

# International District Sector Development Plan DRAFT December 2012



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# Chapter 1

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## introduction

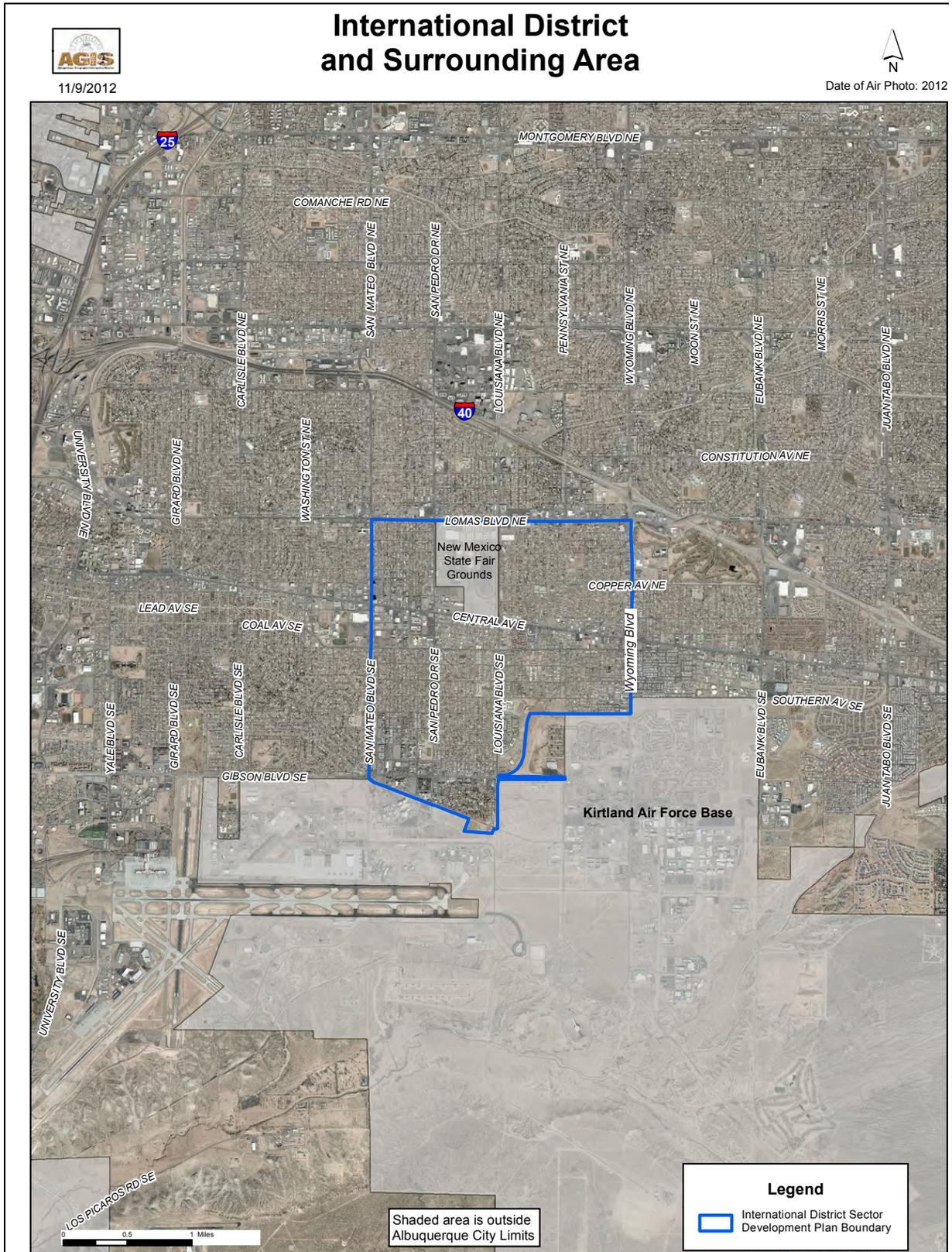


Figure 1.0: Vicinity map

## I. Executive Summary

The International District Sector Development Plan, hereinafter referred to as the “Plan”, was initiated in 2010 by the Albuquerque City Council at the request of several area neighborhoods. The community’s request for a Plan focused on two issues: A) general concerns for health and safety related issues facing the population within the Plan area, including the Plan area’s significantly higher rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, criminal activity, and pedestrian and bicycle accidents, and B) the interest in using land use and transportation tools to help address these issues and support the revitalization of the area designated in 2009 as the “International District” by City Council and State legislation.

The request for a Plan was followed by a two-year-long planning process which resulted in the development of a consolidated community vision with supporting goals and policies and the regulatory tools and strategies to implement them. In addition to the goals and objectives developed during the community participation process, the Plan addresses and implements adopted City plans and policies, including the Albuquerque/Bernalillo Comprehensive Plan, the Near Heights Metropolitan Redevelopment Plans, as well as the recommendations of other City and County commissioned studies and conceptual plans, including the Zuni Road Study, the Health Impact Assessment and existing sector development plans (La Mesa, Trumbull) for parts of the International District.

**The Plan was developed based on the extensive community planning work conducted in the past few years to assess the health issues and opportunities in the Plan area.** For over two decades, the International District has been on the radar of health organizations as an area with critical health issues, resulting in a “healthy communities” mandate for the area. This Plan builds on that assessment by acknowledging the shortcomings related to the establishment of a healthy community with respect to the area’s existing zoning and transportation infrastructure and introduces the following tools to guide redevelopment within the International District:

1. New zones with tailored development standards to encourage the creation of appropriately scaled **complete neighborhoods** and streets for key locations within the Plan area,
2. Transportation recommendations for strategic roadway improvements within the Plan area to support the development of **complete streets** and neighborhoods, and finally,
3. Projects that work to support the community goals of the establishment of complete and healthy neighborhoods within the International District.



**Complete Neighborhoods.** A neighborhood that has safe and convenient access to multiple modes of transportation (including walking), housing for people at different income levels and stages of life, and serves most of the daily needs of its inhabitants within a quarter to half mile walking radius.

**Complete Streets.** Road networks that are safer, more livable and welcoming to everyone. The design and operation of the entire roadway considers all users -- motorists, bicyclists, public transportation vehicles and riders, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities (National Complete Streets Coalition).

## II. Purpose of the Plan

The intent of this Plan is to provide a regulatory framework to support and promote the overall health of residents and businesses within the area defined by Lomas Boulevard, Wyoming Boulevard, San Mateo Boulevard and Kirtland Air Force Base. As a Rank 3 plan, the Plan provides both policy guidance and regulations for development within its boundaries. It establishes zoning, land use and design regulations, and contains policies that have been developed to protect the unique conditions of the community. The Plan also provides recommendations for improvements to public services and facilities, such as transportation, drainage, parks, community centers and open space. **The Plan recognizes that, while there are many similar characteristics throughout the International District, the area is comprised of distinct neighborhoods, each with unique issues and opportunities.** The Plan builds upon a comprehensive community planning process which identified the community's health and safety as priorities.

As such, the Plan identifies the following strategies to implement the goals and policies of the Plan:

- Create a live/work International Marketplace District
- Foster "complete streets"
- Create a strong multi-modal transportation system
- Develop spaces for gathering, active and passive recreation and events

The conceptual strategy map (Figure 1.1) highlights focused improvements that aim to increase neighborhood connectivity, provide access to community goods and services, and expand existing public amenities. The location for improvements are based on community input and availability of existing and appropriate infrastructure.

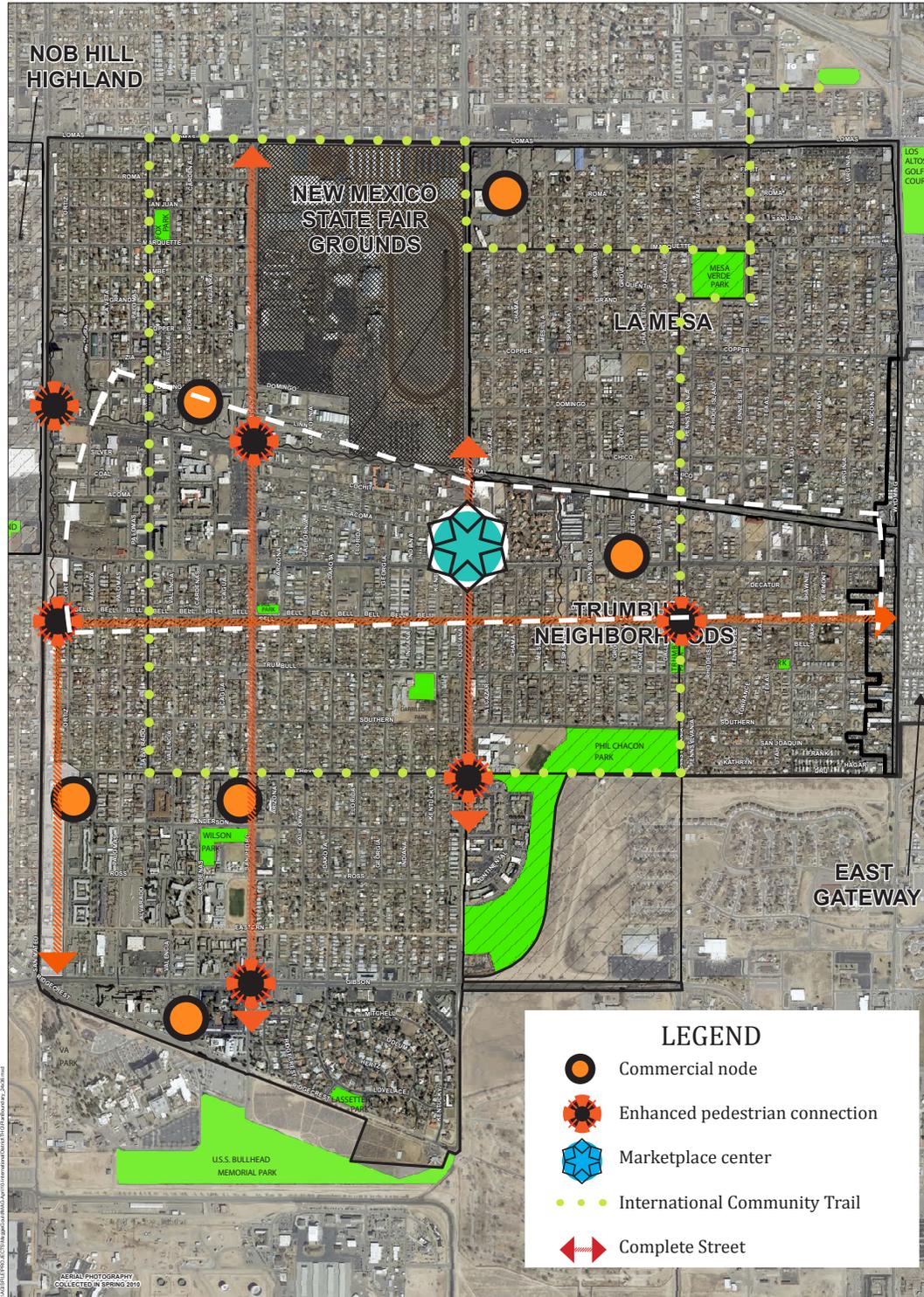


Figure 1.1: Conceptual strategy map

### III. Plan Area Overview

The International District Sector Development Plan area encompasses approximately 2,489 acres and is generally contained within the boundaries of San Mateo Boulevard, Lomas Boulevard, Wyoming Boulevard, and the Sunport/Kirtland Airforce Base. The Plan area includes the Fair West, La Mesa, Trumbull Village, Elder Homestead, South San Pedro and Siesta Hills neighborhoods. Like many communities in Albuquerque, neighborhoods in the International District are automobile oriented, with residential land uses segregated from commercial goods and services. **The existing land use patterns and zoning of the area, typical of post World War II development in Albuquerque, have influenced this automobile dependency and have had an adverse impact on the public health and the general stability of the community.**

The Plan area is primarily residential with commercial and office uses located along its key corridors. The residential neighborhoods in the Plan area were established in the 1950's and range from established single family areas to some of the highest density housing in Albuquerque with a very high turnover rate. The commercial corridors suffer from disinvestment and economic decline. The District's commercial core between San Mateo and San Pedro Boulevards, once envisioned as the original location for "Uptown," has had an historic economic struggle due to its proximity to and direct competition with Uptown Center (Winrock Mall, built in 1961, and Coronado Mall, built in 1965) which is located approximately 2 miles to the north. **As a result, large areas of commercial land, originally envisioned for commerce, have remained vacant or have developed with a wide range of non-commercial uses including light manufacturing, warehousing, office and residential.**

**The Plan area is rich in culture and includes a diverse, international population.** The area is home to a wide variety of ethnic shops, restaurants and businesses that serve local residents as well as the greater Albuquerque area. The New Mexico State Fairgrounds is located in the center of the Plan area, home to the annual State Fair and community special events. A regional flea market at the fairgrounds attracts thousands every weekend.

Prior to the establishment of the International District Sector Development Plan area, two of the Plan's neighborhoods, La Mesa and Trumbull Village, had adopted sector development plans in 1976 and 1981 respectively. **The La Mesa and Trumbull Village Sector Plans plans were primarily policy documents with social action plans, providing a vehicle to connect community issues with appropriate public agencies. They do not contain zoning regulations and capital implementation strategies as modern sector development plans do.** With the adoption

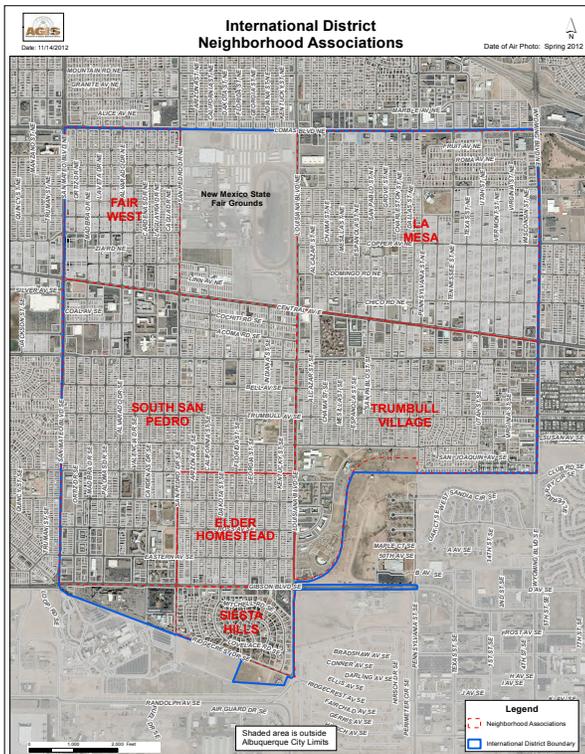


Figure 1.2: International District Neighborhood Association map.

of this Plan, these plans are repealed. See [the appendix \\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](#) for elements of the former sector development plans which have been incorporated into this Plan.

## IV. Plan Organization

The Plan is organized into the following six sections and X appendices:

**Section 1, Introduction**, summarizes the Plan’s policy context and identifies key findings and elements of the Plan.

**Section 2, Goals and Policies**, establishes the rationale and purpose of the changes proposed by the Plan.

**Section 3, Regulatory Plan**, establishes four new zones that regulate lot layout, building form, frontage and use, building articulation, parking, landscaping, lighting and signage in designated mixed use districts and along key transit corridors; modifies uses within the International District to support the goals and policies of the Plan; and rezones properties within the Plan area for the purpose of aligning zoning with established land uses and allowing additional opportunities for uses within the Plan area which support a healthy community.

**Section 4, Implementation: Strategies and Projects**, recommends projects and actions to establish complete streets and healthy neighborhoods within the Plan area.

**Section 5, Community Concerns, Neighborhood Issues and Opportunities**, outlines and analyzes key community concerns and provides potential strategies to address areas of concern.

**Section 6, Existing Conditions and Opportunities**, includes the analysis and general data collection which was used to develop the policies, strategies and implementation tools of the Plan.

## V. The Planning Process

### A. Public Planning Process

The public planning process began with a public kickoff meeting on July 8<sup>th</sup> 2010. More than ten facilitated public meetings and workshops were conducted in late 2010 and early 2011. In addition, the Planning Team conducted surveys, both in paper form and online, in order to assess the community’s perception regarding its economic and physical health, and issues relating to land use and code enforcement. The Planning Team also met with local business owners to solicit their ideas and concerns about the community. (See Appendix x for more details on the planning process).

As a result of these meetings and nearly two years of data collection, site visits, and analysis, the Planning Team developed and presented



Photo: Public Meeting

potential planning strategies at three public workshops in April, August and September of 2011. Zoning and transportation strategies were presented to the public and reviewed in two open houses held in 2012.

The Planning Team has also worked in conjunction with City agencies, Albuquerque Public Schools, Expo New Mexico, STEPS (Southeast Heights Entrepreneurial Leadership Team), the International District Healthy Communities Coalition and Bernalillo County to coordinate planning efforts.

## **B. Recent Planning Efforts**

The following planning efforts were concurrent with or occurred just prior to the development of the Plan. The results of these efforts inform the goals, policies and strategies of this Plan. For additional information on these efforts, please see Appendix N.

**Metropolitan Redevelopment Designation.** In 2000, portions of the International District were designated as The Near Heights Metropolitan Redevelopment Area, noting deteriorated structures and sites, unsafe conditions, impractical planning and platting, and low levels of commercial activity. In 2010, the redevelopment area was expanded. (See Figure 6.10 for designated MRAs within the Plan area)

**International District Designation.** In 2009, the area was designated the “International District” through a joint memorial by the State, County and City and a City Resolution in an effort to capitalize on the unique concentration of diverse cultures living and operating businesses here. This designation is an essential step in the rebranding of the area to combat historic negative perceptions and continues to foster the promotion of the International District as a unique destination in the city.

**Health Impact Assessment (HIA).** “**The International District Health Impact Assessment: Central Avenue in Albuquerque’s International District, Health in All Policies.**” The Plan area was identified by the Bernalillo County Public Health Department as having populations with disproportionate health issues including high rates of diabetes and heart disease as compared to Albuquerque as a whole. As a result, in 2010, Bernalillo County sponsored a Health Impact Assessment for a portion of the plan area. A summary of the HIA can be found in Appendix C.

**Zuni Road Study.** In 2011, the City of Albuquerque contracted with Vector Engineering to conduct a study of Zuni Road. The study involved public meetings, data collection and field surveys and proposes a “Complete Street” road reconfiguration for Zuni Road that includes bike lanes, pedestrian and landscape improvements.

**The International Community Trail.** Bernalillo County Public Works, in coordination with City of Albuquerque Department of Municipal Development, prepared a scoping report for implementing the International Trail located along roadways in the International District of Albuquerque. Trail corridors extend approximately 14 miles (See Figure 1.3). The intent of the trail is to provide better pedestrian and bicycle connections from surrounding neighborhoods to public facilities, such as parks, schools, health facilities, senior and community centers, and other destinations.

The trail alignment was identified by the local non-profit ACHIEVE. The organization received funding in early 2009 from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to prepare an Action Guide, “Places for Physical Activity – Facilitating Development of a Community Trail and Promoting Its Use to Increase Physical Activity among Youth and Adults.” This initiative is designed to reduce barriers to physical activity by creating new or modifying existing places for physical activity, and to promote their use.

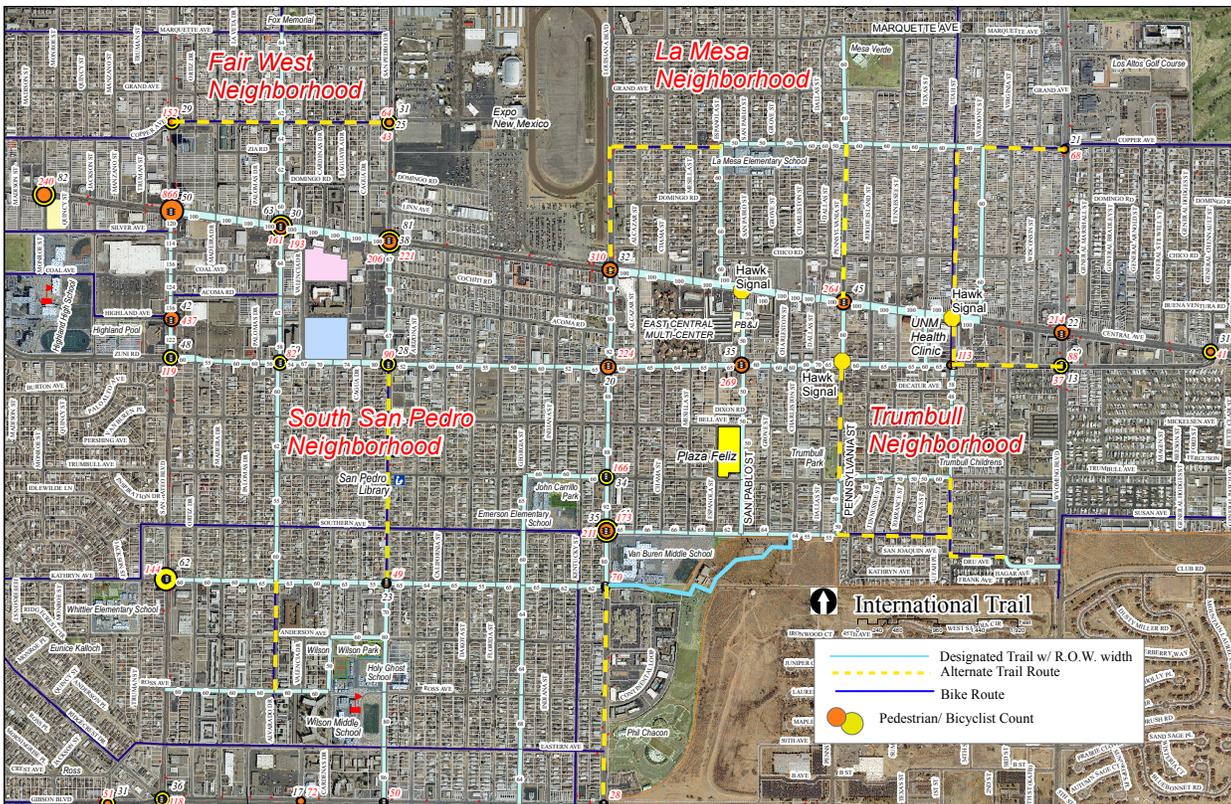


Figure 1.3. International Community Trail Route.

**“Sector Planning, Land Use and Health Promotion in the International District: A Workbook for Community Advocates.”**

This document was developed by UNM School of Architecture and Planning faculty as a companion to a two-session training on sector planning for health sponsored by Saint Joseph’s Community Health Services through the Southeast Heights Health Collaborative (SEHHC).

**University of New Mexico, Advance Planning Studio Fall 2009, International District: Planning and Policy Recommendations.**

This document, developed by UNM Community & Regional Planning graduate students and faculty, contains recommendations based on data collected on district history, existing conditions and future wants and needs for the community as expressed by community members. Recommendations are based on improving community health and vitality in an existing urban environment. Community input was collected through community visioning meetings, focus groups and resulted in a set of goals, policies and recommendations regarding housing, land use, zoning, transportation, community and economic development, and the Expo New Mexico State Fairgrounds.