



Albuquerque, New Mexico Historic Albuquerque High School: *Inspiration for Neighborhood Renewal*

In the heart of downtown Albuquerque sit five historic buildings with a tremendous sentimental value to the city's residents. Built between 1914 and 1940, these structures represented the city's only high school for more than 30 years. Although all five buildings were designated as historic landmarks, they suffered severe deterioration beginning in 1974 and over the next 20 years from neglect—broken and missing windows, severe water damage—and the need to tackle a potentially expensive asbestos abatement challenge.

While a number of redevelopment plans were proposed during this time, none came to fruition until the city committed to a substantial investment project. An assessment grant from EPA enabled a geophysical investigation which determined that heating



tanks formerly located underground at the site had been removed, and an asbestos survey conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through an agreement with EPA quantified the extent of the asbestos containing material, allowing for more effective budgetary planning for site cleanup. Local neighborhood, historic district, and merchant associations were invited and heavily involved in the redevelopment planning. Design charrettes helped create a plan for a vibrant, walkable mixed-use district, attractive

to investors while maintaining cultural and historic values. Cleanup of the old high school library was assisted by a loan from the City of Albuquerque through its EPA Brownfields Cleanup and Revolving Loan Fund grant.

Today, the redevelopment vision for all five buildings is nearly realized. Three now contain residential loft units, some with the original walls, chalkboards, floors, and 13-foot high ceilings left in place where possible. The former gymnasium has been redeveloped into office space and the old library will have a new life as a restaurant. The former campus grounds are now a city park.



Redevelopment of the Old Albuquerque High School has been a catalyst for the renaissance of this inner city neighborhood. A frenzy of remodeling and new construction followed as private developers and investors recognized the area's growing potential. New condos have been constructed north of the old high school. Once abandoned buildings to the south have been redeveloped for commercial use and now house a laundry service, architecture firm and realtor office. Mixed use development has occurred east and west as well, including more residential units and two new restaurants. Implementing Smart Growth concepts in the planning design has improved business in the area as well as safety.