

**East Gateway Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA)**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Community Meeting**  
**May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009, 6:00p.m.-7:30p.m.**  
**Minutes**

*“Leverage starts right here in the community.”*  
*Meeting Attendee*

**Planning Team in Attendance:**

Phyllis Taylor, Principal, Sites Southwest

Barbara Herrington, Planning Project Manager, Sites Southwest

Cynthia Borrego, City of Albuquerque Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency  
Director

Gabriel Rivera, City of Albuquerque Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency  
Redevelopment Planner

Susan Vigil, City of Albuquerque Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency  
Intern

Paula Donahue, City of Albuquerque Long-Range Planning, Senior Planner

**I. Planning Introduction**

Ms. Borrego introduced planning staff in attendance. She then described the difference between Sector Development Plans and MRA plans. The MR Agency creates plans for economic development of distressed areas, while Sector Plans have a broader focus on land use and zoning changes, as well as capital improvement priorities.

There are many successful MRA projects built throughout Albuquerque. For instance, the MR Agency developed the Downtown Theatre Block, and redeveloped Old Albuquerque High School. The MR Agency conducted extensive landscaping at the Verizon Wireless facility located within the West Central MR Area, as well as streetscaping for the Ta Lin International Marketplace in the Near Heights MR Area, and streetscaping for the Los Candelarias Village Project. Development of the 10 acre City purchased property located at Unser and Central is another large project coordinated by the MR Agency.

Some past projects directed by the MR Agency required the acquisition of property. Funding that could be made available to purchase sites for redevelopment include CDC funds appropriated by state legislation, and façade improvement funds available through federal funding mechanisms.

A community-guided MRA plan must first be approved by the Albuquerque Development Commission and Albuquerque City Council before it can be implemented.

Phyllis Taylor explained the differences between the East Gateway Area Sector Plan and the East Gateway MRA area. The East Gateway MRA Plan will address the eastern Central Ave. corridor, from Wyoming to the City limits on the east side. It excludes residential properties and seeks to identify key parcels and intersections where City-incentives could spur development. People enter the city from the east through the East Gateway corridor. The Sector Development Plan covers a broader area to the north and south of Central and includes residential areas.

Gabriel Rivera reviewed the Metropolitan Redevelopment Code, the powers bestowed by the code, the process of blighted area designation, and designations relationship to government financing. MRA designation facilitates the flow of funds to struggling areas, essentially putting the area on the government funding priority list. Government incentives work to lower barriers to investment in an MR area and promote public-private partnerships. The MR Agency seeks private-public partnerships at a financing rate of about 10-1; i.e. the project could generate \$10 of private investment for each public dollar invested.

## **II. Question and Answer**

### Question:

How can the owner of a boarded-up property be identified?

### Answer:

The Bernalillo County Assessor's Office compiles a complete record of lot ownership. For guidance call Gabriel Rivera, Redevelopment Planner at 924-3479

### Question:

Can boundary changes be performed at this stage of the planning process? For instance, owners of a property East of Wyoming and West of Moon want to be included in the MRA. Also, both sides of Acoma are interested in being included in the MRA.

### Answer:

Yes, boundaries can be expanded. However boundaries must be explicitly recommended by the public and soundly justified to the Albuquerque

Development Commission and Albuquerque City Council. The existing MRA boundaries have already been reviewed and approved in an MRA designation by the Albuquerque Development Commission and the Albuquerque City Council, so there are no guarantees that a revision would occur.

Question:

Can anyone be part of a sector plan?

Answer:

No, only those included in the pre-approved sector Plan boundaries, unless they are officially expanded.

Question:

Why do property taxes continue to increase in blighted areas?

Answer:

It could be that property values in general continue to increase across the city. Successful redevelopment should cause property values to increase more and help property taxes more accurately reflect property values.

Question:

Are all MRA projects for big developers?

Answer:

No, there are redevelopment projects and funds that benefit smaller businesses. For instance, streetscape improvements in the public right of way are geared to promote small business development.

Question:

What if a city developer defaults on a public project project?

Answer:

The land and/or project returns to City management and ownership. For instance, the De Anza Hotel site is being developed by a local developer who was chosen by the request for proposals (RFP) process. The RFP specified development in line with community-specified goals outlined in the Highland/Central MRA. Due to the current market, the De Anza developers have requested a time extension to complete the project. If they are unable to complete the project by an approved deadline, the De Anza property will return to the MR Agency for a re-release of the RFP.

### **III. Property Identification:**

Property and Businesses of meeting attendees was identified on the East Gateway MRA aerial map; some of these properties fall outside the MRA boundaries by a small margin. Mr. Rivera said he intended to reach out to each area business personally. Some of the identified properties include:

1. Commercial property on Acoma
2. Garcia & Central – Restaurant: Perea’s (lease it)

### **IV. Planning Recommendation:**

The question was posed to the meeting attendees: What would be most helpful for their area business? What would they most like to see created in the area?

Business Owners’ Suggestions:

1. Medians on Central to slow traffic
2. Back in the 1920’s, before the sign ordinance, there were neon lights and bright signs on Central Ave., these were very attractive.
3. More lights to mark the Gateway, with a Route 66 theme
4. District identifying signs
5. Trash is bad in fields. Code enforcement should be involved
6. Bus stops are trashy. Can they be moved?
7. There are no trash cans at the bus stops
8. More police presence
9. Implement a bicycle patrol on Eubank East through the area, (this is recommended in the upcoming Sector Plan). APD has money set aside for bike patrols. Street lighting is considered acceptable throughout the MRA, except on Juan Tabo (lighting is examined in the upcoming East Gateway Sector Plan). Lighting would help with transients moving through the neighborhood. More lighting is needed at rapid ride pick-ups and on alley ways. Property owners sometimes have to agree to re-light their buildings. Is there a PNM rebate for lighting?
10. Derelict buildings need caretaking or demolition.
11. There is no business owners association.
12. There is a City-owned derelict property on Zia and Central, the North West corner of Garcia and Central that is derelict. (Prior air emission)
13. The State also owns an empty trailer park (upcoming sector plan recommends it become an open space park in the recommended Community Activity Center Zoning area).

Potential Project Sites:

Redevelopment projects were recommended at properties such as:

2. Juan Tabo and Central (known as the Central Shopping Center)
3. State owned trail park (Community Activity Center)
  - a. Zoning/residential use
  - b. No one appears to live there

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.