

OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY NOW OPEN FOR BUSINESS

by Richard Mahler, Newsletter Editor

With the appointment of its new director, Nick Sussillo, the joint Silver City-Grant County Office of Sustainability opened its doors officially in late April. The new office addresses the energy efficiency and conservation needs of



NICK SUSSILLO

town and county facilities, while providing energy audits and upgrades to homeowners through a variety of new programs. It is also coordinating public education activities designed to increase community awareness of fast, inexpensive ways to increase home energy efficiency, including the

Silver City Home Rehabilitation Program, low-income weatherization services, tax incentives, and "green building" rebates.

Other activities to be undertaken by the new program include implementation of a renewable energy project, assistance in developing "green jobs," and help in implementing a local solar energy financing district.

"I believe that we're going to create something exciting here in Silver City and Grant County," says Sussillo. Adds Mary Stoecker, facilitator of the Town of Silver City Climate Advisory Committee, which spearheaded an initiative to establish the office: "We're thrilled that we have finally filled the Sustainability Director position and we are moving ahead with implementing our Climate Action Plan."

The project is funded with a \$341,000 Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) from the New Mexico Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department. Grant County is contributing \$126,000 in Department of Energy EECBG funding from a separate grant.

The Office of Sustainability will reside organizationally within Silver City's Community Development Department, but will be physically located in the new Grant County Convention Center. See a May 14 interview with Nick Sussillo on CATS-TV's *The Morning Show* at <http://www.themorningshowlive.com/TV2010.html>. Send a message via nick.sussillo@gmail.com.

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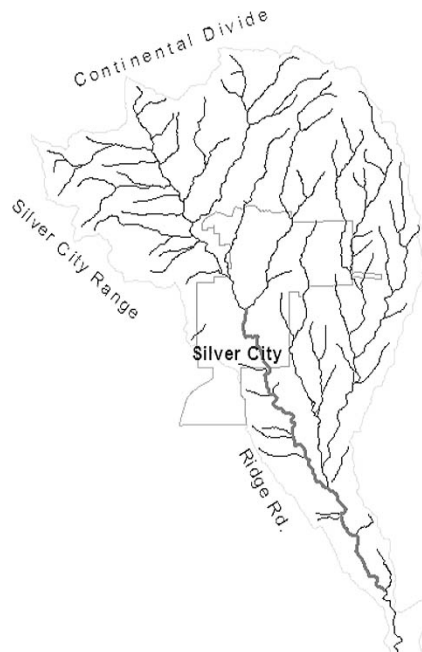
source and inspiration for neighboring areas to start similar initiatives.

Through this project, Silver City will be joining hundreds of other communities whose concerned residents volunteer their time to observe and record local environmental conditions. These volunteers come in all ages and skill levels, and the information they collect is invaluable to their communities. Data collected from these groups have effectively identified the unique environmental issues effecting hundreds of watersheds nationwide.

Key environmental concerns specific to the Silver City watershed include:

- Soil and Water Contamination from Historic Mining Sites - In many old mining areas, the historic mining operations have left a legacy of environmental degradation, including contaminated soil and water.

SILVER CITY WATERSHED



- Trail Erosion - Aside from degrading trails themselves, eroded soil from trails causes local water ways to suffer from sediment loading.
- Severe Stream Bank Erosion - This also contributes to sediment loading in the stream, and causes the loss of property.
- Non-Point Source Pollution - Pollutants from diffuse sources, such as impervious surfaces like roadways and parking lots, are hardest to identify and develop effective controls.
- Invasive Species - Exotic plants and animals displace native species and disrupt natural ecological systems

An initial organizational meeting

FIRST PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT SET FOR P&Z REVIEW

Esperanza Hills to be based on principles of sustainability

by Allyson Siwik, Executive Director

Silver City's first Planned Unit Development (PUD), Esperanza Hills will go before the Planning and Zoning Commission on August 3. The development's concept plan was approved by the town council in May and the final plan submitted for review by the P&Z Commission. Bruce McKinney, the project's developer, explained that the new development recognizes the beneficial connections to its natural systems and resources: "The design of Esperanza Hills promotes the creation of a livable community that sustains itself socially, culturally, ecologically, and economically."

Located in the southeast corner of Silver City adjacent to the San Vicente Creek, Esperanza Hills will encompass extensive open space that will complement residential and commercial uses within the overall plan area. Islands of housing and mixed uses will be interconnected with pathways and clustered in the center of its 110 acres, surrounded by larger open space areas towards its edge. The Esperanza Hills PUD Plan states that it "allows for a compact sustainable mix of homes, neighborhood commercial, and small business opportunities. The Plan coordinates a mix of single-family attached and detached homes with supporting commercial activity and extraordinary circulation, open space and recreation amenities."

Given the project's sensitivity to environmental factors, incorporation of open space and mixed use development, GRIP supports the Esperanza Hills concept and hopes that the development can serve as a model for other PUD's if and when they are proposed. To find out more, the plan may be viewed on-line at www.greensilverlinings.com/EsperanzaDraft.pdf.

for the Silver City Watershed citizens' monitoring group will be held from 6 to 7 pm, July 29, at the Silver City Public Library. For information, contact Regina Willis at the GRIP office at 538-8078 or e-mail regina@gilaresources.info.