

Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan updates

Frequently Asked Questions

What is this project about?

This project aims to reshape the City's regulatory and policy framework governing land development into a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) that consolidates multiple documents. It will also involve updates to the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, where necessary.

This project will be a comprehensive, far-reaching effort that includes analysis and updates to existing adopted policies and regulations, particularly to incorporate best practices for coordinating land use and transportation.

What is the status of this project?

On Monday, April 21, 2014 the City Council unanimously adopted legislation (R-14-46) directing the Planning Department and Council Services to update the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Code and other ordinances and policies regulating land use and transportation in the city to reflect best planning practices. The Council also appropriated \$1.5 million for this project in two separate actions in 2013 and 2014. Bernalillo County will also contribute funding to update the Comprehensive Plan, adopted jointly by the City and County.

On June 27, 2014, the City issued a Request for Proposals to hire a consultant to help with this effort. The City intends to select a consultant by January 2015. Kickoff meetings with the public and other stakeholders are expected to begin in Spring 2015.

What is the purpose of this project?

This project aims to modernize and consolidate the many layers of regulations guiding development into a Unified Development Ordinance. This effort is intended to simplify the development process, making it easier to understand for property owners, developers, and neighbors, as well as more enforceable for City staff. Many U.S. cities have recently embarked on similar overhauls of land use and transportation regulatory systems, including Raleigh, North Carolina; Denver, Colorado; El Paso, Texas; and Austin, Texas. This local effort will help keep Albuquerque competitive in terms of attracting and keeping young people, employers, and retirees, among others.

As aging baby boomers and millennials – the two largest segments of the population – increasingly desire more walkable, urban places, the City has an opportunity to update and

streamline the system of regulations to incentivize development that creates high-quality, mixed-use destinations connected by vibrant, multimodal corridors, while protecting and enhancing rural and other special places.

By embarking on what is likely to be a multi-year effort, the City is taking a comprehensive approach to find the right balance between rules that are flexible enough to encourage the development desired in particular areas, and predictable enough to ensure a high-quality built environment for nearby property owners and neighbors. This important initiative is intended to preserve and improve the quality of life for current and future generations of citizens.

What are the main goals of this project?

There is growing awareness and excitement about the potential of placemaking to encourage and support economic development. Done well, economic development can improve the quality of life for all citizens; provide better access to where we work, live, learn, and play whether we drive, walk, or take public transit; enhance the quality of our public spaces; and ensure the sustainability of our City even as we grow.



The project will integrate land use and transportation planning to encourage a diverse and healthy economy, maximize returns on investment for infrastructure, provide opportunities for goods, services and employment within walking or biking distance of neighborhoods, and protect and enhance our environmental and historic resources.

What's wrong with the current system of land development regulation?

The complexity and inconsistency of our current system present problems for everyone. We have a tangle of policies, standards, and regulations in many separate documents that overlap and sometimes contradict each other. This makes it all but impossible to enforce the rules that are meant to result in development that achieves the vision set out in the Comprehensive Plan.

The different eras in which plans and regulations were adopted also present significant challenges. The City's Comprehensive Plan, originally adopted in 1989 and amended significantly in 2001, emphasizes development that is clustered into centers and connected by multimodal corridors. However, many of the City's land use and transportation regulations, which are supposed to implement the Comprehensive Plan, were adopted prior to its most recent amendments and tend to result in auto-oriented, suburban development. Despite countless amendments, the City's Comprehensive Zoning Code contains zones largely unchanged since its adoption in 1975. The City has developed many additional standalone documents to help regulate land development in the City, including the Subdivision Ordinance, and the Development Process Manual (DPM), which sets standards for streets and other public infrastructure. Despite good intentions and best efforts, inconsistencies and overlaps have never been addressed on a comprehensive scale as each document has been developed.

On top of these city-wide land and development regulations, the City has also adopted a system of ranked plans to address the character and challenges of smaller geographic areas. In order to create and enhance special places and districts with distinct character throughout the city, more than 40 Sector Development Plans have been adopted over the years, establishing goals, policies, regulations, and special use or overlay zoning for small areas. Overlay zones have also been used to regulate the scale and character of development along certain corridors and in some historic areas. These sector plans and overlay zones have boundaries that overlap in many places and rules and policies that sometimes contradict each other, making it hard to understand what can and should be built – for property owners, neighbors, and Planning staff. The resulting variation of current development regulations results in inconsistencies in implementation and enforcement and confusion for City staff, developers, businesses, property owners, and residents.

Will my property be rezoned?

The final stage of this project will involve establishing modern, context-sensitive zoning city-wide. It is not anticipated that new zoning will significantly change permissive land uses from what is currently allowed. In commercial areas, it may establish new permitted uses, such as residential, depending on the context. The timing and nature of any changes to zoning will be analyzed and discussed fully with all stakeholders.

How will the public be able to participate?

The consultant team hired to assist the City with this project will work with staff to design a robust public outreach and participation process for these updates. This process will include private and public stakeholders, as well as relevant City and County departments. A key objective of this effort will be to develop zoning that benefits and protects neighborhoods, while encouraging the revitalization of commercial areas.

We expect the project will officially kick off in early 2015, at which time the public meeting schedule and strategy will be discussed with stakeholders.

What about areas of the City with Sector Development Plans?

The City has more than 40 sector plans. Many establish zoning, but some only include policies and goals. Some were created by large private developers who built the communities many years ago, and the plans are no longer relevant.

One of the key goals of this project is to apply a single set of zoning tools to as much of the City as possible. Consolidating the rules that guide development will help everyone understand what can and should be built and where. Zoning strategies and tools will be designed to be tailored for the protection or creation of special places, districts and corridors envisioned by the various Sector Development Plans and the Comprehensive Plan. Good ideas and zoning strategies in Sector Plans may be extended throughout the City or to other areas with similar character and challenges. Unique vision, goals, and policies might be better enforced if incorporated into one main policy document – the Comprehensive Plan.

Updating the Comprehensive Plan will provide a key opportunity to re-examine the capital projects identified in Sector Plans to see which ones are still relevant and should be recommended for future capital funding cycles.

How long will this project take?

This project will be completed in stages and is expected to take between 2 and 4 years.

How much will this project cost?

The City has currently appropriated \$1.5 million for this effort in Fiscal Year 2015. Any additional funding needs will be addressed in future fiscal years.

Who do I contact for more information?

While the City is soliciting consultants to respond to the Request for Proposals, the Purchasing Division is the sole point of contact for any questions related to this project. Please contact Viola Cunningham: 505-768-3340 or vcunningham@cabq.gov.