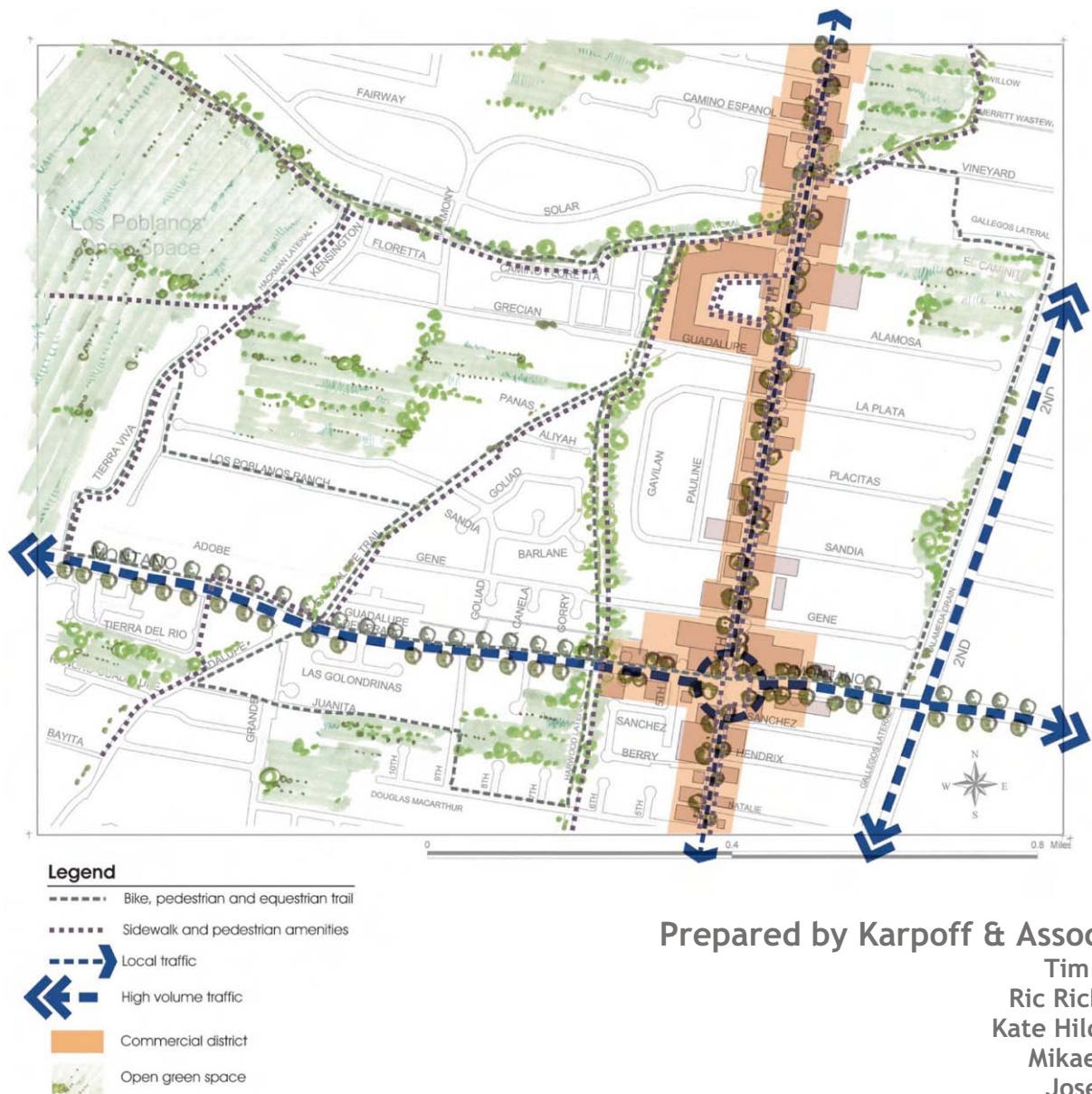


4th Street & Montañó Area Improvement Coalition

Community Visioning Report

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Background

The cultural and economic history of the North 4th Street corridor is rich and diverse. Located in the heart of Albuquerque, 4th Street has long served as a center of activity. For three centuries, 4th Street was part of the El Camino Real, and in the early 1900s, 4th Street was part of U.S. Route 66. 4th Street is one of the few streets in the United States with dual historic designations: as part of the El Camino Real and as part of the pre-1937 Route 66.



Despite its importance and historic significance, residents and business owners feel that the 4th Street and Montañito area has been neglected and in decline for decades. Increased traffic through the area, as well as severe traffic congestion, have decreased safety for residents, pedestrians, motorists, and bicyclists on both 4th Street and Montañito. Local small businesses, traditionally the heart of 4th Street commercial activity, have gradually closed or moved away, and the uninviting aspects of the area have discouraged meaningful economic development and led to a deterioration of surrounding neighborhoods.

In 2003, local residents and business owners formed the 4th Street & Montañito Area Improvement Coalition, which is devoted to making the 4th and Montañito area a better place to live, work, and do business. This area is bounded by 2nd Street to the east, Douglas MacArthur to the south, Solar Road to the north, and the Los Poblanos Open Space to the west. The Coalition grew out of earlier grassroots efforts to improve 4th Street, such as initiating the City's current plans to improve the 4th and Montañito intersection and by working with the City's Zoning Department to preserve the neighborhood integrity of Guadalupe Plaza. The Coalition includes local residents, neighborhood associations and business owners, as well as people residing or working in other parts of Albuquerque who would like to see the area become a "jewel" for all City residents.



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In its first year, the Coalition presented its initial findings to the public and gathered support from officials at the local and state levels. The Coalition convened a Community Visioning process in the summer of 2004, with consultation from Karpoff & Associates.



Intent of the Community Vision

A vision provides a way to articulate the dreams of a community in a way that is compelling and inspiring. It helps people invite others to get involved, challenges each other to overcome difficulties, and guides community direction. It provides a “place to stand” as residents and business owners work with government officials and developers, and marks a reference point from which to check the community’s progress.



Our Community Vision engenders a strong sense of community, connecting residents, business owners and land owners in a mutually beneficial process. The intent is to establish changes that revitalize the entire community, benefiting businesses, the surrounding neighborhoods, and people who pass through to reach other areas of the City. At the same time, the visioning process is designed to put community planning back in the hands of those who live and work in the area: the community articulates the vision, and government officials are challenged with ensuring that improvements are consistent with the articulated vision.

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Traffic improvements along 4th Street and at the 4th and Montañño intersection are integral to the Community Vision. To translate the envisioned concepts into reality, the Coalition will work with government officials to redesign major roadways and intersections to improve traffic flow and safety. The Coalition also will launch and coordinate a variety of projects to enhance the sense of community and overall quality of life in the area, consistent with the views articulated in the visioning process.

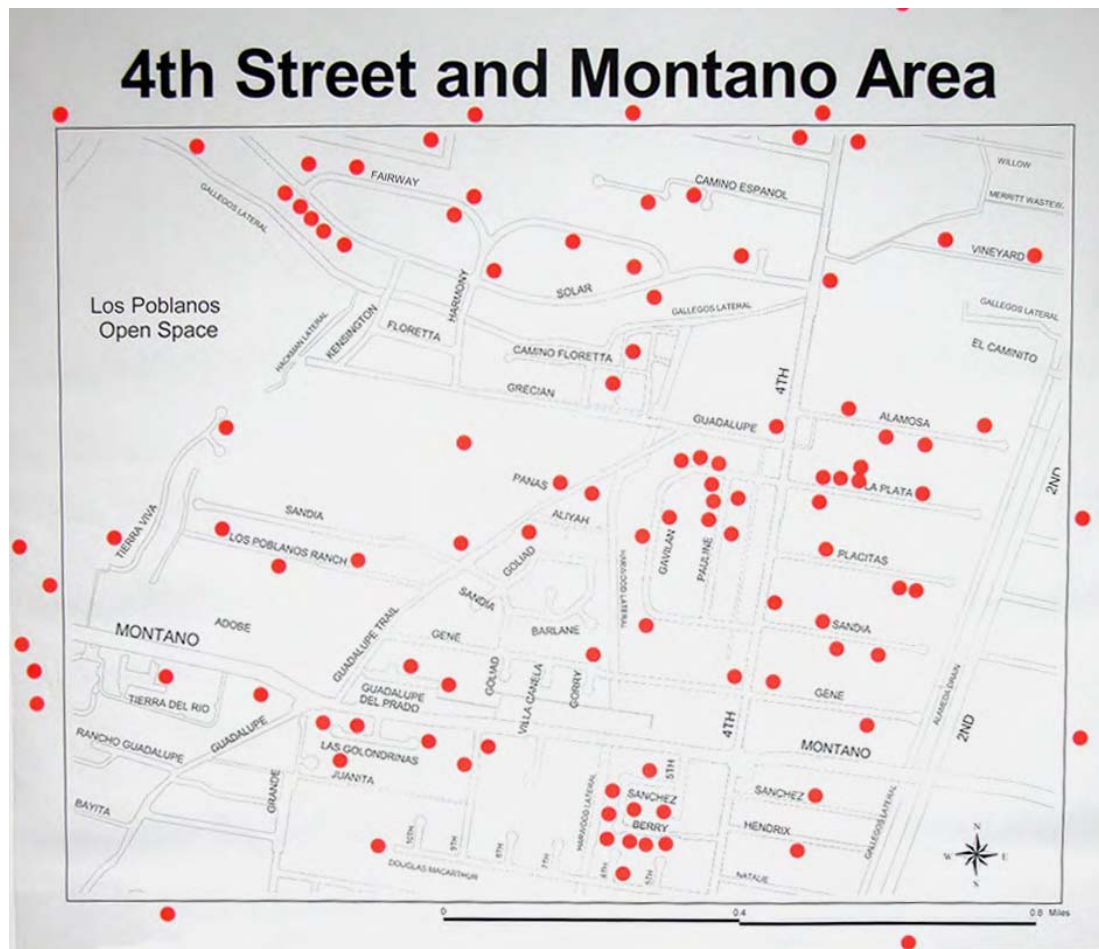
For example, a group of Coalition members has proposed constructing a trailhead at a location that encourages pedestrians and cyclists throughout the City to take advantage of 4th Street restaurants and commercial establishments when using the area's trail network. Another Coalition group has proposed developing a meeting place where festivals and community events can bring people together from throughout the North Valley. Others are working to attract neighborhood-scale businesses to the 4th Street corridor to ensure the long-term economic revitalization of the area.



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Community-Driven Consensus Process

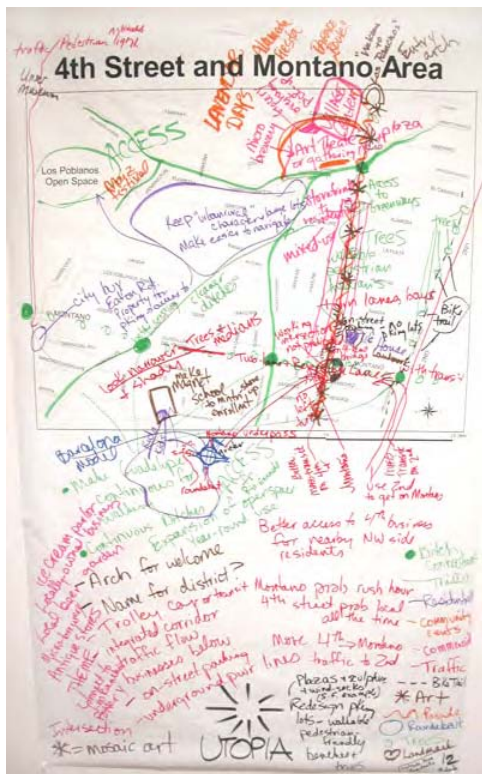
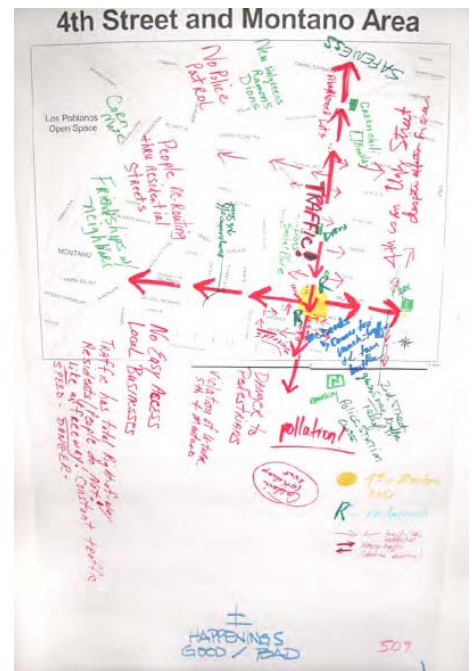
The community-based planning process involved more than 100 residents and business owners in North Valley neighborhoods surrounding 4th Street and Montañó Road. In two Saturday workshops, participants placed a dot on a map to indicate where they live, own property, or operate a business.



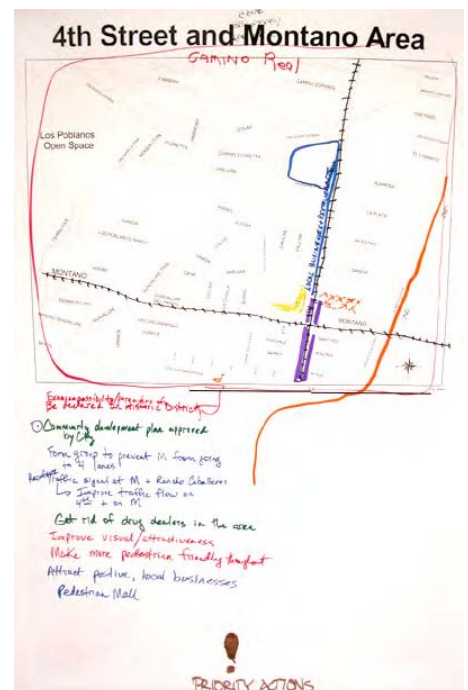
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In both workshops, participants worked together to define goals to shape the area's vision. They identified what people love about the area, mapped trends and good and bad "happenings," developed an image of the perfect place, and agreed on actions to move the vision forward. This grassroots process resulted in broad consensus on a Community Vision.



Working in groups focused on each of the goals, the participants refined the Community Vision, articulated four crucial elements of the vision, and identified practical steps and projects to make the vision a reality.



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Four Goals Comprising the Community Vision

The Saturday workshops produced four goals comprising the Community Vision. The first goal is to ***improve transit and safe vehicular flow*** by providing continuous traffic flow for local traffic and commuters. One key element of this goal is to develop improved traffic flow at the 4th Street and Montañó Road intersection. Other elements include developing a comprehensive study and traffic plan to permit better east-west traffic flow, supporting the City's current plans to make 2nd Street a major arterial for commuter traffic, and working to integrate improved public transit with a comprehensive regional transit plan. Achieving this goal is critical to the success of implementing many other parts of the community's vision. As such, solutions to improve transit and safe vehicular flow must be comprehensive in nature, rather than one-dimensional, and must be made consistent with the complementary objectives of (1) providing a safe environment for area residents, (2) promoting the establishment of long-term, neighborhood-scale business development along 4th Street, (3) preserving and enhancing the area's historical and cultural significance, and (4) accommodating the needs of those who utilize the Montañó corridor to access other parts of the City.



The second goal is to ***preserve the area's rural/urban character and identity***. Components of this goal include creating an enduring district identity, making streetscape improvements to enhance the distinctive character of the area, and installing signs and gateways that link neighborhoods and businesses. The Community Vision embraces business-friendly improvements, recognizing that economic development is important for the future of the area and for the economic vitality of Albuquerque as a whole. It also embraces improvements to the quality of life by supporting the programs of the Los Poblanos Open Space, organizing outdoor community events (such as farmers' markets and festivals), and making the area more pedestrian-friendly.

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The third goal is to create *pathways and pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian amenities*. Improvements along the roadways will encourage pedestrian and bicycle use. A network of trails, including those along the acequias, will be improved in cooperation with local government agencies, to reinforce the area's rural/urban identity. Trailheads will be located near local businesses to encourage shopping, dining, and recreation. Citizens from across the City, as well as visitors, would be drawn to the area to hike, bike, walk, shop and eat in this "jewel" within the heart of Albuquerque.



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The fourth goal is to stimulate **commercial and community revitalization**. The core of this goal is to form a solid economic base for a thriving district. This will include making zoning changes to allow mixed uses that respect the area's residential character and also provide meaningful commercial development opportunities. Design guidelines will be developed that promote development options that businesses and neighborhoods can support. In addition, connections will be strengthened between neighborhoods on the east and west sides of 4th Street, with thriving businesses along the 4th Street corridor. These changes, guidelines and connections will encourage residential and commercial investment in the area. The results will bring about a substantial increase in residential and business property values.



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Key Strategies

Several themes consistently emerged in the Saturday workshops forming the basis for three crosscutting strategies, focusing Coalition efforts to reach its four goals. One strategy centers on ***increasing community identity***. Residents will select a name that defines the area, reflecting its rural/urban historic character, and will organize various community projects that bring people together and maintain momentum toward each of the four goals.



A second strategy is to ***galvanize political and funding support*** for carrying out the Community Vision. To this end, the Coalition will work to have improvements to the 4th Street & Montañó area included in upcoming General Obligation Bond ballots. Actively working in cooperation with government officials, property owners and the media, the Coalition will become a formal non-profit entity within the next year.

The third strategy is to ***complete key technical design studies***. The Coalition will work with the City and other appropriate public agencies to undertake a comprehensive traffic study for the 4th Street and Montañó Road corridors and intersection. The Coalition will also work with the City to organize and sponsor a design charrette to shape and refine the design elements specified in the four Community Vision goals. Later, the Coalition anticipates working with the City of Albuquerque to establish mixed-use zoning for 4th Street to institute the design concepts from the charrette.

Getting Started

The Coalition has formed subcommittees to carry out local, visible activities alongside the proposed studies and redesign projects. Near term activities include advocating for rapid bus/light rail projects, evaluating the best location for a trailhead, selecting a name for the area, and hosting a design charrette.



These early, visible steps will be taken alongside larger-scale actions to build momentum toward realizing the Community Vision. In the near term, a comprehensive engineering study will be completed for the 4th Street and Montañó corridors and intersection. Strategies will also be in place to revitalize 4th Street commerce and address pedestrian and vehicular safety issues along the street.

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Implementation

In the longer term, residents and business owners will see bus lanes and mass transit along Montañño as well as rapid-bus service on 4th Street. Perhaps the Transit and Traffic Subcommittee's efforts will also result in a station at Montañño and the railroad track for the proposed high-speed rail connecting Belen and Santa Fe.

Longer-term projects will also include safe and continuous sidewalks and bike paths along 4th Street, with landscaping and pedestrian-scale lighting. A safe and attractive trail network will draw people to the area from all parts of the City, as will community events that feature the urban/rural quality of the area as embodied in the Los Poblanos Open Space. 4th Street will be lined with trees and have on-street parking. The street's thriving businesses will be a magnet for infill business, and residential and commercial property values in the area will substantially increase, making the area more attractive for businesses and residents alike.



The vision expressed by the community in this area is one of positive economic growth that is consistent with and reinforces the area's historical and cultural values. By working with the community to implement this vision, government leaders have the opportunity to bring the City together in a special place – the heart of Albuquerque – to contribute significantly to the quality of life for the entire region.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

4th Street & Montañó Area Improvement Coalition Executive Committee:

Steve Cogan, Chair
Pat Branda
Ron Gedrim
Chris Kenny, Vice Chair
Carlo Lucero

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Resource Persons who assisted at the August 21 Workshop:

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WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

The following people attended either one or both of the community visioning workshops on July 31 and August 21, 2004:

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