

## COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

*"...A neighborhood becomes a community if the people in it talk together, work together, respect one another....When neighborhood people become community...a neighbor...is someone with whom one owns the neighborhood."*

*"If the neighborhood does not define its own problems, someone else may define them inappropriately."*

*---Partners: Neighborhood Revitalization Through Partnership and A Minneapolis Case Study, Dayton Hudson Foundation, 1981.*



## **COMMUNITY STRENGTHS**

The plan's proposed policies, regulations, projects and programs flow from the area's many strengths. Building on these strengths should create a strong community of businesses, institutions, and residents. The most important Sawmill/Wells Park assets are the people who live, work and do business there:

- Residents and Business Owners interested in improving the area
- Over 2000 employees
- Staff from area museums and the Wells Park Community Center
- Active community organizations and local service providers:
  - Sawmill Advisory Council
  - Wells Park Neighborhood Association
  - Neighborhood Housing Services

### **A PARTIAL LIST OF COMMUNITY STRENGTHS FOLLOWS:**

#### **THE AREA IS PHYSICALLY INTERESTING.**

- Distinctive platting, buildings and streets from the past (See Area History, pp.5 - 11)
- Potential landscaping areas between street curbs and sidewalks and on large street medians south of I-40 on Twelfth Street and Fifth Street

#### **THE CITY AND STATE ARE MAKING PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IN THE AREA.**

- Drainage project, sidewalk installation, and street paving for the John Baron Burg Park Addition completed in 1992
- Wells Park Community Center grounds renovation completed in 1994
- New neighborhood gateway park at Zearing and Rio Grande Boulevard completed in 1994
- Ongoing investment in local streets, sidewalks, drainage, etc.
- Proposed Wells Park Community Center renovation
- City in the process of acquiring 27+ acres of vacant industrial land to assist redevelopment for housing, trail, park, and economic development

#### **THE AREA IS CONVENIENTLY LOCATED FOR BOTH RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES.**

- Housing and business areas within walking distance of Old Town, Downtown, and three major north/south bus routes
- Businesses close to Interstate Highway 40
- Railroad spurs for businesses and some railway right-of-way for possible conversion to trails or other public uses

#### **EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE CLOSE BY AND ACCESSIBLE.**

- Old Town
- Museums (New Mexico Natural History Museum, Albuquerque Museum, Explora! Science Center, Children's Museum)
- Trail Corridor along the Rio Grande
- Wells Park Community Center
- Local artists and artisans who teach their skills to young people

## **EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES ARE PLENTIFUL**

- Over 100 industrial and commercial businesses in the plan area
- Vacant land and buildings for new business development

## **THE COMMUNITY HAS INITIATED SEVERAL INNOVATIVE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS.**

- The Sawmill Advisory Council, a nonprofit organization made up of local residents, has been successfully informing the community about and combatting pollution in the area over several years.
- A Wells Park resident wrote a grant and coordinated efforts with Wells Park Community Center staff to initiate a youth conflict mediation pilot program. The program ended, but may serve as a model for other neighborhoods.
- The Wells Park Neighborhood Association applied for a grant and started a tree planting program in 1992. Many trees were planted in front yards and are thriving.
- The Sawmill Advisory Council applied for grants and started an after-school tutoring program in spring 1993.
- In the summer of 1993, the Sawmill Advisory Council began managing mural projects. Thirty children worked with Leo Romero, a local artist, to paint murals at Twelfth Street and Sawmill Road. A mural is being planned for a warehouse wall at Zearing and Rio Grande Boulevard and another is being planned for the neighborhood gateway park recently built by the City at the same location.
- The Wells Park Neighborhood started a Beautification Program with donations from Sunwest and Norwest banks. Volunteers use the money to help landscape homes with drought resistant plants. Homeowners then volunteer to help their neighbors landscape.
- Neighborhood Housing Services, Wells Park Community Center, and the Wells Park Neighborhood Association initiated a "spruce-up" program. Teenagers paint, clean and do minor home repairs for seniors on fixed incomes.
- Neighborhood Housing Services, a nonprofit organization serving the Downtown, Sawmill, and Wells Park neighborhoods, concentrated its housing rehabilitation loans in the Sawmill/Wells Park area in the early 1990s, helping to rehabilitate about 50 houses in four years.
- The Sawmill Advisory Council formed a separate nonprofit organization. Working with Neighborhood Housing Services, they obtained funds to buy land and develop seven affordable houses for low to middle income families on vacant lots in the Sawmill and Wells Park neighborhoods.
- Sawmill Advisory Council and Wells Park Neighborhood Association publish and distribute newsletters that feature interviews about local history.

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## COMMUNITY ISSUES

The following issues either have already had a negative effect on the community or could threaten the community if appropriate steps are not taken.

1. Deterioration of the community's physical appearance and character
2. Environmental degradation
3. Unemployment, under-employment and insufficient household incomes to maintain properties, to pay escalating property taxes, and to buy or improve homes
4. Insufficient visible public investment
5. Insufficient public recreational opportunities for adults and children
6. Incompatible land uses  
Encroachment of intense land uses on residential areas  
Isolated neighborhoods surrounded by regional services or manufacturing
7. Insufficient neighborhood commercial services

The Sector Plan's action plans, public project design policies, and zoning regulations address these concerns. The following proposals are consistent with policies in all other plans and ordinances affecting the plan area: The Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, the Rio Grande Boulevard Corridor Plan as it relates to properties abutting Rio Grande Boulevard, and Historic H-1 Zone regulations as they relate to properties within the Historic Old Town Buffer Zone.