



## **FIRST ENVISION® RATING FOR SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE IN NEW MEXICO AWARDED TO I-25/UNIVERSITY AVENUE INTERCHANGE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT**

**March 24, 2022:** The I-25/University Avenue Interchange Improvements Project is the first infrastructure project in New Mexico to be awarded an Envision Rating. This \$35 million project, which began in January 2020 and finalized in October 2021, was a joint initiative between the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), the City of Las Cruces, New Mexico State University (NMSU), and other local stakeholders.

The I-25/University Interchange serves as the main access point to several local communities and the NMSU campus, all of which have seen significant growth in recent years.

The purpose of this project was to:

- Add capacity to the I-25 southbound off-ramp at University Avenue.
- Reduce congestion, weaving, and backups onto off-ramps.
- Incorporate roundabouts to improve traffic flow.
- Encourage multi-modal transportation options for cyclists and pedestrians.

### **COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE**

Since its inception, sustainability has been a core focus of this project. Sustainability goals, including this project's pursuit of Envision verification, have been communicated to project and community stakeholders throughout its design and delivery phases. Ultimately, the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure's independent, third-party project verification process awarded the project an Envision Silver rating. The rating recognizes the project's wide-ranging sustainability achievements in improving overall community quality of life, demonstrating leadership in sustainability, using resources efficiently, protecting the environment, and improving climate resilience.

### **KEY SUSTAINABILITY ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Putting safety first during every phase of the project.** Worker and community safety measures were prioritized during construction, while disruptions to the travelling public were minimized through careful and thoughtful construction phasing, enabling lanes in both directions to remain open during the construction period.

In addition, this project measurably improves user safety. Prior to this project, the I-25 on/off ramp had one of the highest crash rates in the University Avenue corridor. Significant measures were put in place to improve driver and pedestrian safety, including:

- Eliminating the common traffic backups on the southbound I-25 off-ramp onto the interstate by adding a new off-ramp connection to the NMSU campus. This new off-ramp also serves to reduce the overall congestion on University Avenue.
- Installing roundabouts to improve traffic flow, which are also proven to reduce injuries and fatal crashes.
- Adding new sidewalks, multiuse paths, connections to existing trails and paths, and providing buffered bike lanes to help create a greater level of comfort and safety for non-motorized traffic.

**Creating connections.** Pedestrian and bicycle improvements in the project's design provide a critical link to existing multi-modal transportation infrastructure in the community and enhance connectivity between public space and amenities. Where I-25 and University Avenue were once community barriers (physical and mental), these corridors now link the various communities within Las Cruces with New Mexico State University.

**Stimulating growth and development.** This project created more than 250 direct and 159 indirect jobs. This project has also created better access to local businesses and recreational amenities for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians, which is expected to drive economic activity.

**Improving energy efficiency.** While high-pressure sodium lights are still commonly used for street lighting throughout the state and in many other places, they are far less energy efficient than LED lighting. To improve energy efficiency in this corridor, this project specifically chose to use LED lighting, resulting in an overall energy savings of about 45% compared to industry norms.

**Reflecting local character in the project design.** Infrastructure such as bridges and retaining walls provides the perfect canvas to showcase local artists, and such works of public art are a great way to express local community values and character, provide a sense of place, and engage local artists and the community at large in the design and selection process. Furthermore, this reinforces the project's role as a gateway to the various communities within Las Cruces, including NMSU.

As part of the final design, local artist and artwork design for the project was selected based on public input, as well as the input from a local selection committee comprised of City, NMSU, and NMDOT representatives, as well as two local artists. The final artistic theme incorporates elements of Las Cruces' history, Mesilla Valley culture, and elements from local landscapes.

## QUOTES

**Melissa Peneycad, ISI's managing director:** *"This is the first infrastructure project in New Mexico to earn an Envision award! Huge congratulations to the I-25/University Avenue Interchange Improvements project team who thoughtfully pursued relevant sustainability goals for this project, and diligently tracked,*

documented, and communicated progress against these goals as part of a robust sustainability management system. As this team appreciates, exhibiting accountability, improving project management processes, and elevating learning opportunities for all stakeholders involved in the project are some of the many benefits associated with Envision verification. I hope the success of this project will spur others in the state to advance their pursuit of sustainability as well.”

**Sherri Holliefield, PE, NMDOT South Region Design Manager:** “The NMDOT’s 2040 Long Range Plan highlighted mobility and sustainability as key goals for future project development. However, we had no tool to measure sustainable design or construction practices. We were introduced to Envision by our consultant and determined that we would utilize this tool to see how the process unfolded and if it would in fact deliver a more sustainable project. Every goal we set were met or exceeded in that regard.”

**Jerry Paz, PE, ENV SP, Team Leader:** “Molzen Corbin has a history of sustainable design on LEED vertical design projects, but our horizontal infrastructure engineering team needed a method to track sustainable design for roadway and utility projects. Envision has set the standard for horizontal design and construction practices and assisted our team greatly in advancing our sustainable design practice.”

---

## PROJECT DETAILS AT-A-GLANCE

<b>Envision-verified Project:</b>	I-25/University Avenue Interchange Improvements Project
<b>Location:</b>	Las Cruces, New Mexico
<b>Envision Rating:</b>	Silver
<b>Owner:</b>	New Mexico Department of Transportation
<b>Project Delivery:</b>	Design-Bid-Build
<b>Lead Envision Firm:</b>	Molzen Corbin
<b>Project partners:</b>	Molzen Corbin (Lead Engineering Firm), Bohannon-Huston (Structural and Signals), Wood Group (Geotechnical Engineer), Ecosphere (Environmental), EcoResources (Traffic), La Calerita Construction, LLC (Construction).
<b>Award Date:</b>	March 24, 2022
<b>Project Phase:</b>	Operational
<b>For more information:</b>	Please visit the <a href="#">project website</a>

---

This project is a joint initiative between NMDOT, City of Las Cruces, and NMSU.

