

Silver Hill HO Zone Request & Resolution 270-1980

The City of Albuquerque Planning Department requests a zone map amendment to apply the Historic Overlay Zone to most of the Silver Hill Historic District. The district lies within the Silver Hill neighborhood in the University Neighborhoods Sector Development Plan area. The Silver Hill Historic District is listed in the New Mexico Register of Cultural Properties and National Register of Historic Places. The request to map the Historic Overlay Zone in Silver Hill complies with the policies of R-270-1980 as follows:

- A. The requested zone change will contribute to the health, safety, and general welfare of the neighborhood, community, and city in the following ways:
- Involve the City of Albuquerque Landmarks and Urban Conservation Commission in decisions on the alteration and demolition of existing buildings, and construction of new buildings in the Silver Hill Historic District. The Commission's powers and duties include making "decisions on applications for Certificates of Appropriateness for alteration, new construction, or demolition," in accordance with The Landmarks and Urban Conservation Ordinance.
 - Promote appropriate treatment of the exterior, publicly visible distinctive characteristics of the Silver Hill Historic District by adopting and applying specific development guidelines for the area.
 - Preserve the distinctive characteristics of an area of the city with historic and architectural significance, and the educational value that derives from its significance.
- B. The requested mapping of the Historic Overlay Zone will not change permissive uses in the area, but by emphasizing the preservation of existing buildings and characteristics it will help stabilize the area.
- C. The requested zone change will be in accordance with the applicable goals and policies of the governing ranked plans, as follows:

Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan

"Section II.5. HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Goal is to protect, reuse, or enhance significant historic districts and buildings."

Policy a

Efforts to provide incentives for the protection of significant districts and buildings shall be continued and expanded.

Possible techniques include the following:

“3) Amend City and County Ordinances to preserve designated structures.”

Policy b Research, evaluation, and protection of historical and cultural properties in the City and County shall be continued.

Possible techniques include the following:

“2) Nominate additional qualifying historic districts and properties to State and Federal Registers.”

Note: Silver Hill Historic District was nominated and listed in both registers in 1986.

“4) Map the Historic Overlay Zone in qualifying historic districts.”

Note: Silver Hill Historic District has qualified for the Historic Overlay Zone since 1986, but this is the first application to map the HO Zone there.

“Section II.9. COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND URBAN DESIGN

The Goal is to preserve and enhance the natural and built characteristics, social, cultural and historical features that identify Albuquerque and Bernalillo County sub-areas as distinct communities and collections of neighborhoods.”

“Policy b In each Community Area, strategic planning, neighborhood planning, development and redevelopment shall be evaluated in light of its relationship to an effect upon the following:

- 1) The natural environment (*partial list*)
 - Topography and landscape features such as arroyos, the Rio Grande and bosque, the foothills, and escarpments
- 2) Built environment (*partial list*)
 - Height and massing of buildings
 - Setbacks from the street
 - Placement of entrances and windows
 - Landscaping materials, both planting and hardscape
 - Relationship between built and natural environment
- 3) Local history (*partial list*)
 - Architectural styles and traditions
 - Current and historic significant significance to Albuquerque”

University Neighborhoods Sector Development Plan, 1986

The Sector Development Plan recommended the Silver Hill Historic District's listing in the State and National registers of Historic Places, and both registers listed the district in 1986. Listing in either register, however, does not protect the historic buildings and other characteristics of the district from demolition or inappropriate alteration, leaving the preservation of the district largely to chance.

Another recommendation of the University Neighborhoods Sector Development Plan (No. 4, p. 49) reads, "The City and affected property owners should consider the development of an Urban Conservation or Historic Overlay Zone for the Silver Hill district area." The City did not act on this recommendation between 1986 and 2006, but now it appears imperative.

In 2006, a historic house in the district was demolished and replaced with a new building inconsistent with the area's historic character. The City enacted a moratorium on residential permits in Silver Hill and began a study whose purposes included seeking "standards and controls to prevent inappropriate new development" in the area. During early 2007, the City gathered public opinion and that of a task force in a series of meetings. The City then discussed its options with planning and historic architectural consultants. The City concluded that the only viable way to protect the Silver Hill Historic District from inappropriate new development was to map the Historic Overlay Zone. The Historic Overlay Zone (and related City Landmark designation) is the City's only regulatory deterrent to demolition of privately owned historic buildings.

- D. Mapping the Historic Overlay Zone is more advantageous than not mapping it, when a historic area is threatened but potentially protected under historic resource/preservation policies in the governing ranked plans. Twenty years after the National-Register listing of the Silver Hill Historic District in 1986, its distinctive character was harmed by two demolitions in 2006 and 2007. These were apparently the first demolitions of the district's historically contributing houses since 1986. At least one other demolition is contemplated by a property owner, indicating a destructive trend that the City has the authority to control.

The 2006 and 2007 demolition sites were redeveloped with new construction that, however high-quality in other aspects, is inconsistent with the historic district's distinctive characteristics. Had the Historic Overlay Zone been mapped beforehand, even if the demolitions had been approved, the City could have controlled the character of the new buildings for an appropriate degree of consistency with their historic neighbors. Achieving such consistency is more advantageous than not doing so in a historic district whose significance and value are collective in nature.

- E. The requested zone map amendment, a historic overlay, will change no permissive uses and do no harm to the adjacent property, neighborhood, or the community.
- F. The request will result in no un-programmed capital expenditures by the City.
- G. The applicant does not expect land costs or other economic considerations to determine the outcome of the request.
- H. The applicant does not seek to justify apartment, office, or commercial zoning in this request.
- I.& J. The request does not constitute a spot zone or a strip zone.