

II. Neighborhood Context

The Neighborhood Context section presents issues and opportunities with analysis and information on the past and present conditions of the area. More in-depth background material and community comments can be found in the appendix.

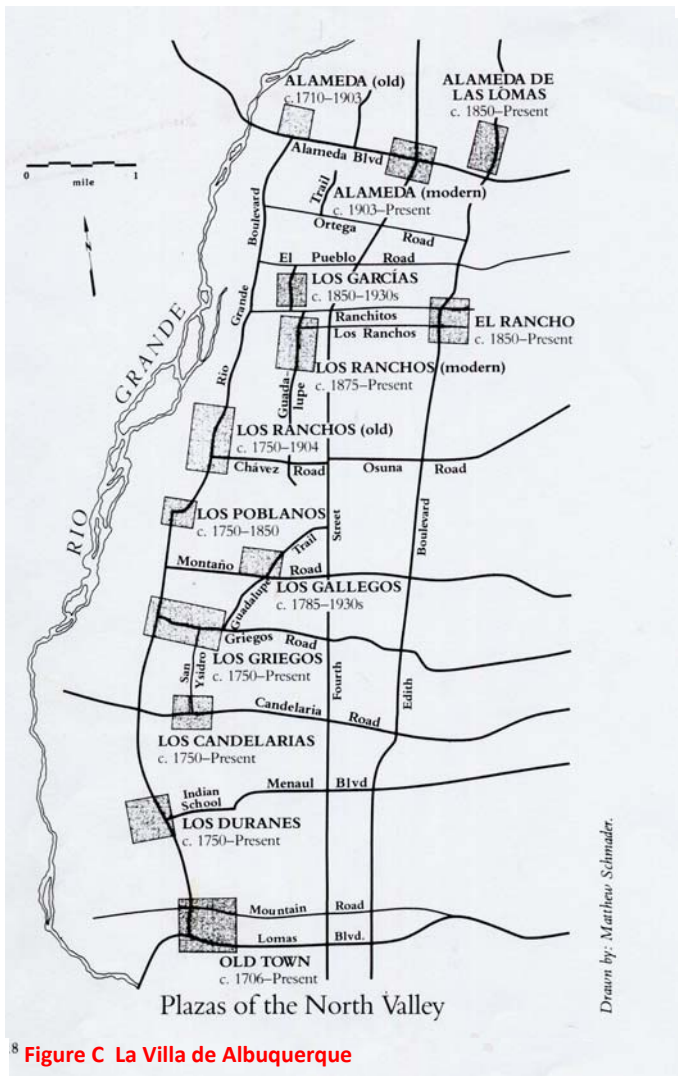
Los Duranes History [C7]

Puebloan people were farming the middle Rio Grande valley as early as 1200 – 1300 A.D. Beginning in the 1600's Spanish Colonists arrived in the valley, establishing farms and ranches in the *Rio Abajo*, but these early colonists were driven away with the Pueblo Revolt in 1680. The Spanish Colonists returned however, and in 1706, established a more permanent settlement, *La Villa de Albuquerque*. The *Villa* was the administrative and trading center for this portion of the Rio Grande valley.

La Villa de Albuquerque not only included the original settlement in what is today called “Old Town”, but also a string of outlying farms and ranches extending north. It is estimated that by the 1750's these

outlying agricultural settlements had developed distinct identities of their own. The closest to the Old Town area itself was *Los Duranes*, founded by the Duran family. The Spanish census in 1790 listed one hundred twenty people in twenty-seven families residents in the plaza of Los Duranes, 27 families.

The early census also indicated that Los Duranes was not a wealthy community. These early settlers were subsistence farmers who fed themselves and their families through their agricultural activities and often bartered or traded for other necessities. Eventually, an *acequia* was built to aid in the irrigation of the crops and the community established a traditional communal organization for maintenance of the ditches. Land ownership and settlement patterns were typical of other early Hispanic agricultural communities. Land was divided in long narrow strips called *linea* or long lots, which provided access to the sources of water for irrigation of the farmlands. This



⁸ Figure C La Villa de Albuquerque

II. Neighborhood Context

traditional pattern of land ownership and the visual imprint of this early agricultural landscape are still visible in Los Duranes today. The Los Duranes ditch still snakes north and south through the community. Fields, gardens, the occasional historic farmhouse and wandering narrow roads remain as evidence of this history.

The arrival of the railroad to the American Territory in 1880 brought with it changes in architectural fashion and building materials. These new influences were readily incorporated in the vernacular adobe building traditions throughout the greater Albuquerque area. By the turn of the twentieth century, pitched roofed buildings became as common as the flat roofed adobe buildings that had dominated the built landscape. The railroad also led to the establishment of the American Lumber Company sawmill in 1903, located in the today's Sawmill neighborhood, south and east of the Los Duranes community. The mill was within easy walking distance and provided residents new employment opportunities.

The establishment of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) and the draining of the Rio Grande floodplain had a significant impact on the landscape. The construction of dams, irrigation canals, drains and levees throughout the valley beginning in the 1930's allowed for the reclamation of large tracts of land in Los Duranes that were previously subject to regular flooding and otherwise unsuitable for residential use.



Before the construction of dams and levees, the Rio Grande would flood regularly. Destructive floods occurred several times a century. A series of floods in the late 1800's and early 1900's devastated the valley.

A 1927 MRGCD survey and land use map illustrates that residential buildings were still very limited in the early decades of the twentieth century. Houses and agricultural buildings were clustered along the Los Duranes ditch, and along Los Luceros, Montoya, Duranes Roads and what is now Rio Grande Boulevard. There was very little development west of the Los Duranes ditch.

There was little physical change overall to the built environment until after WWII. Los Duranes was outside city limits until a major portion of the neighborhood was annexed in 1951. The area lacked infrastructure, therefore the FHA program-based tract development that characterized other areas of Albuquerque was not possible. After WWII more residential development occurred as new home ownership programs became available. Despite the increase in residential construction, lots and fields

II. Neighborhood Context

were subdivided in a manner that allows one to still see the older fields and platting. Streets such as Los Luceros, Gabaldon, Montoya, Zickert and Rice bear the names of the owners of the large tracts of land.

Interviews with lifetime residents of Los Duranes have spoken of life in the community in the first half of the twentieth century. Like other Catholic communities in New Mexico, life centered on religion and family as it had for generations. Holidays and sacraments were celebrated at the chapel, which at one time held the entire congregation. Traditional cultural activities such as *los matachines* continued to be a part of life in Los Duranes.

In the 1960's, the community was divided physically by the construction of Interstate 40, which separated Los Duranes from Old Town. The construction of the highway resulted in the destruction of fields and homes.



The 1976 Los Duranes Sector plan identified the community as still rural in character and lower in average income than other parts of Albuquerque. By City standards, much of the housing was considered dilapidated and inferior. A housing rehabilitation program using Community Development funds provided grants and low interest loans to help upgrade many homes in the community. The sector plan also included goals calling for the maintenance of the rural character and diversity of open space. The

existing zoning was maintained, with most of the area zoned RA-2, a low-density agricultural/ residential zone.

Los Duranes has seen a steady increase in development since the 1970's. Its semi-rural atmosphere and location next to the Rio Grande bosque, the acequias, open fields, lush gardens and even the occasional livestock all contribute to its perception as a unique area, with multiple generations of families and many newcomers calling it home. It is a special place tucked away in the heart of the city, and residents want to preserve its character for their children and future generations to stay and live here, while also providing opportunities to increase the quality of their lives.

II. Neighborhood Context

The maps on the following pages show the transition of the neighborhood's land use trends from largely agricultural uses to residential and neighborhood commercial over the time period from 1935 to 1993.

~~Los Duranes is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Albuquerque. In 1706, the Duranes *acequia madre* or mother ditch, which traversed through the area along its 3 mile length, was established to aid in the irrigation of crops. In the mid-1790's, La Plaza de Señor San Jose de Los Duranes, as it was known then, was one of several small plazas along the Rio Grande north of Old Town. The Spanish census of 1790 counted 27 families in the plaza of Los Duranes, and by 1821, there were 2,547 residents living in Los Duranes.~~

~~There is an excellent historical overview of the neighborhoods roots and culture in "*A Brief History of Los Duranes*" (B. Schoonover, 2003, The Albuquerque Museum)~~

~~Due to its rural history, its location adjacent to the Rio Grande Bosque, the existence of acequias that continue to flow through the area, the lush residential gardens and the few remaining lots that still raise livestock, the neighborhood is perceived as a unique area, with multiple generations of families within the neighborhood and many newcomers calling it home. It is a special place in the midst of an urban city where its residents want to preserve its character for their children and future generations to stay and live here, while also providing opportunities to increase the quality of their lives.~~

Figure C: Flood of 1870

~~The following maps show the transition of the neighborhood's land use trends from largely agricultural uses to residential and neighborhood commercial over the time period from 1935 to 1993.~~

II. Neighborhood Context

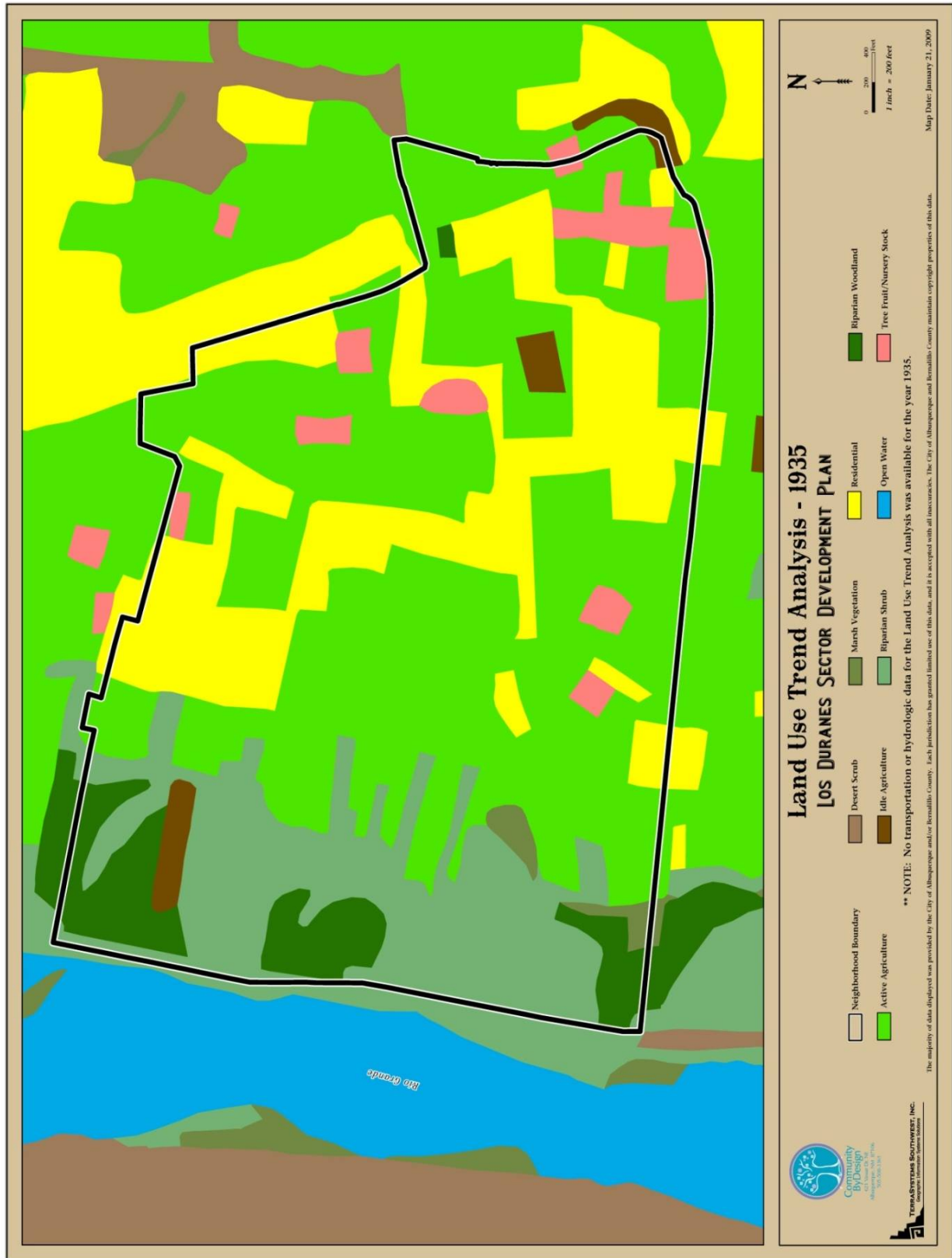


Figure D Land Use trend Analysis 1935

II. Neighborhood Context

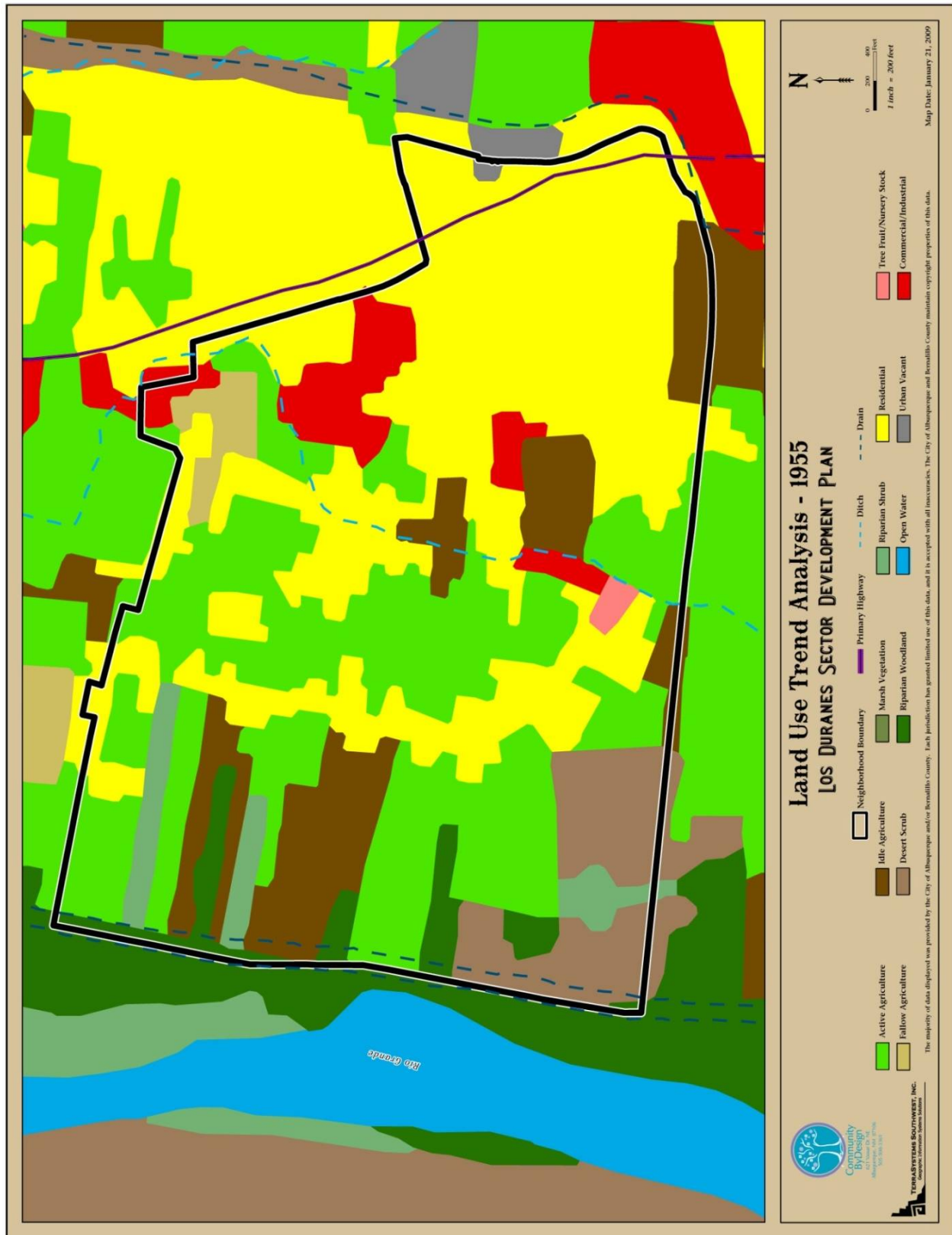


Figure E: Land Use trend Analysis 1955

II. Neighborhood Context

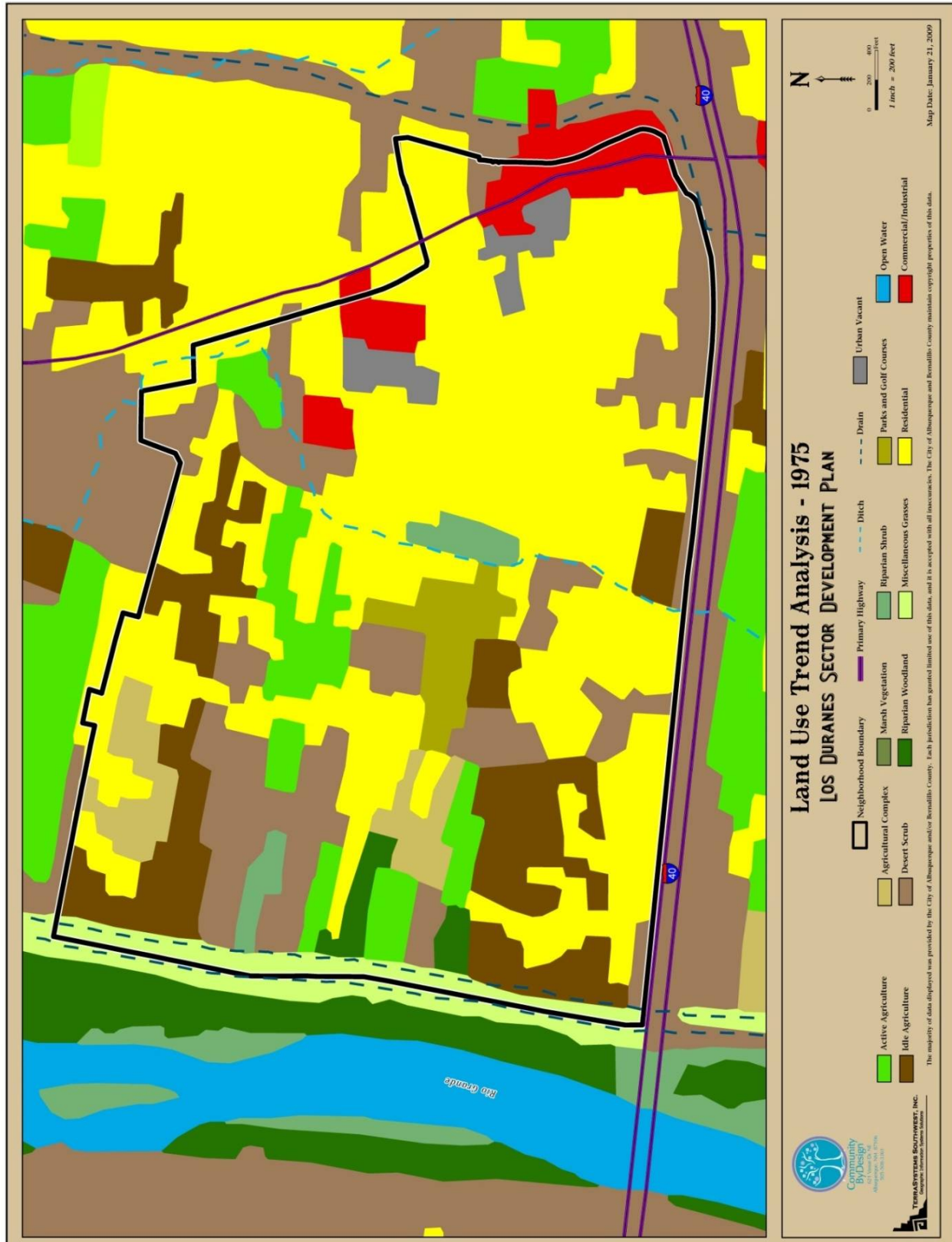


Figure F: Land Use Trend Analysis 1975

II. Neighborhood Context

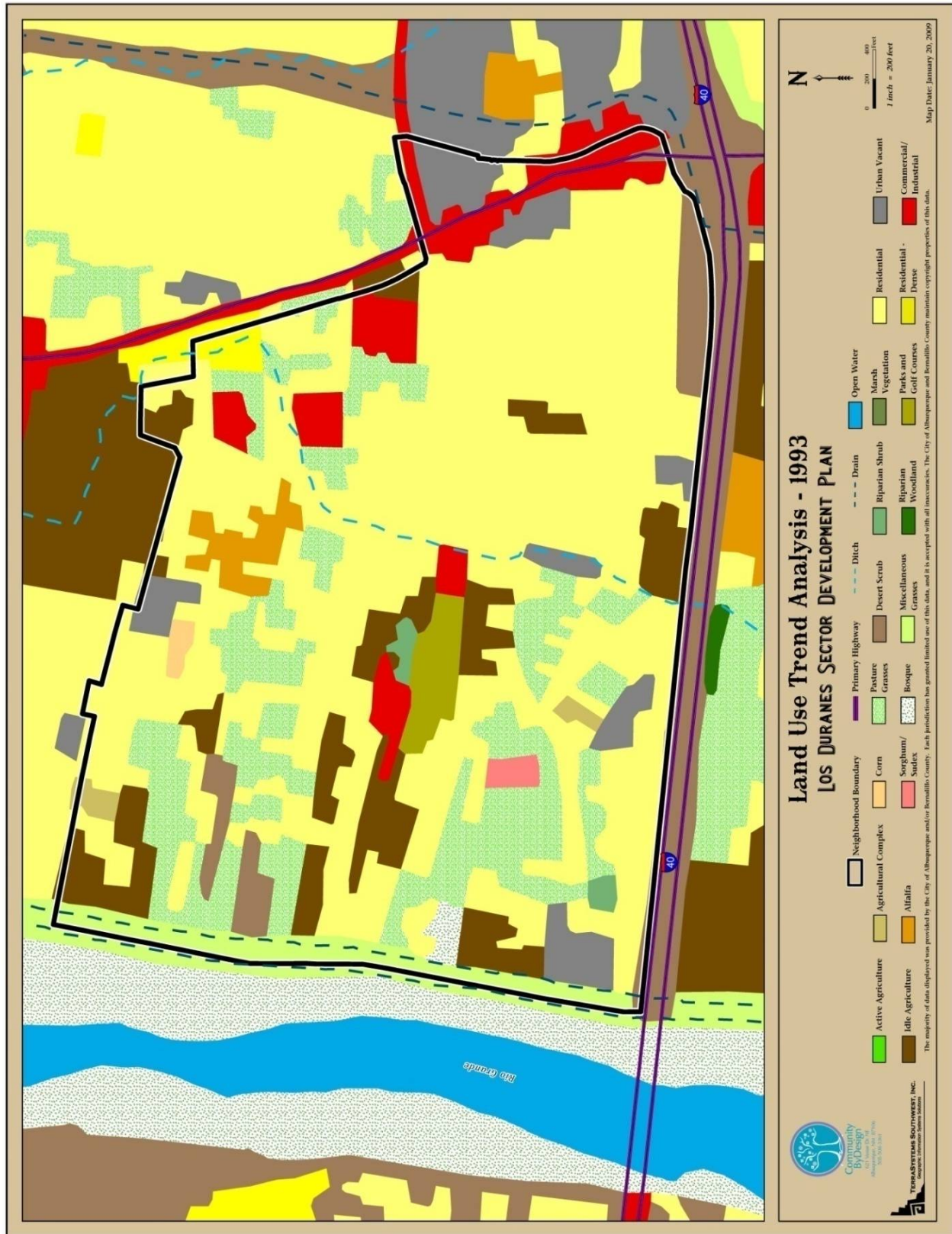


Figure G: Land Use Trend Analysis 1993

II. Neighborhood Context

Existing Land Use, Zoning & Development Patterns

The majority of the planning area consists of single family residential uses on variety of lot sizes and configurations resulting from the subdivision of agricultural land that was historically related to the acequia system.

County Area

The County area is generally west of Gabaldon Rd and consists primarily of residential development on large lots. Most of the area is designated by the Comprehensive Plan as a *Semi-Urban Area* with a smaller portion east of Gabaldon Rd being part of a larger contiguous area in the North Valley designated as an *Established Urban Area*. It is characterized by long, semi-rural residential lots fronting narrow dead-end streets running east/ west from Gabaldon to the easement that follows the Albuquerque Drain. Many parcels are over an acre and those with irrigation support small scale agricultural uses including raising horses, chickens and llamas. The majority of this area is zoned County A-1 which permits low density housing and agricultural uses on lots with a minimum of one acre. Cluster~~ed~~-housing is encouraged in the North Valley Area plan to allow higher residential density in exchange for dedication of open space and possible reduction of infrastructure and energy costs. Under the current County procedure, a request to develop cluster~~ed~~ housing requires an application for a Special Use Permit for a Planned Development Area (PDA) as in Section 18 of the Bernalillo County Zoning Ordinance (Special Use Permits). There are a few pockets of County R-1 zoning which allows higher density residential uses up to 3 dwelling units per acre while still allowing agricultural uses with limitations on livestock. Two properties in the County area have Special Use Permits that have allowed different uses and residential densities than the underlying A-1 zoning, including one for a trailer court and another for a single family dwelling and two mobile homes.

There are a few large parcels and several contiguous small vacant parcels that have the potential for clustered housing. However, due to impractical platting, which has resulted in long narrow lots, limited access and numerous owners, developing these parcels may prove difficult.

The neighborhood feels this area should remain rural in character and continue to provide a transition zone from the higher density development of the neighborhood core to the Rio Grande bosque and that clustered housing with appropriate standards is viewed as one strategy to preserve open space and enhance the rural character of this area.[C64]

II. Neighborhood Context



Figure H: View of Los Duranes looking west to the Rio Grande

There are a few large parcels and several contiguous small vacant parcels that have the potential for cluster housing. However, due to impractical platting, which has resulted in long narrow lots, limited access and numerous owners, developing these parcels may prove difficult.

The neighborhood feels this area should remain rural in character and continue to provide a transition zone from the higher density development of the neighborhood core to the Rio Grande bosque and that clustered housing with appropriate standards is viewed as one strategy to preserve open space and enhance the rural character of this area.

City Area

The area west of Gabaldon and north of Beach Rd includes properties in the City that are zoned RA-1 (Residential and Agricultural Zone, Semi-Urban Area) and RA-2 (Residential and Agricultural Zone).

East of Gabaldon Rd in the City portion of the plan area, residential development has occurred on smaller lots created from the subdivision of the long narrow agricultural lots. The lots have been platted to front a narrow set of dead-end streets, cul-de-sacs and private driveways. It is part of a larger contiguous area in the North Valley designated by the Comprehensive Plan as an *Established Urban Area*, which allows for a full range of urban land uses resulting in a gross density of five dwelling units per acre.

II. Neighborhood Context

Unlike in the majority of Established Urban Areas of Albuquerque, residential development occurs on a variety of lot sizes and configurations due to subdivisions that related to the acequia system, family transfers, access and frontage to public and private streets as well as responding to major roadways such as Rio Grande Boulevard and Interstate 40. This has created a unique pattern of narrow streets, alleys, cul-de-sacs and pathways. At the parcel level there is a variety of setbacks, landscape features and parking placements. Scattered throughout the area are large garden plots, small scale agricultural activities nurtured by the acequia system and home businesses. Many of the lots have accessory dwelling units and some have been configured to accommodate clustered housing. There are a few small multi-family apartment complexes and townhouse developments scattered throughout the neighborhood.

Most parcels in the neighborhood core are zoned RA-2 (Residential and Agricultural Zone) and are regulated by provisions in the Los Duranes Sector Development Plan (1976, amended 1981) , which allows residential and low intensity agricultural uses and affirms the right to build one residence on lots of record, regardless of size.

The RA-2 zone also allows for clustered housing developments using the Private Commons Development regulations. Generally, this results in a clustered housing pattern with a shared common open space set aside and allows a density of 4 units per acre on parcels with two or more acres. There are two areas in the neighborhood with R-1 (Residential Zone): a large cul-de-sac subdivision of 40 units in the center of the neighborhood and several blocks of standard lots fronting Lilac Ave., Rose Ave. and the eastern end of Floral Ave. There are also a few scattered townhouse developments with R-LT (Residential –Limited Townhouse Zone) zoning. The most recent is a large, higher density single-family residential development adjacent and parallel to Interstate 40. Lastly, there are a couple of clustered housing developments and multi-family apartment complexes with R-2 zoning on irregular lots that front on or have access to Rice Ave.

Within the core area of the neighborhood are several community facilities; two elementary schools, a vibrant community center with a park and a small Catholic church. One of the elementary schools, Montessori of the Rio Grande, a charter school, has SU-1 [for Private School](#) zoning. The other elementary school, Duranes Elementary is in the RA-2 zoning district, ~~but as~~ [Both are now](#) part of ~~part~~ the Albuquerque Public Schools system, [and is \[C2\]](#) exempt from city zoning regulations. The Los Duranes Community Center is an approved conditional use in the RA-2 zoning district. The San Jose Mission, which is part of the larger San Felipe de Neri Parish, is located on a large parcel with RA-2 zoning.

Fronting both sides of Rio Grande Blvd. are neighborhood scale commercial uses, such as offices, barber shops, convenience stores, restaurants and a few single family residences. The development in this area is primarily zoned C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial Zone) with additional design standards and guidelines prescribed in the Rio Grande Boulevard Corridor Plan and Design Overlay Zone adopted in 1989. Most of the development is residential in scale and even the newer office developments have followed historic

II. Neighborhood Context

architectural styles. Along Rio Grande Blvd., south of Indian School, the building styles are influenced by the proximity to Historic Old Town with the potential to make a tremendous visual impression on the many tourists and Albuquerque residents who travel on it to Old Town, the Rio Grande Nature Center and the rural North Valley.

East of the commercial development, one block in from Rio Grande and south of Indian School Rd are a few blocks with single family residences developed on standard city lots with R-1 zoning.

At the intersection of Rio Grande and Interstate 40 there is the potential for an urban commercial node due to large vacant and underdeveloped land, frontage on a designated Enhanced Transit Corridor and easy access to the Interstate. As stated by policy d under the Established Urban Areas section of the Comprehensive Plan, the location, intensity and design of new development shall respect existing neighborhood values as expressed in this sector plan and prescribed in the new LDSDP MUD 1 and 2 zoning districts.

The following maps illustrate existing land uses, zoning, parcel divisions and building footprints showing the unique and traditional settlement pattern of the neighborhood.

II. Neighborhood Context

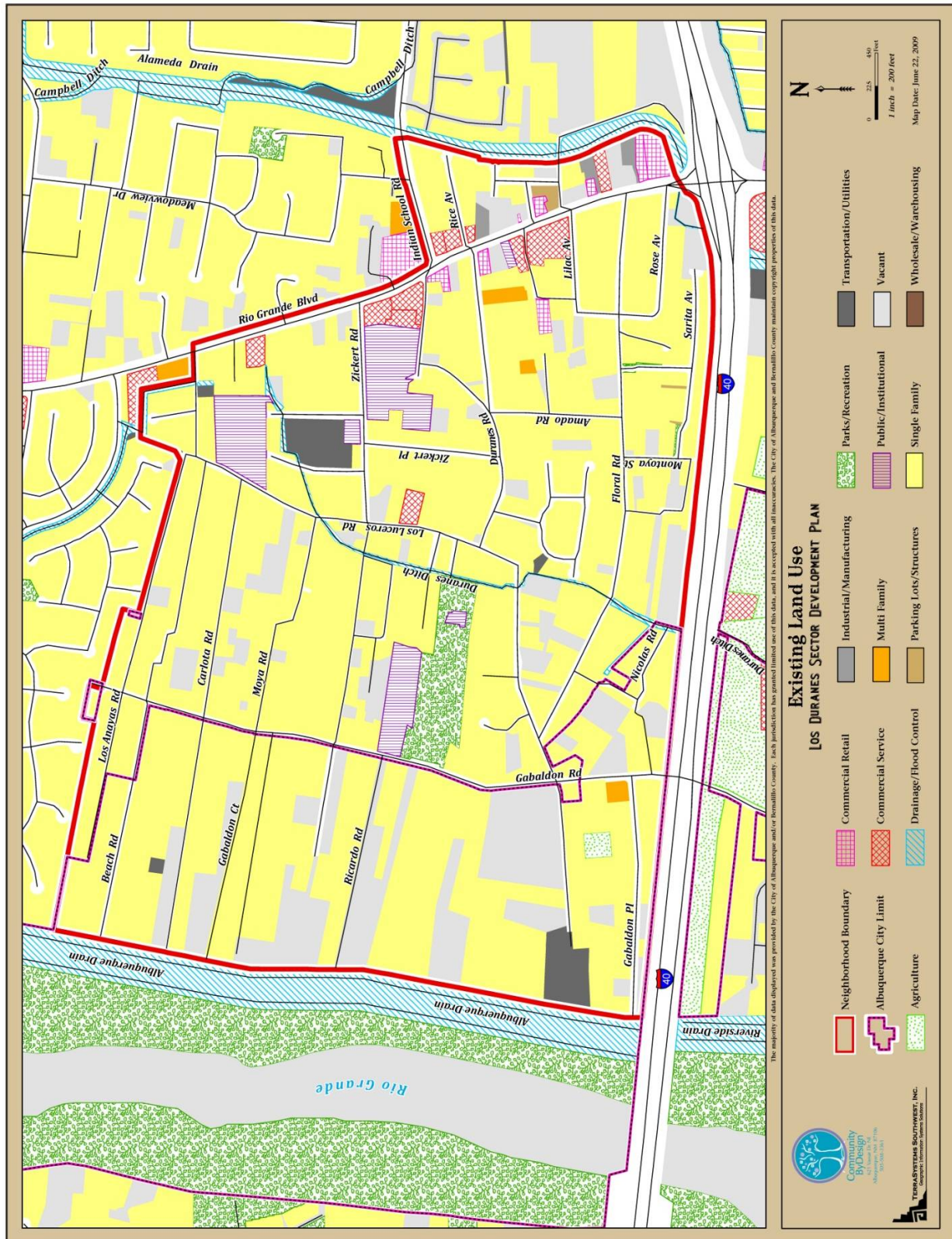
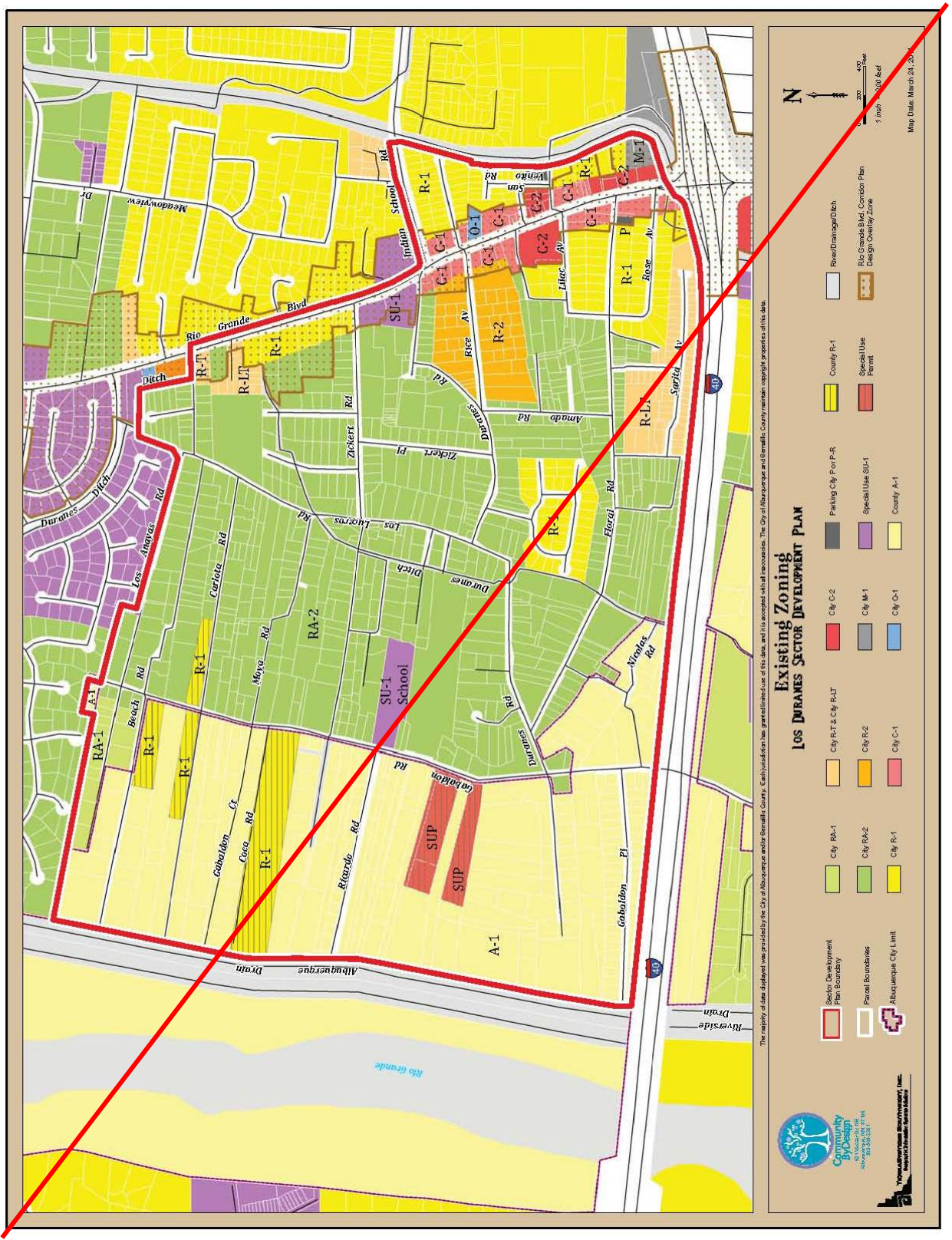


Figure I: Existing Land Use Map 2008 **MAP TO BE REVISED [C3]**

II. Neighborhood Context



~~Figure J: Existing Zoning Map 2008~~

II. Neighborhood Context

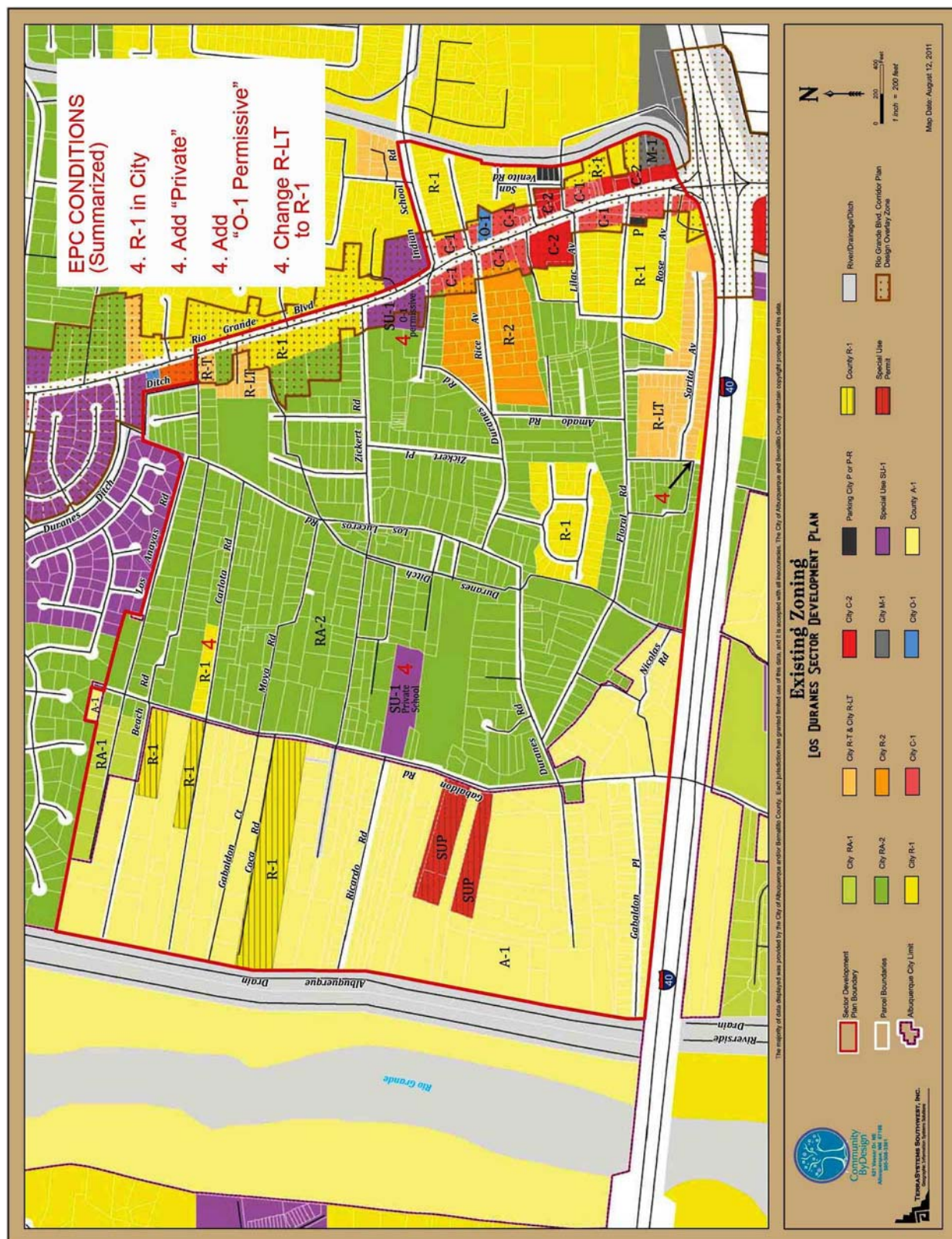


Figure J: Existing Zoning Map 2009

II. Neighborhood Context

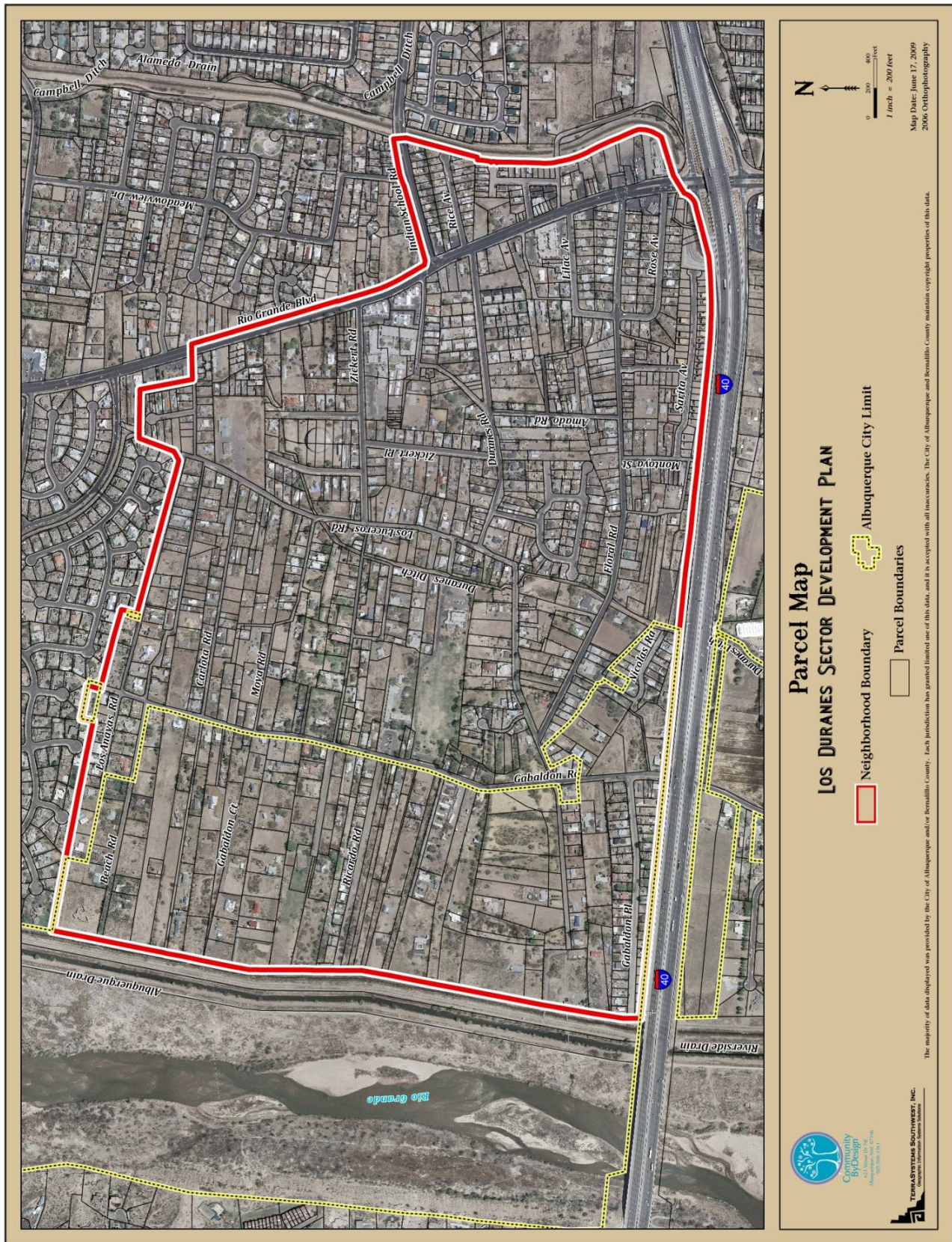


Figure K: Parcel Map 2009

III. Neighborhood Context

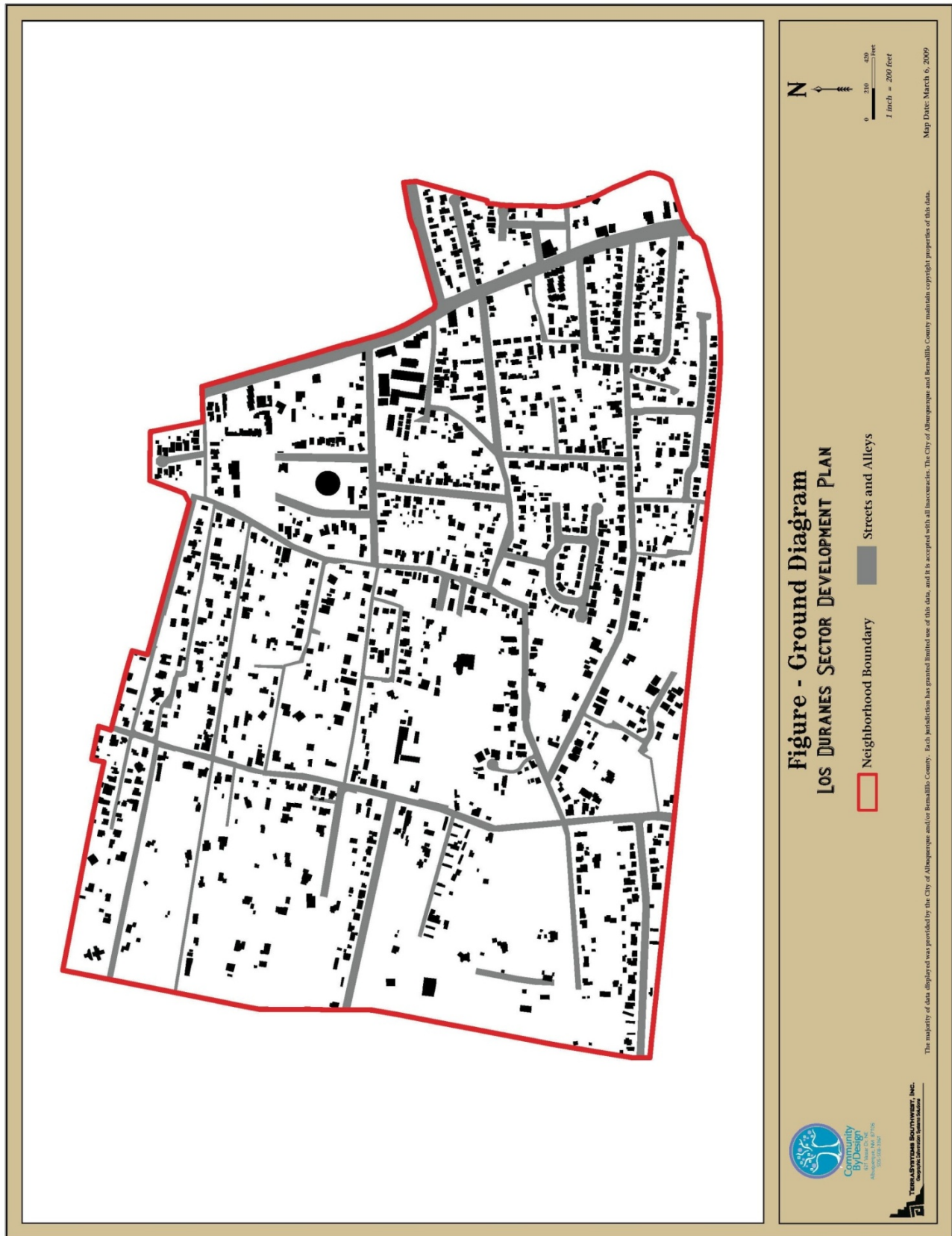


Figure L: Figure-Ground Diagram