



# The Animas River Trails System

A conceptual plan for a trails system and open  
space use

2024





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# Introduction



The Animas River Trails System was conceived over 20 years ago as a way to connect Aztec's diverse natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources through a bicycle and pedestrian friendly network of walkways and trails. The original document titled as the Animas River Trail and Interurban Loop was developed by Green Gold (Mitzi Messick, September 2003). This concept was updated in 2010 in collaboration with Aztec Trails and Open Spaces (ATOS) organization which developed the first edition of the Aztec River Trails System (ARTS).

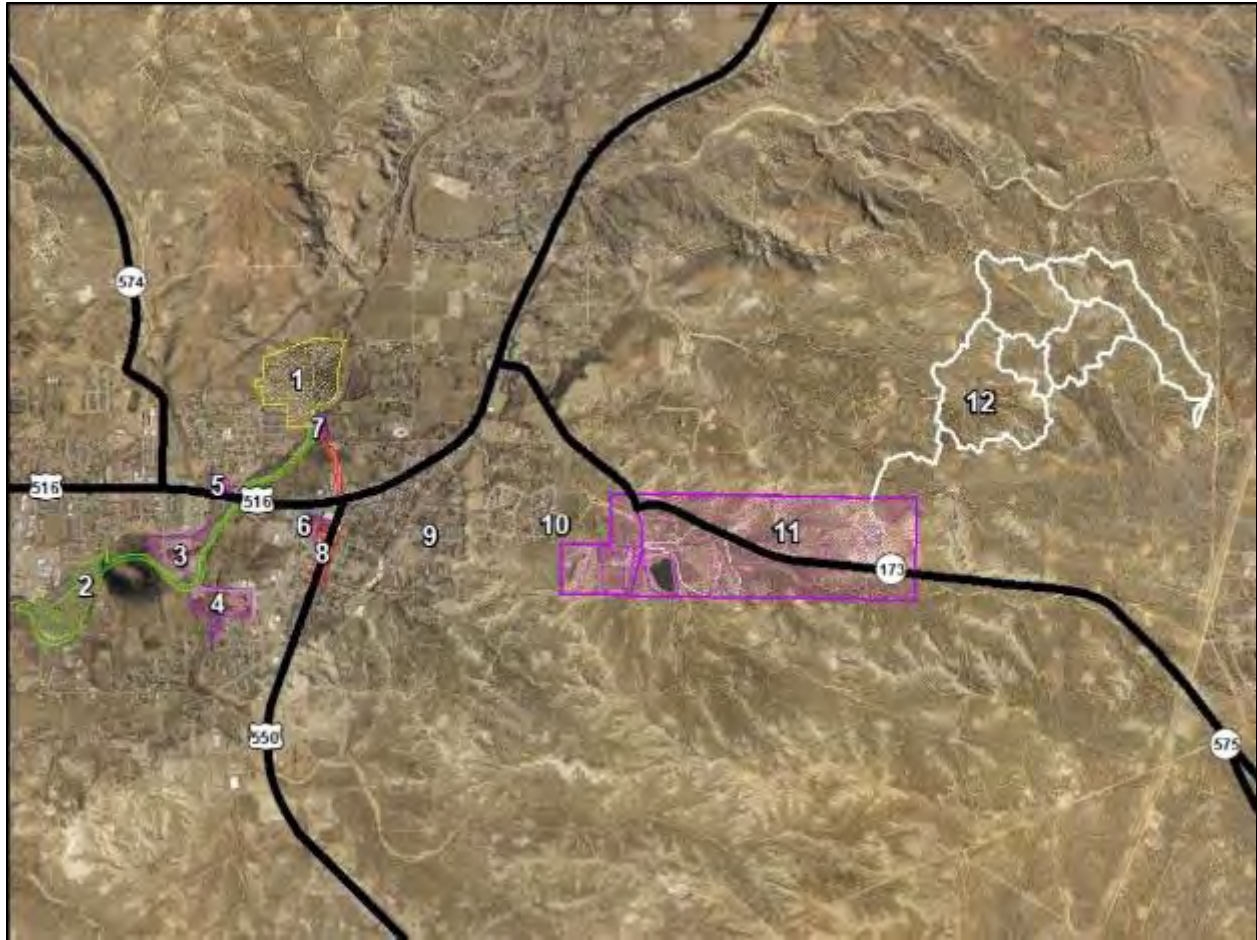
The purpose of this document is to update the ARTS 2010 plan. This plan is intended to be reviewed every five (5) years or on an as needed basis as changes occur to ensure the following goals are being achieved:

- Provide safe and pleasant routes throughout the city;
- Create a connection between the Animas River to the Historic Downtown District;
- Maintain a friendly, small town atmosphere by encouraging pedestrian use;
- Provide alternatives to motorized transportation options for daily use;
- To highlight and promote sites and locations of historical, cultural and natural significance; and
- Reconnect the community with the river.

Aztec has a rich history and attractive features. The proposed Animas River Trails System will connect Aztec's major points of interest by constructing new trail ways in key areas and linking existing trail segments to form a web of walkways and trails throughout the city.

The trail system connects neighborhoods such as Aztec's Historic downtown with city parks (e.g., Riverside Park, Hartman Park, Florence Park, and Tiger Park) with the Aztec Ruins National Monument, the Animas River. The system of trail ways features several trailheads with parking areas making it accessible at various points to visitors and residents alike.

What follows is a review of existing trail assets, trail segments and some proposed major trails and features. Features that have been recently identified as necessary throughout the trail system include bicycle lanes, signage, bicycle racks in areas of public parking, seating or rest areas, trash cans, and pet clean-up stations, to name a few.



Resources in Aztec.

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Aztec Ruins National Monument        | 9. Cap Walls Park                    |
| 2. River Corridor, natural, undeveloped | 10. Kokopelli Park                   |
| 3. Riverside Park                       | 11. City Recreation Lands (BLM Deed) |
| 4. Hartman Sports Complex               | • Tiger Park & Sports Complex        |
| 5. Florence Park                        | • Aztec Disc Golf Course             |
| 6. Minium Park                          | • Aztec Motocross                    |
| 7. North Main Extension                 | • Kart Canyon Speedway               |
| 8. Historic Downtown                    | 12. Mountain View Trails             |

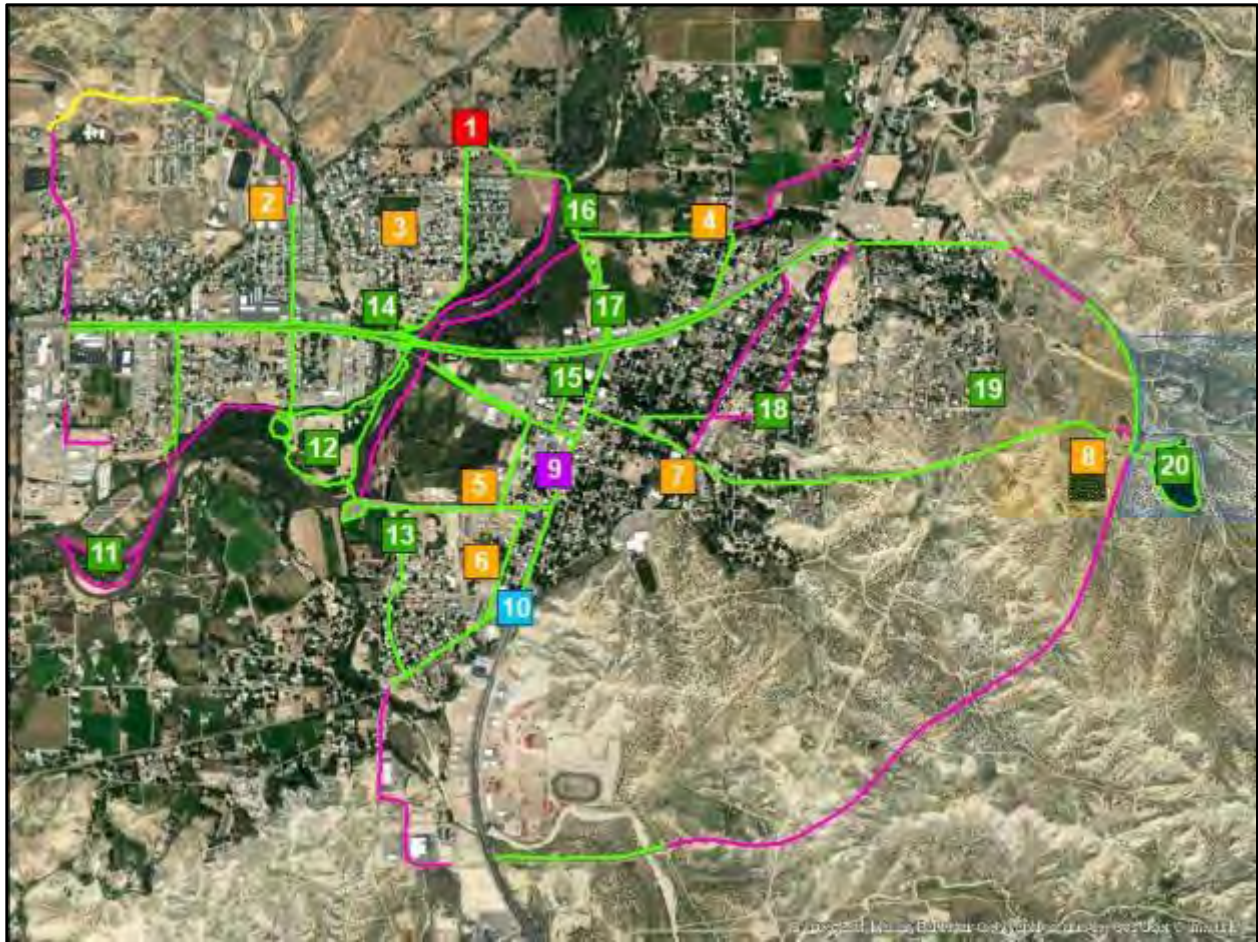


## Getting Connected

Linking Aztec's natural, cultural, and historic resources can help to preserve its small-town character and strong sense of community, while creating new economic opportunities. The proposed Animas River Trail System links 11.7 miles of existing trail ways and 13.3 miles of new trails to form a system that connects Aztec's historic downtown with the Aztec Ruins National Monument and the Animas River. The trails pass or connect seven city parks and highlight several Historic sites. The trail system features several trailhead parking areas and is accessible to both pedestrians and cyclists.

In addition to the various recreational and educational functions, the Animas River Trails System also provides a safe network of trails and walkways connecting neighborhoods to schools and parks. After school functions and athletic activities at Hartman and Riverside Parks can be accessed via trail ways from many of Aztec's schools. The Aztec Family Center and Aztec Public Library are an easy walk or bicycle ride away from most of the city's schools. The proposed trail system allows Aztec's children to get to school and extracurricular activities safely. It also provides youth with rich opportunities to explore their environment and cultivate independence.





Connecting the Resources: Existing trails (green), under construction (yellow), proposed (pink).

1	Aztec Ruins National Monument	11	Townsend Wildlife Nature Refuge
2	Koogler Middle School	12	Riverside Park
3	Lydia Rippey Elementary	13	Hartman Park
4	McCoy Elementary	14	Florence Park
5	Library, B&G Club, Vista Nueva School	15	Minium Park
6	Park Avenue Elementary	16	Armijo Plaza
7	Aztec High School	17	Rio de Animas Park
8	Tiger Sports Complex (school district)	18	Cap Walls Park
9	Historic Downtown	19	Kokopelli Park
10	U.S. Post Office	20	Tiger Park & Reservoir



# Existing Trails



Currently within the Animas River Trails System are 17.9 miles (94,101 ft) of existing trails varying from simple earthen trails to concrete sidewalks. That is an increase of 65% (6.2 miles / 32,142 feet) since 2010.

Construction	Feet	Miles
Asphalt	13,332	2.5
Concrete	57,341	10.9
Earthen / Mulch	18,771	3.6
Gravel	2,801	0.5
Polypavement	1,856	0.4
Grand Total	94,101	17.9

## Ruins Trail

The Ruins Road Trail segment incorporates 0.58 miles of sidewalk to connect the intersection of Chaco Street, Ruins Road, and Aztec Boulevard (NM 516) with Aztec Ruins National Monument (#1).



This part of the trail also parallels a bicycle route and is ADA accessible. An Aztec Ruins monument sign was constructed in 2012 at the intersection of Ruins Road and Aztec Blvd (Hwy 516) to enhance its appearance and facilitate way finding.

This trail passes through a tranquil neighborhood as it skirts Florence Park (#14), and the southern edge of the Aztec Ruins where it enters a wooded area and will cross the Animas River via the North Animas River Pedestrian Bridge into the Rio de Animas Park (#16). Traveling further south, it provides access to Armijo Plaza (#17) and the intersection of Aztec Blvd and Main Ave (construction completed in 2023). This allows for connectivity to the historic downtown. Parking is available at Florence Park, Aztec Ruins, and at the end of North Main Ave. Alternatively, one can complete a loop by walking the sidewalks along Aztec Blvd (shown in yellow).



## Chaco-Llano Loop

The 1.7-mile Chaco-Main-Llano Loop has two options in order to complete a loop walk. The shortest option (green route) goes by the Family Center (#5) on Ash Ave, then Llano St that goes by Hartman Sports Complex (#13). One then crosses the Hartman-Riverside Pedestrian Bridge to enter Riverside Park (#14) and head north to the Money Saving Bridge.



The second option is to bypass Ash Ave and continue on Chaco St to reach Main Ave and enter the Historic Downtown Area (#9).

The Main Avenue portion of the walk runs through the historic downtown core. Some attractions include the Aztec Museum & Pioneer Village, Main Avenue Courtyard, with its frequent outdoor events, and the various restaurants, shops and art galleries along historic Main Avenue. Historically, raised plank walkways along Main Avenue were places where Aztec residents and visitors conducted business and socialized. These walkways are important links to the past and can help maintain a vibrant downtown. To help identify this sidewalk portion of the trail system distinctive signage and kiosks are recommended and would be located at strategic points throughout the entire system.

## What Is Needed

- Historic designed signage.
- Historic plaques.
- Kiosks at key locations.

## Historic Walking Tour

This walkway system consists of paved sidewalks which run along parts of Main Avenue, Church Avenue, Mesa Verde Avenue, Lovers Lane, and Chaco Street. A brochure was created by the Aztec Museum to accompany this Historic Walking Tour which contains photos and history of many of the Nationally Registered Historical houses and buildings found along the walking tour.





## Riverside Park Loop

This trail creates a loop around Riverside Park and provides for a scenic walk along the Animas River. It can be easily accessed from Riverside and Hartman Parks via the Riverside-Hartman Pedestrian Bridge and is ideal for fishing, hiking, bicycling and family-oriented recreation.



The trail segment along the Animas River corridor is concrete and allows for ADA use along most of the trail along the river's edge and across the pedestrian bridge. In addition, through the contribution of San Juan Regional Medical center, four fitness stations are available along this trail:

1. Push-Off
2. Body-Pull
3. Sit-Up
4. Body-Tuck

Efforts were made to connect the Riverside Loop with Townsend Wildlife Nature Refuge which is 0.4 miles west via the Eledge Ditch Trail. However, the ditch company sought not to enter into an agreement for public use of the Eledge Ditch access road. Subsequently, the City has been working on obtaining easements across three private

parcels of land to allow for such connectivity. The City has successfully acquired one of the three easements.

### What Is Needed

- Continued improvements / maintenance of the trail loop.
- Installation of kiosks.
- Uniformity in signage.
- Possibly more rest stops or other trail features such as pet clean-up stations.

### Tiger Lake Loop

This ½-mile trail consists of a loop around Tiger Lake (Reservoir #3). Currently it is only accessible by driving to Tiger Park. It is hoped that once the East Aztec Arterial is complete, that the pathway along that highway will provided walkable access from the city. Each 10<sup>th</sup> of a mile is marked with a mile marker.





## Riverside - Hartman Pedestrian Bridge

This pedestrian bridge allows pedestrian and bicycle access between these two popular parks (Riverside Park & Hartman Park). The bridge spans over 260 feet across the Animas River and features extended piers for fishing and other recreation. It connects the diverse athletic facilities of both parks including the soccer, softball, football fields, and the skateboard park. This important connection allows parents and children to safely and conveniently pass from one park to the other and connects the Chaco-Main-Llano Walk to the Riverside Loop Trails.

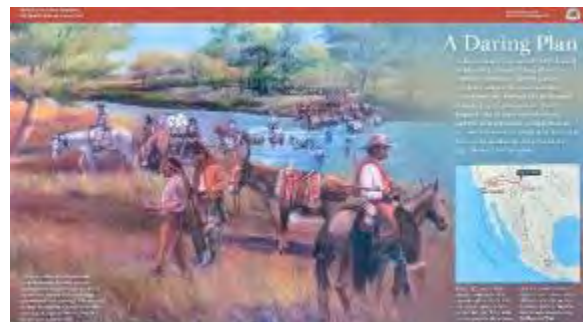


## Aztec Ruins – Rio de Animas Park Bridge

Completed in 2012, this is the northern pedestrian bridge which allows for the connectivity of the Ruins Trail with Rio de Animas park, recent construction of the North Main Extension (Armijo Plaza), and ultimate connection with historic downtown.



The Aztec Ruins National Monument has provided and installed signage along the bridge to provide historical information.









## Future Trails

### Animas River Corridor

The concept of creating a looped trail along the Animas River has been considered since the development of this plan. Two proposed trail segments would be necessary to create such a loop along the Animas River.

- Animas River Trail East (shown in green)
- Animas River Trail West (shown in yellow)

Each trail section has its own challenges in terms of development.



### Animas River Trail East

Shown in green, requires obtaining easement from two private property owners and likely would not occur until development occurs on the land.

### Animas River Trail West

Shown in yellow, this trail would follow the existing Eledge Ditch. It would require easements across several properties:

- Aztec Ruins National Monument (////)
- City of Aztec (////)
- Private (////)
- Unknown (not hatched). No land ownership can be determined from the San Juan County Assessor's records.

This proposed 0.25 mile trail segment follows the irrigation ditch from the Ruins Road Trail near the proposed Bridge Park, through a shady cottonwood bosque to meet the Riverside Trail, and then continues on to the Townsend Wildlife Nature Refuge. It can also be accessed via Chaco Street and the Chaco-Main-Llano Walk. The trail passes underneath Chaco Street and Aztec Boulevard and provides a safe and pleasant alternative to the crosswalks above.

### **What Is Needed**

- Discussions/agreement with Aztec Ruins National Monument for trail easement (West Segment).
- Discussions/agreement with Eledge Ditch Association to acquire easements along Eledge Ditch (West Segment).
- Discussions/agreement with private property owners for easements (East and West Segments).
- Design and construction of trail.
- Inclusion of trail features and signage.





## Townsend Wildlife Nature Refuge & Trails

This roughly 42 acre parcel is mainly set aside as native open space. Previous efforts to eliminate and monitor invasive species shall continue until this threat no longer exists. The property has been cleared of cross fences and minor drainage ditches.

Part of the trail system has been developed through the two-track road used to access the City of Aztec solar farm. A trail segment leading to the facility (shown in green) would be able to provide users to view the solar farm.



A walking/bicycling trail is proposed to follow along the Animas River and then loop back along the woodland edge (shown in Yellow).

The park shall be eliminated of invasive species; among those noted are Russian Olive, Salt Cedar, Russian Thistle, and Russian Knapweed. While there may be others present these are the most pervasive and active removal and monitoring is necessary for the next several years. This property is frequented by many varieties of wildlife, and it is intended to remain a natural sanctuary for native plants and animals. Potential maintenance for this property, once invasive species are eliminated and native species are established, may include using a brush hog to cut down grasses a couple of times a year to help prevent fire danger.

Another potential beneficial use for this native setting is as a natural filter for storm water runoff from city streets and facilities which sit at higher elevations than the refuge. This concept is in keeping with the newly developed Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES) which focuses on sustainable parks and is a spinoff of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program for green buildings. For additional information on SITES visit: [www.sustainablesites.org](http://www.sustainablesites.org).



Parking to access this park and trail loop could be developed as a gravel base parking facility in the northeast corner of the property close to where the trail meets the bridge across the ditch. An access point for the Animas River would also be developed in relatively close proximity to the parking area. This would allow for recreational water activities on the Animas River and act as a final pullout point for rafters before leaving the City of Aztec and heading into County and private property downriver. The parking area and river access point will be fenced off from the rest of the refuge to prevent vehicular traffic from wandering beyond these designated areas.

The focus of this entire park and trail loop is to protect and preserve open space for native plant and animal life. As such there are numerous opportunities to utilize this park as an observation area and as an educational resource. Plant markers and wildlife identification stations can be placed along the trail loop. There shall also be educational kiosks explaining Solar Energy and showing other outdoor recreational opportunities in the Aztec area.





## Trail Information

It is the intent to have standardized signage along the trails system which can provide cultural, natural, and/or historic information pertinent to that particular area. There are three fundamental types of signage that will be utilized along the trail system:

1. Directional
2. Informational
3. Regulatory

Signage for access to the trail system should be incorporated into the various directional road signs placed throughout the roadways within Aztec. Aside from standard trail signs, several kiosks are planned for locations at Rio de Animas Park, Riverside-Hartman Park, Tiger Park, and Townsend Wildlife Nature Refuge. These kiosks will contain interpretive panels with benches, trash receptacles, etc. Conceptually the informational panels could contain the following information for each location:

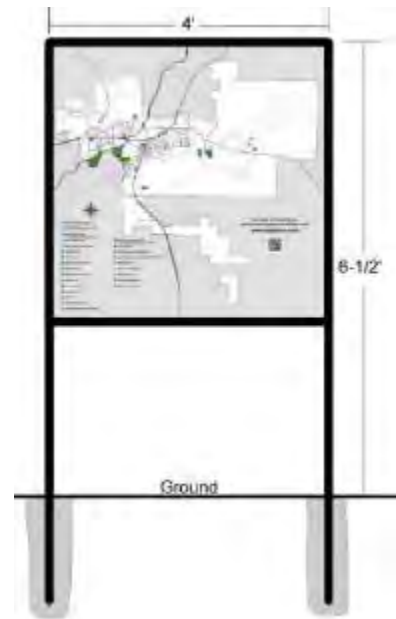
### North Main Trail

Entrance into Rio de Animas Park from the North Main Extension could act as a gateway to the sites and locations on the opposite side of the Animas River. This important connection provides river access to Aztec Ruins National Monument, enhances the experience of visiting the adjacent national monument and encourages trail use. Signage through kiosk locations (1-5) could include:

- 1 Aztec Becomes a Community  
Brief Anglo history of Aztec
- 2 Hispanic History  
Old Spanish Trail, Hispanic history
- 3 Ancestral Puebloan History  
Details about Aztec Ruins and Pueblo Culture
- 4 City Map with Points of Interest  
Aztec Ruins, Museum, Recreation Areas, etc
- 5 Outdoor Recreation Destinations  
Disc Golfing, Mountain Biking, Aztec Motocross, Kart Canyon, Aztec Arches



Each sign kiosk will consist of 3" by 3" square tubing construction at an above ground height of 6-1/2". Sign panels will be 4' by 4' single sided and oriented towards the trail.



### **Townsend Wildlife Refuge**

- Nature key to local wildlife and plants.
- Informational panel on Solar Energy.
- Map of other city parks and trails system.





# Index of Trails

Trail Segment	Built (Ft)	Proposed (Ft)	Total (ft)
ANIMAS RIVER (NE) TRAIL		2,661	2,661
ANIMAS RIVER (NW) TRAIL		3,459	3,459
ANIMAS RIVER (SE) TRAIL		2,216	2,216
APACHE AVE	1,882		1,882
ARTERIAL ROUTE	5,115	9,693	14,807
ASH AVE (S)	1,346		1,346
AZTEC BLVD (NE)	5,046		5,046
AZTEC BLVD (W)	16,233		16,233
AZTEC RUINS NATIONAL MONUMENT	431		431
AZTEC RUINS TRAIL	1,273		1,273
BLANCO ST	8,235	361	8,596
BRIDGE PARK TRAIL		412	412
CHACO ST (W)	3,910		3,910
CHAMIZA AVE		2,566	2,566
CR 3400		2,003	2,003
ELEDGE DITCH TRAIL	2,339	1,946	4,285
ESTES ARROYO CROSSING	420		420
FLORENCE PARK	430		430
LIGHT PLANT RD (N)	1,731	1,651	3,382
LIGHT PLANT RD (S)	1,249		1,249
LLANO ST	3,718		3,718
LOVERS LN	1,203	861	2,063
LOWER ANIMAS DITCH TRAIL		2,657	2,657
MAIN AVE (S)	4,264		4,264
MARTINEZ LANE	2,326		2,326
MC WILLIAMS RD	519	2,384	2,903
MCCOY AVE	1,076		1,076
MCCOY BRIDGE	64		64

MONEY SAVING BRIDGE	406		726
NAVAJO DAM RD		1,362	1,362
NORTH MAIN TRAIL	3,106		3,106
OLIVER DR (N)		2,882	2,882
OLIVER DR (S)		545	545
PARK AVE (N)	990		990
PARK AVE (S)	1,806		1,806
PEPSI WAY		1,454	1,454
RIO ANIMAS TRAIL	583		583
RIO GRANDE AVE (N)		3,159	3,159
RIO GRANDE AVE (S)	2,092		2,092
RIVERSIDE FISH POND	1,116		1,116
RIVERSIDE PARK	3,412		3,412
RIVERSIDE-HARTMAN BRIDGE	728		728
RUINS RD	3,157		3,157
RUINS TRAIL	426		426
SABENA ST	2,763		2,763
SWIRE AVE	1,833		1,833
TIGER PARK	1,033		1,033
TIGER PARK LAKE LOOP	2,553		2,553
TOWNSEND REFUGE	1,312	3,756	5,068
WESTERN DR		676	676
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>20,425</b>	<b>4,432</b>	<b>137,148</b>