

CITY OPENS SECTION OF RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION.

Paved path will eventually link downtown to Frenchy's Field

By Staci Matlock

The New Mexican

Santa Fe is about one-third of a mile closer to completing a recreational trail along the Santa Fe River that will connect Alto Park to Frenchy's Field.

The city recently unveiled the completed 10-foot-wide concrete trail meandering about 1,800 feet from Ricardo Road toward Don Jose Road off Alameda Street. The trail will eventually stretch the 1.5 miles between the two parks, giving runners, walkers and bicyclists easy, safe access to downtown Santa Fe.

Tucker, a shepherd-mix from Grand Rapids, Mich., took his people, John and Heather Findeisen, for a test walk on the trail Tuesday. The canine would have liked it better if the couple had let her off the leash, but the Findeisens, in town awaiting the birth of a grandchild, enjoyed the trail. "It's lovely, nice and wide," Heather Findeisen said.

Currently, no parking lot has been built along the trail. Eventually, people will be able to park at Alto or Frenchy's Field parks and hop on the trail. The trail will feature signs, benches and shady trees along it.

The first segment cost \$300,000 to build, according to Rachel Friedman, the city's river coordinator. It features signs on either end in Spanish and English reminding people of trail etiquette: No dumping trash, no camping, no riding all-terrain vehicles. "The reason this was built first is because the city owns the property," Friedman said.

The city has been negotiating easements with 25 private property owners along the Santa Fe River where the trail is planned. Friedman said so far, the landowners seem willing to consider the easements. The city recently finished appraisals for easements through Barrio de la Canada, and all 15 property owners accepted the city's offers. Some of the easements are for the trail and some are for concurrent work the city is doing to restore the river channel and prevent erosion.

The state Legislature has provided funding for the trail. The easements are permanent, but property owners still own the land, and the agreements don't change property setbacks, Friedman said.

An existing concrete sidewalk runs 2.77 miles along the Santa Fe River between East Palace Avenue and Camino Alire. The new river trail will eventually join the existing one.

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