



2025

# Community Forest Management Plan

TOWN OF SILVER CITY

DRAFT





*Photo shows local art on a dead tree in Hurley, one of the six communities in the Southwest New Mexico Community Forestry Network. The project team has dubbed him Tree Rex. He has become a bit of a mascot for the project.*

## Acknowledgments

### Town of Silver City Leadership

**Mayor:** Ken Ladner

**City Council:** Rudy Bencomo, Nicholas Prince, Stan Snider, Guadalupe E. Cano

**Town Manager:** Alex C. Brown

**Assistant Town Manager:** Jacqui Olea

**Town Clerk:** Alfred Sedillo

**Chief of Police:** Freddie Portillo

**Fire Chief:** Milo E. Lambert

**Public Works & Parks:** Peter Pena

**Parks Maintenance Supervisor:** Jesus Alvillar

**Municipal Judge:** Jackie Hernandez-David

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**Southwest NM Council of Governments:** Priscilla Lucero

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*Current page photo and cover photo show high quality tree canopy in Gough Park.*



# Getting Started

Welcome to Silver City's Community Forest Management Plan! This plan contains helpful information about Silver City's community forest, with specific recommendations for its growth and care. The plan is just one part of a greater effort to increase tree equity in southwestern New Mexico. Silver City, along with Bayard, Deming, Hurley, Lordsburg, and Santa Clara is part of the Southwest New Mexico Community Forestry Network (CFN).

Before getting started, here are definitions for some important terms that are used throughout this plan.

**Community Forest:** The word "forest" might suggest an area up in the mountains that is dense with trees. Just as a wildland forest is made up of all the trees and other vegetation within a specific area, Silver City's community forest (also known as "urban forest") is made up of all the trees and plants within the city's municipal boundaries. All the trees and other vegetation in parks and public spaces, residential and business lots, and open and undeveloped space compose Silver City's community forest.

Wildland foresters take a landscape-scale approach to evaluate and manage threats to forest health and productivity, and the same principle applies to community forestry. Urban forests are managed by examining all of a city's trees and vegetation as a whole to assess the trends, patterns and priorities that emerge. This approach allows managers to respond with informed strategies to improve and protect the overall community forest, while still addressing the health needs of individual trees. Furthermore, just as wildland foresters manage forests to provide resources and ecosystem services, Silver City's community forest can be strategically managed to provide multiple environmental, economic, and social benefits to the community.



Urban forests, and the individual trees they are comprised of, play a crucial role in enhancing the livability and resilience of our communities, particularly in the arid Southwest. Trees provide a wide variety of social, environmental and economic benefits that can be maintained or even enhanced through best management practices.



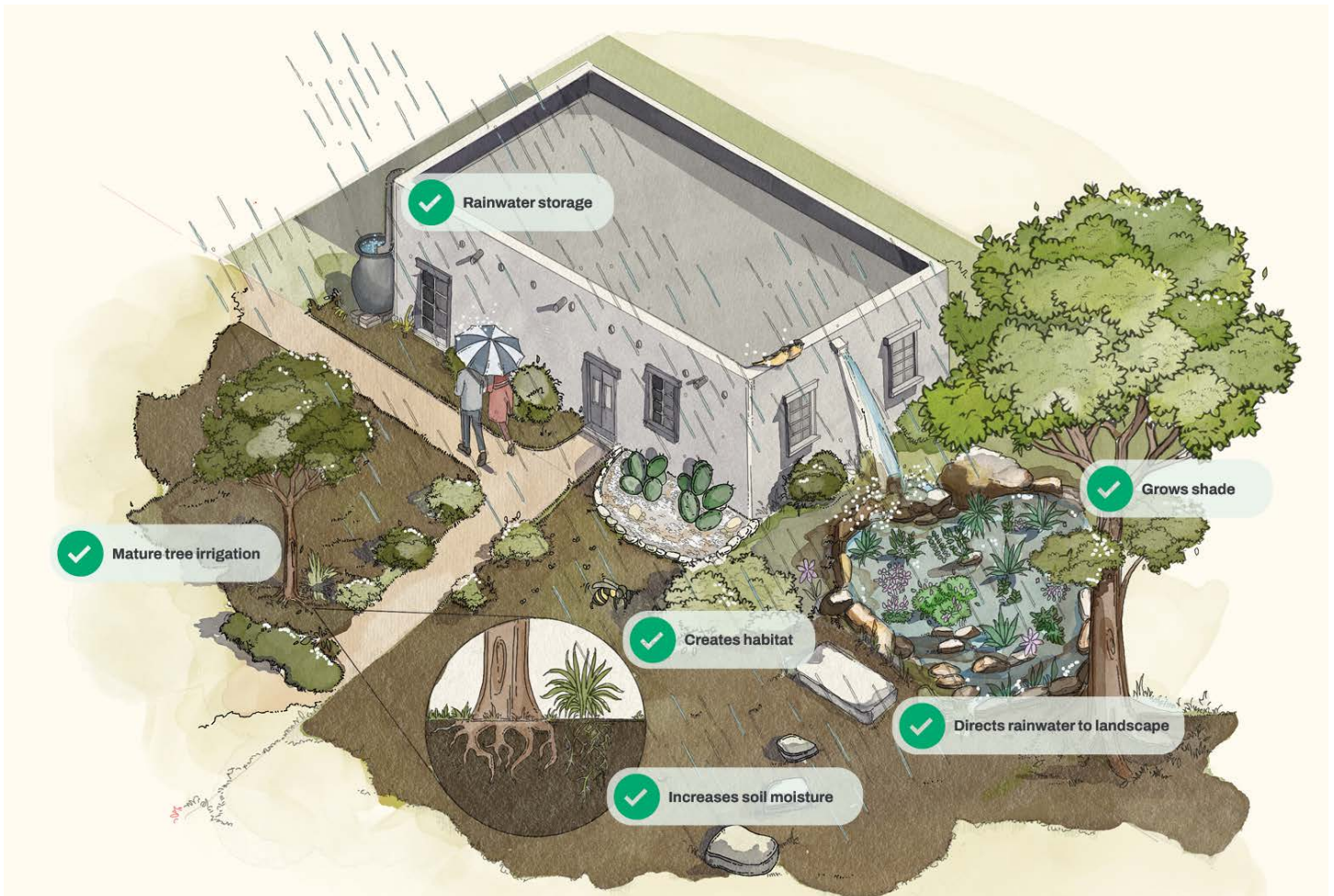
**Urban:** The term urban might not be relatable for Silver City, but in the context of this plan, urban simply means an area that has a higher density of residential, industrial, commercial, and institutional development.

**Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI):** Green Stormwater Infrastructure, or GSI, is an approach to stormwater management that creates many small, distributed green spaces that soak up rainwater where it falls, reducing stormwater runoff that carries pollution to waterways. GSI captures rainwater and recharges soil moisture, which brings much needed water to plants and trees that create shade for people and habitat for wildlife.

GSI features are designed to leverage the power of living, natural systems to provide the community with many benefits. By directing rainwater from roadways and other impervious surfaces to landscaped areas, GSI can reduce nuisance flooding and support irrigation of trees and other plants, which helps to grow more green space while conserving Silver City's drinking water supply.

"Trees are beautiful and provide so many benefits. Shade, oxygen and homes for so much wildlife."

- Silver City Resident



Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI), also known as rainwater harvesting, provides multiple benefits. Image credit: Arid Low Impact Development (LID) Coalition.



# Southwest New Mexico Community Forestry Network

The USDA Forest Service awarded Western New Mexico University (WNMU) a 5-year grant to increase tree equity in six small, rural communities in southwestern New Mexico: Bayard, Deming, Hurley, Lordsburg, Santa Clara, and Silver City. While WNMU is the grant lead, Gila Resources Information Project (GRIP) and Integrated Biological Solutions (IBIS) serve together with WNMU as the project team.

As part of the project, IBIS developed Community Forest Management Plans for Silver City and each of the five other communities. **These management plans serve as the foundation to guide all subsequent project work to be done in each community throughout the remainder of the grant period and beyond**, including tree planting and tree maintenance (e.g., tree pruning, irrigation assistance, pest management). The project team is guiding the implementation of these plans by providing technical and capacity building support to the town. GRIP is leading the planting of 1,000 trees total across all six communities, and funding at least one week of tree maintenance work per year in each community. Prioritization of planting and maintenance work is informed by the assessments and recommendations provided in the Community Forest Management Plans.

**One of the key outcomes of the project is the formation of the Southwest New Mexico Community Forestry Network (CFN)**, which is facilitated by the project team and includes all six communities. The CFN was designed to help coordinate efforts and share information between communities and project partners. The CFN website, [swnmforestry.org](https://swnmforestry.org), includes links to additional resources that are referenced in this community forest management plan and a curated list of other useful resources. The network and the project team will continue producing tools and materials as needed to help the towns put their plans into action.

## The CFN's work is focused on:

- » Providing guidance and on-the-ground support for tree planting and maintenance.
- » Sharing educational resources for a variety of audiences, from community members to tree care professionals.
- » Encouraging collaboration between communities in the region.
- » Supporting municipalities to engage community members in the care and development of their urban forest.
- » Connecting southwest New Mexico communities to statewide resources and other networks.
- » Supporting communities to leverage the Community Forest Management Plans to obtain additional funding for implementation.
- » Assisting communities to address resource shortfalls.
- » Building municipal staffing capacity through training and program development.



*Community Forestry Network partners attending the Think Trees Conference in Albuquerque, February 2025.*



## Purpose of the Plan

At first glance, it might seem as though a community forest management plan would only need one sentence: Plant more trees! As wonderful as they are, trees and public green spaces require an investment of both money and time to make sure they produce maximum benefits without posing unnecessary risk, such as falling limbs and infrastructure interference. And in New Mexico's desert communities, the water requirements for planting additional trees must also be carefully considered and budgeted for.

A well-managed community forest can provide multiple benefits that support Silver City's long-term development goals. However, just like any infrastructure, urban trees require an ongoing investment. This plan strives to balance cost and benefits within Silver City's unique community context in order to make management recommendations and identify opportunities for the CFN to support efficient community forest management in the region.

This plan is designed to be a practical guide for the town of Silver City, outlining specific implementation strategies for the planting, care, and general management of the community forest. It reflects the community's stated values, plays to the town's strengths, identifies key challenges and opportunities, and charts a path toward achieving Silver City's goals for the development of both the urban forest and the town at large.

"The trees around Silver City are a constant companion to me. They are my friends and teachers. I would not be here without them!"

- Silver City Resident



### Purpose of the Plan:

Practical Guidance

Educational Resource

Community Planning Reference



## Scope of the Plan

This plan defines Silver City's community forest as all trees and vegetation within municipal limits, but **the focus of the plan is on trees, shrubs, and other woody perennial plants**. The reason for this is that these plants have a long-term presence and therefore represent the highest potential benefit to Silver City. However, they can also represent the highest cost and risk, requiring long-term planning and specialized management. Other vegetation, like grasses and flowers, are recognized as important components of a community forest and are included in this plan's discussion, but they are not the primary focus.

For this plan, the area of analysis was determined by the densely populated or urbanized portion within the town boundary of Silver City, with consideration of the surrounding areas within the extrajurisdictional territory (ETJ). While this plan considers Silver City's entire community forest, much of **the emphasis of the plan will be on assessing trees and vegetation in public spaces and providing municipal recommendations** to the Town of Silver City and its major partners.

Silver City's Community Forest Management Plan cannot be static if it is to be successful. This must be a dynamic document that encourages the application of adaptive management practices (plan-do-check-fix) in order to respond to changing conditions and shifting priorities.

**The management plan was written with a five-year lifespan in mind (i.e., 2025-2030)**, at which time it should be updated and adjusted based upon progress made and lessons learned over the coming years. The newly formed Southwest New Mexico Community Forestry Network (CFN) and the recently expanded New Mexico Tree Alliance can serve as community educational resources and technical or logistical support for Silver City's priority projects. **As Silver City continues to work to strengthen its approach to community forest management, there are many resources available to aid in this effort.**



*Hub Plaza is an important gathering space in the Historic Downtown District that uses trees and other landscaping to increase patronage to local businesses. There is an opportunity to plant additional shade trees here.*



## How to Use This Plan

The Town of Silver City's Community Forest Management Plan is organized into three sections: the *Basis for the Plan*; the *Action Plan*, and *Additional Resources*.

### Basis for the Plan

This section provides background information on how this plan was developed, including community context, analytical data regarding Silver City's urban forest, and methodologies for identifying key priorities and strategies. This section can **help grant writers and project planners to provide justification for proposed projects and budgets** and may be of interest to those actively engaged in Silver City and its community forest. However, it is not necessary to read this section to understand and implement the *Action Plan*.

### Action Plan

This section identifies six broad goals for Silver City's community forest, strategies within each of these goals, and specific actions to achieve these goals. It provides tailored recommendations for the physical care of trees as well as recommendations on policy, funding, community planning, training, and municipal and volunteer support. **Silver City's *Action Plan* is meant to be a working "to do" list.**

### Additional Resources

This section is an appendix to the plan and provides guidance and templates to support the implementation of activities identified within the *Action Plan*. It is meant to serve as an **educational resource** for anyone actively involved in Silver City's community forest. Many of these resources are linked on the CFN website ([swnmforestry.org](http://swnmforestry.org)), which will continue to be updated as more resources are created and collected by the CFN.

"There is nothing more magical  
than a forest. It heals the body,  
mind, and soul."

- Silver City Resident





# Recommended Goals and Strategies

Silver City's Community Forest Management Plan sets six primary **Goals** that guide a vision of a healthy community forest and organize the work ahead. **Strategies** within each goal outline actionable and measurable tasks designed to help achieve these goals. The *Action Plan*, beginning of page 73 of this document, expands upon these Goals to recommend **Actions** within each Strategy, including timelines, partners and collaborators, and available resources.

Goal 1 serves as the primary and overarching goal for the community forest, with strategies that apply broadly across all areas. Goals 2–6 each focus on one of Silver City's five **Community Forest "Stewardship Areas"**, which **are distinct landscape types with unique management considerations**. The five Stewardship Areas are: Residential Neighborhoods; Arts, Culture and Tourism; Community Services and Athletic Facilities; Urban Corridors, and; Natural Landscapes and Open Space. While some strategies are relevant to more than one stewardship area, each is organized under the primary Stewardship Area with the strongest alignment.

## Goal

## *Cross-Cutting Goal: All Stewardship Areas*

**1** Silver City collaboratively manages a resilient community forest that contributes to broader community goals.

### Strategies:

- 1.A: Build a community forest network with representatives from municipal, county, state, Federal, and institution professional staff.
- 1.B: Monitor community forest health to prioritize tree maintenance and tree risk reduction.
- 1.C: Develop, implement, and evaluate town-wide community forest policies, plans and initiatives that support Silver City's community forest goals.
- 1.D: Provide guidance and training to non-profits, town boards, and local experts to empower participation in community forestry monitoring and maintenance.
- 1.E: Invest in building staff expertise to further strengthen Silver City's community forest management.
- 1.F: Implement green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) in high stormwater runoff areas such as pavement, roofs, and other impermeable surfaces to water trees and reduce localized erosion and flooding.

## Goal

## *Primary Stewardship Area: Residential Neighborhoods*

**2** Silver City develops and expands the community forest in Silver City's neighborhoods based on connectivity and need.

### Strategies:

- 2.A: Expand and revitalize parks and elementary school landscapes in neighborhoods with highest need.
- 2.B: Develop a street tree initiative that focuses on connecting people to parks and services while lowering harmful heat levels.
- 2.C: Engage residential community members in the growth and care of the community forest.





## Goal

### *Primary Stewardship Area: Arts, Culture, and Tourism*

# 3

Silver City plans for community forest succession while still supporting and protecting legacy trees.

#### Strategies:

3.A: Revitalize Silver City's historic landscapes by reducing tree risk and supplementing existing landscapes with new and replacement plantings.

3.B: Prioritize developing and implementing a maintenance plan for Big Ditch Park.

## Goal

### *Primary Stewardship Area: Community Services and Athletic Facilities*

# 4

Silver City's community forest enhances public health and quality of life for residents and visitors.

#### Strategies:

4.A: Focus resources on improving and expanding the community forest in town landscapes and recreation areas.

4.B: Cool pedestrian walkways, bus stops, parking lots, and other high pavement areas through the use of trees and landscaping.

## Goal

### *Primary Stewardship Area: Urban Corridors*

# 5

Silver City proactively integrates the community forest into residential and commercial growth.

#### Strategies:

5.A: Develop cohesive streetscaping on US-180 and NM-90 to create attractive business districts and foster a distinctive sense of place.

5.B: Proactively integrate tree infrastructure and irrigation into new and expanding residential developments along streets and in parks and other public spaces.

## Goal

### *Primary Stewardship Area: Natural Landscapes and Open Space*

# 6

Silver City actively manages the community forest in natural and open space areas for environmental services, wildlife habitat, and human benefit.

#### Strategies:

6.A: Improve the health of the community forest in riparian channels within Silver City municipal boundaries.

6.B: Incorporate community forest maintenance and monitoring into Open Space Area management.



# Community Forestry Best Management Practices for Silver City

The assessments and recommendations presented in Silver City's Community Forest Management Plan are rooted in science-based best management practices in the field of urban forestry. To produce the goals, strategies, and actions featured in the Action Plan, the following best management practices were considered in the context of Silver City's vision, capacity, strengths and ongoing challenges.



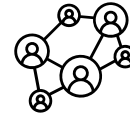
## Planning

- » Select a wide variety of tree and plant species adapted to thrive in local conditions to conserve water, increase biodiversity, and improve forest health.
- » Establish and implement an irrigation plan for all new plantings.
- » Select the right tree for the right place, considering both plant and site characteristics.
- » Stagger tree plantings over time to grow a resilient community forest with a distributed age structure.
- » Prioritize planting in underserved neighborhoods and high-use pedestrian spaces.
- » Incorporate trees and irrigation into public infrastructure projects whenever possible to maximize opportunities for greening public spaces.
- » Integrate green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) with community forestry projects to reduce flooding, provide trees with supplemental irrigation, and promote water conservation.



## Plants

- » Prioritize the maintenance and health of mature trees to retain canopy and maximize tree benefits.
- » Create and maintain an urban tree inventory to actively monitor tree health and prioritize work.
- » Support soil health by using organic mulch and reducing soil compaction.
- » Use correct pruning techniques, eliminating tree "topping" (a harmful pruning practice where the tops of trees or large branches are indiscriminately cut off, often leaving stubs behind) and other out-of-date techniques.
- » Address public safety concerns by proactively identifying and mitigating high risk trees through trimming or removal.



## People

- » Engage and empower community members to support community forest goals on both public and private property.
- » Invest in workforce development and ensure tree care workers are trained in proper maintenance, monitoring and integrated pest management techniques.
- » Establish town policies, ordinances, programmatic workflows, and budgets that support the goals of sustainable community forest management.
- » Collaborate with regional and statewide forestry programs and networks to leverage resources, expertise, and funding opportunities.

"The older I get the more I  
appreciate trees."

-Silver City Resident

# Tree Care and Tree Biology Basics

The **branches** and **leaves** of a tree collect energy and transpire water. Branches grow from their tips, not the base.

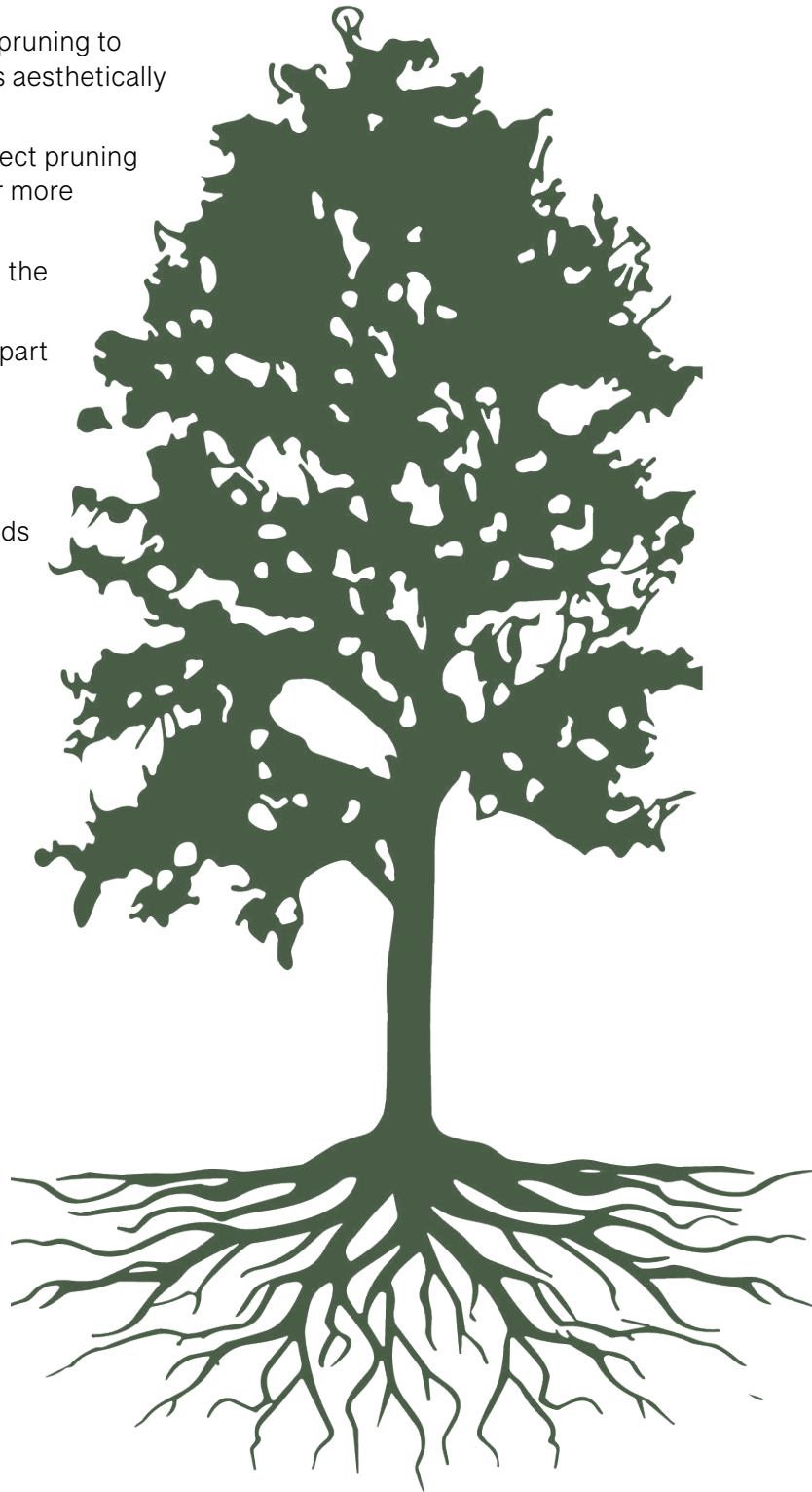
- » Any pruning cut is a wound to the tree. Minimize pruning to only what is needed for human safety and what is aesthetically appropriate for the species.
- » Pruning wounds heal faster and better when correct pruning cuts are performed (see *Additional Resources* for more information).
- » Branches stay at the same height on the trunk as the tree grows.
- » Two or more vertical branches can pull the tree apart at the branch crotch; prune early to favor one.

The **trunk** provides strength and structure, and expands outward as the tree grows.

- » Damage to outer bark creates weak points in the tree and allows diseases to enter the tree. Protect the trunk from weed whackers and other equipment.
- » Ropes or cords tied around the tree choke sap flow as the trunk expands, and can even kill the tree over time.

The **roots** carry water and nutrients. Roots expand out to the width of the leaf canopy and are two to three feet deep.

- » The root collar, where the roots transition to trunk, should be at or slightly above the surface of the ground.
- » Irrigate fine root hairs at the ends of roots near the edge of the leaf canopy. Keep them moist at all times, even through winter.
- » Protect roots from damage with organic mulch rings or under-plantings.
- » Roots that circle the trunk can cause tree instability and eventually choke off nutrient and water flow in the trunk; circling roots are best cut at tree planting.





# Basis for the Plan

Public input and local knowledge are critical components to any community planning effort. To develop the Silver City Community Forest Management Plan, the project team gathered information in multiple ways.

- » Conducted multiple interviews with Silver City town officials, staff, and local experts to introduce them to the project, get initial input on priority areas, and understand the basics of the Town's current approach to landscape management.
- » Reviewed the Silver City Comprehensive Plan, Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP), and other available planning documents to identify community goals and opportunities to integrate with upcoming community forestry projects.
- » Met with partners frequently between September 2024 and September 2025 to conduct a broad assessment of existing trees and public spaces to identify opportunities and challenges for planting and maintenance.
- » Worked closely within the project team to glean local knowledge and incorporate their implementation and training experiences to help shape goals, strategies and actions.
- » Reviewed and analyzed data regarding Silver City's community forest such as climatological conditions, geography, natural vegetation types, and existing policy and ordinances.

Community input in these various forms was integrated into a broader assessment of the Town of Silver City, which is discussed in the following sections: the **Community Context**, **Community Forest Assessment**, and **Community Forest Stewardship**. This assessment was guided by three key questions:

What does Silver City's community forest currently **have**?

What does Silver City **want** for its community forest?

**How** can Silver City's community forestry goals be **achieved**?

*New tree planted at Johnny Banks Park in December of 2024 during an event hosted by GRIP.*





*La Capilla is an important historic cultural site that provides beautiful views of the town.*

## Community Context

The high-elevation desert surrounding what is now the Town of Silver City has supported human settlement for thousands of years. The area was once home to early Mimbres and Apache communities, and later to traditional Hispanic villages, mining towns, and farming and ranching communities.

The Town of Silver City was incorporated in 1878 along San Vicente Creek, with the original townsite laid out on a grid (2017 Silver City Comprehensive Plan). In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the town experienced catastrophic flooding when deforestation in the surrounding mountains caused severe erosion and runoff. The floodwaters from San Vicente Creek swept through the town, destroying what was then Main Street and leaving behind a deep channel that came to be known as “the Big Ditch.” This event permanently reshaped the town’s landscape and remains one of the most defining moments in Silver City’s history. Today, the Big Ditch has been transformed into a park that serves as a central feature of downtown.

Silver City spans roughly 10.7 square miles and is home to 9,000–10,000 residents. The historic districts surrounding the Big Ditch are lively and distinctive, characterized by winding streets, colorful architecture, and a rich blend of arts, culture, and local enterprise. Galleries, restaurants, and community spaces contribute to a vibrant downtown atmosphere that serves both residents and visitors alike. The Town of Silver City serves as the county seat and regional center for Grant County. It is a key gateway to tourist destinations such as the Gila National Forest and Continental Divide Trail.

Two major highways—U.S. Highway 180 (US-180) and New Mexico Highway 90 (NM-90)—bisect the town, along which development has continued to expand in all directions. Silva Creek and Pinos Altos Creek converge into San Vicente Creek near the town center, forming a large “Y” of riparian corridors that divide Silver City into several distinct neighborhoods. While the historic downtown continues to house many community services and anchors the local tourism economy, the Silver Heights neighborhood, located north of US-180 and west of North Swan Street, has seen increasing investment in public services, including schools, the Gila Regional Medical Center, and new recreation facilities.

### Silver City Mission Statement

“Silver City is the hub of an inclusive community settled within a small town that through guided growth, honors and preserves its historical, cultural, and natural heritage while facilitating jobs, health, and educational resources such that the residents and visitors may enjoy and protect the recreational opportunities of the area and high quality of life.”



## Silver City Governance

The Town of Silver City is led by a Mayor and four Town Councilors. The Town Manager oversees a staff organized into departments, many of which will play a role in the implementation of this community forest management plan, including the Public Works and Parks Department, which includes Parks, Streets, and Memory Lane Cemetery; the Community Development Department; the Recreation Department; and, the Utilities Department.

Silver City has municipal ordinances and land use codes that set requirements for trees and other vegetation. **Establishing a basic vegetation ordinance gives municipal staff the authority to address community forest issues effectively**, such as vandalism, tree hazards, invasives, and pest management.

Additionally, Silver City can **establish a Tree Board** to assist the Town in implementing this community forest management plan and support community engagement. A Tree Board is a group of local experts who are dedicated to enhancing the well-being of trees in a community and may be called upon for consultation and support, and is a strategy widely used by municipalities across the country.

Silver City has a set of Land Use Codes that govern development activities, with several sections that pertain to trees and vegetation:

- » *Section 5.1:* Requires new residential developments to establish parks, playgrounds, or other public areas, or pay a fee to the Town in lieu.
- » *Section 5.10:* Requires landscaping and buffering for new multi-family residential buildings, commercial buildings, parking lots, and other types of development. This includes the installation of trees and shrubs, and requires the use of low-water use plants selected from a list maintained by the Community Development Department.
- » *Section 5.11.4:* Requires large retail development facilities to install foundational landscaping.

**In future revisions of the Town's land use code, consideration should be given to establishing requirements for new street tree infrastructure** as streets are built or renovated. Street trees provide a multitude of benefits to a community, including aesthetics, traffic calming, shade and pavement cooling, and vehicle air pollution mitigation. Proactively including irrigation and tree root protection infrastructure into roads and sidewalks leaves these spaces open for planting

opportunities, even if not part of the original project. Other land use code revisions that should be considered are requiring the use of organic mulch surrounding trees and shrubs, as opposed to gravel and other heat absorbing materials, and regulating the use of weed cloth or other barriers that impede water infiltration near tree roots.

"I love trees that have fall color. I celebrate the seasons based on the stages of the trees in Silver City."

-Silver City Resident

## Management of Town Landscapes

The Town of Silver City's Public Works and Parks Department oversees tree care for most town-owned trees. The Community Development Department also plays a role in managing trees at specific sites and projects, such as the Senior Center Park and the San Vicente Trail system.

Town park staff serve as the primary maintenance personnel for the community forest. In addition to maintaining the town's parks, they also manage the landscapes around all municipal buildings and athletic facilities. **Providing these staff members with annual training in tree irrigation, pruning, and maintenance**, and connecting them to statewide urban forestry resources, is vital to sustaining the health and longevity of Silver City's community forest.

Tree and plant maintenance and irrigation are specialized fields with regionally-based best practices that are always evolving based on emerging science. Tree care can also be dangerous work that requires highly specialized skills, particularly when working at heights in large, mature trees, either by climbing or using bucket trucks. While working with certified arborists

is valuable, it is usually not cost-effective to have this level of expertise on staff full-time. Silver City has an established contract with a local arborist, and efficient and effective methods for accessing tree care expertise when needed.

While contracting certified arborists remains an efficient solution, long-term success depends on building local capacity through training and collaboration. **The Community Forest Network (CFN) aims to strengthen this capacity by developing and sharing educational resources, facilitating training and mentorship opportunities, and fostering collaboration** among the six communities participating in this project. By creating pathways for knowledge exchange and engagement with regional experts, the CFN will help ensure a cohesive, well-managed, and resilient urban forest—both within Silver City and across the broader region.



*The Grant County Courthouse provides critical green space in this area of town. While not intended to be a park, neighbors often use this space as such.*

"Trees provide a sense  
of life and well-being."

-Silver City Resident

## Local Partners in Community Forestry

In addition to the Town of Silver City, there are several other significant land managers within the town's municipal boundaries and the surrounding extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). These land managers contribute significantly to Silver City's community forest and are key partners in its management.

- » The **Western New Mexico University (WNMU)** campus serves as a park-like area in the community, with plentiful tree cover and an arboretum that boasts a wide variety of species. WNMU landscapes are managed by the Facilities Department Grounds Division and the WNMU Horticultural Manager.
- » **Grant County** has several facilities with grounds in Silver City, including the Grant County Courthouse in the downtown historic district. These landscapes are managed by the Grant County Maintenance Department.
- » Silver High School, La Plata Middle School, and the four Elementary Schools are managed by the **Silver City Consolidated School District**. The school landscapes are managed by the School District maintenance staff.
- » The **Gila Regional Medical Center** has a large central hospital, and several clinics and administrative buildings throughout the Silver City area. These landscapes are managed by the Gila Regional Medical Center maintenance staff.
- » The **Federal government** has a presence in Silver City including the United States Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management offices, and the Post Office facility. These landscapes are managed by the maintenance groups of their respective offices, sometimes with support from local landscaping contractors.





*Local residents completing the public survey in September 2024 that informed the creation of this Community Forest Management Plan. Many of these outreach events included giveaways of tree saplings.*

## Public Survey for Community Input

One of the key community engagement strategies used by the CFN project team was a public survey open to all Silver City residents. Two hundred and seventeen Silver City residents responded to the public survey, which was open for a period of three months. To ensure that all residents in Silver City had an opportunity to contribute, the team used a wide range of outreach strategies. The public surveys were made available in both English and Spanish.

The public survey requested information about potential priority locations for tree planting projects, tree maintenance and removal, and areas with flooding that could benefit from green stormwater infrastructure. Residents also had the opportunity to share which benefits of trees are most important to them, to give opinions about their preferred plant palettes for community forest projects, and to share their personal “Tree Stories”. Responses to the survey questions highlighted that **Silver City residents deeply value their existing trees and strongly believe the city will benefit from having more.** The survey revealed overwhelming support from the community for this initiative.

According to the survey results, Silver City residents were most interested in community forestry projects that prioritize shade trees, native and drought tolerant plants, and trees that add color and beauty to the town. Silver City residents were also particularly interested in using trees to help provide habitat for native pollinators and wildlife, and finding appropriate places for more fruit trees throughout town.

## Guiding Plans

The Town of Silver City’s Office of Sustainability developed a Community Forest Management Plan in 2013, which included a town-wide tree inventory and a community forestry demonstration project (Johnny Banks Park). The 2013 plan and inventory were key documents in the development of this community forest management plan. Additionally, in 2017 Silver City was included in an effort by New Mexico State Forestry to prepare a tree inventory and statewide management plan, with a focus on historic and legacy trees.

The Town of Silver City and Grant County have several additional guiding plans that informed the development of this community forest management plan, and contain many complementary goals, strategies, and actions. Key plans include:

- » 2017 Silver City Comprehensive Plan
- » Grant County Comprehensive Plan
- » Grant County Hazard Mitigation Plan
- » Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan
- » 2020 Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- » Emergency Operations Plan
- » Silver City Sustainability 2030 Plan (2013)
- » Silver City Greenways and Big Ditch Master Plan
- » Silver City Arts and Cultural District Cultural Plan
- » Water Conservation Plan



# Community Forest Assessment

The Town of Silver City's community forest comprises all the trees and plants over one meter (about 3.3 feet) tall within Silver City's municipal boundaries. The trees and plants that make up the community forest include both the natural vegetation of the mountain forests, foothills, riparian channels, and the human-introduced trees and plants of the more developed areas. Although **the focus of this plan is within Silver City's municipal boundaries**, this plan also considers trees and other vegetation within the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) of Silver City. The developing neighborhoods of the ETJ and the natural vegetation in these areas are both important considerations in planning the future health of Silver City's community forest.

It is important to consider that much of Silver City's land area is privately owned, and trees and landscaping in these private spaces contribute greatly to the town's total tree canopy cover. **Engaging Silver City's residents in planting, growing, and caring for trees on their property can play a critical role** in enhancing the overall health of Silver City's community forest. The CFN will provide resources to help Silver City engage with residents, including educational resources on plant selection and irrigation recommendations.

There are several powerful mapping tools and analysis methodologies that provide data related to the health of the Silver City community forest. **The following sections summarize the analyses of spatial data that helped inform this plan**, including data for tree canopy height and distribution, topography, land surface temperature, tree inventories and more.

"Trees improve my life by providing shade and biodiversity. We always need more trees."

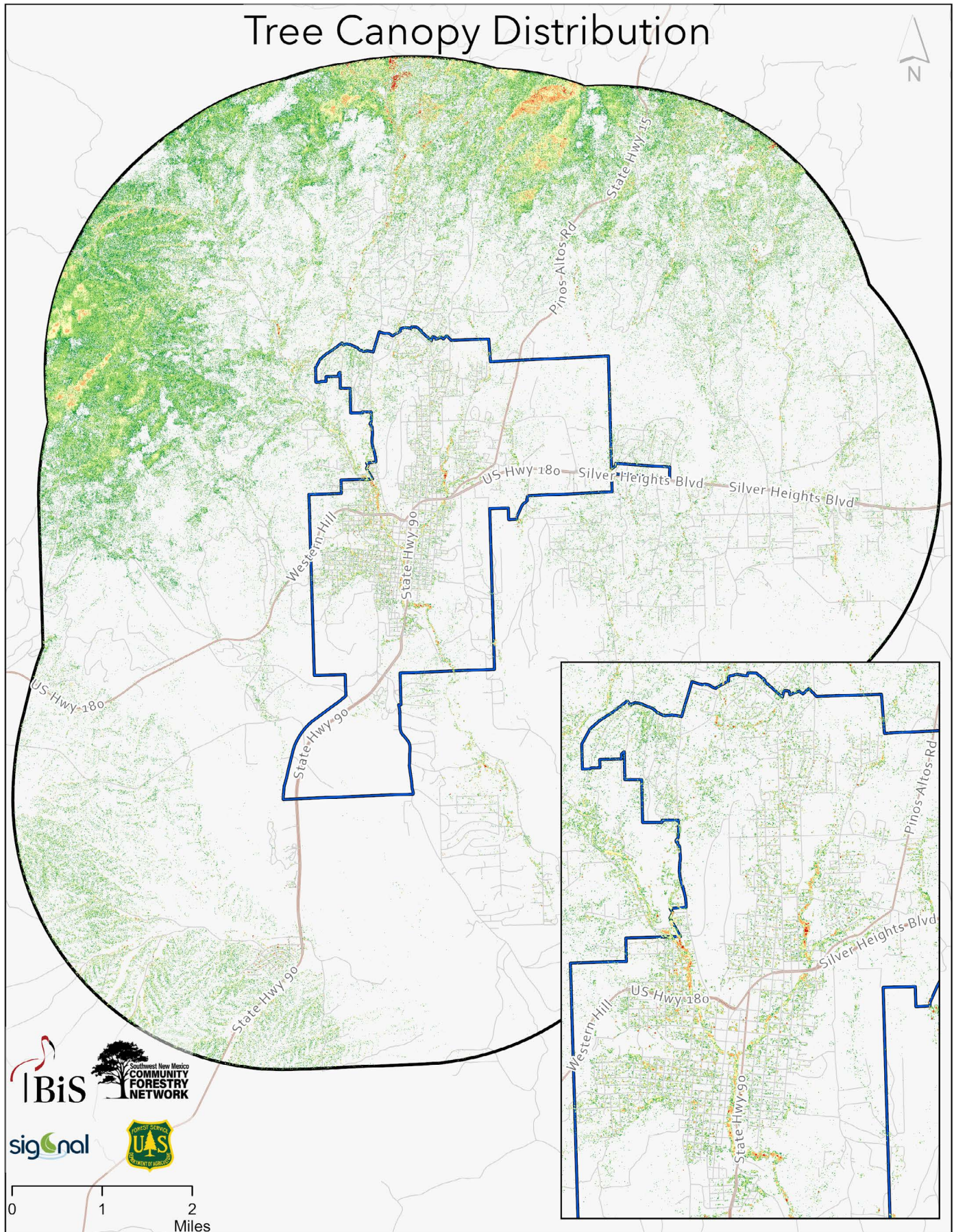
-Silver City Resident

*Gough Park is an important community green space in Silver City's urban core, enjoyed by both residents and visitors.*





# Tree Canopy Distribution



The dark green on the map of Silver City's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) shows the distribution of tree canopy in the area, including all plants over 1 meter (approximately 3.3 feet) tall. Inset shows a closer view of the tree canopy distribution within Silver City's municipal limits.



## Tree Canopy

Tree canopy cover is the percentage of land area covered by the leaves, branches, and stems of trees and plants when viewed from above, across the whole community in both public and private spaces. Satellite imagery provides data about tree canopy distribution as well as data to assess the range in height of vegetation greater than one meter tall (3.3 feet). **Larger tree height and a denser tree canopy are generally associated with greater benefits to a community**, such as providing more shade and heat mitigation.

The tree canopy map of the ETJ clearly shows areas of dense natural vegetation, such as the edges of the Gila National Forest, along the Silva Creek, Pinos Altos Creek, and San Vicente Creek riparian areas, and the pinyon-juniper forests in the foothills of Tyrone.

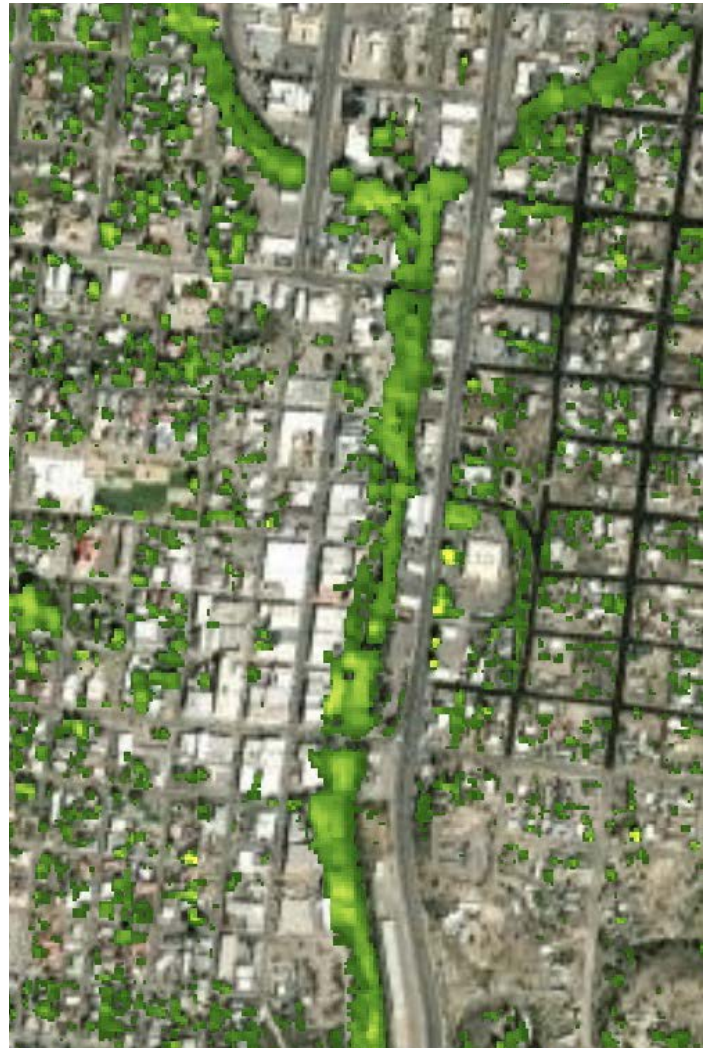
Looking closer at the densely populated areas within Silver City's municipal limits, patterns in the distribution of tree canopy across neighborhoods and business districts begin to emerge. The historic neighborhoods west of downtown have a denser tree canopy with larger, more established trees compared to other areas where tree canopy is more sparse. For example, the area between Ursa Major and Ursa Minor known as "Starski Ridge" north of US-180 is almost completely devoid of trees. This type of analysis can **identify areas with low tree canopy, which can help prioritize tree planting projects to improve canopy distribution more equitably across Silver City.**

"The trees at Gough Park provide a place for shared community activities and give our children places to grow, learn and thrive within urban spaces."

-Silver City Resident



*Gough Park appears as an island of denser tree canopy in an urban area that has otherwise sparse tree canopy.*



*The Silva Creek, Pinos Altos Creek, and San Vicente Creek riparian areas create a "Y" shape of denser tree canopy through the heart of Silver City, known as the "Big Ditch". The downtown area has very few other trees.*



Tree Canopy (cont.)

The total percentage of tree canopy cover is one way to assess the overall condition of an urban forest. The satellite imagery analysis shows the total canopy cover (the percentage of land that is covered in plants and trees greater than 3 feet tall) within Silver City municipal limits is 6.8%. Silver City's tree canopy (plants taller than 10 feet) is 3.35%, while smaller understory plants (between 3 and 10 feet tall) contribute an additional 3.45% to the total canopy. The ETJ, which includes areas of sparse development and more natural vegetation, has a higher total canopy cover of over 15%.

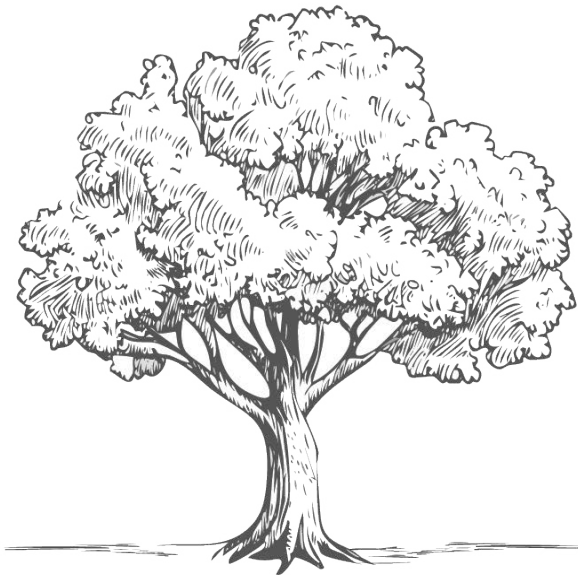
Silver City's municipal boundaries include large areas of natural land with sparse and low-growing vegetation, such as the Boston Hill Open Space area and the

undeveloped areas south of town. Including these areas in a town-wide tree canopy assessment can skew the overall canopy coverage downward and does not accurately reflect the canopy cover in developed urban areas. **To provide more meaningful data to support the assessment of Silver City's community forest, these uninhabited natural areas were excluded from the total tree canopy percentage analysis.** A more localized analysis is provided by the Tree Equity Score tool developed by American Forests, which evaluates tree canopy cover percentage by census block. According to this tool, canopy cover in Silver City's downtown core is around 9%, with significantly higher percentages in the residential neighborhoods surrounding downtown.

USDA Forest Service research shows that in a desert community like Silver City, a tree canopy of 15% is a realistic goal. Many of the census blocks of Silver City already meet or exceed this goal, an indicator of the investment that has already been made in the care of the community forest. The areas of town currently below this 15% canopy cover goal should be considered priority areas for tree planting initiatives to increase equitable access to green spaces across the community.

"We should prioritize low income parts of Silver City."

-Silver City Resident



Large Trees



Small Trees + Shrubs

Silver City Municipal Boundary

3.35%

3.45%

Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)

6.22%

9.52%

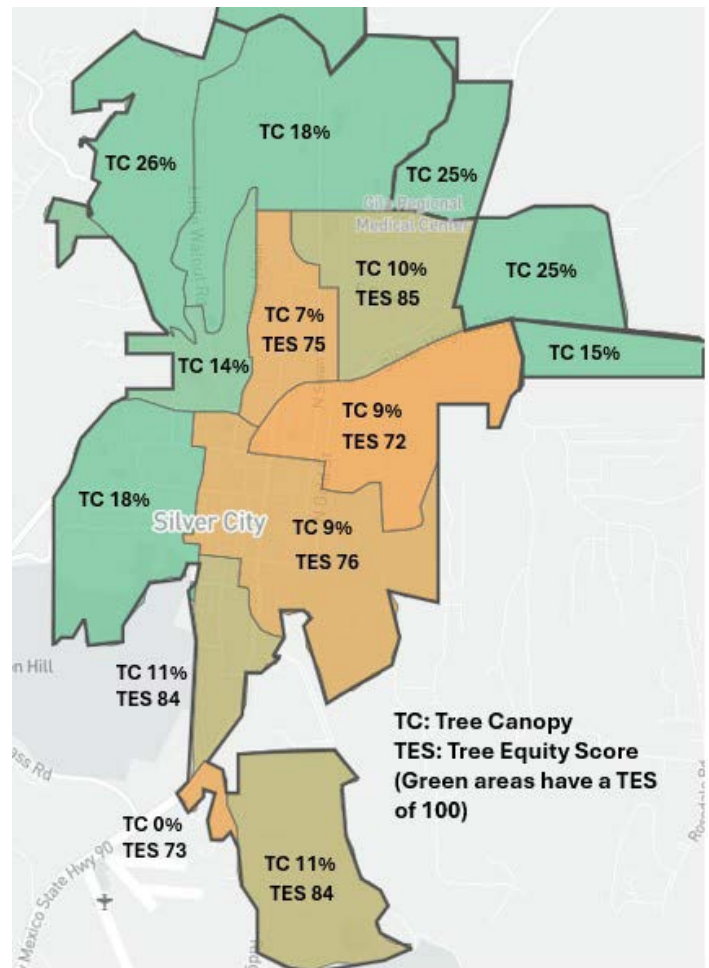
Within Silver City municipal boundaries, 6.8% of the land area is covered by the leaves, branches and stems of the trees and plants over 3 feet tall, when viewed from above. 3.35% of Silver City's canopy cover comes from trees over 10 feet tall, while 3.45% comes from trees and plants between 3 and 10 feet tall.

## Tree Equity Score

American Forests created the Tree Equity Score tool to “help address damaging environmental inequities by prioritizing human-centered investment in areas with the greatest need.” By assessing tree canopy in relation to demographic statistics - such as poverty, race, health burden index, unemployment and heat disparity- this tool assesses how equitably green space is distributed across a community (by census block). The tool provides useful data and statistics that may be helpful for grant writers as they are developing funding proposals for new projects. For example, census blocks with lower Tree Equity Scores indicate an area with less canopy and a higher concentration of vulnerable populations that may be prioritized for new tree planting projects. The Tree Equity Score National Map can be accessed via the web at [treeequityscore.org](http://treeequityscore.org).

According to the Tree Equity Score tool, the following census blocks in Silver City are ranked the highest priority for increasing tree equity.

- » The small census block north of Harrison Schmitt Elementary School
- » The census block north of Highway 180 bounded by Ursa Major and North Silver
- » The census block that includes the downtown Historic District, South Brewer Hill Neighborhood, and San Vicente Arroyo
- » The census block east of North Silver and north of US-180
- » The census block that includes the neighborhoods on either side of south NM-90



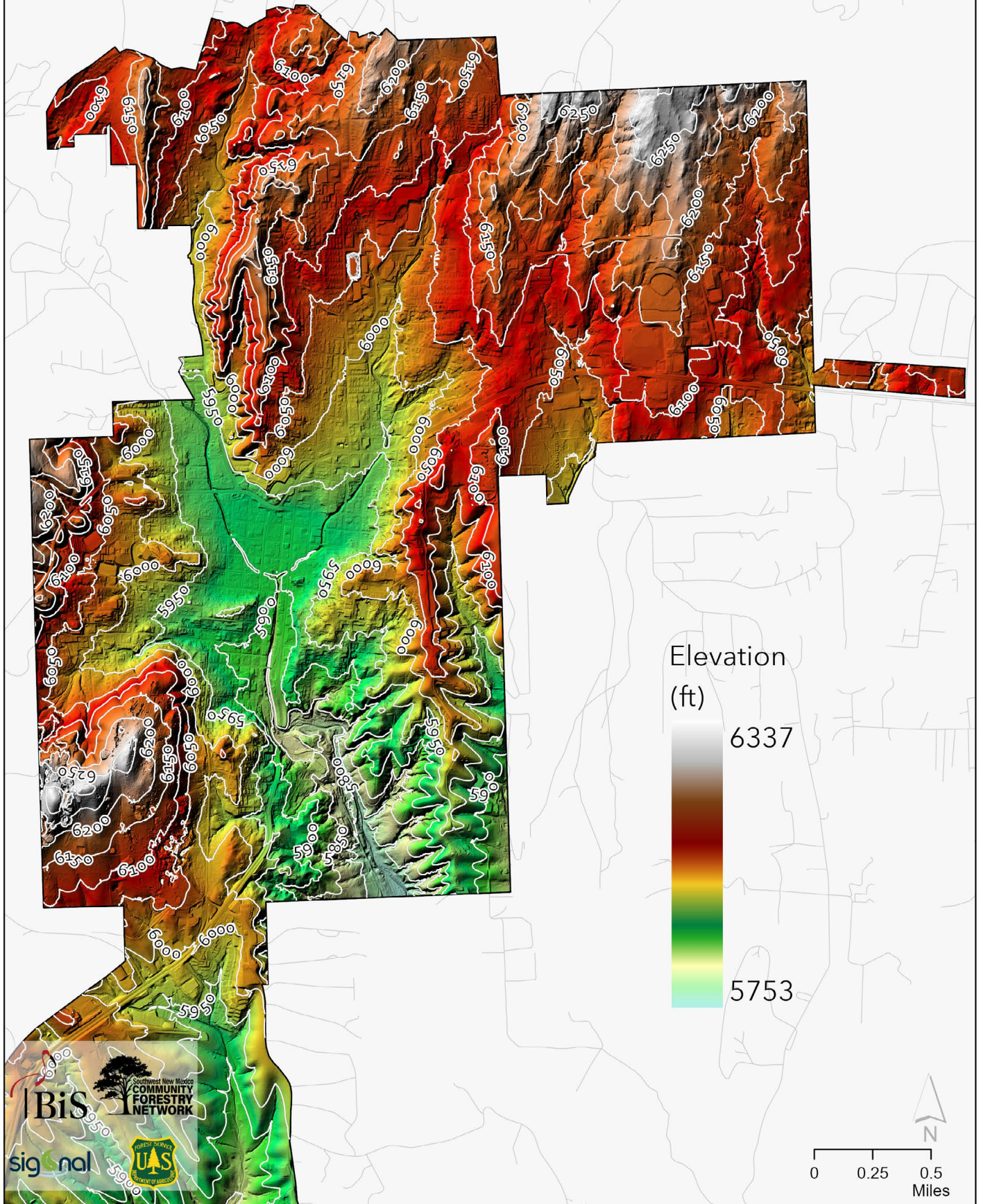
American Forest's online Tree Equity Score (TES) tool, pictured above, combines demographic data with tree canopy (TC) data to create a single measure of tree equity, scored from 0 to 100. The lower the TES, the greater the need for investment in the urban forest.



Throughout the remainder of the grant, the CFN will implement planting projects to increase tree equity in Silver City.



# Topographic Elevation Map



The elevation map for Silver City shows the steep transitions from high elevation areas (white/red) to low elevations (green). Vegetation is denser in low elevation areas, particularly in the riparian channels.

## Topography and Vegetation

Silver City is nestled between the Silver City Range and Pinos Altos Range of the Mogollon Mountains at roughly 6,000 feet elevation. Three narrow riparian channels bisect the community, creating ribbons of denser vegetation. The topographic elevation map shows steep elevation transitions within Silver City's municipal limits, with the mountain foothills draining to these riparian channels.

The natural vegetation communities in the Silver City area can be characterized as Great Basin conifer woodlands, made up of piñon pine and juniper trees with an understory of native bunch grasses. Semi-desert grasslands are slowly encroaching on the historic woodlands, as increasing heat and drought are leading to reduced tree cover. Changing temperature and precipitation patterns, combined with a legacy of grazing practices, has reduced grass cover in both vegetation communities, leaving more bare ground open to wind and water erosion.

The riparian forests were historically dominated by cottonwood and willow with ash, walnut, and other riparian tree species contributing to the overstory canopy. These forests serve valuable ecological functions, but also bring risk of fire and flooding to several residential neighborhoods in Silver City. Considerable efforts by local conservation organizations have helped to remove invasive, non-native salt cedar (*Tamarix ssp.*) tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) and Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*) that choke out native species and increase the fire risk.

## Flooding

Flooding has played a significant role in the cultural, natural and architectural history of Silver City. The infamous 1895 flood almost entirely wiped out Silver City's downtown main street, leaving "The Big Ditch" in its place. As the downtown area was rebuilt, sidewalks with high curbs were installed to protect storefronts and allow pedestrians to move about while floodwaters flowed through the streets to San Vicente Creek. This story of resilience in the wake of natural disaster contributes to the charm and character of this small town.

Flooding continues to be an issue today. Because the town was originally laid out in a grid pattern over natural drainages, impermeable streets now are conduits for stormwater flow off surrounding steep slopes. Stormwater floods the downtown area before being directed into spillways and culverts discharging to San

Vicente Creek. This also happens along Silva and Pinos Altos creeks. **A Stormwater Drainage Management Plan is needed in Silver City** to reduce the volume of water that collects in streets, and prevent obstructions or alterations to natural channels that convey stormwater. The town has been working with partner organizations and businesses to implement rainwater harvesting projects to divert stormwater flow off of the streets into basins on private properties. Additionally, Silver City and partners are working to restore natural floodplains and repair natural hydrological processes. These restoration projects include removing invasive species, planting native trees and shrubs, constructing check dams to slow stormwater velocity and encourage infiltration, and building grade control structures to reconnect incised channels to the floodplain. These efforts are helping to mitigate the impacts of stormwater runoff and create a natural oasis that provides many community benefits beyond flood protection.

These riparian corridors offer many opportunities for residents to connect with nature and access natural recreation near their homes and the places they frequent. The town continues to acquire land and easements along San Vicente Creek and Pinos Altos Creek with the goal to build a continuous trail on public property and protect the riparian corridor. This trail system, while not yet complete, will provide valuable recreation opportunities while reducing flood risk to surrounding private properties. **Proactive management of the surrounding uplands is also critical to the health and function of these riparian corridors.** For example, policies that restrict yard waste disposal in the riparian areas and provide residents with access to alternative yard waste disposal are imperative to minimize impact to these waterways. It is also recommended that Silver City **update their Land Use Codes to guide sustainable development and protect watershed health.**

"There are opportunities to catch water from roads for native plants - passive rain harvesting."

-Silver City Resident



## Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) is a stormwater management approach that can help mitigate flooding issues, reduce erosion, and protect water quality and watershed health. **GSI works by directing stormwater from impervious surfaces into vegetated landscapes,** which slows the flow of water, infiltrates stormwater runoff into soils, and intercepts precipitation on leaves and branches of plants before it hits the ground. GSI features such as curb cuts, bioswales, and stormwater harvesting basins can be implemented alongside tree planting projects to catch stormwater and repurpose it for irrigation, mitigating nuisance ponding while also growing more trees and plants that provide a range of other benefits to the community.

As part of upland urban watershed management, neighborhoods near hill tops can help their downstream neighbors by practicing rainwater harvesting at their homes and businesses. Directing rainwater to landscaped basins instead of driveways and streets reduces the volume of stormwater that causes flooding in downstream communities.

Residents who participated in the community survey identified locations throughout town that would benefit from the addition of GSI. Community members suggested potential priority GSI project locations, including the area around Silver High School, the area near Jose Barrios Elementary School, the numbered streets southeast of the WNMU campus, and College Avenue intersections in downtown.

**Silver City has been a pioneer in southwestern New Mexico for the implementation of GSI features** throughout town, with several long-time GSI practitioners who actively work in the area. Johnny Banks Park, for example, is a stormwater retention feature in the Brewer Hill neighborhood that serves as an athletic field and community park when not flooded. **It is recommended that Silver City continue to integrate GSI with ongoing public urban forestry initiatives, and also encourage residents to use rainwater harvesting practices on private property.** Re-purposing stormwater to irrigate plants creates a more vibrant and beautiful town while simultaneously helping to address flooding problems.



"We have installed catch basins to capture rainwater and bring it into our yard for our trees."

-Silver City Resident

*A green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) feature with curb cut, bioswale and basins in Silver City constructed by Asher Gelbart, Green Energy Now, that will harvest rainwater to irrigate the landscape and reduce flooding in streets during storm events.*



*The mountains surrounding Silver City provide both benefits and risks.*

## Wildfire

The mountains surrounding Silver City contribute greatly to the town's beauty and character, but they also pose a wildfire risk. Fires that begin in the surrounding Gila National Forest or on nearby Bureau of Land Management lands could spread into the town's edges, particularly under hot, dry, and windy conditions. Across the western United States, wildfires are growing larger and more severe as forests and woodlands become increasingly flammable due to prolonged drought, higher temperatures, and dense vegetation.

In Silver City, prevailing winds generally blow from southwest to northeast, across Boston Hill towards Downtown. Although vegetation is relatively sparse along the town's southwest boundary, grassland fires can still move quickly across the landscape, demanding rapid response. While a fire moving directly from the Gila National Forest into town is less likely, wildfire can travel along riparian corridors, which act as natural pathways leading into Silver City's core. A worst-case scenario would involve a fire starting in Big Ditch Park or along nearby creeks, spreading north through densely vegetated channels and igniting trees and downed fuels. Such an event could have devastating consequences for homes, historic districts, local businesses, and the biodiversity of this unique riparian oasis.

The Silver City Parks Department and Fire Department collaborate closely with local conservation organizations to reduce wildfire risk. Ongoing work focuses on removing dead and downed trees, invasive species, and accumulated fuels. For example, the Gila Resources Information Project (GRIP) led a project along San Vicente Creek, from the Broadway Bridge to Mobile Drive, that reduced fuel loads by approximately 85%. The Fire Department supports these efforts and recognizes the need for continued and expanded fuel-reduction projects across the community.

The New Mexico State Forestry Division's 2020 Forest Action Plan provides valuable wildfire-planning resources, including maps showing fire probability, intensity, and conditional burn severity—a combination of fuel type and expected fire behavior. **These data highlight the need for targeted fuels management, invasive species removal, and tree density reduction in areas with moderate to high wildfire risk.**

Similarly, the 2020 Grant County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) offers localized strategies for

focusing limited resources on the most effective risk-reduction actions. Many of these wildfire-preparedness strategies overlap with community forestry best practices, such as promoting proper tree maintenance and safe debris disposal. Programs like wood-chipper services give residents an easy, fire-safe way to manage yard waste and reduce fuel buildup. **Silver City and Grant County are also encouraged to participate in the Firewise USA® Program**, which provides actionable guidance for creating defensible space around homes and businesses and for expanding the number of certified Firewise neighborhoods in the area.

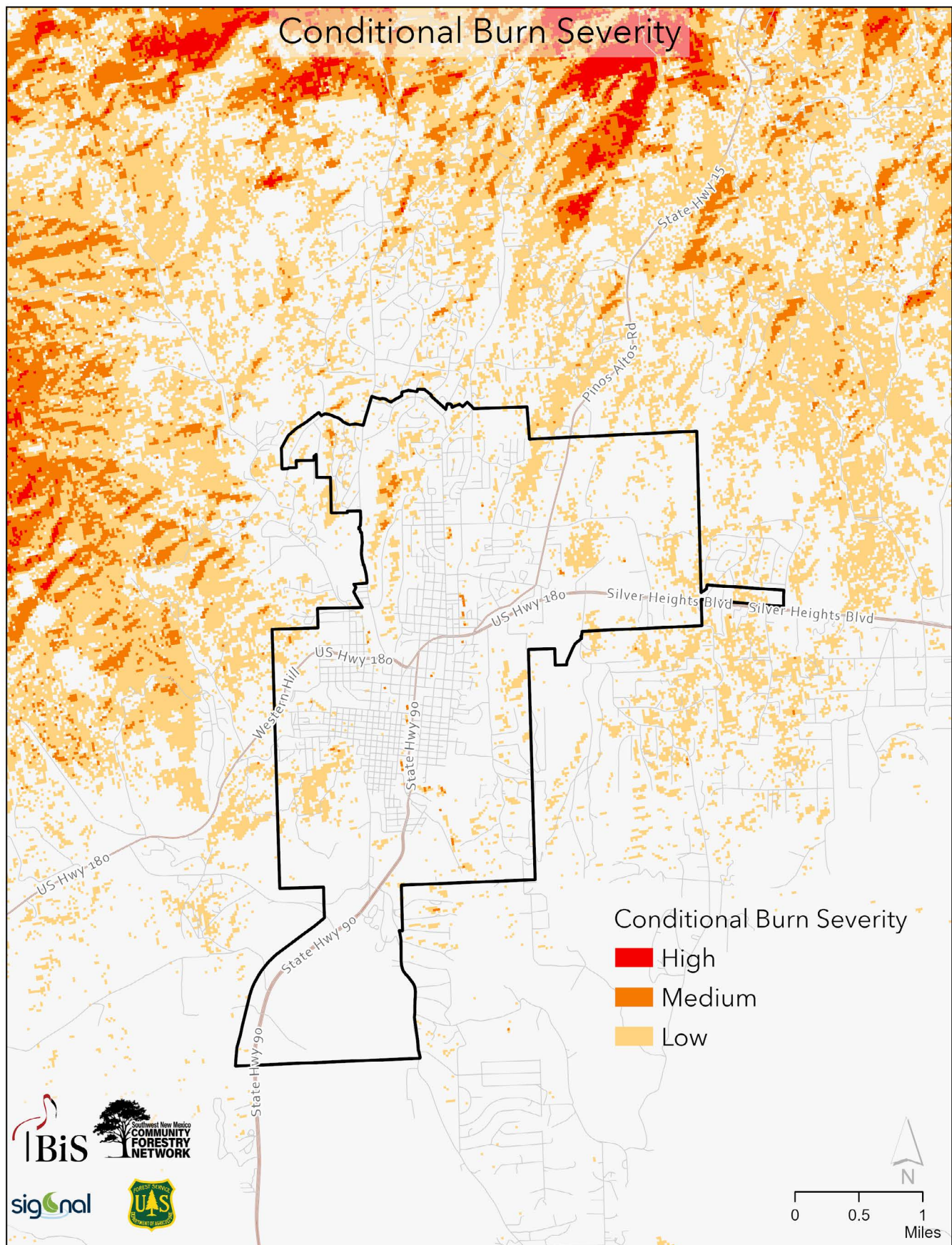
Another critical consideration in the 2020 Forest Action Plan is Post-Fire Debris Flow Probability. When intense fires burn through forested watersheds, the resulting lack of vegetation and hydrophobic soils can become the source of severe flooding and debris flows downstream during rain events. These debris flows—fast-moving mixtures of water, ash, sediment, and downed vegetation—can scour landscapes, damage infrastructure, disrupt ecosystems and threaten lives. The map illustrates areas that are at high risk of becoming the source of debris-flow material following high severity wildfires, such as Ursa Major and Pinos Altos. Implementing pre-fire forest management, including riparian restoration and erosion-control measures, can help reduce both fire intensity and post-fire flooding.

To further strengthen wildfire preparedness, **the Town of Silver City should consider developing its own Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)** that covers both the urban area and the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). A local CWPP should:

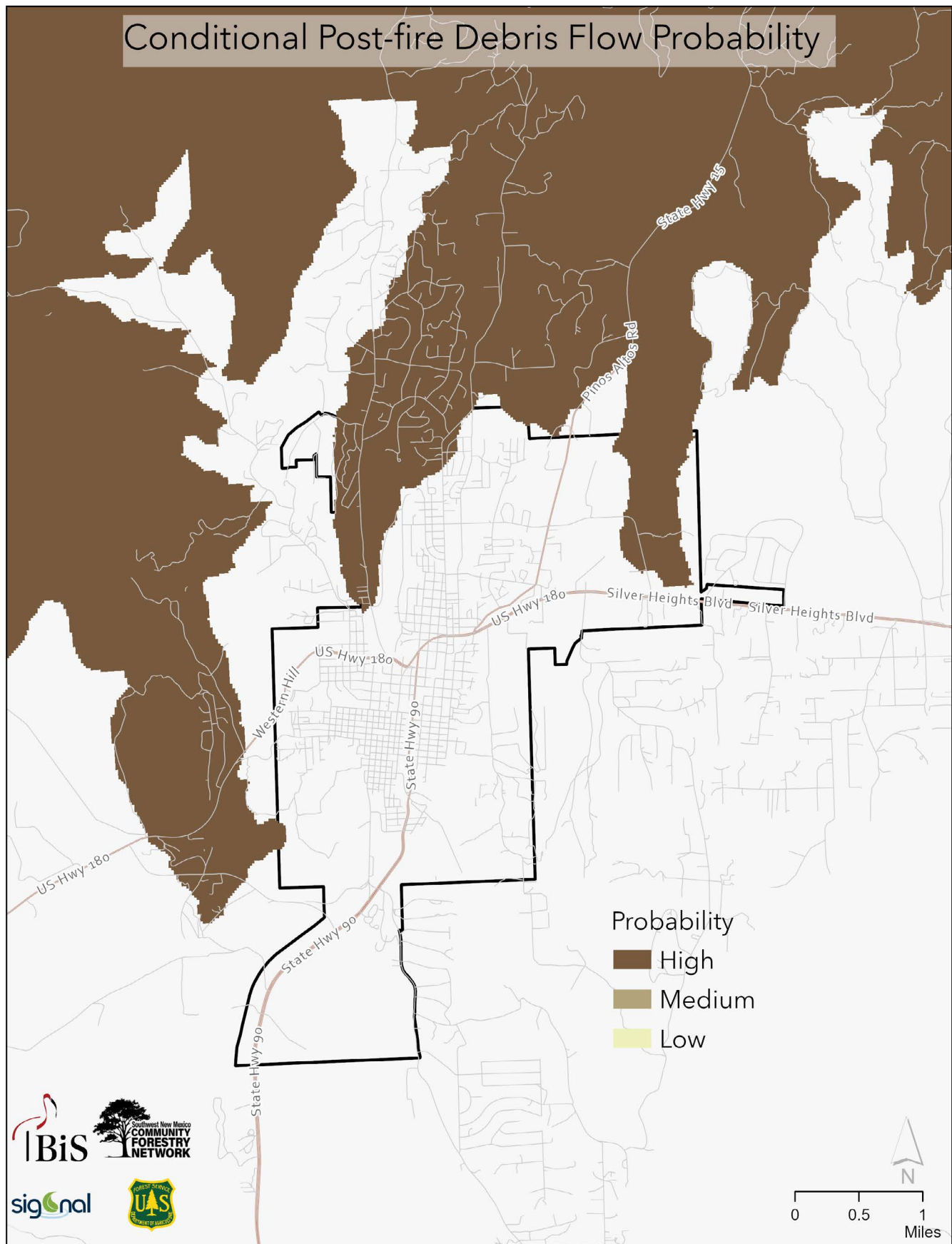
- » Define clear actions for creating defensible space around public and private structures.
- » Prioritize treatments in areas of high wildfire risk.
- » Recommend green stormwater infrastructure to reduce drought stress and vegetation flammability.
- » Support proper yard-waste disposal and community chipper programs.
- » Propose policy and land-use code updates that integrate wildfire-resilient landscaping and design.

By combining proactive forest management, community engagement, and coordinated planning, Silver City can reduce wildfire risk, protect its natural and built environments, and build long-term resilience for its residents and landscapes.





The conditional burn severity probability map for Silver City shows the probability of high severity wildfire (red), medium severity (orange) or low severity (yellow) in the event that the area burns. This model is conditional on fire intensity and fuel conditions, and actual burn severity will be influenced by the weather conditions at the time of wildfire. This model is intended to support planning efforts. Data source: New Mexico Forestry Division's 2020 Forest Action Plan.



The conditional post-fire debris flow probability map for Silver City shows areas that have a high probability of becoming the source of debris flow material downstream, if the area (indicated in brown) is burned in a high severity wildfire. Modeled debris flow hazard probabilities were mapped using models developed by the US Geological Survey (USGS) and parameterized using data originally collected for the New Mexico Forestry Division's 2020 Forest Action Plan.



## Climate

Like many southwestern communities, Silver City's precipitation is split between the winter and summer monsoonal rain events. Winters can vary from mild to cold, with occasional overnight freezing temperatures. Summer temperatures are increasingly getting warmer, edging up to the mid-90s. **The total amount of rain and snowfall has declined in recent years, leading to earlier and more intense periods of drought.** The monsoon rains, historically active in this region between July and September, help cool ambient temperatures during the heat of summer. However, monsoon patterns are becoming more variable and extreme, with periods of severe drought and intense precipitation.

Silver City isn't the only community experiencing these changes. **Average temperatures across New Mexico have increased by 2°F** since the beginning of the 20th century, causing many communities to re-examine what types of vegetation are prudent choices for new planting projects. The annual number of days reaching 100°F in New Mexico has increased from an average of 12 days (1900 - 2020) to nearly 20 days per year (2015-2021). This same pattern is seen in increasingly warm evening temperatures, with the number of nights above 70°F nearly doubling in recent decades compared to the previous century. These changes are already having an impact on the types of tree species that are able to survive and thrive in Silver City's local

"I love native plants!"

-Silver City Resident

climate conditions.

**To plan for a long-lived, resilient urban forest in Silver City, tree species selected for planting must be drought tolerant to perform well in the region's arid environment, and should be adapted to withstand the range of temperatures in the area** - both summer highs and winter lows. The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone designations help guide the selection of trees and plants that will have the best chance of succeeding in Silver City throughout their lifespan. Each Zone designation is based on the 30-year average of recorded temperatures, with an emphasis on the lower threshold of temperatures. The 2023 Hardiness Zone map classifies Silver City within Zone 7b, although a few warm winters has caused this to bounce back and forth between 7b and 8a. Trees have a multi-decade lifespan, and because the temperature is projected to increase substantially over the next several decades, it is prudent to prioritize planting tree species

*Example of a regionally appropriate, climate-resilient plant palette for Silver City.*



Arizona Ash  
*Fraxinus velutina*



Chinese Pistache  
*Pistacia chinensis*



Italian Stone Pine  
*Pinus pinea*



Eastern Red Cedar  
*Juniperus virginiana*



Evergreen Sumac  
*Rhus virens*



Texas Red Oak  
*Quercus buckleyi*



Texas Mulberry  
*Morus microphylla* var. *buckleyi*



Autumn Sage  
*Salvia greggii*



Globe Thistle  
*Echinops* spp.



Desert Four O'Clock  
*Mirabilis multiflora*



that function well in the current zone designation but will also be able to thrive under the projected zone designation of the future: 9a.

**It is recommended that Silver City adopts a diverse, regionally native-focused plant palette that is well adapted for the town’s specific climate and geography.**

As part of this project, regionally appropriate tree lists have been developed for Silver City and can be found in the Additional Resources section of this plan. Selecting species for planting projects from this recommended palette will help prepare Silver City’s community forest for a resilient future as summers become hotter and drier.

It is also worth noting that warmer temperatures and drier conditions can exacerbate the impacts of tree pests. Insect pest cycles are influenced by temperature, while tree cycles remain driven by daylight hours. As these two cycles continue to diverge, insect pests can impart damage to trees for a longer period of time and at more vulnerable times for tree health. **Developing an Integrated Pest Management Plan** in coordination with NMSU Cooperative Extension pest experts will support community forest management in Silver City by improving the effectiveness of pesticide applications, reducing waste, and improving overall community tree health.



*Native plantings with rainwater harvesting features at the Silver City Waterworks building, one of the locations of the Five Points Project.*

*Example of a regionally appropriate, climate-resilient plant palette for Silver City.*



Southern Live Oak  
*Quercus virginiana*



Thornless Honey Locust  
*Gleditsia triacanthos*



Deodar Cedar  
*Cedrus deodara*



Aleppo Pine  
*Pinus halepensis*



Arizona Rosewood  
*Vauquelinia californica*



Chaste Tree  
*Vitex agnus-castus*



New Mexico Olive  
*Forestiera pubescens*



Darcy Sage  
*Salvia darcyi*



Showy Milkweed  
*Asclepias speciosa*



Desert Zinnia  
*Zinnia acerosa*



## Land Surface Temperature

Land surface temperature refers to how hot the “surface” of the Earth feels to the touch, as opposed to the ambient air temperature. This data is collected by satellite, and so the “surface” from the satellite’s perspective could be pavement, rooftops, plant leaves, bare ground, or other surfaces. Dark surfaces such as parking lots and dark building roofs tend to be hotter than lighter colored areas, as they absorb heat from the sun and radiate it back out into the atmosphere at night.

Land surface temperature data demonstrates how hot Silver City can get, with mean surface temperatures in many parts of town reaching 113 degrees Fahrenheit or more. This level of heat can have serious human health impacts, particularly for vulnerable populations. Heat is the number one weather-related cause of death in the United States. New Mexico’s Department of Health estimates that heat related deaths will double between 2020 and 2030, based on climate models that project an increase up to 111 days of extreme heat per year (90°F or higher).

**The land surface temperature map clearly shows that areas of natural vegetation have lower surface temperatures compared to areas with more development,** illustrating that trees and other plants can help mitigate high temperatures. Cooler land surface temperatures around Silva Creek, Pinos Altos Creek, San Vicente Creek and the other naturally vegetated

areas are apparent on the map as ribbons of yellow and light orange. In contrast, the hotter areas of Silver City (appearing in red or dark orange) coincide with where there is more development and less vegetation. For example, one of the hottest areas of Silver City is at the intersection of US-180 and NM-90.

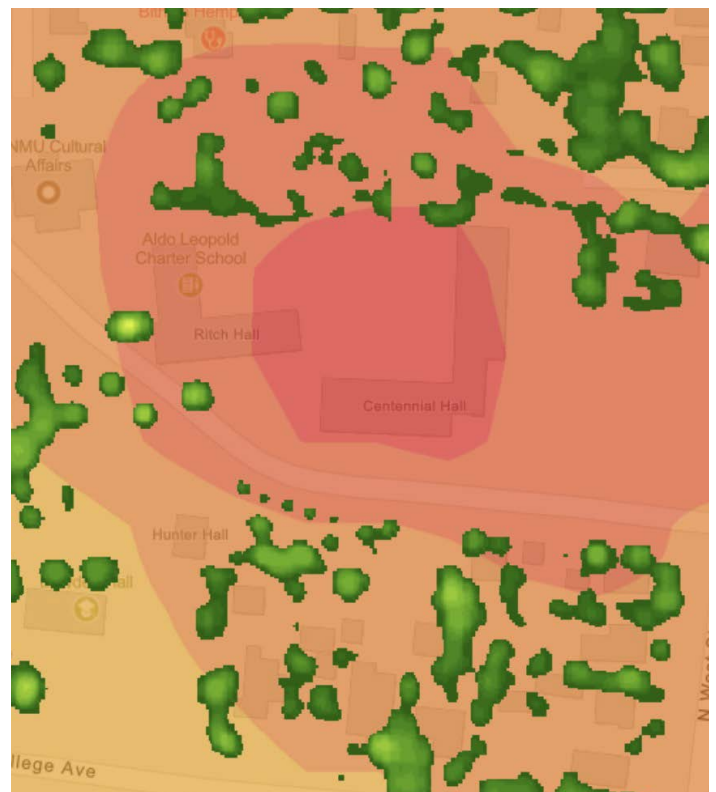
While the land surface temperature map gives a good picture of where Silver City’s “hotspots” are located, the scale of currently available satellite data is not a fine enough resolution to prioritize specific tree planting locations. However, knowing that areas with a greater amount of heat absorbing surfaces (like roadways, sidewalks, and buildings) will have higher surface temperatures indicates that **recreation areas, pedestrian walkways and bike paths should be prioritized for tree planting to help lower harmful heat levels in high-use areas.**

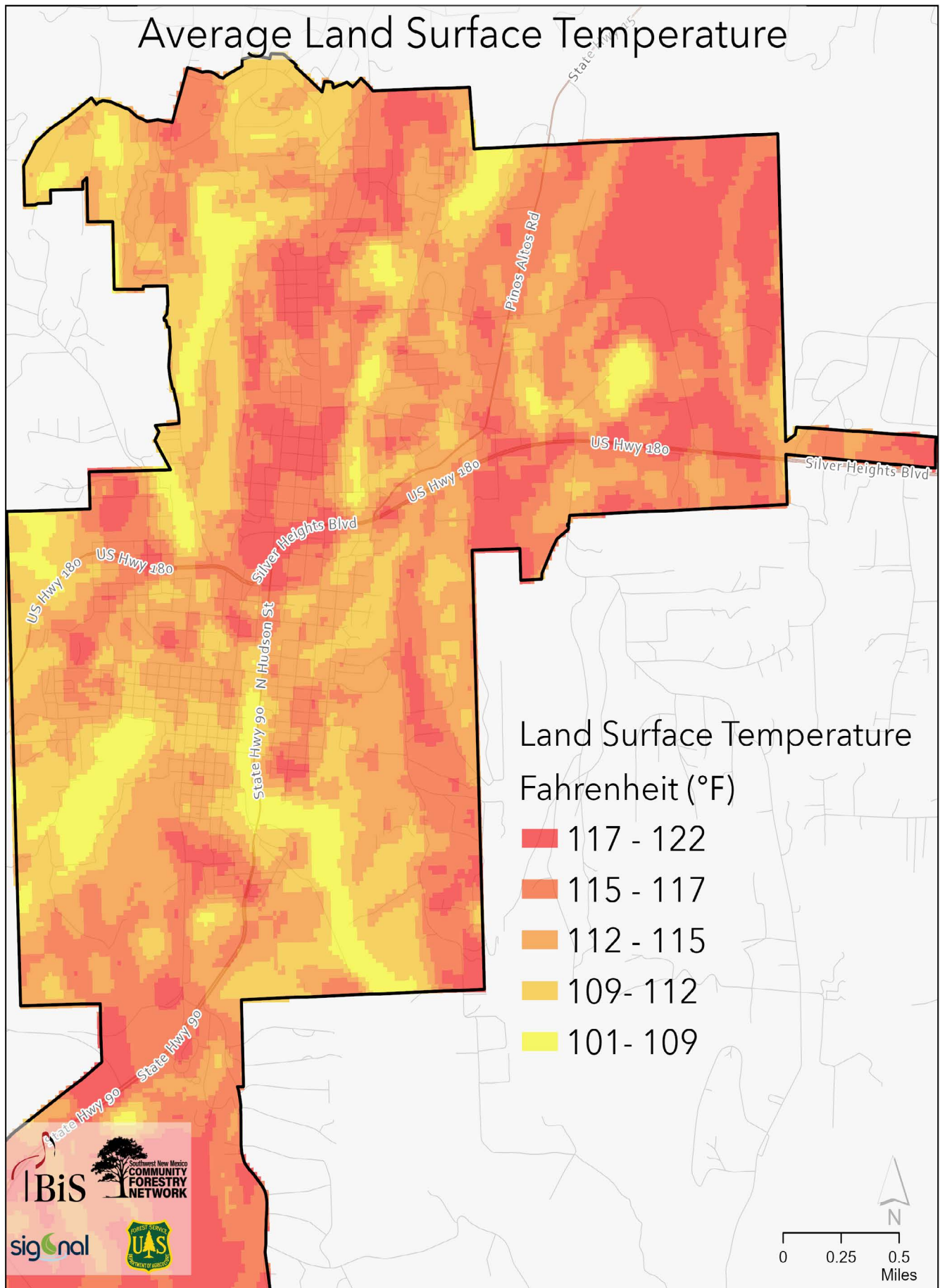
Trees and plants can help combat heat, but heat can also be extremely detrimental to tree health. Trees planted near roads, sidewalks, and other heat absorbing surfaces must survive both ambient heat and additional heat reflected from the pavement. **To help urban trees survive heat stress, Silver City should use light-colored, organic mulch materials and/or plant living ground cover around trees, in addition to providing adequate irrigation.**

"Shade is so essential here in Silver City...  
Thanks, trees!"

-Silver City Resident

*The land surface temperatures map overlaid with tree canopy shows that areas with vegetation are cooler than parking lots and buildings. This shows the “hot spot” of the solar parking structure and parking lot on the WNMU campus (visible in red), in contrast to the cooler vegetation of the campus arboretum (yellow and orange).*





This map of land surface temperatures during summer months (May through September, 2019–2024 mean values) illustrates how hot it can get in Silver City. Extreme heat can have significant human health impacts.



## Water and Irrigation

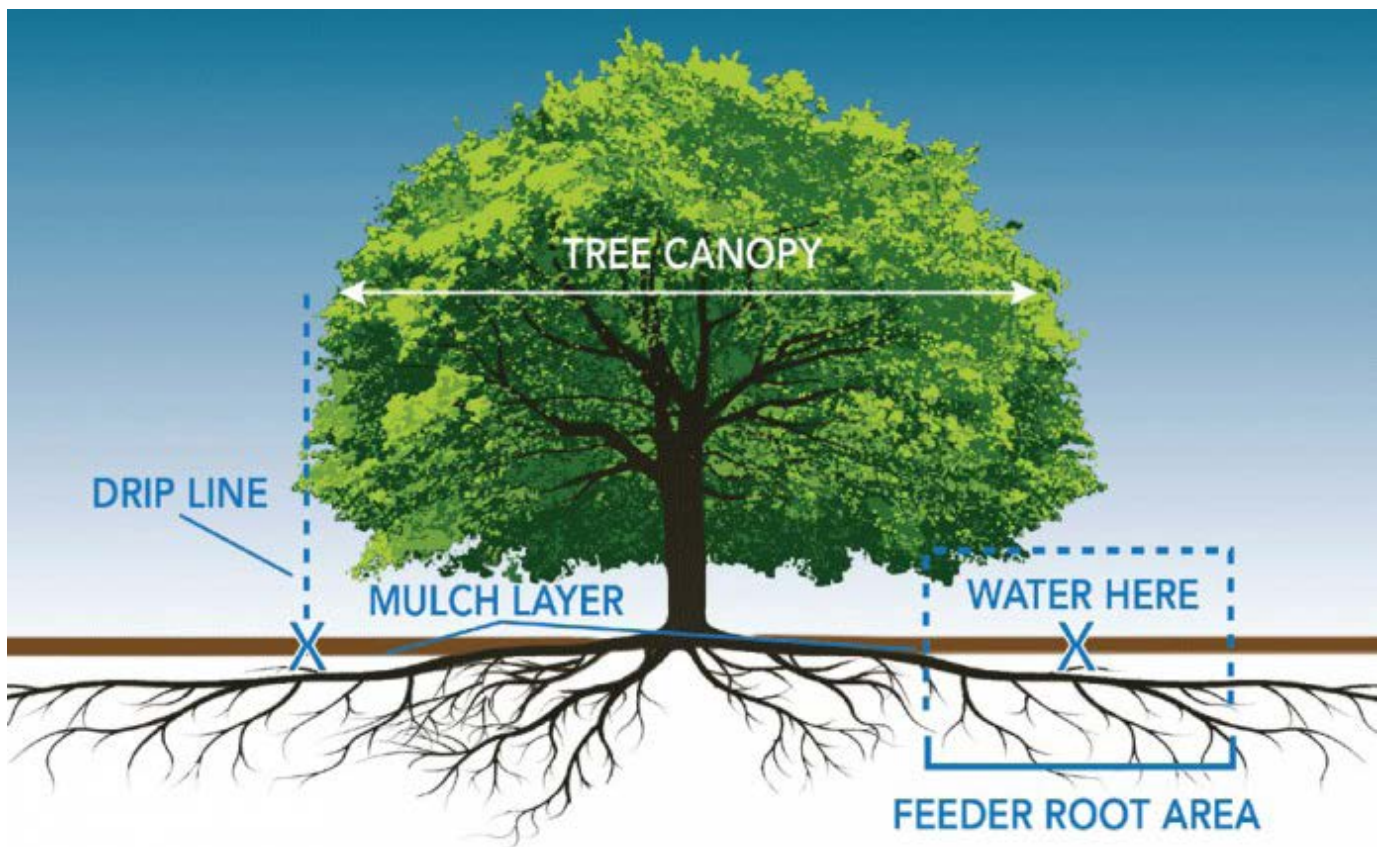
Silver City's primary source of drinking water is groundwater from the Mimbres Basin and Gila/San Francisco Basin aquifers, supplied through eight active wells located to the southwest of town. Frequent and persistent drought conditions have led to decreased groundwater recharge and increased pumping to meet residential and commercial water demands, depleting the aquifer over time. Water supply is a long-term concern for all communities in the Grant County area. While a significant decrease in per capita water use has occurred over the past decade and additional water infrastructure is planned through the Grant County Regional Water Supply Project, Silver City has little water to spare. **This requires careful planning when considering planting additional trees and plants, both at a municipal and residential scale.**

In an effort to curb drawdown of the aquifer, Silver City adopted a water conservation plan in 2010, focused mainly on water used for irrigation. The 2013 Town of Silver City Sustainability Plan 2030 also identified actions to "implement smart irrigation projects in Town parks", and to "implement rainwater and stormwater harvesting projects to water outdoor vegetation (both public and private)." There have been several

successful water conservation projects following these plans, including the installation of smart irrigation at the Ben Altamirano sports fields and the use of treated wastewater to irrigate the Scott Park Golf Course.

As Silver City works to increase its tree canopy and green space, it is important to consider these goals in the context of the region's limited water availability and water conservation goals. All trees and landscaping will need some form of irrigation throughout their lives, especially during periods of heat and drought. To conserve water resources while increasing tree canopy for maximum community benefit, it is recommended to **concentrate on increasing canopy in high use areas where people need tree canopy benefits the most**, rather than aiming to increase tree canopy across the entire town. Additionally, incorporating GSI and planting low water needs species will help to minimize watering requirements.

**Insufficient irrigation is a very common cause for poor tree health in urban areas.** Trees need slow, deep watering to saturate the soil deep into the root zone (about 18-24 inches). Trees should be watered near the canopy drip line where its fine roots are located,



*Trees take up most of their water using fine roots located at the canopy drip line. Graphic credit: Denver Water.*

## Soils

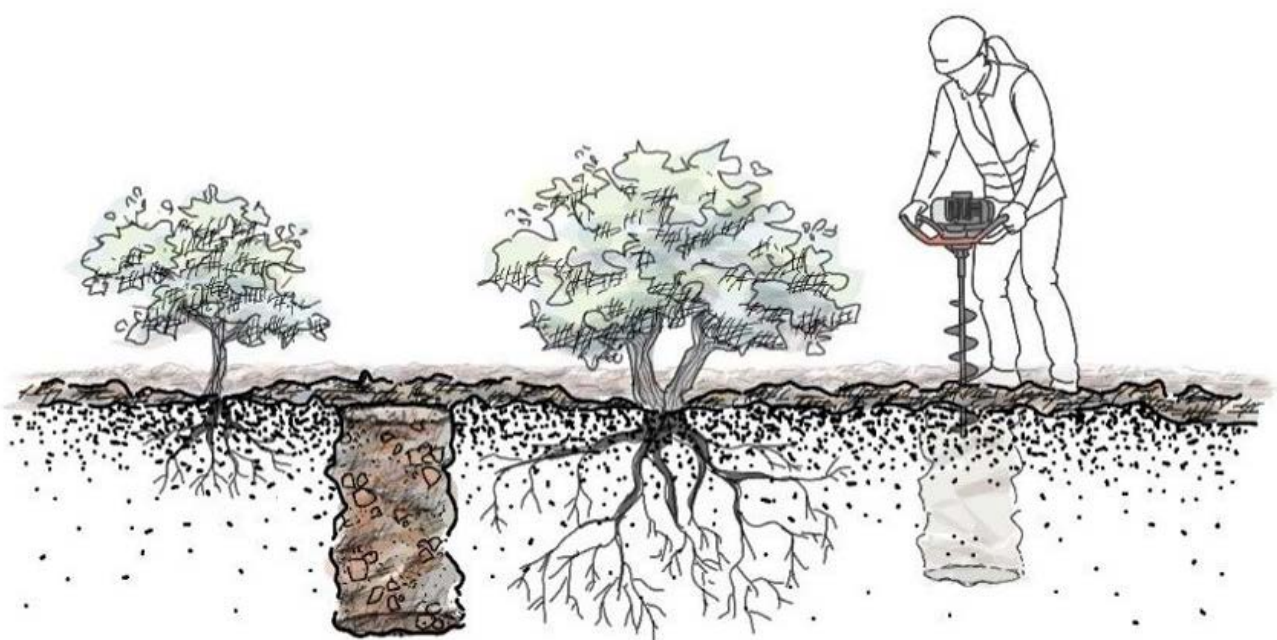
rather than at the base of the trunk. **Adding mulch rings and drip emitters around trees will reduce water loss to evaporation, and will encourage deeper watering.**

The volume and frequency required for proper tree watering is dependent on several factors, including the time of year, the age of the tree, and the tree species. Soil moisture should be monitored regularly to ensure sufficient irrigation and avoid over-watering, which can also be harmful to the tree. Relying solely on spray irrigation systems that concurrently irrigate turf grass and trees can be problematic for tree health. Grass and larger plants or trees have different watering volume and frequency needs, and grass always wins in the competition for available water, often leaving trees under-watered. As Silver City continues to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of its irrigation systems and invest in irrigation systems at new planting projects, take care to **ensure trees' watering needs are being met in the irrigation planning process, from sapling to mature tree.**

The Silver City Sustainability Plan also recommended a public education campaign regarding water conservation that includes methods for harvesting rainwater and reducing drinking water use for irrigation. As these efforts continue, **incorporate proper tree irrigation information into public education materials and outreach.** The CFN project will assist in developing these educational resources.

The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Web Soil Survey provides complex geo-referenced information about soils. The data is not precise at small municipal scales, and urban soils are often very different compared to surrounding natural areas. However, the soil survey provides useful insight into potential challenges with soil related to community forest management in Silver City.

The developed areas of Silver City are at the bottom of steep foothills and rock outcroppings. Soils in areas along the creeks are generally sandy or gravelly loam that is well draining, with a depth of two to three feet, which is good for tree planting. Some of the outer edge areas of Silver City, including Brewer Hill and Boston Hill, have rock outcroppings with only shallow soil over a hard, underlying rock layer. Large trees need at least two feet of soil to establish structural roots, and roots will not travel through hard, underlying rock. During tree planting in some areas of Silver City, **extra care may be needed to ensure there is adequate soil volume available for the tree, considering the expected mature size of the tree species being planted.** Tree roots generally extend several feet beyond the canopy drip line of the tree, and these fine roots tips are where the tree pulls in most of its water from the soil. Soil sponges, an excavated hole filled with a mix of pumice, compost, and wood chips, should be considered to improve infiltration and support tree health by storing water in the soil nearby.



*Soil sponges can help improve water infiltration and storage. Graphic credit: NMDOT GSI Maintenance Manual.*



## Tree Inventory

While citywide tree canopy cover data provides a useful overview of vegetation patterns, it does not reveal much about the health or condition of individual trees within Silver City's community forest. For instance, riparian areas may show high canopy cover, but many of those trees are less desirable invasive species. To better understand the structure, health, and management needs of the community forest, **conducting a tree inventory is an essential and widely used management tool.**

A tree inventory provides detailed data about individual trees within the community forest, which can be used to support informed decision-making, help set management priorities, and preserve institutional knowledge about tree conditions and maintenance needs—even as staff and leadership change over time.

**Tree inventory efforts can be scaled depending on the resources available and the information most needed for urban forest management.** For areas such as parks and high use public spaces, detailed information about each tree can be collected routinely to allow monitoring of tree health and maintenance needs over time. In lower priority areas, such as in parking lots or along streets, a simple "windshield" or drive-by inventory every few years may suffice. It is recommended that Silver City develop and maintain a tree inventory that includes all trees in publicly-accessed spaces managed by the town of Silver City, Grant County, WNMU, Silver City schools, and other government-managed locations to help establish and track management objectives.

As part of the development of Silver City's 2013 Community Forest Management Plan, a tree inventory was done for Town-owned properties. Individual trees were counted in twelve parks, as well as at the Murray Ryan Visitor Center, Town Pool, former Recreation Center, Museum, Library, and Golf Course, along with several street trees. This effort documented over 4,300 trees, highlighting the significant size of the Town's managed urban forest. The 2013 Plan also noted an additional inventory of 700 fruit trees on public and private lands conducted for a local gleaning program.

Since those early efforts, new digital tools have made tree inventory data collection and management more efficient. The New Mexico Forestry Division provides communities with free access to Tree Plotter, an online, map-based platform for mapping, monitoring, and managing urban trees. Tree Plotter offers a user-friendly interface and ensures consistent data collection across agencies. Data can be easily integrated with

GIS systems, supporting other municipal mapping and planning initiatives. **It is recommended that Silver City's tree inventory data be maintained and updated in Tree Plotter.**

In 2017, the New Mexico State Forestry Division, in partnership with Silver City's Office of Sustainability, used Tree Plotter to inventory 200 of the community's oldest and most historic trees, including those in Gough Park and Big Ditch Park. This dataset should be updated and integrated into ongoing inventory efforts.

The CFN project team has inventoried several additional areas in Silver City in 2024 and 2025, including Penny Park and the Grant County Convention Center, and has updated or expanded inventory data for the Murray Ryan Visitor Center and other previously inventoried areas in Tree Plotter. These efforts have largely been conducted for the purpose of identifying trees that may be in need of high priority maintenance. Additionally, the WNMU Horticultural Manager is leading a team that is working on completing an inventory of the WNMU main campus using Tree Plotter.

For each tree that was inventoried in Silver City, the following data was collected:

- » **Tree genus/species**
- » **Tree height**
- » **Tree health condition**
- » **Tree risk**

"I was part of the WNMU Horticulture Club and have planted multiple trees on campus. Every time I see them it makes my heart happy."

-Silver City Resident



An example of low tree species diversity, with many Siberian elms at Penny Park.

## Tree Genus or Species

**A diverse community forest is considered healthier compared to a forest dominated by just a few species.**

Increased biodiversity allows an ecosystem to better adapt to changing environmental conditions, maintain ecosystem functions, and provide a wide range of ecosystem services and habitat for wildlife.

Tree pests generally target trees by genus or species, and therefore having a community forest with low biodiversity makes that forest particularly vulnerable to outbreaks that could cause wide-spread tree mortality. In the field of urban forestry, a standard goal proposes that a healthy urban forest should be made up of no more than 10% of any one species, 20% of any one genus, or 30% of any family of trees. Current data in Tree Plotter for Silver City shows a diversity of over 40 species, supported by the 2013 inventory that identified 27 genera. There is a dominating presence of both Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*) and tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) in Silver City, both invasive species that are considered to be noxious weeds in New Mexico. The 2013 inventory identified 40% of Silver City's town-managed trees as Siberian elm.

An emerging alternative goal for tree diversity proposes that there should be at least three or more species in any given group of trees in a community area. Many of Silver City's inventoried public spaces meet this goal. For example, while Penny Park is dominated by rows of Siberian elm, more recent planting efforts have incorporated trees of several different species into the park's landscape.

As new planting projects are developed for Silver City's public spaces, it will be important to **diversify the tree species used, prioritizing regionally native trees while simultaneously phasing out Siberian elms**. The nursery industry is creating new hybrid elm cultivars that have the best qualities of the Siberian elm without the invasive characteristics, providing promising new options for large, low water, drought tolerant shade trees.

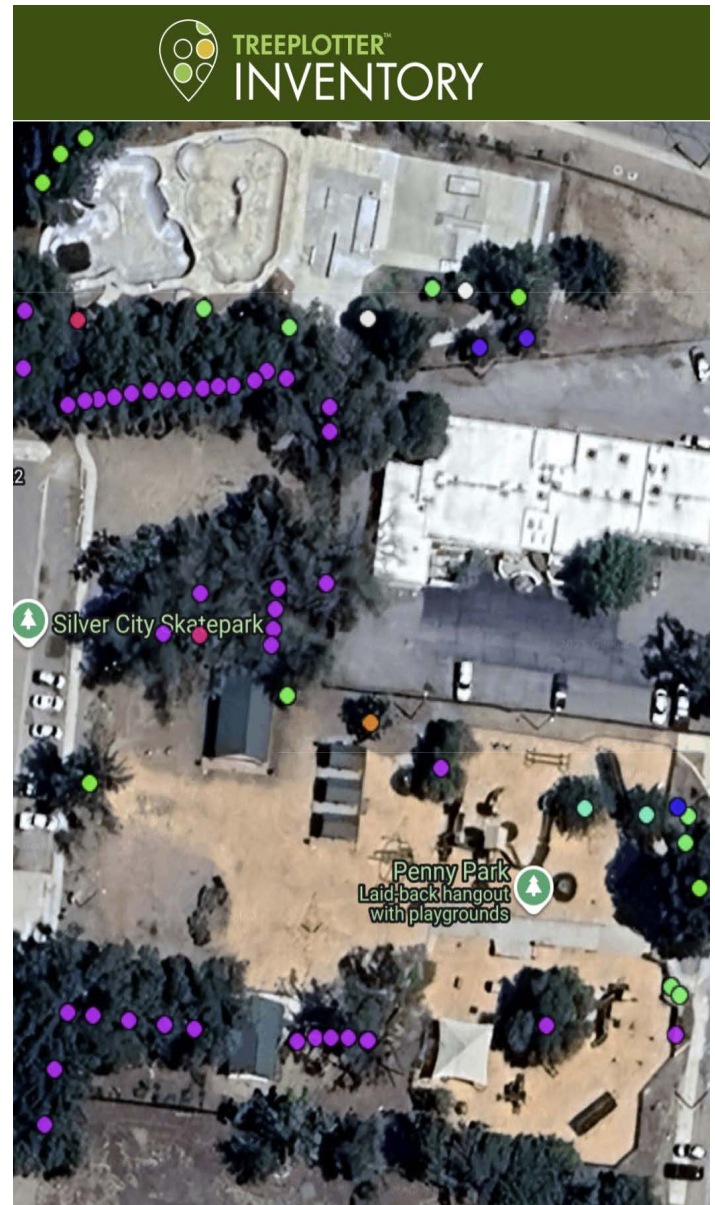
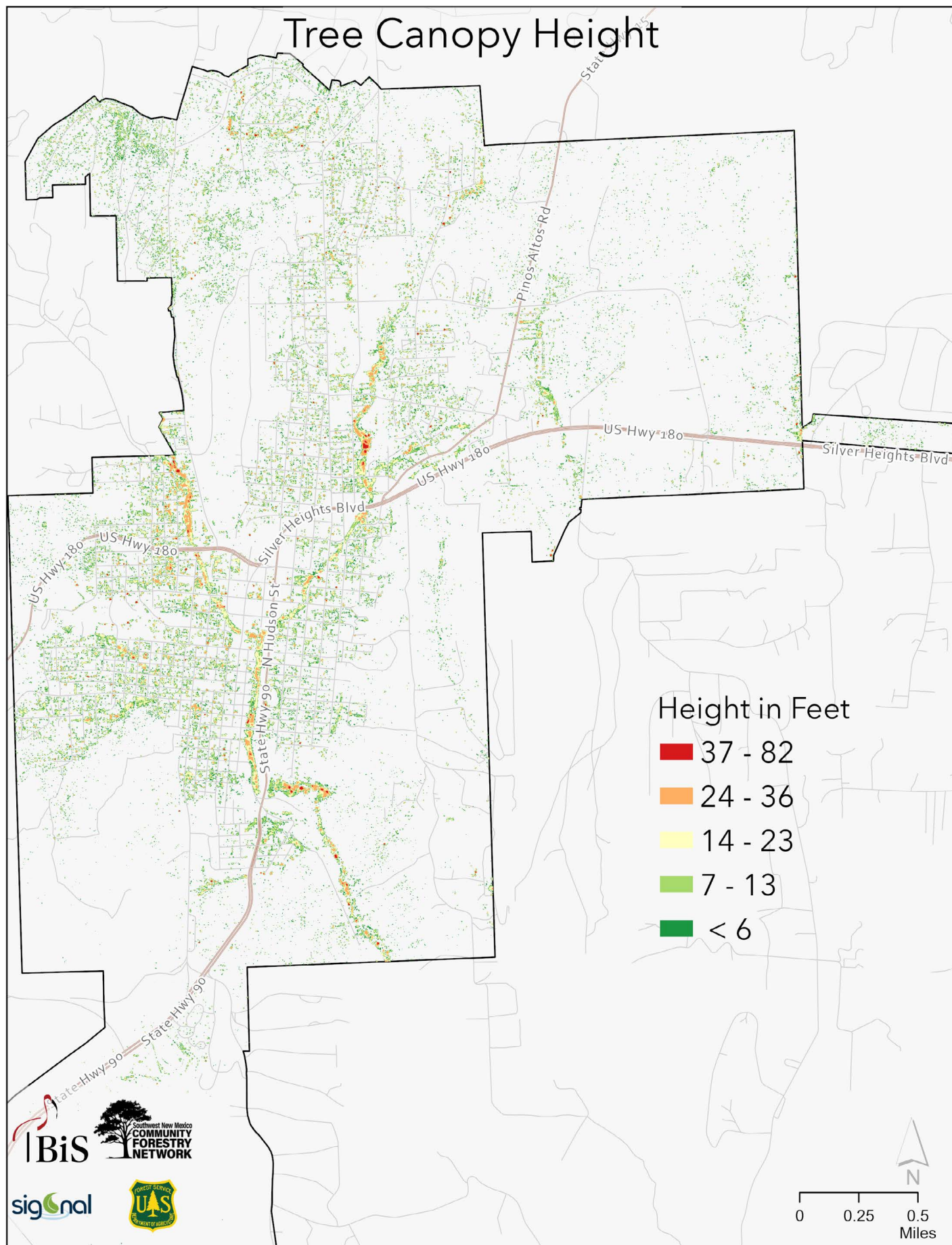


Image shows a view of Penny Park in Tree Plotter, an online software available to New Mexico communities to support tree inventory efforts. Each tree species in Penny Park is displayed in a different color, showing the many old Siberian elms (purple) and the introduction of more diverse species during recent planting efforts.





*This map of tree canopy height illustrates the distribution of canopy throughout the town and highlights that the tallest and likely oldest trees mostly occur along the creeks.*

## Tree Height

Tree height data helps assess both the risk a tree poses if it fails and provides a general indication of its age. When many trees in a community forest are of similar age, they tend to decline at the same time, leading to canopy loss. Just as species diversity strengthens a forest, **age diversity ensures consistent tree canopy cover over time.**

Satellite data shows that Silver City has a mean tree canopy height of 16.3 feet within city limits, with a maximum height of 82 feet. The tallest trees are in the downtown-adjacent neighborhoods, in the older parks, and along the creeks. The median height includes areas that are dominated by many shorter stature native trees and shrubs. This is consistent with the inventory data that shows Silver City has many large shade trees and evergreens in its older public spaces, such as the Grant County Courthouse, as well as tall trees in its riparian areas, such as Big Ditch Park. It is evident that at certain sites, many of the trees were planted at the same time. For example, the Siberian elm trees in Penny Park are all a similar height and age, and may therefore reach the natural end of their lives around the same time.

To sustain consistent canopy cover for future generations, **Silver City should apply the principle of succession planting—a long-term approach that staggers tree planting over time to create a balanced age distribution.** Regularly supplementing landscapes with new and replacement trees will ensure a resilient, multi-generational community forest rather than one dominated by a single aging cohort.



Photo shows an example of a large tree in poor health condition in Penny Park. Due to its location in a high use area, this is a high priority for maintenance to reduce risk.

## Tree Health Condition

An assessment of the health condition of individual trees gives an idea of the overall health of Silver City's urban forest. Tree Plotter uses a simple scale to evaluate tree condition:

- » *Excellent* - nothing is apparently wrong with the tree
- » *Good* - the tree has minor issues, routine monitoring and maintenance needed, with no need for immediate care
- » *Fair* - the tree has issues which will require maintenance to bring it back to good health and form
- » *Poor* - the tree has issues that will likely not be able to be corrected to bring it back to good health and form
- » *Dying/Dead*

It is important to note that in Silver City, tree conditions to date have been evaluated by a cursory visual assessment and without tree health assessment tools. Assigned conditions may not accurately reflect the actual health of individual trees. As the tree inventory is being completed, a thorough tree health assessment should be conducted to gain a more accurate understanding of Silver City's overall tree canopy health. This information should inform the development of a maintenance schedule, and support prioritization of tree replacement or succession planning. Tree Plotter can be used to keep track of specific trees in priority locations for this purpose. Additionally, these data can yield helpful information about which tree species are performing well in Silver City and which species should not be planted because they are struggling to thrive in local conditions.

## Tree Risk

Assessing tree risk is a good approach to prioritizing maintenance work in a community forest. Tree risk is a combination of tree condition, tree height/size, and potential consequences should the tree fail (such as causing injury to people or damage to utility lines, buildings/infrastructure, vehicles, etc.) Accurate individual tree risk assessments are most reliably done by qualified professionals who are trained in tree health assessment and evaluation of site conditions. **Training tree maintenance staff on basic tree risk assessment principles** will allow them to provide risk management recommendations, proactively plan the town's tree maintenance needs into the future, and identify when the help of a professional arborist may be needed.





*A volunteer planting event hosted by GRIP along San Vicente Creek demonstrates the need for community participation in the care of the community forest.*

## Community Forest Stewardship

In the context of a community forest, stewardship refers to a long-term, holistic, and collaborative approach to managing urban trees and green spaces. Community forest stewardship integrates environmental, social, and economic goals to ensure that both current residents and future generations can continue to benefit from the presence of trees within their community.

Within Silver City's community forest, there are a wide variety of **distinct landscape types, referred to in the plan as "Stewardship Areas", that each require nuanced management considerations**. Each Stewardship Area exhibits differences in the compositions of native, invasive, and intentionally planted vegetation; the entities responsible for management; the approach to how management goals and priorities are set and accomplished; the primary benefits, functions or uses the landscape is being managed for; the policies and processes that govern the landscape, and; the infrastructure that may be present, such as irrigation, GSI, streets, and sidewalks.

To inform effective management recommendations the town's landscapes have been organized into five primary Stewardship Areas:

1. **Residential Neighborhoods**
2. **Arts, Culture, and Tourism**
3. **Community Services and Athletic Facilities**
4. **Urban Corridors**
5. **Natural Landscapes and Open Space**

The following sections provide detailed discussions of each Stewardship Area, outlining general management considerations as well as site-specific recommendations. While certain sites may be relevant to multiple Stewardship Areas, each has been assigned to the one that most closely reflects its primary use or management focus. For example, Big Ditch Park is a riparian corridor within a residential area and it is also a cultural landmark. For the purposes of this plan, Big Ditch Park is addressed in the Arts, Culture, and Tourism section, recognizing its significance as a valued cultural and community asset.

Organizing landscapes in Silver City by Stewardship Area helps to answer the following guiding questions at a finer scale and produce the strategic recommendations featured in the *Action Plan* section of this document.

- » What does this Stewardship Area have?
- » What are Silver City's goals for this Stewardship Area?
- » How can Silver City's community forestry goals for this Stewardship Area be achieved?

*"I have a deep appreciation for trees."*

-Silver City Resident

## Stewardship Area: Residential Neighborhoods

Silver City's community forest plays a vital role in enhancing quality of life within residential neighborhoods. The presence of trees and green spaces contribute to creating neighborhoods that feel safer, more welcoming and more livable. **Research shows that residents are more likely to spend time in public spaces with trees and vegetation, and that access to green space is linked to a stronger sense of safety, community pride, and social connection.** Neighborhood green spaces foster opportunities for positive, meaningful interactions among neighbors by creating inviting places for people to relax, gather with friends and family, and enjoy a connection to nature. In this way, the community forest strengthens social cohesion and supports a sense of belonging throughout Silver City's neighborhoods.

The trees in neighborhoods are primarily managed by residents, for the benefit of residents. Municipal involvement in tree management in residential areas is often influenced by community feedback and leadership decisions, but it is essential to ensure that management efforts are equitable. A key goal of stewardship in residential areas is to determine whether all residents—regardless of neighborhood—have equitable access to the benefits provided by the community forest. Assessing tree canopy coverage across neighborhoods can help identify disparities and guide strategies to achieve a more balanced and inclusive urban forest.

Successful community forest initiatives in residential areas depend on clear, proactive communication and public engagement. Sharing timely information about tree maintenance activities, planting programs, and care recommendations empowers residents to participate in sustaining the urban forest. Providing educational materials about proper tree care, suitable tree species for private yards, and long-term maintenance practices can further strengthen neighborhood canopy health. **Establishing a simple, accessible reporting mechanism—such as a 311 system or online platform—would allow residents to easily submit tree-related concerns or requests,** improving responsiveness and trust between the community and town staff.

The Residential Neighborhood Stewardship Area includes a discussion of parks, community gardens, elementary schools, street trees and residential yards. The following sections expand upon the management priorities for each of these unique landscape types that contribute to the overall community forest in Silver City.

### Relevant Landscape Types:

- Parks
- Community Gardens
- Neighborhood Street Trees
- Residential Yards
- Elementary Schools

### Primary Tree Benefits:

- Sense of Place and Community
- Shade, Cooling, Air Quality
- Mental Health, Nature Connection
- Property Value, Energy Savings
- Wind and Visual Blocking

### Management Influences:

- Equity
- Town Leadership
- Community Member Input

### Management Goals:

- Liveability, Beautification
- Safety
- Connectivity, Walkability



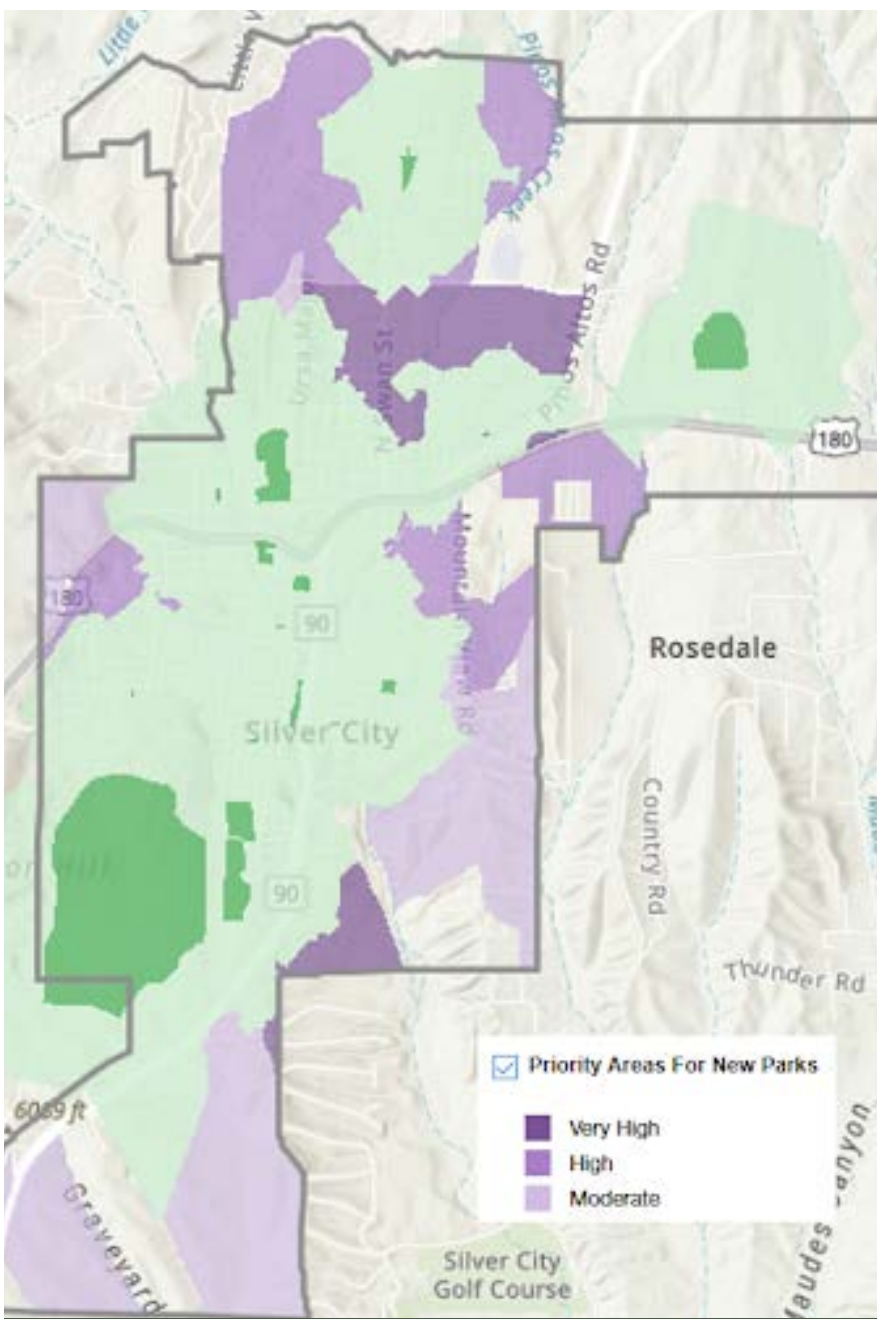


## Parks

Parks provide essential oases in urban environments, offering recreation opportunities and community gathering spaces while also providing valuable tree canopy, wildlife habitat and shade. For many residents, parks are the most direct way to experience trees and nature close to home. A widely recognized standard, promoted by the National Parks and Recreation Association, is for all residents to live within a 10-minute walk (roughly half-mile) of a quality park. Silver City faces unique challenges in meeting this goal, as the town's original grid was not designed with parks in mind (2017 Silver City Comprehensive Plan). Even so, the community has made significant progress in developing parks throughout town, while other landscapes, such as

the Western New Mexico University campus, provide additional park-like spaces that benefit residents.

The Trust for Public Land's ParkScore® tool, which maps park access in urban areas nationwide, provides data that can be used to improve park equity in Silver City. While the data is somewhat skewed by the inclusion of the Silver City ballpark (a facility that functions differently from a neighborhood park) and inconsistencies in how certain open spaces are counted, the tool estimates that about **67% of Silver City residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park**. The tool also highlights priority areas where access to parks remains more limited and where future investment could be most impactful.



"My children love the trees at Gough Park. They get exercise, fresh air, and imaginative play by interacting with the trees, leaves, sticks, and flowers."

-Silver City Resident

The Trust for Public Land's online ParkScore® tool, pictured here, identifies 15 spaces in dark green as parks for Silver City. Areas with darker purple are considered higher priority for park development.



*Gough Park is the gem of Silver City's parks system and an important central location for local events and visitors to enjoy.*

### **Park Maintenance and Irrigation**

Many of Silver City's parks are older, established parks with large trees that require ongoing monitoring and care. Because residents are encouraged to use parks they should always be safe community forest spaces. **Parks are a high priority for tree pruning and when necessary, tree removal, due to their high use and human risk potential.** Park trees are also the highest priority for tree inventories, so that their condition and maintenance needs are routinely monitored and addressed.

Most parks combine turf grass and trees within the same irrigated landscapes, which can create maintenance and tree care challenges. Improper mowing or weed trimming can cause serious damage to tree trunks and roots if they are struck or cut by mechanical equipment. Severe or frequent mechanical damage can interrupt the flow of water and nutrients within the tree and cause other issues that can result in tree death or decline. A simple and yet critical way to protect existing trees is to **train park maintenance staff in these basic tree care principles to raise awareness and reduce accidental damage to trees during routine mowing and maintenance.** Additionally, using rings of organic mulch around trees and plants (minimum 3 foot radius) serves as a barrier and helps protect them from mechanical damage from mowing, with the added benefit of promoting soil health and water infiltration. Organic mulch allows nutrients and water to seep into the soil slowly and to be held longer where they are available for uptake by tree roots.

To support the long term health of trees in the town's parks and other public spaces, Silver City should continue efforts to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of its irrigation systems. This includes evaluation of the function of current systems on a regular schedule,

addressing maintenance needs promptly or proactively, and investing in water-efficient irrigation systems at new planting projects. Areas with existing irrigation systems may benefit from expanding and adjusting the spray or drip zones, and ineffective nozzle spray heads should be replaced. To support this effort, **it is recommended that Silver City establish irrigation standards** in their community forest management program so that all irrigation infrastructure is the same, simplifying irrigation system maintenance and minimizing staff time required.

Urban parks are also used by transient populations seeking shade, rest, and safety. While this reflects the importance of parks as community refuges, it can also create unique maintenance challenges for vegetation and trees. Park staff are often on the front lines of addressing these issues, and their experience provides valuable insight. Recognizing these challenges and including park staff in broader discussions around community and social needs will help ensure that both people and trees are supported.

### **Silver City: A Town of Neighborhoods**

"One of Silver City's strengths has been and should continue to be its neighborhoods, and public policy and planning efforts should continue to support strong neighborhoods."

*- Silver City Comprehensive Plan (2017)*





*Renderings of imagined improvements to the entrance and west-side of Penny Park, adding grassy areas for picnicking and new shade trees to replace the Siberian elms in poor health. Renderings by Anthropopulus Design + Planning.*





## Community Gardens

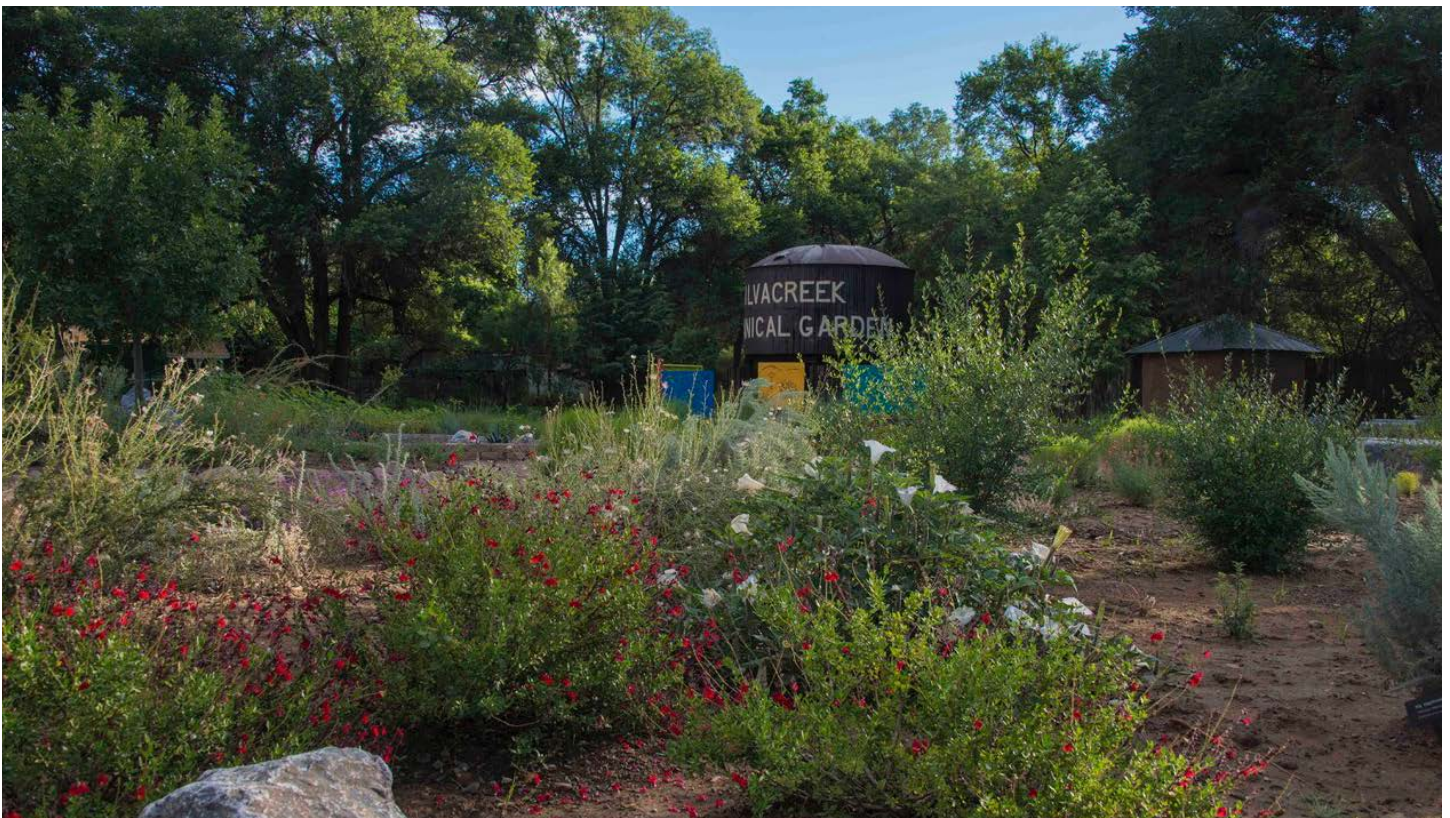
The Town of Silver City and Grant County have a strong network of community organizations focused on anti-hunger activism, which has inspired local initiatives such as a fruit tree mapping project and establishment of an orchard near Gough Park. The Grant County Community Health Council and Western New Mexico University's Natural Sciences Department were both key partners in these efforts (2013 Silver City Urban Forest Management Plan). While they certainly provide benefits to the communities, food trees can also be challenging for municipalities to manage in public spaces due to fruit fall, additional maintenance needs, and the sometimes-unwanted attraction of pollinators to recreational spaces. **Supporting non-profits and other entities to expand and develop orchards and food trees in appropriate locations** helps alleviate food access issues, but also contributes to the community forest as a whole, providing cooling and air quality benefits. New Mexico State University's Cooperative Extension program has numerous resources for how to effectively grow and manage food trees.

The Town of Silver City owns the Silva Creek Botanical Garden, which is managed by the Gila Native Plant Society and maintained by volunteers. This space is an excellent resource for education of both Silver City residents and visitors, and provides a connection between several

other green spaces in town. The botanical garden provides an opportunity to communicate the value of the community forest and native tree species in improving habitat and biodiversity.

**Supporting urban wildlife habitat and biodiversity is of great importance for residents in Silver City**, with 60% of public survey participants indicating that this is one of the benefits of the urban forest that they value the most. Community trees not only enhance the quality of life for humans but also serve as vital habitats for diverse native wildlife, including birds, beneficial insects, and small mammals. Planning for a community forest with an abundance and variety of native species can support biodiversity in Silver City by creating nesting sites, food sources, and corridors for wildlife to thrive.

Selecting native trees and plants for landscaping projects also supports water conservation efforts. These desert-adapted plants are drought tolerant and well suited to prosper in local climatic conditions and will therefore require less irrigation, helping to conserve water in underground aquifers. The presence of tree and plant roots also helps water infiltrate better where it can be stored in the soil, which can contribute to improved water quality, soil health and overall watershed health.



*Silva Creek Botanic Garden is an important native plant education center and provides a connection between neighborhoods and recreation trails along the creek and the Waterworks Building. Image Credit: Silva Creek Botanic Garden.*



## Elementary Schools

Elementary schools are important neighborhood focal points and can provide vital outdoor learning and recreational space for children. Shade trees in these spaces make play and outdoor learning more pleasant and provide sun protection. Additionally, **research has shown that children who can see trees and plants outside school windows have better focus, and score higher on standardized tests.**

GW Stout Elementary School has interior campus trees, but would benefit from streetscaping to reduce campus temperatures and create walkable paths to school. Harrison Schmitt Elementary School is surrounded by natural vegetation and established evergreen trees that work as windbreaks. The interior of the school campus would benefit from deciduous tree planting and ground cover to shade and cool play areas, and the school has expressed interest in developing a food forest. 6th Street Elementary and Jose Barrios Elementary Schools are identified for closure, although alternative plans are currently being discussed.

Elementary school grounds fall under the jurisdiction of the New Mexico Public Schools Facility Authority (NMPSFA). Any proposed tree planting or landscaping should be coordinated with NMPSFA to align with their existing plans and funding priorities. If a project is planned but lacks near-term funding, community groups could organize a temporary planting effort, with support from the CFN, understanding that trees may be replaced in future upgrades. To ensure long-term success, newly planted trees must receive regular maintenance and irrigation. **Involving school staff in CFN training opportunities can further support proper tree care and foster ongoing stewardship on school grounds.**

## Neighborhood Street Trees

**Creating safe and shaded walkways to access parks, community gardens, and elementary schools is important to support healthy neighborhoods.** Of Silver City community members responding to the survey, mitigating pedestrian heat was the top priority at 72%. The National Parks and Recreation Association's "Safe Routes to Parks: Improving Access to Parks through Walkability" outlines steps to make parks more accessible. Urban trees can assist in these efforts when planted along sidewalks, as they can provide traffic calming, cooling shade, and mitigation of vehicle-caused air pollution.

Silver City currently lacks a comprehensive street tree program. According to the 2013 Urban Forest Management Plan, the only town-managed street trees are located along the 6th Street Elementary streetscape. In contrast, Western New Mexico University (WNMU) maintains a strong street tree presence along the perimeter of its campus.

Street trees present unique management challenges, such as limited planting space, soil compaction, and visibility or safety concern. They also provide substantial benefits, including shade, aesthetic enhancement, and improved walkability. When paired with green stormwater infrastructure (GSI), streetscapes can also help manage localized flooding.

To strengthen its community forest, the Town of Silver City should consider **conducting a walkability analysis linking neighborhoods to parks and schools, assessing rights-of-way along key corridors, and initiating a**



*Neighborwoods is a Tree New Mexico residential tree planting program that is expanding statewide. Silver City hosted its first tree giveaways as part of this program expansion in fall of 2025. Image Credit: Tree New Mexico*



**formal street tree program.** Initial efforts could focus on corridors already prioritized for sidewalk and drainage improvements in the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP).

Trees and plants can help combat heat, but heat can also be extremely detrimental to tree health. Trees planted near roads, sidewalks, and other heat absorbing surfaces must survive both ambient heat and additional heat reflected from the pavement. Using light-colored, organic mulch materials and/or planting living ground cover around trees, and providing adequate irrigation, are key to helping trees survive heat stress.

"Trees offer the mind a refreshing attitude."

-Silver City Resident

## **Residential Yards**

Excluding open space, approximately one quarter of Silver City's land area is residential, which means **residential trees are a significant contributor to the community forest and the overall benefits it can provide.** Trees in private yards provides cooling and improved air quality benefits to the whole community—two of the top benefits identified in the community survey as important benefits of the urban forest. **Encouraging residents to maintain and plant trees on their property will expand Silver City's community forest much more than the Town can do on its own.**

Silver City can encourage residents to connect with CFN partners and help provide them access to educational resources about tree care and irrigation, and connect them to tree planting opportunities. Residents can also be encouraged to install rainwater harvesting features on their properties to help reduce stormwater runoff and provide supplemental irrigation for residential landscapes, reducing the use of drinking water for outdoor use. This engagement may also result in establishing a cohort of volunteers that can support maintenance of public landscapes and help implement Silver City's community forest management plan.

Residential properties can also play an important role in stormwater management through rainwater harvesting practices. Roof and driveway runoff from private residences that can be diverted to the landscape instead

of the street, particularly at the top of the hills, results in less stormwater collecting at low elevations in town, lessening the need for further investment in stormwater sewer systems. Water captured in the landscape or in rain barrels can be used to water outdoor landscaping, particularly trees and other native plants. Educating residential landowners about rainwater harvesting can not only result in lesser strain on town stormwater infrastructure, but help irrigate the community forest.

Beyond single-family homes, multi-family housing complexes also represent important opportunities for community forest enhancement. While commercial developments are typically subject to landscaping requirements, many government-subsidized housing complexes lack similar standards. Integrating trees and other vegetation into these spaces can provide shade, improve aesthetics, and create more comfortable outdoor environments. Planting efforts in these areas can support children's play spaces and shade pedestrian and bicycle corridors, strengthening neighborhood connectivity and quality of life.

Finally, fostering resident involvement can build a culture of shared stewardship. Community engagement may inspire volunteers to form a Tree Board or neighborhood stewardship group to assist with public landscape maintenance and help implement the goals in this plan.

## **Fire Preparedness**

In several neighborhoods in Silver City, particularly those along creek corridors and in the foothills approaching the mountains, wildfire risk represents one of the most significant challenges to the urban forest. Dense vegetation near homes increases the potential for wildfire to spread to structures, elevating the risk of catastrophic loss and community-wide emergencies.

To address this concern, **it is essential to implement the recommendations outlined in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).** Key actions include organizing and promoting neighborhood yard waste chipping days to support residents in reducing hazardous vegetation and maintaining defensible space around homes. Additionally, Silver City should work to expand participation in the Firewise® USA program, encouraging more neighborhoods to become officially recognized as Firewise® sites. This designation reflects a collective commitment to proactive wildfire preparedness and community resilience, emphasizing collaboration among residents, local agencies, and partners to reduce wildfire risk and protect lives, property, and the community forest.

## Stewardship Area: Arts, Culture and Tourism

The community forest is an important component of what gives character to Silver City's arts, culture, and tourism districts, and should be integrated into future initiatives. Silver City's "legacy" trees, documented in the 2013 Silver City Community Forest Management Plan, hold stories of the development and history of the town decades ago. The trees and landscapes surrounding Silver City's cultural buildings are key to the aesthetic of these important cultural sites, while also offering economic benefits to this small community. **Studies have shown that the presence of trees attracts more visitors, encourages them to stay longer, and increases foot traffic for local businesses, ultimately promoting economic development and tourism.**

The trees and landscape types included in this Stewardship Area benefit both residents and visitors, but they are managed with the intent to establish Silver City's public facing image and distinct sense of place. Aesthetics, community character, and cleanliness are key management priorities, and these landscapes often contain unique components requiring specialized care (e.g., pollinator gardens). Municipal management priorities are informed by leaders of arts, culture and tourism organizations and business owners.

**The Silver City MainStreet organization is the key partner for this Stewardship Area.** This New Mexico state-sponsored organization is "committed to working with our community to foster economic development in our historic downtown," including the management of the Murray Ryan Visitor Center. There are several additional volunteer, non-profit, and business partners that participate in management of the trees and vegetation in this Stewardship Area. Establishing two-way communication channels with partners, defining responsibilities, and setting clear expectations are paramount for the success of these relationships and the health of the community forest.

The Arts, Culture and Tourism Stewardship Area includes a discussion of the downtown core, historic districts, historic landscapes including La Capilla Chapel and the Waterworks building, and various cultural and tourism sites such as Big Ditch Park, the Visitor Center, the Museum and the Library. The following sections expand upon the management priorities for each of these unique landscape types that contribute to the overall community forest in Silver City.

### Relevant Landscape Types:

- Historic Downtown
- Big Ditch Park
- Pocket Parks
- Historic Properties

### Primary Tree Benefits:

- Aesthetics, Sense of Place
- Shade, Heat Mitigation
- Attracting & Retaining Visitors
- Connectivity, Walkability

### Management Influences:

- Community Image
- Local Arts & Culture Orgs.
- Local Business Leaders

### Management Goals:

- Beautification, Tourism
- Community Character
- Cleanliness







Big Ditch Park is an important cultural and ecological landmark in Silver City's Historic Downtown, loved and visited by locals and visitors alike.

"Big Ditch Park is a great space downtown. It would be even more inviting if the landscape was cleaned up and maintained."

-Silver City Resident

### ***Mission Statement for the Silver City Arts and Cultural District***

*"The Silver City Arts and Cultural District is a distinctive area in Silver City where historic architecture, an excellent eclectic mix of design, niche businesses, and a concentration of artistic and cultural activities foster civic pride, provide opportunities for local creative enterprise, and contribute to a unique, authentic, and stimulating experience for residents and visitors."*

### **Big Ditch Park**

Big Ditch Park is one of Silver City's most complex forest management sites. Located along San Vicente Creek between Broadway and College Avenue, the park's steep slopes, rock walls, and footbridges make access and maintenance challenging. While native cottonwoods remain, they are declining due to reduced flows and a lower water table. Invasive Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*) and tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) now dominate parts of the canopy, creating risks of falling limbs and potential wildfire spread to nearby structures.

Big Ditch Park is a popular destination for residents and visitors, featuring connected trails, footbridges, and amenities such as benches and picnic areas that encourage recreation and enjoyment along San Vicente Creek. The 2013 Greenways and Big Ditch Master Plan has identified improvements focused on trail connectivity and amenities. This attention, management approach, and promotion of the space communicate to the public that this is a managed and safe space for people to be.

**Tree risk in Big Ditch Park must be managed at the highest level,** on par with other parks in town.

Steep terrain and limited access complicate maintenance efforts. Ongoing risk management should involve close coordination between Parks staff, the Town's on-call arborist, and the Silver City Fire Department or wildland firefighters. The Town should establish a dedicated annual budget for tree risk mitigation in Big Ditch Park and pursue grant funding related to economic development, tourism, or wildfire prevention to supplement these efforts.



**The trees in Big Ditch Park should be monitored at least twice annually by staff trained in basic tree risk assessment.** Highest priority should go to removing dead limbs over trails and amenities and addressing trees near structures. Once immediate hazards are mitigated, invasive species should be gradually removed to prevent regeneration. Invasive tree control must be an ongoing effort, focusing on early removal of Siberian elm and tree-of-heaven seedlings before they mature.

Replacement planting of trees also needs to be planned and executed annually. Because Big Ditch Park is in a riparian channel, planting only native species is preferable. Unfortunately, the native cottonwoods are not good replacement species, due to the considerably lower available water in the creek. Tree and shrub species generally suited for GSI—those that can withstand drought conditions with intermittent flooding—will be better suited for success in this location. Because of these fundamental changes in the ecosystem, Big Ditch Park may transition over time to a very different look, with shorter stature trees and shrubs.

## Visitor's Center

The Murray Ryan Visitor Center facility is managed by Silver City MainStreet, but landscaping and tree maintenance are performed by Silver City Parks staff. The building is surrounded by sidewalks and curated landscaping with trees, shrubs, and flowers. A paved and lighted walking path behind the building connects pedestrians from East Broadway to the southernmost entrance to Big Ditch Park. The building and parking lot is separated from Hudson Street (NM-90) by a streetscape with street trees along Hudson Street. This streetscape leads to a small landscape surrounding the historic Billy the Kid homesite at the corner of Hudson and Broadway.

The trees and landscaping at the Visitor Center were planted during the startup of the center. Some of the trees along the road and sidewalk were planted with insufficient root space for their species at a mature size, which has ultimately lead to their demise. Additionally, the drip irrigation system has not been expanded with the growth of the trees. While the trees performed relatively well for a period, these fundamental issues caught up with them and they showed severe signs of stress, necessitating their removal. Carefully considering



*Rendering of imagined improvements to the Silver City Visitor Center along Hudson St., revitalizing the streetscape with new trees and understory plants. Renderings by Anthropopulus Design + Planning.*





*Rendering of imagined landscape improvements along the walkway between Big Ditch Park and the Silver City Visitor Center, managed in collaboration with Silver City MainStreet. Renderings by Anthropopolus Design + Planning.*

species at their mature size and expanding drip irrigation as they grow will help ensure long term viability for the replacement landscape.

The Visitor Center area also has native flower and small shrub landscaping, which can get weedy without proper care. The Silver City Parks staff that maintain the area have not had training on how to maintain this landscape and its special needs. It is recommended that **Silver City MainStreet work to develop a detailed landscape maintenance plan for the Visitor Center's unique landscape and coordinate training for Silver City Parks staff.** Additionally, consider roles a volunteer group can play in this and other key areas.

### **Silver City Museum, Public Library, and Grant County Courthouse**

The Silver City Museum, Public Library, and Grant County Courthouse are key cultural landmarks featured on Silver City's downtown visitor map. Their historic buildings and surrounding landscapes contribute significantly to the city's character. Each site contains mature, large trees that require ongoing monitoring and maintenance. Succession planting with phased tree replacement should begin now to ensure new plantings have time to mature before older trees must be removed, preserving the continuity of these important landscapes.

"I'm almost 50 and I still enjoy sitting in a tree."

-Silver City Resident

The **Silver City Public Library** has turf grass landscaping with some very large evergreens and deciduous trees. The trees are a high priority for a tree inventory, so that their condition and maintenance needs are routinely monitored and addressed.

The **Silver City Museum** has trees on the interior of its campus and trees providing shade in the parking area. Several of the trees are aging and need maintenance or removal, with replacement planting. A partial tree inventory has been completed. Complete and maintain the tree inventory to monitor and address maintenance needs here and throughout the downtown district.

The **Grant County Courthouse** has a large turf grass lawn with established evergreens. Grant County maintenance staff are responsible for monitoring and maintaining these trees. Update and maintain the existing tree inventory to monitor and address maintenance needs. Succession planning should also be completed for this location.



## Pocket Parks

Silver City has several pocket parks in historic downtown that optimize small spaces next to businesses, providing multiple benefits including pavement cooling, aesthetic improvement, and economic benefit to the businesses. While these spaces are great amenities, their ongoing care and maintenance often falls between the cracks of collaborating organizations. **Setting clear responsibilities for maintenance and monitoring of pocket parks is key.**

- » The Main Street Pocket Park on 7th Street, a space between buildings that leads to the Main Street Plaza parking area. There are a few trees and some grasses and shrubs in this area. This landscape is managed by the Silver City MainStreet organization and maintained by the town.
- » The pocket park next to the Silver City Food Co-op along Pope Street has a small picnic area and several shrubs and trees. It is maintained by the food co-op.
- » Hub Plaza has a picnic area with several shrubs, cacti and a few trees. This landscape is privately owned and maintained.



*The Waterworks Building site is a good demonstration of how native trees and vegetation can be watered, in part, by rainwater harvesting.*



*The Main Street Plaza Pocket Park offers a shaded setting and a connection between Bullard Street and a small parking area behind the businesses near 7th Street.*

## Historic Waterworks Building

The Silver City Waterworks Building, located on Little Walnut Road across Silva Creek from the Silva Creek Botanical Gardens, is a current Five Points Initiative project, one of five cultural destinations within Grant County being revitalized by Southwest New Mexico Arts, Culture, and Tourism (swnmACT). Established in 1887, the Waterworks Building provided Silver City's first municipal water supply, and is the last surviving stone building of that era.

The Town of Silver City acquired the property and is working with local partners to develop it into a community gathering space with native plant demonstration gardens and camping spots for Continental Divide Trail hikers. The project team has already planted native trees and installed some GSI features to irrigate garden plantings, along with a drip irrigation system. The Town will continue to work with swnmACT for the ongoing care and maintenance of the trees and landscapes at this site.



## Historic Districts

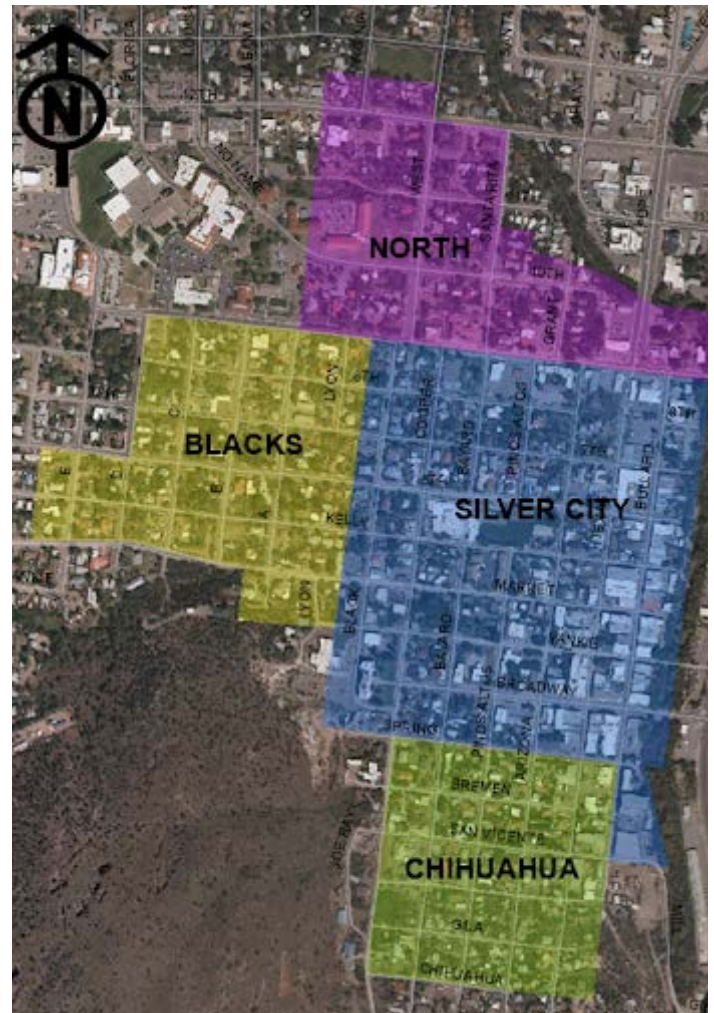
The town of Silver City has four adjacent historic districts in the original town and downtown neighborhoods. One of the purposes of these districts is to “preserve surviving historic character” while “encouraging new investment that reinforces the scale, distinguishing features, and appearance of those districts.” Architecture is clearly the primary focus, but there is significant tree canopy, particularly in the Blacks District, and this canopy and other landscaping is an important contributor to the historic character of these districts. The Historic Design Review Committee engages with homes, churches, and commercial buildings within these districts, and could also provide information on tree care and planning for tree replacement.



The Silver City Museum has several trees that contribute to the museum's character and the downtown tree canopy.

### Silver City's "Moon Tree"

*The “Moon Tree” in Gough Park is a cultural icon in Silver City that is beloved by the community. It is an American sycamore, grown from a seed which was taken to the moon during the 1971 Apollo moon landing. The so-called “Moon Tree” was planted by Harrison Schmitt, a Silver City native and Apollo 17 astronaut.*



Silver City's Historic Overlay Zoning Districts. These areas have specific goals to maintain distinguishing features and appearance, and protect cultural assets. Landscapes are a key part of this historic preservation.

## Historic La Capilla Chapel

La Capilla Chapel sits on Chihuahua Hill overlooking the Chihuahua Historic District. Originally built in 1887 by the Manquero sisters, “the small chapel overlooking the community became a symbol of faith, resilience, and cultural identity.” After the chapel was torn down in 1914, Chihuahua Hill continued to be a visited religious site. The chapel was rebuilt in 2004, driven by local volunteers.

Chihuahua Hill's landscape is native scrub vegetation. Planting native species in an intentional way to frame the entrance and create a formal parking area at the bottom of the hill and the walking path up the hill to the chapel would pay tribute to this historic site and establish La Capilla as a formal destination.





*Rendering re-imagining the entrance, parking area and trailhead of La Capilla with additional trees and native vegetation. Adding GSI features to the road, and directing that runoff to planted areas will help prevent further erosion and irrigate added trees. Renderings by Anthropopulus Design + Planning.*





## Stewardship Area: Community Services and Athletic Facilities

While community forest management often focuses on trees and vegetation in parks and other high-use areas, the trees and shrubs around government offices, schools, athletic facilities, medical buildings, and other community service sites are equally important to Silver City's overall community forest. **These landscapes help reduce the urban heat island effect, manage stormwater in heavily paved areas, and also contribute to the social benefits of trees,** such as enhancing community pride, mental health and perceptions of safety.

The trees in community service areas benefit residents of both Silver City and Grant County who use Silver City as a regional hub for services. However, tree care at these sites is rarely a priority and is often handled by untrained staff or external contractors. The focus tends to be on maintaining neat, low-maintenance landscapes rather than promoting long-term tree health. Without regular attention, tree health decline can go unnoticed until trees are dead or dying, which can result in frequent tree replacement and a lack of mature trees in these areas. Establishing formal annual maintenance schedules and irrigation checks is essential to sustaining the benefits these trees provide.

Community service locations frequently provide good opportunities to expand the town's tree canopy and community forest benefits. While many of the buildings already have landscaping, **the six bus stops in town would benefit from shade tree plantings,** and may be good locations for GSI.

A common feature of this Stewardship Area is the interface of landscaped areas with paved surfaces such as driveways, parking lots, and sidewalks. Limited root space, improper irrigation, and heat-reflective materials often are common challenges in these landscapes, which can lead to poor tree health. **Developing a brief design guide for future installations, and modifying land use code requirements to set minimum standards for planting** space and mulch could help reduce tree mortality in these challenging landscapes. Modifying existing installations to expand root space and utilizing GSI practices such as curb cuts and swales for irrigation could improve the health of existing sites.

The Community Services and Athletic Facilities Stewardship Area includes a discussion of recreation facilities, the cemetery, and landscapes in areas with a high density of community services. The following sections expand upon the management priorities for each of these unique landscape types that contribute to the overall community forest in Silver City.

### Relevant Landscape Types:

- Government Buildings
- Health & Community Services
- Middle & High Schools
- Athletic Facilities
- Cemetery

### Primary Tree Benefits:

- Reducing Urban Heat
- Stormwater Management
- Community Pride & Wellbeing
- Community Safety
- Beautification

### Management Influences:

- Government Leadership
- School District
- Municipal Land Use Codes

### Management Goals:

- Efficiency
- Professionalism
- Aesthetics





Silver City has several areas where community services are consolidated, making these services easier for residents and visitors to access. These service centers provide opportunities to develop the community forest, delivering focused benefits and making infrastructure more efficient to manage.

### **Silver Heights Community Service Center**

The intersection of 32nd Street and North Silver is a primary node for multiple community services, including Silver High School, La Plata Middle School, Silver City Recreation Center, swimming pool, tennis courts, and track, and the Gila Regional Medical Center and associated medical offices. It has several adjacent residential neighborhoods. This area currently has low tree canopy, and routine street flooding occurs. The area provides an exceptional opportunity for trees and landscapes that can provide multiple benefits to the wide group of people visiting the area. In addition to tree benefits already discussed, research shows that views of trees speed human healing and are beneficial for mental health. Developing and implementing a comprehensive landscape plan across the entire area that includes street tree planting along 32nd Street and North Silver and uses GSI for irrigation could lead to an excellent collaborative effort with significant results.

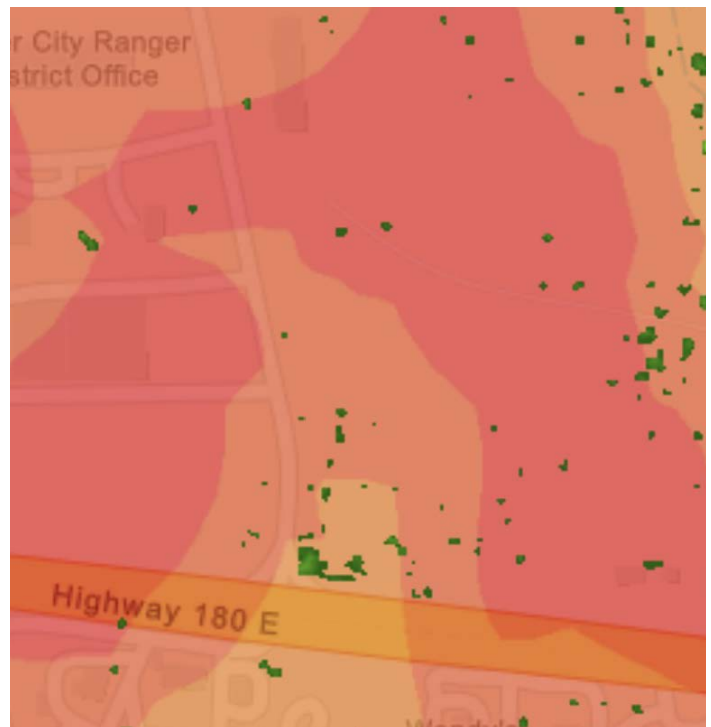
The athletic facilities are managed by the Town of Silver City. Gila Regional Medical Center is managed by the hospital. As discussed earlier in this plan, the high school and middle school grounds are under the jurisdiction of the New Mexico Public Schools Facility Authority (NMPSFA), with day-to-day management carried out by school janitorial staff and school district staff. Co-development of planting projects is needed to develop cohesive and comprehensive landscaping to enhance community forest benefits to the people who frequent these service locations.

### **32nd Street Bypass Service Center at US-180**

The intersection of US-180 and the 32nd Street Bypass is the location of several key government community services, including the Grant County Business and Conference Center, USDA Forest Service Offices, and the New Mexico Income Support Division, and is adjacent to a large shopping center. This area has high parking requirements, and this pavement makes it one of the hottest land surface temperature areas in town. There are newly planted trees in the parking lot of the Business and Conference Center, but they are struggling. To maintain this investment and improve tree health, consider adding organic mulch rings and GSI features.



*New tree plantings at the Silver City Recreation Center, supported by GSI features that capture parking lot runoff and reduce the use of drinking water for irrigation.*



*Land surface temperatures and tree canopy maps for the 32nd Street Bypass near US-180. Expansive areas of pavement and low tree canopy in this area leads to surface temperatures exceeding 117 degrees, heat levels that can have serious human health consequences.*



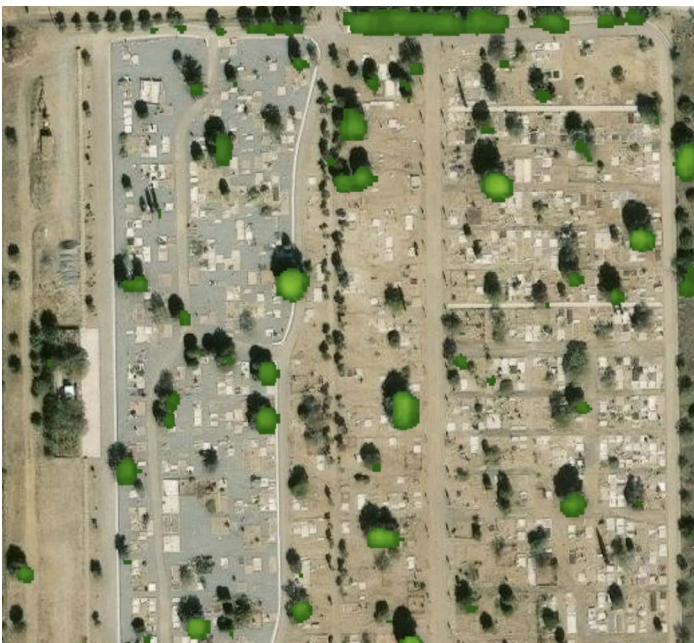
## 11th and Pope Street Service Center

The area around 11th and Pope Streets includes the City Hall Annex, Silver City Fire Department and Public Safety Building, several medical clinics, professional offices, and the Silver City Farmers Market. It surrounds Gough Park and lies near the confluence of San Vicente and Pinos Altos Creeks, both with high tree canopy. However, the service area itself is largely devoid of trees, aside from a small orchard at the Farmers Market. Extensive pavement and rooftops make this one of the hottest areas in town.

As the area undergoes community planning for future development, incorporating street and parking lot trees and other landscaping will help cool the district, manage stormwater, and enhance connectivity to Gough Park.

"We need trees. Not only do trees provide clean air for the community, but they also provide an environment where I can feel safe and at peace."

-Silver City Resident



Tree canopy at Memory Lane Cemetery.

## Grant County Administrative Offices

The Grant County Administrative Offices, located along US-180 northeast of downtown Silver City, currently features minimal landscaping. The surrounding area remains lightly developed and bordered by natural vegetation, which helps moderate local temperatures. The site's large, sloped parking area presents an opportunity to integrate green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) to capture runoff and irrigate new trees and landscaping. This approach could turn periodic flooding issues into a sustainable source of water for shaded, attractive public spaces.



The sloped parking lot at the Grant County Administrative Offices could use GSI to irrigate trees and other landscaping, reducing flooding. Image source: Google Maps

## Memory Lane Cemetery

Memory Lane Cemetery, managed by the Town of Silver City and overseen by a volunteer Cemetery Board, features many mature evergreens and cacti. Two sections of the cemetery are served by drip and bubbler irrigation, while the remainder is non-irrigated. The site frequently experiences severe flooding, suggesting a strong opportunity to incorporate green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) to better manage runoff.

A tree inventory should be conducted to assess existing conditions and help prioritize maintenance and irrigation needs in collaboration with the Cemetery Board. The Board may also consider developing a cemetery planting policy that includes irrigation guidelines and limits future planting to ensure long-term care, alignment with water conservation goals, and preservation of the cemetery's landscape character.



## Athletic Facilities

Silver City has a variety of athletic facilities, each with unique management considerations.

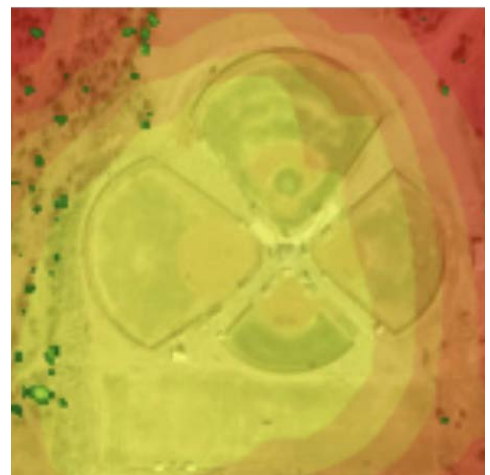
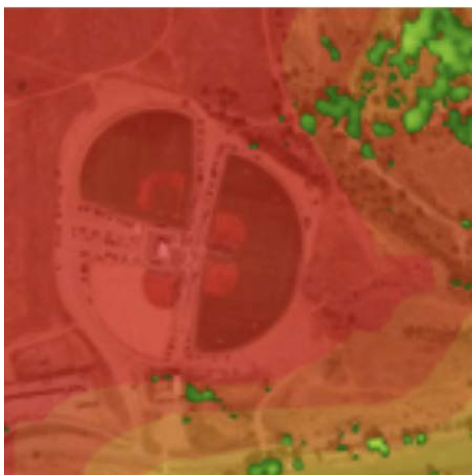
- » **Ballfields:** The three main athletic field areas in Silver City have almost no tree canopy, and can appear as “hot spots” on the land surface temperature map because the dark turf grass is a heat absorbing surface. While trees are certainly not wanted in the athletic fields themselves, shade trees in spectator areas and parking areas and/or windbreak trees around the fields are opportunities for the community forest to provide benefits to these spaces.
- » **Scott Park Golf Links:** Scott Park Golf Links is an 18-hole golf course owned and managed by the town of Silver City. There is extensive tree canopy at the golf course, and there are many tall and old trees. Like any park setting, tree risk management is a high priority here. Conducting a tree inventory and updating it at least annually to identify tree maintenance needs are good management practices for these trees. Because these trees are irrigated as a secondary target for turf grass management, checking to make sure trees in high use areas are getting enough water is an important part of annual monitoring.
- » **Silver City and Maudes Canyon Disc Golf Courses:** Both disc golf courses are managed as natural areas. The Silver City Disc Golf Course has large cottonwood trees that need periodic safety pruning. Maudes Canyon Disc Golf Course is well covered by a mix of mostly shorter stature natural vegetation. Conduct routine monitoring of the courses to address any high risk trees and keep the course clear of debris.



*Scott Park Golf Links is a high use area that requires annual inspections to ensure trees continue to provide shade in these active areas. Image credit: Scott Park Golf Links.*



*Maudes Canyon disc golf course is located within the natural woodlands and may only require a lighter routine maintenance schedule. Image credit: udisc.com.*



*Land surface temperatures and tree canopy maps for L to R: Scott Park, Ben Altamirano Field, and Silver City Ballpark. These fields can have higher surface temperatures due to the dark, heat absorbing turf grass.*



## Stewardship Area: Urban Corridors

US Highway 180 (US-180) and New Mexico State Highway 90 (NM-90) are the two primary corridors in Silver City, with the Highway 180 East Corridor being “the most important strip commercial corridor in the region” (2017 Silver City Comprehensive Plan). Residential development and new neighborhoods are expanding west and south along these corridors. **The community forest can play a key role along these urban corridors, providing traffic calming, pavement and pedestrian shade, and softening the aesthetics of hardscapes.** Silver City’s Comprehensive Plan identifies the need for signage, continuous sidewalks, designated bike lanes, and highly visible crosswalks, as well as decorative lighting, landscaping, and street trees as improvements that would make these corridors less physically divisive in the community.

The Corridors Stewardship Area includes a discussion of streetscaping, commercial developments, and green stormwater infrastructure. The following sections expand upon the management priorities for each of these unique landscape types that contribute to the overall community forest in Silver City.

"I see the necessity of planting more trees in our area. Trees along bike lanes and sidewalks will benefit all pedestrians."

-Silver City Resident

### Relevant Landscape Types:

- Streetscapes
- Commercial Development
- Stormwater Infrastructure
- Residential Development

### Primary Tree Benefits:

- Reducing Urban Heat
- Attracting visitors to business districts
- Traffic Calming
- Air Quality

### Management Influences:

- New Mexico Department of Transportation
- Transportation Planning

### Management Goals:

- Safety
- Economic Development
- Beautification





## Streetscaping

Streetscaping projects, while often a good investment, can also be extremely challenging, particularly in areas where multiple jurisdictions are at play. This is certainly the case for US-180 and NM-90 in Silver City, where making any changes to streetscapes to the main corridors will necessitate direct coordination with the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) and will require a complex planning process. However, streetscape improvements are certainly an attainable long-term goal for Silver City, and the CFN can offer support to get this collaborative process moving.

Modifying existing streetscapes to include trees often requires removal of pavement, adding new irrigation infrastructure, and treatment of compacted soils. Adequate irrigation is paramount for plant survival in streetscapes, where large areas of heat-absorbing surfaces like pavement increase the risk of heat stress for trees. If done carefully and well, adding trees along the corridors in Silver City would provide many benefits for both residents and visitors, improving environmental

conditions, enhancing aesthetics and ultimately supporting the town's economic growth.

The North Hudson Street portion of NM-90 through downtown includes the Silver City Fire Station and the U.S. Post Office. The Fire Station provides an opportunity to increase street trees along this section of NM-90. The U.S. Post Office has some very large, aging cottonwood trees along the street that require routine monitoring and maintenance and possible understory replacement planting.

Silver City's MainStreet organization has already implemented an "adopt-a-median" program for local businesses near the intersection of the two corridors. Expanding this program to both medians and buffer strips along roads, whenever possible, will spread the maintenance effort more broadly to maximize the benefit while minimizing the town's efforts.

Trees and landscaping could also serve to highlight the three town gateway signs along US-180 and NM-90 welcoming travelers to town.



*Photos above and below show examples of drought-tolerant streetscapes in Las Cruces, illustrating how adding trees and cohesive landscaping can enhance urban areas and beautify corridors.*



## Commercial Development

Silver City's land use code requires landscaping for new, large commercial development. This is a good community planning tool that ensures that landscaping continues to be integrated throughout the community. Landscaping land use codes frequently have unintended results that result in landscaping providing little to no benefit. The ultimate effectiveness of Silver City's land use policies needs to be measured over time against their goals. Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of land use codes and its impact on community forest health, and make adjustments as needed (see the *Silver City Governance* section of the plan for additional recommendations).

Existing businesses do not need to comply with the land use code, but the Town of Silver City would benefit from finding ways to encourage businesses to install streetscaping. Implementing a program to assist businesses with streetscaping, including pavement removal, soil de-compaction, and GSI features, would be of public benefit to the community for economic development, safety, stormwater management, and urban heat island mitigation. Prioritize businesses that have large lengths of street front, such as the Food Basket and Harvest Church on NM-90, removing pavement, and installing GSI irrigated streetscapes, as well as helping businesses replace dead and dying trees.



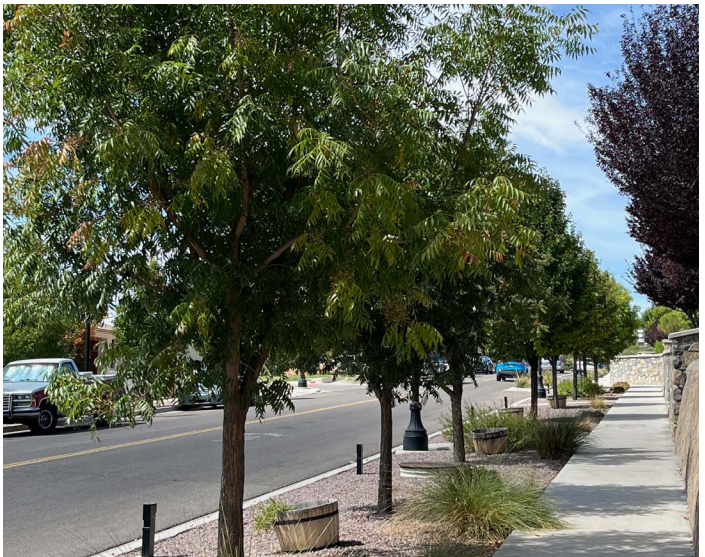
## Residential Development

The Silver City Comprehensive Plan identifies several areas along the US-180 and NM-90 corridors for future housing development. Current land use codes require new residential projects to include parks, playgrounds, or public spaces, or to pay a fee in lieu. This is an effective tool to ensure that outdoor recreation areas grow alongside housing.

However, streetscaping and pedestrian corridor enhancements are not yet included in these requirements. Future updates to the land use code should incorporate sidewalks, streetscaping, and multi-modal connections to create more walkable, shaded, and connected neighborhoods. Proactively planning for these features as new developments arise will strengthen community character and livability across Silver City.



*Photos show examples of shaded, walkable streets in more residential areas of Silver City. Above: Bullard St. Below: College Ave.*



## Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Using Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) alongside traditional gray stormwater infrastructure can increase the longevity of road surface and other infrastructure along corridors. The Town's Sustainability Plan recognizes the importance of both gray and green infrastructure and is in alignment with the GSI recommendations in this plan. Installing GSI such as "localized small basin and other structures on private and public land" recommended in the Sustainability Plan would allow for increased infiltration of average rain events into the soil, making that water available for trees, shrubs and other plants.

Completing a field-based analysis to identify locations where stormwater harvesting is feasible and creating a "shovel-ready" list of projects allows implementation when projects overlap with those locations or other funding becomes available.



*Photos above and below show examples of green stormwater infrastructure in Silver City. Curb cuts were installed by Van Clothier with Stream Dynamics.*





## Stewardship Area: Natural Landscapes and Open Space

Silver City's neighborhoods are intertwined with areas managed as natural and open spaces. The riparian forests of San Vicente, Silva, and Pinos Altos Creeks as well as smaller drainages travel through Silver City's densest urban neighborhoods. Boston Hill, Brewer Hill and the other foothills ring the perimeter of town.

**The vegetation in these natural and open space areas is part of the community forest, but the management objectives and strategies are very different than for trees in more formally landscaped areas.** Management of the community forest in these areas is focused on minimizing human impacts to and from these areas. This includes invasive species management, wildfire risk reduction, and flood mitigation.

The community forest in natural areas and open spaces are managed for human benefit, wildlife benefit, and environmental services. These areas provide access to outdoor recreational space and spaces for solitude and reflection for the human residents of Silver City, habitat for wildlife, and serve important environmental functions including promoting rainwater infiltration to restore the shallow aquifer and buffering the town from erosion. Of Silver City community members responding to the survey, improving wildlife habitat and biodiversity was one of the top priorities.

With some of these drainage corridors running through or abutting private property, this management approach may include an ordinance to control how adjacent property owners can build in, alter or impact these natural or riparian areas. Silver City may also consider an ordinance that requires new developments to retain stormwater on-site, using GSI features when appropriate, to mitigate excess runoff that carries pollutants into waterways.

The Natural Landscapes and Open Space Stewardship Area applies to sites that are managed by the Town of Silver City, including Greenway, Boston Hill, Brewer Hill, San Vicente creek, trails behind the Senior Center, and Combs Wetland.

### Relevant Landscape Types:

- Open Spaces
- Riparian Channels
- Foothills
- Trails

### Primary Tree Benefits:

- Biodiversity, Habitat
- Connection to Nature, Mental Health, Outdoor Recreation
- Erosion Control
- Stormwater Management

### Management Influences:

- Invasive Species
- Wildfire Risk
- Flooding Risk

### Management Goals:

- Wildlife Habitat
- Recreational Access
- Environmental Services





## Open Space Recreational Trails

Open space recreational trails are managed by Silver City's Community Development Office, with input from the volunteer Trails and Open Space Committee. This committee has developed the Silver City Greenways and Big Ditch Master Plan, and is in the process of developing a Master Pedestrian and Recreational Trails Plan. Providing safe and equitable access to these recreational trails is a key goal that can be supported through management of the community forest.

The higher elevation areas of Boston Hill and Brewer Hill are primarily desert scrub, with few trees. Intentional landscaping around trailheads and parking areas using native shrubs and plants can help improve access to these spaces making them look intentional, inviting and well maintained.

The San Vicente Creek and Silva Creek trails travel through riparian areas. These areas have floodplain trees, including large cottonwoods and willows. Just like in parks, trees along established and marked trails must be managed to a higher level of public safety. Trail steward volunteers should establish routine trail monitoring schedules and be trained in basic tree risk assessment. Silver City can also establish processes for residents to report high risk trail trees to town staff and assign mitigation work.



Volunteers plant native trees in San Vicente Creek as part of GRIP's River Stewardship riparian restoration project.

"I love trees. Everywhere  
I go, I seek their shade.  
I love that they provide  
shelter for wildlife too."

-Silver City Resident

## Invasives Management

The riparian channels running through Silver City are a significant part of its community forest. These riparian channels were historically dominated by cottonwood and willow species, but have since shifted to a predominately non-native plant palette that includes, Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*), tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), and Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*). The San Vicente Creek riparian area and its tributaries serve valuable ecological functions, but also pose a particular maintenance challenge. In addition to aiding the spread of non-native and invasive species, these drainage corridors bring risk of fire and flooding to several residential neighborhoods.

**An Integrated Pest Management plan** should provide an overall management approach to invasive species management, including both mechanical and chemical removal methods, and document the timing and where each method is appropriate. For example, the removal of *Ailanthus* often requires mechanical removal, quickly followed up with targeted herbicide application (e.g., cut-stump method) to help kill the roots to prevent re-sprouting. It often takes multiple applications to effectively remove these species. Chemical application must be carried out by a licensed herbicide applicator to ensure that wanted trees and plants are not inadvertently killed by over-spray. **It is imperative that applicators choose the correct chemical for the targeted invasive species, use it at the correct dosing according to the label and apply it at the right time of year to be effective.** These mismatches are common mistakes that waste time and money and needlessly release chemicals into our environment without being effective at removing unwanted plants. Herbicides are an important tool and are often effective when used appropriately. Training staff and volunteers to recognize germinates or seedlings of common invasive species allows for easy removal at that stage through hand weeding that does not require a chemical solution.



# Priority Community Forest Projects

The *Community Context*, *Community Forest Assessment*, and *Community Forest Stewardship* sections of this plan identify many general recommendations, management considerations for different Stewardship Areas, and specific projects to improve the health of Silver City's community forest. Together with the map on pages 65-66, this section of the plan synthesizes these recommendations into specific community forest projects. These projects strive to achieve the most benefits from the community forest through efficient management while balancing cost and resource demands.

## 1 Gough Park/ Penny Park Revitalization & Connectivity

The area near Gough Park and Penny Park—near the intersection of US-180, NM-90, and the 11th Street and Pope Street Service Center—is highly paved, contributing to high land surface temperatures. Tree canopy cover is approximately 9%, among the lowest in Silver City. Tree planting and landscaping could improve walkability and connectivity in the area while reducing surface temperatures. Targeted projects could improve walkability and connectivity that is currently lacking for this area.

The Silver City Greenways and Big Ditch Master Plan identifies Gough Park as a key hub for the creek trail system. Streetscaping improvements connecting Gough Park and Penny Park to nearby neighborhoods would strengthen pedestrian connectivity while cooling surrounding paved areas. Additional street and parking lot tree plantings around the 11th and Pope Street Service Center would further combat the urban heat island effect felt in this area. The nearby multi-family housing complexes close to US-180 have significantly lower tree canopy and would benefit from tree planting in common spaces to provide benefits to residents.

Gough Park, Penny Park and the adjacent Skate Park are older landscapes with large mature trees. Focusing on revitalizing these parks through high-risk tree pruning and removal and replacement planting would ensure that these historic landscapes continue to provide high quality green space.



*The land surface temperature map with tree canopy overlaid for the area around Gough Park and Penny Park area shows high surface temperatures in areas with more pavement, with cooler temperatures near the parks and creek where there is higher tree canopy.*

## 2 Connecting Virginia Street Park Area

The area surrounding Virginia Street Park and Jose Barrios Elementary forms a vibrant pocket of community green space within Silver City. Together with the Silva Creek Botanical Garden, the historic Waterworks Site, and nearby Silva Creek trail, these landscapes create a valuable oasis for residents. Although tree canopy cover in this area ranges from 9 to 14%, walkability and connectivity remain limited, with Virginia Street Park and Jose Barrios Elementary separated from some of the neighborhoods they serve by US-180. Enhancing streetscapes along Virginia Street and Little Walnut Road would help establish a walkable corridor that links these key community resources to neighborhoods across the highway.

Virginia Street Park is characterized by its mature tree canopy, and future efforts should focus on revitalization through high-risk tree pruning, removal, and replacement planting to sustain the park's health and character. Nearby, the closure of Jose Barrios Elementary presents both a challenge and an opportunity: as the site transitions to new uses, its existing trees and landscaping should be thoughtfully adapted to complement future development. Continued coordination among town staff and the organizations managing the Silva Creek Botanical Garden and the historic Waterworks Site will be essential to ensure these interconnected green spaces remain healthy, well maintained, and accessible for the community.



Tree canopy in the **Historic Downtown District** is around 9%, and the Tree Equity Score indicates this area as one of the highest priorities for tree planting initiatives. However, downtown properties often have minimal space for landscaping, and the southernmost neighborhoods are on steep inclines, making tree planting challenging in this area. Targeted projects could increase the area's tree canopy cover while working around non-plantable areas.

Neighborhoods near downtown have easy, walkable access to numerous parks and green spaces, including the WNMU campus and the Grant County Courthouse. Many downtown district historic landscapes feature mature, historic trees, some reaching the end of their natural lives. Efforts should focus on revitalizing these parks and landscapes through high-risk tree pruning, removals and replacement planting to sustain these historic landscapes.

Community survey responses highlighted flooding along several streets leading into downtown, particularly 6th Street and Market Street. Incorporating street trees and GSI into sidewalk and drainage improvement projects could help address these issues.

The downtown district includes three high-priority community forestry sites: **Big Ditch Park**, the top management priority due to hazardous trees and wildfire risk; **Murray Ryan Visitor Center**, where a phased plan for tree replacement, understory improvements, and irrigation upgrades will refresh this focal landscape; and **La Capilla**, an important cultural landmark overlooking downtown that would benefit from formalized landscaping and erosion control at its entrance, parking area, and trailheads.



From top to bottom: Big Ditch Park; Murray Ryan Visitor Center; La Capilla.

## 5 Little Walnut Road Wildfire Risk Reduction

Neighborhoods along Little Walnut Road are defined by steep slopes and dense natural vegetation, creating both scenic value and elevated wildfire risk. The 2020 Community Wildfire Protection Plan identifies the Indian Hills and Copper Ridge subdivisions, as well as neighborhoods farther north along Little Walnut Road, as high-risk areas. Reducing wildfire vulnerability in these communities should be a top priority, with an emphasis on engaging residents in Firewise USA® practices and establishing defensible home protection zones through ongoing outreach and education.



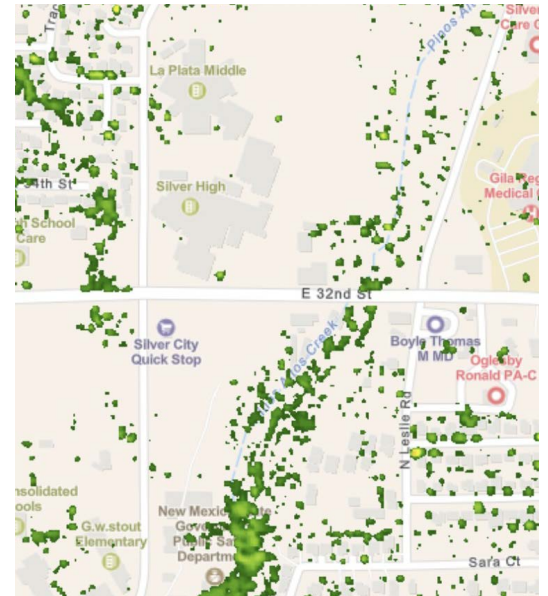
The Firewise USA® program can help neighborhoods reduce wildfire risk through efforts such as yard waste chipping days. Image credit: Firewise USA website.



## 6 East 32nd Street/North Silver Area

Tree canopy cover in the East 32nd Street and North Silver Street area ranges from 7% to 10%, among the lowest in Silver City. Neighborhoods between Silva and Pinos Altos Creeks experience some of the town's highest land surface temperatures and have limited park access. The ParkScore tool identifies this area as the highest priority for new park development. While the area includes several recreational facilities—such as the new Recreation Center and the Middle and High Schools—these are structured, limited-access landscapes. Cherry Hills Park is small and distant, and Hidden Park functions more as natural open space, fitting its dry, hilltop location.

The Silver Heights Community Service Center near East 32nd Street and North Silver offers a central hub to address these equity challenges. Creating a new park near the Recreation Center would improve accessibility for nearby neighborhoods, while adding street trees along key corridors could enhance walkability, connect residents to schools and services, and, paired with green stormwater infrastructure (GSI), help manage flooding near the High School. Expanding residential tree planting—through partnerships with Tree New Mexico and the Community Forestry Network (CFN)—would further increase shade and comfort for homes and multifamily housing throughout the area.

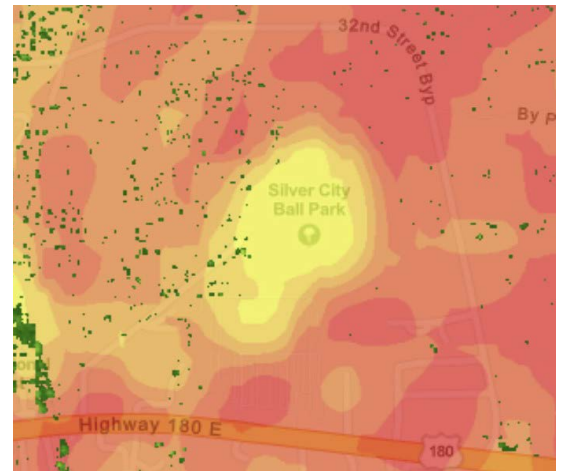


*The tree canopy map for the area surrounding East 32nd Street and North Silver shows an opportunity to provide more tree canopy by connecting existing services.*

## 7 32nd Street Bypass/US-180

The area around the 32nd Street Bypass and US-180 currently has low housing density but is designated in the Silver City Comprehensive Plan for future residential growth. Because of the limited population, Tree Equity and ParkScore rankings undervalue the area's need for trees and parks. As new neighborhoods develop, planning should proactively integrate sidewalks, parks, and streetscaping—with requirements codified in land use regulations. While the Silver City Ball Park provides structured recreation space, additional and accessible park space will be needed as the neighborhood expands.

This corridor also serves as a major community service hub, home to the Grant County Business and Conference Center, multiple state and federal offices, and large commercial centers. Extensive pavement contributes to elevated land surface temperatures, underscoring the importance of adding shade and greenery. Planting street and parking lot trees, along with building landscaping irrigated by green stormwater infrastructure (GSI), would significantly reduce the urban heat island effect and enhance the comfort and appearance of this growing district.



*The land surface temperature map with tree canopy highlighted shows temperature hot spots in high pavement areas near the 32nd Street Bypass and US-180 intersection. Tree canopy in parking lots and along streetscapes could help combat the urban heat island effect.*



## 10 Brewer Hill & Surrounding Area

Tree canopy cover in the Brewer Hill area is about 9%, among the lowest in Silver City, and the Tree Equity Score identifies it as a top priority for planting. However, steep elevation changes and rocky, shallow soils make large-scale planting difficult and, in some areas, unsuitable.

With no elementary school in the neighborhood, access to parks is especially important. Johnny Banks Park, a stormwater retention basin lined with trees, serves as a strong example of a multi-use green space that incorporates GSI. Ybarra Park, though modest in size, could benefit from additional tree planting, potentially using GSI to irrigate new street trees once playground upgrades are complete.

Because the Brewer Hill area has few commercial or service locations to support canopy expansion, strengthening connections to main corridors along 12th Street, College Avenue, and Broadway is increasingly important. Improved streetscaping on East 12th Street would enhance pedestrian access to nearby parks such as Gough and Penny.

Along Pinos Altos Creek, many properties contain large, aging riparian trees, including cottonwoods and invasive Siberian elms. The new Pinos Altos Creek trail and the San Vicente Creek trail also provide valuable shaded open space for residents in the Brewer Hill area. Connecting homeowners and property managers, such as those at the Silver City RV Park and Shady Grove Trailer Park, to CFN resources for large-tree maintenance, risk identification, and yard waste management will help sustain canopy health and reduce wildfire risk throughout this corridor.

## 11 Harrison Schmitt Elementary School Area

The area around Harrison Schmitt Elementary currently has low housing density but is designated in the Silver City Comprehensive Plan for future residential growth. As development occurs, proactively incorporating sidewalks, parks, and streetscaping—and embedding these requirements in land use codes—will be essential. The ParkScore® tool identifies this area as a high priority for new park development. While recreational facilities exist nearby, they are largely structured and restricted-access spaces, and the lack of community services and limited walkability highlight the need for more accessible public amenities.

Tree canopy in the residential areas along Ridge Road averages about 11%, extending toward the large recreational complex that includes Scott Park and the Silver City Golf Course. However, the census block north of Harrison Schmitt Elementary has 0% canopy cover and is identified as one of the highest-priority areas for planting in Silver City. Future neighborhoods along south NM-90 could benefit from a residential tree partnership program with Tree New Mexico, working through the CFN to expand canopy across new developments.

Harrison Schmitt Elementary itself is surrounded by natural vegetation and mature evergreens that serve as windbreaks, but the interior campus would benefit from additional deciduous trees and ground cover to provide shade and cooling for play areas. The school has also expressed interest in creating a food forest, offering an opportunity to combine education, sustainability, and community engagement within the broader goals of the community forest plan.



*The tree canopy map for the area surrounding Harrison Schmitt Elementary School shows opportunities for school campus and residential tree planting.*

# Map of Silver City's Priority Community Forest Project Areas

## 1 Gough Park/Penny Park/Skate Park:

- » Revitalization, walkability and connectivity

## 2 Virginia Street Park/Jose Barrios Elementary Area/Virginia Street:

- » Revitalization, walkability and connectivity

## 3 Historic Downtown District:

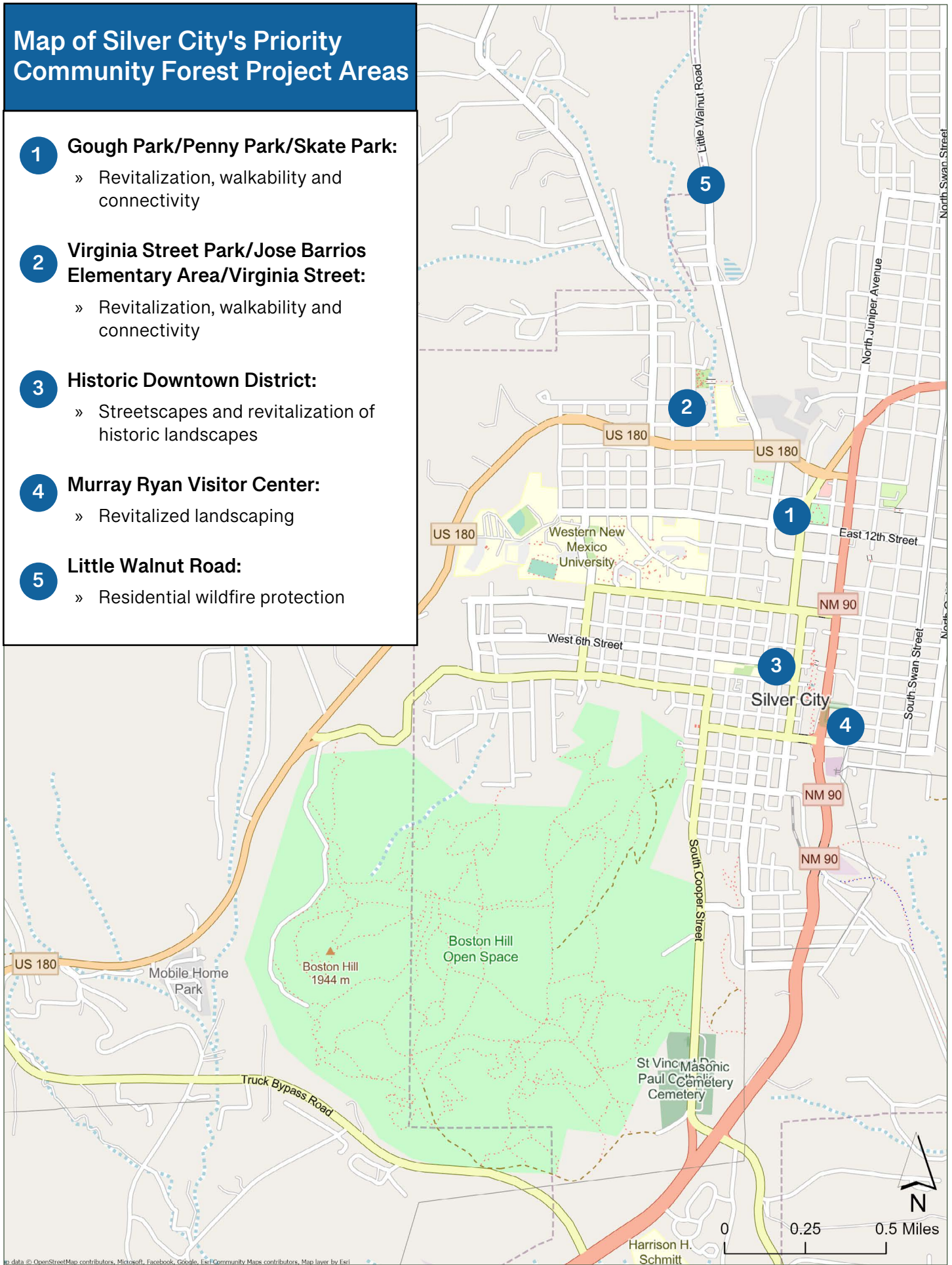
- » Streetscapes and revitalization of historic landscapes

## 4 Murray Ryan Visitor Center:

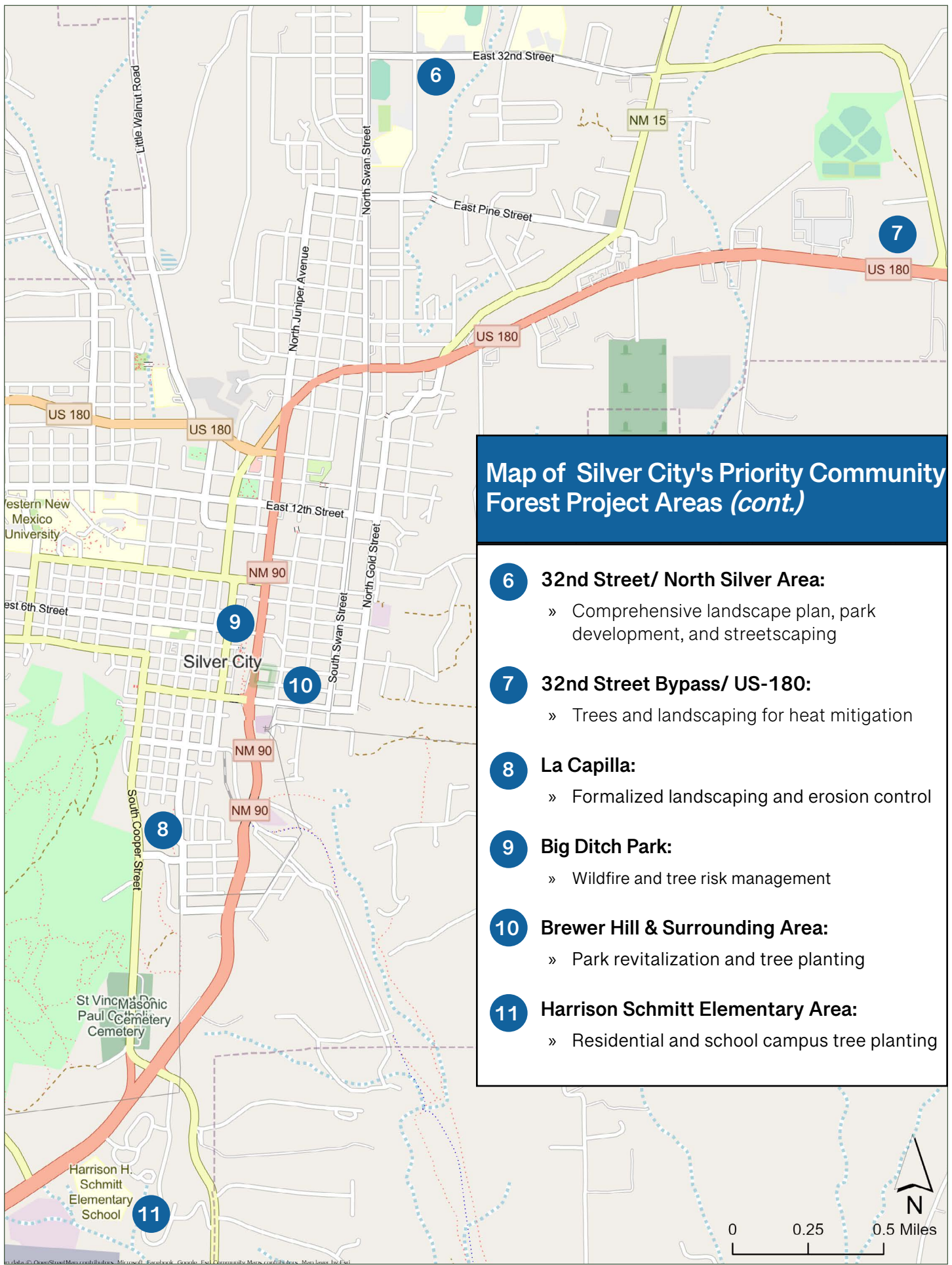
- » Revitalized landscaping

## 5 Little Walnut Road:

- » Residential wildfire protection









## From Planning to Action

With the adoption of this community forest management plan, Silver City has completed a comprehensive planning phase that establishes a clear framework for managing and enhancing its community forest. The previous sections provide an overview of the data and analyses that informed this plan, with discussion of key management considerations for each of the five distinct landscape types in Silver City, referred to in this plan as “Stewardship Areas.” The Action Plan in the following section defines specific goals, strategies, and actions that align with community priorities. With key assessments and inventories largely in place, the town is poised to move from planning to action—translating the recommendations in this plan into visible improvements across the town’s parks, streetscapes, and neighborhoods and integrating the community forest into the town’s broader initiatives.

The Southwest New Mexico Community Forestry Network (CFN) will serve as a vital partner in this effort—providing coordination, technical expertise, and professional development to strengthen Silver City’s capacity for long-term urban forest management. The

CFN will support the town by connecting municipal, county, state, federal, and institutional partners, facilitating shared learning, and promoting best management practices. Through this collaboration, Silver City’s staff, contractors, and community organizations will have access to shared tools, training, and resources that support the implementation of this Community Forest Management Plan. Together, Silver City and its partners will continue to build on the foundation established during the planning phase.

To inform management decisions and support the work ahead, completing and regularly updating the town’s tree inventory is a foundational and ongoing task. Tree inventory data will help guide the development of efficient maintenance schedules, prioritize high-risk removals, and identify succession planting areas, while preserving institutional knowledge over the coming decades. These efforts will ensure the community forest remains healthy, safe, and resilient in the face of environmental change and future community development needs.



*The CFN can provide training and other support for municipal tree care staff and partners.*



*CFN tree planting event in Big Ditch Park with the Aldo Leopold Charter School Youth Conservation Corps.*





*The CFN can support Silver City municipal staff and partners to prioritize and implement community forest projects.*

Community participation remains essential as Silver City moves forward. Residents, nonprofits, and local boards will play key roles in implementing neighborhood and park projects, supported by CFN outreach, education, and volunteer coordination. Integrating tree planting with stormwater management, park revitalization, and neighborhood greening will help address pressing challenges such as heat, flooding, and drought—while fostering a shared sense of stewardship and civic pride.

The move from planning to implementation marks the beginning of a sustained investment in Silver City's natural infrastructure. The following Action Plan will serve as a working "To Do List" to implement this plan. The CFN will assist by kick-starting the implementation with priority tree removals and planting projects, helping establish maintenance priorities, and supporting access to trained arborists and regional forestry specialists.

With town leadership and staff guiding the work and the CFN providing strong technical and collaborative support, Silver City is well-positioned to expand its tree canopy coverage, revitalize historic landscapes, and integrate green infrastructure into future growth. This coordinated effort will ensure the community forest continues to provide environmental, cultural, and economic benefits for generations to come.

"I love trees for so many reasons, for all of the things they do for the planet we share, the beauty they bring and the way they create community."

-Silver City Resident

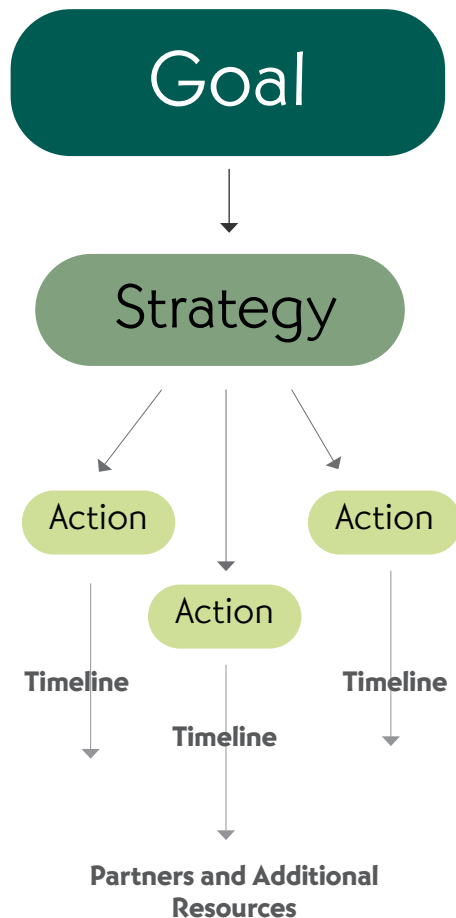
# Action Plan

Throughout the remaining years of the project, a significant investment is being made to enhance Silver City's community forest through the Southwest New Mexico Community Forest Network (CFN) project. This *Action Plan* outlines the foundational steps necessary to guide, support, and sustain this effort.

The *Action Plan* sets 6 primary goals that establish a vision of a healthy and resilient community forest in Silver City. Goal 1 serves as the primary and overarching goal for the community forest, with strategies that apply broadly across all areas. Goals 2–6 each focus on one of Silver City's five Community Forest Stewardship Areas, which are distinct landscape types with unique management considerations.

Each goal is supported by targeted strategies and actions that work together to help Silver City make progress towards this vision. While some strategies are relevant to the community forest as a whole, each is organized under the primary Stewardship Area with the strongest alignment. The strategies are further broken down into a series of specific actions with defined timelines for completion, which are outlined in the tables below. Additionally, each goal is presented with a list of potential partner organizations and available supporting resources.

The goals, strategies and actions were informed through engagement with Silver City leadership and staff, Grant County leadership and staff, community members, and local experts. The project team also carefully reviewed Silver City's available planning resources including the 2017 Comprehensive Plan Update and others. The results of this engagement and the analyses that informed the recommendations featured in the *Action Plan* are discussed in the previous section, *The Basis for the Plan*.



**Goals** are the foundation for any Strategic Plan. They are a collective vision for the town to aspire to. They organize strategies and actions to help fully realize the plan.

**Strategies** are measurable approaches of "how" to achieve a given goal.

**Actions** are individual steps or sets of steps to be taken to support a strategic approach to achieving the goal.

**Timeline** proposes a time frame for an action. This plan proposes Short Term actions (1-2 years), Mid Term (2-5 years), and Long Term (5+ years).

**Partners and Additional Resources** are vital to completing the *Action Plan*. Partners can support municipal staff with ongoing training, implementation of actions, and the creation of additional resources. Additional Resources can provide the specific guidance to help residents and municipal staff carry out the actions identified in the plan.



# Action Plan

## Goal

Cross-Cutting Goal: All Stewardship Areas

**1** Silver City collaboratively manages a resilient community forest that contributes to broader community goals.

### Strategy I A

Build a community forest network with representatives from municipal, county, state, federal, and institution professional staff.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Timeline                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| IA.1 Establish a Tree Board to guide Silver City’s community forest management that includes representatives from each major community forest partner.                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)              |
| IA.2 Create mechanisms for municipal staff to access tree expertise via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Continued Silver City municipal contracts with certified arborists for skilled maintenance.</li><li>» Sharing certified arborist support between major partners.</li><li>» Supporting the development of a CFN regional urban forester position.</li></ul> | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)              |
| IA.3 Support and encourage professional landscape maintenance staff to actively participate in the CFN, where they can collaborate with other professionals and connect to educational resources and events to further their skills in urban forestry and GSI implementation and maintenance.                                                                               | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)/<br>Ongoing  |
| IA.4 Collaborate with community forest partners on information sharing on tree species, maintenance, and irrigation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term)/<br>Ongoing |

### Strategy I B

Monitor community forest health to prioritize tree maintenance and tree risk reduction.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Timeline                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| IB.1 Complete the existing Silver City tree inventory in Tree Plotter and update it at least annually to inform maintenance and tree risk reduction priorities. Prioritize: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» All Parks</li><li>» Library</li><li>» Silver City Museum</li><li>» Grant County Courthouse</li><li>» Schools</li><li>» Government-subsidized housing complexes</li><li>» Golf Course</li><li>» Cemetery</li></ul> | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)/<br>Ongoing |
| IB.2 Use tree inventory data to set pruning and removal priorities for the year in collaboration with a contracted arborist.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term)            |



# Action Plan

Goal

Cross-Cutting Goal: All Stewardship Areas

1 Silver City collaboratively manages a resilient community forest that contributes to broader community goals.

Strategy IC

Develop, implement, and evaluate town-wide community forest policies, plans and initiatives that support Silver City’s community forest goals.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Timeline                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| IC.1 Establish a vegetation ordinance that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Formalized authority of Silver City town staff</li><li>» Protection of existing healthy, mature trees</li><li>» Tree irrigation and water conservation policy</li><li>» Responsibilities for vegetation in ROWs, buffer strips, and riparian areas</li></ul>                                   | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term)             |
| IC.2 Periodically evaluate and update existing Land Use Codes. Consider updates to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Establishing requirements for tree infrastructure in new or rebuilt streets</li><li>» Guiding sustainable development and protecting watershed health along creeks</li><li>» Requiring basic levels of landscape care for commercial entities</li></ul> | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term)/<br>Ongoing |
| IC.3 Update the Silver City Community Development Office’s recommended tree list and include plant palettes appropriate for Silver City’s climate and geography, focused on drought-tolerant plants native to the southwest U.S./northern Mexico.                                                                                                                                           | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)              |
| IC.4 Evaluate irrigation efficiency at parks and park-like landscapes and transition to a uniform system for irrigation parts that are used on all irrigation projects.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)/<br>Ongoing  |
| IC.5 Develop a Silver City Integrated Pest Management Plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term)             |
| IC.6 Update the Silver City Community Forestry Management Plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 2029                                   |





# Action Plan

Goal

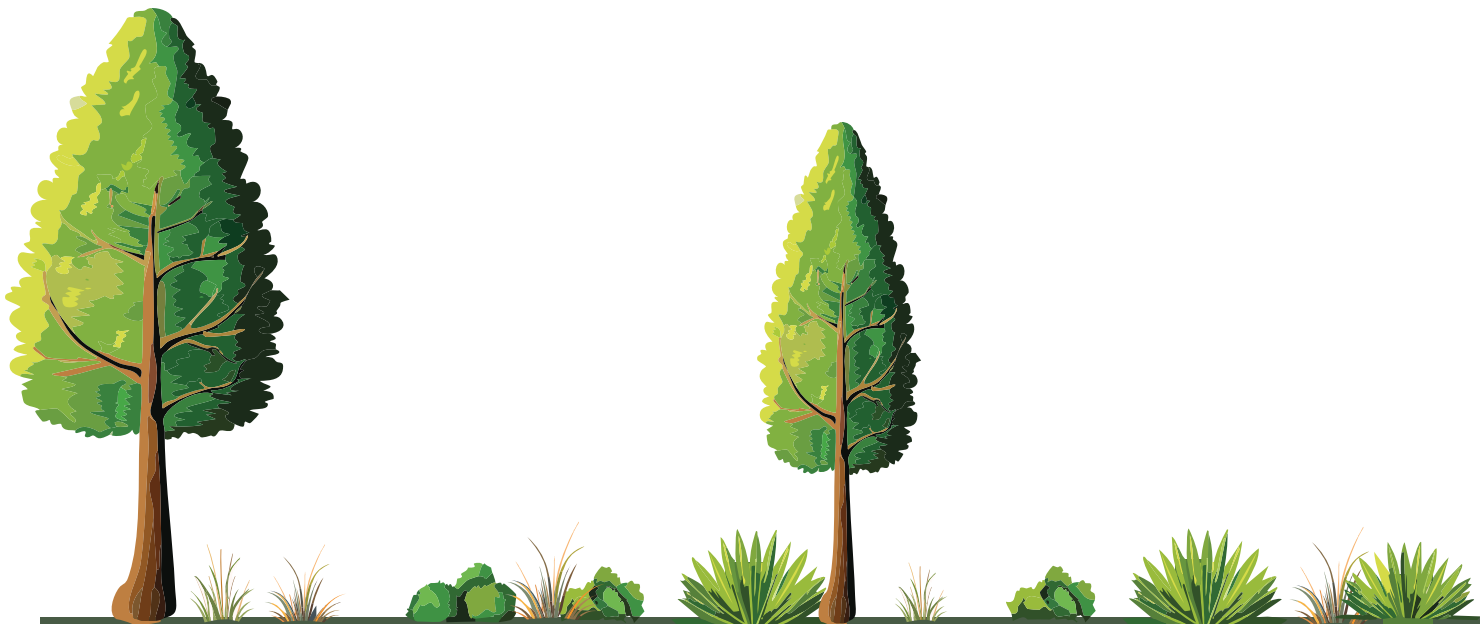
Cross-Cutting Goal: All Stewardship Areas

1 Silver City collaboratively manages a resilient community forest that contributes to broader community goals.

Strategy ID

Provide guidance and training to non-profits, town boards, and local experts to empower participation in community forest monitoring and maintenance.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Timeline                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ID.1 Work with Silver City MainStreet personnel to develop detailed landscape maintenance plans for Main Street-managed landscapes including Murray Ryan Visitor Center and MainStreet Plaza and train landscape maintenance staff on implementation.                                                                                                                                                                                    | 1-2 Years (Short Term)          |
| ID.2 Connect commercial businesses and volunteer groups maintaining pocket parks, community orchards, and other landscapes to the CFN and tree care maintenance and irrigation and GSI resources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» The Commons Center for Food Security and Sustainability</li><li>» The Hub</li><li>» Silva Creek Botanical Gardens</li><li>» Community Orchards</li><li>» Community GSI installations</li></ul> | 1-2 Years (Short Term)/ Ongoing |
| ID.3 Engage the Silver City Library, Museum, and Cemetery Boards to support the town staff by monitoring and reporting tree and landscape issues.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 1-2 Years (Short Term)          |
| ID.4 Include Silver City park maintenance staff in discussions around social issues impacting park usage.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Ongoing                         |



# Action Plan

Goal

Cross-Cutting Goal: All Stewardship Areas

1 Silver City collaboratively manages a resilient community forest that contributes to broader community goals.

Strategy I E

Invest in building staff expertise to further strengthen Silver City's community forest management.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Timeline                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| IE.1 Use the CFN to provide annual staff training on tree care, irrigation maintenance, integrated pest management, risk management, and GSI maintenance. Include government, school, and commercial landscapers. | Ongoing                   |
| IE.2 Offer basic tree risk assessment training to all Silver City landscape staff. Include government, school, and commercial landscapers.                                                                        | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term) |

Strategy I F

Implement green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) in high stormwater runoff areas such as pavement, roofs, and other impermeable surfaces to water trees and reduce localized erosion and flooding.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Timeline                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| IF.1 Develop a Silver City Stormwater Drainage Management Plan including a field-based analysis to identify locations where stormwater harvesting is feasible and creating a "shovel-ready" list of projects. | 5+ Years<br>(Long Term)    |
| IF.2 Provide GSI education to residents and business owners and incentivize stormwater managed in landscapes.                                                                                                 | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| IF.3 Integrate GSI with ongoing urban forestry initiatives and public education, and ICIP street improvement projects.                                                                                        | Ongoing                    |

GOAL I PARTNERS INCLUDE:

- » SWNM Community Forestry Network
- » New Mexico Tree Alliance
- » New Mexico Urban & Community Forestry Program (EMNRD)
- » NMSU Cooperative Extension
- » Local Silver City Community Forest Partners

GOAL I RESOURCES INCLUDE:

- » Recommended Tree and Plant List for Silver City
- » Guide to Planning and Implementing Community Forestry Projects
- » Green Stormwater Infrastructure Implementation Guide
- » Irrigation Guide
- » Example Vegetation Ordinance



# Action Plan

## Goal

*Primary Stewardship Area: Residential Neighborhoods*

# 2

Silver City develops and expands neighborhood community forests based on connectivity and need.

### **Strategy 2A**

Expand and revitalize parks and elementary school landscapes, prioritizing neighborhoods with highest need.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Timeline                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2A.1 Develop opportunities for new park space in the northeast quadrant of Silver City, potentially near the Recreation Center adjacent to Fire Station #2 on East 32 <sup>nd</sup> Street and Pinos Altos Road.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 5+ Years<br>(Long Term)    |
| 2A.2 Develop opportunities for new park spaces in developing neighborhoods along south NM-90, potentially near the existing recreational facilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 5+ Years<br>(Long Term)    |
| 2A.3 Collaborate with GW Stout and Harrison Schmitt Elementary Schools to develop landscaping with shade trees and living ground cover. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Interior campus tree plantings near play areas</li><li>» GW Stout - streetscapes and along walking paths to recreation facilities</li><li>» Harrison Schmitt - fruit tree orchard</li></ul>                                                                                                                    | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)  |
| 2A.4 Expand tree planting at Silver City multi-family housing complexes (Silver Cliffs, Mountain View Senior Apartments, Lintero Apartments, Gateway Apartments).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| 2A.5 Revitalize neighborhood parks, including Virginia Street Park, Cherry Hills Park, and Ybarra Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Assess irrigation system, and install irrigation efficiency improvements</li><li>» Structural pruning and maintenance for existing trees</li><li>» Additional plantings in parks</li><li>» Removal and replacement of dead and dying trees, as needed to reduce risk. Include residential trees overhanging parks in risk assessments</li></ul> | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)  |
| 2A.6 Maintain and expand tree canopy at the former sites of 6th Street Elementary and Jose Barrios Elementary as these facilities are re-purposed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 5+ Years<br>(Long Term)    |



# Action Plan

Goal

Primary Stewardship Area: Residential Neighborhoods

2

Silver City develops and expands neighborhood community forests based on connectivity and need.

Strategy 2B

Develop a street tree initiative that focuses on connecting people to parks and services while lowering harmful heat levels.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Timeline                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2B.1 Incorporate street tree infrastructure into planned ICIP projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» North Swan Street Improvement</li><li>» 6th Street Improvement Project</li><li>» 12th Street Improvement Project</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Ongoing                    |
| 2B.2 Develop cohesive and complementary streetscaping projects through a combination of public spaces, commercial and institutional property owner engagement, and residential property owner engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» North Silver Street and East 32nd Street intersection to support connectivity to recreational facilities and medical services</li><li>» West College Avenue to continue WNMU streetscaping to downtown</li><li>» North Virginia Street between Virginia Street Park area to Dog Park to increase connectivity between northwest and southwest quadrants</li><li>» East 12th Street, East College Ave, East Broadway to connect southeast quadrant residents to parks and services in southwest quadrant</li><li>» Silver Heights Community Services Center connection with surrounding neighborhoods</li></ul> | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| 2B.3 Prioritize use of understory plantings (like grasses and shrubs) and organic mulch over use of rock mulch in streetscapes to mitigate heat for both pedestrian comfort and tree health.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Ongoing                    |





# Action Plan

## Goal

Primary Stewardship Area: Residential Neighborhoods

# 2

Silver City develops and expands Silver City's neighborhood community forests based on connectivity and need.

### Strategy 2C

Engage residential community members in the growth and care of the community forest.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Timeline                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2C.1 Connect residents to existing educational resources, partner organizations and events on community forest issues to empower community members to action. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Regionally appropriate plant selection that are drought-tolerant and support pollinator and wildlife habitat</li><li>» Tree planting and maintenance</li><li>» Water conservation and proper tree irrigation</li><li>» GSI and residential scale rainwater harvesting</li><li>» Phasing out aging Siberian elms (<i>Ulmus pumila</i>) to decrease weedy trees throughout town</li></ul> | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)/<br>Ongoing |
| 2C.2 Increase tree canopy by promoting tree planting and landscaping in residential areas and partnering with organizations that support residential tree planting programs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)             |
| 2C.3 Support large tree monitoring and maintenance at the Western Regional Housing Authority housing complex, trailer parks, and RV parks.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)             |
| 2C.4 Provide residents yard waste disposal options (e.g. chipper days) to reduce wildfire risk and minimize impact to riparian channels.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)/<br>Ongoing |
| 2C.5 Expand the number of Silver City neighborhoods to become Firewise® sites.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term)            |
| 2C.6 Establish an on-line reporting system for community members to report tree concerns.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term)            |

#### GOAL 2 PARTNERS INCLUDE:

- » SWNM Community Forestry Network
- » Tree New Mexico Neighborhoods Program,
- » New Mexico Tree Alliance
- » NMSU Cooperative Extension
- » Grant County
- » New Mexico State Forestry Landowner Outreach

#### GOAL 2 RESOURCES INCLUDE:

- » Recommended Tree and Plant List for Silver City
- » Guide to Planning and Implementing Community Forestry Projects
- » Firewise USA
- » Irrigation Guide
- » Bernalillo County Residential Rainwater Harvesting Guide

# Action Plan

## Goal

*Primary Stewardship Area: Arts, Culture and Tourism*

# 3

Silver City plans for community forest succession while still supporting and protecting legacy trees.

### **Strategy 3A**

Revitalize Silver City's historic landscapes by reducing tree risk and supplementing existing landscapes with new and replacement plantings.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Timeline                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 3A.1 Revitalize Gough Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Tree removal and replacement</li><li>» Structural pruning and maintenance for existing trees</li><li>» Improve irrigation efficiency</li><li>» Additional succession plantings</li></ul>                                                                                | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| 3A.2 Revitalize Penny Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Tree removal and replacement</li><li>» Structural pruning and maintenance for existing trees</li><li>» Improve irrigation efficiency</li><li>» Additional succession plantings</li></ul>                                                                                | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| 3A.3 Revitalize landscapes at Silver City Public Library, Silver City Museum, and Grant County Courthouse <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Tree removal and replacement</li><li>» Structural pruning and maintenance for existing trees</li><li>» Improve irrigation efficiency</li><li>» Additional succession plantings</li></ul> | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)  |
| 3A.4 Noble Park and Pope Street Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Tree removal and replacement</li><li>» Structural pruning and maintenance for existing trees</li><li>» Improve irrigation efficiency</li><li>» Additional succession plantings</li></ul>                                                                      | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| 3A.5 Formalize landscape elements, reduce erosion, and install replacement signage at La Capilla.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| 3A.6 Through the Historic Design Review Committee, engage with homes, churches, and commercial buildings within historic districts on mature tree care and tree succession planning and planting.                                                                                                                                          | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |





# Action Plan

Goal

Primary Stewardship Area: Arts Culture and Tourism

3

Silver City plans for community forest succession while still supporting and protecting legacy trees.

Strategy 3B

Prioritize developing and implementing a maintenance plan for Big Ditch Park.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Timeline                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 3B.1 Establish an annual tree maintenance budget for Big Ditch Park as a separate line item, and seek alternate sources of funding to supplement (e.g., economic development, tourism, natural resource conservation). | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)/<br>Ongoing |
| 3B.2 Conduct at least semi-annual monitoring of all trees within Big Ditch Park by a staff member trained in tree risk assessment.                                                                                     | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)/<br>Ongoing |
| 3B.3 Schedule maintenance based on identified tree issues and make work assignments based on skills needed.                                                                                                            | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)             |
| 3B.4 Continue to phase out invasive trees and aging tree, and replace with native trees species that are well adapted to current conditions.                                                                           | Ongoing                               |

GOAL 3 PARTNERS INCLUDE:

- » SWNM Community Forestry Network
- » Silver City MainStreet
- » Silver City Historic District, Museum, and Library Advisory Groups
- » Grant County
- » New Mexico State Forestry Division

GOAL 3 RESOURCES INCLUDE:

- » Recommended Tree and Plant List for Silver City
- » Guide to Planning and Implementing Community Forestry Projects
- » Irrigation Guide
- » Example Maintenance Schedule

# Action Plan

## Goal

*Primary Stewardship Area: Community Services and Athletic Facilities*

# 4

Silver City's community forest enhances public health and quality of life for residents and visitors.

### **Strategy 4A**

Focus resources on improving and expanding the community forest in town landscapes and recreation areas.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Timeline                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 4A.1 Establish and update a tree maintenance schedule for all government and institutional buildings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Tree pruning/removal</li><li>» Irrigation checks</li><li>» Mulch and understory planting maintenance</li><li>» Insect and disease checks</li><li>» Invasive species management</li></ul> | 1-2 Years<br>(Short Term)  |
| 4A.2 Plant and maintain trees in spectator areas at athletic facilities for heat mitigation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Scott Park</li><li>» Silver City Ballpark</li></ul>                                                                                                                                               | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| 4A.3 Conduct large tree pruning and maintenance and expand planting and landscaping at the Senior Center.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| 4A.4 Look for opportunities to add tree canopy in open planting spaces. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Dog Park</li><li>» Johnny Banks Park</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                         | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| 4A.5 Revitalize Murray Ryan Visitor Center Landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Tree removal and replacement</li><li>» Structural pruning and maintenance for existing trees</li><li>» Improve irrigation efficiency</li><li>» Additional succession plantings</li></ul>                                                  | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |





# Action Plan

## Goal

*Primary Stewardship Area: Community Services and Athletic Facilities*

# 4

Silver City's community forest enhances public health and quality of life for residents and visitors.

### **Strategy 4B**

Cool pedestrian walkways, bus stops, parking lots, and other high pavement areas through the use of trees and landscaping.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Timeline                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <p>4B.1 Develop a plan for planting street trees, parking lot trees, and building landscaping irrigated by GSI in the 32nd Street Bypass and US-I80 Service Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Bus stops</li><li>» Grant County Convention Center</li><li>» New Mexico Human Services Building</li><li>» Children, Youth, and Families Building</li><li>» Silver City Ball Park</li><li>» Retail stores</li></ul> | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| <p>4B.2 Develop a plan for planting street trees, parking lot trees, and building landscaping irrigated by GSI in the Silver Heights Service Center:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Bus stops</li><li>» Gila Regional Medical Center and associated offices</li><li>» Silver City Recreation Center, Swimming Pool, and Athletic Fields</li><li>» Silver High School</li></ul>                                      | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| <p>4B.3 Develop a plan for planting street trees, parking lot trees, and building landscaping irrigated by GSI in the 11th and Pope Street Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Bus stops</li><li>» City Hall Annex</li><li>» Silver City Public Safety Building</li><li>» Medical clinics</li><li>» Professional commercial offices</li></ul>                                                                      | 5+ Years<br>(Long Term)    |

#### **GOAL 4 PARTNERS INCLUDE:**

- » SWNM Community Forestry Network
- » Grant County
- » Silver City MainStreet
- » Gila Regional Medical Center
- » Silver City Consolidated Schools District
- » New Mexico School Facilities Association

#### **GOAL 4 RESOURCES INCLUDE:**

- » Recommended Tree and Plant List for Silver City
- » Guide to Planning and Implementing Community Forestry Projects
- » Green Stormwater Infrastructure Implementation Guide
- » Irrigation Guide

# Action Plan

Goal

Primary Stewardship Area: Urban Corridors

5

Silver City proactively integrates the community forest into residential and commercial growth.

**Strategy 5A**

Develop cohesive streetscaping on US- I80 and NM-90 to create attractive business districts and foster a distinctive sense of place.

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Timeline                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 5A.1 Coordinate with NMDOT to develop cohesive landscaping projects along US- I80 and NM-90 for traffic calming and heat mitigation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Add landscaping to highlight the Silver City gateway signs</li><li>» Identify parcels along corridors owned by the Town of Silver City or in the right of way that could provide opportunities for complementary landscaping</li><li>» Continue and expand the Silver City MainStreet “adopt-a-median” program to include buffer strips</li></ul> | 5+ Years<br>(Long Term) |
| 5A.2 Implement a program to assist existing commercial properties along US- I80 and NM-90 to conform with land use code for new commercial development.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 5+ Years<br>(Long Term) |

**Strategy 5B**

Proactively integrate tree infrastructure and irrigation into new and expanding residential developments along streets and in parks and other public spaces.

| Actions                                                                                      | Timeline                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 5B.1 Develop a park and streetscape plan for the developing neighborhoods along south NM-90. | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |

GOAL 5 PARTNERS INCLUDE:

- » SWNM Community Forestry Network
- » New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT)
- » Silver City MainStreet

GOAL 5 RESOURCES INCLUDE:

- » Recommended Tree and Plant List for Silver City
- » Guide to Planning and Implementing Community Forestry Projects
- » Sample Tree Ordinance
- » Irrigation Guide



# Action Plan

## Goal

*Primary Stewardship Area: Natural Landscapes and Open Space*

6

Silver City actively manages the community forest in natural and open spaces for environmental services, wildlife habitat, and human benefit.

### **Strategy 6A**

**Improve the health of the community forest in riparian channels within Silver City municipal boundaries.**

| Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Timeline                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 6A.1 Continue sustained efforts to remove dead and down trees, invasive species, and accumulated fuels in riparian areas.                                                                                                                    | Ongoing                    |
| 6A.2 Coordinate with Grant County, NMED, NM EMNRD/State Forestry, NRCS and water agencies to develop a program to proactively manage riparian areas and prioritize work to minimize fire danger, flood risk, and invasive species migration. | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| 6A.3 Develop and implement an invasive plant management program for riparian channels.                                                                                                                                                       | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| 6A.4 This is a suggested edit: Support and enhance the implementation of the Grant County Community Wildfire Protection Plan by becoming a Firewise USA® site.                                                                               | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |

### **Strategy 6B**

**Incorporate community forest maintenance and monitoring into Open Space Area management.**

| Actions                                                                                                                                                         | Timeline                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 6B.1 Use native trees, shrubs, rock work and trail signs to develop trailheads and designated parking for Open Space areas, such as La Capilla and Hidden Park. | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |
| 6B.2 Engage trail steward volunteers in monitoring for high risk trail trees and establish a reporting mechanism to assign and accomplish work.                 | 2-5 Years<br>(Medium Term) |

#### **GOAL 6 PARTNERS INCLUDE:**

- » SWNM Community Forestry Network
- » Grant County
- » New Mexico Environment Department (NMED)
- » New Mexico State Forestry Division
- » Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
- » Other water agencies

#### **GOAL 6 RESOURCES INCLUDE:**

- » Recommended Tree and Plant List for Silver City
- » Guide to Planning and Implementing Community Forestry Projects
- » Irrigation Guide
- » Grant County Community Wildfire Protection Plan

# Additional Resources

## Supporting Networks & Organizations

Southwest New Mexico Community Forestry Network (CFN)

Gila Resources Information Project (GRIP)

Integrated Biological Solutions (IBIS)

Western New Mexico University (WNMU)

Grant County Cooperative Extension

New Mexico Tree Alliance

New Mexico Urban Forest Council

New Mexico Forestry Division

Arid LID (Low Impact Development) Coalition

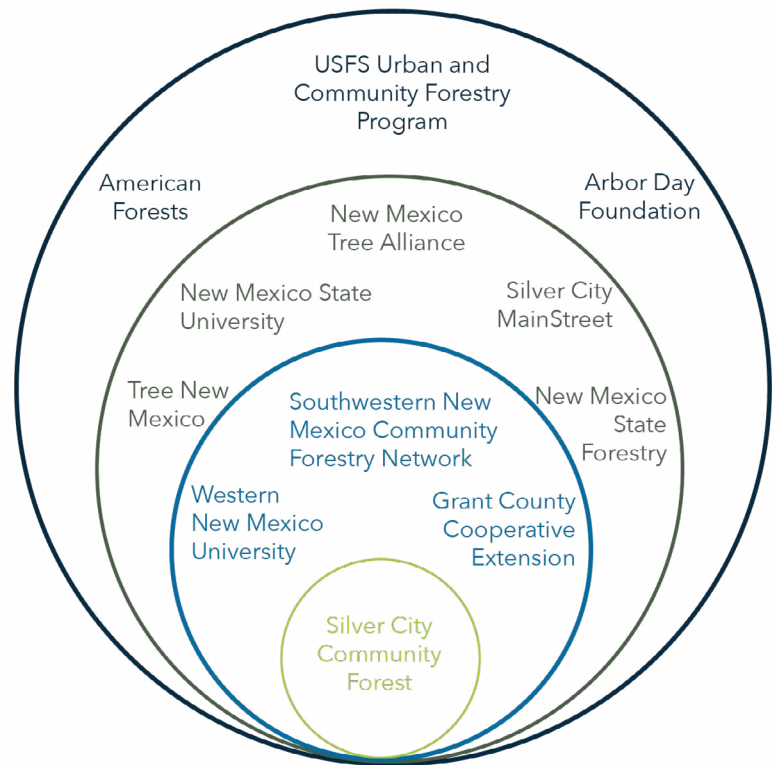
Tree New Mexico

Arbor Day Foundation

- » Partners in Community Forestry
- » Trees are Good
- » TreeCity USA

American Forests

US Forest Service, Urban and Community Forestry Program



## Supporting Documents

The Southwest Community Forestry Network (CFN) website, [swnmforestry.org](http://swnmforestry.org), was designed to help coordinate efforts and share information between communities and project partners, including links to additional resources that are referenced in this management plan. The network and the project team will continue producing and curating tools as needed to help the towns put their plans into action, such as:

- » Examples of seasonal maintenance schedules and checklists.
- » Guides to planning and implementing community forest projects.
- » Guides to planning and implementing green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) projects.
- » Templates for recommended policies, such as a Vegetation Ordinance, a Complete Streets Ordinance and/or a Cemetery Tree Policy.
- » Templates for contracts to enlist the support and

specialized skills of a Certified Arborist, and a list of recommended questions to ask when selecting a practitioner to hire.

- » Example landscape maintenance and irrigation budgets.
- » Landscape irrigation guides and other resources.
- » Guide to connecting with regional resources and groups, such as the NM Tree Alliance and the SW Directory of Tree Care Practitioners.
- » Resources for soil testing and promoting soil health.
- » Resources for engaging residents and exploring neighborhood tree planting programs.

**More resources can be found on the Southwest New Mexico Community Forestry Network (CFN) website: [swnmforestry.org](http://swnmforestry.org).**



# The CFN Community Engagement Roadmap

Public input and local knowledge are critical components to any community planning effort. In September 2024 the project team produced the Community Engagement Roadmap, which can be found on the CFN project website. This document outlined the project’s approach to engaging various audiences in the development of the Community Forestry Management Plans. The project team employed a unique set of strategies tailored specifically to each of the six community’s needs and public practices.

The Roadmap includes actionable engagement strategies that can be adapted and applied to a variety of future projects in Silver City that have a public outreach component, such as:

- » Using different approaches to reach a variety of community audiences in a way that best suits their needs and interests.
- » Informing, consulting, involving, collaborating with, or empowering the engagement audiences at strategic points in the project (Source: Spectrum for Public Participation, International Association for Public Participation).
- » Establishing clear objectives for community engagement.
- » Employing a variety of engagement techniques to “meet people where they are,” such as: community surveys, outreach booths at well-attended events, presentations, informational handouts, consultations with community groups and municipal leaders, use of social media and traditional media, fliers and door hangers, providing access to translation services, mailings, and creation of “Info Hubs” and a project website.

As Silver City works to champion projects featured in this plan, the Comprehensive Plan, the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) or other plans, **this Community Engagement Roadmap can serve as a useful resource to help project planners conduct meaningful community engagement.**



*Public outreach event at the Silver City Farmers Market in September 2024, where residents were able to learn about the project, complete the survey to provide input for the development of the Community Forest Management Plans, and take home a tree seedling to plant at their homes.*

# Recommended Tree List for Silver City

## LARGE SHADE TREES

| <u>Common Name</u>        | <u>Latin Name</u>                                | <u>Water Needs</u> | <u>Local Expert Notes</u>                                                                                         |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Persian Silk Tree/ Mimosa | <i>Albizia julibrissin</i>                       | Medium             | Susceptible to freeze damage when young.                                                                          |
| Common Hackberry          | <i>Celtis occidentalis</i>                       | Medium             | Prairie Sentinel(R) is a good cultivar for a more columnar look.                                                  |
| Netleaf Hackberry         | <i>Celtis reticulata</i>                         | Low                | Great native tree, not a good street tree.                                                                        |
| Kentucky Coffee Tree      | <i>Gymnocladus dioicus</i>                       | Medium             | May experiment with this species, mixed results in other areas of NM.                                             |
| Osage Orange              | <i>Maclura pomifera</i>                          | Medium             | Great tree, seedless and thornless varieties available.                                                           |
| White Mulberry            | <i>Morus alba</i>                                | Medium             | Very tolerant tree for urban conditions. High invasive potential.                                                 |
| Chinese Pistache          | <i>Pistacia chinensis</i>                        | Medium             | Performing very well. Very popular; beware of overplanting.                                                       |
| Mexican Sycamore          | <i>Platanus mexicana</i>                         | High               | Requires careful site selection, may be sensitive to drought conditions.                                          |
| Honey Mesquite            | <i>Prosopis glandulosa</i>                       | Low                | Look for Texas variety that are thornless and more tree like in form.                                             |
| Bur Oak                   | <i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>                        | Medium             | Not widely available yet, but a great native tree.                                                                |
| Chinquapin Oak            | <i>Quercus muehlenbergii</i>                     | Medium             | Invasiveness is a characteristic of reproduction for oaks, so care should be taken in choosing planting location. |
| Southern Live Oak         | <i>Quercus virginiana</i>                        | Medium             | Doing well in many locations.                                                                                     |
| Western Soapberry         | <i>Sapindus saponaria</i> var. <i>drummondii</i> | Low                | Can form thickets, and have toxic properties.                                                                     |
| American Elm              | <i>Ulmus americana</i>                           | Medium             | Gorgeous old specimens in area. Mostly sold as hybrid cultivars.                                                  |
| Cedar Elm                 | <i>Ulmus crassifolia</i>                         | Medium             |                                                                                                                   |
| Lacebark/Chinese Elm      | <i>Ulmus parvifolia</i>                          | Medium             | Prolific seeds in fall - concern about invasiveness. Different tree than Siberian Elm.                            |

## EVERGREEN TREES

| <u>Common Name</u> | <u>Latin Name</u>          | <u>Water Needs</u> | <u>Local Expert Notes</u>                                                |
|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Deodar Cedar       | <i>Cedrus deodar</i>       | Medium             | Performing well locally, but beginning to struggle in other parts of NM. |
| Arizona Cypress    | <i>Cupressus arizonica</i> | Medium             | Great tree with good hybrids available.                                  |
| Yaupon Holly       | <i>Ilex vomitoria</i>      | Medium             | Not a lot of familiarity locally, but doing well in other areas of NM.   |



## EVERGREEN TREES (*cont.*)

| <u>Common Name</u>      | <u>Latin Name</u>                                                         | <u>Water Needs</u> | <u>Local Expert Notes</u>                                                                        |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Alligator Juniper       | <i>Juniperus deppeana</i>                                                 | Low                | Exhibiting some die-back locally. Does need supplemental irrigation.                             |
| Rocky Mountain Juniper  | <i>Juniperus scopulorum</i>                                               | Low                |                                                                                                  |
| Eastern Red Cedar       | <i>Juniperus virginiana</i>                                               | Low                |                                                                                                  |
| Aleppo Pine             | <i>Pinus halepensis</i>                                                   | Low                | Few examples locally, but seem to be doing well.                                                 |
| Single leaf pinyon pine | <i>Pinus monophylla</i>                                                   | Low                | Small, but grows well locally.                                                                   |
| Italian Stone Pine      | <i>Pinus pinea</i>                                                        | Medium             | Few examples locally, but seem to be doing well.                                                 |
| Arizona White Oak       | <i>Quercus arizonica</i>                                                  | Low                | Evergreen oaks generally do well locally.                                                        |
| Emory Oak               | <i>Quercus emoryi</i>                                                     | Medium             |                                                                                                  |
| Escarpment Live Oak     | <i>Quercus fusiformis</i>                                                 | Medium             |                                                                                                  |
| Mexican Elder           | <i>Sambucus mexicana</i>                                                  | Medium             | High performer in urban environments. Fast growing, but needs pruning to maintain its tree form. |
| Texas Mountain Laurel   | <i>Sophora secundiflora</i><br>(SEE <i>Dermatophyllum secundiflorum</i> ) | Low                | Struggling with cold hardiness.                                                                  |

## SMALL/MEDIUM TREES

| <u>Common Name</u>         | <u>Latin Name</u>             | <u>Water Needs</u> | <u>Local Expert Notes</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mexican Redbud             | <i>Cercis mexicana</i>        | Medium             | Redbuds are doing well locally, Texas and Mexican species in particular. Eastern redbud ( <i>Cercis canadensis</i> ) is not generally recommended due to its intolerance to wind, but 'Forest pansy' varietal has grown well. Redbuds greatly benefit from good pruning. |
| Western Redbud             | <i>Cercis occidentalis</i>    | Medium             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Oklahoma Redbud            | <i>Cercis reniformis</i>      | Medium             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Texas Redbud               | <i>Cercis texicana</i>        | Medium             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Desert Willow              | <i>Chilopsis linearis</i>     | Low                | Highly recommended.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Texas Persimmon            | <i>Diospyros texana</i>       | Low                | Not much local experience with this species.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| New Mexico Olive           | <i>Forestiera neomexicana</i> | Medium             | Highly recommended.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Golden-ball Leadtree       | <i>Leucaena retusa</i>        | Low                | Good tree, but currently difficult to find.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Southern Wax Myrtle        | <i>Morella cerifera</i>       | High               | No local experience with this species.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Texas/Little Leaf Mulberry | <i>Morus microphylla</i>      | Low                | Highly recommended.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Hoptree (Wafer Ash)        | <i>Ptelia trifolata</i>       | Low                | Recommended by local experts. Drought tolerant.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Screwbean Mesquite         | <i>Prosopis pubescens</i>     | Very Low           | Thorny, and concerns regarding their ability to handle local soil conditions.                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Texas Red Oak              | <i>Quercus buckleyi</i>       | Medium             | Highly recommended.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Chaste Tree                | <i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>     | Medium             | Performing well locally, and can achieve small tree size in right conditions.                                                                                                                                                                                            |

A photograph showing a large number of young trees and shrubs in black plastic pots, arranged in rows. The plants have green leaves and thin stems. In the background, a person is visible, slightly out of focus. The text "Thank you Silver City, for planting the next generation of trees!" is overlaid on the image.

Thank you Silver City, for planting the  
next generation of trees!