

# North Fourth Street Rank III Corridor Plan

*EPC Draft - July 9, 2008*







# City of Albuquerque

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## Executive Summary


### **Overview**

In 2005, the City of Albuquerque began work on development of a sector plan for North Fourth Street. The intent was to revitalize development along the corridor between Lomas Boulevard NW and Solar Road NW. This segment of the historic road extends 4 1/3 miles from the north edge of the downtown to the Albuquerque's boundary with the Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque at Solar Road.

This document is the resulting Rank III Corridor Plan. It is based on a vision developed over five months of intensive meetings by a negotiating group composed of residents, merchants, and city officials. The plan establishes principles to guide redevelopment of the Corridor, preserves existing zoning, establishes a zoning overlay, and calls for a study to designate North Fourth Street as a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA). It also provides a framework to guide decision-making about land use, transportation, development regulations, and public investment.

The *North Fourth Street Corridor Plan* introduces three regulatory innovations to guide future redevelopment:

- A. Creating a Form Based Overlay Zone that integrates three development districts tailored to North Fourth Street. Existing zoning will remain in effect after adoption of this plan. Property owners may either develop in accordance with the existing zoning or choose to develop under regulations in the Overlay Zone. However, the regulatory plan does contain trigger mechanisms that under certain circumstances require new development to build according to the Overlay Zone.
- B. Instituting mechanisms to give property owners options as to whether and (if so) when to adopt the Overlay Zone



for their individual properties. The intent of the mechanism is to allow the “vision” for the corridor to influence new development gradually in the sector area.

- C. Providing incentives for property owners to utilize the form-based overlay zoning regulations including an expedited review process, the ability to mix uses and activities within buildings, and permitting higher intensity land development.

In addition, the plan presents concepts for the redesign of the North Fourth Street right-of-way and pedestrian realm based on the work of the negotiating group. To explore and refine the redesign concepts, the City will retain a design team to undertake a 30% engineering design. Finally, the plan establishes the strategy and phasing for capital improvements along the corridor.

### **Policy and Regulatory Context**

North Fourth Street has a long history in which the corridor has made a slow transition over time. This plan provides the guidance for another transition anchored in a form-based approach to encouraging new building typologies and mixing uses in existing and new structures. The policy context for adopting the optional overlay zone in this plan follows City Council Resolution R-270-1980 by responding to long-term changes in the neighborhood character and community conditions along the corridor.

As experience with the form-based approach grows and taking into consideration the City’s Form Based Code as it is developed, it is presumed that this plan will be amended to include additional building forms, context-sensitive building typologies and new building technologies. In response to establishing the recommended Metropolitan Redevelopment Area, it is likely that opportunity sites or special redevelopment nodes will be designated within the North Fourth Street Corridor. In these cases, it is likely the Plan will be amended by the adoption of a master plan or specific plan for the redeveloping area.

As noted in Section III, this plan is in conformance with the Albuquerque/Bernalillo Comprehensive Plan by respecting existing neighborhoods, mitigating the harmful effects of traffic and enhancing quality design. The Plan also reflects intent of the North Valley Area Plan with respect to encouraging redevelopment, enhancing transportation systems, promoting streetscape improvements and innovating in land use controls.


### **The Planning Process**

In 2006 the City of Albuquerque Planning Department contracted with Architectural Research Consultants, Incorporated, and Morrow, Reardon, Wilkinson, Miller, Ltd., for preparation of a draft of the sector plan. An advisory group of sixteen members, called the North Fourth Street Working Group, gave feedback and advice during this phase of the process. In June 2006, the City released a “review draft” of the *North Fourth Street Study: Rank III Corridor Plan*.

The June 2006 review draft generated considerable opposition involving both residents and merchants from the area. In response, the City’s Redevelopment Agency arranged for two public meetings under the City’s Land Use Facilitation Program. These meetings (held April 24 and May 14, 2007) were designed to identify issues and generate agreement on solutions; however they resulted in a new level of conflict and controversy.

Then in June 2007, the Albuquerque Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) directed the City’s Redevelopment Agency to make another attempt to work with residents and merchants to resolve the conflict. The Redevelopment Agency hired Consensus Builder, a local firm with expertise in land use and environmental mediation, to assess the situation and recommend a process to resolve the conflict.

Between June and August, Consensus Builder’s mediation and planning team conducted interviews with the parties to the dispute and assisted them to form a negotiating group



composed of merchants, residents, and representatives of the Redevelopment Agency. The negotiators were responsible for communicating with their constituencies and bringing constituent concerns back to the negotiating sessions. All meetings were open to the public. The negotiation process took place between September 4, 2007, and January 9, 2008, and important elements of the process included:

- Formulating principles to guide the planning process and to frame the plan
- Recommending an optional design overlay
- Determining a mechanism to enable use of the overlay
- Recommending a 30% engineering design of the corridor
- Developing a working concept for the redesign of the corridor
- Defining the boundaries of the zoning overlay
- Creating a map of the zoning districts

Working with several subcommittees composed of negotiators, the mediation team drafted a white paper that summarized the proposals that grew out of the process. On January 8<sup>th</sup>, the full negotiating group unanimously accepted the White Paper (See Appendix A). This *North Fourth Street Rank III Corridor Plan* incorporates the recommendations contained in the white paper, while retaining material from the *June 2006 North Fourth Street Redevelopment Study: Rank III Corridor Plan – Review Draft*.

### **Major Sections and Appendices**

There are five (5) major sections and seven (7) appendices that make up this Plan. With the exception of Appendix A: “*White Paper for the North Fourth Street Corridor Plan*,” material for the appendices was drawn from the “*June 2006 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street Redevelopment Study: Rank III Corridor Plan – Review Draft*.” Descriptions of each of the Plan’s major sections and the appendices follow.



## Major Sections

**Section I** is the Executive Summary, which summarizes the plan's policy context and outlines the planning process. The section also identifies key findings and elements of the plan.

**Section II** is the Introduction and provides a brief history of North Fourth Street including historic maps, photographs of remaining original structures and the location of the corridor in the city.

**Section III** contains the Regulatory Plan. This comprehensive section identifies the current zoning, presents the form based overlay zone and provides a guide for using the plan. Highlighting that the existing zoning is preserved in plan, the Regulatory Plan identifies conditions under which the Overlay Zone is optional and under which it is required to be used. It describes how increased densities and mixing of uses provide incentives for landowners and property developers to use the Overlay Zone. The section provides a comprehensive description of how the form-based code in the overlay may be used.

**Section IV** presents the Transportation and Street Design. The section contains a vision for redesigning north 4<sup>th</sup> Street, identifies existing conditions and issues, and outlines steps to alleviate the conditions. The section identifies key design principles, elaborates several design parameters and identifies design standards for the reconstruction of the street including two representative sketches of varying street sections. The section recommends the implementation of a 30% engineering study to make decisions about the design and configuration of the pedestrian environment and automobile and transit rights-of-way.

**Section V** contains Redevelopment Conditions and Opportunities. The section provides an overview of the physical conditions along the corridor and reviews the steps necessary to designate the North Fourth Street Corridor as a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA).

## Appendices

**Appendix A** the “*White Paper for the North Fourth Street Corridor Plan*,” provides the record of the consensus about key elements of the plan. Completed in January 2008, the White Paper documents agreements that resulted from the assisted negotiations among the merchants, residents and city staff.

**Appendix B** from the “*June 2006 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street Redevelopment Study: Rank III Corridor Plan – Review Draft*,” presents the planning area’s demographics and a profile of the population. The appendix also displays the boundaries of a variety of adopted city plans and regulatory documents that overlap the corridor area.

**Appendix C** from the June 2006 Review Draft contains information about land uses and existing conditions in the area. The appendix contains a description and map of general land use patterns in the area, lists land uses by category of use and provides data showing intensities of residential and employment related uses. The appendix also documents several environmental issues in the North Fourth Street Corridor study area.

**Appendix D** based on information and data available when the June 2006 Review Draft was produced, provides an overview of real estate and business conditions. It also provides an analysis of the trade area and analysis of the real estate market at the time.

**Appendix E** drawn from the June 2006 Review Draft presents relevant traffic data analyzing safety and transit information.

**Appendix F** includes urban design goals and objectives, and illustrative prototypical design studies contained in the June 2006 Review Draft.

**Appendix G** displays three tables from June 2006 Review Draft that summarize cost estimates for investment in streetscape projects.