

# URBAN CONSERVATION IN NEW MEXICO

## Achieving a sustainable future for people and nature

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is working with local partners and communities to enhance the relationship between cities and nature so both can thrive. Our Urban Conservation Program was established in Albuquerque in 2016 to build diverse partnerships and bring nature back into the city. We are focused on working with local and traditional communities to protect our drinking water quality, reduce heat impacts and invest in our urban tree canopy. Our work supports human and environmental health and increases habitat for native plants and animals. Fundamental to our approach is understanding what nature can do for cities—and what cities can do for nature.

# OUR WORK

Our Urban Conservation Program seeks to conserve nature and the value it provides while responding to Albuquerque's need for clean water, healthy neighborhoods and solutions to climate change.



## Urban Water

We are working to restore nature's ability to clean our stormwater and protect our drinking water. Our projects bring nature back into the city to reduce pollutants that harm the Rio Grande, capture rain water for outdoor uses, and enhance habitat for wildlife.

**Arroyo Restoration.** Albuquerque's network of natural arroyos transport stormwater—the rain and snow that runs off roofs, roads and pavement—from the city to the Rio Grande. But stormwater picks up pollutants along the way. To prevent dirty water from entering the Rio Grande, we are employing local youth from Rocky Mountain Youth Corps in a partnership with the local flood control agency, AMAFCA. Crews have planted

more than 2,800 young willows in three arroyos to allow native vegetation and soils to naturally filter out trash and pollutants. Interventions like this let nature work for us to manage water and create a healthier city.

**Rainwater Harvesting.** To collect and store rainwater for trees and community gardens, we are converting donated storage containers from General Mills, Inc. into large cisterns. We have installed 8,500 gallons of rainwater storage at schools, like Dolores Gonzales Elementary, community centers and community gardens to transform bare ground into natural places. We will also design a rain garden with a natural channel at the Westside Community Center, which will hold rain water runoff, allowing it to soak in and support a native garden.



## Urban Heat

Albuquerque covers roughly 190 square miles of high desert, and much of it is affected by urban heat. Higher urban temperatures occur because asphalt, concrete, brick and other building materials absorb and retain heat from the sun. Conversely, natural areas with trees and plants, like the Rio Grande Bosque, provide shade and act as natural air conditioners as plants breathe water and oxygen into the air.

**Mapping Temperatures.** The Conservancy mapped temperatures across the Albuquerque Metro area, and found that the International District, as well as the Downtown and South Valley Neighborhoods, are hotter than communities with more abundant green space.

To lessen the impact of urban heat, we are investing in a community designed mobile pop-up park that will bring newly planted trees and rainwater harvesting to the heart of the International District. Community partners, like South San Pedro Neighborhood Association and Whittier Elementary, are leading the charge in becoming ambassadors for these green solutions that provide residents with cooler, healthier, more inviting spaces. The affordable and versatile pop-up park design may also facilitate the expansion of greenspace in other under-resourced neighborhoods.

"Dori and I are thrilled to provide seed money for this innovative ecology project run by The Nature Conservancy. We have met Sarah Hurteau, director of the program, and she is a dynamo! We are particularly happy about how this urban project integrates education with water conservation, tree planting, and community involvement with new park planning."

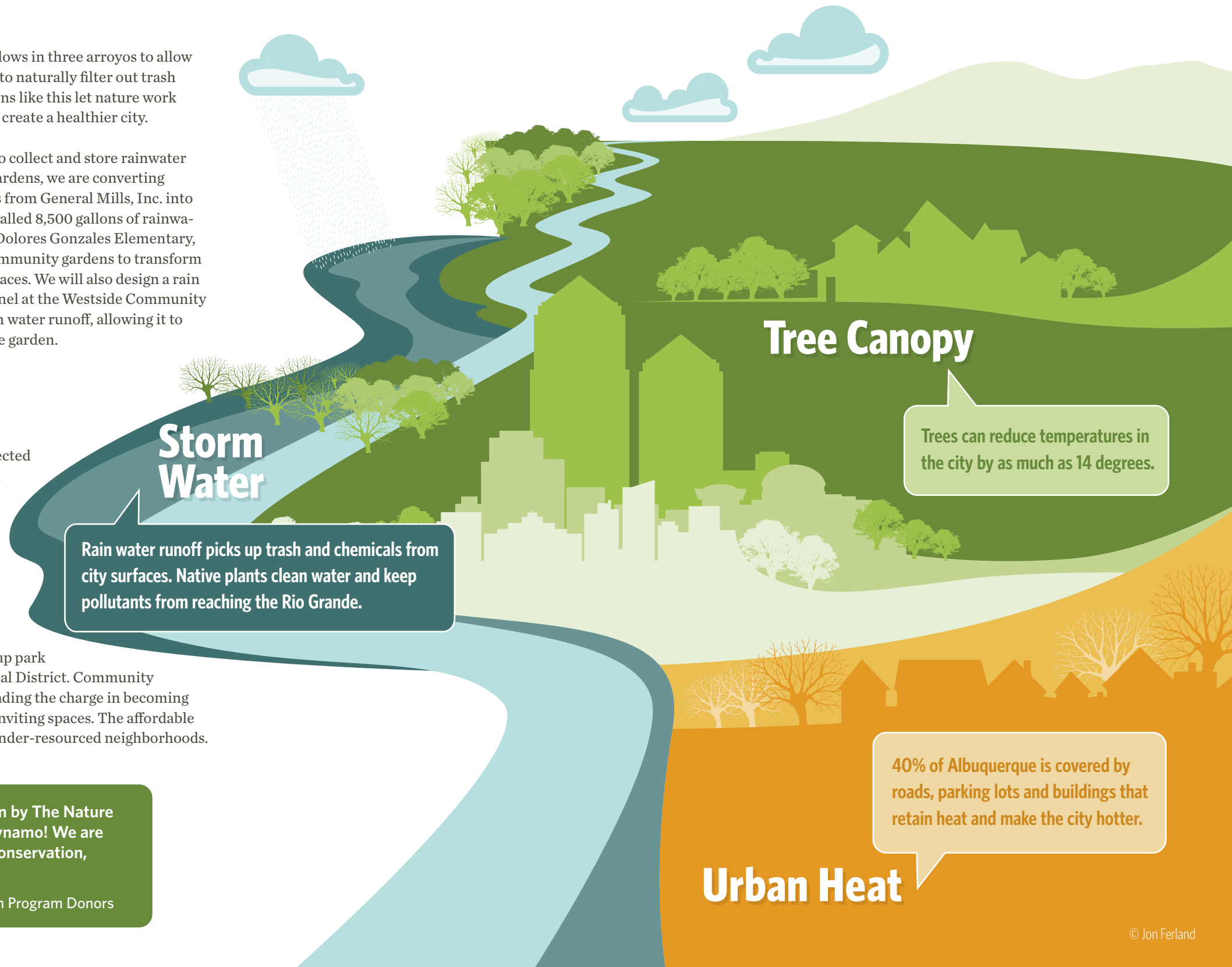
-Dr. Steven Hecht and Dori Smith, MEd, Urban Conservation Program Donors



## Trees

Our tree planting program presents a unique effort to address urban heat and green space inequalities in Albuquerque. Trees reduce temperatures, decrease air pollution, and promote human health and water quality. Trees also provide much needed habitat for pollinators and other wildlife that live and migrate through Albuquerque.

**Planting Trees.** As part of a grant funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Wells Fargo, we are working with Albuquerque communities to plant 400 native and desert adapted trees over the next two years. For example, we are working with residents in the South Valley's Mountain View Community to increase their access to green space, reduce heat impacts and improve air quality.



## Urban Heat



**"Thanks to TNC's Urban Conservation Program, we are hiring more youth than ever before to complete conservation projects in Albuquerque. And by working alongside TNC staff, we have confidence that RMYC crew members are helping to establish Albuquerque as a national leader in conservation."**

*-Jordan Stone,  
Conservation Program Manager,  
Rocky Mountain Youth Corps*

## What's Ahead

**PLANT 100,000 TREES**  
ONE FOR EVERY CHILD IN  
ALBUQUERQUE OVER THE  
**NEXT 10 YEARS**

Create more livable  
communities for  
**170,000**  
**RESIDENTS**  
in underserved  
Neighborhoods

**INSTALL 10,000 GALLONS**  
**OF RAIN WATER STORAGE**  
**OVER THE NEXT YEAR**

**CREATE 45 LOCAL GREEN JOBS**  
for young people to support urban conservation goals  
**and engage in their communities**

Thanks to our partners and communities for helping build a more resilient, healthy Albuquerque!

For more information visit [nature.org/abq](https://nature.org/abq)

To support The Nature Conservancy's Urban Conservation Program, please contact Jackie Hall at 505-946-2021 or [jacquelyn\\_hall@tnc.org](mailto:jacquelyn_hall@tnc.org).

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