

West Route 66 Sector Development Plan - Liaison Committee
Notes of Meeting – September 29, 2011 – West Mesa CC

Committee Participants: Pat & Joe Risbeck, Anderson Hills NA; Ron Bohannon, NAIOP; George Holly, Pat Hurley NA; Klarissa Pena, SWAN; Nancy Montoya, SWAN; Pat Baca, Riverview Heights NA; Norm & Belinda Mason, Stinson Tower NA; Mike & Lisa Stewart, Business/Property Owner at 8101 Central NW; Kelly Chappelle, Avalon NA; Diane Beserra, Los Altos Civic Assn.; Nate Archuleta, Property/Business Owner at 2202 Central SW.

Guest: Bruce Rizzieri, Director, ABQ Ride

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT):

Why ABQ Ride is looking at Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on Central Avenue between 98th and Tramway:

- Increasing level of ridership overall, and Central Ave. accounts for 40 to 45% of total city transit ridership.
- Projections of increasing traffic congestion, especially between west and east sides of city.
- BRT is faster than conventional bus and potentially more relaxing for passengers. Transportation is typically the second biggest expenditure for lower income residents and transit is a lower cost option. BRT is also cheaper than previous systems that the city has considered, i.e. trolley and light rail.

Phase I Process: Follow Federal Transit Administration requirements -

- Alternatives Analysis (AA) – alternatives include “no build”, road changes, cost/benefit analysis, different options, ridership projections.
- NEPA (environmental) document – includes analysis of impacts on traffic movements and on surrounding properties, access to stations, etc.
 - There is a public involvement component in both of the above.

The process is underway:

- Initial Feasibility Study has been completed (see ABQ Ride webpage for study & BRT info:
<http://www.cabq.gov/transit/planning-for-the-future-bus-rapid-transit-brt-service-on-central-avenue>
- City has issued RFP for a consultant to conduct the AA
- Next steps: Selection process, Council approval and contract negotiation. Estimated timeframe: March /May 2012
- Estimated “fast track” timeline for entire process—to complete studies, obtain funding (including federal), construction, and begin operations--is 6 to 7 years.

Q&A and Committee Comments (C)

Q. Would BRT have dedicated lanes? Need to maintain all vehicle lanes on Central bridge.

A. Dedicated in some areas but not necessarily all.

Q. Would landscaped medians be eliminated?

A. Possibly in some areas.

Q. How would drainage be handled if medians go?

A. Can be handled in different ways. For example, landscaped medians can be replaced with landscaping on either side of roadway.

Q. Will it go into the County?

A. Currently looking at 98th to Tramway only, but can talk to County.

Q. More information on BRT and examples of cities that are similar to ABQ and have BRT?

A. Eugene, OR has BRT. (Search “EmX” (for Emerald Express) at <http://www.ltd.org/index.html>)

El Paso, TX is considering it. Cities with a university are comparable.

Phoenix, AZ, Denver, CO, Salt Lake City, UT have Light Rail systems.

C. BRT would be effective together with sector plan zoning that allows higher density residential and commercial in the Central corridor. Also, consider requiring no fare.

C. Expressed concern about the possible effect of BRT on bridge and other existing infrastructure.

C. General comment about transit needing to serve desired destinations.

Team response to Committee’s Issues on Working Draft (C = Committee, T = Team)

Zoning Issues:

T - All uses desired by C are allowed in WD, except for health care/service complex in the Special Activity Center (SAC). Presbyterian has land outside the sector plan area near I-40 for a potential future hospital.

T- The character and quality of residential development in the plan area would be controlled through Form Based zoning. Amenities, such as play areas, would be required. More than one housing type can be required on a single site to create diversity.

C - Examples of “large” expanses of apartments to avoid are in the Ladera / Unser / Laurelwood area. There are 3 close together. They also cause traffic problems.

C - Intergenerational housing is needed.

C - Examples of “good” multi-family developments: University/Gibson and in the Academy area.

T – No particular architectural styles are required.

T – Existing uses would be grandfathered in the plan.

T – Better location for Route 66 Visitor Center is in the County near I-40, not in the city plan area. County is considering it.

T – A new zone for properties just west and east of the river is being proposed to serve residents and visitors that would include river, Bosque and acequia-oriented uses such as restaurant, recreational services (e.g. bike rental/repair), community garden.

C – The new zone would be acceptable to members in the Atrisco area, except 45 ft building height is too high. (No negative comments from other members.)

C - Have concerns about proposed building heights in the corridor generally (too high). Community has made concessions e.g. accepting residential uses; heights should be capped at a lower height.

Discussion of building heights: 26 ft is typical 2-story residential. 32 ft is typical 1-story for commercial. 3 stories are needed to make multi-residential development viable. How high is Legacy Church--possibly 40-42 ft? Beach Apartments near Tingley is partly 4 stories

T - General intent of plan is to limit building heights along the Central frontage and to allow increased height away from Central, except adjoining residential zones where they would be lower. Team will provide a graphic comparison of property-owners' entitlements under current zoning with what is proposed in WD.

Transportation Issues

T – Proposed frontage road project west of Unser Blvd. would be a good catalytic project. Opportunity for coordination with County on it.

T – Will follow-up with DMD on Unser/Central intersection project and investigate potential for more pedestrian-friendly crossing on Unser.

T- Improvement of Yucca/Old Coors intersection is on DMD's project list.

T – Will pursue idea of trails along ditches in the Atrisco area with MRGCD

Other Issues

T – Met with Water Utility Authority at Central/Yucca site in early September. Odor under better control due to contained bacterial process (“scrubber”) and carbon filters. There is on-going, frequent sampling to monitor conditions. No complaints regarding that site this summer.

C – Still a major odor problem in general area, including around Sunset Gardens. There was recent media coverage.

Hand-outs: Committee Issues; pedestrian-activated crossings (HAWK) info sheet; height allowance diagrams & explanation.

WR66 SDP Committee Issues for Team Response

Zoning

General

1. Attract businesses that meet local residents' needs, incl shops, restaurants, health-related, and indoor family recreational and entertainment uses
2. Allow for shopping centers with range of shops and services
3. Allow for health care/service complex
4. Provide more diverse housing types including townhomes, senior housing, live/work, vertical mixed use
5. Prevent large expanses of apartments
6. Allow different architectural styles
7. Explain how form based zoning applies in specific cases
8. Address existing uses that would become non-conforming
9. Provide ped/bike friendly environment
10. Provide safe environment, e.g by providing benches, shelter, lighting

Area Specific (west to east)

11. Visitor Center
12. Additional park and community center for SW Mesa residents
13. West of Bosque/around acequias: change from Community Activity Center (CAC) to zoning for lower density, recreational and cultural uses
14. Sunset/Central/near BioPark: provide for special venue, riverwalk
15. East of river: expand uses allowed in Special Activity Center (SAC) zone, allow restaurant with liquor

Team Observation

- General Committee support for MAC and SAC zones; no negative comment on other (non activity center) zones

Transportation

General

1. Ped/bike friendly environment, including no new utilities in pedestrian realm
2. Safe environment, e.g by providing benches, shelter, lighting
3. Provide frequent, passenger-friendly transit

Area Specific (west to east)

4. Frontage road between 98th & Unser: provide vehicular access for businesses; make it attractive; include ped/bike trail; address flooding.
5. Limit future widening of Unser north of Central for pedestrians' sake

WR66 SDP Committee Issues for Team Response

6. Realign Yucca/Old Coors
7. Atrisco area: provide ped/bike access along all ditches that intersect Central, including Atrisco Lateral; improve pedestrian access to Bosque
8. Build dedicated Ped/Bike bridge across Rio Grande
9. Maintain 6 vehicular lanes between Atrisco and Tingley
10. Provide direct pedestrian access from BioPark to Bosque
11. East of river: make pedestrian improvements on north and south Central, traffic calming, signaling, etc.

Other

1. Clarify the identity and history of West Central
2. Executive summary of how the plan affects different stretches of the corridor
3. Permanent solution to sewer odor at Central/Yucca
4. Counter area's stigma