



SCHOOL OF
ARCHITECTURE
& PLANNING



ALBUQUERQUE WESTSIDE VISION FOR 2100

***UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING
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FINAL SUBMISSION

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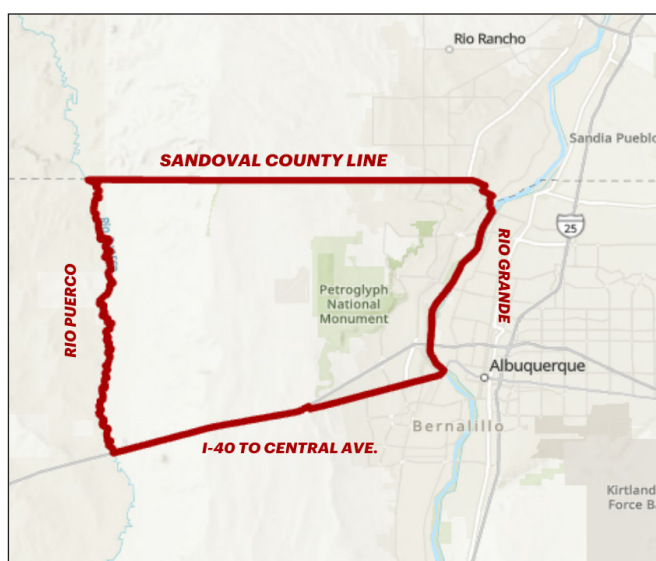
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Albuquerque Metropolitan Area, located in central New Mexico, is the state's population and economic hub. In the coming decades, the city is expected to grow primarily westward due to a combination of space, affordability, location, and a number of other factors. In recent years, population growth on the westside has outpaced that of Bernalillo County as a whole. This potential population growth has wide-ranging implications for water resources, open space, urban development, economic opportunity, and transportation networks, among many other issues. The University of New Mexico (UNM) Master's Community & Regional Planning (MCRP) Capstone Studio analyzed existing plans and policies on the westside of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County, conducting community engagement to better understand and incorporate the community's voice and the westside's unique character into a vision for growth.



Westside Vision 2100 looks from the present day forward 80 years into the future, in order to describe a picture of what that growth may look like from now until the year 2100. The boundaries of the Westside Vision 2100 study area (“study area”) stretch from the Sandoval County line in the north, to I-40 and Central Avenue in the south, from the Rio Grande in the east out to the Rio Puerco in the west. While the boundaries of the study area include both City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County jurisdictions, this vision does not apply to pueblos or federal land that falls within those boundaries. This study only attempts to describe a vision for growth on land within city and county jurisdictions.

From January 2024 - May 2024, the UNM MCRP Capstone Studio (“Project Team”) conducted research into demographic trends, current plans and policies, and existing conditions in the study area, as well as hosted a series of community outreach events in order to understand what residents, business owners, and local westside communities love about the westside, what their biggest concerns are, and what the westside wants to see in the future.

The results of that research and community process evoked a vision for growth and development in the study area over the course of the next 80 years and raised questions such as: What needs to be preserved? What do residents of the westside want to see change? How can scarce water resources be protected? Where can growth be best absorbed? All of these questions and more are addressed throughout this document (the “Vision”), organized into 7 key elements: Quality of Life, Water Resources, Open Space and Trails, Stormwater Infrastructure, Land Use and Urban Development Patterns, Transportation and Corridors, and Economic Development.

Many of the key findings that resulted from both the analysis of existing plans and policies, as well as community feedback, center around the need for planning that emphasizes the goals of the community. In the study area, many residents highlighted quality of life, community identity, and protection of water resources and cultural heritage as their most important priorities in developing a vision for growth and development. Therefore, the Project Team incorporated those factors as a lens for analyzing and addressing each of the 7 elements. In addition, improving community engagement processes themselves are key recommendations of the Vision, because comprehensive community participation is the centerpiece for developing future policy and plans that authentically reflect community goals. As the first iteration of Westside Vision 2100, this report begins to define a roadmap for planning for increasing growth and development in the study area, including important recommendations both for policies and processes.

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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

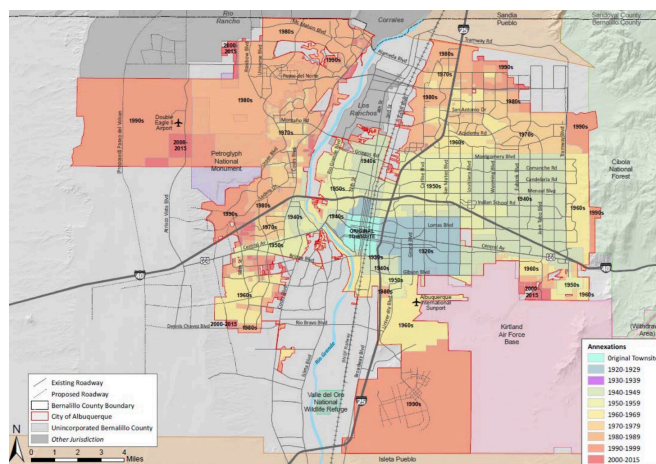
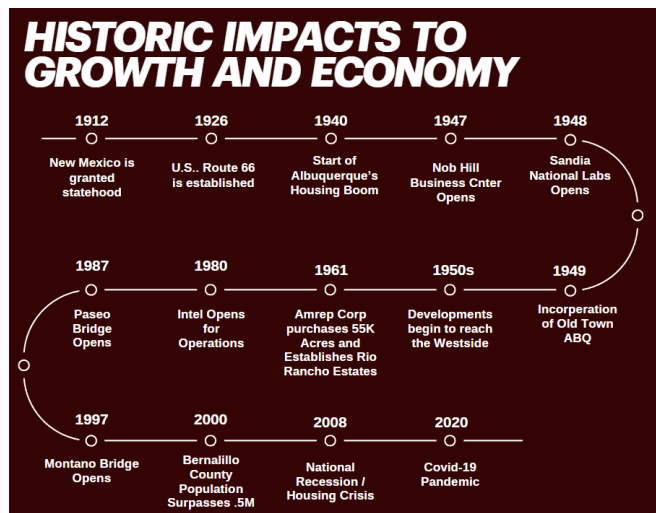


Albuquerque is one of the most dynamic and unique cities in the Southwest and in the United States as a whole. It has a rich history that combines many different cultures, contexts, and experiences. Bernalillo County, in which Albuquerque is located, has gone through many different iterations of community planning processes. From tribal settlements and leadership which continue through the present, to Hispanic settlements, to the incorporated city established through state and federal legislation that it is today - visioning, planning, and governance structures have shifted dramatically. However, those transformations have not led to the elimination of histories and cultures, but have created a unique lifestyle and identity that is celebrated and protected, requiring unique considerations in today's context of population growth and resilience.

There are examples of this historic mix of planning visions, rooted specifically in Albuquerque's westside within the study area as well as in the larger county, such as the many petroglyphs preserved in Petroglyph National Monument. These sacred sites highlight the importance of the preservation of cultural and natural landscapes alongside the continuation of Native American ties to the land today. In addition, sweeping natural views of the mountains, and the creation of a space where nature and wildlife are protected make considerations for the future and preservation of Petroglyph National Monument central to the identity of the study area and vision of growth in the future.

The study area's older neighborhoods share historic ties to other parts of the city including the north and south valleys, where agriculture is integral to the community, identity, and to the connection between people and nature. There are also new and rapidly growing neighborhoods intended to establish efficient, urban lifestyles with the goal of community self-sufficiency and sustainability. All of these experiences and developments are integral to how the community's identity has been shaped, as well as how the study area fits into the larger societal context. As we work to creatively imagine the future, it takes intentional planning processes to incorporate those dreams and visions into a reality.

Albuquerque's westside is growing many times faster than the rest of the city and Bernalillo County, and continues to expand even in years when Bernalillo County's population sees a decrease. The graphic to the right describes many of the major historic events that have contributed to growth and the current state of the economy in the study area. These historic events, combined with past land use planning and development policies have resulted in the Albuquerque metropolitan area's sprawling geographic footprint. This map below shows how those historic policies continue to have an impact on the city's spatial distribution. As a result, much of the development and growth in the study area has occurred since the 1960's and 1970's. While the study area's development is relatively recent compared to the rest of the city, historic neighborhoods and unique community identities have been shaped by this growth.



As rapid growth within the study area continues into the future, it is important for the community to be able to define a vision for what that growth should look like. This project, Westside Vision 2100, is that vision. Funded by New Mexico State Senator Antonio Maestas of the westside and in collaboration with the University of New Mexico (UNM) Resource Center for Raza Planning, this document outlines a vision for growth and economic development in the study area out to the year 2100.

Rather than a zoning or policy document, a vision describes what the westside wants to see in the future. It is an opportunity to consider strategies for economic development, transportation, access to open space, and many more issue areas that are impacted by population growth. The Vision can then serve to shape and provide direction for future development and planning within the 7 element areas that promote mutual benefits and support vibrant communities. While not a legally authoritative policy document, the policy recommendations made throughout the Vision highlight strategies and opportunities to adapt the language of existing comprehensive planning and zoning policies so that they provide for growth and development rooted in the identity of the study area, and which residents of the study area want to see.

Westside Vision 2100 is an iterative process, and the results from the Spring 2024 MCRP Capstone Studio project represent the first iteration of the Vision. Future MCRP Capstone Studios will build on this foundation to create additional iterations that dig deeper into the community process, identify additional policy recommendations, and incorporate further community voice so that City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County policies impacting growth and development in the study area have a robust set of data and a community-driven portfolio of recommendations to reference in policy development and planning work.

VISIONING PROCESS

The project team consisted of Alexandria Barron, Rebecca Neal, and Jake Mirabal (MCRP students) along with Moises Gonzales and Alex Ochoa (MCRP professors), as well as Farzin Baik and Amir Reza Maroof (Landscape Architecture Research Assistants). From January - May 2024, under

the direction of these MCRP professors, the three MCRP students analyzed existing plans and policies impacting growth and development in the study area, developed population projections for the study area out to the year 2100, conducted a community process to understand and incorporate community voice into the Vision, and then compiled that community engagement data and technical research into the final Vision presented here. The Research Assistants created initial renderings to help stimulate discussion at community events, and continued to design original renderings throughout the semester based on community feedback in order to suggest possibilities and visually represent the goals of community members in the final Vision.

In the first phase of the Capstone Studio, the Project Team identified relevant plans and policies that affect the study area. There are a variety of Rank I, II, and III plans that have been used to coordinate and plan for growth in the study area. Rank I plans include documents like the Albuquerque Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO) and the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan (ABC Comprehensive Plan). These plans have primary policy authority in planning and development decision-making. Prior to the development of the IDO and ABC Comprehensive Plan, neighborhood, sector, and corridor plans, such as the Coors Corridor Plan and the Westside Strategic Plan played a larger role in influencing planning and development decisions. While the IDO and ABC Comprehensive Plan were intended to incorporate much of the community-specific policies of these plans into their content, Rank II and Rank III plans such as the Westside Strategic Plan still hold secondary and tertiary (hence the labels “Rank II” and “Rank III”) policy authority.

Some of the key plans that the project team analyzed include:

- Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan
- Bernalillo County’s recently adopted Comprehensive Plan (2024)
- Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority Water 2120: Securing Our Water Future Plan
- Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority (AMAFCA)
- (MRCOG) Metropolitan Transportation Plan: Connections 2040
- Westside Strategic Plan
- Coors Corridor Plan



Based on research and data presented in these plans along with United States (U.S.) Census Bureau data, the Project Team calculated population projections out to 2100 for the study area in order to form the basis for the Vision. The Project Team presented these population projections, the structure of the visioning process, and essential elements (i.e. Urban Development Patterns, Water Resources) at a Community Launch Event attended by business owners, residents, elected officials, and others to begin the public engagement process. The Launch Event allowed the Project Team to provide context and information as well as initiate community feedback and input to give direction for the Vision.

After initial plan analysis, the Project Team conducted community engagement through a two-pronged approach - by 1) hosting community events to answer questions, learn more about community perspectives, and gather feedback and insight, as well as 2) designing an open

community survey in both Spanish and English to gather additional voice and opinions of the community in a more structured format. This participatory process allowed the Project Team to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative community data into the Vision and provide valuable context to historic and contemporary events and policies.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS



The final step of this Capstone Studio's iteration of Westside Vision 2100 project was the creation of this report, in which the Project Team reflects on the synthesis of community guidance and experiences related to planning policies, and makes recommendations based on opportunities where policy analysis and community voice come together in a way that highlights potential strategies and futures. By combining the analysis of plans, policies, and community voice, the recommendations in this Vision highlight alignment between community goals and policies, outline priorities for planning projects, add nuance regarding the unique experiences of the study area connected to existing policies, and create new frames for potential policies that reflect the total analysis. By thinking broadly about the impacts of growth in the study area 80 years from now, the Vision develops strategies to support quality of life in the study area for both current and future residents.

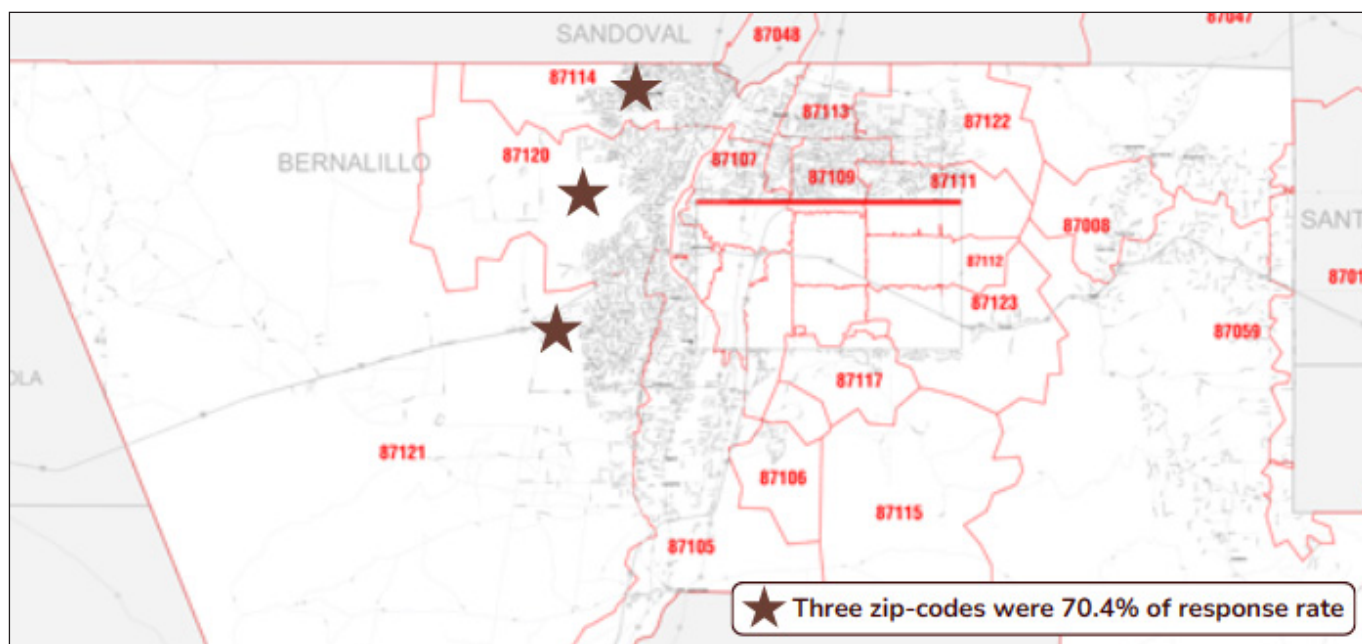
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Part of the Project Team's goals for the Vision's community engagement process were to better understand where current governmental community engagement processes can improve as the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, and other entities develop plans and policies. The traditional approach to community engagement by city and county governments has been to develop a plan or proposal, utilize an agency facility (i.e. a community center, government office, or library) to host a meeting and present the plan, and then gather general feedback that is used to support or make minor edits to the plan as it has been developed. Attempts to then fit community input into existing plan frameworks result in frustration and mistrust between community members and governmental agencies and officials.

Real concerns about this kind of process also arise from its top down approach to planning, where plans are created and presented to communities without embedding adequate community input throughout the whole cycle of plan development - from concept to implementation. Meetings may be advertised only in spaces that are convenient to governing agencies, resulting in attendance primarily from people who already engage regularly with governmental processes. Time and location of meetings tend to make engagement accessible primarily to those who are retired or connected to governmental planning through other organizations (i.e. neighborhood associations). These practices result in the exclusion of a significant proportion of the community, particularly youth, who inherit the legacy of planning decisions today. Meaningful community participation

an email address, which the Project Team added to a growing email list so that updates, events, and the final document could be shared with everyone who participated in the visioning process. This contact list has been saved and will be built on by future MCRP Capstone Studios in future iterations of Vision development.

Participation by different demographics was relatively well-balanced and showed diverse community engagement compared to community engagement counts and demographics from city and county comprehensive planning processes. Over 54% of survey participants were under the age of 50, with the majority of respondents aged 36-49. In all, the survey featured responses from participants in every income category - including people who live below the poverty line as well as people who make over \$100,000 per year. A common concern related to participation expressed by community members was the need to speak with people who actually live within the study area. The survey was successful in this regard, and more than 70% of survey responses came from zip codes within the study area (87114, 87120, 87121).



Through the survey, the top 5 elements that the community identified in order of importance are:

1. Quality of Life
2. Water Resources
3. Open Space and Trails
4. Economic Development
5. Transportation

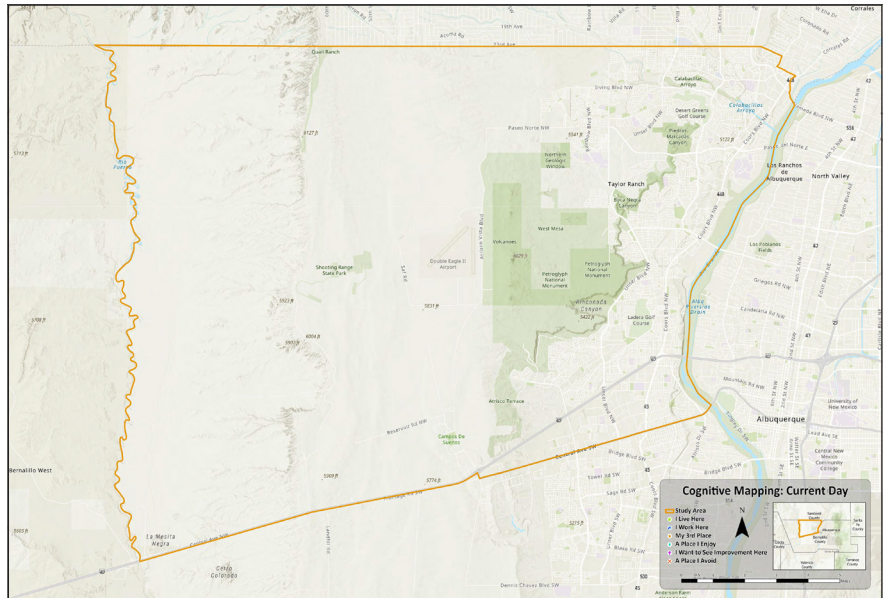
Survey responses also highlighted specific goals of the community as a part of the approach to address these priority elements, such as support for new local businesses, increasing diversity of food options both in terms of global cuisine as well as access to locally grown food, as well as the need for more specific attention to and stronger integration of quality of life factors such as air quality, urban heat, viewsheds, and ecosystem integrity within all elements of the Vision, as well as within existing comprehensive plans and policies.

The Project Team held a Launch Event at Ladera Golf Course on March 7th, 2024, where the basic context and elements for the Vision were presented, and community members could help build out what the Vision would look like. This event was attended by 22 community members, who participated in a mapping exercise to identify where



residents live, work, enjoy spending time, avoid, and want to see improvement.

The Launch Event was followed by more informal community pop-ups at three different local businesses within the study area, Sobremesa, Tractor Brewing Westside, and Mariscos Altamar. The goal of these events was to meet people where they already spend time, increase the level of outreach around the project, and create spaces where people



could take the survey, ask the Project Team questions, and participate in conversations with the Project Team and with each other about the future of growth and development in the study area. As a part of these pop-ups, the Project Team also provided coupons for food as both incentives to participate, as well as to support the local restaurants that hosted them. These community pop-ups were extremely successful, with members stating that they loved the idea of outreach being conducted in places where community members already traditionally spend time, and that these pop-ups were a new concept that they wished more agencies would host.

Despite the success of the Project Team's community engagement process, some gaps persisted. Initially, the Project Team planned to host the fifth and final community event at Volcano Vista High School in order to ensure the voices of youth were included in community input. However, due to scheduling challenges, the final event's location was moved to Taylor Ranch Community Center.

“THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT I CAN REMEMBER THAT ANY ENTITY CAME OUT TO US IN THIS KIND OF PUBLIC SPACE AND ASKED US FOR OUR OPINION AND THOUGHTS ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY. THANK YOU FOR DOING THIS.”
-Community Pop-Up Participant

While a successful final event, participants under the age of 17 are a key demographic whose input is missing from the Vision's data. Yet, the importance of planning around the needs and goals of youth, and focusing on outreach to youth in the Vision's future iterations, was strongly and consistently emphasized by many community participants.

In addition, members and officials from local tribes participated in the Project Team's launch event at Ladera Golf Course, however more time and investment is needed to adequately incorporate the perspectives and goals of the region's many tribes and Pueblos. The Project Team reached out to offices of local Pueblos in order to further incorporate Indigenous perspectives into the Vision, but the timespan of one or even two semesters is not enough to fully engage with tribal communities. Therefore, the Project Team strongly recommends that future MCRP Capstone Studios prioritize early investment in outreach and engagement with the many tribes with cultural ties to the study area, as well as the study area's youth.



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During our initial approach to this plan, population research and statistics for the study area served as a pivotal guide for the overall planning process. Through the data provided in their section our team was able to gain valuable insights into the current composition and needs of the communities that exist and function within the outlined study area. This data not only highlights the current conditions of urban development in the study area, but also offers a roadmap for the Vision, including by developing proposed policies, spotlighting areas for investment, and identifying adequate interventions aimed at creating a well-connected and sustainable future for the study area.

AREA HISTORY

Although Bernalillo County and the City of Albuquerque has a long and complex history dating back centuries, the scope of this plan intends to highlight historical events starting in the 20th century to present more recent impacts to growth within the project area.

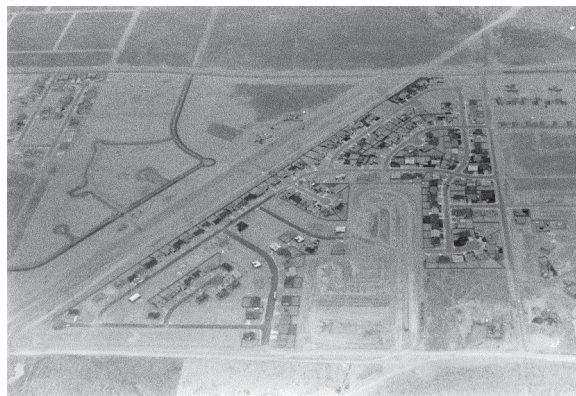
Prior to the 20th century and before New Mexico officially had established statehood, Albuquerque already had a significant population. By 1910, Albuquerque had nearly 11,020 residents while Bernalillo County was home to 28,630 residents. A number of factors resulted in the rapid growth of Albuquerque over the next few decades, including the electric street railway system that connected key areas across the city such as Old Town, New Town and the University of New Mexico Campus. The Alvarado Hotel that was established in 1902 had quickly become a symbol for the city's growth and would remain so for many decades before its eventual demolition in the 1970's.

Between 1910 and 1920 the city grew nearly 37.5% to 15,157 residents. This growth trend would continue into the next decade with the establishment of U.S. Route 66 in the mid 1920's that would bring more travelers through the city. By 1930 the city had grown an additional 75.2% to 26,570. Throughout the 1930's and 1940's Albuquerque and Bernalillo County's population practically doubled with a large housing boom taking place surrounding the establishment of the Nob Hill Business Center and Sandia National Labs. During this time period Joel and Nina Mae Taylor purchased 800 acres west of the river, marking what would later develop into the Taylor Ranch community. By 1950 the population in the City of Albuquerque had grown to 96,815 residents while Bernalillo County grew to 145,673 residents.

During the 1950's and 1960's urban development really began to take shape west of the river. In 1961, Amrep Corp purchased 55K acres of land, now within the study area, that would eventually be used to establish Rio Rancho Estates. In 1963, the Taylor Ranch community continued to diversify with the establishment of Montaño Road. In 1965, the Coronado Freeway bridge (I-40) opened allowing improved access across the river. By 1970 Albuquerque's population had

grown to 244,051 while Bernalillo County grew to 315,774.

The 1970 and '80's were a transformative period resulting in many milestones for development in the study area. Bellamah Corp purchases 300 acres of land, leading to the establishment of the Taylor Ranch Subdivision and the Taylor Ranch Neighborhood association being founded. Shortly after came the Coors Corridor Initiative. In 1987, the Paseo Del Norte bridge crossing was constructed. By 1990, Albuquerque's



Taylor Ranch in 1977

population was at 386,988 residents while Bernalillo County's grew to nearly half a million with 480,577 residents. The rapid population growth paired with westward expansion prompted the initiation of the Montañño Bridge in the 1980's, and though it was met with mixed reviews from residents at the time. The bridge completed construction in 1997 and remains one of the most highly utilized river crossings today.

FACTORS CONSIDERED FOR GROWTH PROJECTIONS

A number of factors were considered when establishing our growth projections, including birth and mortality rates, fluctuations in historic population, as well as other historic factors, availability of water resources (that of which will be discussed later in this plan), and migration in and out of the state, county and study area.

Birth and Mortality Rates

Any growth within the state of New Mexico has been solely driven by birth taken place in the state. In the last five years, the natural increase in population since 2017 is estimated to be 1,722 people within 94,134 births and 92,412 deaths.

Bernalillo County is the state's largest county and has experienced gradual decline in population. The county's natural increase has declined by 148 people with 28,638 births and 28,784 deaths having occurred in the 5 years between 2017 and 2022.

Net Migration

Net Migration overall at the state and county level has declined since 2017. State-wide population has experienced negative net migration with a loss of 1,144. Showcasing that there is a higher amount of residents that have exited the state (12,438 in total) than the number of residents (11,294) that have entered.

Negative net migration level at the county level is much higher. From 2017 to 2022, total net migration for Bernalillo County is -3,094; 4,904 residents entering the county and -7,998 exited the county to different counties within the state.

Current and Historic Population				
	Bernalillo County	% Change	Study Area	% Change
2000	556,678	-	128,061	-
2010	662,564	19.02%	161,001	25.7%
2020	676,444	2.09%	190,185	18.1%
2022	674,692	-0.26%	198,375	4.3%

Source: 2000-22 US Census ACS DP5

Historic Population Change

Since 2000 Bernalillo County has grown a total of 21.2%, the majority of that growth taking place between 2000 and 2010 where the county population increased by 105,886 people (19.02%). Between 2010 and 2020 only increase by 13,880 (2.09%), 86.8% less growth than the prior decade. The gradual decline in population continues in the following years, with the county experiencing a negative decline of 1,752 people (-0.26%) between

2020 and 2022. Given historical rates, it is unlikely that Bernalillo County will experience an extreme uptake in growth within the coming years. However, given the impacts of external factors such as the COVID-19 virus, it is under consideration that the placement and lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in between 2020 and 2022 contributed to low in migration and high exodus of residents.

Despite the gradual decline in population on the county level, population growth within the study has seen consistent growth since 2000. The population have increased a total of 54.8% over a 22 year period. Similarly to the county, 2000-2010 sees the most growth with an increase of 32,940 residents (25.7%). Between 2010 and 2020 the study area continues to grow another 18.1% (29,184 residents). And within just 2 years from 2020 to 2022, the study area has grown an additional 4.3% (8,190 residents). However, a majority of growth - both current and future is predicted to come from within the county as the study area grows and residents move from the eastside to the westside.

POPULATION GROWTH MODEL

The Mid-Region County of Governments (MRCOG) highlights two baseline averages for population growth. The first being an historical average of 1.6% annual growth that accounts for population change as far back as the 1990's while the second is a more recently adjusted estimation of 0.8% for the average annual growth rate that factors in slowed migration and declining birth rates.

With consideration of existing projection models established by MRCOG and all factors previously discussed: low-, mid-, and high-range estimations have been generated. The high-range projections account for the historical growth rate of 1.6% annually while the mid-range projections account for the most recently establish .8% annual growth rate. Although a low-range projection model has been established at 0.2% annually to account for the steep decline in population the county has experience in the most recent 2-3 year period. Additionally, the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority Water 2120: Securing Our Water Future Plan (ABACUA) that will be discussed later in the plan has noted that Albuquerque and the greater Bernalillo County may experience strains on population related to depleting water supply by the year 2088. This has been taken into considerations within our projection models by highlighting a crucial “mar of decline” in which the growth rate slows to less than 0.2% annually. All factors and considerations included the following growth model has been generated for Bernallilo County.

		2030	2040	2050	2060	2070	2080	2090	2100
Bernalillo County	High	766,046	897,826	1,052,274	1,233,292	1,445,450	1,694,104	1,985,533	2,327,096
	Medium	719,100	778,743	843,334	913,282	989,032	1,071,065	1,159,901	1,256,106
	Low	685,565	699,400	713,514	727,914	742,604	757,590	772,879	788,477
Bernalillo County	Medium	719,100	778,743	843,334	913,282	989,032	1,071,065	1,159,901	1,256,106
	Low	685,565	699,400	713,514	727,914	742,604	757,590	772,879	788,477
	Mark of Decline							735,955	728,559

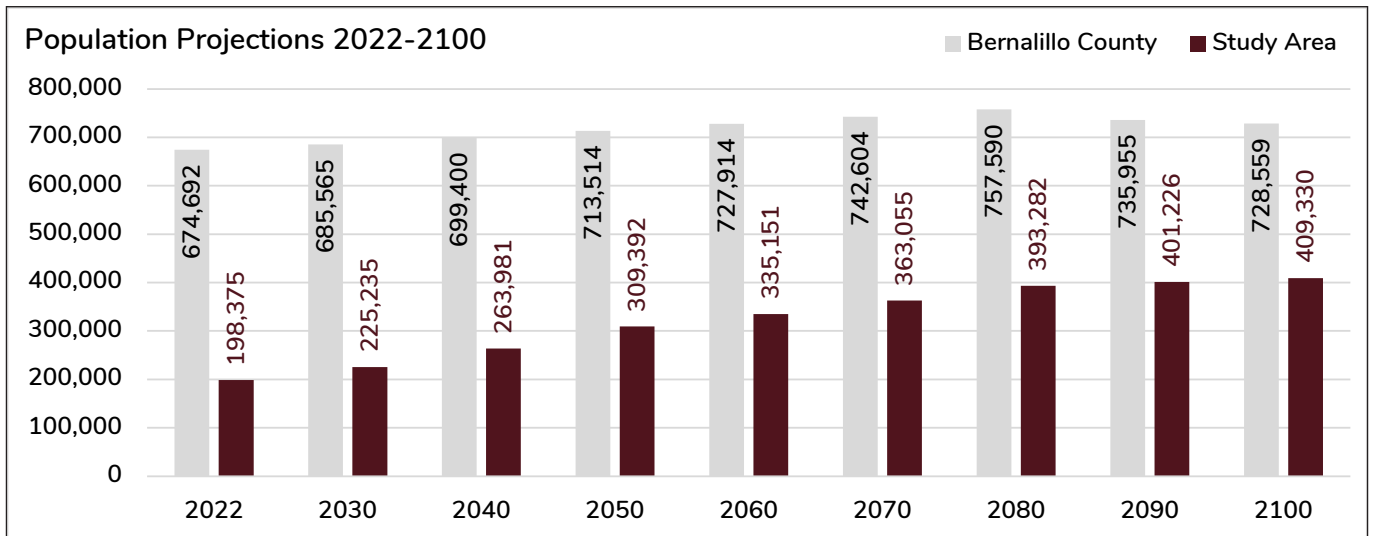
Bernalillo County is expected to growth a low annual rate of 0.2% for the next 5-6 decades, estimating the population to reach 757,590 by 2080. A 12.2% for the most recent 2020 population count. With limitations regarding water resources, growth is expected to slow further in the following 2 decades. Place the 2100 population for Bernallilo County at 728,559 residents.

All the same factors and considerations for Bernallilo County included in additional to ongoing developments and available space growth the following growth model has been generated for the westside study area.

		2030	2040	2050	2060	2070	2080	2090	2100
ABQ Westside	High	225,235	263,981	309,392	362,616	424,995	498,105	583,792	684,219
	Medium	211,432	228,988	247,959	268,526	290,798	314,917	341,037	369,324
	Low	201,571	201,571	209,796	214,034	218,357	222,786	227,268	231,859
		2030	2040	2050	2060	2070	2080	2090	2100
ABQ Westside	Medium				335,151	363,055	393,282	426,026	461,497
	Low							401,226	409,330

Given the historical rates of growth within the study area and available space for growth, it is expected that the gradual increase in population will continue for the next 2-3 decades. Placing the 2050 population at 309,392 residents, an 57.5% increase from the most recent 2022 population. However, in the following years growth is expected to slow as the westside is gradually built out. By the end of the 2080's as the limitation of water resources become more predominant growth is predicted to slow further reaching 409,330 residents by the year 2100.

Finalized Projections



QUALITY OF LIFE

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Quality of Life was identified as the most important element to consider in the visioning process because the factors that make up community quality of life are impacted by every other element category. In this way, using quality of life as a framework to approach each of the other elements provides a direction for the Vision, helping transform the Vision from the potential format of bureaucratic instructional manual to a more big-picture, integrated, practical document. This Vision therefore focuses less on tinkering with existing policies, and more on thinking broadly about what makes life good in the study area, and how each of the other 8 elements can present opportunities to protect and improve quality of life, rather than pose a threat. In addition to thinking about infrastructure and design regulations, quality of life in this Vision focuses on what residents love about their communities in the study area, and what they want to see and experience in the future.

While quality of life is often addressed as a catchall and final add-on to existing planning documents, this Vision places quality of life as the central framework for the document. Given that quality of life can be a very nebulous topic, the Project Team incorporates quality of life factors based on what community members have identified as important quality of life concerns, as well as many of the factors that are emphasized in the quality of life sections of existing comprehensive plans. Based on this, Westside Vision 2100 identifies 3 major categories that comprise quality of life and some examples of each are:

COMMUNITY HEALTH

- Air Quality
- Urban Heat
- Access to Nature
- Water Quality
- Noise Pollution

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Education
- Housing
- Access to Food Choices
- Access to Public Transit

COMMUNITY IDENTITY & LOCAL AMENITIES

- Historic & Cultural Resources (Petroglyphs; Preservation of Indigenous Lands, Cultures & Practices)
- Non-Automotive Transportation Networks (Walkability; Bikeability; Access to Public Transit)
- Public Spaces (Access; Public Safety; Performance Spaces; Community Centers; Recreational Opportunities)

EXISTING CONDITIONS & RELEVANT PLANS

Quality of life is often given the least attention within conventional planning processes. This fact is demonstrated by much of the historic planning and development within the study area. Currently, planning and development in the study area is primarily semi-urban, focused on a

few existing corridors structured around commuter travel and commercial businesses, often surrounded by single family housing units. Conventional planning focused primarily on physical development overlooks many of the quality of life factors that planning impacts. This has had the effect of isolating neighborhoods from each other, from local businesses, from many recreational facilities and public spaces, as well as from natural and cultural amenities without the use of a car.

Many community members have a positive opinion regarding the affordability and aesthetics of much of the single family housing within the study area, but because of the recent, rapid growth in the study area, many community members note the lack of a clear, intentional approach to planning that focuses on the goals of the community - goals which include things like access to nature, sweeping views, preservation of local cultural identity, and community connectivity. At the same time, poor air quality, urban heat, and noise pollution have increased due to these development patterns - deteriorating quality of life within the study area.

Petroglyph National Monument, the Bosque along the Rio Grande, and the San Antonio Oxbow are all cultural and natural spaces that are central to community identity and quality of life within the study area. They contribute to a unique lifestyle that people want to protect and that draws them to the study area. More than providing cultural and recreational activities, these landscapes contribute to the viewsheds of the Sandia Mountains that are central to community identity. Yet, these cultural and natural areas have limited accessibility by any means other than a car, a fact which community participants have identified that they would like to see improve.

The prevalence of continued single family housing development is also very spatially expensive. It is the primary form of development within the study area, and continued expansion without consideration of community-wide impacts, threatens many of the cultural and natural resources that contribute to a positive quality of life in the study area. This means that shifting development patterns and prioritizing the preservation of open spaces can also provide an opportunity to protect the study area's quality of life while supporting creative strategies to absorb growth.

Moreover, this kind of sprawling development has resulted in uneven access to grocery stores, schools, local businesses, as well as overburdening transportation infrastructure - worsening traffic, yet increasing community reliance on vehicles. In developing a vision for the future of the westside, it is critical to think about how to absorb a growing population and provide infrastructure and amenities that contribute to new residents' quality of life as well as protecting and taking care of the quality of life of existing neighborhoods.

Quality of life also has a lot to do with creating a welcoming and safe environment for all community members. In general, Bernalillo County struggles with rates of substance abuse, crime, homelessness, and trust in public safety infrastructure - such as in the Albuquerque Police Department and the local Detention Center. The City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County and many nonprofit organizations have developed a variety of initiatives to address these issues, but as a community we continue to struggle to provide adequate services and support systems to meet the need of the mental health, social, and economic challenges that underpin public safety and substance abuse concerns.

Currently, while less prevalent than in downtown and the eastside, homelessness, mental health services, and housing insecurity are not uncommon in the study area. Residents have identified that supporting the whole community in feeling welcome and safe is important to their quality of life. Public space in the study area meant for recreation, such as parks, community centers, and open spaces are also important to community connection, and as the community identifies a goal to increase public spaces, they have also identified the importance of ensuring those spaces are safe and welcoming for everyone.

Access to good education systems, recreational activities such as little leagues, community events, and programming for all ages, (i.e. “A Day in Paradise” held at Paradise Hills Community Center) are examples of how public spaces, centers, and local schools all contribute to a positive quality of life in the study area. Much of this is attributed to the social learning, community engagement, and positive connections and interactions that arise from these spaces. These factors emphasize the importance of public space, opportunities for youth, and a strong education system as central to quality of life, and as areas that should be intentionally planned for as the study area continues to grow in the future.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

Quality of life was ranked the most important element in developing a vision for growth in the study area through the community engagement process. While many participant responses to survey questions highlighted variation in community goals, quality of life was consistently ranked highly, if not the most important factor, by almost all survey respondents. A common theme throughout the document is the interdependence of elements with each other, and particularly as they connect back to overall quality of life, such as how transportation and urban development



patterns impact air quality, or how access to trails is not only connected to quality of life but also transportation infrastructure. Interdependence is a theme that was repeatedly emphasized by community members as they expanded upon what quality of life means to them, and so the Vision seeks to expand on those interconnections between elements.

Many of the reasons cited for why residents choose to live in the study area include that it provides a different experience and quality of life compared to the rest of Albuquerque, and other cities as well. Community concerns around the potential negative impacts of growth stem from the risk of losing part of the community’s identity - which is deeply connected quality of life. Concerns about future development serving to increase housing insecurity and homelessness, the impact of tall buildings on views, and the potential repetition of disregard for the Native communities that has occurred through past planning and development processes were all highlighted as major concerns of community members that are directly related to quality of life. Because irresponsible development poses a threat to natural and cultural resources, which underpin community identity, community members advocated for planning for growth and development that centers the goals of communities. Rather than becoming the next Denver or Phoenix, community members stated that they want to develop in a way that is uniquely Albuquerque, and honors the region’s cultural and natural heritage.

Community members also highlighted the need to ensure a positive quality of life for youth in the study area. Oftentimes, youth are left out of planning processes or their input only considered within the context of education. In addition to needing a balance between charter schools, traditional schools, schools implementing community school strategies, and even universities, participants also emphasized the need to connect youth’s quality of life with access to public space, transportation networks, cultural amenities, and spaces designed for them. Opportunities for youth, and the need to listen to their perspectives in planning processes, are therefore central to ensuring a positive quality of life for all ages in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

By analyzing existing policies and planning documents, and synthesizing community engagement data, the following policy recommendations are intended to improve the incorporation of community voice in existing planning structures and to encourage centering a quality of life approach to planning.

- Develop comprehensive community engagement processes that authentically engage residents, tribes, and youth throughout the whole life cycle of planning processes.
- Use quality of life as a comprehensive framework for planning, rather than an additional element separate from other planning goals.
- Improve interconnection between local businesses, neighborhoods, and public space through biking, walking, and public transit connectivity.
- Approach planning by focusing on the interconnections between elements rather than treating them as siloes.
- Design public spaces that include both open space and trails, as well as event or performance opportunities, art, and spaces for youth to spend unstructured time.
- Emphasize local community identity in planning processes, rather than attempting to attract development that looks like Denver, Phoenix, or other fast-growing cities.

WATER RESOURCES



Taken by Rebecca Neal

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Integrating the role of water in growth and development planning is a top priority to outlining a vision for the future in the study area. Questions of how much water will be available, how it will be used, and where it will come from are central to envisioning a sustainable future with a growing population where communities have the water they need for a variety of uses. Understanding the kinds of impacts that different residential, commercial, urban, and economic development patterns have on water demand are one piece of the puzzle. Other important pieces are how limited water is best used and how we can protect the ecosystem integrity of rare aquatic features such as the Rio Grande and the San Antonio Oxbow.

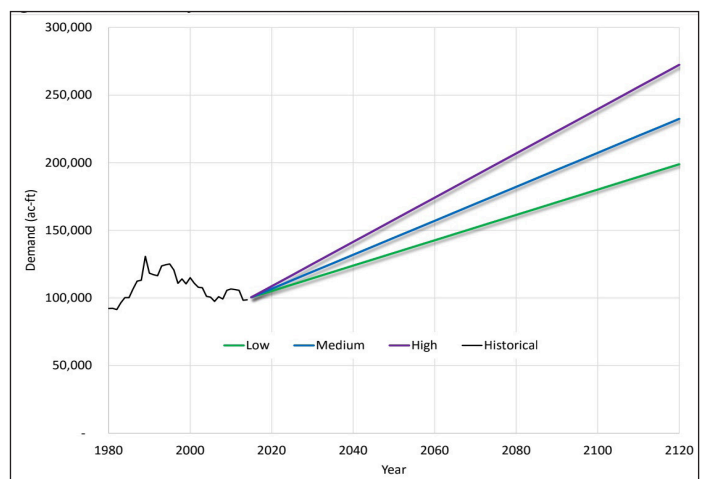
Water resources are not only threatened by irresponsible growth and development, but in looking out to 2100, climate change factors grow ever more important to water planning. Albuquerque is already experiencing a hotter and drier climate, as well as shifts in rainfall patterns due to climate change. Climate change stressors increase water demand and reduce supply for current users, and also create an additional layer of complexity that needs to be considered in developing a vision for the future in the study area. A vision that

incorporates the protection of water resources requires a focus on resilience, an understanding of the infrastructure needed to protect our water supply, and an emphasis on co-benefits. Co-benefits could include how different strategies for water resource protection can also benefit cultural resources, quality of life, open space and trails, stormwater management, and even the characteristics and economic development capacity of urban development patterns.

EXISTING CONDITIONS & RELEVANT PLAN

The Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority's (ABCWUA) Water 2120: Securing Our Water Future is the City of Albuquerque's plan for the future of water in the metropolitan area, the majority of which lies within ABCWUA's service area. Water 2120 outlines current supply conditions, demand projections, and a portfolio of strategies to address them. According to ABCWUA, Albuquerque likely has enough water under current arrangements to meet the demand for our growing population into the 2080s. However, around the year 2088,

ABCWUA Water 2120 Plan

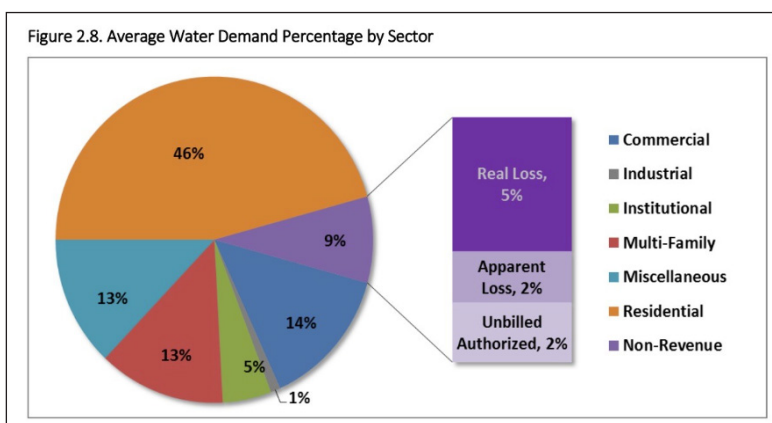


ABCWUA projects that they will need a new supply of water. This has a major impact on the Project Team’s population projections, and ABCWUA lays out a number of potential strategies for either pushing out further the need for a new supply or to meet the demand for an increased supply.

It is important to consider where Albuquerque’s water comes from and how that is expected to be impacted by growth and development in creating this Vision. Existing native Rio Grande surface water rights, groundwater supplies, and San Juan-Chama (SJC) allocations are the primary sources of Albuquerque’s water, along with some wastewater reclamation. Starting in the 1990’s ABCWUA implemented ambitious conservation targets that resulted in water demand decreasing by more than half. With simultaneous infrastructure improvements for SJC project water, Albuquerque’s groundwater pumping was reduced by 2/3rds and our aquifer has risen 15ft. since then. The aquifer is expected to continue to rise through the 2020s. This data highlights the potential success of future conservation measures both for ABCWUA’s operations as well as consumption.

ABCWUA has also created a groundwater management plan that establishes a safety reserve of groundwater for long-term emergencies as well as a working groundwater level that can be utilized without resulting in damage to the aquifer or above-ground infrastructure. However, ABCWUA projects water demand to more than double in any growth scenario. Therefore, ABCWUA recommends investments in conservation, additional aquifer storage and recharge, stormwater capture, as well as wastewater reuse to extend our limited water resources as far as possible. Even so, there is no way around the fact that water poses a significant constraint and consideration for future development.

Currently, single-family residential development uses the majority of ABCWUA water. However, businesses are also a major contributor to water demand. This has significant implications for future growth planning, and in developing areas for increased economic activity, such as industrial zoning. The amount of water needed for business operations will need to be taken into consideration as a part of planning and permitting processes. Multi-family residential development tends to use much less water than single-family residential. However it’s important that in establishing strategies and priorities, shifts in development also function to preserve key features of westside lifestyles.



ABACUA Watrer 2120 Plan

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

Often one of the biggest concerns about future growth in the study area raised by community members is the question of water supply. As an example of changing development patterns that protect water resources while at the same time preserving community character are thinking about viewsheds even beyond existing view overlay boundaries. This is because while multi-family housing has been shown to require the least amount of per capita water usage, low-rise development provides an opportunity for multi-family housing that does not compete with community goals for view protection. Many community members have voiced concerns about the increase in density and urban growth impacting the views that the westside is known for. Many positive case studies exist for low-rise multi-family housing. Rather than expecting, or requiring, residential development to increase the number of stories, multi-family housing can produce

affordable, attractive, and water-wise results while still providing housing supply capacity when developments are designed for 1-2 stories.

At the same time existing vacant single family homes can be divided into duplexes as a way of maintaining the single family housing characteristics of neighborhoods, but allowing for additional growth alongside trends showing a decreasing number of members per household. This approach could also allow those homes to return to single family occupancy should the characteristics and lifestyle needs of the population in the study area shift again.

Related to the question of water supply, community members also emphasized the importance of protecting existing waterways and water features including the Rio Grande and the Cottonwood Bosque that relies on it, as well as the San Antonio Oxbow. Community feedback highlighted the importance of encouraging development that accommodates growth without compromising water resources. As a part of maintaining the study area's unique community identity, development within the study area needs to consider the region's unique water context and focus on co-benefits. For instance, ABCWUA has proposed the Westside Bosque Reuse Project for more than a decade, but wastewater reclamation capacity has still not been expanded within the study area. Prioritizing the construction of the Westside Bosque Reuse Project would result in a facility that treats and redistributes wastewater as non-potable water for important quality of life and open space needs including landscaping and wildlife habitat.

Given the community goal of emphasizing co-benefits, an additional strategy for aligning development futures with community goals is to create strategies that better integrate water planning with land use planning and development. The need to consider water resources, including water use and water quality, at all stages of permitting and development processes is critical to ensuring a resilient and water-secure future in the study area. Moreover, the success of ABCWUA's implementation of ambitious water conservation targets in the past suggests that outlining new conservation targets, especially for new development that can implement more recent technology, could be a promising strategy for protecting the region's water resources for future generations.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the Project Team's review of relevant planning documents through the lens of community feedback and a quality of life framework that emphasizes interdependence, the following policy recommendations have been developed:

- Promote low-rise multi-family housing or opportunities to divide existing single family housing in duplexes and triplexes
- Develop strategies to integrate water planning and climate change impacts with land use planning policy
- Implement new, more ambitious conservation requirements - especially for new development
- Prioritize improvement of wastewater reclamation capacity, such as by constructing the Westside Bosque Reuse Project
- Increase collaboration among agencies with jurisdictions over water use in Albuquerque as well as community members in order to identify the best strategies for water resource management and protection based on community goals.

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TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Not only are open spaces central to community participants' quality of life, but they also provide multiple benefits for water resources, stormwater management, wildlife habitat, urban heat mitigation, air quality improvement, recreational opportunities, community connection, and many other aspects of community identity and future development in the study area. Therefore, open space and trail networks are important elements of community planning in the study area. These interconnected networks of parks, greenways, trails, and natural habitat provide opportunities for recreation and relaxation, and play a vital role in fostering environmental sustainability, social cohesion, and public health. In addition, open spaces pose important opportunities for climate resilience. Open space and trail networks are regarded as essential ingredients for creating livable, resilient, and equitable communities, where residents can connect with nature, engage in physical activity, and forge meaningful community bonds.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Under-maintenance is a primary concern within existing open space and trail networks in addition to the challenging, but critical effort of preserving or expanding open spaces and trail systems. Limited resources and development policies that often place open space preservation and economic development at odds exacerbate many of these issues. The need to balance the acquisition of new open spaces with maintaining existing ones within the confines of constrained budgets presents a significant hurdle. Even today, community members state that they want to see current open space and trail networks expanded and improved. As the study area's population grows and demographics change over time, the demand for open space will continue to increase, further straining already limited resources. Yet the preservation, acquisition, and care of open spaces are necessary in order to support the quality of life of both current and future residents. This dilemma necessitates careful prioritization and strategic allocation of funding to address both immediate maintenance needs and long-term open space acquisition goals, ensuring that open spaces remain accessible and well-maintained for current and future generations.

Another challenge lies in the distribution of current parks and available open space in the study area based on the community's goals and needs. Balancing competing demands and interests while ensuring equitable access to green space requires thoughtful planning and community engagement. Additionally, coordinating open space management with other agencies and private entities adds complexity to the process. However, collaborative efforts are essential to maximize the benefits that open space and trail networks offer to residents and possible future partnerships. It also allows for resources to be leveraged more effectively to meet shared conservation and recreation objectives.

Furthermore, managing open space presents a need to mandate public access in order to

safeguard natural resources; especially in high traffic areas such as the Bosque. Striking a balance between recreational use and conservation requires active stewardship and sustainable, adaptive management practices. As urbanization encroaches on natural habitats, protecting biodiversity and preserving ecological integrity have become even more important, and protections for open space that require responsible development with mutual benefits for the values of open space must be a top priority. Additionally, acquiring land for open space preservation entails significant costs and timing challenges, particularly in coordination with development. Strategic land acquisition strategies through open space bonds, coupled with proactive planning and partnerships, are essential to secure critical open space parcels and ensure their preservation in the face of rapid urban growth and development pressures.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

Open spaces support many community values, and community members from the study area highlighted the importance of protecting open space for many reasons, including wildlife habitat, water resource protection, cultural ties, recreation, preservation of views, care for Petroglyphs and local tribes' traditional cultural uses, community character, beauty, clean air, natural heritage, agriculture, and many more. The quality and character of open spaces in the study area, including the Bosque (Rio Grande State Park), the San Antonio Oxbow, Petroglyph National Monument (although this is technically federal land, it is central to community identity and major connection for the study area's city and county open spaces), the Calabacillas Arroyo and many of the green stormwater infrastructure projects constructed by AMAFCA, city and county parks, and many others are all part of the community's identity.



Taken by Rebecca Neal

Community feedback highlighted the need to acquire additional open space, particularly around Petroglyph National Monument in order to preserve viewsheds and basalt outcrops, to ensure the continuation of Indigenous cultural practices, protect wildlife habitat unique to the west mesa, and allow for continued recreational use by current and future residents. Community members also expressed the need for increased open space and trail connectivity between neighborhoods and commercial areas as well. Strategies to expand and steward open space and trail networks should thus be diverse - prioritizing the protection of large areas of land around Petroglyphs National Monument from urban development, but also focusing on integrating parks and more urban open spaces into urban development planning so that mutual benefits of community connectivity, biking and walking trails, access to nature, and green stormwater management are all part of urban and economic development strategies. In this way, protection of the region's natural and cultural heritage does not have to be pitted against economic development and growth, but rather can be part of a pathway forward that provides shared benefits centered on a variety of community values.

RELEVANT PLANS & POLICIES

Existing policies for open space and trails that are outlined in the ABC Comprehensive Plan focus on promoting parks and open space as economic engines and enhancements to quality of life, underscoring the interconnectedness of urban development, environmental stewardship, and community well-being. By recognizing parks, trails, and open spaces as valuable assets that contribute to residents' quality of life, attract recreational tourism, and create new jobs, current planning documents suggest leveraging open spaces as catalysts for economic growth and vitality. Moreover, by leveraging city and county funding for regional recreational facilities and

eco-tourism opportunities, communities can maximize the benefits of open space investments, creating shared amenities that enhance regional competitiveness and appeal to visitors while providing residents with accessible recreational opportunities.

Preserving available land within the study area highlights the importance of cultural and ecological heritage conservation in open space planning. By safeguarding what remains, communities can protect vital ecosystems, preserve cultural landscapes, and promote sustainable land use practices that have the possibility to support local food production and overall biodiversity conservation. What current policy documents do not stress, but could align with community goals is the role of traditional dryland farming and local Indigenous agricultural methods within open space. While conventional agriculture can be water-intensive, many traditional agricultural practices can fit well into the community goals of additional open space acquisitions - where recreation, local agriculture, water resource protection, youth development, community connection, and celebration of cultural heritage can each be addressed through new approaches to open space management.

Additionally, identifying critical ecological zones and creating networks of open space, trails, and parks to connect residents demonstrates a commitment to ecological connectivity and habitat preservation. By consciously linking green areas and wildlife corridors, Albuquerque can enhance biodiversity, mitigate habitat disintegration, and provide wildlife habitat in the study area while offering the growing population of residents and visitors opportunities for outdoor recreation and nature-based education. Overall, these implementation strategies reflect a holistic approach to open space planning that integrates economic, environmental, and social considerations to create vibrant, resilient, and equitable communities for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the future presence and use of open space and trail networks, it is important to embrace strategies that promote the multifaceted co-benefits that such spaces offer while consistently analyzing and responding to evolving community needs. Firstly, promoting parks and open space as economic engines is important for enhancing the overall quality of life for residents in the study area and for attracting tourism in addition to new job opportunities that can assist in economic development. By highlighting the recreational, cultural, and ecological value of these spaces, the westside can leverage them as key assets for economic development while at the same time fostering local entrepreneurship and enhancing the overall attractiveness of the study area for residents and visitors alike.

Secondly, leveraging city and county funding for recreational facilities in the area and more eco-tourism opportunities can increase the impact of investments in the study area's open space and trails. By pooling resources and collaborating at the state and city level, the study area can develop interconnected networks of recreational amenities that cater to diverse interests and preferences. Moreover, integrating ecotourism opportunities into open space initiatives supports the integration of the preservation of natural and cultural assets, revenue generation, and support local businesses, with environmental conservation and stewardship.

Lastly, preserving open space and trails by identifying current key but also possible future ecological zones, and creating networks of open space, trails, and parks are essential strategies for ensuring the long-term sustainability and resilience of urban environments in the face of climate change. Safeguarding water resources, preserving agricultural heritage, and protecting natural habitats within the study area supports ecological integrity and enhances the overall health and well-being of communities. By responding to changing demographics and community needs through the provision of more regional parks, active sport parks, urban agriculture spaces, and signage for parks and open space, Albuquerque can ensure that its open space and trail networks remain accessible, inclusive, and relevant for future generations.

Additionally the following considerations should also be taken into account:

- Acquire new open spaces, particularly around Petroglyph National Monument, through the use of Open Space Bonds
- Integrate open spaces with economic development planning in order to ensure mutual benefit, increased connectivity, and access to nature, rather than pitting natural resource conservation against growth.
- Invest in the maintenance needed to properly steward open spaces as natural and cultural sites while also providing opportunities for recreation
- Consider the diverse uses and co-benefits of open spaces for community connection, local agriculture, stormwater management, and others in developing management plans.
- Center the goals of community and ecosystem needs in the context of climate resilience when acquiring new open space



Render completed by Farzin Baik and Amir Reza Maroof

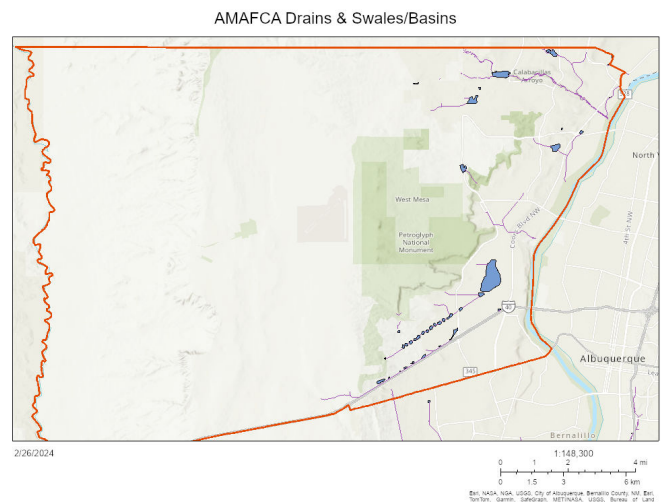
STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Stormwater infrastructure is an important consideration in urban growth because increases in population, development, and the construction of “hardscapes,” such as asphalt, concrete and other non-porous materials increase the quantity of stormwater runoff and easily degrade water quality as well. In the desert southwest, compacted soils, basalt fields, and other naturally-occurring landscape features combined with our southwestern monsoon patterns make stormwater management all the more crucial. As heavy rains pour down on non-porous surfaces, rain accumulates as floodwater, creating runoff as it makes its way downhill toward the river. Stormwater picks up debris, contaminants from roadways and refuse, and funnels everything toward the river.

Climate change’s impacts create an additional layer of complexity to stormwater planning and management because hotter and drier conditions, combined with less frequent, but more intense monsoons result in increased flooding. To address both water quantity (volume of stormwater runoff) and quality (level of water pollution), Albuquerque Metropolitan Area Flood Control Authority (AMAFCA) has constructed and manages a complex system of arroyos, basins, channels, and filtration systems to redirect stormwater away from homes and businesses for managed release into the river.

Until a flood occurs or waterways become unsafe for human use and enjoyment, it is easy for stormwater management to go unnoticed. However, with changes to our climate resulting in increased intensity of rainfall combined with longer periods of drought, these scenarios have become increasingly likely. Yet, well-thought-out urban development, infrastructure planning, and preservation of open spaces and natural arroyos provide opportunities to provide mutual benefits for water quality, recreation, economic development, and community connection to water resources.



Taken by Rebecca Neal

EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

A number of lined (concrete), softlined (riprap, soil cement), and unlined (natural soil) arroyos, basins, and stormwater projects exist in the study area. In comparison to the eastside of Albuquerque (such as the North Diversion Channel), AMAFCA has made a significant shift in the kinds of infrastructure constructed in order to include more multi-use projects. The Piedras Marcadas Basin, adjacent to the Rancho Sereno and Riverview

Estates neighborhoods, includes a bike trail, walking paths, and a disc golf course. The basin is also connected to Piedras Marcadas Park, which has a playground.

The Calabacillas Arroyo is one of the largest arroyos on the westside, beginning near the northwest mesa and running all the way to the river. Because of its size, a number of other basins and stormwater channels are diverted to the Calabacillas Arroyo in order to provide more capacity at smaller stormwater facilities. Large unlined sections of the arroyo double as walking paths, with soil cement used to stabilize sections of the arroyo.

The “Stormwater Volcano” at the Intersection of I-40 and 98th St. represents an innovative way to foster increased engagement with stormwater management. 100-year flood events, an intense rainfall event that has historically only had a 1% chance of happening each year, are becoming increasingly common due to climate change. During intense rainfall events, such as a 100-year flood, stormwater has breached arroyos and run onto I-40 in the past near the intersection with 98th. Due to nearby residential development, space for improvement of AMAFCA drainage channels in this area has been limited. In 2019, AMAFCA completed construction of a stormwater volcano, where stormwater bubbles out the top during high flow events. The design creates a fun and innovative way for residents to engage with stormwater management.



Taken by Rebecca Neal

The San Antonio Oxbow is a rare desert wetland adjacent to the Rio Grande. Made by a previous river meander that was cut off, the wetland provides a unique habitat to wildlife, while also providing stormwater storage and filtration. Areas like the San Antonio Oxbow that create natural solutions for stormwater management as well as provide community benefits need to be prioritized for preservation - no matter the commercial or residential value of the land. The Mariposa Park wetlands differ in that they are constructed wetlands further up the west mesa. These wetlands capture, filter, and drain stormwater while providing shade, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat within an urban ballpark. On the eastside, AMAFCA has reconstructed historical wetlands within the Jefferson ditch in order to provide wildlife habitat and an opportunity for aquifer recharge. The preservation and construction of these kinds of wetlands are a key opportunity for managing increased stormwater runoff and degraded water quality in the study area.



Taken by Rebecca Neal

As the study area grows, stormwater management infrastructure capacity needs will increase dramatically. As land use changes both from open land to developed land as well as from spread-out commercial corridors to increased density, stormwater runoff volumes will grow and water quality is likely to be further degraded. Stormwater management solutions that work with the natural environment and provide multiple community co-benefits will only become more important as growth increases.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

Community feedback has emphasized the importance of open spaces and trail networks, public spaces and activities, as well quality of life issues in finding new ways to think about stormwater

management in the study area. Many of these priorities, while not often explicitly connected to stormwater management, can be improved and protected through improved stormwater management and also provide opportunities to produce co-benefits from integrated stormwater management planning with the other elements.



Some community members have also noted that rapid upstream development has not always adequately considered stormwater planning and ecosystem services, resulting in downstream flooding to historic residential communities. Green infrastructure such as bioswales, wetlands, ponds, and even preservation and maintenance of natural arroyos can simultaneously provide wildlife habitat, multi-use opportunities, water quality improvements, stormwater storage, urban heat mitigation, access to greenspaces and many more co-benefits alongside stormwater management. Green infrastructure is intended to revitalize natural hydrological processes. While AMAFCA is shifting more toward green infrastructure projects within the study area, community members stated that they want to see more green infrastructure that is integrated with urban development patterns and open space networks. For instance, the Calabacillas Arroyo provides opportunities for large scale green infrastructure projects that incorporate recreational trails, but even in more urban areas of the arroyo, public spaces, walkable urban development, and community connectivity can be a part of greener stormwater management.



Renders completed by Farzin Baik and Amir Reza Maroof

EXISTING PLANS AND POLICIES

AMAFCA's Project Schedule is updated every two years, and outlines a series of construction and improvement projects and establishes priorities from a technical perspective throughout the Albuquerque metro area. In the 2022 Project Schedule, 17 projects are highlighted as needing funding and implementation within the Westside Vision 2100 study area, but none of these are defined as green infrastructure. Six of these projects have to do with erosion and grade control as well as monitoring in different reaches of the Calabacillas Arroyo. Projects such as these could be adapted to include green infrastructure and create more community co-benefits in order to tailor existing stormwater priorities to community concerns.

While ABCWUA focuses on drinking water and wastewater management as it impacts water supply, stormwater intersects with ABCWUA's work as well due to both drought and increasing demand in a hotter and drier Albuquerque, where population is projected to continue growing until the 2080s. Given the intensity of monsoons and heavy rain events in the study area, not only could stormwater be slowed and retained through improved infrastructure, but could also potentially be stored, treated, and reused as non-potable irrigation water. In Water 2120: Securing our Water Future, ABCWUA considers the role of stormwater as a long-term strategy to supplement limited water supplies.

However, there are major barriers to implementing these policy changes given the complexity of water law in the Southwest. The New Mexico Office of the State Engineer (OSE) considers stormwater to be "public waters of the state," meaning within 96 hours of falling, stormwater must be returned to the river to continue on to downstream users. Yet, ABCWUA notes that

the intensity and flashiness of rainfall events at times results in downstream users not being able to fully utilize stormwater flows from the river, suggesting a gap may exist between the amount of stormwater that falls, and the amount of stormwater that can be used downstream. In Water 2120, ABCWUA considers the possibility of working with the New Mexico OSE and other stakeholders to treat and reuse stormwater that otherwise may go unaccounted for.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on community feedback to further integrate stormwater management planning into urban development and open space, the Project Team developed the following recommendations in order to highlight opportunities where agency capacity and community goals can be aligned to improve and diversify stormwater management practices in the study area.

- Prioritize protection of rare aquatic ecosystems, as well as construction of new ones, for their stormwater and community co-benefits
- Work with institutional water stakeholders such as the New Mexico OSE to figure out strategies unutilized stormwater runoff reclamation
- Prioritize and implement green infrastructure projects in the Calabacillas Arroyo and other stormwater drainages in the study area
- Integrate stormwater management facilities with both multi-use community projects as well as urban development plans.
- Incorporate stormwater management into the acquisition of open spaces and new urban development in order to create a network of multi-use green stormwater infrastructure that filters and treats stormwater where rainfall occurs.

LAND USE AND URBAN CENTERS & DEVELOPMENT

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Zoning and land use has a significant impact on quality of life, transportation patterns, local community aesthetic, and access to goods and services. Zoning dictates where different kinds of development can occur, and what areas are preserved as open spaces. It influences the walkability of neighborhoods as well as the urban-rural gradient between urban cores, suburban development, and rural communities. Zoning and land use have a lasting effect on urban development patterns. Urban development patterns encompass a wide range of aspects related to the built environment, including the layout and design of urban space as well as how people organize within and utilize urban spaces, even down to the neighborhood and individual block scales.

However, urban development patterns are not set in stone. They can change over time as communities identify how they want their community to develop through improving land use and zoning policies, positively shaping urban development patterns in the future. Yet, land use change toward increased urban development often has significant negative impacts for stormwater runoff, water quality, and the health of local ecosystems. But with proactive land use planning that integrates urban development with stewardship and protection of natural and cultural landscapes, this does not have to be the case. Good land use and urban development policy can actually improve ecosystem health along with community quality of life when adequately planned for.

At the core of most major urban developments are urban centers and corridors, a framework for urban development created by the ABC and Bernalillo County comprehensive plans. These plans identify 3 types of centers: Urban Centers, Employment Centers and Activity Centers.

Each of these centers is intended to have different forms, with urban centers expected to absorb the majority of growth and development - increasing in density. Employment centers are places expected to provide jobs, and activity centers are outlined as lower intensity, but still multi-use districts for commercial, residential, and recreational development.

Developments can be impacted by a wide variety of factors such as historical events that are unique to the area, economic changes, public policy and environmental conditions that include local weather and terrain. Growth planning also needs to account for elements related suburban sprawl, mixed use developments, past and current policies of urban renewal, and in the study area's context - the urban centers and corridors framework. In creating Westside Vision 2100, the goal is to identify opportunities within urban development frameworks to be resilient in a variety of growth and future economic development scenarios.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Historic land use regulations have resulted in primarily single-use, suburban development, often characterized as "sprawl" around the perimeter of urban areas, while urban cores have experienced simultaneous disinvestment. This kind of planning has been particularly significant in the study area since the 1970s, increasing car dependency, and making it challenging to provide residents with alternative transportation networks and access to commercial businesses within their own neighborhoods. Paired with the rapid growth in the study area over the last 40-50 years, the sprawling urban development patterns seen today shape many aspects of life for residents and visitors in the study area, including through increased consumption of natural

areas by development, income disparities among communities, traffic congestion, air pollution, and overall diminished quality of life.

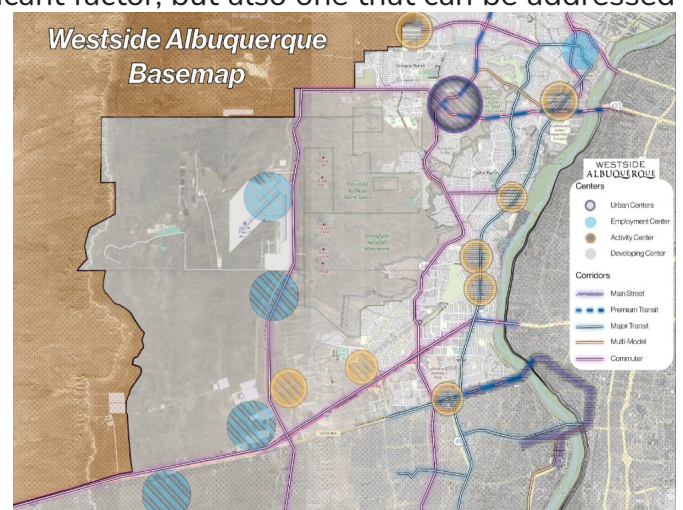
This sprawling suburban development has siphoned resources away from urban cores, and resulted in open spaces, agricultural land, and rural areas being overdeveloped - reducing access by residents, and damaging important natural and cultural resources. This transition continues to impact the quality of life and landscape in the study area today. National surveys highlight that U.S. residents often prefer to preserve rural areas and open spaces, while identifying areas to expand inward and maintaining the character of historic neighborhoods. Those sentiments are similarly reflected in community surveys completed as a part of the Westside Vision 2100 project as well.

In many ways, current zoning designations and development patterns reflect historic land use policies. The current City of Albuquerque (CABQ) zoning map shows stark distinctions between land use areas in much of the study area and even highlights how “sprawl” is connected to zoning policies. Today, major corridors like Coors are lined with many large-scale commercial developments with negative impacts to air quality, views, and quality of life. This single use zoning also reinforces car-centric transportation networks, and isolates residential neighborhoods from local businesses.

More recent shifts toward multi-use development and form-based code are considered improvements to historic planning and zoning policy. The IDO or, Integrated Development Ordinance is a system of regulations designed for influencing positive development outcomes for the city of Albuquerque. The purpose of the IDO is create regulation and guidelines for land use and development within the city. However, community participants have pointed out that the IDO still continues to institutionalize “sprawl” development in many ways, and much more attention to the uniqueness of neighborhoods in the study area is needed. As the study area grows, it will be important to consider how zoning decisions impact community aesthetic, transportation patterns, and quality of life, as well as how economic and urban development policies can be best adapted to support those areas rather than hurt them.

Another important consideration in land use change is the existing range of city and county utility infrastructure. Continued focus on westward expansion without community-based long range planning strains existing infrastructure networks and can lead to underdeveloped and inadequate access to public services. This dilemma contributes to increased maintenance costs for governments and consumers. Responsible development requires equitable investment of resources in water supplies and stormwater infrastructure, gas and electric lines, as well as transportation infrastructure in order to ensure that some communities and groups do not receive disproportionate investment at the expense of others. With a geographic footprint as large as Albuquerque’s, existing infrastructure is a significant factor, but also one that can be addressed through improving land use policies.

The City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County have both implemented a series of overlay zones to protect views around Petroglyph National Monument, and to protect the historic character of neighborhoods. A recent proposal to create an additional overlay in the Integrated Development Ordinance around Petroglyph National Monument will require notification to nearby Pueblos for all development within 660ft. of the site. However, community feedback has emphasized that these overlays are not sufficient to preserve community character and



Map generated by Farzin Baik and Amir Reza Maroof

appropriately address the concerns of tribes and neighborhoods.

The primary urban center within the study area identified by the comprehensive plans is planned to be built near the intersection of Paseo Del Norte and Unser Blvd. The majority of employment centers in the study area are located on the west mesa around Atrisco Vista Blvd. Activity centers have been identified primarily along Coors Blvd.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

Community members identified land use needs related to centers and corridors in order to preserve historic characteristics in the study area such as viewsheds. Community members highlighted that particularly in the fragile desert environment of the west mesa and basalt fields around Petroglyph National Monument, soil structure and local geography need to be considered in order to protect basalt outcrops. In the past, blasting of basalt for development has damaged homes and increased flooding in addition to causing irreparable damage to sacred land around the west mesa. Indigenous beliefs and cultural practices related to the west mesa expand far beyond the boundaries of Petroglyph National Monument, and limiting notification only to development proposals within 660ft of the National Monument (even if an improvement from current practices), especially given the well-documented best practices for meaningful tribal consultation, is an injustice to the original stewards and residents of the westside.

Community members proposed adjusting the location of centers in order to promote development that is appropriate to the landscape. The stretch of Paseo del Norte near its intersection with Unser Blvd. in particular was highlighted as a potential scenic parkway, a designation which would encourage creative development that helps preserve viewsheds of both Petroglyph National Monument as well as of the Sandia Mountains to the east. The urban center projected to be developed at that intersection was proposed by community members to be moved to the current Cottonwood Center, since that commercial area is in need of economic investment and also lies northwest of the Calabacillas Arroyo. Basalt flows stop at the Calabacillas Arroyo and so encouraging more urban development north, rather than south of this landscape feature would protect a valuable cultural and natural landscape while promoting growth and responsible development. The intersection of Paseo del Norte and Unser could then be developed as an activity center with attention to the unique views in the area.

It was also made clear that as part of a strategy to preserve more of the character of the study area while increasing capacity to absorb growth, Rank II and Rank III plans need to carry more weight in IDO and ABC or Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan decisions, given that oftentimes comprehensive planning documents fail to integrate some of the nuances of distinct communities within the study area.

Especially in regards to development and land use planning around the Double Eagle Airport, community members expressed concerns about noise pollution and air quality, impacts to basalt outcrops, as well as viewsheds. Community members proposed expanding view overlays, height restrictions, and improved design standards around Petroglyph National Monument, especially to the west, because there are many important tribal uses and community characteristics that are connected to the expansive views both to and from Petroglyph National Monument. Another strategy to preserve these important qualities is for the city and county to acquire additional land through Open Space Bonds around Petroglyph National Monument in order to preserve it as open space and ensure that the National Monument is buffered from Double Eagle area Employment Center development.

Single-family housing is often characterized as a barrier to multi-use development, increased density, and improved walkability of cities, but it is important to consider how development patterns might impact both existing single family housing neighborhoods, and how single family housing can be part of the solution to responsible growth and contribute to affordable

housing supply. Community feedback emphasized the need to consider single-family housing considerations alongside increased development of multi-family housing in land use planning.

Where large single family homes are vacant, opportunities to divide them into duplexes and triplexes in order to absorb growth, without relying on the construction of entirely new forms of development, can also offer a strategy forward. In the event that housing preferences and needs change again in the future, for instance as the study area's population begins to level off around the 2080s, these homes then have the possibility of being returned to single family housing. This kind of flexibility in development is critical to ensuring a resilient future for development in the study area that is appropriate to a range of different scenarios.

EXISTING PLANS & POLICIES

Planning for urban development has to be a collaborative process. In the study area, there are multiple planning entities that have a role in developing land use policies, including the Paradise Hills Zoning District, which dates back to 1978. In addition, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Laguna Pueblo, To'hajiilee Navajo Chapter, City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, and Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) are all important intersecting jurisdictions in the study area that are critical to land use planning coordination and processes.

Rank II and Rank III plans are also important to consider. Even since the adoption of the ABC Comprehensive Plan and IDO, these Area, Corridor, and Sector Development plans such as the Westside Strategic Plan, Coors Corridor Plan, West Central and Upper Petroglyphs plans highlight the unique character considerations necessary for land use planning and development policies in the study area's distinct communities. However, a thorough process for considering Rank II and Rank III plans does not actually exist, and community members described many development decisions in which these plans had been ignored.

Along with the centers and corridors framework, the ABC and Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plans outline "vacant and buildable" land, where growth is intended to be directed as part of long-range urban development planning. It is important to consider though, how some vacant land might be better served by open space protections rather than development, as well as how urban development and land use designations in centers and corridors can be integrated with the geography of the westside, preserving important spaces connected to westside identity, while allowing for growth and responsible land use change. For instance, the city and county could consider a growth boundary in order to direct development to appropriate areas in the study area, without turning the majority of the west mesa into developed land. However, in making these decisions, the city and county will also have to consider existing entitlements alongside community goals in identifying growth boundaries in the study area, so that these boundaries are fair. These considerations can be part of the remedy for past land use patterns that isolate, suburbanize, and overdevelop communities as well as for achieving economic development goals that work in harmony with goals for quality of life, economic resilience, and community aesthetic.

The Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan also highlights "Study Areas," such as Paseo Del Oeste, as areas that may be analyzed for future consideration as sector plans areas or activity centers. The County's plan also recommends Reserve Areas where large-scale mixed-use development is a likely future scenario, but where sites would be negatively disturbed or damaged by development without protections. On the upper West Mesa, this includes areas with important environmental qualities and/or paleontological, archaeological, or natural resources.

Rural and Semi-Urban areas identified in the County's plan also play an important role in land use planning. Rural areas in particular can provide a buffer to the more urban land uses and densities, but also often have land use attributes and environmental conditions which require different development standards and land use policies in order to maintain their open character, provide an adequate buffer zone between protected open land and urban density, as well as

provide the quality of life that rural county residents desire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving urban development patterns on the Westside Albuquerque involves collaborative land use planning to improve zoning, to preserve cultural and natural landscapes, to locate density in the right areas, and to provide affordable housing options that preserve the historic character of existing neighborhoods. By enabling the creation of more mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly, and public transit-oriented development, better integration and access between neighborhoods, commercial areas, and open spaces, and local amenities can improve overall quality of life and positively reshape urban development patterns for the future. Proactive planning for urban development that centers community goals can help alleviate traffic congestion, poor air quality, urban heat, and the isolation of communities from each other. However, these changes must stem from planning processes that meaningfully engage local communities in order to develop policies that authentically reflect community goals for development.

- Expand height and viewshed overlay zones
- Public acquisition of vacant land near Petroglyph National Monument through the use of Open Space Bonds to preserve natural and cultural areas and provide buffers to development.
- Further integrate Rank II and Rank III plan considerations with Comprehensive Plan and IDO decision frameworks
- Define Reserve Areas within developed urban areas and not just on the outskirts that would benefit from protection
- Consider noise pollution, air quality, and other community health and quality of life implications of new employment center development (i.e. at Double Eagle)
- Consider cultural and natural geography of local landscape in land use planning (i.e. basalt fields and impacts to water resources)
- Develop policies for housing and urban development that build resilience and flexibility into growth, so that structures can be repurposed and renovated under a variety of growth scenarios.

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TOPIC DESCRIPTION

As the study area continues to develop in the coming decades, transportation planning will become increasingly important to ensure future sustainability and functionality for the area's residents. Transportation as a whole encompasses the area's mobility infrastructure and corridors, including roads, highways, sidewalks, bike lanes, walking paths, and bridge crossings, as well as the modes of transportation available (i.e. buses, trolleys, bikes, and walking) and the external factors which impact the resident experience such as safety and accessibility.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing transportation systems in the study area face many challenges such as increasing traffic congestion, inadequate public transit systems, as well as inequitable access to transportation infrastructure. Many of these challenges stem from lack of coordination between land use planning and zoning, quality of life considerations, and transportation infrastructure. This disconnect often leads to inefficiencies in existing infrastructure, and further contributes to traffic congestion. Finding ways to improve interconnectivity of infrastructure that is both mindful of future development while also retrofitting existing communities lacking access to multiple transportation systems is key to addressing these issues.

Many communities in the study area have underdeveloped multi-modal links between existing urban centers and transportation corridors, hindering access to alternative modes of transportation such as biking, walking, ride-share and public transit. According to the Mid-Region Council of Governments' (MRCOG) Connections 2040 MTP plan, transit ridership has seen a decline in recent years. However, people aged 20-24 years old and 60-64 years old are showing increased dependency on public transit for commuting. This data indicates a significant gap in investment and policy coordination to support public transit options.

Census data indicates that the number of workers commuting by public transit has remained relatively constant during the last decade, suggesting the decline may be attributed to non-commuting use of public transportation. Yet, river crossing congestion is expected to worsen as the population within the study area grows. While many cities faced with increasing traffic congestion continue to implement traditional roadway and bridge expansion, the current capacity and utilization of existing roadways in Albuquerque demonstrate that not only is this an impractical option that can have many negative impacts, but as demand increases to fill expanded roadways and bridges, traffic congestion is often not even improved through widening roads.

Connections 2040 highlights that a multifaceted approach is necessary to improve Albuquerque's transportation infrastructure, including by achieving a better balance between jobs and housing distribution for residents. The current household to job ratio is for every 2 households, there is only 1 job on the westside, meaning residents in the study area increasingly have to commute

across the river for work. Increased residential density in urban centers east of the river and more job opportunities in the study area are needed to encourage a “reverse commute.”

Over-reliance on personal automobiles also limits opportunities for sustainable transportation options. Despite recognizing the growing need for new and improved biking, walking, and public transit infrastructure, current options often fail to meet the needs of the majority of the population. Biking and walking routes, as well as current public transit systems, are often inconvenient, uncomfortable, and inadequate.

Pedestrian safety, particularly along larger corridors such as Coors, Unser, and Paseo Del Norte, as well as near transit stops, combined with growing congestion during peak commuting hours, underscores the urgency of implementing effective transportation solutions. Urban development patterns and geographic features such as the escarpment on the westside further constrain connectivity and mobility in the study area. Addressing these challenges requires holistic planning approaches that prioritize multi-modal transportation networks, improve infrastructure, and promote sustainable land use practices to create more efficient, accessible, and safe transportation systems for all westside residents.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

Throughout the Project Team’s community engagement process, transportation came up repeatedly as a primary concern for residents, who expressed deep dissatisfaction with current mobility options. These concerns were categorized into three primary areas.

Traffic Congestion

Due to the job-household imbalance in the study area, a majority of residents commute to the eastside of the river for work, increasing congestion at bridge crossings, and on major corridors such as Montañó Road, Paseo Del Norte, Coors Boulevard, Alameda Road and I-40, as well as within the surrounding roadways close to these major crossings and corridors.



Taken by Alexa Barron

Roadway Maintenance and Expansion

Community engagement results also revealed that deterioration of existing roadways have severely impacted resident experiences of existing transportation infrastructure. This is in part the result of the rapid growth within the last 50 years which has produced greater strain on roadways and quicker deterioration than they can be repaired. In addition to this, concerns were raised related to potential expansions of existing roadways. Residents are concerned that the character of communities will be impacted by ever-expanding roadways, with little to no alleviation of traffic issues. Low connectivity of existing roadways also poses a problem as traffic is all funneled into a few major corridors. Increasing thru-connections of existing roads and improving transportation infrastructure though is can help alleviate many traffic-related concerns.

Safety of Alternative Transportation Modes

Community members also spotlighted the lack of safety of biking, walking, or public transit options within the study area. Underinvestment in infrastructure that designs bike routes based on infrastructure convenience rather than cyclist safety and experience, as well as travel times, and inadequate connectivity all contribute to limited accessibility and use of alternative modes

of transportation.

EXISTING PLANS AND POLICIES

Existing mitigation strategies as outlined in the ABC Comprehensive Plan present a proactive approach to addressing the complex challenges of transportation planning. The plan in coordination with the regional Metropolitan Transportation Plan (Connections 2040) promotes infrastructure investments that are aligned with broader community goals of connectivity, accessibility, and sustainability. This coordination not only facilitates more efficient use of resources but also fosters collaboration between stakeholders to identify and prioritize key transportation projects that benefit the entire region. Additionally, by coordinating land use development and transportation investments, Albuquerque can promote more livable and vibrant communities that reflect the desired character of residents while promoting active transportation options such as walking, biking, and transit.

Current plans also note that improving network connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles is essential to creating a more inclusive and accessible transportation system. Complete Streets frameworks help to create safer and more inviting transit environments for all users, regardless of their mode of transportation. Furthermore, prioritizing key road network and trail improvements to increase opportunities for active transportation not only enhances mobility but also promotes public health and environmental sustainability by reducing reliance on cars.

While many plans have highlighted the need to encourage biking, walking, and public transit, especially during peak hours, along with other travel demand management strategies being crucial for reducing traffic congestion and promoting more sustainable travel behaviors. However, convenience and safety are some of the most important factors in actually increasing use of alternative modes of transportation. To improve the study area's transportation system in a coordinated and cost-effective manner through the capital improvement process and the development review process cannot be the only method that decides how resources are allocated efficiently or how projects are implemented. Instead ample community outreach similar to those conducted in this study is needed to maximize potential benefits for the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving transportation requires a multifaceted approach that integrates innovative solutions to enhance network connectivity and promote sustainable, safe multi-modal options. One key solution is to prioritize transit-oriented development (TOD) strategies that strategically align existing and future land use patterns with transportation investments. TOD often involves concentrating dense, mixed-use development around transit hubs and corridors which increase accessibility to everyday amenities for residents, reduce dependency on personal automobiles, and encourage greater use of public transit, walking, and biking. This approach not only improves access to transportation options but also fosters more pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods where residents can live, work, and play without the need for constant car travel. However, it is important to focus on expanding transportation options and connectivity to existing neighborhoods that are not intended to absorb such density as well. TOD strategies need to be complimented by equitably distributed multi-modal transportation networks.



Render completed by Amir Reza Maroof

Additionally, investing in the expansion and enhancement of multi-modal transportation infrastructure is essential for promoting usage of alternative modes of transportation to reduce congestion. This includes expanding bike lane networks, improving pedestrian pathways, and upgrading public transit systems to provide reliable, convenient, and comfortable options for all residents. Implementing Complete Streets policies that prioritize the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users in street design can also enhance safety and accessibility while encouraging active transportation. Moreover, creating interconnected bike and trail networks throughout the city and county, coupled with measures to improve pedestrian safety on arterials and near transit stops, will further encourage non-motorized modes of travel and contribute to a more sustainable and resilient transportation system.

The implementation of improved Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) can assist in the optimization of traffic management especially during peak commuting times. ITS often utilizes real-time data collection and analysis via traffic sensors, cameras and local communication networks in order to implement more dynamic traffic signal control and potential on-ramp metering. This as a result has the potential to alleviate congestion and streamline travel for private motorists and public transit operators.

Lastly, the possible implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) which comparatively to other public transit options are more cost-effective to implement as BRT lines require less infrastructure investment and can be integrated into existing road networks with minimal disruption to the public. BRT systems also provide improved flexibility for route planning that allows for easier adaptation to changes in demand or overall urban development. Additionally, since BRT systems can be implemented more rapidly than light rail systems (LRT) this allows for the prioritization on construction of dedicated lanes and stations. BRT have the potential to enhance general accessibility for a wider range of passengers as well, including those with disabilities, through features like low-floor buses and level boarding platforms. BRT systems are also far more growth-oriented, allowing cities to start with smaller implementations and expand gradually as demand increases, thereby managing costs effectively while still delivering high-quality public transportation service.

By embracing these solutions and adopting holistic planning approaches, more inclusive, efficient, and livable urban environments can be created for all residents of the study area, even with high population growth projections.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Envisioning economic futures in the study area involves understanding current industries, the capacity for new jobs, reducing the 2:1 household to jobs imbalance, and integrating economic development strategies with quality of life, open space, transportation, and land use planning. Approaching economic development as an interconnected thread of holistic planning in the study area is critical to promoting job growth and economic equality that fits the unique context of the study area.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Bernalillo County has seen large growth (over 200%) in the sectors of agriculture, forestry, and outdoor recreation over the past decade. Employment with utilities grew by 49% and arts and entertainment have grown by 31%, including through the expansion of Netflix and NBC. These trends indicate that incorporating stewardship of natural and cultural areas, art and creativity, as well as community infrastructure should be a part of a future economic development strategy in the study area. In the past, the relocation and expansion of large employers in Albuquerque, such as Sandia National Labs, Kirtland Air Force Base, city and county government, PNM, and education has driven the majority of population growth in the region, including in the study area.



Render completed by Farzin Baik

With two of the country's 17 national laboratories. New Mexico's public investment in research and development is the highest in the nation and it leads the U.S. for number of industry partnership agreements and partners with Sandia National Labs. The study area is well-connected to interstate transportation networks, and in 2019, the Albuquerque International Sunport had the fourth highest number of boarding passengers in the Southwest (only falling behind Dallas, Phoenix, and Salt Lake City), and also ranked fourth highest in the nation compared to other medium-sized airports. Within the study area Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) Westside, large public primary and secondary schools, and planned growth around Double Eagle Airport are all expected to be key components to economic development in the region over the coming decades.



Render completed by Farzin Baik

In reflecting on how economic development has been promoted in the past and how the study area can increase economic vitality as it grows in the future, it is important to consider existing policies and programs that support local economic activity. The list below summarizes some of the key strategies to incentivize economic development in the region, and how they might apply in the study area:

- **Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRB):** A subsidy interaction in the selling of property between either the County or the City and an organization intended to foster mutually beneficial partnerships in public-private settings.
- **Gross Receipts Investment Policy (GRIP):** A policy that requires an organization, typically a developer or retailer, pays for the improvement of public infrastructure, typically in the form of a tax.
- **Local Economic Development Act (LEDA):** A statewide policy that supports public-private partnerships to promote development of local businesses.
- **Multifamily Housing Revenue Bonds (Project Revenue Bonds or PRB):** An incentive-based program to support affordable housing development.
- **Impact Fee Exemptions:** Waivers of certain fees on land in the unincorporated county meant to incentivize development. However, this program often also risks supporting “sprawl” development when existing infrastructure can be retrofitted more appropriately.
- **Business Incubator Programs:** These programs provide low or no-cost access to commercial space, appliances, or other cost-intensive resources associated with starting a new business (i.e. commercial kitchens for new food businesses). The South Valley Economic Development Center is a very successful example of this, and a similar center could help support local business development in the study area as well.
- **Opportunity Zones:** A federal funding stream that incentivizes investment in low income neighborhoods through tax benefits.

Given the current development patterns within the study area, trends in regional economic development, along with the programs and policies in place to support it, the study area has opportunities for the development and expansion of renewable energy, light industrial and manufacturing, shipping and distribution, ecotourism, film and media, as well as research and education job growth. In planning for future economic development though, key considerations for water resources, unique natural and cultural landscapes, as well as potential negative quality of life impacts associated with different industries are important to keep in mind.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

Community feedback showcases a vision for diverse and community-based economic development in the study area. Many community participants highlighted the need to focus on job growth that will make it through multiple economic cycles, rather than collapse through layoffs and business relocation. Local businesses and stable jobs are community priorities. In addition, it is important to community members that economic development focus not just on the number of jobs, but diverse, well-paying opportunities through business development that protects the area’s water resources, and cultural and natural heritage - especially on the west mesa. They also noted the importance of considering the drawbacks of different kinds of economic development and how certain industries negatively impact others. For instance noise and air pollution from Double Eagle Airport expansion could prevent opportunities such as in film, media, and outdoor recreation.

Moreover, community members emphasized the importance of diverse economic opportunities for the study area’s youth, investment in local businesses, and long-term economic stability that allows residents to stay on the westside. Most importantly, residents consistently identified the preservation of identity, cultural heritage, and natural resources as their top priority in any economic development scenario. This perspective arises from trends in past and current economic development that has resulted in increased sprawl, congestion, and disregard for landscape features unique to the study area. In developing a vision for economic development,

community members want to see quality of life, water resources, and preservation of landscapes be approached as compliments and not impediments to economic development.

An example of this is the proposal to shift around employment center development on the west mesa. While existing entitlements must be honored, additional employment center development on the west mesa should remain west of Atrisco Vista Blvd. and to the west of Double Eagle Airport where possible in order to protect the natural and cultural characteristics of Petroglyph National Monument and the area's basalt fields and views. Development around Double Eagle also needs to be strategically designed and planned so that it does not prevent other economic development opportunities such as film and media, and does not overuse or degrade the quality of precious water resources. One of the most important pieces to ensuring economic development that is equitable and appropriate to the study area is to incorporate the perspectives of local tribes and community members in development decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the needs of economic development in the study area, the programs available, the role of existing entitlements, and the goals highlighted by community members, the Project Team developed the following set of policy recommendations for future economic development in the study area.

- Incentivize economic development through renovation and repurposing of existing buildings rather than new construction. This kind of development also allows for utilization of existing LEDA and Business Incubation programs.
- Providing support and resources to local businesses such as access to finance, training programs, and market opportunities, can stimulate entrepreneurship, innovation, and job creation.
- Focus on economic development in natural, cultural, and artistic fields.
- Provide job training and development opportunities for the study area's youth
- Prioritize design standards for employment centers that incorporate unique characteristics of the study areas natural and cultural heritage.
- Possible expansion of Double Eagle Airport into a full regional airport which would allow for improve support of the study area's local economy by generating both direct and indirect economic benefits, stimulating tourism, facilitating better logistical support for industries and companys local to the area, and can also serve as hubs for emergency medical transportation to westside hospitals. This would contribute to job creation for the area, improve overall business development (on all scales), and generate more revenue for those businesses, while also attracting visitors to tourist destinations and supporting the tourism sector in general. An airport expansion also has the potential to support various other industries such manufacturing by enabling efficient transportation of goods and materials.



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MOVING FORWARD FROM HERE

This Vision proposes a lens of community-centered growth and development in the study area over the next 80 years. One of the key takeaways from the Project Team’s community engagement process was the central importance of looking to the region’s history, both in terms of past development patterns and processes, as well as in terms of the study area’s unique cultural and natural heritage in order to develop responsibly and absorb growth in a way that preserves the study area’s characteristics for current and future generations. Applying this Vision practically is more than a single set of policies. Rather it seeks to highlight the need to reshape planning processes from developing a plan and gathering community input, to integrating and synthesizing community voice throughout the whole cycle of planning for growth and development in the study area.

The City of Albuquerque has spent the better part of a decade attempting to mend relationships broken by top-down planning approaches that have ignored the unique experiences, perspectives, and heritage of local communities. Central to moving forward is the development of robust community engagement processes that result in an authentic representation of community feedback into plan development. Balancing formal and informal engagement opportunities for Westside Vision 2100 resulted in a more balanced and complete representation of community members in the visioning process.

In addition, the Research Assistants for Westside Vision 2100 created and updated renderings based on community feedback, allowing participants to shape the physical representations of growth and development in the future. These visuals were integral to the Project Team’s ability to both communicate with and learn from community members at public events. Adopting more meaningful community engagement frameworks would allow for future planning and policies to align development strategies with community goals. Not only is community-centered visioning the right approach, but Westside Vision 2100 was premised on the model that robust community engagement actually results in better policy and planning outcomes.

REFLECTION

The development of this Vision is not without weaknesses. As a graduate-level Capstone Studio, the Project Team was given the outline in January to complete within one semester. A January-May timeline is much shorter than almost any other planning process takes, and community engagement in particular deserves time and investment to creatively and meaningfully implement. The Project Team reviewed plans, researched area history, and gathered data on demographics and growth patterns in order to develop population projections early on. In about 3 months, the Project Team was tasked with designing and implementing a community engagement process, organizing and analyzing a broad sweep of important community input, and synthesizing all of this information into the Vision described in these pages.

All of this means that the Project Team struggled to balance breadth and depth. At the same time, this semester-long timeframe also required significant dedication of time and energy by community members to participate in the process, and we are incredibly grateful to the more than 125 community members that attended our events, completed the survey, and shared their insights and experiences with us throughout. We have received positive feedback from many community members, and hope that despite such a short timeframe to accomplish so much, this Vision offers a roadmap reflective of the time, feedback, and investment that community participants shared with us, and the love that they have for the westside.

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