

III. NOB HILL HIGHLAND TODAY



Land use in Nob Hill is predominantly retail and office along the blocks bracketing major streets, with neighborhoods of single family homes and small apartments in the interiors. Scattered within the neighborhoods are churches and Monte Vista Elementary School. Zoning in Nob Hill is a combination of the R-1 zoning that was established when zoning was adopted in Albuquerque in 1959 and special neighborhood office and commercial zoning that was put in place with the adoption of the 1987 Nob Hill Sector Development Plan.

A. Land Use and Current Zoning

The Highland neighborhood has several large apartment complexes and a mix of single family homes, small apartment buildings and townhomes within the interior of the neighborhood. Second units on the same lot as a single family detached home are common in some blocks. Highland High School and Zia Elementary School are significant institutions in the neighborhood. Retail and office uses extend along major streets, and the area surrounding Highland High School is a mix of retail, office and multifamily uses. Zoning in the Highland area dates from 1959, with O-1, C-1 and C-2 zoning along major streets and south of Central Avenue to Zuni. Residential zoning in the Highland neighborhood is R-3.

In both neighborhoods churches are zoned SU-1/ Special Use and some surface parking lots are zoned PR/Parking Reserve.

B. Streetscape, Character, and Scale

Scale and increment are especially important to the character of the streets in the plan area. Much of the commercial façade in the western side (i.e. Girard to Jefferson) of this sector has a regularity of increment and a distinct scale which is particular to mid-20th Century development, and is recognized as an asset to the streetscapes of this sector and to the City at large. Because this existing façade is an important asset to the City, the continuity, maintenance and retention of its component or contributing pieces shall be preserved or restored.

C. Transportation Systems

Today, Albuquerque is a city that is dominated by automotive travel typically comprised of single occupancy vehicles traversing the well established road network. According to a 1996 Parsons Brinckerhoff transportation study entitled [Albuquerque Transportation Evaluation Study](#), 20% to 30% of Albuquerque's total area is comprised of streets and their rights of way. By any measure this is a major type of land use and shapes the way the built environment is used and consumed.

The Nob Hill Highland area is no exception. Though the area is well-served by transit, bicycle and pedestrian routes relative to the City at large, transportation in the Plan area remains dominated by the car. Since its inception, Central Avenue has shaped commercial and residential development along its borders and today remains a major community form determinant in the Plan area. San Mateo, Zuni, Lead, Coal, and Lomas are also vital links to and for the rest of the city and typically carry heavy volumes of traffic at peak travel times. Transit service in the form of bus and RapidRide service is paving the way for a modern streetcar project on

Central Avenue, which will be developed in the near future. In addition, there are many marked and/or dedicated bike lanes throughout the plan area that are part of the Albuquerque Bicycle Master Plan.

However, as the number of "vehicle miles traveled" and "vehicle hours traveled" continue to increase, there is a renewed effort to create truly walkable, pedestrian-oriented environments and development. The Plan looks to address this current situation and also point the way forward to viable communities free from auto-only dependency.

D. Public Facilities

The Nob Hill Highland area is generally well-served by its parks and public facilities. Monte Vista and Zia Elementary Schools and Highland High School are natural community centers. Both the Monte Vista and Zia Elementary schools' playgrounds offer basketball courts and other play equipment for the community at large. Morningside Park, at Morningside and Lead, also offers play equipment for children. Highland High School with its track, football, baseball, soccer fields, tennis courts and pool facilities offer surrounding residents opportunities to exercise and participate in community sports leagues. The Wellesley Tennis Courts, at Lead and Wellesley, offer more community tennis courts.

The Triangle Community Park at the intersection of Girard, Monte Vista, and Central, offers some open space and houses a Police Community Substation. Yet, Central Avenue, as it makes its way through the Nob Hill Highland Area, lacks any major public place for gathering for festivals, concerts or other special events. These spaces are sorely needed as special events are forced to take place either in parking lots or in other parts of the City.



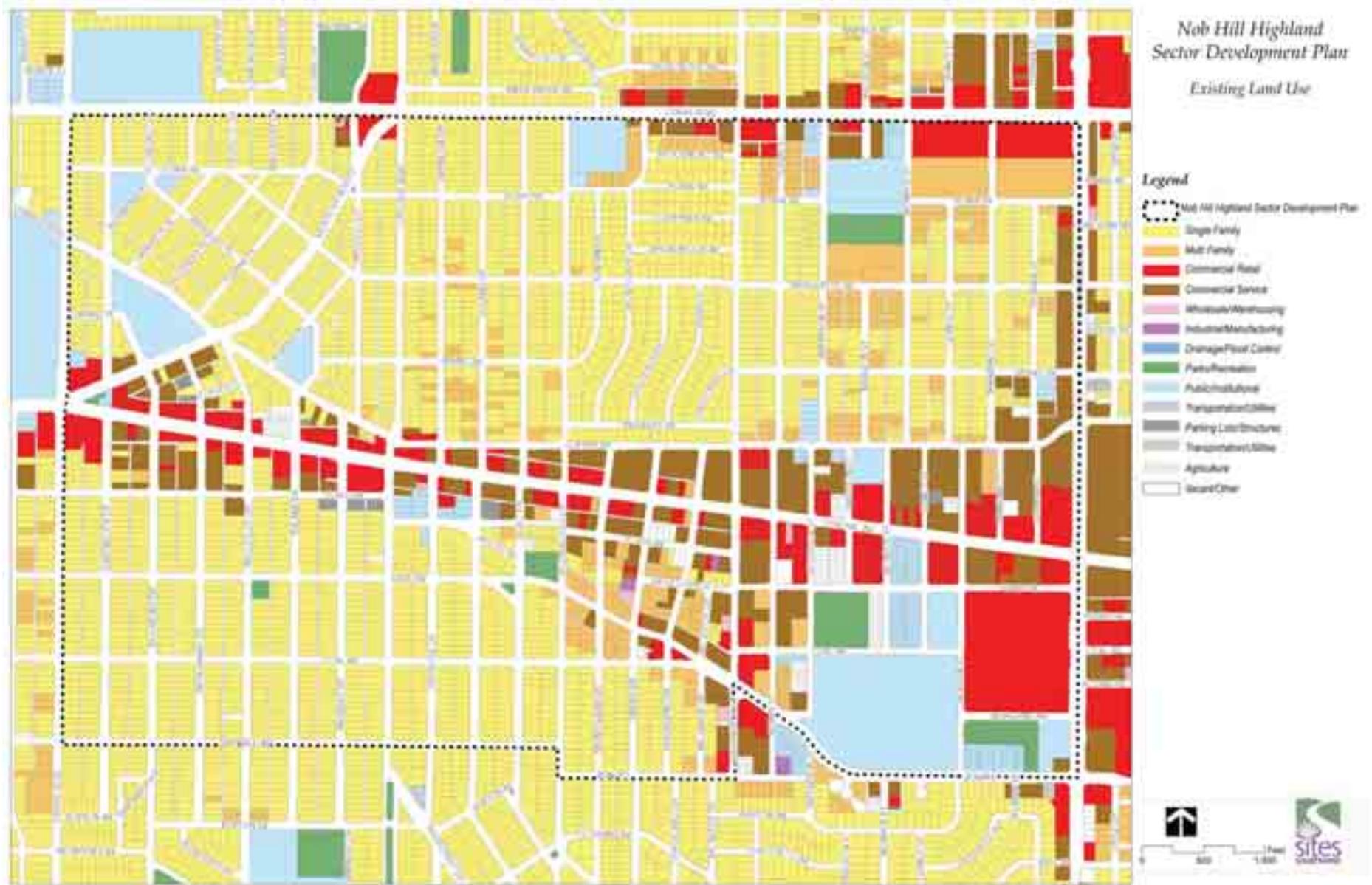


Figure 4: Existing Land Use



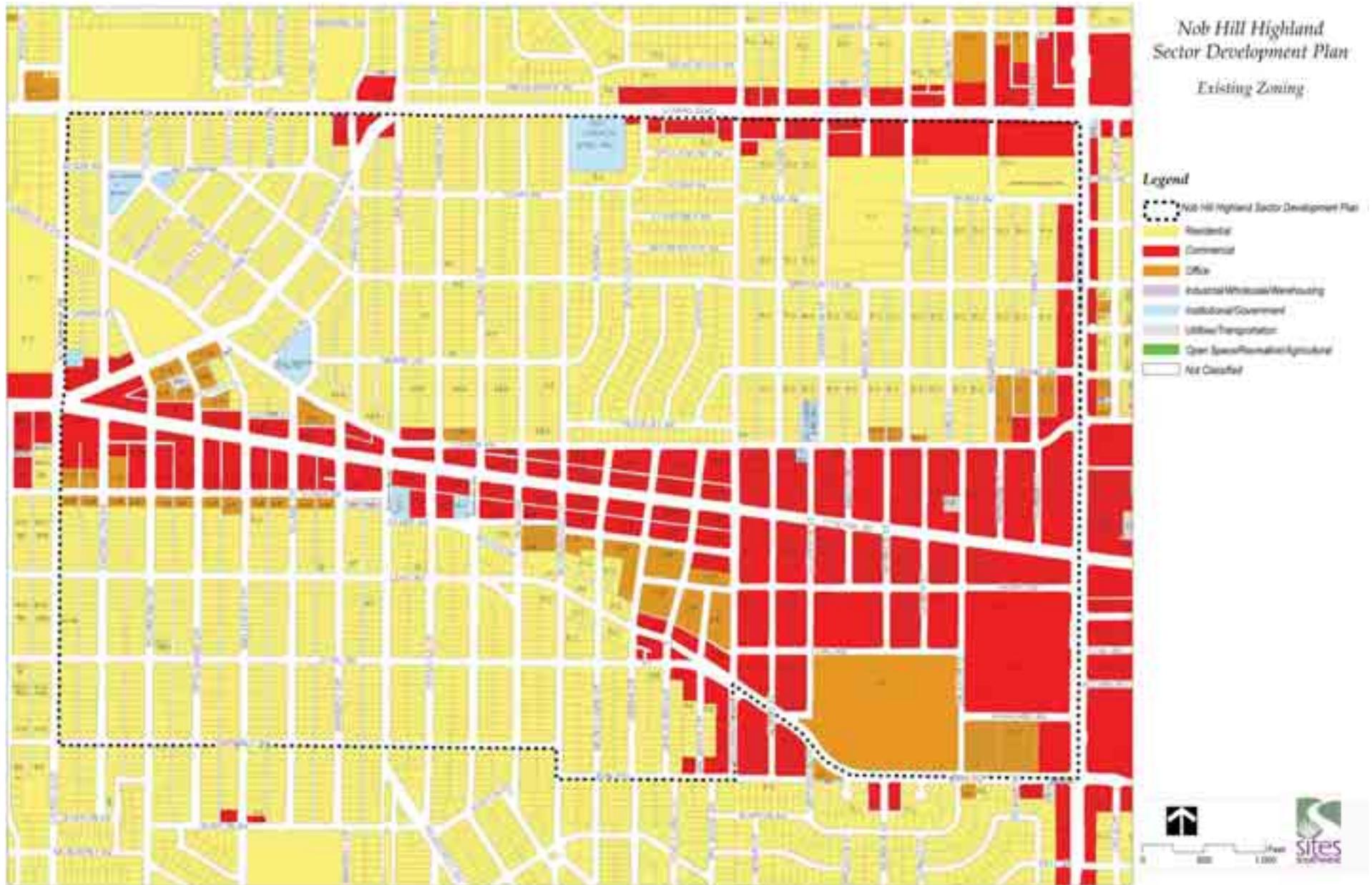


Figure 5: Existing Zoning



E. Housing Characteristics

Housing in the Nob Hill Highland area in general is characterized by a greater propensity towards rental properties, which form 51% of the whole, versus 37% of the whole for Albuquerque at large (U.S. Census Bureau). Figure 6 shows the distribution of properties by ownership, based on 2005 Bernalillo County Assessor Records. Properties where the owner address and site address are the same are assumed to be owner-occupied. A majority (58%) homes are detached single family dwelling units. Of the multi-family dwelling units, the majority are duplexes and three or four-plexes. There are no mobile home parks and only (5%) of all dwelling units are in housing structures that have 50 or more dwelling units. The approximate median value of homes in the Nob Hill area was \$131,400 and in the Highland area was \$108,600 in 2000. However, the median home price in Albuquerque in 2000 was \$127,600 and then jumped up to \$169,200 in 2005, a 32% increase, according to the National Association of Realtors. Nob Hill Highland housing prices have likely followed or even exceeded this upward trend.

1. Age of Housing

Housing in the Nob Hill Highland Area tends to be older than the city-wide average. The median age of houses in Albuquerque is approximately 1975 while the median age of homes in the Nob Hill Highland area is 1952 creating a market of older housing stock. In the Nob Hill area, 69.7% of homes were mainly built prior to 1960 and almost a third of those were built prior to 1940. Only 18% of the housing units in Nob Hill were built from 1960 to 1980, and 11.4% were built after 1980.

2. Building Conditions

A 1985 survey, the most recent study, indicated that residential building conditions are generally good in the Nob Hill area, reflecting a pattern of regular maintenance. According to a May 22, 2006 interview with area historian David Kammer, since this survey was completed, the majority of building conditions and housing stock has improved. Reinvestment in Nob Hill, combined with the inclusion of more houses listed on the Historic Registry may have contributed to these improvements.

However, residents throughout the Nob Hill Highland area have voiced concern at the proliferation of investment properties. They claim that with real estate markets across the Southwest being superheated, many out-of-state investors are buying up property as a safe investment. These properties become vacant or rental units and are not kept up as well as owner-occupied properties, which creates a sense of disinvestment in the area.

Also, old Route 66 motels in the Highland area, such as the De Anza, present a unique opportunity for redevelopment. Though these motels currently act as affordable housing for some, area residents and neighbors complain of criminal activities as well as their physical condition. These buildings no longer function as potential community resources, but rather as blights on the landscape.



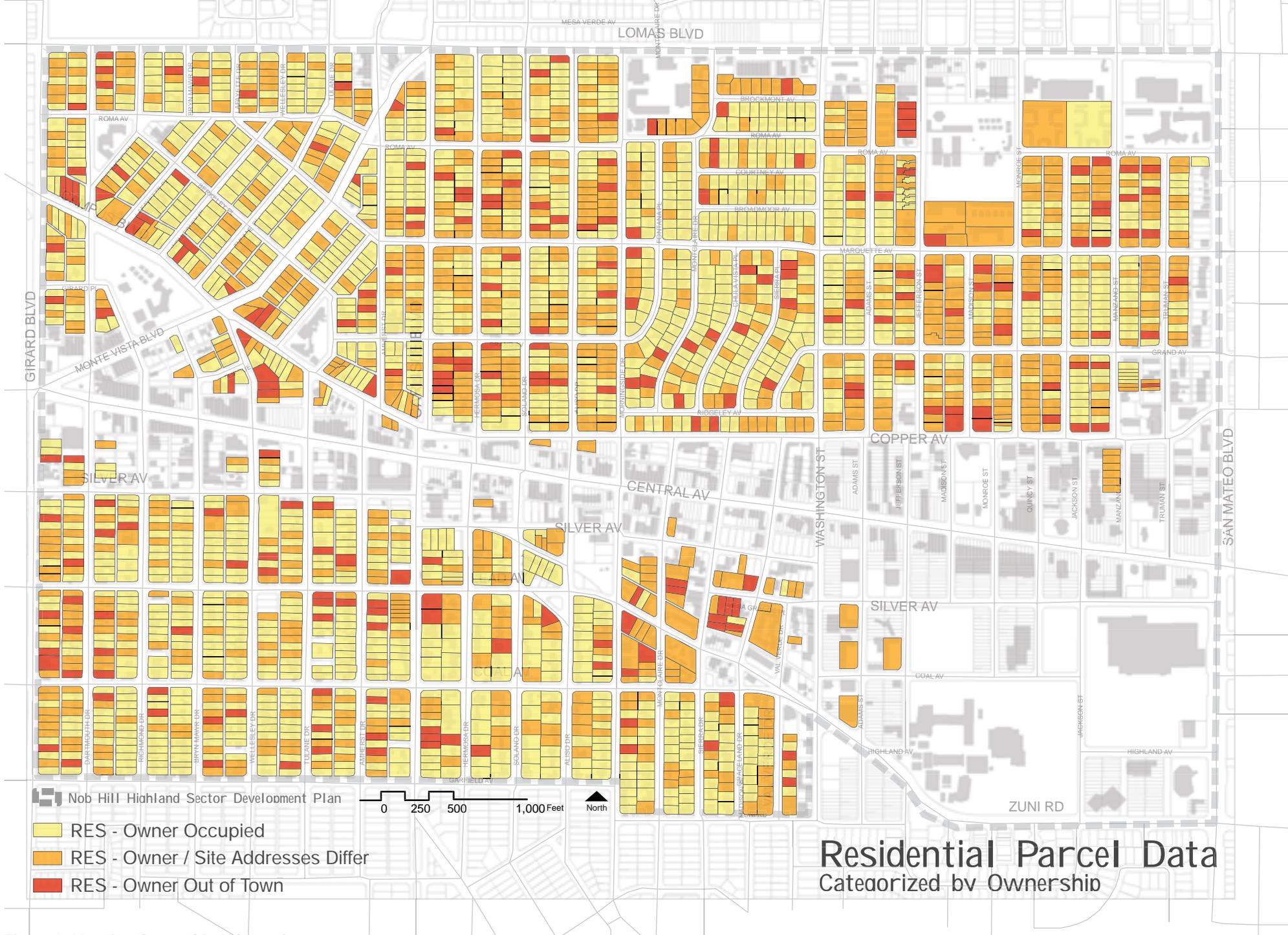


Figure 6: Housing Ownership Information



F. Population Characteristics

The total population for the Nob Hill Highland area in 1990 was 7,281 and in 2000 was 7,222. If this trend continues the population will remain steady. However, as infill becomes more predominant in Albuquerque, it is likely that the population of areas like Nob Hill Highland will increase as the neighborhoods become more urban.

The racial and ethnic make-up of Nob Hill Highland is predominately White and Non-Hispanic. 79% of people in Nob Hill Highland identified themselves as White only versus 71% for the city at large. Ethnically, 23% of people in Nob Hill Highland identified as themselves as Hispanic or Latino while 40% identified themselves as such City-wide.

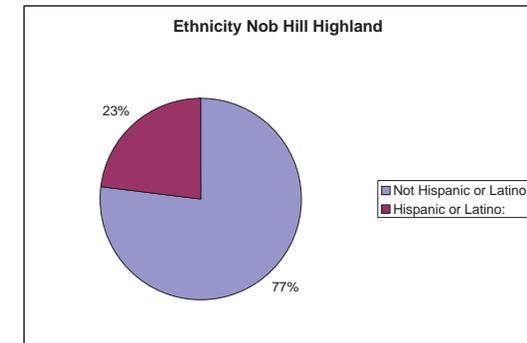
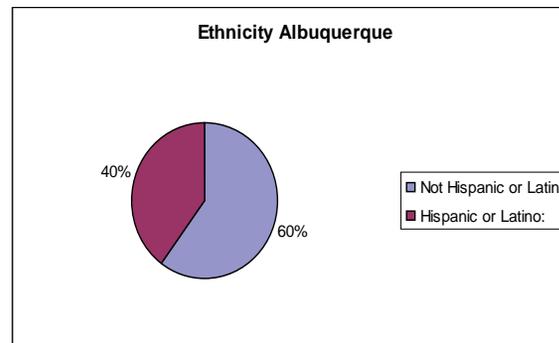
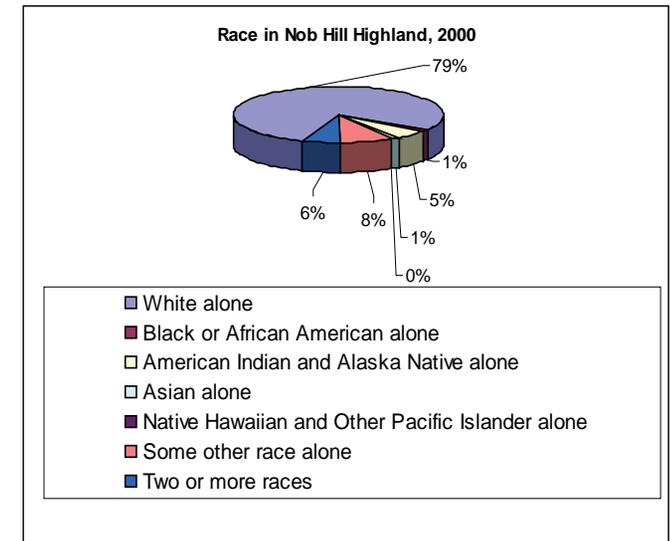
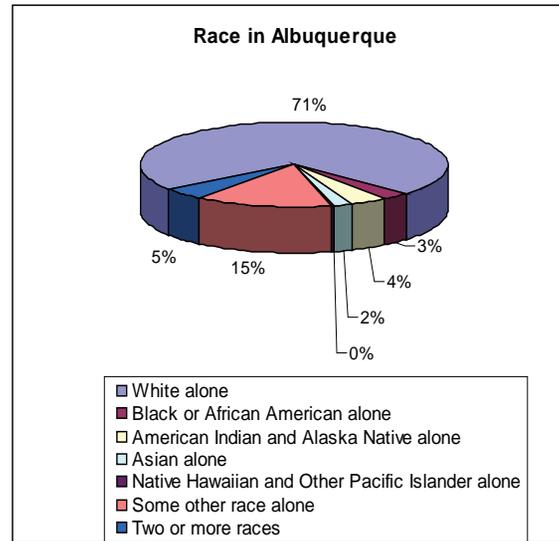


Figure 7: Race and Ethnicity Demographics



The Nob Hill Highland area population is characterized by a larger percentage of younger people who tend to have fewer children when compared to the City overall. This creates a propensity for relatively large numbers of one-person households. The neighborhood also has a larger 50-59 year old population than the rest of the City. The Plan area's largest population groups by age are the 20-29 and the 30-39 categories like that of Albuquerque's. However, these categories in the Plan area make up a higher percentage of its total population that Albuquerque's do. These young people have fewer children as compared to the rest of the City as Nob Hill Highland is underrepresented in the 0-9 and 10-19 year old age groups, and there is a smaller percentage of school-aged children.

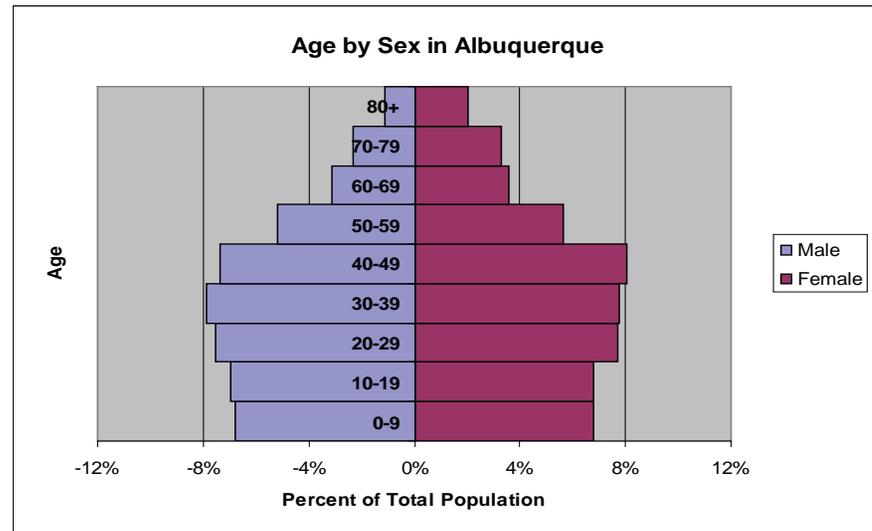
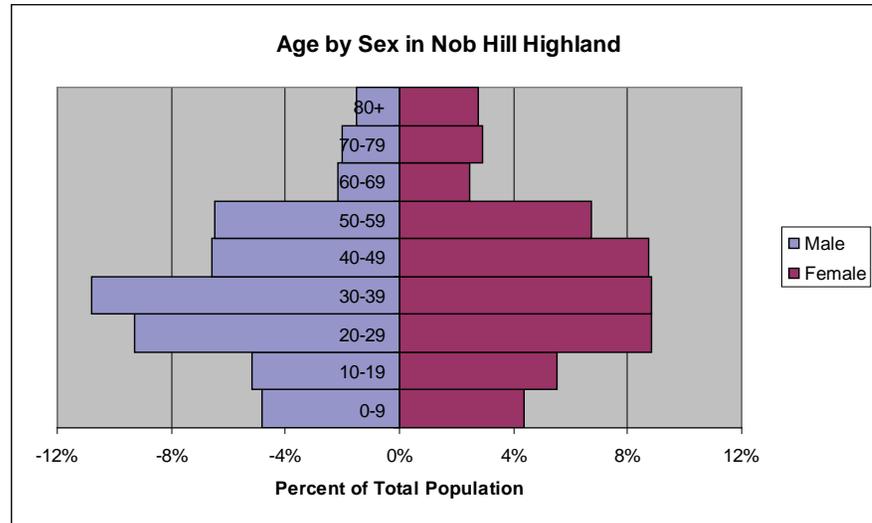
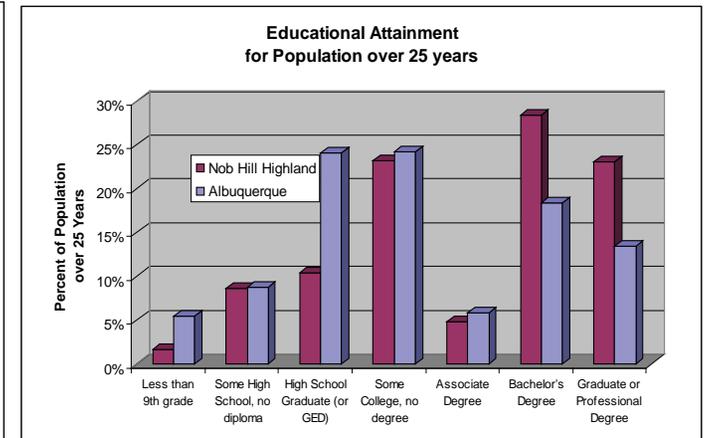
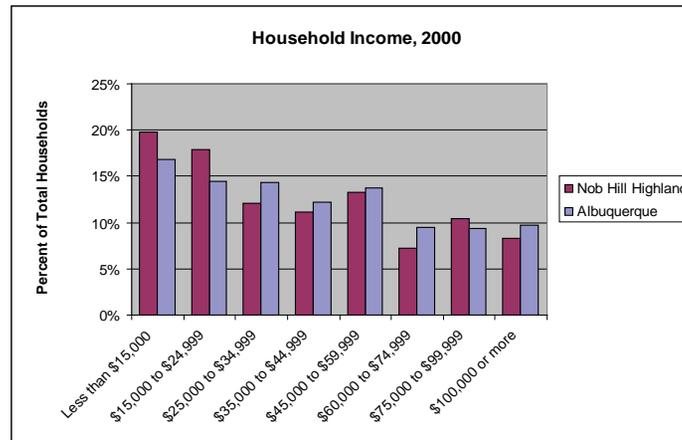


Figure 8: Age and Sex Demographics



Per capita income for the Nob Hill Highland Area is \$23,898 which is slightly higher than Albuquerque's per capita income of \$20,884. Household income across the earning spectrum does not deviate greatly from that of Albuquerque's, however, educational attainment does. Nob Hill Highland tends to be a well-educated part of the City. The percentage of people in the plan area who have their Bachelor's Degree is 28% versus 15.4% for Albuquerque at large. Those who have graduate or professional Degrees are 23% of the population in the Nob Hill Highland area versus Albuquerque's 6%. Furthermore, 89% of Nob Hill Highland residents are high school graduates versus 85.9% in all of Albuquerque.



2000 Population Age 25+ by Educational Attainment*	Nob Hill Highland		Albuquerque	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
	4,785	100%	291,485	100%
Less than 9th grade	78	2%	15,695	5.4%
Some High School, no diploma	409	9%	25,346	8.7%
High School Graduate (or GED)	498	10%	70,221	24.1%
Some College, no degree	1107	23%	70,518	24.2%
Associate Degree	231	5%	17,070	5.9%
Bachelor's Degree	1360	28%	53,562	18.4%
Graduate or Professional Degree	1102	23%	39,073	13.4%

2000 Population Age 25+	Nob Hill Highland	Albuquerque
Percent without high school diploma	10.2%	14.1%
Percent high school graduate or higher	89.8%	85.9%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	51.5%	31.8%

Figure 9: Income and education demographics



G. Crime

The Nob Hill Highland area crime rates for 2004 were higher than that of Albuquerque in all categories except assault. The instances of assault fell by nearly half in the Nob Hill Highland area from 2000 to 2004, from 45 to 22.6 reported cases per 1000 people. Also, drug arrests fell by more than half from 22.4 to 10.3 incidents per 1000 people. The category with the highest crime rate in the Nob Hill Highland Area was that of theft crimes (larceny and burglary) at 78 instances per 1000 people. This is up dramatically since 2000 when theft crimes were just 44.3 incidents per 1000 people. The largest discrepancy between the Nob Hill Highland area and Albuquerque's crime rates in 2004 was in the vandalism/disorderly conduct category. Here Nob Hill Highland had a rate of 44.1 instances per 1000 people, 54.7% higher than that of Albuquerque's at 28.5 instances per 1000 people. The increase in theft crimes and vandalism supports residents concerns about the escalation in property crime.

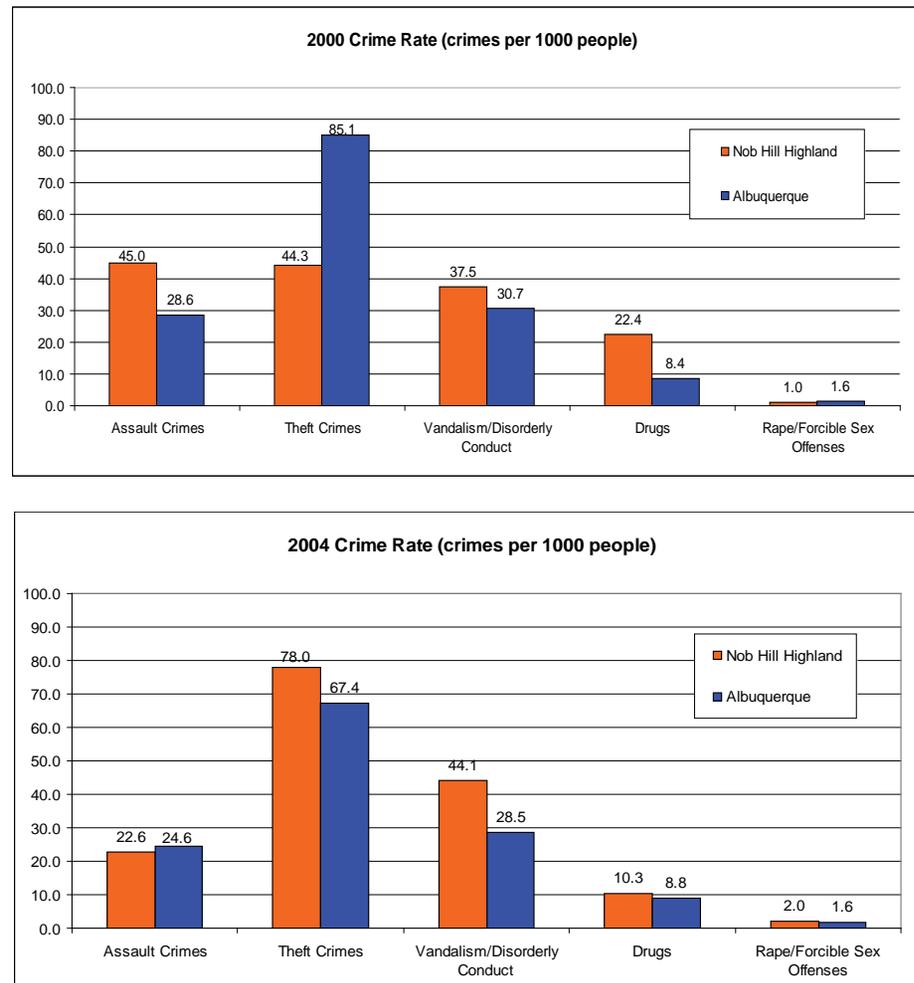


Figure 10: Crime rates



H. Utilities

1. *Water and Sewer*

Water and sewer lines currently provide adequate service in the Nob Hill Highland area (see Figure 11). However, due to the age of the neighborhood's water and sewer lines, many will need to be replaced in the coming years. Since there is no major replacement project slated for the Plan area, improvement will occur in response to normal system and/or future redevelopment projects.

2. *Drainage*

Addressing the storm water runoff and drainage problem in the Nob Hill Highland Area is critical. A 100-year-flood zone extends from Girard to Washington and generally follows Campus/Copper, Central and Zuni (see Figure 12). These important transportation and commercial corridors function as storm water collection channels in lieu of the natural drainage systems they replaced. Existing drainage is approximately at the capacity of the streets which are subject to flooding when surface water flows are anything more than one foot at the curb (ASCG study). Proposed pedestrian and streetscape improvements, such as bulb-outs at corners, would reduce drainage and surface flow capabilities and greatly increase the instances of surface flooding. As a result, many of the proposed street improvements are predicated on the resolution of this problem.

One solution to this problem, as proposed by a 2006 ASCG Inc. study, was to increase the capacity of the Highland Detention Basin. However, this option is not desirable to local stakeholders and a new request for proposals (RFP) has been issued by the City to study the situation further and recommend alternatives. .

3. *Gas, Electric, and Communications*

The Nob Hill Highland area is a fully served area of the city regarding gas and electric utilities as well modern communications technologies. The scope of any infrastructure upgrades will be dictated by normal maintenance, or by future development evaluated on a project by project basis.





Figure 11: Water and Sewer Lines





Figure 12: Flood Zones



I. Economic Vitality

The Nob Hill Highland area is one of Albuquerque's most vibrant economic centers. Economic activity is concentrated along Central Avenue, the area's "Main Street", and falls into three distinct commercial districts. As the Nob Hill Highland Renaissance Corporation outlines, the first is the Route 66 Historic Core from Girard to Carlisle; the second is Emerging Nob Hill from Carlisle to Washington, and the third is the Highland commercial district from Washington to San Mateo. To varying degrees, each commercial center is populated by a diverse array of shops, boutiques, cafés, restaurants and services. The Nob Hill Highland area also has a good balance of other establishments including grocery stores, bars, antique shops, automotive service centers and big box retailers like Wal-mart. Beyond Central Avenue, commercial activity along Lomas and San Mateo also provide local residents with basic services as well as additional services including, pet stores, pharmacies and child care.

Organizations charged with promoting the economic health of the plan area include the Nob Hill Business Association, the Highland Business and Neighborhood Association, and the Nob Hill Highland Renaissance Corporation. All are non-profit, community based organizations designed to foster reinvestment, protect historic resources, and create a safe environment in the area that translates into economic vitality.

Much of the concern of residents and business owners alike is how to improve on the area's existing economic strengths while retaining its character of small-scale, locally owned businesses. However, the Nob Hill Highland area also has more immediate concerns as well. The area along Central from Girard to Carlisle is the heart of Nob Hill. Yet, even along this corridor there is much available space for lease. Additionally, business tenure is a problem. With the exception of key anchor establishments that have been in business for more than ten years in the same spot (Master Cleaners, Red Wing Shoes, and the Flying Star to list a few), many business have a high turnover rate creating instability and, in turn, high vacancy. The point is not to list all vacant frontages, but rather to demonstrate that even in the heart of one of the City's most vibrant economic areas vacancies and high turnover rates are real concerns that need to be addressed.

The Highland area has similar problems with vacancy and turnover rates among its area businesses east of Carlisle to San Mateo. This district used to have a predominance of Route 66 road-side motels which in recent years served as havens for criminal activity, or simply stood vacant. Currently, only the Desert Sands remains, as others have been torn down. This leaves a gap in the physical and economic landscape, but also provides a prospect for redevelopment. The Highland Theater has struggled economically in the recent past, but also presents an important opportunity to be an anchor for economic redevelopment in the area.

Other problems as expressed by business owner's are common to both Nob Hill and Highland. Litter removal, a large homeless population and safety are just a few of the recurring problems experienced in the plan area. The Nob Hill Highland area is in need of continued attention and reinvestment if it is to maintain and improve its economic vitality.

