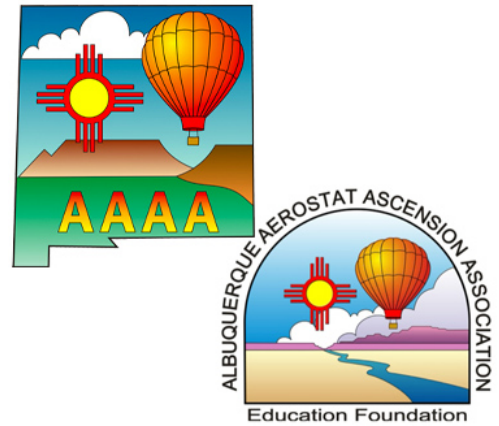


Ensuring the Future of Ballooning: Preserving Safe Landing Sites in Albuquerque



Introduction

Hot air ballooning is an iconic tradition in Albuquerque, a city celebrated as the ballooning capital of the world. However, as the city grows and urban development expands, the availability of safe landing sites is rapidly diminishing. This white paper highlights balloonists' challenges, explores the importance of preserving landing areas, and outlines actionable steps for stakeholders to protect this cherished tradition.

AAAA's Mission

The Albuquerque Aerostat Ascension Association (AAAA) represents pilots and ballooning enthusiasts. It promotes year-round ballooning to benefit the community, the public, and the sport. AAAA is dedicated to advocating for ballooning through education, outreach, and collaborations that ensure the longevity of hot-air ballooning in Albuquerque.

The Challenge: A Shrinking Landscape

As Albuquerque's urban landscape expands, balloonists find it harder to locate suitable landing sites. Development is pushing viable locations farther out, reducing balloon visibility in the Albuquerque sky and increasing safety risks for pilots. Without proactive measures, this beloved aspect of Albuquerque's identity risks fading away.

AAAA's Role in Preserving Ballooning

Although AAAA does not own or acquire land, the organization plays a vital role as a resource in urban planning efforts. As subject matter experts, AAAA educates city planners, developers, and landowners, advocating for policies prioritizing balloonists' needs. Through collaboration and outreach, we aim to preserve safe landing areas and ensure the future of ballooning in Albuquerque.

What Makes a Good Landing Site?

To support safe and effective ballooning, landing sites should meet the following criteria:

- Open Space: Large, clear areas free of power lines, buildings, or obstructions.
- Low Vegetation: Grassy fields or dirt lots to minimize fire hazards and prevent property damage.
- Accessible for Recovery Vehicles: Easy access for chase crews to retrieve balloons and passengers.
- Minimal Public Disruption: Locations away from high-traffic or sensitive private areas.
- Landowner Cooperation: Spaces where landowners understand and welcome balloon landings.

Why Preserving Landing Sites Matters

Albuquerque's hot air balloons are more than a visual spectacle—they are a cultural and economic cornerstone. Preserving landing sites ensures:

- Continued Tradition: Safeguarding ballooning as a vital part of Albuquerque's identity.
- Tourism & Economic Impact: Supporting ballooning events that draw visitors worldwide.
- Community Pride: Maintaining the unique character of Albuquerque for future generations.

How Stakeholders Can Help

City Planners & Developers

- Incorporate balloon-friendly spaces into urban growth plans.
- Ensure open areas remain accessible for safe landings.

Landowners

- Allow balloon landings on your property.
- Collaborate with pilots to establish guidelines for safe use.

Community Members

- Advocate for policies that protect landing zones.
- Attend public meetings and support balloon-friendly development.

Local & State Leaders

- Partner with AAAA to create guidelines for preserving ballooning needs.
- Promote policies that protect existing landing areas.

Businesses & Organizations

- Sponsor educational initiatives about ballooning.
- Host balloon-friendly events to celebrate and support the sport.

Conclusion

Hot air ballooning is integral to Albuquerque's culture, history, and economy. As urban development accelerates, it is critical to preserve safe landing sites to ensure this tradition continues to thrive. By working together—city planners, landowners, community members, and leaders—we can safeguard Albuquerque's skies and maintain its reputation as the world's ballooning capital for future generations.