

# Coors Corridor Plan Update

## *Report on Community Kick-Off Meeting*

November 1, 2005

Paradise Hills Community Center



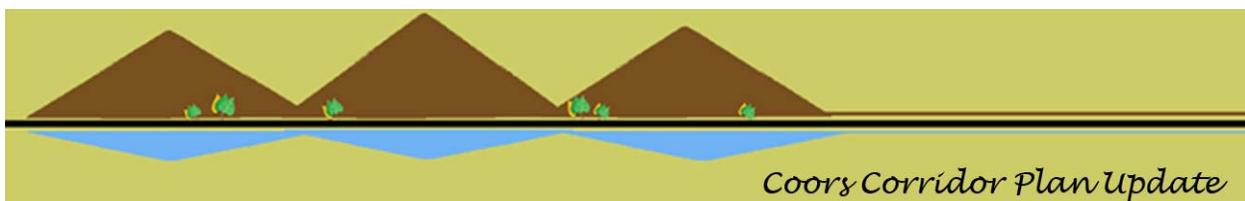
### MEETING PROCESS

Approximately 40 people attended the meeting to begin the process of amending the Coors Corridor Plan (the “Plan”). The purpose of the meeting was to gain an understanding of community preferences for pedestrian improvements and visual character of the Coors Corridor from Western Trail to Alameda (segments C and D in the original Plan).

The planning team, consisting of City Planning Department planners, HDR planning consultants, and Shared Vision, an Albuquerque community process organization, described the process for community involvement to be followed over the next several months. The schedule includes a design workshop on December 9, an open house in late January or early February, interest group presentations in early March, and presentations to the Environmental Planning Commission and City Council in spring of 2006.

The team sought the opinions of the participants on the visual characteristics they would like to see through two facilitated discussion groups, one for the section of Coors from Eagle Ranch Rd. to south of Paseo del Norte, the other for the section running from Paseo to Alameda. These groups discussed and wrote on large aerial maps and photographic images of areas adjacent to Coors prepared by HDR. At the end of the evening, the groups reconvened and reported out their findings.

These preferences will be used by the City Planning Department and HDR consultants to guide plan revisions and prepare for the next workshop.



## PLAN GOALS

At the beginning of the meeting, District 5 Councilor Michael Cadigan described to the group his goals for the plan revision:

- Transit linkages
- Respect for the river Bosque as it abuts the Rio Grande Valley State Park
- Recognition of Coors as a commuter route with limited access
- Pedestrian crossings and safety for pedestrians
- “A plan that is easy to follow”

## KEY FINDINGS

### ***1. Issues with the existing plan***

There is general agreement that the existing Coors Corridor Plan adopted in 1984 has not been very effective. It is viewed as inconsistent with cumbersome regulations that are difficult to administer. Many participants believed that the Plan has not been properly enforced by those governmental agencies and commissions charged with that responsibility. “The plan has been ignored. What the community wanted in 1984 did not happen.”

A positive aspect of the existing Plan is that it addresses the need to preserve views to the east through excavations and dropping of floor elevations in new development.

Many thought that the character of Coors has suffered as a result of the Plan’s failures and that revisions are happening after the fact. “It’s too late; revisions should have happened 10 years ago.” “What can be influenced now? How do you undo what’s been done badly?”

At the same time, community participants are looking to the Plan Update to set new, *enforceable* standards that can influence the limited developable land that remains. For this reason, the group expressed a sense of urgency in completing the Plan update quickly.

### ***2. Development Character and Preferences***

People view Coors as dangerous, congested, inhospitable to pedestrians, and marred with buildings and walls too close to the street that often obstruct views to the bosque and mountains on the east side. When asked about places they disliked, one group said “Coors.” They avoid driving there and use it only when necessary to get somewhere else.



Commercial development is seen as problematic as it necessitates left turns which cause more congestion. Left-turn access onto Coors from adjacent development and from intersecting streets (e.g. Winter Haven) is often dangerous. Other intersections mentioned as problems include Coors and Paseo del Norte, where traffic backs up north of Paseo, Coors and Irving, and Coors and Montañño.

***Desired character: “Whatever will improve the flow of traffic”***

- More emphasis on access control, with fewer access points allowed.
- Less commercial development permitted between centers.
- Lower densities between centers

**B. Pedestrian environment**

Coors is not designed as a walking environment. Not only are pedestrian facilities lacking along the street, the character of adjacent developments also discourages walking. Many buildings are spaced too far apart, adjacent buildings lack direct pedestrian connections to Coors, and there are few places for people to sit. One person commented on the character: “It’s all commercial.”

***Desired character:***

- Shade, comfortable places to sit and wait for a bus
- Some public spaces
- Landscaped buffer areas between Coors and development

**C. Pedestrian Circulation**

Pedestrian travel across Coors is very difficult. Furthermore, subdivisions bordering Coors have no pedestrian access out onto Coors, e.g. to catch a bus. Subdivisions to the west of Coors along Montañño in particular were mentioned as lacking these kinds of connections. This is a problem if the city wishes to encourage use of transit.

Although the groups wanted better access to buses with comfortable waiting areas along Coors itself, they favored clear separation of walkways, trails and bicycle paths from auto traffic.

***Desired Improvements:***

- Ways to cross Coors - preference for underpasses, not overpasses. Participants cited the underpass and trail crossing Rio Grande Blvd. as an example where walkers feel safe.
- Pedestrian connections from buildings to the street
- Pedestrian connections from subdivisions to transit stops on Coors and to the bosque
- Along Coors – walking, bicycling trails “off roadway”



#### **D. Visual Qualities**

*Walls* - Participants complained about the residential development north of Western Trails on the west side of Coors where walls are too high (15 ft.) and too close to the road

*Lighting* - Too high, too bright

*Architectural style and Colors* – “junky buildings” - architecture that doesn’t fit with the natural setting (e.g. angled rooflines at Coors and La Orilla); requests for loud colors and neon signage

*Setbacks* - Participants did not like buildings fronting on or too close to Coors. Residential development on the west side of Coors north of Montano Plaza Drive is seen as an area where houses are too close to the road and too close to each other.

Participants wanted to avoid a “downtown look.” At the same time, they do not want to see parking in front of buildings.

#### ***Desired character:***

- Buildings set back from the street and buffered with landscaping.
- Architectural features and colors that blend with the natural setting, e.g. low Territorial style buildings and low key signage
- Need for controls on lighting – lower, softer lighting
- Limiting height of walls

#### **E. View preservation**

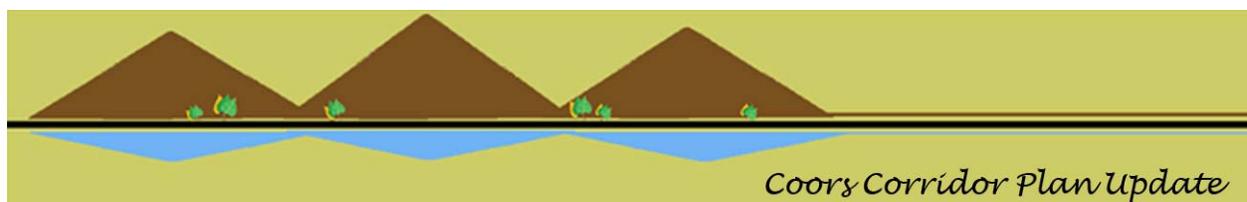
Participants were concerned about commercial buildings that are too tall blocking views from the roadway. They liked the idea of requiring site excavation, and identified Montañño Plaza (Raleys) as a good example of preserving views to the treetops of the river bosque and the Sandia mountains with “sunken” buildings.

#### ***Desired Character:***

- Buildings as seen from Coors should not block views to the mountains and bosque tree lines. View preservation should be required, not just a guideline
- Raley’s (excavation) lying below the street grade is an example of good design – other buildings should follow this example

#### **F. Open Space and Trails**

Many were disappointed that so much open space has been lost to development. They would like to see more of the bosque preserved and harmonious treatment of areas that are transitional to open space, with attention to colors and architectural style. They saw opportunities for preserving open spaces north of Dellyne/Learning Rd. east of Coors. North of La Orilla views and open space could be preserved through lower density, high quality development.



### ***Desired character:***

- Preservation of the river bosque; no development should be allowed within a 100-foot buffer zone from the bosque.
- Preserve existing trailheads and provide trail connections for good access to walking and hiking trails in the state park, e.g. off Namaste, La Orilla, Montano

### **G. Urban places**

Places that people like to visit are those developments that are most walkable.

Specific places that people like:

Row of Restaurants – north of Paseo between Coors bypass and Alameda

People appreciate having choices of places to eat concentrated in one place, and enjoy the views to the east.

Montaño Plaza (Raleys) and Riverside Plaza

Participants cited the attractive Territorial-style architecture, buildings “broken up”, and pleasant places for people to walk, especially in newer Riverside Plaza which offers outdoor seating and interesting interior shopping streets.

These commercial developments are set back and buffered from the roadway with landscaping. They provide an environment where people feel safe and can comfortably enjoy walking between restaurants and stores and sitting outdoors.

These developments are successful examples of combining walkability, appropriate architectural character, and view preservation.

### ***Desired Character:***

Based on these “favorite places” the desired character of commercial areas can be summarized as follows:

- Walkable areas separated from the main roadway
- Cohesive architectural style that fits with the natural setting
- Compatible shopping and restaurant activities that attract people to one destination
- Fountains, landscaping and outdoor seating
- Small interior walking streets
- Excavation for “sunken” buildings to protect views

