

June 2004

MASTER PLAN FOR

# CENTRAL- HIGHLAND- UPPER NOB HILL

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Moule & Polyzoides, Architects/Urbanists  
Swift Associates LLC, Transportation Consultant  
Gibbs Planning Group, Retailing Consultant  
for

Albuquerque Development Services  
City Planning Department



## DESIGN WORKSHOP SPONSOR

Albuquerque Development Services  
City Planning Department/City of Albuquerque  
Richard Dineen, Director; Richard Asenap, Acting Manager  
Kim Calander, Redevelopment Project Manager  
600 Second Avenue N.W., Suite 550  
Albuquerque, NM 87102  
t: 505 924.3860 f: 505 924-3399

Nob Hill-Highland Renaissance Corporation  
Rob Strell, President; George Kenefic, Vice President;  
Michelle Negrette, Secretary; Marianne Dickinson, Treasurer,  
Susan Freed, Page Coleman, Laura Cordova, Will Gleason, Nick Manole, Orville Pratt  
PO Box 8215  
Albuquerque, NM 87198  
www.rt66central.com

## DESIGN WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS & DONORS:

Many thanks to all who participated in the workshop and all of the following:

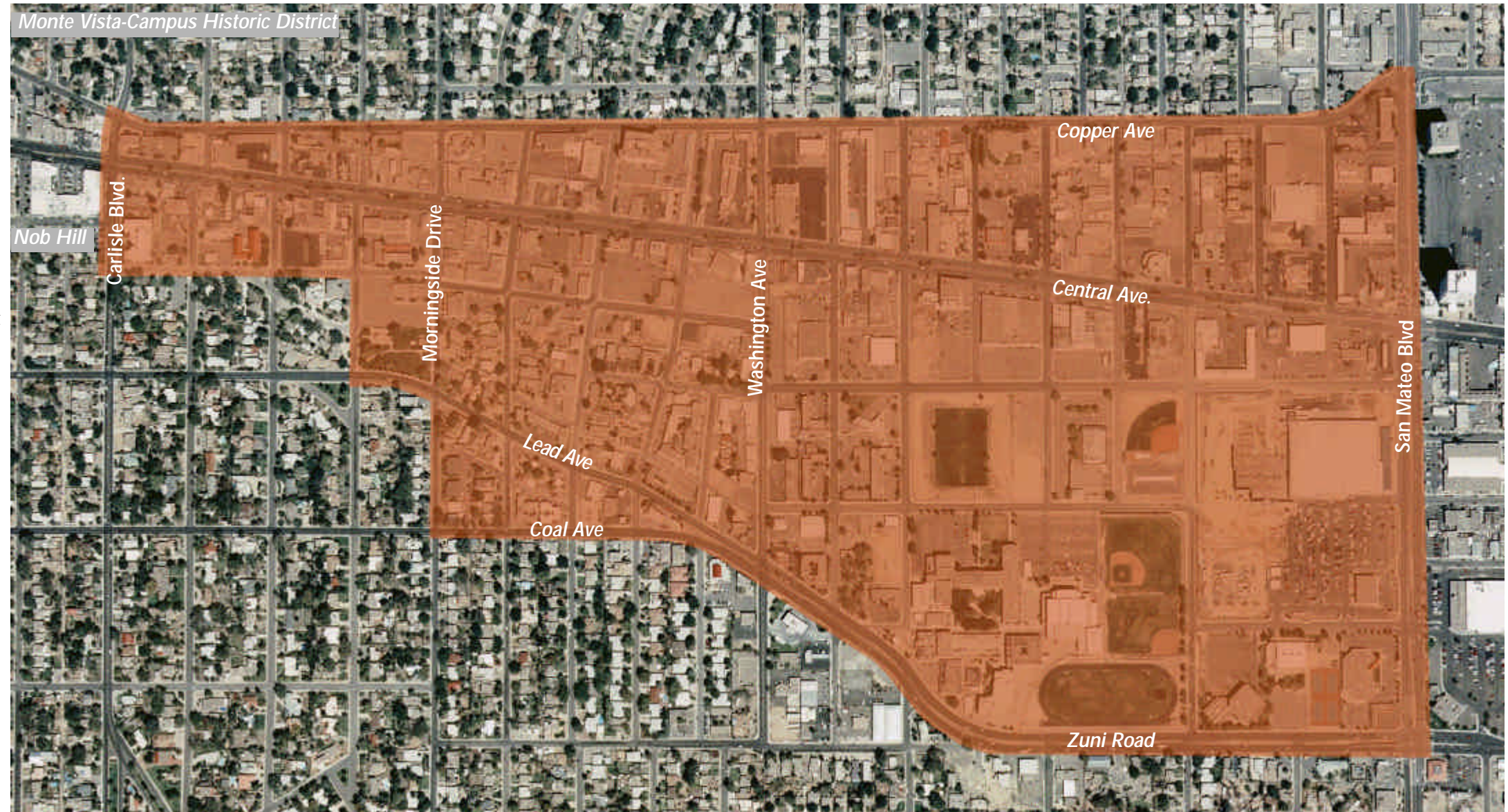
Alliance for Active Living  
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Flying Star Cafe  
Highland Business & Neighborhood Association  
Musical Theater Southwest/Hiland Theater  
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Robert Slattery Construction  
Sign & Image Factory  
Strell Design  
Walk Albuquerque

## DESIGN TEAM

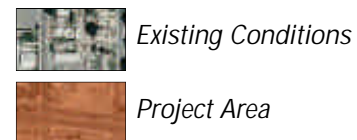
*Town Planning & Architecture:* Moule & Polyzoides Architects and Urbanists  
Bill Dennis, David Day, Xiaojian He, Zeke Mermell  
2045 South Plaza NW  
Albuquerque, NM 87104  
t: 505 244-9400 f: 505 244-9410

*Traffic Engineering:* Swift and Associates, LLC  
Peter Swift  
421 21st Avenue, Suite 212  
Longmont, CO 80503  
t: 303 772-7052 f: 303 651-7226

*Main Street Retail Strategy:* Gibbs Planning Group  
Bob Gibbs  
330 E. Maple Street #310,  
Birmingham, MI 48009  
t: 248 642-4800 f: 248 642-5758



### Key



Existing Conditions- Aerial Photo of Central-Highland-Upper Nob Hill M.R.A. & project Boundaries [M.R.A.-Metropolitan Redevelopment Area]



City Map - Project is located in the center of town along Route 66, Central Ave.

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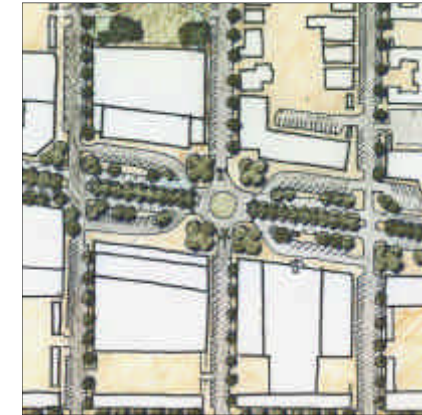
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*Charrette Process*



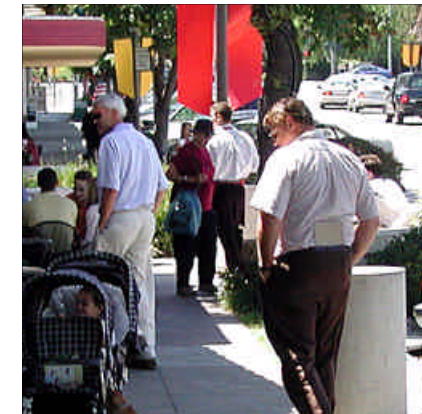
*Context*



*Illustrative Plan*



*Catalytic Projects*



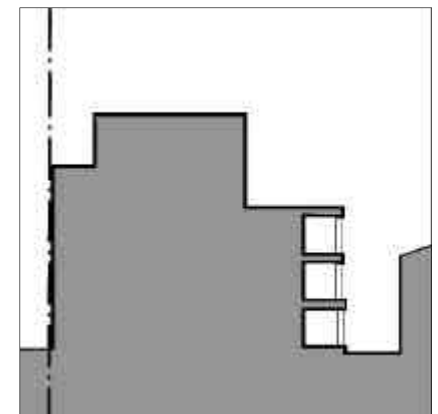
*Great Streets*



*Affordable Housing*



*Regulating Plan*



*Development Code*

# INTRODUCTION

## SUMMARY

This Master Plan provides two essential ingredients for the redevelopment of the Central-Highland-Upper Nob Hill area:

- 1) a vision of what the area could look like in 5 to 20 years, and,
- 2) tools to implement the appropriate type of development.

The goal of the Plan is to create a place that is identifiable for its unique Route 66 character, which can be a livable, walkable, mixed-use, vibrant economic and residential part of Albuquerque.

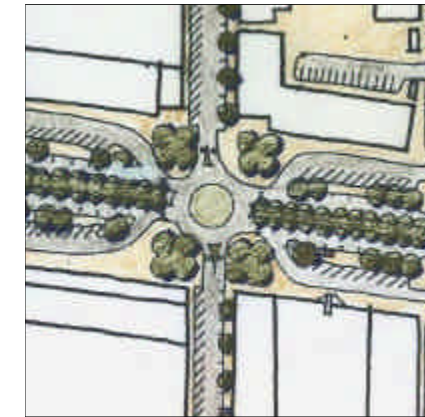
The Master Plan is the culmination of a public design process and previous planning efforts by the City Government, businesses, and residents\*. It follows the M.R.A. Plan which was created to reverse blighted conditions in the area - a territory spanning from Carlisle Blvd. to San Mateo Blvd. along Central Ave. [see page i] and expanding to Copper and Zuni. The Plan analyzes the assets and liabilities of the project area and then offers recommendations and regulations that can be applied to properties in the area to guide and encourage redevelopment. Next steps for adoption of the regulations [as law] are also given. For, as having a shared vision for the area's physical being is important, having a set of rules for all players to follow is critical. Information in the Plan is grouped as follows:

- 1. Introduction: Summary [this section]  
Public Participation [Charrette Process]  
Principles of Design  
Context and History of the area
- 2. Master Plan: Illustrative Plan - the vision  
Catalytic Projects - suggested 1st projects
- 3. Plan Components: Streets and sidewalks  
Parking  
Landscape  
Retail strategies  
Affordable Housing
- 4. Implementation: Regulating Plan  
Development Code

These subjects are critical building blocks for a great place. Moule and Polyzoides Architects and Urbanists, along with a nationally respected traffic engineering specialist and retail specialist, brought their expertise in designing urban environments to the table to meet with the residents and business owners in the area. It should be noted that design principles [page 4] used here follow a New Urbanist philosophy of restructuring urban places to those oriented more to pedestrians and mixed-use shopping/living buildings. It is a form-based approach to design, in opposition to the current status quo of use-based design which separates uses and generally dis-allows mixed-use. It was essential to the design team that the components which make up the streets, stores, and homes in the Central-Highland-Upper Nob Hill be analyzed, discussed, and changed if necessary through design. A design workshop process was used to gather the public's ideas and opinions. Through a series of exercises and feed-back loops, hopes and concerns of those affected by the plan were directly incorporated into this Master Plan document. While not every comment made it into this booklet, the majority of participant requests were honored in the designs for the plan.

**A note on Master Plan Adoption - the City Planning process:**  
 The following are suggested steps to review and approve the Master Plan's Development Implementation Process and create it as ordinance:

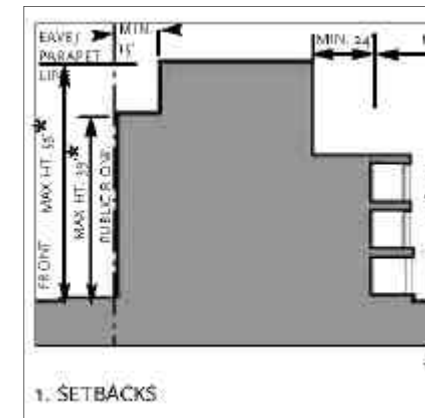
1. M.R.A. Plan - Albuquerque Development Commission review & approval .
2. Nob Hill Sector Development Plan - amend:
  - a. Sector Plan - extend to San Mateo in order to include this M.R.A.
  - b. Design Overlay Zone - [East of Carlisle] add with this form-based code.
  - c. Design Overlay Zone - [West of Carlisle] suggest future overlay zone be created by re-coding Sector Plan Design guidelines which are currently not ordinance.
3. E.P.C. approval
  - a. Zoning Change - from C-2 to C.C.R. [with amendments as necessary] along Central Ave. .
  - b. Design Overlay Zone - [East of Carlisle] including height [and other] amendments to C.C.R. Zone
4. City Council approval- review and approval of item 3 above.
5. B.I.D. or T.I.F. - businesses in the MRA should organize one or more of these associations to manage marketing, parking, and financing as a district.



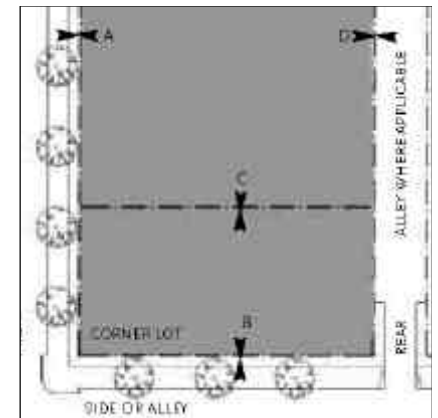
Vision



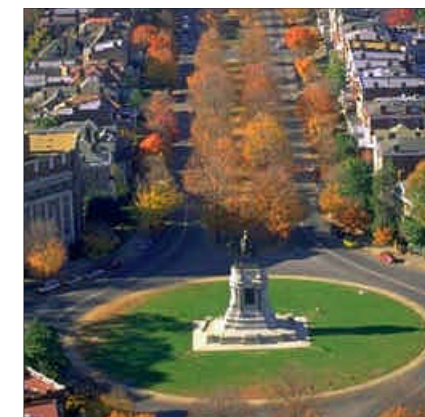
Vision



Tools



Tools



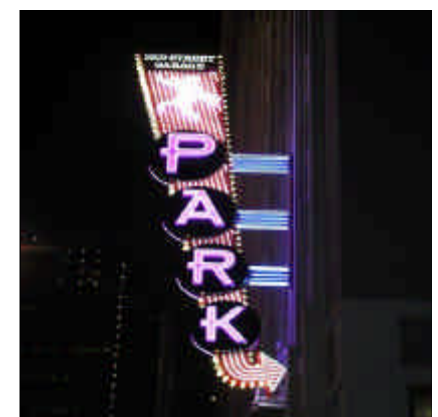
Principles: Great Streets



Principles: mixed-use buildings



Principles: transit



Principles: parking

People living and working in the area that participated in the workshops were very aware and sensitive to the role all parts of an urban fabric play in their neighborhood. Concerns common to the majority of residents and businesses included:

- stores that serve daily needs or general shopping needs are desired, but rare now
- stores and motels in the district, in general, are degraded [motels are nuisances]
- motels [existing] need to be refurbished, or removed & redeveloped
- business that have improved buildings see little investment in neighboring sites
- lack of development in general in the area is frustrating: "make something or anything happen" was uttered frequently
- streets and sidewalks have become neglected, are inhospitable, are too narrow
- street traffic is moving too fast [esp. at Central, near Highland High, Lead, Coal]
- street crossings are dangerous on Central, Zuni, Lead, & Coal due to speeding, creating divisions in the neighborhood
- street crossing makes it difficult to visit stores on opposite side of Central
- street traffic is loud and intimidating
- parking is difficult for Hiland Theater at large events
- parking is difficult for businesses on Central where on-street parking was removed
- sidewalks and other civic spaces in the area are degraded or hazardous
- bicycling is discouraged on major streets [no shoulders or lanes, speeding cars]
- transit issues - more routes, better vehicles, better stops desired
- housing options in the area are currently limited, more desired
- housing options should be increased, especially to keep mixed income feeling to area and trying to avoid gentrification
- housing should be buffered from commercial ventures nearby
- mixed-use buildings are desired, could be more dense than Nob Hill, use height or bench marks existing in neighborhood to gauge heights [not too high]
- character of neighborhood should be preserved and improved - more Route 66, avoid generic, anywhere America character esp. on Central
- create a plan that makes the neighborhood a walkable and "shop-able" place again

The Master Plan offers an design which addresses these concerns in a holistic, interconnected manner, and therefore must be understood as a whole. Firstly, the Illustrative Plan and Regulations create a new form-based code which places mixed-use buildings at the sidewalk, moves parking to streets and rears of lots, and allows a modest increase in heights of buildings. The mixing of housing and business on the main corridors in the project will increase walkability and sustain more retail. A mix of building types will allow a variety of incomes and businesses to move into the area. Encouraging businesses of similar types to congregate in groups, as recommended, will focus the shopping energy and create districts within the larger neighborhood that add character.

Central Ave. streetscape should be built following a new design that allows 4 lanes of traffic, on-street parking, roundabouts, wider sidewalks, and a new centrally located alameda. This will keep traffic at more reasonable speeds [while maintaining the number of cars the road can carry] which greatly increases the aesthetics and economic vitality of Central. Other street improvements are offered to help walkability and reduce speeds throughout the remainder of the neighborhood.

A Park Once district is also recommended to handle parking issues [on-street, parking courts, and eventually in structures]. Parking ratios are changed to reflect shared-use and the mixed-use nature of this transit corridor. Landscape changes involve the recreation of major streets into the public realm with alamedas, street trees, and roundabouts as markers on Central. Existing open spaces are to be improved by partnerships between the City and Highland High School, and several new parks are proposed as well.

**A Note on Phasing of Projects:**

The following is the suggested phasing of projects for the Master Plan:

**1. Streetscape - striping**

Central Avenue should be striped and signed appropriately in order to allow on street parking per the street sections shown in this document. This would help to phase the full streetscape design, familiarizing motorists with the proposed design, help the pedestrians in the area, and allow crucial parking for many businesses in the corridor.

**2. Streetscape**

Central Avenue street design should be constructed including sidewalks, roundabouts, and utilities improvements [as necessary]. City Planning has designated 5 potential sites in the city for a prototype roundabout, and one of the intersections in this Plan as is one such potential pilot project. The City's Rapid Transit Study and its recommended location [Central or Lomas] should be finalized as there are implications on Central Ave.'s design.

**3. Catalytic Projects**

City or County-owned properties shown in the Catalytic Projects 1 & 2 this plan should be developed into mixed-use properties by those institutions [with or without partners]. These include the City-owned De Anza Motel and the County-owned Hiland Theater.

**4. Private Development [Mixed-use]**

Businesses should be encouraged to remodel or develop in the Central Ave. corridor as suggested by the groupings shown in the Retail section of this report - Nob Hill extension area, Antiques area, Restaurant area, and Neighborhood/Community retail areas. While specific businesses cannot be required in a given property, developers should take advantage of creating business types which enhance, profit, or capitalize on similar types in near proximity. Housing should be included in these developments, to increase the livability and the economic success of individual properties as well as the entire district.

Note: a B.I.D. or T.I.F. Association should be set up by business owners to manage marketing and parking as a district and manage common funding solutions. [Business Improvement District, or Tax Increment Finance Association]

**\*Footnote:**

Those efforts include the following:

- a) M.R.A. Plan [Metropolitan Redevelopment Area], September 2002, Metropolitan Redevelopment Code of the State of New Mexico, Section 3-60A-48 N.M.S.A. 1978 and Albuquerque Ordinance 14-8-4-1-1994. This plan gives strategies for the elimination of the blighting conditions found to exist in the project area [Resolution #R-02-72, Enactment #82--2002] to identify projects, and to indicate the means by which redevelopment will be carried out, and;
- b) Albuquerque Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, and;
- c) Nob Hill Sector Development Plan.



Degraded retail



Sidewalk and traffic problems



Acres of surface parking lots



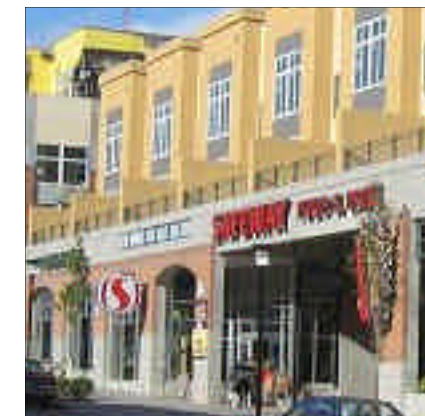
Degraded Motels



Proposed Mixed-use buildings



Proposed street improvements



Retail strategies



Housing variety

## INTRODUCTION DESIGN WORKSHOP PROCESS

The Master Plan was produced through the design workshop process. Residents, business owners, neighborhood associations, land owners, City governments departments, & other interested parties discussed issues over the course of three intensive days. During this period, the project site, the immediate neighborhood, and the community as a whole were analyzed and evaluated in many terms: environmental, social, economic, and as importantly, physical. The information gathered served as the base from which to understand what can [and should] occur in the project site. The results of the workshop are published in the form of a booklet - a buildable Master Plan. This booklet is the guiding vision [and eventually the legal document] for people building the neighborhood's future.

Focused sessions occurred each day of the event to help identify a design direction. Numerous smaller sessions with different groups helped build upon the base information while pursuing the larger goal: a master plan for the project site. The workshop process was very open and democratic, and stimulated enthusiasm and ideas, keeping participants motivated about concrete outcomes. The design team led the workshop, and included Moule & Polyzoides Architects & Urbanists and their retail and traffic engineering consultants. Participants' opinions about street/sidewalk design, traffic, open space, building types and massing, and desirable businesses were distilled and drawn in the Master Plan. Enforceable regulations were the end result of the efforts, and are contained in the Master Plan in the Regulations section.

The first day included 3 major events. First, a retail presentation, with about 50 attendees, laid out current concepts of national and local retail design and their relations to corridors such as Central Ave.. Second was a walking tour of the site noting opportunities and deficiencies. Two volunteer groups supplemented this tour by providing results of their audit of the pedestrian environment in the area. Third was the main event involving over 100 attendees sitting at tables together to discuss issues and offer design solutions. Each table chose a spokesperson who presented findings to the general audience. A consensus concerning retail desires, street designs, transit, housing, and building character began to take shape and directly informed the design team.

The second day found the design team distilling the public input into analysis drawings and plans. Individuals and groups worked with the design team as the plans were being drawn. Participants' desires for more pedestrian/bike-friendly streets, transit, open spaces, and mixed-use buildings and uses were shown on the plans. Consultants worked with participants and the design team to help ground dreams into buildable realities.

The third and final day culminated in presentation of the project to a public crowd of over 100 individuals. The Master Plan shown is the "road map" for potential development in the area and clearly shows what the area could look like within the next 4 to 20 years.

The Master Plan was put into booklet form in the months following the design workshop. Building heights and placement, street designs, transportation, and parking are given specific standards to be adopted as ordinance by the applicable City Departments to regulate future construction in the project area. In this way, property owners may construct or renovate their individual properties as part of an overall plan and strategy for the area. Owners can be assured that properties near theirs will be developed in an equitable and complimentary manner.

Note: A design workshop is a shorter version of a Charrette, which normally unfolds over a 5 to 8 day format.



Postcard to inform the public (front & back)  
Courtesy of Nob Hill Highland Renaissance Corp & Susan Freed



Tour of the area



Public talks to consultants



Public design workshop



Public design workshop - sharing



Master Plan drawing



Public design workshop



Transit options



Presentation of Master Plan

## INTRODUCTION

### PRINCIPLES FOR GREAT STREETS & NEIGHBORHOODS

The Central-Highland-Upper Nob Hill workshop was guided by the design team's New Urbanist philosophy which espouses the following principles:

#### 1. Pedestrian First

- Wide sidewalks
- Outdoor dining
- Trees & Shade
- Pedestrian Lighting
- Inviting storefronts - buildings frame the street
- Street furniture, signage appropriate to pedestrians

#### 2. Traffic Speeds for Safety & Retail

- Slower traffic but higher trip quality and higher capacity/volume
- Slower cars = more pedestrians, more business, more housing
- Slower traffic = better safety, fewer fatal accidents
- Citizen and tourist draw to area if walkable
- Bike safety

#### 3. Park Once and Walk

- Strategy is to combine On-street, courts, and structures to accommodate cars:
- On-street parking - encourages retail, protects pedestrians
- Parking courts - 2nd level of easy parking, located behind buildings or at side streets
- Parking structures - shared for businesses and new housing, retail liners advantage
- Parking structures located every 3 blocks when development filled out
- Quality signage/wayfinding a must

#### 4. Daily Needs within Walking Distance

- Balanced mix of local, regional & national tenants give neighbors services
- Commercial spaces along Central marketed, leased, and managed as a district
- Civic buildings at honored locations

#### 5. Building Types & Housing Choices

- Vital communities need a mix of types:
- Lofts, Live / Work Buildings
- Apartments, Condominiums, Townhouses, & Courtyard Housing
- Duplexes, Tri-plexes, Quad-plexes
- Single Family Detached Houses & Garage apartments

#### 6. Live Above Stores and Businesses

- Supports retail and commercial businesses - built-in customer base
- Extends day into night = safety & increased business
- Eyes on street = safety

#### 7. Beautiful Public Spaces, Constantly Occupied

- Great Streets & Roundabouts
- Gateways
- Plazas & Squares
- Pocket Parks
- Monuments

#### 8. Quality Transit

- Attractive, clean vehicles
- Attractive, dignified, well-located stops
- Timely, efficient, safe, enjoyable
- Proper speeds for pedestrian comfort
- On-street parking between transit vehicle and the pedestrian
- Mix into slower traffic speeds

Client: City of Albuquerque Planning Department  
Albuquerque, New Mexico



*Pedestrian first*



*Traffic speeds for safety & retail*



*Park once and walk*



*Daily needs in walking distance*



*Building types & Housing choices*



*Live above stores & businesses*



*Beautiful public spaces occupied*



*Quality transit*

## INTRODUCTION CONTEXT & HISTORY

Central-Highland-Upper Nob Hill contains an amazing cross-section of our country's building history in its structures and streetscapes. At the area's western edge, Nob Hill has been, and continues to be, one of the most fashionable shopping and living districts in Albuquerque. An antique district, Hiland Theater, Route 66 motels, and Highland High School still grace the center of this project area. Recent City-lead initiatives such as the designation of a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area [M.R.A.] and the purchase of the De Anza Motor Lodge have begun a renewed interest in this area. The project area's pivotal location along Central Ave. is unique in that many of Albuquerque's main civic institutions lie along this corridor - Old Town, Downtown, University of New Mexico., Nob Hill Shopping district, the State Fair Grounds, and a new Asian cultural center.

Albuquerque's distinguished urban and architectural history began with the founding of Old Town in 1706 and was firmly established with the addition of New Town in 1880. The University was built shortly thereafter on the east edge of New Town. The 1920's/30's saw new neighborhoods such as Monte Vista and University Heights growing up on the vast mesa to the east of the University. Citizens of those eras travelled mostly via foot, streetcar, bus and much more rarely, by automobile.

Route 66, the Mother Road, came to prominence during 1930's to the 1950's and was one of the major routes from the East Coast to the West Coast. As it was aligned with Central Ave., through Albuquerque, it stimulated great growth and prosperity along the corridor. As one traveled east on 66, the character of the city changed from the densely spaced pueblo-style buildings of Old Town, to the brick storefronts Downtown, to the Victorian-era homes of Huning Highland, and finally to the modern & pueblo-revival buildings that gave Rt. 66 its unique character. Motor court motels, road-side diners, gas stations & neon signs reflected our city's growing dependence on the automobile.

Late in the 1940's, R. B. Waggoman bought land far east on the mesa and developed Nob Hill Business Center, one of the first modern shopping centers in the Western U.S.. This building, and those nearby, while designed for the modern age, still had the pedestrian foremost in mind. Facades framed the public space of the street. There were generous sidewalks and parking was placed at the side or rear of the buildings.

Zoning codes coming to the fore during the 1950's and 60's, however, created single use type buildings. The mixing of housing and businesses within one building was becoming a rarity. With this change, as well as with our increasing use of the auto, commercial buildings along Central Ave. began to change and responded by moving themselves away from the street to provide for large parking lots. The pedestrian environment was mostly forgotten as a public space. The current state of Central Avenue, along with limited choices in housing, has contributed to the decline of business activity and vitality around the corridor.

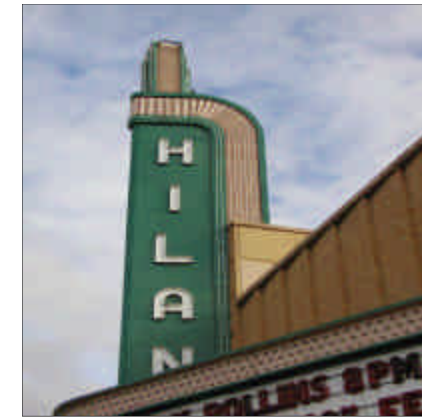
The 1980's brought revitalization of the Nob Hill area. Recently, City-lead redevelopment projects have created new interest in the Central-Highland-Upper Nob Hill area. There are many fine examples of Route 66 roadside and Modern 1950's character buildings in the project area. The residential parts of the neighborhood also contain existing buildings which have an appropriate scale, density, and detail for a walkable district. The Metropolitan Redevelopment Area defined these areas and will facilitate desirable change here. On the next page is a map indicating historic and redevelopment assets within the Master Plan area [and beyond], courtesy of the Nob Hill Highland Renaissance Corporation. Properties noted in green or yellow indicate those with a character worth protecting and enhancing to maintain the character of this area.



*De Anza Motor Lodge Postcard*



*Nob Hill Business Center beginni*



*Hiland Theater*



*Central Ave. storefronts*



*Rt. 66 Neon signage*



*Duplexes*

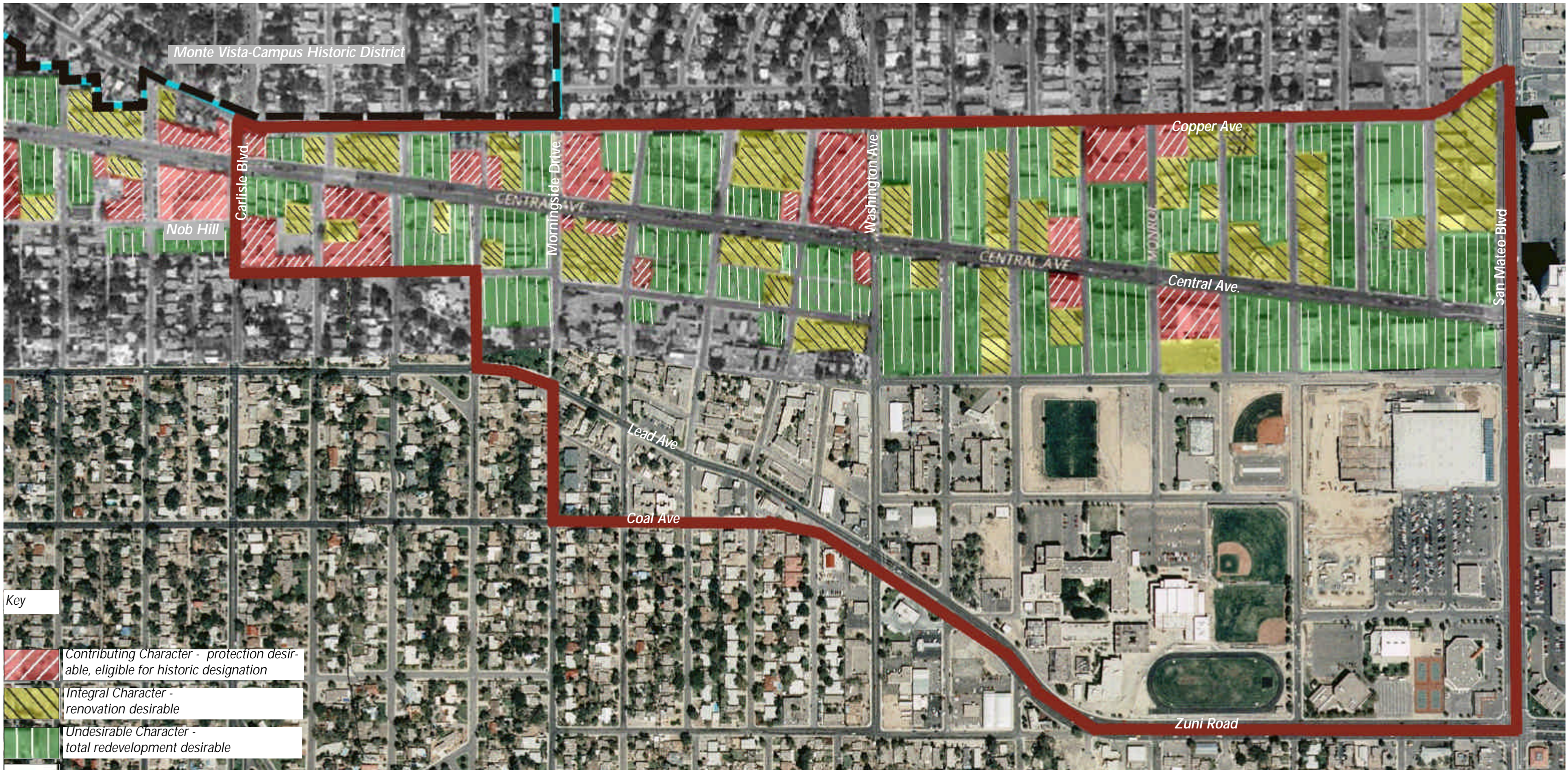


*Central Ave. looking east*



*Highland High School*

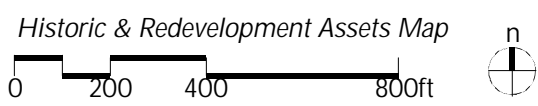




**Key**

- Contributing Character - protection desirable, eligible for historic designation
- Integral Character - renovation desirable
- Undesirable Character - total redevelopment desirable
- Monte Vista-Campus Historic District
- Master Plan Boundary

*Historic Assets Map - courtesy of Nob Hill Highland Renaissance Corporation - identifies properties with contributing character, redevelopment opportunities, and/or nuisance properties.*



## THE MASTER PLAN | ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

The Master Plan illustrates what the area could look like in 20 years time. Potential buildings shown represent the design team's interpretation of the interests and intentions of landowners, business owners, residents, potential developers and retailers. The goal of the Master Plan is the creation of a robust place which is a walkable, mixed-use district that features great main street shopping and new options for exciting living spaces. It is envisioned as a place that both enlivens the surrounding neighborhood and secures its future.

The most notable feature of the Master plan is the proposed placement of buildings along streets. Returning to the time-tested patterns seen in Nob Hill and Downtown, buildings meet the sidewalk again, framing the public space of the streets. The majority of the proposed buildings along Central Ave. are appropriate for smaller shops and offices with living spaces above. Other lots along Central are shown with larger footprint retail spaces, but their relationship to the streets is similar to the smaller buildings. Parking for the entire district would include a combination of on-street spaces on Central [to protect pedestrians and encourage retail], on-street and parking courts on side streets, and on-site parking at the rears of buildings. Some of these patterns are still visible near Hiland Theater. The Regulating Plan and the Development Code are the controlling documents for the array of various building placements and parking.

Another notable feature of this plan is the change in character of the major thoroughfare at the heart of the area, Central Avenue. The present design of this road creates a rift through the project area, and renders null and void any attempt at a pedestrian-friendly and commercially profitable district. Too many lanes of traffic moving much faster than the posted speed limit, combined with sub-standard sidewalks, creates an unfriendly environment for people. For vibrant retail and residential, a balance must be achieved of folks transporting themselves by many modes - by foot, bicycles, car and by transit - with no one method dominating. A new refined, shared public realm of Central Ave. [and other roads in the area] ensures the activity and accessibility necessary to sustain retail and office use, while keeping the speed and noise of motorized transport at low enough levels to allow un-encapsulated humans to happily inhabit the public realm. Central Avenue becomes a hybrid of a Main Street and a Parkway, with generous sidewalks and on-street parking supporting the retail on either side. Proposed roundabouts, along with an Alameda creating a linear park in the center of the avenue, help connect both sides of Central for the pedestrian. Traffic flows and amounts of traffic will continue as before, but the character of that flow will change. The plan will make the streets memorable and pleasant places.

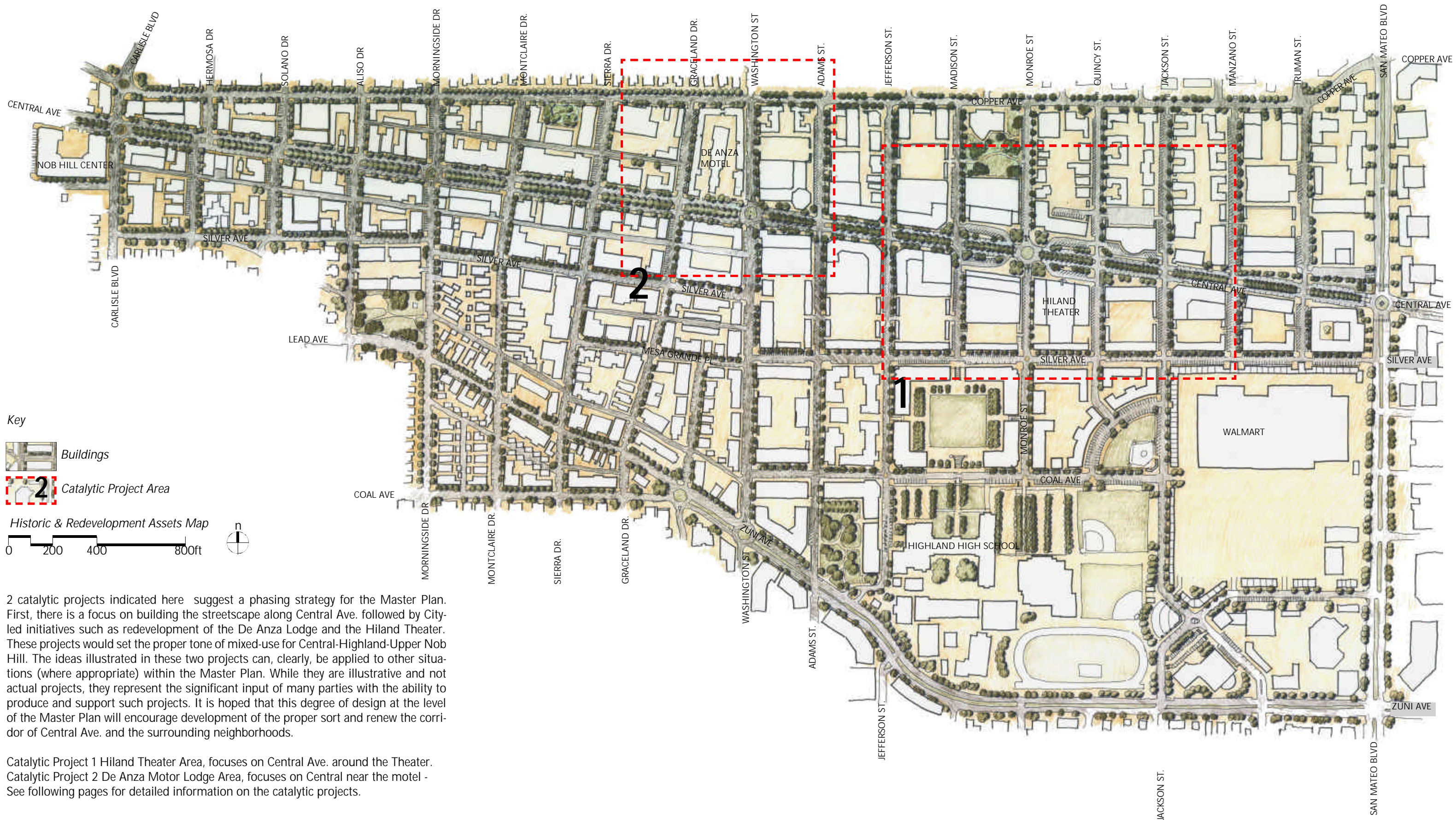
Intersections within the traditional grid pattern of Albuquerque are typically thought of only as places for crossing, either by car or on foot. This plan makes them focal points (and the defining gateways of the neighborhood) by creating modern roundabouts. This is essentially free space within the public realm, because the roundabout can handle the traffic flow admirably, while the space in the center of the intersection becomes available for visual delight. While not quite parks in the usual sense, these ovals and circles allow the placement of fountains, trees and monuments to give legibility to the civic character of the this unique neighborhood. Crossing for bicycles and pedestrians at such roundabouts is proven to be safer than traditional lighted intersections. These character and safety improvements will help re-connect the 2 sides of Central Ave. for shoppers and neighbors. Smaller roundabouts [circlets] near Highland High School will help pedestrians there by controlling traffic speeds.



*Central Avenue - looking east toward Hiland Theater*



*Central Avenue - looking West towards Washington St. and the De Anza Motel*



2 catalytic projects indicated here suggest a phasing strategy for the Master Plan. First, there is a focus on building the streetscape along Central Ave. followed by City-led initiatives such as redevelopment of the De Anza Lodge and the Hiland Theater. These projects would set the proper tone of mixed-use for Central-Highland-Upper Nob Hill. The ideas illustrated in these two projects can, clearly, be applied to other situations (where appropriate) within the Master Plan. While they are illustrative and not actual projects, they represent the significant input of many parties with the ability to produce and support such projects. It is hoped that this degree of design at the level of the Master Plan will encourage development of the proper sort and renew the corridor of Central Ave. and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Catalytic Project 1 Hiland Theater Area, focuses on Central Ave. around the Theater.  
 Catalytic Project 2 De Anza Motor Lodge Area, focuses on Central near the motel -  
 See following pages for detailed information on the catalytic projects.