

East Gateway Metropolitan Redevelopment Area 2nd Community Meeting Minutes

**Thursday, August 27th, 2009, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Manzano Mesa Multi-Generational Center**

1) Welcome, Introductions, (6:30p.m. to 6:45p.m.)

- Gabriel Rivera, Redevelopment Planner/ Project Manager
- Barbara Herrington, Sites Southwest Project Manager; Elise Welch, Landscape Designer, Sites Southwest
- Susan Vigil, MRA Intern

2) What Is An MRA Plan And How Is It Different From A Sector Development Plan? (E.g. No Zoning) (6:45p.m. to 7:00p.m.) -- Barbara Herrington/Mr. Gabriel Rivera

Mr. Rivera explained that there are two Albuquerque planning initiatives occurring simultaneously. The July 2009 DRAFT East Gateway Sector Development Plan addresses land use and zoning. Property owners in the East Gateway Area were encouraged to developments of the July 2009 DRAFT East Gateway Sector Development Plan, because zoning changes are enacted by this plan. Paula Donahue, Senior Planner, City of Albuquerque Long Range Planning Division, is the East Gateway Sector Plan Project Manager. Paula Donahue's contact information was distributed. (Telephone: 505 924-3932, E-Mail: pdonahue@cabq.gov) Mr. Rivera encouraged meeting attendees to contact Paula Donahue with any questions concerning Sector Plan initiatives.

A Metropolitan Redevelopment (MR) Area Plan does not authorize zoning in an area, though it may recommend it. Instead, an MR Plan focuses on, projects involving the public right-of-ways (streetscapes, landscapes) and public-private partnerships.

MR Area Designation focuses City redevelopment monies on the redevelopment area. The State of New Mexico Metropolitan Redevelopment Ordinance is designed to initiate and spur investment in blighted areas of the City.

3.) Albuquerque City Councilor Don Harris (7:00p.m. to 7:10p.m.)

Councilor Harris noted that the East Gateway MR Area is an essential area of Albuquerque and an important consideration to the July 2009 DRAFT East

Gateway Sector Development Plan. He described his role in the community planning process as only to address special public concerns. The East Gateway Sector Development Plan planning process presented a single instance when the Councilor's assistance was called on by the community. He was asked by the business community to help maintain the current width of Central and prevent possible plans to narrow this important corridor. Councilor Harris intervened on this East Gateway issue at the public's request; otherwise, he desires the Albuquerque planning process be wholly left in the hands of the involved communities.

Addressing recommended zoning changes in the July 2009 DRAFT East Gateway Sector Development Plan, Councilor Harris stated that the DRAFT Sector Plan's new zoning will only apply to area buildings undergoing substantial remodeling or new building construction. Older businesses are protected from the demands of the recommended new zoning in the East Gateway Area. He stated that the City "wants East Gateway businesses to continue to be successful, and to help (them) be successful."

Councilor Harris asked the meeting attendees to think about the things they want or do not want in and for the East Gateway MR Area. Property values always rise in designated Metropolitan Redevelopment Areas due to realized on-site improvements. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts effectively keep dollars in the redevelopment area by ensuring that the incremental rise in property values from redevelopment is reinvested in the redevelopment area.

The Downtown Action Team was extolled by Councilor Harris as an effective voice for the preferred direction of City investment in the Downtown Redevelopment Area. East Gateway MR Area businesses would do well to form such a business group for their area.

Currently, \$1.5 million dollars is already scheduled in a bond package for spot medians on Eubank in the July 2009 DRAFT East Gateway Sector Development Plan Area (whose boundaries overlap with the Designated East Gateway Metropolitan Redevelopment Area. These short medians are specifically designed to beautify the area, while not inhibiting access to businesses.

Capital improvements should be designed to reflect the unique character of the East Gateway Area. City medians are not made from a cookie cutter mold, although there are a number of prototypes. Also, there are drainage issues to be considered. The scheduled medians for the East Gateway Area are to exhibit a pro-business design. At Lomas, they will calm drivers so that they may pause to see the businesses around them.

Councilor Harris encouraged meeting attendees to keep the area's unique character in mind, while defining redevelopment recommendations. Other changes will be coming to the area that should be directed by the public's vision of the East Gateway.

4.) Public Input Session (7:10 p.m. to 8:00p.m.)--Barbara Herrington and Mr. Rivera Rivera

The public addressed and discussed several issues with the redevelopment planning team.

The Metropolitan Redevelopment Process vs. Sector Plans

Some meeting attendees remained unclear as to the process followed by the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency, as well as to the differences between MR Plans and Sector Plans. The MR planners explained that official designation of a MR area, documenting its declining status and boundaries, is the initial step in the redevelopment process. Designation describes a redevelopment area's "slum" or "blight conditions," – legal terms indicating economic, structural, and infrastructure deterioration.

Once MR Area designation is complete, the Metropolitan Redevelopment planning process begins, seeking to instigate public financing, infrastructure investment, and public/private investment in the designated redevelopment area. A basic outline for an MR Plan includes a market analysis, opportunity site identification, and descriptions of potential redevelopment projects and their financial feasibility. Frequently, the MR Agency is able to assemble land parcels to create a large catalytic redevelopment project, such as that found in the Downtown Theatre Block. An example of a MRA public project involved implementing improvements in Albuquerque's Downtown alley ways. On a larger scale, the MRA organized and administered financing for the rehabilitation of the Old Albuquerque High School. Gleaned from community input, two or three redevelopment projects will be formulated for the East Gateway MR Area.

Property owners should be aware that the current July 2009 DRAFT of the East Gateway Sector Development Plan recommends new zoning for the area, namely a Community Activity Center located around the Four Hills Neighborhood Area and by Home Depot, as well as a Neighborhood Activity Center found along the Central corridor area in and around Juan Tabo. Zoning changes may allow a greater variety of building types and uses in these areas, as well as impose new property use restrictions.

Reinvestment in MR Areas

Mr. Rivera described incentives for reinvestment into an MR Area. The Tax Base of the area should be reinvested back into that area. \$80,000 dollars in area

improvements, artwork and streetscaping were invested by the MR Agency in the Ta Lin International Market. He explained that developers understand that property values will increase when an area is designated for redevelopment and often plan private projects for the area even before capital investments are made.

The most successful redevelopment projects come from and are supported by organized community groups. Recommendations for Capital Implementation Spending (CIP) originate from the affected redevelopment communities, who are consulted prior to redevelopment project implementation. City Council representatives seek projects with strong community support to implement and fund.

Meeting attendees expressed a desire to redirect bond monies from medians on Eubank. They felt there were more pressing needs in the area such as sidewalks and lighting on Central. They called for more CIP funding to be used for area needs. Priority CIP project suggestions for the area included a traffic light on Elizabeth St. by the Manzano Mesa Multi-Generational Center and a new traffic light by Dions on Central. These meeting attendees were concerned that all capital expenditures for the East Gateway Area are being allocated to the Eubank medians.

According to one meeting attendee, redirecting funding away from the planned for Eubank medians will “help us really implement the (MR) plan. How can we take this money for the MR plan?” The Redevelopment team will look into and address this issue at the 3rd East Gateway MRA Community Meeting.

Forming A Citizen Action Business Team:

Attendees inquired about the importance of a business organization to the Redevelopment process success. Mr. Rivera responded that business organizations are an important advisory tool to City spending decisions. A business organization can help direct to their area tax money that is channeled through the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency. For instance, the West Central MR Area organizations garnered approximately \$10 million dollars for improvements to the West Central Areas from municipal funding sources.

Ms. Herrington offered to provide information and case examples to help area businesses and meeting attendees form an East Gateway business organization, following the example of the Downtown Action Team. The Downtown Action Team formed independently within the Downtown Business Investment District. The Downtown Action Team primarily implements the existing Downtown MRA Plan, rather than rewriting it.

Ms. Herrington asked for a show of hands regarding the meeting composition of attendees. This showed that a generally equal mix of residents, property owners and

businesses were represented at the East Gateway MRA 2nd Community Meeting.

Several meeting attendees expressed a desire to place the redevelopment process on hold to allow them time to form a representative business organization. In response, the Metropolitan Redevelopment planning team agreed to create and distribute an outline and method for forming an area business organization. These materials will be circulated to meeting attendees via e-mail and also at the upcoming East Gateway MRA 3rd Community Meeting. If meeting attendees approve, the redevelopment planning team will also distribute attendee contact information between entities. There is other East Gateway neighborhood association groups already organized that also may offer an umbrella for businesses to begin organizing under.

Describing The East Gateway Area

Meeting attendees commented that the East Gateway should have a unique character and not mimic the Nob Hill area. They tasked themselves with describing the area and its advantages. They want to build on the area's positive aspects.

Attendees described their area as containing two essential aspects of Albuquerque: an industrial component and a gateway component. Large business and retail establishments in the area include Sandia Business Park, Home Depot, and Wal-Mart. Recent mobile home park and sales lot vacancies could present opportunities for redevelopment.

East Gateway Boundaries and Tax Increment Financing

Meeting attendees raised the question of expanding and changing the East Gateway MR boundaries. They felt the designated East Gateway MR Area boundaries should be changed to include big tax dollar contributors, such as Sandia Technology Park, which take advantage of street improvements and other capital improvements in the MR area. This would allow the MRA, in turn, to take advantage of the future incremental increases in property values. TIF allows MR area business investments to be plowed back into MR area capital improvements.

Tax Increment Finance Districts (TIF) should not be confused with Tax Increment Development Districts (TIDD). TIDDs can be used to develop new areas of the City while TIF applies to redevelopment districts. TIDDs actually siphon a percentage of a new development's taxes into the same area's infrastructure.

In answer to the question of how the East Gateway MRA boundaries were originally drawn, Ms. Vigil answered that impact fees and the possible lowering of residential property values were discussed by the community. A business developing in an MRA area may contribute to an MRA TIF fund but it will also decrease the city's overall tax income by its MRA exemption from development impact fees. When the East Gateway MRA's boundaries were originally drawn, residents expressed concern that residential

property values might decline if included in the MR Area. Community representatives believed commercial properties along South Central more appropriate for redevelopment and inclusion in the East Gateway MR Area. A City legislative process with strong community backing is required to redraw the East Gateway MR boundaries.

5.) Summary MRA Presentation To Juan Tabo Hills Neighborhood Association, Manzano Mesa Multi-Generational Center Gym (8:00p.m. to 8:30p.m.)—Gabriel Rivera

Mr. Rivera gave an overview of the 2nd East Gateway MRA Community Meeting. In response to questions of expanding the East Gateway MRA's current designated boundaries, Mr. Rivera answered that redrawing the boundaries is a possibility, if there is strong community demand. Mr. Rivera further explained that the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency is particularly effective at leveraging public dollars to draw private investors to an area and will do so for the East Gateway MR Area.

**The 2nd East Gateway MRA Community Meeting
adjourned at 8:30p.m.**