IV.

Transportation and Street Design

Introduction

North Fourth Street is a major street serving the North Valley. It extends north from Mountain Road near downtown, through the portion of the Valley within the City of Albuquerque, continuing through the Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque and the unincorporated portion of Bernalillo to Alameda. Over time, North Fourth Street has functioned as both a local street connecting a grid of arterial and collector cross streets as well as a major transportation route in and out of Albuquerque.

Today the street serves as major route for commuters, local residents and business interests. It is in need of repair, reinvestment and redesign to initiate its long-term transition into a corridor that serves auto and transit-accessible commercial needs as well as providing a pleasant and safe environment for local residents and pedestrians. This section of the plan describes how the reinvestment should be guided.

Vision for Redesigning North Fourth Street

Redesign and reconstruct North Fourth Street to improve safety, aesthetics, and functionality for both pedestrians and motorists along its entire length; and optimize public transportation service; and maintain four lanes of vehicular traffic from I-40 to Solar Road.

Existing Conditions and Issues

The actual design and construction of improvements to North Fourth Street are integral to development of the entire area. However, the programming of improvements should be based upon a full understanding of the barriers to the corridor's redevelopment. The June 2006 Draft North Fourth Street Rank III Corridor Plan identified major issues that remain problematic, some of which are described below. However, additional input from area leaders identified a

framework to implement reconstruction of the street, tied to private redevelopment together with public investment and on-going public involvement.

Findings of the 2006 Study

The findings of the North Fourth Street Redevelopment Study include the following:

Traffic volume varies along the approximately four-mile stretch of North Fourth Street considered by this plan. According to 2005 figures from the Mid Region Council of Governments (MRCOG), traffic flow varies from 9,000 vehicle trips per day to 28,000 trips per day depending on what portion of the street the counts were taken. They were lowest on the southern end and highest at Griegos. However, overall traffic had not increased substantially on North Fourth Street from 1994 to 2004.

West Side traffic contributes approximately 50% of the vehicles on North Fourth Street according to MRCOG. The agency's modeling analysis that was generated at a network level estimates that West Side traffic is southbound in morning peak traffic hours and northbound in the afternoon peak hours. Crossings occur equally between the Montano and Alameda Boulevard bridges.

North Fourth Street and North Second Street are "paired streets" that are relatively close to each other. Their connectivity allows drivers to choose one or the other to reach the same destination. The paired streets carry roughly the same volume of traffic north of I-40 even though the capacity of North Second Street is greater.

Turn lanes and on-street parking vary along the corridor. Four moving lanes are available north of I-40 and two lanes exist south of I-40.

Key Conditions

Other conditions found on North Fourth Street are:

1. Some sidewalks are crumbling or not even paved
2. Sidewalk links are missing along the corridor and on a number of side streets in adjoining neighborhoods
3. Obstructions in sidewalks include power poles and other utility installations
4. ADA compliance issues exist due to obstructions in sidewalks and crosswalks

Curbs are broken and crumbling in many places along the street

The sidewalk is not ADA compliant and the foundation is crumbling.

The location of the utility poles makes pedestrian access virtually impossible.

In some instances, the varying widths of the street itself are a problem. The rights-of-way widths are as little as 55 feet in some areas and as wide as 200 feet in others. As a result, some sidewalks are only a few feet wide and/or obstructed in many blocks. In other areas, the street may provide greater capacity than necessitated for vehicular traffic creating the possibility of increased speeding violations and traffic accidents.

Additionally, both sides of the street have several driveway pads, which can make it hazardous for cars to enter and exit the street. Also, the driveway pads slope at varying slopes and are of differing widths causing pedestrians to walk on uneven surfaces for some distance. At best, the surface of the street and sidewalk is inconsistent adding to a sense of unpredictability for pedestrians.

Public feedback about the conditions outlined above resulted in a process to correct the problems. Paramount was the decision that a set of value statements should be adopted to guide the street's design and construction. Secondly, additional data and information was needed, such as an engineering study, before additional programming of the street's reconstruction could occur.

Steps to Alleviate Conditions

To guide the street's reconstruction the following value statements should be adopted:

A. Design Principles

The redesign of North Fourth Street shall:

- Emphasize and ensure the safety of all street users, including pedestrians, motorists, transit riders and trucks
- Create a highly walkable, livable and distinctive place within Albuquerque
- Create a roadway friendly to various forms of transportation and commerce
- Provide a supportive environment for urban revitalization and private investment conducive to high-quality, convenient access for vehicular traffic and parking
- Enable high-quality, time-competitive, reliable and safe public transportation service
- Enable high-quality, convenient access for vehicular traffic and parking
- Ensure that local businesses can continue to ship and receive deliveries by truck
- Maximize opportunities for landscaping throughout the corridor

B. Design Parameters

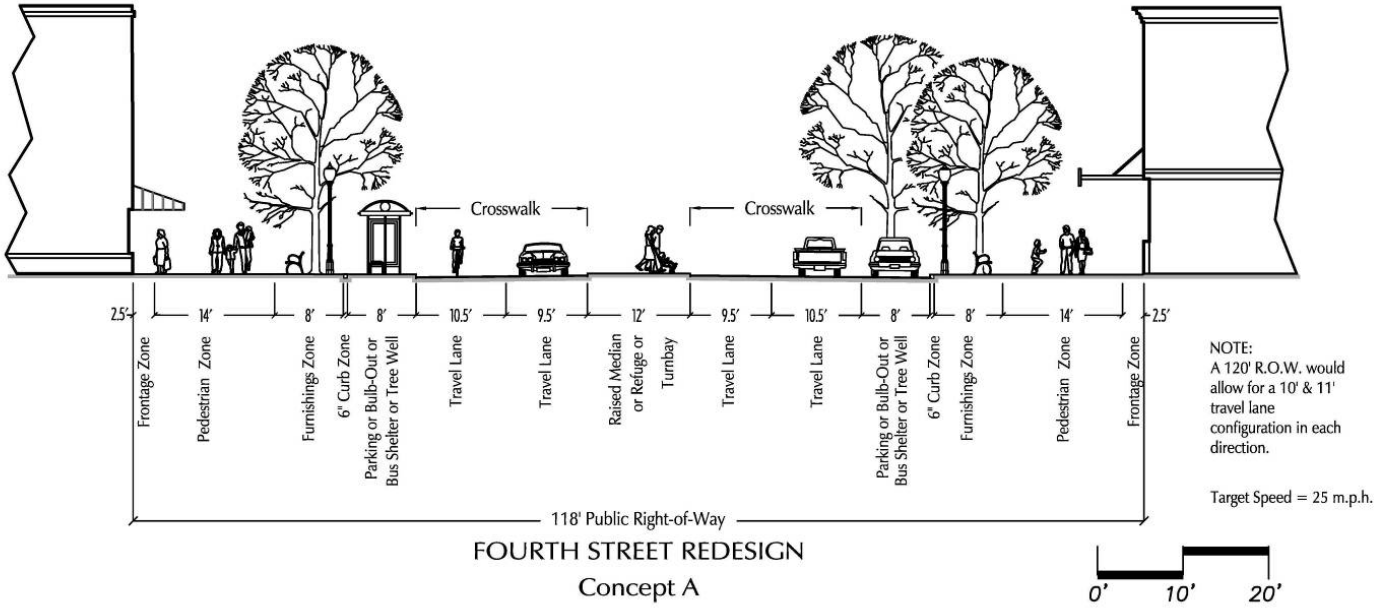
The North Fourth Street Corridor Plan recognizes the differing conditions along the corridor. Opportunities to enhance the street for pedestrians should be programmed using the following design parameters in the public right-of-way from I-40 to Solar:

1. Maintain four lanes of traffic and sidewalks on both sides meeting ADA requirements. Within the areas of limited ROW, inside traffic lanes may be narrowed to allow for safety and pedestrian enhancements

2. Create the very best pedestrian environment and automobile/transit access with four lanes of traffic north of I-40 and two lanes of traffic south of I-40
3. Increase the Right-of-Way (ROW) to add sidewalks wider than ADA requirements including buffers
4. Widen the Right-of-Way (ROW) where necessary by acquiring property and/or negotiating easements
5. Increase the ROW to add landscaped medians, on-street parking, pedestrian crossing refuges, other pedestrian enhancements, and turn bays

C. Design Standards

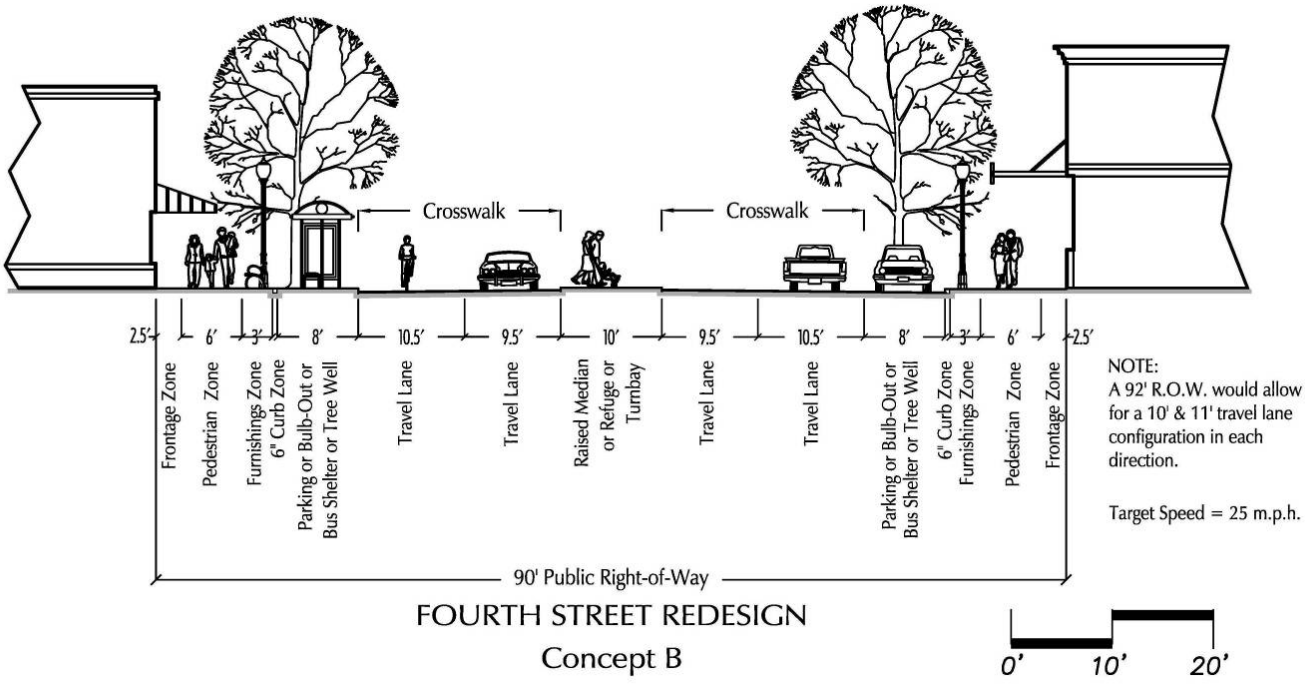
1. Reconstruct both sides of the street to create a streetscape consistent with the following minimum design elements (See Concept A below):



Frontage zone (2.5')
Pedestrian zone (14')
Furnishing zone (8')
Curb zone (.5')
Parking or Bus Shelter or Bulb-out zone (8') Including tree wells where possible
2 Travel Lanes (10.5' outside and 9.5' inside each)
Raised Median/Turn-Lane/Refuge (12')

The minimum ROW required would be 118'

Optionally, where necessary, the following variance may apply (See Concept B below):



Pedestrian zone (6')
Furnishing zone (3')
Raised Median/Turn-Lane/Refuge (10')

The minimum ROW required would be 90'

2. Construct safe and highly visible pedestrian crossings, approximately every 1/8-mile
3. Install pairs of local bus stops approximately every 1/8 mile
4. Install Rapid Ride stops at major transfer points and development nodes
5. Bury power lines on both sides of the street or route to new utility ROW
6. Provide pedestrian-scaled street lighting along the entire length of North Fourth Street

7. Create greater connectivity to adjacent side streets including providing circle-back routes in the first block off of North Fourth Street
8. Allow on-street parking to substitute for allowable off-street parking; allow and encourage shared parking and minimize curb cuts
9. Provide left-turn breaks and left-turn lanes in medians. Consult fully with adjacent owners about median and median break placement
10. Provide significant landscaping in medians with pedestrian refuges
11. Install pedestrian shade structures and low water use trees at frequent intervals without interfering with signage
12. Ensure that landscaping is high-quality, meets "green" standards and is sustainable
13. Recognize that Fourth Street south of I-40 holds distinctly different development opportunities than the area north of I-40

Recommendations

An important element of the street's reconstruction is the requirement that an engineering study of the entire corridor be conducted. An initial engineering study should encompass at least 30% of the requirements for complete construction documents and adopt the Design Principles, Parameters and Standards outlined in this chapter. The study will aid in the further design and reconstruction of the street, as implementation phases are planned.

Engineering Study

The engineering study shall:

- Evaluate any conflicting parameters and design standards and suggest alternatives
- Explore options to modify the roadway to avoid condemnation costs
- Consider, in areas of limited ROW; that inside traffic lanes may be narrowed to allow for adequate pedestrian amenities

- Review roadway alignment and recommend where appropriate obtaining additional ROW necessary to construct improvements; also evaluate the modification of the roadway alignment to improve traffic safety
- Institute fast track permitting and inspections processes for projects conforming to the design overlay
- Prioritize and implement "catalyst development" projects in several locations
- Provide incentives for and explore creative ROW acquisition strategies

Planning and Construction

The engineering design and construction of the street should include significant public input and involvement. A steering committee should be formed to guide the study and the selection of a contractor that would include abutting property owners and representatives of the neighborhoods as well as involving the broader public through design workshops or charrettes.

The City should work in tandem with existing and proposed private development on the parcels fronting Fourth Street as opportunities for demonstration projects emerge.

- An Access Plan should be created during construction to minimize business disruption. This phase should incorporate timelines with incentives and penalties in the construction contracts for Fourth Street's reconstruction.
- The City should prioritize a capital plan with a budget and timeline to implement the redevelopment of the corridor.
- The planning and construction phase should involve exploring opportunities for the City and State to pay for public ROW improvements, as well as cost sharing between the City and property owners for improvements located outside the ROW.