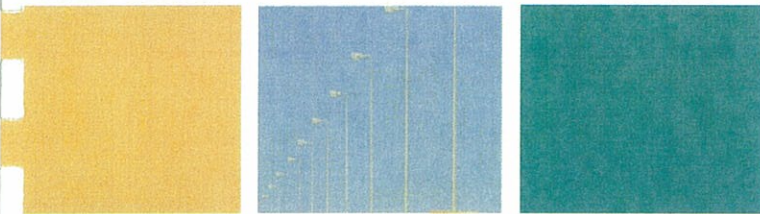
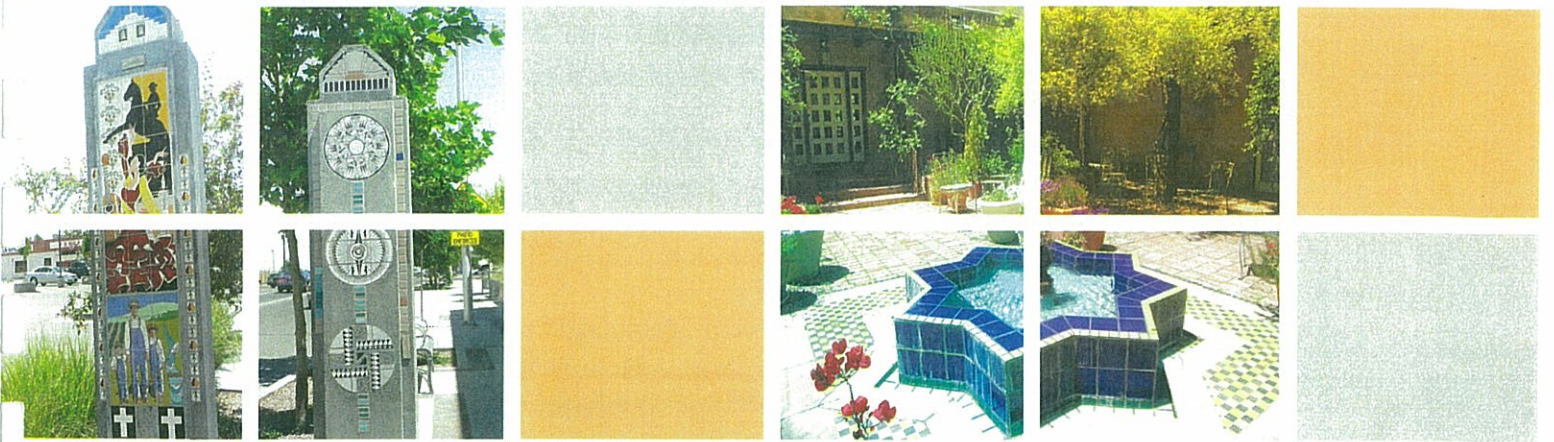


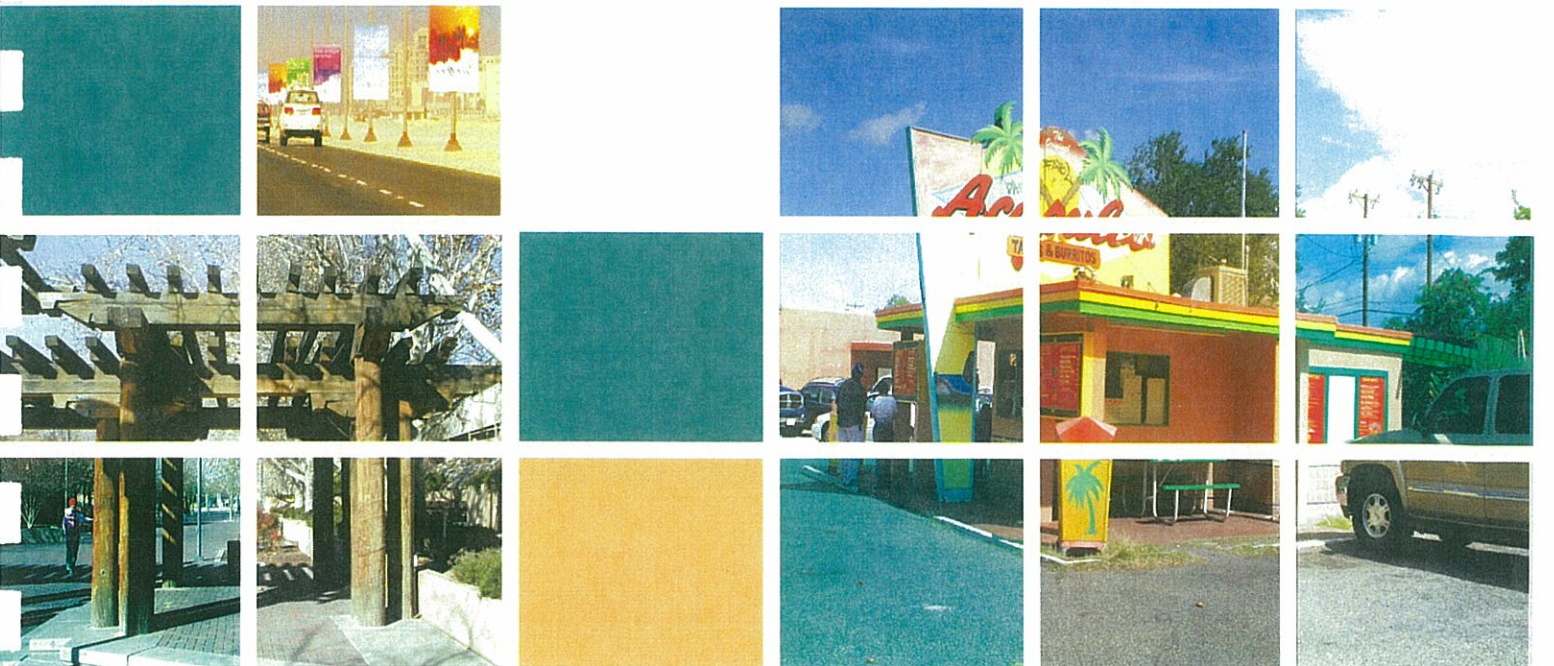
# Near Heights MRA Expansion Plan

June 2010



Prepared for:  
Albuquerque Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency  
City of Albuquerque Planning Department

Prepared by:  
Sites Southwest LLC





## **Acknowledgements**

### **City of Albuquerque Administration**

Richard J. Berry, Mayor

David S. Campbell, Chief Administrative Officer

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Ken Sanchez, District 1, President

Debbie O'Malley, District 2

Isaac Benton, District 3

Brad Winter, District 4

Dan Lewis, District 5

Rey Garduño, District 6

Michael D. Cook, District 7

Trudy Jones, District 8, Vice President

Don Harris, District 9

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Jeanette Baca

Archie Garcia

Samuel K. Collins, Jr.

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### **Photo Credits**

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**CITY of ALBUQUERQUE  
NINETEENTH COUNCIL**

COUNCIL BILL NO. R-10-49

ENACTMENT NO. 2010-005

SPONSORED BY: Rey Garduño

**RESOLUTION**

**APPROVING THE NEAR HEIGHTS EXPANSION METROPOLITAN  
REDEVELOPMENT PLAN.**

**WHEREAS, the New Mexico Legislature has passed the Metropolitan  
Redevelopment Code (herein "Code"), Sections 3-60A-1 to 3-60A-48 inclusive  
NMSA, 1978, as amended, which authorizes the City of Albuquerque, New  
Mexico (the "City") to prepare metropolitan redevelopment plans and to  
undertake and carry out metropolitan redevelopment projects; and**

**WHEREAS, The City Council, the governing body of the City, (the "City  
Council") after notice and public hearing as required by Code, has duly  
passed and adopted Council Resolution No. R-08-29 Enactment R-2008-051,  
including the recently formed Eastern/Alvarado Metropolitan Redevelopment  
Area (R-07-283), making certain findings, among other things, that one or more  
blighted areas exist within the corporate limits of the municipality and that the  
rehabilitation, conservation, development and redevelopment of and in the  
Area designated as the Near Heights Expansion Metropolitan Redevelopment  
Area is necessary in the interest of public health, safety, morals and welfare of  
the residents of the City; and**

**WHEREAS, the City Council, by Resolution No. R-08-29 Enactment R-2008-  
051, has made certain findings which declare the Near Heights Expansion  
Metropolitan Redevelopment Area to be blighted, has designated the Area as  
appropriate for Metropolitan Redevelopment Projects and has called for the  
preparation of a metropolitan redevelopment plan identifying the activities to  
be carried out to eliminate the present conditions; and**

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1 WHEREAS, the Albuquerque Development Commission, which acts as the  
2 Metropolitan Redevelopment Commission under the provisions of the City  
3 Council Ordinance 14-8-4-1994, (the "Commission") recommends approval of  
4 the Near Heights Expansion Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan (the "Plan") for  
5 the redevelopment of the Area, as required by the Code; and

6 WHEREAS, the City Council has conducted a public hearing, after proper  
7 notice as required by the Code, on the Plan; and

8 WHEREAS, the expanded Plan proposes redevelopment of certain sites  
9 within the project area; and

10 WHEREAS, the expanded Near Heights Metropolitan Redevelopment Area  
11 Plan boundaries incorporate and replace the Eastern/Alvarado Metropolitan  
12 Redevelopment Plan (R-07-283); and

13 WHEREAS, the expanded Plan identified three catalyst projects; 1) The  
14 development of the vacant Eastern/Alvarado site; 2) An International themed  
15 streetscape project along San Mateo Boulevard and Gibson Boulevard and; 3)  
16 Development of nine vacant parcels south of Southern Boulevard on the east  
17 side of San Mateo Boulevard for a future mixed use retail and housing  
18 development; and

19 WHEREAS, the expanded Plan proposes a coordinated redevelopment of  
20 certain public and private projects in the area which will meet the objectives of  
21 the code and will benefit the City's efforts to revitalize the Near Heights  
22 Expansion Metropolitan Redevelopment Area; and

23 WHEREAS, this expanded Plan for projects will promote the local health,  
24 general welfare, safety, convenience and prosperity of the inhabitants of the  
25 City and will benefit the City's effort to revitalize the area.

26 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL, THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF  
27 ALBUQUERQUE:

28 SECTION 1. The City Council, after having conducted a public hearing  
29 pursuant to the code, finds that:

30 A. The expanded Plan and the proposed redevelopment of the Near  
31 Heights Expansion Metropolitan Redevelopment Area will aid in the  
32 elimination and prevention of blight or conditions which lead to development  
33 of blight.



1           **B. The expanded Plan does not require the relocation of any families**  
2           **or individuals from their dwellings; therefore, a method for providing**  
3           **relocation assistance is not required.**

4           **C. The expanded Plan complements the Albuquerque/Bernalillo**  
5           **County Comprehensive Plan and affords maximum opportunity consistent**  
6           **with the needs of the community for the rehabilitation and redevelopment of**  
7           **the Near Heights Expansion Metropolitan Redevelopment Area by the public**  
8           **activities and the private enterprise; and the objectives of the Plan justify the**  
9           **proposed activities as public purposes and needs.**

10           **D. The expanded Plan, attached as Exhibit A, and made a part hereof,**  
11           **is approved in all respects.**

12           **SECTION 2. The entire Near Heights Expansion Metropolitan**  
13           **Redevelopment Area is specifically included for purposes of tax increment**  
14           **financing, and the creation of a tax increment district.**

15           **SECTION 3. SEVERABILITY CLAUSE. If any section, paragraph, sentence,**  
16           **clause, word or phrase of this resolution is for any reason held to be invalid or**  
17           **unenforceable by any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not**  
18           **affect the validity of the remaining provisions of this resolution. The Council**  
19           **hereby declares that it would have passed this resolution and each section,**  
20           **paragraph, sentence, clause, word or phrase thereof irrespective of any**  
21           **provisions being declared unconstitutional or otherwise invalid.**

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1 PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 7<sup>th</sup> DAY OF June, 2010  
2 BY A VOTE OF: 8 FOR 0 AGAINST.

3  
4 Excused: Jones

5  
6   
7 Ken Sanchez, President  
8 City Council  
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10  
11 APPROVED THIS 18 DAY OF June, 2010  
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13  
14 Bill No. R-10-49

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17 Richard J. Berry, Mayor  
18 City of Albuquerque  
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22 ATTEST:

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24 City Clerk  
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## Designation Resolution Approval

### EXHIBIT A

#### CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE CITY COUNCIL

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#### INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

4/14/08

R-2008-051

TO: Martin Chávez, Mayor

FROM: Laura Mason, Director of Council Services

LM

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Legislation

Transmitted herewith is Bill No. R-08-29 Designating The Near Heights Boundary Expansion a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area, Including The Recently Formed Eastern/Alvarado Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (R-07-283); Making Certain Findings and Determinations Pursuant To The Metropolitan Redevelopment Code, and Authorizing and Directing The Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency To Prepare a Metropolitan Plan For The Near Heights Expansion Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (Garduño), which was passed at the Council meeting of April 7, 2008, by a vote of 9 FOR AND 0 AGAINST.

In accordance with the provisions of the City Charter, your action is respectfully requested.

LM:db  
Attachment  
4/8/08



# CITY of ALBUQUERQUE

## EIGHTEENTH COUNCIL

COUNCIL BILL NO. R-08-29

ENACTMENT NO. B-2008-051

SPONSORED BY: Rey Garduño

### RESOLUTION

DESIGNATING THE NEAR HEIGHTS BOUNDARY EXPANSION A METROPOLITAN REDEVELOPMENT AREA, INCLUDING THE RECENTLY FORMED EASTERN/ALVARADO METROPOLITAN REDEVELOPMENT AREA (R-07-283). MAKING CERTAIN FINDINGS AND DETERMINATIONS PURSUANT TO THE METROPOLITAN REDEVELOPMENT CODE, AND AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE METROPOLITAN REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY TO PREPARE A METROPOLITAN PLAN FOR THE NEAR HEIGHTS EXPANSION METROPOLITAN REDEVELOPMENT AREA.

WHEREAS, Section 3-60A-8 NMSA 1978 of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Code (Sections 3-60A-1 through 3-60A-48 NMSA 1978) states: "A municipality shall not prepare a metropolitan redevelopment plan for an area unless the governing body by resolution determined the area to be a slum area or a blighted area, or a combination thereof, and designated the area as appropriate for a metropolitan redevelopment project"; and

WHEREAS, the City of Albuquerque ("City") and the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency of the City and their employees and agents, have for some time engaged in a study of blighted areas within the City, and have submitted their findings and recommendations concerning the area detailed in the Near Heights Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Expansion Designation Report which is attached as Exhibit A to this Resolution and incorporated herein by reference; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 3-60A-8 NMSA 1978 of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Code, the Council caused to be published in the Albuquerque Journal a newspaper of general circulation, a notice containing a general description of the proposed metropolitan redevelopment area and the date,

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1 time and place where the Council will hold a public hearing to consider the  
2 adoption of this resolution and announcing that any interested party may  
3 appear and speak to the issue of the adoption of this resolution; and

4 WHEREAS, the Albuquerque Development Commission held an advertised  
5 public meeting on October 17, 2007, took testimony from the public, and  
6 recommended to the Council the designation of the Near Heights Metropolitan  
7 Redevelopment Expansion Area, as set forth in the Staff Report attached to  
8 this resolution as Exhibit B; and

9 WHEREAS, the Land Use Planning and Zoning Committee of the Council  
10 and the City Council, at a time and place designated in a public notice, to hear  
11 and consider all comments of all interested parties on the issue of the  
12 adoption of this resolution; and

13 WHEREAS, the Near Heights Expansion Metropolitan Redevelopment Area  
14 expands the Near Heights MRA Plan that was adopted in the year 2000. Due to  
15 economic investment along the San Mateo Blvd and Gibson Blvd corridors,  
16 along with the relocation of the Lovelace Medical Center facility on Gibson to  
17 their new downtown location, a destabilizing impact is noticeable in the area;  
18 and

19 WHEREAS, the Near Heights Expansion boundaries include the  
20 Eastern/Alvarado MRA site recently approved by City Council on November 5,  
21 2007 (R-07-283). The area boundaries begin at the northeast corner of the  
22 intersection of Eastern and Palomas, easterly along Eastern to Alvarado;  
23 northerly along Alvarado to Ross; westerly along Ross to Palomas; southerly  
24 along Palomas to the northeast corner of Eastern and Palomas, being the  
25 points of beginning; and

26 WHEREAS, the Council has considered the findings and determinations set  
27 forth in Exhibit A attached hereto; the Staff Report attached as Exhibit B; and  
28 all comments made at the public hearing concerning the conditions which  
29 exist in the proposed Near Heights Metropolitan Redevelopment Expansion  
30 Area.

31 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL, THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF  
32 ALBUQUERQUE:



1 Section 1. The Council finds and determines that the area from the  
2 commercial corridor along San Mateo Blvd. from Bell Street to Gibson Blvd.  
3 and the commercial corridor along Gibson Blvd. from San Mateo Blvd. to  
4 Kentucky Street, near Louisiana Blvd. is hereby included into the Near  
5 Heights Metropolitan Redevelopment Area. The boundary excludes recently  
6 redeveloped properties on the south side of Gibson Blvd. from Dakota Street  
7 to Kentucky Street. It includes the shopping center along the west side of San  
8 Pedro Blvd, which is bounded on the north by Kathryn Ave. and the south by  
9 Anderson Ave., and is adjacent to the existing Near Heights Metropolitan  
10 Redevelopment Area. The Near Heights Expansion area further described in  
11 Exhibit A to this Resolution, is, by reason of the presence of a substantial  
12 number of deteriorated structures, unsafe conditions, deterioration of site and  
13 other improvements, obsolete and impractical planning and platting and low  
14 levels of commercial activity and redevelopment which substantially impair  
15 and arrest the sound growth and economic well being of the City and the Near  
16 Heights Metropolitan Redevelopment Area, constitute an economic and social  
17 burden and a menace to the public health, safety, and welfare in its present  
18 condition and use, the blighted areas that are appropriate for a metropolitan  
19 redevelopment project or projects and are hereby designated the Near  
20 Heights Metropolitan Redevelopment Expansion area.

21 Section 2. The Council finds that the rehabilitation, conservation,  
22 development and redevelopment of and in the Near Heights Expansion  
23 Redevelopment Area are necessary in the interests of the public health, safety,  
24 morals and welfare of the residents of the City.

25 Section 3. The Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency is hereby authorized  
26 and directed to prepare a Metropolitan Redevelopment Plan or Plans for the  
27 Near Heights Expansion Area which, without limitation, shall seek to eliminate  
28 the problems created by the blighted conditions in the area, shall conform to  
29 any general plan for the City as a whole, and shall be sufficient to indicate the  
30 proposed activities to be carried out or encouraged in the area and the Plan's  
31 relationship to defined local objectives respecting land uses, improved traffic  
32 patterns and controls, public transportation, public utilities, recreational and

1 community facilities, housing facilities, commercial activities or enterprises,  
2 and other public improvements.

3 Section 4. SEVERABILITY CLAUSE. If any section paragraph, sentence,  
4 clause, word, or phrase of this resolution is for any reason held to be invalid or  
5 unenforceable by any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not  
6 affect the validity of the remaining provisions of this resolution. The Council  
7 hereby declares that it would have passed this resolution and each section,  
8 paragraph, sentence, clause, word or phrase thereof irrespective of any  
9 provisions being declared unconstitutional or otherwise invalid.

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1 PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 7th DAY OF April, 2008  
2 BY A VOTE OF: 9 FOR 0 AGAINST.

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8 Brad Winter, President  
9 City Council

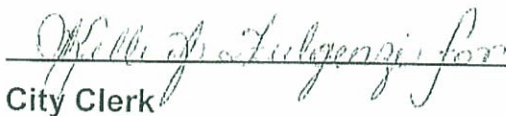
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12 APPROVED THIS 17<sup>th</sup> DAY OF April, 2008

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15 Bill No. R-08-29

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19 Martin J. Chávez, Mayor  
20 City of Albuquerque

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24 ATTEST:

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27 City Clerk

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction and Overview

The Near Heights Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Expansion Plan is a supplementary document to the Near Heights Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan that was adopted by the City of Albuquerque in September 2000. It expands the original boundaries of the 1,010-acre MRA to encompass properties along the San Mateo and Gibson Boulevard commercial corridors, as well as the Willow Village Shopping Center on San Pedro and a 3.7-acre vacant parcel at the corner of Eastern Ave. and Alvarado Street. The expansion area was designated as a metropolitan redevelopment area by City Council in April 2008. Under the Metropolitan Redevelopment Code (3-60A-1:48 NMSA 1978) this designation allows municipal acquisition, ownership, lease and improvement of properties within the area to spur economic development. It also offers other incentives to private developers such as impact fee waivers, bonds, and improvements financed through tax-increment financing.

## Planning Process

Using a series of public participation meetings, charrettes, work groups and interviews, the project team identified three likely sites for redevelopment. The community and team analyzed the opportunities and constraints of each site as well as the improvements, goods, and services sought by residents and businesses to come up with three project concepts to generate activity.

## History and Vision

Projects took into account the community's vision for the area: a safe, walkable, economically viable area with neighborhood retail and more home ownership opportunities. Residents envision the area as part of the recently designated International District in Albuquerque, promoting a multi-cultural theme marked by gateways, heritage markers, information kiosks, and public art.

## Redevelopment Strategies

The redevelopment strategies grew out of the market analysis and community desires. The trade area (zip code 87108) had approximately 38,000 people in 2008. Residents tend to be slightly older, less educated and more racially diverse than the City at-large. Just over half are Hispanic or Latino. In general, residents earn about 74 percent of the median household income in Albuquerque.

Area strengths and opportunities are its residential density, its proximity to employment centers such as Kirtland AFB, Sandia Labs, the Veteran's Hospital, and Gibson Medical Center, providing a customer base for different times of the day. It has moderate weekday traffic flows along San Mateo Blvd. and Gibson Blvd. and is also close to the airport and bus service. Its multi-cultural population and concentration of ethnic restaurants and other businesses suggest the international theme can become a magnet for drawing residents, tourists and employees from other parts of the city. It also has a strong base of community residents and non-profit organizations working for change. Weaknesses to overcome include the area's reputation for being unsafe, vacant buildings and parcels, and the general economic downturn.

The project team came up with five redevelopment strategies for the community and City to pursue:

- Build upon the existing ethnic businesses and population to transform the area into an international, multi-cultural "destination," attracting City residents, employees and tourists.
- Develop neighborhood retail that will draw local residents to San Mateo Blvd. and more housing to increase the number of residents. Data indicate that residents leave the area to purchase groceries, home improvement items, drug store items, clothing, and to eat at full-service restaurants.
- Attract more employees from nearby employment centers by catering to their needs and schedules.



- Help businesses in the area to expand and draw on existing residents' special talents to help them create new businesses in the MRA.
- Designate the MRA as a Tax-Increment Financing District, allowing the incremental increase in property taxes following redevelopment to be funneled back into the area to help finance more revitalization.

### **Opportunity Sites & Catalytic Projects**

Three vacant opportunity sites were selected by the community in consultation with the City and project team. They were chosen for their location and potential for helping catalyze more redevelopment in the area. They include:

1. The 3.7-acre former parking lot at the corner of Eastern Ave. and Alvarado Ave. that was donated to the City by Lovelace Medical System.
2. The streetscapes along Kathryn Avenue (from San Mateo to San Pedro), San Mateo (from Bell Ave. to Gibson Blvd.) and Gibson Blvd. (from San Mateo Blvd. to Kentucky).
3. Nine vacant lots north of the gas station/convenience store along the west side of San Mateo Blvd.

Potential projects were conceptualized to carry out one or more of the development strategies.

- **Opportunity Site/Project #1:** As a large site already owned by the City but located on secondary streets, the Eastern/Alvarado site is proposed to have a mix of uses: for-sale residential, office space (potentially for local non-profit organizations seeking to expand), a public plaza and a community use, such as an economic incubator with a commercial kitchen, and a café. Connections from this site to the Siesta Hills Shopping Center would be fostered by promenades and special streetscape treatments.
- **Opportunity Site/Project #2:** Improvements proposed in this project include a group of streetscape designs and elements along three streets: Gateway, heritage markers, and other design elements at various corner locations would herald and reinforce the entrance to the International District. Landscaping, pedestrian street lighting, and bicycle lanes would create a safer, east-west pedestrian-bicyclist boulevard along Kathryn Ave. from San Mateo Blvd. to San Pedro Drive. Part of the street could be closed occasionally for community events, such as a farmer's market.
- **Opportunity Site/ Project #3:** This project would build upon the private health club development slated to be constructed on the existing Parkland Hills Shopping Center site at San Mateo Blvd. and Kathryn Ave. It calls for an additional 7,500 square feet of new retail space, including a café with outdoor seating, as well as a public plaza for events. It is hoped that the new clientele brought in by the private development can be drawn farther north along San Mateo Blvd. to help support the retail.

The remaining chapters in the report document the history, existing conditions, zoning and land use, vacant land, existing architecture, the market study, and include a few case studies of other relevant redevelopment projects.



# 1. Overview



## A. Introduction

In 1998 the Albuquerque City Council designated the Near Heights Metropolitan Redevelopment Area. The Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency selected a planning team to complete the Near Heights Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) Plan, which was adopted in 2000. Since adoption, the Talin Market World Food Fare and accompanying streetscape projects and City-initiated land acquisitions for future projects at Central and Louisiana have been completed. In 2007, The Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency initiated an expansion to the Near Heights MRA boundary. Mayor Chavez and then District 6 City Councilor Heinrich supported the MRA expansion.

The City of Albuquerque Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency solicited proposals for an updated redevelopment plan for the Expanded MRA and selected Sites Southwest to lead the effort. The Expanded Near Heights MRA boundary was approved in April 2008.

## B. Project Sponsor

The City of Albuquerque Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency is primarily responsible for executing projects and programs that lead to revitalization of blighted commercial corridors, enhance small business development and job creation, stabilize low income neighborhoods, and increase affordable housing in the City. The Agency's primary focus is implementation. It focuses on the creative use of City land and financial resources to trigger private and other public investment. It also cultivates partnerships with community-based and nonprofit organizations to develop and implement projects.

The Agency's role in the Near Heights community included identifying it as one in need of commercial and residential revitalization. It subsequently embarked upon an extensive community involvement process that will culminate with the implementation of projects and programs identified within this plan.

## C. New Mexico Metropolitan Redevelopment Code

The State of New Mexico has several statutes intended to help municipalities promote economic development, redevelopment, and stability where these are hindered by a variety of factors. The New Mexico Metropolitan Redevelopment Code (§3-60A-1 to 3-60A-48 NMSA 1978) is one such statute. It provides New Mexico cities with the powers to correct conditions in areas or neighborhoods within municipalities that "substantially impair or arrest the sound and orderly development" within the city. These powers can help reverse an area's decline and stagnation; however, the municipality may only exercise these powers within designated Metropolitan Redevelopment Areas (MRAs).



Designation of an MRA is based on findings of “slum or blight” conditions, as defined in the Metropolitan Redevelopment Code (§3-60A-4). The criteria in the Code for a “blighted” area include both physical and economic conditions.

As defined in the Code,

“Blighted area” means an area within the area of operation other than a slum area that, because of the presence of a substantial number of deteriorated or deteriorating structures, predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility or usefulness, unsanitary or unsafe conditions, deterioration of site or other improvements, diversity of ownership, tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land, defective or unusual conditions of title, improper subdivision or lack of adequate housing facilities in the area or obsolete or impractical planning and platting or an area where a significant number of commercial or mercantile businesses have closed or significantly reduced their operations due to the economic losses or loss of profit due to operating in the area, low levels of commercial or industrial activity or redevelopment or any combination of such factors, substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth and economic health and well-being of a municipality or locale within a municipality or an area that retards the provisions of housing accommodations or constitutes an economic or social burden and is a menace to the public health, safety, morals or welfare in its present condition and use;”

In April 2008, the Albuquerque City Council approved the designation of the Expanded Near Heights MRA.

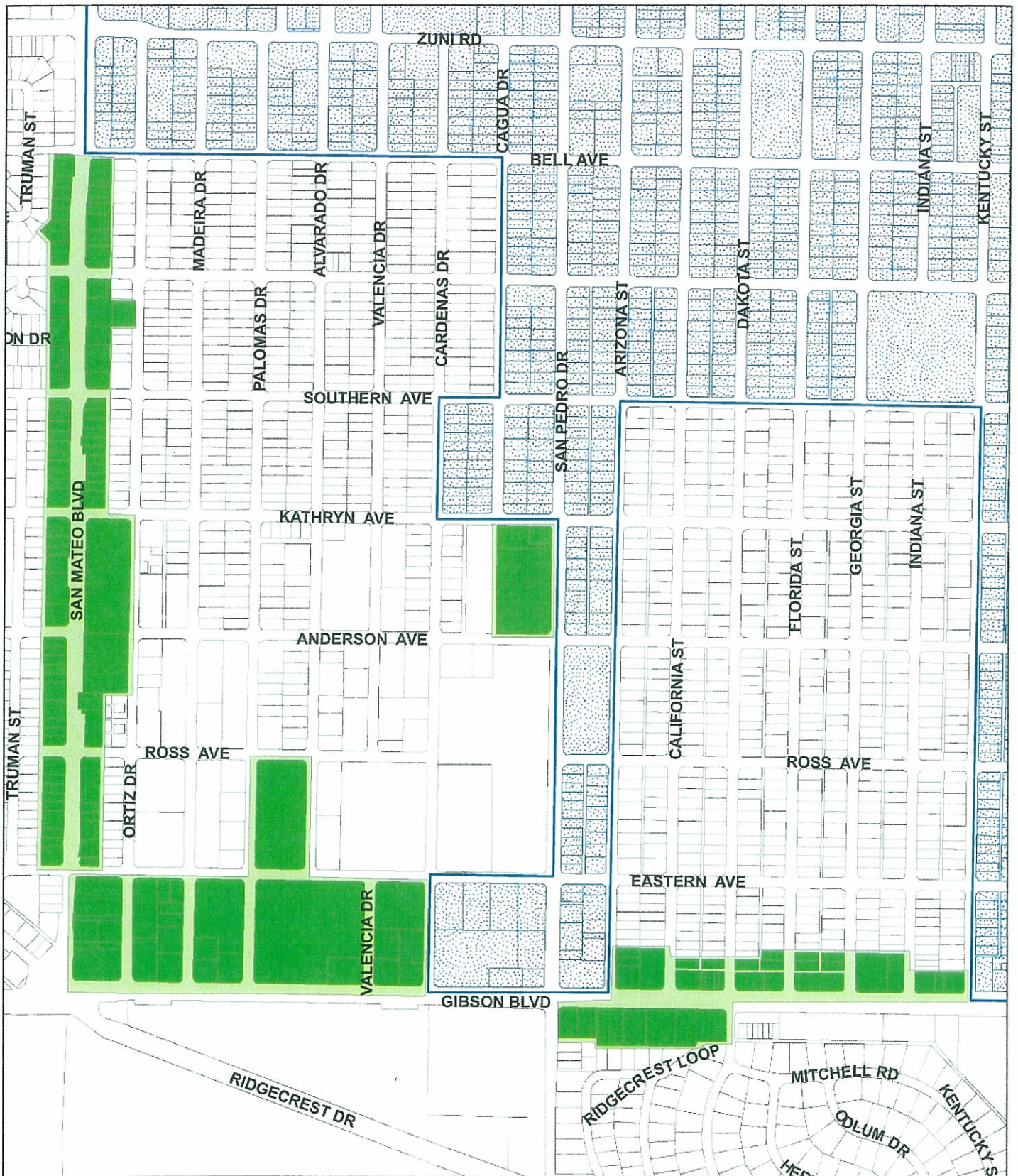
## D. Summary of Need

The Expanded Near Heights MRA exhibits a combination of factors that contribute to blight, including physical and economic conditions. There are a number of vacant lots filled with trash and weeds that residents say attract homeless people and drug deals, contributing to unsafe and unsanitary conditions. At the same time, many of these lots are contiguous and form parcels sizeable enough for redevelopment. Several businesses in the area have closed recently, some due to the departure of Lovelace Medical Center, which was located south of Gibson and recently was purchased by private investors. There are also a number of deteriorated or deteriorating buildings in the area that contribute to blight.

These factors combine to substantially impair and arrest the sound growth and economic health and well-being of the Near Heights Expanded MRA .







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Figure 1. Near Heights MRA





## E. Location of MRA Expansion

The general boundaries of the Expanded Near Heights MRA are the commercial corridor along San Mateo Blvd. from Bell Ave. to Gibson Blvd. and the commercial corridor along Gibson Blvd. from San Mateo Blvd. to Kentucky Ave., near Louisiana Blvd. The boundary excludes recently redeveloped properties on the south side of Gibson from Dakota to Kentucky. The boundary also excludes the former Lovelace Medical Center facility on Gibson, which was purchased by a local investor. The boundary also includes two stand-alone parcels; the shopping center along the west side of San Pedro Drive, which is bounded on the north by Kathryn Ave. and the south by Anderson Ave., and is adjacent to the existing Near Heights MRA, and the vacant 3.7 acres at the corner of Eastern Ave. and Alvarado St. A more specific description of the area is as follows:

- San Mateo Blvd. Corridor
  - From Bell Ave. to Eastern Ave., one lot deep along San Mateo Blvd.
- Gibson Blvd. Corridor West
  - On the north side: From San Mateo to Cardenas Drive, the blocks between Eastern Ave. and Gibson Blvd.;
  - Lot A-1 Block 20 Plat of Lot 1 Block 20 Virginia Place Addition containing 3.7091 acres (known as Eastern Ave./Alvarado St. Corner site)
- Gibson Blvd. Corridor East
  - On the south side: one block deep along Gibson Blvd. from San Pedro Drive to Dakota Street.
  - On the north side:
    - Block 26A, Elder Homestead Addition, Lots 8, 9, A (Replat of lots 10-12), B (Replat of lots 13, 14) and A (Replat of lots 15-21).
    - Block 27A, Elder Homestead Addition, Lots 9, A (Replat of lots 10-14), 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20.
    - Block 28A, Elder Homestead Addition, Lots 9, A (Replat of lots 10-15), 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21.
    - Block 29A, Elder Homestead Addition, Lots 10 through 21.
    - Block 30A, Elder Homestead Addition, Lot A (Replat of lots 8-16) and Lot B (Replat of lots 17-21)
- San Pedro Drive Corridor
  - Block 8, Virginia Place Addition (Willow Village Shopping Center)

## 2. The Planning Process



The planning process employed several methods of involving area residents and business owners in the plan. These included:

1) **Public Meetings/ Citizen Advisory Team Meetings:** The redevelopment team held five area-wide meetings, beginning in May 2008, to gather input from residents and business owners about their future vision for the area, shopping patterns, suggestions for redevelopment projects and other area improvements, and comments on the proposed redevelopment projects and overall plan. Originally intended to be split between the Citizen Advisory Team (CAT) and the general public meetings, the distinction disappeared as most participants came to both. Altogether, more than 100 people attended one or more of the meetings.

2) **Business survey and interviews:** The owners or staff of at least 37 businesses in the MR area were interviewed personally by the redevelopment team members to learn the nature and longevity of their business, the current business climate, where their customers came from, and what changes they thought would most improve the business climate in the Near Heights expanded MRA.

3) **Neighborhood Charrette:** Once the community had generated a list of desired businesses and improvements, Sites Southwest held a neighborhood design charrette the evening of October 1, 2008 from 6:30 pm to 9 pm. An initial slide presentation pointed out potential opportunity sites for redevelopment along San Mateo and Gibson Boulevards, including vacant parcels and potential spaces for gateways, streetscapes and crosswalks. Slides of photos from Albuquerque and other cities illustrated various design elements and types of residential and retail development. Participants were then given aerial maps, the list of desired businesses and improvements for the area, and asked to package together potential businesses and design elements into projects for particular opportunity sites. This resulted in four main proposals that were sketched onto the maps.

4) **Special Meetings:** Sites Southwest held two Work Group meetings to flesh out specifics of each project and potential implementation steps, involving their design staff to help develop the ideas graphically. City Redevelopment staff also held a special meeting with area businesses to explain the intent of the plan and answer questions. This meeting focused on detailing the benefits to businesses of an MRA plan, including long-term bonds financing, impact fee waivers, public-private partnerships, State tax credits, and tax-deferred financing. Victor Limery, owner of the Talin International Market, was on hand to describe the benefits his establishment obtained through the existing Near Heights MRA plan and his partnership with the City.

Community residents actively helped with outreach, particularly members of the Southeast Heights Health Coalition and St. Joseph Community Health. The Endorphin Power Company and Wilson Middle School generously offered their facilities for public meetings for the plan.



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### 3. Area History and Vision

#### A. Area History

The Near Heights area that surrounds the San Mateo Boulevard and Gibson Boulevard MRA of this plan encompasses a number of neighborhoods. The closest are South San Pedro and Elder Homestead to the north and east; Siesta Hills to the southeast; and Parkland Hills to the west. Farther to the northeast are La Mesa and Trumbull Village neighborhoods. Affluence tends to decline east of San Mateo and rise to the west of San Mateo.

La Mesa began to develop before it was incorporated into the city and thus early development there had few controls. The area was annexed into the city in the late 1940s. After the area was annexed, the quality of the earlier developments generally improved, but the area still did not attract as high a quality development as much of the rest of the Heights, mainly because of the poor quality of the earlier developments and because of the incompatibility of the Tesuque Drive-In Theatre in the middle of the area with the residential development around it (City of Albuquerque 1976).

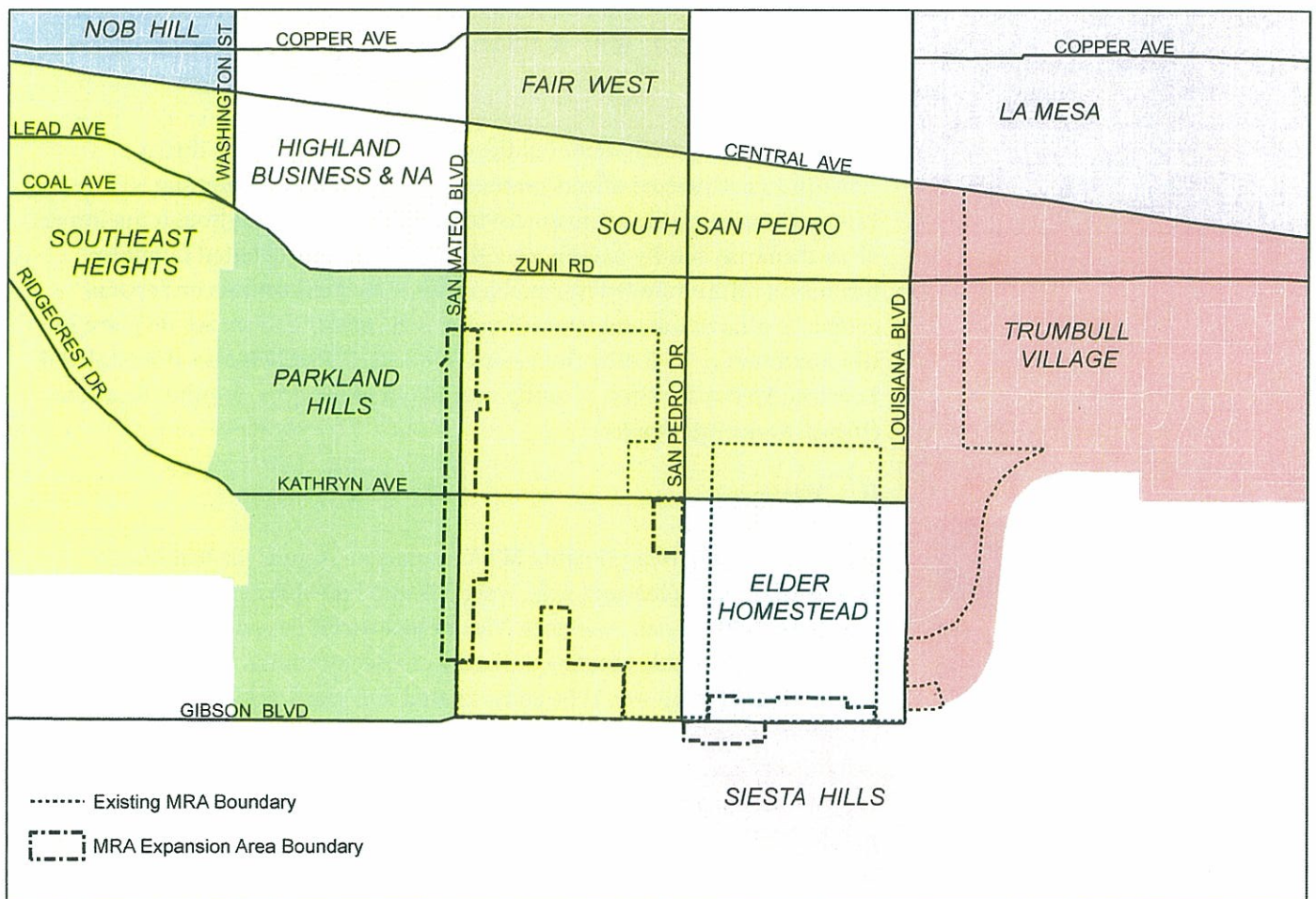


Figure 2. MRA Area Neighborhood Associations





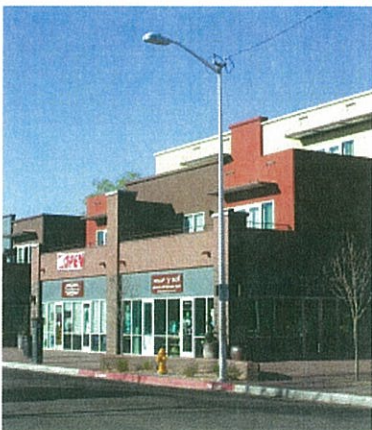
Trumbull and La Mesa, which were east of the Fairgrounds, were heavily influenced by a zoning pattern in the 1950s that assumed a need for future apartment development near Kirtland Air Force Base. The rationale for vast areas of high-density housing was the area's proximity to major employment centers, such as the Base and the US Veteran's Administration Hospital, which opened its doors in 1932 on a 516-acre site. The zoning contributed to a proliferation of individually owned, four-unit apartments with inadequate consideration of parking, landscaping, or management. By the early 1980s the social and aesthetic problems inherent in this development pattern caused the established neighborhoods nearby to push for rezoning, city amenities, and city services to meet the needs of a dense and highly mobile population.

After WWII, the VA Hospital, now designated the Albuquerque Veterans Administration Medical Center Historic District, donated 28 acres to the Air Force, 41 acres to the highway, and 92 acres to the City of Albuquerque, from which was created Bullhead Park. In 1951 the VA dedicated a new building with kitchen and dining facilities, a recreation hall, library, Mental Hygiene Clinic, and a number of medical units. Most recently in 1980, an education building was opened. (City of Albuquerque Historical File Document, no date).

Other institutions that anchored the community continue to thrive, sometimes with mixed effects on the neighborhood. Albuquerque International Airport is convenient to the Near Heights, although the impact of air traffic on nearby neighborhoods has been hotly debated in public forums on future runway expansions. The State Fairgrounds underwent extensive renovation and upgrading recently, seeking to secure its place in the community. Two other long-term presences, Presbyterian Hospital and Lovelace Medical Center, recently moved out of the area, to other locations. (Biebel, Szoka Pahl, Taylor)

## B. Vision

The vision for the Near Heights MRA Expansion Area is for San Mateo Boulevard to be a pleasant, safe, walkable and bikeable commercial area for neighborhood residents. Vacant lots would be redeveloped into businesses or for-sale housing desired by the community. A multi-cultural, international theme would be consolidated and publicized by circulating information about existing ethnic business such as the Thai and Mexican restaurants and Chinese market, and expressed further through the design of streetscape elements such as gateways, heritage markers, signage, and public art. Kathryn Ave. would be transformed into a pedestrian and biking thoroughfare, eventually connecting Whittier Elementary School to Louisiana Boulevard. The international theme would be carried through to Gibson Boulevard, which would continue to serve regional as well as local clientele. The shopping center on the southwest corner of Kathryn Ave. and San Pedro Dr. would undergo a face-lift with new facades and landscaping.



## 4. Redevelopment Strategies Opportunities

In selecting opportunity sites for potential redevelopment, the team and community considered several criteria. Initially, overall redevelopment strategies for the area were considered; second, the individual characteristics of each site were examined.

### A. Redevelopment Strategies

With the community's input, the team devised four redevelopment strategies for the MRA expansion area.

1. **Continue the area's transformation into an international, multicultural "destination" to attract residents, employees and tourists from all over the city, and even beyond by creating future public improvements with an international "ethnic" theme.**
2. **Draw more neighborhood residents to the area by facilitating the retailing of desired products and services in the expanded MRA area.**
3. **Attract more employees from surrounding employment centers such as Kirtland Air Force Base, the Veteran's Administration Hospital, the new tenants at the Gibson Medical Center, and the Kirtland Technology Park mixed-use development to rise west of San Mateo, by catering to their needs.**
4. **Help existing businesses to expand in the area and draw on existing residents' special talents to help them create new businesses in the MRA.**
5. **Tax-Increment Financing to fund further redevelopment in the MR expansion area.**

Each of these strategies would require actions and commitments beyond the scope of this plan. However, because they helped to inform the selection of opportunity sites and projects, they are described in more detail below.

#### **Redevelopment Strategy 1. Continue the area's transformation into an international, multicultural "destination" to attract residents, employees and tourists from all over the city, and even beyond.**

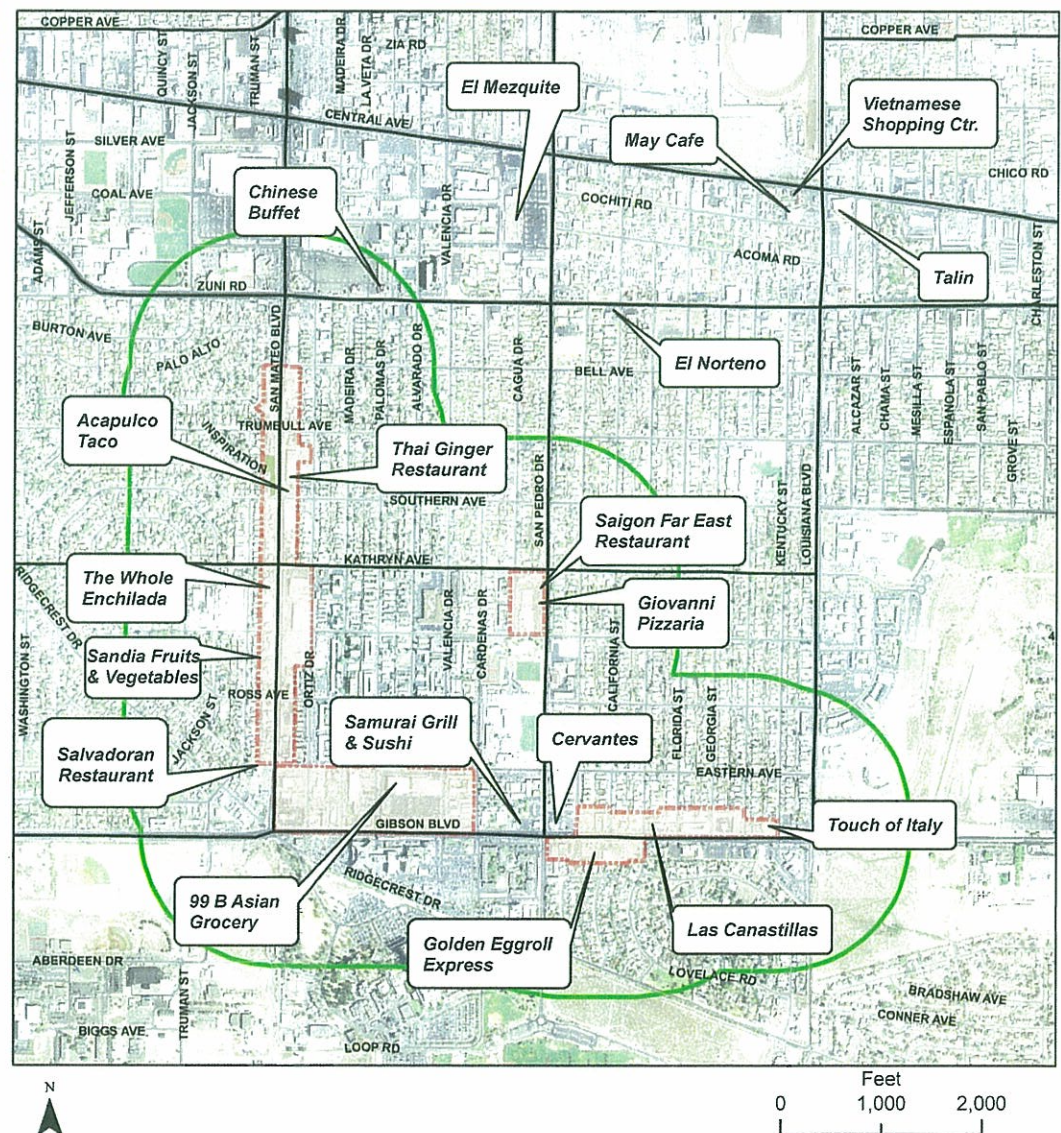
The re-characterization of the surrounding area as the "International District" has been in the works for several years. The idea is to replace the area's existing depiction as a crime area in the media and on-line with a more positive image. The Albuquerque District 6 Coalition has been promoting this re-characterization and recently, in cooperation with the Southeast Heights Health Coalition, successfully urged the NM State Legislature and the Albuquerque City Council to adopt legislation to this effect.





This new branding evolves both from the diverse cultural backgrounds of people living in the wider area and from the international flavor of many of its businesses. The Talin market at Louisiana Blvd. and Central Ave. recently expanded into a new building, complete with a new streetscape and multi-cultural artwork. Nearby are two Vietnamese restaurants and a pharmacy.

The Near Heights MRA expansion area offers a Thai restaurant, a Mexican restaurant and a taqueria, and a Mexican fruit and vegetable market on San Mateo Boulevard. Along Gibson Boulevard is an Oriental market and restaurants offering Mexican, sushi, and Chinese food. A new Salvadoran restaurant opened on Gibson just west of San Mateo. At the Willow Village Shopping Center on San Pedro Dr., also part of the expanded Near Heights MRA, is a Vietnamese restaurant and a Italian pizzeria. Farther north on Zuni are a Mexican restaurant, a Chinese buffet, and a Mexican food market.



**Figure 3. MRA International Establishments**



Table 7 in Appendix B demonstrates that the residents in the 87108 zip code (between Central Ave. and both sides of Gibson, and from Carlisle to Wyoming) are more racially diverse than residents in the City of Albuquerque generally.

Moreover, in personal surveys of at least 37 businesses in the MRA, 18 or nearly half said they thought establishing a distinct international character would improve business.

Actions to help implement this strategy might include:

- A brochure and/or map promoting all of the ethnic businesses.
- Neighborhood encouragement of more ethnic businesses to establish in the area such as a Chinese bakery or international food court.
- International design themes depicted in gateways, public art, historical interpretation (signage, obelisks, sidewalk markers).
- International celebrations in the area, fiestas, parades. (An international neighborhood celebration was held in September in the parking lot of the Talin Market.)
- An Asian American or other ethnic center located in the area, providing a place for performances, classes, foreign language film screenings, and other multi-cultural events.
- An international theme for housing.
- Alliances with existing networks and resources, such as Sister City programs.

**Redevelopment Strategy 2. Draw more neighborhood residents to San Mateo Blvd. and Gibson Blvd. commercial areas by offering desired products and services now unavailable in the expanded MR area.**

To a certain extent, the type and number of business in the MRA reflect the incomes and shopping habits of the surrounding residents as well as area employees. They also reflect the impact of the surrounding competition—primarily big box stores and the malls at Uptown and Coronado—as well as competition from on-line retailing. All these businesses are competing for the same consumer dollar. The advantages of patronizing local businesses include more personal service, opportunities to socialize with friends and neighbors, being able to walk instead of drive to a store, and keeping dollars circulating in the community instead of flowing to a far-away corporate headquarters.

Clues to what goods and services may be undersupplied in the area come from the feedback given by the more than 100 residents and business owners who came to the MRA meetings and from analyzing the Retail Marketplace Opportunity Gaps.



Among those goods, services and improvements repeatedly requested by the approximately 100 residents who attended MRA meetings were:

**Retail Goods/ Places:** Cybercafé for kids, a local coffee shop or café with outside seating, ice cream shop, microbrewery or pub, a hardware store, a flower shop, a bakery, non-chain restaurant with live music, language-diverse bookstore, a grocery store.

**Services:** Business incubator and job training, a dance studio/gymnastics, community service center (domestic violence, medical and children's services, wellness), summer programs for middle schoolers.

**Community Facilities:** Asian-American Center, Farmer's Market, swimming pool, skate park, open plaza/gathering space, better bike paths and neighborhood lighting (especially along Kathryn), business incubator with commercial kitchen, family recreation center (with picnic tables, skate park, pool, playground, basketball hoops, skateboarding), bus shelter improvements.

The community facilities and services are more commonly programmed through sector development plans than the more targeted MRA plans; however, some of these could be included in redevelopment projects and through public/private partnerships.

Another indicator of a lack of local supply compared to the demand is information in the Retail Market Opportunity Gap report. This report compares data on what consumers spend in a certain geographic location (Consumer Expenditure Survey) to the supply in that geographical area (Census of Retail Trade). A positive gap between the two indicates that the local supply is not keeping up with the local demand in that retail category and thus may be an opportunity for additional sales in the area. Table 1 shows the opportunity gap for particular retail categories in the 87108 zip code. This zip code was chosen because nearly everyone who participated in the MRA plan meetings lived in this zip code. (See "Figure 19. Zip Code Map (87108)" on page 71).



**Table 1. Retail Opportunity Gap**

Retail Stores in Zip Code 87108 Totals	Demand (in dollars)	Supply (Retail Sales) (in dollars)	Opportunity Gap (in dollars)
Supermarkets, Grocery (Ex Conv) Stores-44511	62,197,916	38,813,996	23,383,920
Home Centers-44411	15,801,994	0	15,801,994
Full-Service Restaurants-7221	23,908,435	10,382,307	13,526,128
Pharmacies and Drug Stores-44611	22,986,806	10,709,719	12,277,087
Family Clothing Stores-44814	8,227,623	844,001	7,383,622
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers-4412	6,119,004	2,923,207	3,195,797
Office Supplies and Stationery Stores-45321	2,540,751	0	2,540,751
Women's Clothing Stores-44812	3,456,139	959,531	2,496,608
Convenience Stores-44512	3,112,866	801,549	2,311,317
Nursery and Garden Centers-44422	3,028,881	1,131,683	1,897,198
Shoe Stores-4482	2,968,282	1,324,679	1,643,603
Book Stores-451211	2,008,570	624,888	1,383,682
Department Stores Excl Leased Depts-4521	27,541,943	26,275,062	1,266,881
Other Health and Personal Care Stores-44619	1,672,196	482,311	1,189,885
Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores-45322	1,940,969	845,178	1,095,791
Men's Clothing Stores-44811	1,068,000	0	1,068,000
Childrens, Infants Clothing Stores-44813	1,005,752	0	1,005,752
Special Foodservices-7223	4,336,410	3,423,162	913,248
Paint and Wallpaper Stores-44412	843,148	0	843,148
Hardware Stores-44413	3,632,868	2,840,052	792,816
Specialty Food Stores-4452	2,100,776	1,374,326	726,450
Other Clothing Stores-44819	934,787	320,974	613,813
Outdoor Power Equipment Stores-44421	540,604	0	540,604
Musical Instrument and Supplies Stores-45114	742,919	351,127	391,792
Camera and Photographic Equipment Stores-44313	352,043	0	352,043
Clothing Accessories Stores-44815	313,508	0	313,508
Luggage and Leather Goods Stores-44832	206,368	0	206,368
Home Furnishing Stores-4422	4,514,436	4,313,150	201,286
News Dealers and Newsstands-451212	107,388	0	107,388
Radio, Television, Electronics Stores-443112	7,696,939	7,622,545	74,394

Source: Claritas Dec. 2008

The Retail Opportunity Gap table indicates potential local sales opportunities of \$23.4 million in groceries, \$15 million in home items, \$13.5 million in full-service restaurants, \$12 million in pharmaceuticals and drug store items, and \$7 million in family clothing stores based on the gap between what consumers spent last year on these items and actual retail sales in the area. A caveat is that at least one big box or category-killer store exists not far beyond the zip code area that may be meeting some of the demand for these items, even though this doesn't register in the table. Still, these two sources point to some potential unmet needs in the local area that could be catered to by new businesses.



**Redevelopment Strategy 3 Cater to the needs of and attract more employees from surrounding employment centers such as Kirtland Air Force Base, the Veteran’s Administration Hospital, the new tenants at the former Lovelace Medical Center on Gibson Blvd., and the budding Kirtland Technology Park, a commercial and office mixed-use development slated to be built west of San Mateo Blvd. on Gibson Blvd.**

There are plans by private developers to redevelop the Parkland Shopping Center on the southwest corner of San Mateo Blvd. and Kathryn Ave., which, if completed, will substantially advance the MRA area. This could serve as a huge catalyst for the San Mateo Blvd. corridor, attracting employees in the areas as well as residents east and west of San Mateo Blvd. Once there, visitors could be drawn to other parts of the corridor for food, drinks, groceries, and other items. Continuing reuse of the Gibson Medical Center will likely bring new employees and clients to the Gibson Blvd. corridor. A new residential treatment center is being established at the old Lovelace Hospital site and is expected to hire 1,000 employees and attract new clients to patronize local businesses. Moreover, a new 92-acre, mixed-use development (the Kirtland Technology Park) just west of San Mateo Blvd. is eventually expected to employ 2,000 people in the area, although many of their needs may be served by the technology park itself.

Catering to new employees or even to residents with higher incomes just west of San Mateo Blvd. could help boost demand for new retail and other services. Businesses seeking to attract this clientele would do well to find out what needs are going unmet at the Base, the VA, and other employment centers and strategize to meet those needs. Ones suggested at the MRA meetings include a need for meeting spaces and better restaurants.

**Redevelopment Strategy 4. Help existing businesses to expand in the area and draw on existing residents’ special talents to help them create new businesses in the MRA.**

Growing local businesses—either new ones or expanded ones— is a time-tested strategy for boosting investment and generating new jobs in an area. The MRA expansion area already has a number of assets that could contribute to this strategy:

- Several establishments have said they would like to expand if adequate, reasonably-priced space was available: the bookstore, the public library, and the garden store. Each needs a different type of space.
- More than 1,000 residents in the zip code area reportedly are self-employed. Some may be home-based businesses ready to move into another space if it were available.
- There is a good supply of vacant lots that could be built on as well as abandoned buildings that could be rehabilitated for space.

- Technical assistance for navigating City Hall and start-up money is available through the Southwest Team for Entrepreneurial Success (STEPS). The STEPS program in the area is a non-governmental organization based on the Sirolli Institute model that works to create wealth from within communities by nurturing the intelligence and resourcefulness of community members, such as by facilitating home-based businesses.
- There is a recently organized Albuquerque Independent Business Alliance in the City that promotes local businesses and offers seminars, workshops, and other training opportunities.
- The example and leadership set by the Endorphin Power Company, strategically located near the county Metropolitan Assessment and Treatment Services (MATs) facility, in innovatively addressing the recurring problems of substance abuse in the City.
- An energetic and committed group of neighborhood leaders.

There are also challenges in the area that constrain this strategy, including

- Burglaries and break-ins of businesses, particularly over night.
- The perception—and sometimes reality—of safety issues for customers. A lack of adequate lighting in places contributes to this problem.
- The lack of a business organization in the area.
- Vacant, sometimes boarded, storefronts, lots, marginal businesses and nonprofits, weeds and trash.
- Asking prices or rents for property that may be unrealistically high for the area.

Catalyst MR projects might be able to provide expansion space at a lower cost by facilitating development of vacant lots or rehabilitating abandoned and deteriorated buildings. They could help improve safety by improving lighting along major pedestrian corridors. Other components of strategies 2-4 would have to be addressed by the neighborhood and business community, such as obtaining more police presence, starting a business organization that could help address common problems, and making sure City building codes controlling weeds, trash, and other unsightly blight are enforced on vacant and abandoned property.

**Redevelopment Strategy 5. Tax Increment Financing. This strategy allows the difference in property taxes before and after redevelopment to be channeled back to the MRA to finance more improvements within the district.**

The Near Heights MRA can benefit from the Implementation tools of Tax Increment Financing by:

- Once the Plan is approved and a project is identified within the MRA, the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency shall notify the county assessor and taxation and revenue department of the taxable parcels (lots) within the designated project.



- Upon notification by the MRA, both government agencies shall identify the parcels within the MR project and certify the net taxable value of the properties at the time of the notification as the base value for the distribution of the property tax code (7-35-1 NMSA 1978).
- If by acquisition by the MRA, the property becomes tax-exempt, when the parcel becomes taxable again the MRA shall notify the county assessor and the taxation and revenue department of the parcels of property that because of their rehabilitation or other improvements are to be revalued for tax purposes.
- Current tax rates shall be applied to the new taxable value. The amount by which the revenue received exceeds that which would have been received by application of the same rates to the base value before inclusion in the MR project shall be credited to the municipality and deposited in the MR fund.
- The procedures specified above shall be followed annually for a maximum period of twenty years following the date of notification of inclusion of the property as coming under the transfer provisions of this section.

## B. Selection of Opportunity Sites

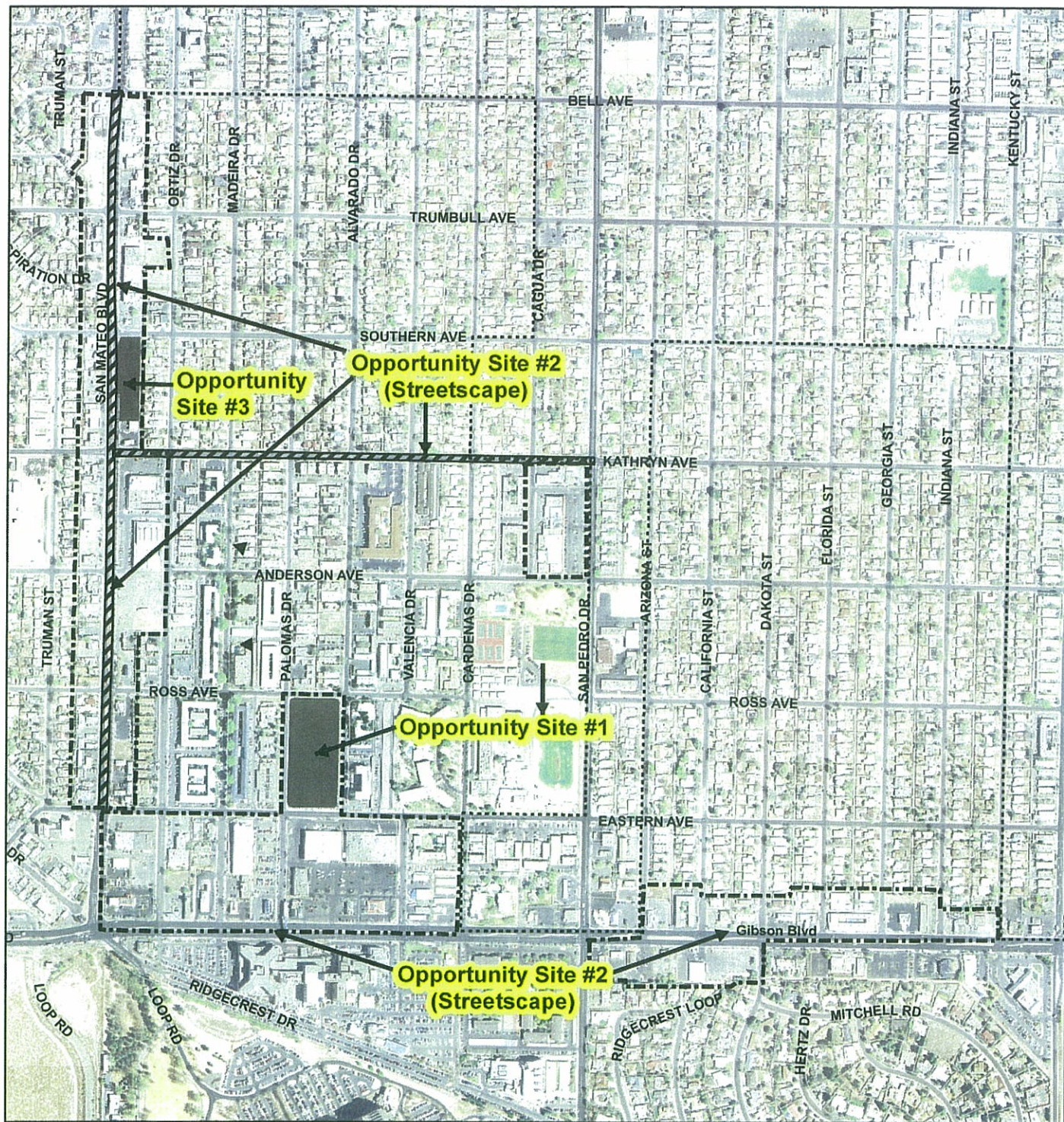
Opportunity sites were chosen through a collaborative process involving City staff, the public and the consultant team with the above strategies as well as by the following criteria in mind:

- Potential as a catalyst for future development in the area.
- Vacant land or deteriorated building with a willing and reasonable seller.
- Potential to interest a developer with financial capability.
- Potential to eliminate blight and prevent future deterioration of property values.

A number of sites were presented to the community on maps and discussed. The following sites were selected during the community charrette when participants brainstormed and came up with ideas and potential designs for the sites. The three sites are:

1. 3.7 vacant acres at Eastern Ave./Alvarado St. corner
2. San Mateo Blvd./Kathryn Ave./Gibson Blvd. streetscapes
3. Vacant lots on the east side of San Mateo Blvd. at Southern Ave.

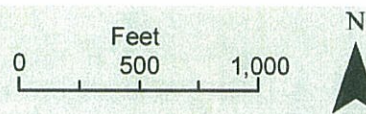




- ..... Existing MRA Boundary
- ..... MRA Expansion Area Boundary
- Opportunity site - parcel
- ▨ Opportunity site - streetscape



Figure 4. Opportunity Sites





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