

PETROGLYPH NATIONAL MONUMENT VISITOR SERVICES AND FACILITY ENHANCEMENTS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Park Service, in collaboration with the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division, is developing site plans for visitor services and facility enhancements for the Boca Negra Canyon and Lava Shadows areas (including the Visitor Information Center), the two primary visitor destinations in Petroglyph National Monument. The current facilities at Boca Negra Canyon have served visitors since 1973 when it was established as Indian Petroglyph State Park and managed by the City of Albuquerque. The Lava Shadows area includes the Las Imágenes Visitor Information Center, which occupies a historic home constructed in 1948. It is the primary place for visitors to learn about the natural and cultural history of the monument and serves as the base for exploration and wayfinding. The Lava Shadows area also includes an amphitheater built in 2014 that serves as a venue for larger events. The goal of this planning project is to provide visitors with meaningful experiences through improved facilities and opportunities for discovery, learning, and connecting to park resources, while ensuring that cultural and natural resources are preserved for future generations.

From March 23, 2026, through April 30, 2026, National Park Service staff solicited public input on the future of Boca Negra Canyon and Lava Shadows, including potential visitor opportunities and facility improvements. The National Park Service conducted this civic engagement period because public input is integral to a thoughtful and sustainable management approach that keeps Petroglyph National Monument's special places accessible and well-preserved.

In March 2026, the National Park Service released a newsletter with preliminary site concept maps to inform the public about this planning effort. This newsletter described project goals, the desired visions for Boca Negra Canyon and Lava Shadows, and proposed site improvements. The newsletter was made available on the [National Park Service Planning, Environment, and Public Comment \(PEPC\) website](#), and hard copies were made available at the monument's public outreach events. Additionally, physical copies of the newsletter were sent to the approximately 1,700 households within 660 feet in any direction of the Boca Negra Canyon and Lava Shadows sites in accordance with City of Albuquerque planning requirements. A press release issued on March 13, 2026, announced the availability of the newsletter, which included the dates the National Park Service would accept comments; and the date, time, and location of a planned public site visit to Boca Negra and an open house. The newsletter directed interested individuals to the project's PEPC website to submit comments.

The site visit at Boca Negra Canyon on March 28, 2026, lasted two hours and was attended by 12 people. The visit allowed members of the public to view the site and existing facilities as well as discuss opportunities to improve the onsite visitor experience with park staff. The evening public open house was held on March 30, 2026, at the Don Newton Taylor Ranch Community Center (4900 Kachina St. NW, Albuquerque, New Mexico). Approximately 13 people attended to hear national park staff present proposed site improvements for the Boca Negra Canyon and Lava

Shadows areas. Attendees, some of whom also participated in the site visit, were able to ask questions, provide comments, and interface with park staff.

The National Park Service engaged with Tribes and Pueblos affiliated with the lands of Petroglyph National Monument throughout the planning and concept development process. Representatives of these groups were invited to several site visits and workshop sessions outside the broader civic engagement activities described in this summary. These conversations guided the development of actions included in the conceptual site designs and site improvements that will support the overall landscape and protect important cultural features.

METHODOLOGY AND CORRESPONDENCE ANALYSIS

This report summarizes all public comments received during the March-April 2026 civic engagement period. The monument received 16 correspondences through the PEPC website, one handwritten comment mailed to the park's administrative office, and one official response from the State of New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department.

An interdisciplinary team of National Park Service personnel read every correspondence received and analyzed all comments. Staff noted common themes that were expressed by multiple commenters as well as viewpoints expressed only once. Collectively, the content of comments, rather than the number of times a comment was received, will be used to guide the development of management strategies for resource preservation and visitor experience.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Correspondence.** The entire document received from a commenter. It can be in the form of a letter, written comment form, note card, or open house transcript.
- **Comment.** A portion of text within a correspondence that addresses a single subject or issue. Examples include an expression of support or opposition to the use of a potential management tool.
- **Comment Summary.** A grouping that is centered on a common subject. Comment summaries combine similar comments.

LEADING QUESTIONS

The National Park Service posed six questions to solicit targeted feedback from the public. These questions were included in the newsletter and on the PEPC website:

1. What do you like about the site plans at Boca Negra Canyon and why? What would you change?
2. What do you consider the highest priority for visitor services or facility enhancements at Boca Negra Canyon and why?
3. What do you consider the highest priority for resource protection measures at Boca Negra Canyon and why?
4. What do you like about the site plan at Lava Shadows and why? What would you change?

5. What do you consider the highest priority for visitor services or facility enhancements at the Lava Shadows area and why?
6. What other ideas do you have related to this planning effort?

The following narratives summarize the responses received regarding Boca Negra Canyon and Lava Shadows, as well as the general themes that emerged from the comments. These summaries present major concepts that were expressed often as well as perspectives voiced by only one or two commenters.

BOCA NEGRA CANYON

Questions 1, 2, and 3 asked the public about potential changes at Boca Negra Canyon, the most visited portion of Petroglyph National Monument.

Responses were split between those that wanted to “rewild” Boca Negra Canyon’s landscape by reducing or removing infrastructure and generally limiting visitor access at Boca Negra Canyon—a “less is more” mentality—and those that supported all the proposed facilities and asked for additional visitor opportunities and associated assets. Some commenters felt that the proposed trail closures and/or removals were extreme considering the lack of significant evidence to support its necessity. They believed trail closures would limit visitors’ access into and circulation within the monument. Keeping all existing trails and/or creating additional trails would help address crowding, according to a commenter.

The site concept for Boca Negra Canyon included a shaded outdoor visitor plaza designed to accommodate up to 50 people and a new shaded picnic area. Several commenters thought creating a group gathering place at Boca Negra Canyon was a good idea and would be great for visiting school groups and programs. Others did not want a new facility and experience at the site when the amphitheater and patio are already available at Lava Shadows for large gatherings. A few commenters noted that a space for 50 people would be larger than necessary and would impact sightlines and views of the escarpment and mesa. Another pointed out that additional picnic areas would result in more trash. The design concept would need to include adequate trash receptacles and plan for more frequent trash removal. One suggestion to decrease the amount of waste in the park was to remove all picnic tables at Boca Negra Canyon and replace them with benches.

There was broad support that continued trail maintenance should be a priority at Boca Negra Canyon. Landscape, trail, and road maintenance were brought up multiple times, even among commenters that otherwise opposed additional amenities. One commenter specifically called out trash and tumbleweeds as concerns. Maintenance of the existing guardrails and installation of new ones would improve visitor safety and could also provide more separation between visitors and the glyphs along the existing trails. Widening the Boca Negra Canyon trails would allow groups to pass without trampling nearby vegetation or contributing to social trails. However, other commenters would rather see the trails close to the escarpment decommissioned and shade shelters along the route removed. A commenter asked for additional directional signage along pedestrian trails—especially Mesa Point Trail—but stipulated that any additional signs or markers should be nonintrusive on the landscape. One commenter suggested that the National

Park Service should promote bicycling and improve the existing bike trail. Greater bicycle access would make new experiences available to visitors of all skill levels.

Many commenters welcomed the addition of the proposed comfort station and shade structures. Several identified additional bathrooms and shade as the highest priority for visitor services and facility enhancement. A few commenters preferred the addition of benches (uncovered or unshaded) along existing trails instead of shade structures because they would be less visually intrusive and still provide a place for visitors to rest. In either case, commenters stressed the importance of visitor safety at the site. Additional shade structures, benches, and potable water were important for visitors who may not be prepared for heat and other physical conditions of the site. Commenters also mentioned improved parking and/or designating a parking lot for “handicap” vehicles may support visitors’ experience and safety.

A few commenters wanted the National Park Service and the City of Albuquerque to better maintain the Upper Canyon Trail and existing shade structures, benches, and picnic areas instead of removing them. They argued that the current installations are in relatively good condition and provide another visitor experience. One suggestion for the retained Upper Canyon parking lot was the installation of a water bottle filling station that could be used by anyone taking advantage of the Unser Boulevard multi-use trail. Another commenter suggested installing a bench and shade structure partway up the multi-use trail to allow visitors climbing the hill a chance to rest, cool off, and contemplate the landscape.

Commenters felt strongly that resource protection, not additional facilities, needed to be the primary focus of park management. These commenters wanted increased and continued protection of cultural sites along the trails. One commenter suggested methods to deter visitors from walking off designated paths and touching or scraping nearby glyphs, including clearer site identification and sectioned-off areas. A few commenters also suggested that the National Park Service create an interactive onsite experience where visitors could touch replicas of the glyphs in the hope that this type of installation would keep children’s attention and reduce people touching the glyphs along the trails.

A commenter claimed the social trails that connect adjacent neighborhoods to the park, specifically the visitor-created trail that runs from Tesuque Drive NW along the southern edge of the arroyo, contribute to wildlife disturbances, vegetation trampling, rock removal, and sustained damage from bicycle and motorcycle use. The commenter further felt that increased residential development near the park contributes to wildlife impacts and soil erosion. They want the National Park Service to improve the monument boundary fencing along Atrisco Drive NW to stop pedestrian traffic from travelling through the fenceline and creating uncontrolled social trails.

Commenters wanted regular National Park Service presence at Boca Negra Canyon to provide law enforcement, interpretation, additional visitor orientation, and visitor safety support during emergencies. If interpretive rangers are not stationed at the park, commenters suggested additional signage and educational materials to describe the history and significance of the site and provide information about geology, vegetation, wildlife, and other natural resource topics. A commenter proposed redesigning the entrance road and visitor experience to better connect the

park's cultural significance to the resources Petroglyph National Monument was established to protect.

While no formal visitor information center was proposed for Boca Negra Canyon, a commenter asked the National Park Service to consider designing and constructing a dedicated facility to enhance visitor understanding of the park and its resources. They also suggested that the land southwest of the entrance gate and along Atrisco Drive NW owned by the State of New Mexico, and the private parcel currently for sale, be acquired by the National Park Service or City of Albuquerque for additional parking, if needed.

LAVA SHADOWS

Questions 4 and 5 focused on the site plan for Lava Shadows, the primary visitor orientation site for Petroglyph National Monument.

Commenters from both the newsletter outreach and the public open house shared less feedback about the Lava Shadows site plan than they did in response to the proposed enhancements at Boca Negra Canyon. Replacing the vault toilet with a bathroom, adding a water fountain, and finding ways to add shade to outdoor spaces were supported by commenters. One person suggested developing a visitor center near the Western Trail/Unser Boulevard location (i.e., the Lava Shadows area) to create a destination outside Boca Negra Canyon where group activities could be consolidated and where additional infrastructure would be less likely to impact resources within the park. If the Las Imágenes Visitor Information Center remains the main visitor orientation site, commenters wanted more information about the resources and visitor opportunities at the center and on the park website. They also asked that the National Park Service retain the Southwestern design and character of the Visitor Information Center. Any additional facilities or improvements should reflect this regional architectural style and be sensitive to the surrounding landscape. A commenter suggested native tree planting (juniper or mesquite) to support the natural landscape. Several commenters wanted to retain the horno to represent Southwestern Pueblo culture. A handful of responses did not support any expansion of the existing facilities footprint or paved parking at Lava Shadows.

One commenter pushed for enhanced pedestrian safety at the monument. They asked the National Park Service and the City of Albuquerque to work with the New Mexico Department of Transportation to improve the existing pedestrian crossing and address the left-hand turn at the Western Trail/Unser Boulevard intersection. One commenter asked for the trails at Lava Shadows to be retained and pointed out the need to connect the trails at Lava Shadows to overlooks or other locations where visitors could see glyphs. Cycling-related improvements suggested by commenters included multimodal access, shifting bicycle traffic off the road to a multiuse trail along the escarpment, and more bike racks.

OVERALL

Commenters supported the purpose and goals of the planning process as described in the National Park Service newsletter. They voiced appreciation for extensive consultation with Tribal partners and collaboration with the City of Albuquerque throughout the planning process as well as the consideration of accessibility. Many commenters wanted to see more information about

the cultural and natural resources within the park as well as interactive materials, especially for children.

One commenter asked for additional site visits and opportunities to review and comment on proposed projects.

The New Mexico State Parks Division submitted a letter of support for the proposed improvements shown for Boca Negra Canyon and Lava Shadows, saying they “align directly with state goals to enhance accessible, sustainable, and high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities within the Albuquerque area” and that they “fit with the state’s efforts to improve existing outdoor recreation areas and expand access, as documented in the Division’s ongoing administration and creation of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).”