

Commercial Stabilization and Neighborhood Development for Albuquerque's West Central Corridor

Community Input and Proposals from the University of New Mexico Fall 2010 Advanced Planning Studio

Introduction

In Fall 2010, graduate students enrolled in the Advanced Planning Studio of the Community & Regional Planning Program at the University of New Mexico collaborated with the West Central Community Development Group (WCCDG) to produce a redevelopment plan for the West Central Ave. and Old Coors Blvd. corridors.



Students engaged in a community-based planning process that included an analysis of existing conditions, community outreach, and the development of design and policy recommendations.

Community-based planning for economic stabilization and neighborhood development along the West Central and Old Coors corridors can invigorate the economic, cultural, recreational and visual assets of these historic thoroughfares and achieve objectives advocated for by the WCCDG.

The following presentation outlines the community outreach process and outcomes, and presents a sampling of proposals specific to the West Route 66 Corridor.

Community Input

The 2010 UNM Fall Planning Studio class undertook several efforts to obtain community feedback about neighborhood assets, challenges and opportunities.

Two key activities were a community charrette held at the Alamosa Multi-Service Center on Sept. 25, 2010 and a survey distributed to business owners in the area.

General Perceptions

- The general perception of the community, as described by residents, is that it is home to hard-working people and has the potential to overcome negative perceptions.

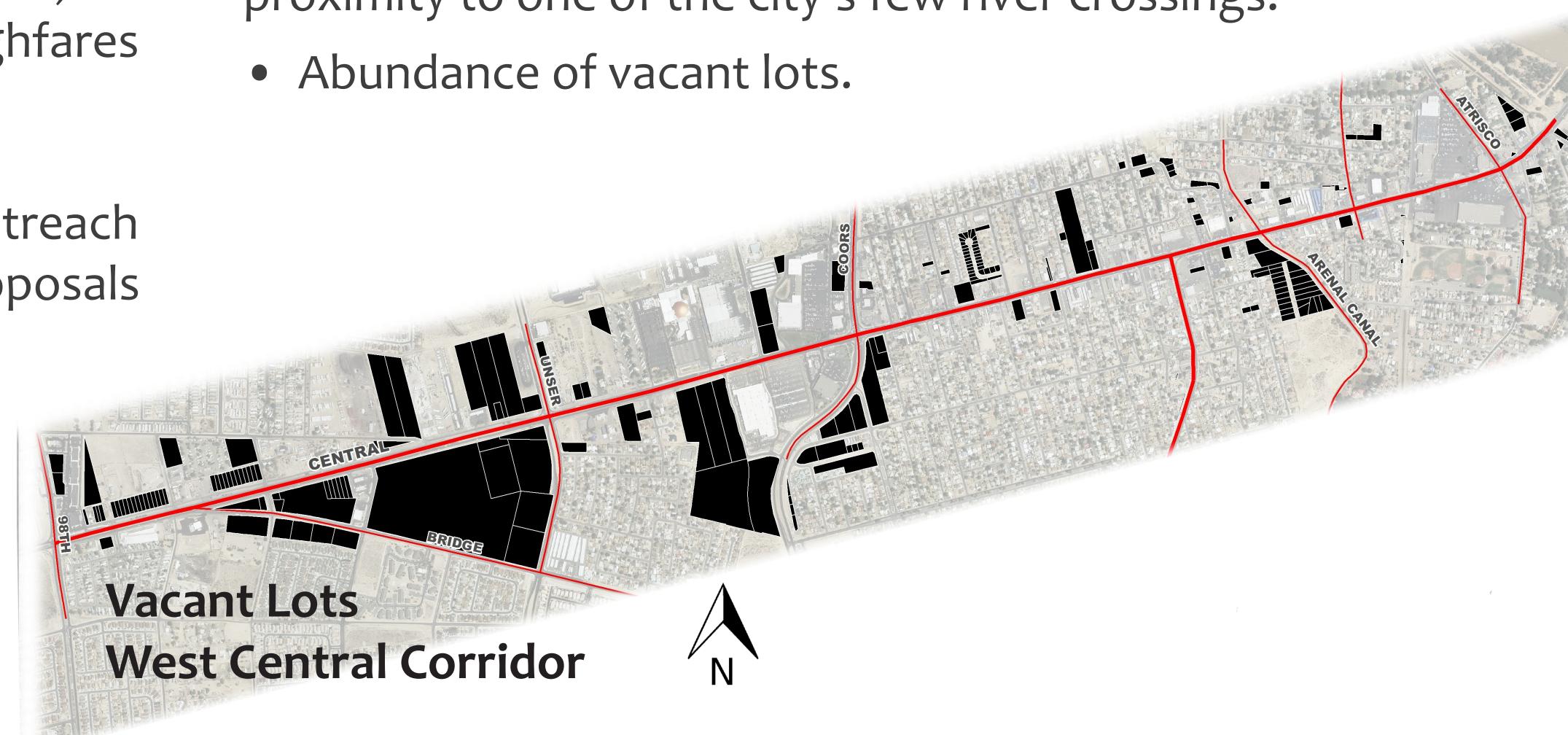


- Many articulated the opinion that safety in the area was improving, however, and that parks and community centers have enhanced the area greatly.

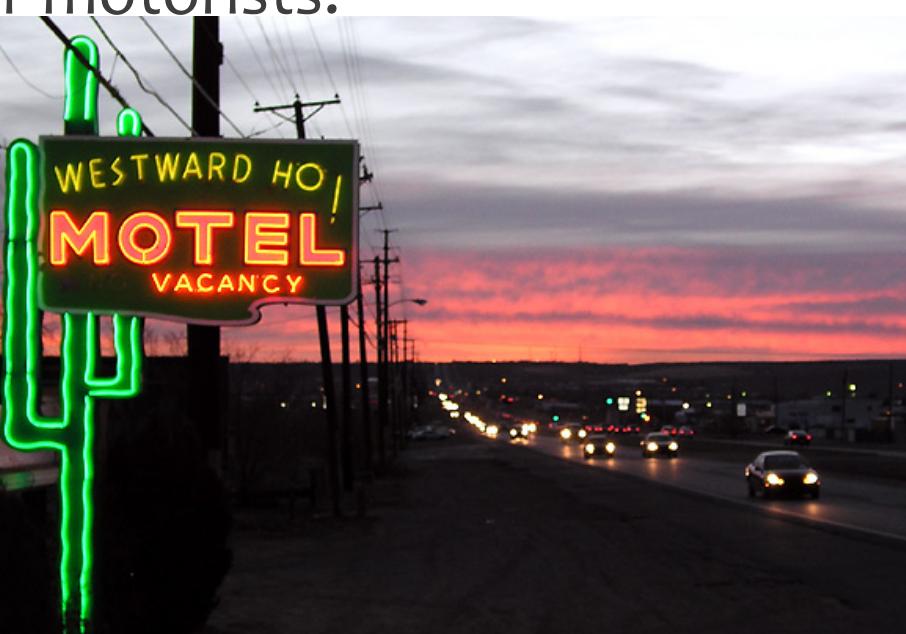
Issues and Opportunities

- Lack of economic and business diversity in the area.
- Long travel times in order to reach common amenities to which most people in urban regions have access.
- Need for training in technical fields to improve job opportunities for local youth.

- Some parks, such as Alamosa Park, are suffering from overuse, evidenced by trash and graffiti.
- Lack of formal trails and maintenance in the Rio Grande State Park's west bank contributes to feelings of unease among recreational users, in contrast to the more developed infrastructure on the east side of the river.
- Lack of connectivity between neighborhood areas and other parts of the city.
- Placement of key changeover bus stops, such as those at Central and Coors, causes riders to jaywalk through medians and high traffic to make connections.
- High proportion of affordable housing in proportion to middle-income, senior or student housing.
- Poorly-maintained sidewalks, infrastructure such as utility poles blocking sidewalk travel
- Impediments to transportation, such as awkwardly designed intersections and traffic congestion caused by proximity to one of the city's few river crossings.
- Abundance of vacant lots.



- Inadequate street lighting
- High traffic speeds, causing dangerous conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists and other motorists.



Community Desires

- Protection of views.
- More accessible outdoor recreational spaces in the Rio Grande Bosque and along the numerous canal systems that pass through the area.
- More big box retailers (namely Target or Lowe's), family-oriented restaurant chains (Applebee's, Olive Garden), specialty stores (Bed, Bath and Beyond), and youth-oriented entertainment (such as a movie theater, roller rink, bowling alley or game center).

- Improved connectivity between neighborhoods.
- Demolition or redevelopment of old travel hotels along the corridor.
- Development of tourist amenities and attractions, capitalizing on the Route 66 theme, to bring visitors and commerce to the area.
- Assistance to small- and medium-sized businesses to encourage growth, increased access to banking options.



Selected Recommendations

The following is a selection of recommendations specific to the West Route 66 Corridor from the Fall 2010 UNM Fall Advanced Planning Studio.

Economic Development

- Assess and strengthen cultural institutions, participants and resources to build community capital.
 - Promote non-predatory community financial services, such as a community development credit union.
 - Develop space for local creative activity and the sale of locally produced art, food and other goods.
 - Create neighborhood commercial centers and districts.
 - Assembly of land parcels for redevelopment.
 - Attract new business with incentives in return for Community Benefits Agreements that help guarantee local hiring.



Proposal for infill development at Central and Old Coors



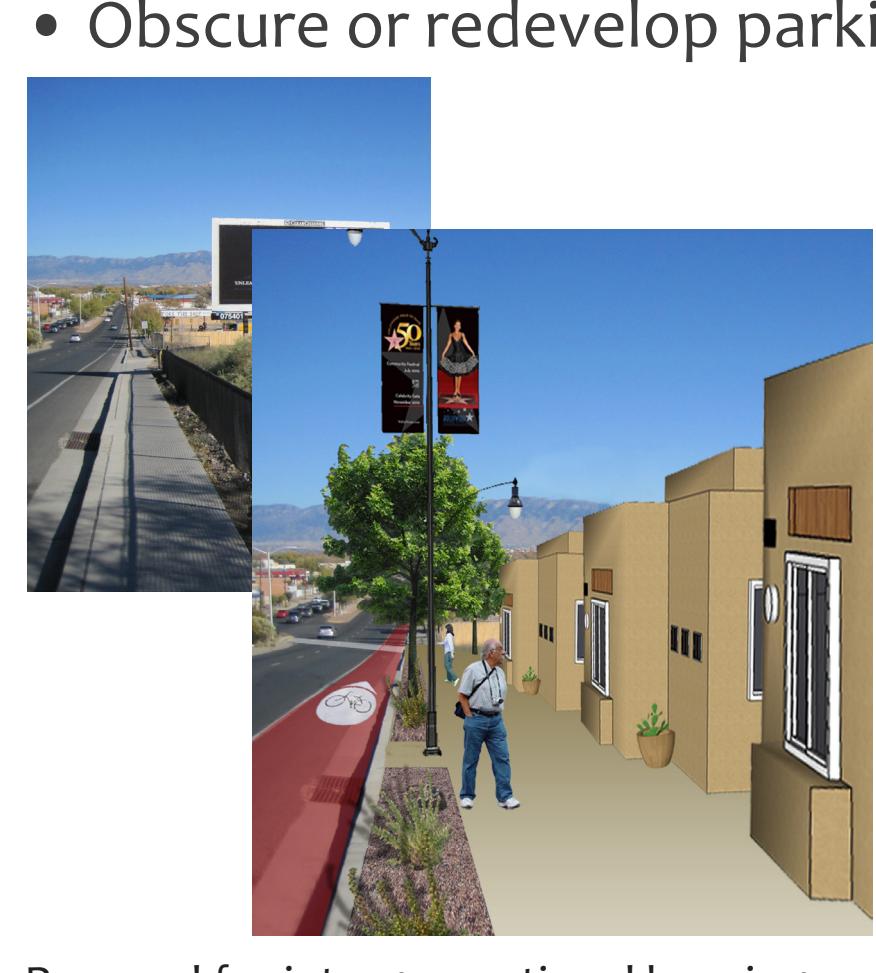
Proposal for infill development at 57th Street

Community Development

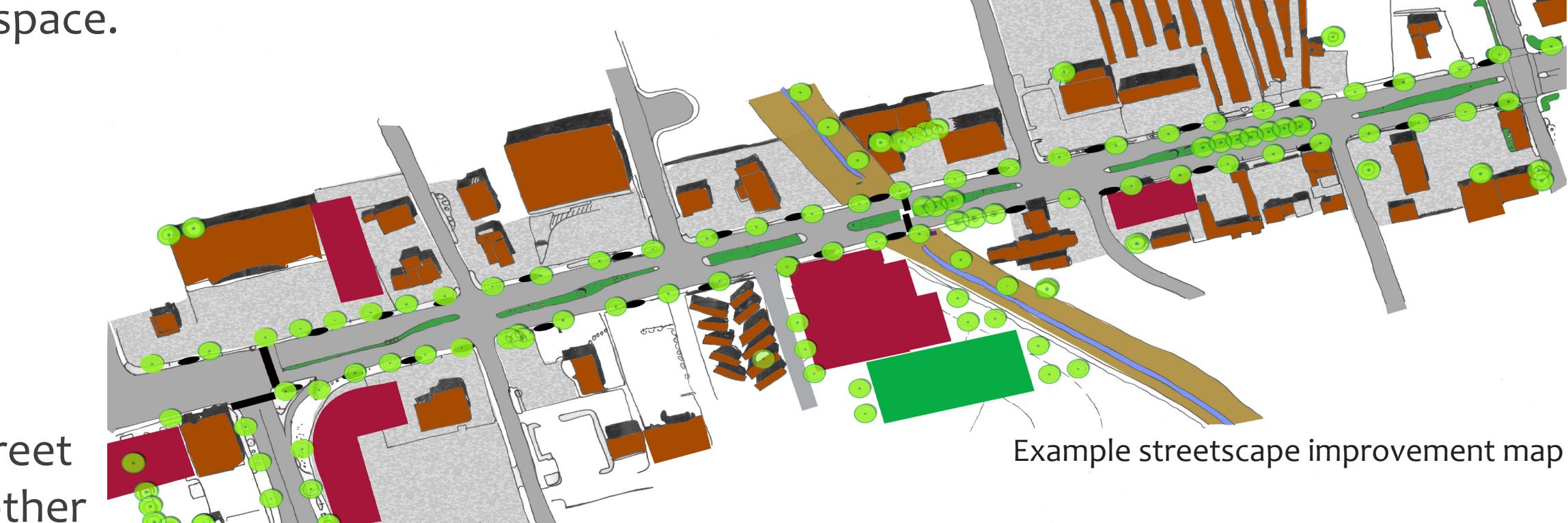
- Promote community health, wellness, and safety
- Encourage intergenerational space in the community, including residential and community garden facilities.
- Celebrate local histories and cultures by providing local artisan or museum space.

Streetscape

- Utilize cohesive design elements to enhance streetscape along the corridors.
- Obscure or redevelop parking lot frontages.



Proposal for intergenerational housing



Example streetscape improvement map



Unser Crossing planview and perspective

Open Space & Recreation

- Strengthen the link between the West Central Corridor and surrounding neighborhoods to the existing natural systems in the area.

- Open acequias and other canal facilities to pedestrians.

- Create "Art Walk" facility on west side of Rio Grande State Park at the Central Ave. Bridge.

Transportation

- Enhance connectivity and mobility for area pedestrians, cyclists and transit users.
- Improve walkability by promoting mixed-use development and by buffering pedestrian realms from high-traffic areas where appropriate.
- Re-engineer select intersections, such as Central, Yucca and Old Coors, to improve traffic flows and safety of other users.
- Reduce traffic speeds.



Proposed Street Reconfiguration, Central, Old Coors and Yucca



Proposed infill development at KMart site, Central and Atrisco

Opportunity Sites and Key Infill Locations

The community has identified several "Opportunity Sites" to build community controlled economic stabilization in the West Central community. Catalyst projects at these sites could serve as seeds for growth to create and maintain capital within the community and allow people the opportunity to live, work, and recreate here. The following opportunity sites and key infill locations have been identified: Atrisco Plaza; Central Ave. and Old Coors. Dr. SW; and Central Ave. and Unser Blvd.



Example streetscape improvement map



Unser Crossing planview and perspective