

# Executive Summary

To accommodate Santa Fe's annual Fourth of July fireworks under a new Mayor (Michael Garcia), and acting city manager (Brian Moya), we evaluated 11 potential sites. After a thorough review, we recommend Franklin E. Miles Park at Siringo/Carlos Rey as the new venue. This site offers vastly more space and amenities than the Santa Fe Place Mall (which is now unavailable) and the other ten alternatives. Franklin Miles Park spans nearly 29 acres— including 6 acres of open grassy fields, multiple sports courts, a skate park, playground and picnic areas – making it highly family-friendly. It has expansive parking capacity (roughly six times the mall's) and is surrounded by large adjacent lots (state offices to the north; Food King/Kmart shopping center to the east; Milagro Jr. High, Midtown and Santa Fe High parking lots nearby) that can absorb overflow. In addition, multiple public road access points provide ample egress in an emergency. Cell phone coverage is strong, ensuring reliable 911 service for the expected 40–50,000 spectators. Consultations with the fireworks vendor, drone support team, Santa Fe Police, Fire, and Parks Departments have all confirmed Franklin Miles as a safe, practical site that meets operational and safety needs.

## [Interactive Site Map](#)

By contrast, all other sites — including the previous Santa Fe Place Mall site — have incurable limitations (see Table 1 below). Notably, Santa Fe Place Mall is no longer available as a launching zone due to planned hotel construction at the old launch area. Many alternatives suffer from limited parking, poor access, legal complications, or conflicts. For example, The Downs at Santa Fe (Tribal property) would require extensive permits, multiple agency MOUs, FAA waivers (due to the nearby airport), large budget increases (>\$100k extra) and massive security measures (e.g. triple security staffing, fencing off unsafe areas) – making it infeasible. Other evaluated parks (Ragle Park, Swan Park, Genoveva Chavez “Sunset” Park, La Tierra Trails, Railyard Park, etc.) lack parking or access; some lie under flight paths or have too many nearby homes. Even Fort Marcy Park, despite ample open space, has persistent neighborhood pushback (residents already endure events like Zozobra and Wine & Chile Fiesta) and insufficient parking. A detailed comparison is shown in Table 1, and each site's issues are discussed below.

This shift is also a historic opportunity. 2026 is the 250th anniversary of U.S. independence, and a successful Fireworks celebration at a new iconic venue would draw greater public interest and positive publicity. As an AP News article notes, nationwide celebrations are planned to mark America's semiquincentennial. Launching a new tradition (with the city's first fireworks under Mayor Garcia) would freshen the event, draw in crowds, and demonstrate forward planning. Franklin Miles Park's large grassy sweep provides an eco-friendlier setting (sustainably absorbing crowds on green space rather than asphalt), easier noise management, and a scenic backdrop that is more inviting for families. In short, Franklin E. Miles Park is our recommended site for Santa Fe's Fourth of July fireworks.

“We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity – with a new administration and the nation's 250th birthday – to reinvent the 4th of July celebration in Santa Fe. Franklin Miles Park offers the space, infrastructure, and visibility that the old mall site does not, and we should seize this historic moment.”  
– Santa Fe Kiwanis FOJ Committee (May 2026)

**Table 1: Comparison of Candidate Locations for Fourth of July Fireworks**

Location	Parking	Access/Egress	Cell Service	Environmental/ Other Concerns	Nearby Residences/ Road Impact
<b>Franklin E. Miles Park</b> (recommended )	~600 spaces on-site; plus <i>multiple large adjacent lots</i> (Kmart/Food King, schools) – roughly 6x Santa Fe Place Mall’s capacity bestskateparks.org	<i>Multiple</i> wide roads allowing 3–4 access/exit points; accessible from all sides	<b>Strong</b> coverage (ensuring reliable 911 calls for 40–50K people)	Large open grassy areas naturally absorb crowds; no floodplains or sensitive habitat on site	Bounded mainly by schools, shopping, and highways – minimal residential impact; closures would affect mostly arterial roads
<b>Santa Fe Place Mall</b> (old site)	~200 spaces (and mall parking)	One mall entrance; chokepoints	Good on perimeter, but new construction at center blocking zones	Under construction: new hotel being built in former launch zone (unsafe)	Adjacent: State offices and residences to north; closures would impact local streets heavily on east side
<b>The Downs at Santa Fe</b> (tribal)	Only ~400 spaces (next to small pond)	<i>Single</i> two-lane access (undivided highway, unlit); major traffic risk (tailgating on I-25)	Moderate cell reach (rural area)	Deferred maintenance (old grandstands, asbestos in stands, pond hazard)	Surrounded by sparse Pueblo lands – few residences, but road closures would affect Santa Fe Hwy/ Frontage Rd travel
<b>Ragle Park</b> (W. Santa Fe)	Limited lot + street parking	Single on/off (stone-dust lot)	Moderate	Insufficient lighting, no large flat areas uncovered	Some houses on adjacent streets – maximizing parking forces blocking of streets (past event blocked emergency access)
<b>Santa Fe High School</b>	Existing campus lots (limited)	Single main entrance/exit	Good	New artificial turf installed – cannot allow heavy use or risk damage by crowds	Residential neighborhood on north; road closures affect local neighborhood drives
<b>Santa Fe Rodeo Grounds</b>	Small dirt lots, limited	One main gate (fits rodeo events), others locked	Good	Rodeo has vendor contracts until early July; cannot displace	Very close to homes on Rodeo Rd; fireworks zone would overhang neighborhoods
<b>Swan Park</b> (Airport area)	~50 cars + neighborhood parking	One narrow road in/out	Fair (somewhat spotty)	Very small park, no room for stage or crowd	Residences on adjacent streets – any street parking blocks emergency; one-lane exit risk

Location	Parking	Access/Egress	Cell Service	Environmental/ Other Concerns	Nearby Residences/ Road Impact
<b>Hipico Santa Fe</b> (polo fields)	~50 cars + dirt lot	One narrow dirt road (two-way)	Limited (rural outskirts)	All access via unpaved road; no lighting or facilities	Rural area – few homes, but access road usage interferes with neighboring ranch traffic
<b>Municipal Rec Sports Complex (MRC)</b>	200+ shared sports lot	Only two-lane Industrial Ave; one access	<i>Poor</i> (in airport flight path)	Directly under Santa Fe Airport approach route – FAA restricts fireworks; near Animal Shelter (noise concerns)	Mainly commercial/ industrial zone; closures would impact Hospital connections and eastern routes
<b>Fort Marcy Park</b>	Some small lots + street (~100)	Multiple, but all narrow park roads	Good (city park)	Park is entirely on a hill; neighbors already endure several annual events (Zozobra, Wine & Chile, etc)	Adjacent neighborhoods (Old Santa Fe Trail, etc.) – road closures and crowds have been contentious in past events
<b>La Tierra Trails Community Park</b> (NW Santa Fe)	Small lot + trailhead area (few dozen)	Single narrow road (La Tierra/ San Antonio)	Fair (rural fringe)	Very remote; mostly trails and hills, no open field large enough	Remote acreage – no houses nearby but very far from city center (poor public transit, long emergency response)
<b>Santa Fe Railyard Park</b> (Downtown)	Limited plaza/park area	Multiple downtown streets (Cerrillos/ Camino Real)	Good	Small urban park; railway tracks bisect area, cranes	Dense downtown environs – road closures would severely disrupt city core (no wide parking)
<b>Genoveva Chavez Park</b> (Sunset)	~50 cars + Rec Center parking	One exit via Rodeo Rd; one entry from Rodeo/Sit	Good	Only ~3.7 acres active (plus adjacent open fields); adjacent to airport approach path	Nearby households on Rodeo/Murphy; street closures would block school routes; airport restrictions apply

## Analysis of Sites (Reasons Not Feasible)

Metrics

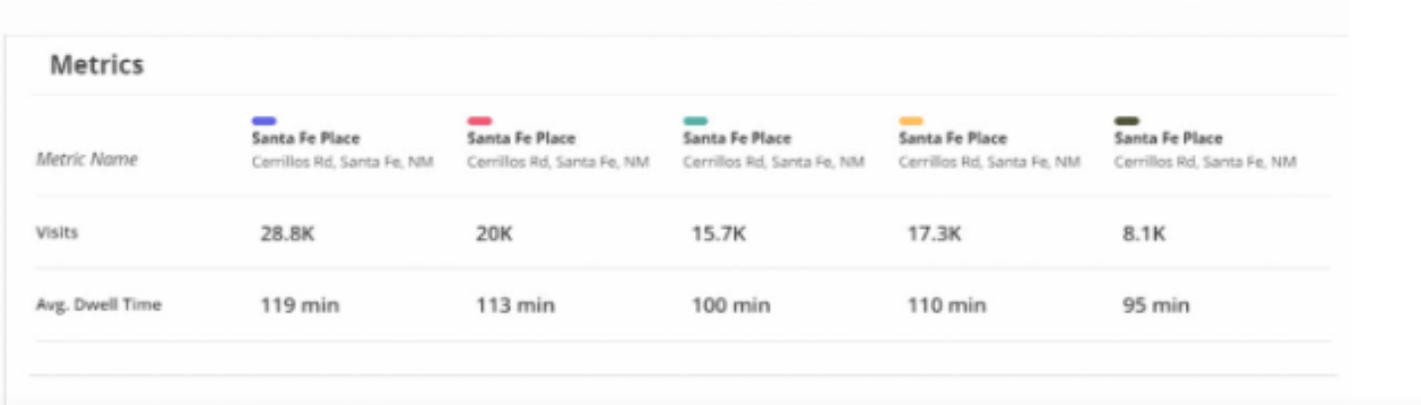


Property:

Santa Fe Place / Cerrillos Rd, S...



Visits	41.8K	Avg. Dwell Time	78 min
Visits / sq ft	0.07	Panel Visits	1.1K
Size - sq ft	573.9K (GLA)	Visits YoY	-30.8%
Visitors	37.6K	Visits Yo2Y	+45.3%
Visit Frequency	1.11	Visits Yo3Y	+232.5%



## Santa Fe Place Mall (6401 Richards Ave).

Previously used as the official site, this location is no longer available. A new hotel development is under construction on the old launch field, making it unsafe to host fireworks. In any case, the mall offered only ~150 dedicated parking spaces on site, forcing tens of thousands of attendees onto narrow city streets.

## The Downs at Santa Fe (Tribal Fairgrounds).

This site was considered but is impractical. It requires multiple inter-governmental agreements: a lease or MOU from the Pueblo of Pojoaque (landowner), and from the City, County, and State for providing city/county police, sheriff, DOT, and State Police services off reservation. A special FAA waiver would be needed due to the proximity of the flight path, which typically takes 60–90 days to process (we would need to coordinate federal support for a waiver by June). The fireworks vendor must inspect the grounds and pond for shot-zone measurement. Insurance costs are huge: the Downs' Management would demand indemnity because of deferred maintenance (old bleachers with asbestos, unlit two-lane access road).

The site itself is at a disadvantage: only about 400 parking spaces exist, yet last year's crowd (41,833 phones counted) greatly exceeded that. Securing off-site shuttles and transit would be mandatory. We would need to: install 10-ft fences around the pond and old stands (to keep the public away from asbestos and deep water), more than triple our usual security staff (to guard unauthorized areas and

the fireworks), and hire armed medevac/helicopter coverage (the site is 25+ minutes from Christus St. Vincent Hospital). Traffic plans would need full lane closures (I-25 frontage/Tesuque exit), with police to enforce a 50-mph speed zone for insurance compliance. All utilities are lacking: no public restrooms or power on site, so ~100 portapotties, 40 handwashing units, 30 light towers, extra generators, and rental storage pods would be required. In short, costs for Downs could easily add \$100K–\$200K (beyond our \$60K budget); we would likely have to charge admission. Finally, the single, undivided inadequately-lit access road invites drunk driving/road rage, and an incident in 1987 where a distracted motorist sued after watching fireworks from a concert at the Downs and killed a family of 5 remains a liability precedent. For all these reasons, The Downs is not a viable option.

## **Ragle Park** (West Zia Road).

Though a peaceful 22-acre park, Ragle suffers from very limited parking and facilities. It has only scattered trails and one little parking lot, far too few spaces for even a fraction of our crowd. Lighting is sparse, raising safety/security issues after dark. When fireworks were trialed here in 1990's, reported incidents included sexual activity in secluded dugouts and attendees spilling onto residential streets in overflow, blocking emergency access (as happened during a recent Zozobra concert at another small park). Because Ragle cannot safely hold a July-4 crowd (too small and too many dark corners), we reject it.

## **Santa Fe High School** (2100 Yucca St).

The school's fields are adjacent to ample parking, but the turf replacement makes this strictly off-limits. Principal and school officials have expressly declined: heavy crowds and setup equipment would damage the brand-new artificial turf field installed this year. There are also tight schedules with sports teams and no reason to disrupt school operations.

## **Santa Fe Rodeo Grounds** (300 Rodeo Road).

Although a large open area, the Rodeo Grounds are booked every late June for the Santa Fe Rodeo de Santa Fe (vendor contracts, entertainment) and cannot be cleared in time. Available parking is modest (grassy lots and some outfields). Critically, the ideal fireworks firing zone here would directly overfly nearby homes on Rodeo Road and downtown, forcing a smaller display to stay safe. In sum, Rodeo hosts a crowd itself and cannot accommodate another event that week without conflict – it must be ruled out.

## **Swan Park** (Honeywell Ave).

Tiny neighborhood park by the airport. It has only one narrow entrance (uncontrolled), with maybe 50 off-street parking spots. We would have to restrict traffic heavily on single-lane Swan Road – any closure or overcrowding would strand cars. With zero lighting or field space, plus no wheelchair accessibility, this park simply cannot serve as a temporary concert/fireworks site.

## **Hipico Santa Fe** (Pecos Medians, off Airport Road).

(Pecos Medians, off Airport Road). This site is essentially two polo fields in the desert. Access is by one unpaved horse-trail road, yielding one vehicle in/out at a time. There is no infrastructure (only a couple of bleachers, no restrooms). Even if cars could be parked on the dirt, the ingress/egress alone violates fire code for emergency access (just 50 feet between lanes). Furthermore, it's in a

remote spot: in an emergency, first responders would be 10–15 minutes away on narrow roads. For safety and practicality, we cannot use Hipico.

## **Santa Fe Municipal Recreation Complex** (MRC, 3901 Zafarano Dr).

This sports park has decent parking on weekdays, but it sits directly under the Santa Fe Airport's landing glide path (FAA would forbid large fireworks here). Its only road in/out is a two-lane industrial road. Also, its proximity to the animal shelter (next door) raises noise/air quality concerns for dozens of boarded animals. We contacted Parks and the FAA – both confirmed these constraints. We therefore cannot move the show to MRC.

## **Fort Marcy Park** (100 Murales Rd).

A historic city park on a hill. Parking is insufficient (about 100 spots) for a big event, and the road network is already strained by Zozobra (and the Wine & Chile festival each year. Neighbors in the Bishop and Riverside areas are vocal: they face highway closures and noise every autumn, plus schools use Marcy fields daily. In recent surveys, many residents opposed adding another Loud July 4 event at Fort Marcy. While it has open space, the combination of crowding and community pushback makes Fort Marcy look more troublesome than beneficial.

## **La Tierra Trails Community Park** (5500 Agua Fria, NW Santa Fe).

This new park is a trail system with a small parking area. It is far outside the city core (20+ minute drive from downtown) near the foothills. There are no facilities except trailheads; parking is scant. For an urban fireworks show, needing tens of thousands of downtown tourists' buses, this is impractical. We also checked fire/emergency response times: they would be overextended in that remote area. La Tierra Trails offers great hiking, but no viable fireworks launch site.

## **Santa Fe Railyard Park** (740 Cerrillos Rd).

The Railyard Park is adjacent to the train depot. It's a lovely civic plaza and small lawn (about 2-3 acres total), but only room for a couple hundred people at once – far too small. One must cross active rail lines to reach some areas. During events it shares space with markets/festivals, causing logistical problems. Its downtown location means any road closures or crowd outside that park would gridlock Cerrillos Road and nearby Santa Fe Farmers' Market or train traffic. Emergency vehicles would have trouble navigating the tight Railyard lanes. In sum, it cannot safely or practically accommodate a full-scale fireworks show.

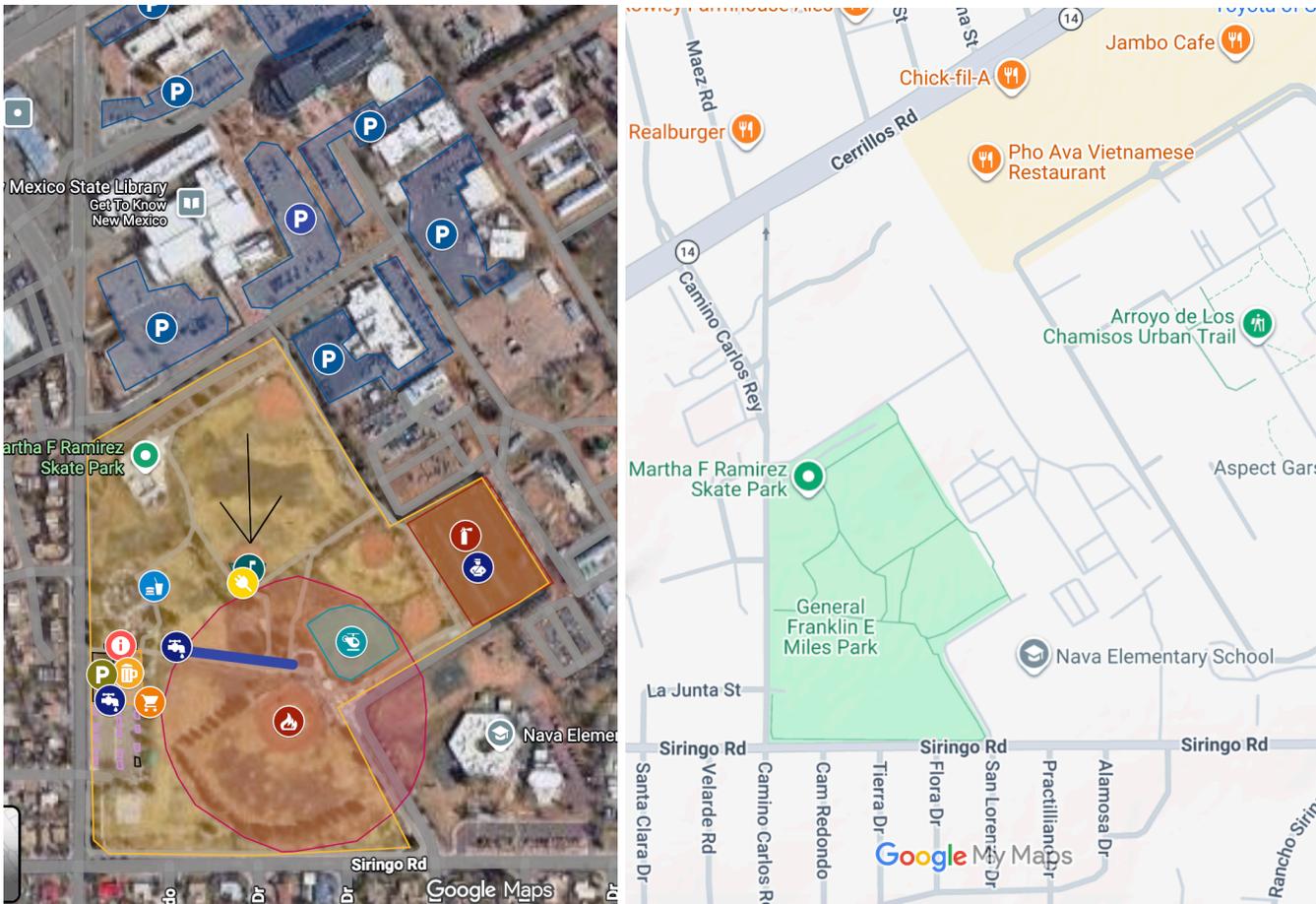
## **Genoveva Chavez Park** (3221 Rodeo Rd, "Sunset Park").

This 3.7-acre neighborhood park (adjacent to the Sunset Community Center) has only a small play area and basketball court. While there is some additional open lawn (Arroyo Chamisos area, ~10.75 acres), it is broken up by trail features and a disc-golf course. In effect, there is no single large open field. The site shares terrain with the Santa Fe airport's approach (fireworks height is constrained by FAA limits here). It has only one narrow two-way road (Rodeo Rd) in and out, which already carries school bus traffic. We estimated parking at only ~50–60 spots total (center parking + street). Given these limitations (no big sitting area, scarce parking, and flight restrictions), Sunset Park is unworkable for July 4.

In summary, none of the above ten sites (including the now-unavailable mall) are acceptable due to insufficient capacity, safety/legal issues or incompatibility. Franklin Miles Park, however, meets or exceeds all requirements for space, infrastructure and access.

## Franklin E. Miles Park: Recommended Site

”Franklin E. Miles (1923–2016) was a decorated U.S. Army Major General who served as the Adjutant General of the New Mexico National Guard for 11 years, notably leading forces during the 198030 prison riot. He was a World War II veteran, the son of former New Mexico Governor John E. Miles, and a prominent Santa Fe community leader.”



**Franklin E. Miles Park** (1027 Camino Carlos Rey) clearly emerges as the best choice. Key advantages:

**Scale and Amenities:** At ~28.6 acres the park provides vast open areas and formal infrastructure. There are 6 acres of contiguous grass fields suitable for seating/viewing. Attendees can spread out on the lawn and enjoy a playground, basketball courts, skate park, baseball and soccer fields as a backdrop. Unlike the old Mall site (hard asphalt), families can sit on real grass and kids can play on slides and courts before/after the show. The park has restrooms, picnic shelters and a concession stand, reducing our need for rentals and keeping the event family-friendly and comfortable.

**Parking:** The park itself has roughly 600 spaces (many in front and alongside fields, plus two park-and-rides near Rodeo Road). Crucially, it is adjacent to three huge parking resources:

- **North:** All nearby State of NM office buildings (Building 47, 46, 49) have large, secured lots. With coordination, these can be used evenings/weekends/holidays
- **East:** The Rodeo Road shopping corridor (Food King, Staples/Kmart center, and the big Appleby's/Kmart lots) lies just 200 yards away – easily walkable.
- **South:** Milagro Middle School and Santa Fe High School sit just 0.3 miles east, each with hundreds of spaces after hours.

Combined, this surrounding parking is roughly six times what the Place Mall had. For example, in contrast to Place Mall ~150 total spots, Franklin Mile's park + partners can easily provide ~1000 or more. Overflow shuttles can link the remotest lots, but most cars will park within easy walking distance.

**Access/Egress:** Multiple public roads border Franklin Miles Park: Camino Carlos Rey to the south, Rodeo Road to the east, Dale Ball Road to the north, and the Meridian Road park entrance. This inherently provides 3–4 entry/exit points. Even if one or two roads are temporarily closed, traffic can circulate on the others. We can stage a phased closure (e.g. of Carlos Rey) only during peak evening hours. Critically, there are emergency exit routes on all four sides – so if any one exit is blocked, people can exit other ways. This multi-route configuration greatly improves emergency evacuation ability.

**Safety:** Good cell coverage at the site means any 911 calls (ambulance, police) from spectators or staff will go through reliably – vital for large crowds. Fire and Police reports indicate no coverage “dead zones” in this neighborhood. The area is flat with unobstructed sightlines, assisting drone monitoring and camera surveillance. There are no ponds or hazardous structures in the immediate firing zone (unlike The Downs), so we don't need mile-long fencing. We will, of course, apply standard perimeters: cordon off the launch area, and ensure fireworks are loaded on-site only after 4th-of-July midnight on-site. Police have evaluated the site and see no potential problems to this becoming the site.

**Logistics:** City and county departments already service this area daily. The parks division manages the playground, courts and lighting. We have begun dialogue with the Christus St. Vincent and Presbyterian Hospitals (minutes away in two different directions in case one access route is blocked ) for Medivac standby, as a precaution. Since the site is inside city limits and on official parkland, we eliminate the need for MOUs or off-site fees. We can operate under our existing public events permits. Utilities (power and water) are already at the park shelter and restrooms.

**Community Relations** Surrounding neighbors (consisting largely of retail spaces, office complexes and schools) have few concerns: offices are closed on July 4, and the schools are on summer break. The closest homes are across the street, but these areas are accustomed to

occasional noise and will receive notice and neighborhood passes. We will host public meetings (see Next Steps) to gather input from local residents and businesses. Access passes can be provided for legitimate neighborhood exits. Moreover, because state agencies (DPS, DOT, etc.) sit immediately north, we have direct liaison with them.

**Family-Friendly Features:** Franklin Miles Park is inherently more attractive and comfortable for families than any previous site. On hot July afternoons, kids can cool off in the shaded playground, and the Fire Department could create a splash pad, or play basketball and baseball. The open lawn lets people picnic on grass (rather than asphalt). The skate park, Basketball courts and playground offer teens while parents relax nearby. These amenities encourage a full-day community festival atmosphere. We anticipate the event becoming not just a fireworks display, but a celebration in the park – aligning with eco-friendly goals (staying in green space) and creating a safer, healthier spectator environment.

**Historical and Publicity Factor:** Launching the Fourth of July fireworks from Franklin Miles will itself be newsworthy. Coupled with Mayor Garcia’s fresh leadership and the nation’s 250th birthday on July 4, 2026, the novelty is a public-relations boon. Independence Day celebrations nationwide are being amplified for the semiquincentennial and Santa Fe can join with a bold new chapter – capturing media attention and civic pride.

Given these strong factors, we recommend Franklin E. Miles Park as the site for the City’s 4th of July Festival and Fireworks. On balance it outclasses all others in capacity, safety and community benefit.

**Other Considerations and Mitigations:** Even at Franklin Miles Park, certain planning details will ensure success:

**Sustainability & Environmental:** Holding the event on open grassy fields (rather than asphalt) reduces heat-island effects and runoff. We will implement recycling and waste-minimization plans in coordination with City Recycling programs. Portable toilets and handwashing stations will be placed on paved areas to prevent soil compaction on grass. All non-recyclables will be sorted post-event by Parks volunteers. Cleanup plans include trash pickup crews on July 5–6 to restore the park to original condition (as with past city events). Using existing park infrastructure (power, restrooms) means fewer generator emissions. If possible, we will source LED stage lights and encourage food vendors to use compostable containers. These steps align with Santa Fe’s sustainability goals.

**Noise Mitigation:** Although fireworks are inherently loud, we will follow state regulations (limiting usage to 21 minutes). Neighbors will be notified 2 months in advance and provided earplug stations. Post-show speakers will use downward-facing PA systems. Parks staff confirm there are no sensitive bird nesting areas on site.

**Community Outreach:** As part of a smooth transition, we plan a series of community meetings. There we will present the traffic plan (including temporary road closures to Meridian and Paseo areas), discuss neighbor passes (so local cars can exit blocked roads), and outline security

staging. We will work with Midtown and Railyard Community what does the Railyard have to do with it? Associations to address concerns. All city and state agency partners will attend (Police, Fire, Public Works, Parks, Transpo, Environmental services, etc.). Detailed event info (start times, street closures map, shuttle routes) will be published on [santafenm.gov](http://santafenm.gov) and social media. This transparency and early engagement will ensure neighbors feel heard and any issues are resolved proactively.

## Next Steps

- 1. Official Approval:** Present this report to Mayor Garcia and Acting City Manager Moya for formal site adoption.
- 2. Permit Process:** Once approved, Kiwanis will submit updated permit applications naming Franklin Miles Park as the venue, including any required noise ordinance waiver.
- 3. Community Meetings:** In early June, we will host public forums (one north, one south of the park) to share plans and gather feedback. We will distribute flyers and doorhangers to adjacent areas (Milagro School zone, Rodeo Road businesses, etc.) announcing the shift.
- 4. Logistics Coordination:** Negotiate parking agreements with the State (north lots) and Churches Plus/Shop owners (east lots), and with the Santa Fe Public Schools (south lots). Finalize traffic control and shuttle contracts with Southwest Safety and local transit. Ensure pre-staged fencing, signage and medical equipment arrive by July 2.
- 5. Venue Preparation:** Work with City Parks to confirm turf inspection (though recent photos show it is healthy). Pre-spray lawns with a nontoxic disinfectant (for public health). Arrange water access points for hydrant lines at the stage and fireworks site.
- 6. Communication:** Update all event promotional materials to Franklin Miles Park address. Publicize the change prominently (both the local media and on all event ads) so attendees know the new location.

## Conclusion

With a new administration and the grand milestone of 2026, Santa Fe has a unique opportunity to refresh its Independence Day tradition. Franklin E. Miles Park is ready to accommodate—and enhance—our city’s celebration. Its extensive facilities and modern accessibility outweigh any constraints of other sites. By moving the fireworks here, we solve the critical problem of losing the old mall, while also expanding capacity and family comforts. Given that every stakeholder we consulted (fireworks and drone teams, Police, Fire, Parks) supports this move, and that we have proactively addressed safety/traffic, we are confident this recommendation ensures the safest, most enjoyable 4th of July yet.

The City will turn the page on more than three decades of mall fireworks shows. Embracing Franklin Miles Park for our annual fireworks—one of the few events on July 4th – allows a clean break from the past and heralds a new era. We urge the Mayor and City Manager to adopt this plan so that Santa Fe’s patriotic celebration continues boldly into its semiquincentennial and beyond.