

1 **EL PASEO/SOUTH SOLANO AD HOC COMMITTEE**
2 **CITY OF LAS CRUCES**
3 **January 21, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.**

4
5 **MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tessa Abeyta-Stuve, City Councilor, District 2
6 Justin Bannister, New Mexico State University
7 Johana Bencomo, City Councilor, District 4
8 Luis Campos, New Mexico State University
9 Joseph Fuemmeler, District 3
10 Gabriel Jacquez, Las Cruces Public Schools
11 David G. Lynch, District 6
12 Gloria Martinez, Las Cruces Public Schools
13 Crystal McCaslin, District 5
14 Orlando Padilla, District 4
15 Ariana Parsons, District 1
16 Jake Redfearn, Community Member/Local Businessman
17 Sharon Thomas, Community Member
18 Karen Trujillo, Las Cruces Public Schools
19 Gabe Vasquez, City Councilor, District 3
20

21 **MEMBERS ABSENT:** David Armijo, SCRTD
22

23 **STAFF PRESENT:** David Weir, Deputy Director Community Planning
24 Mark Miller, Planner
25 Cruz Ramos, Economic Development Specialist
26 Audrianna Sambrano, Administrative Assistant
27

28 **OTHERS PRESENT:**
29

30 **I. CALL TO ORDER (3:01 p.m.):** Chair Vasquez called the meeting to order.
31

32 **II. CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** There was none.
33

34 **III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA:** Motion to accept the agenda by Board Member
35 Bencomo, seconded by Board Member Abeyta-Stuve. Motion passes.
36

37 **IV. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:**
38

39 **a. December 17, 2020 Meeting:** Motion to accept the agenda by Board Member
40 Padilla, seconded by Board Member Bencomo. Motion passes.
41

42 **V. DISCUSSION ITEMS:**
43

44 **a. Study and implantation area boundary confirmation:** David Weir reminded
45 the Board that during their first meeting they had discussed and reached
46 agreement on boundary areas. A map was shown of the overlays that the

1 Committee agreed on. The focus of the Committee is revitalization of both the
2 corridors, El Paseo and the South Solano areas. Staff believes the Mesquite
3 Historic District and the University District areas would be impactful to the whole
4 study area. A concern about overlays on top of overlays was brought up and
5 since the Committee is concentrating on the two corridors, if suggestions are
6 made to original overlays staff will follow the existing procedures and
7 ordinances .
8

9 **b. Development Vision - Plan Recommendations:** A task in the resolution was
10 to evaluate and review the vision and policies and actions that were in existing
11 plans for the area.
12

13 **1. Elevate Las Cruces - Future Development Program (Place-Types):**
14 Mark Miller went over Elevate Las Cruces' Future Development Program.
15 This program utilizes a place-based approach as opposed to use-based.
16 A policy is to "Create consistency between Elevate Las Cruces Future
17 Development Program recommendations and development regulations."
18 Mark Miller emphasized two of the place types, which are not parcel
19 specific, but have approximate boundaries, urban neighborhood place
20 type and suburban neighborhood place type. Each has various
21 development strategies, one for the urban is to promote higher
22 development intensities along major thoroughfares, and one for suburban
23 is to allow for centers of employment along major corridors. The future
24 development map shown is with town centers, possible neighborhood
25 centers, and mixed use corridors. Neighborhood centers are mixed use,
26 and supported by the surrounding neighborhoods. A development
27 strategy is to create a development character that mixes land uses with
28 individual parcels and buildings.
29

30 Mixed-use corridors, active public realms with buildings to frame the street
31 and create an active area. A development strategy would be to construct
32 transitional high-density residential development along roadways that
33 provide access to lower-density single-family development. The mixed-
34 use corridor has a few specific actions that are applicable, "Explore the
35 development of new incentives to encourage development along the
36 mixed-use corridors," "Incorporate form-based districts or concepts into
37 a refined Las Cruces land development code to apply place type overlays
38 and create consistency between existing City zoning overlays," "Apply the
39 mixed-use corridor zoning district to property flanking the thoroughfares
40 where depicted on the Future Development Map through a remapping
41 process or on a case-by-case basis such as a floating zone." At the
42 present time there is no direct mixed-use category or zoning category in
43 the zoning ordinance, but there are processes that can address that. Also
44 this entire study area is within the Infill area.
45

1 Board Member Lynch mentioned that on December 21, 2020 the City
2 Council passed a resolution to join Age Friendly and Livable Community
3 network. Board Member Lynch stated on December 21 the City Council
4 passed a resolution to join Age Friendly and Livable Community network,
5 and he would suggest that maybe in a following meeting go over the eight
6 domains of livability for reference. Board Member Thomas stated she
7 heard about a missing middle development that is to the west of El Paseo
8 where it is more suburban. Mark Miller stated there is specific action in
9 the suburban place types which is primarily single-family and need to keep
10 the character of the neighborhoods, and that missing middle should be
11 allowed in those areas. Missing middle housing means the space
12 between the multifamily apartment complex and the single-family house,
13 including duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes. Chair Vasquez stated
14 development of incentives for these two corridor areas, how to spur
15 development with businesses that serve the surrounding communities
16 based on the needs of those communities to encourage the leasing of the
17 vacant buildings, but also existing commercial and retail property really
18 could benefit from façade improvements, structural improvements, etc.
19 Board Member Thomas stated another reason to push for the missing
20 middle is we do not have the density to support the kind of commercial for
21 these corridors. She also asked for information on numbers of density
22 that supports commercial. David Weir also stated that will help support
23 the transit with neighborhood employment centers, commercial centers.
24 Chair Vasquez stated we do not have the pedestrian infrastructure or the
25 pedestrian culture that encourages walking to the strip malls/center.
26

- 27 **2. El Paseo Corridor Blueprint:** David Weir stated this was started 10-12
28 years ago from a federal grant from EPA and HUD, focused on public
29 engagement, and creation of vision that the neighborhood and adjacent
30 areas to see achieved for the area. An additional grant for realizing El
31 Paseo awarded and it identified projects to improve the neighborhood and
32 things to encourage reinvestment in the general vicinity, and make it
33 vibrant corridor. The vision highlights included a neighborhood built on
34 shared ideas and common desires for economic growth and healthy living,
35 and a thriving transit-oriented area where businesses, residents, visitors,
36 and City work together to keep it sustainable with all modes of
37 transportation: pedestrian, bicycles, transit and automobiles, and all
38 citizens of the community can enjoy. The goals included being a safe,
39 user-friendly corridor, support diverse land use and housing types,
40 flexibility in regulation and use of buildings, become a pleasant place
41 visually with its own sense of place and identity, development that is
42 sustainably environmentally sensitive, and supports a healthy lifestyle.
43 Also a series of actions were noted which included review of development
44 regulations/zoning and consideration of a form-based code for that area,
45 any redevelopment considers a complete street concept so that includes
46 all modes transportation for the development. Redevelopment would

1 include affordable housing and green infrastructure and incentives for
2 redevelopment.

3
4 Board Member Parsons mentioned that this corridor is right up against the
5 Downtown area/the Arts and Culture District, which emphasizes retail,
6 entertainment and food and beverage businesses and activities. She is
7 wondering if there is an opportunity to think of supplemental services or
8 another service type that would play into that ongoing project of
9 Downtown, business services, office buildings, office complexes, more 9-
10 5:00 workers then directly adjacent to that dining/entertainment uses. Can
11 there be some exploration of concepts around that? Be diligent in who
12 we are attracting and how to attract those types of services. David Weir
13 stated that that was the intent of efforts that went into El Paseo. And also
14 this ad hoc committee was created to encourage that and get dedicated
15 transit service through that area. He suggested that one recommendation
16 could be how to incentivize the corridors with additional public and private
17 investment. Board Member Parsons questioned being able to really target
18 investment and can the Committee make recommendations on the
19 incentives. David Weir stated that is the role of the Committee. And that
20 each of the monthly discussions will be building on themselves with a
21 future meeting dedicated to a discussion of incentives.

22
23 Board Member Bencomo asked if an advanced transit plan would be
24 discussed more specifically. Also mentioned shaded bus stops, biker
25 friendly streets. David Weir stated that RoadRUNNER Transit and South
26 Central Regional Transit District are participants of the Committee and a
27 more complete discussion of transit will be a part of future meetings.
28 Board Member Abeyta-Stuve asked about the green infrastructure and
29 trying to trap some of the water, was there going to be any major
30 accommodations or things that the City has to deal with or would this be
31 more reliant on the property owners, or combined discussion. David Weir
32 stated the result from the studies and grant, the City hosted a seminar and
33 technical service information was provided and made available to the
34 property owners and businesses along the corridor including technical
35 expertise and knowledge sharing of ways to incorporate green
36 infrastructure. Green infrastructure policies are also in Elevate Las
37 Cruces along with some of the neighborhood plans and in the
38 Sustainability Action Plan, and there is a review of all development codes
39 and design standards that addresses potential drainage treatments. So
40 staff envisions that being incorporated in the upgraded development
41 codes with standards and the appropriate conditions to use green
42 infrastructure.

43
44 Board Member Padilla asked about affordable housing and green
45 infrastructure when looking at El Paseo and Solano, and if multi-story
46 apartments, or what other kind of housing is being looked at. David Weir

1 stated what is being envisioned today is zoning and development
2 standards that would encourage and make it easier to have multistory
3 dwelling units including a mix of uses with residential, office, and retail into
4 one building. Chair Vasquez stated there are vacant lots adjacent to
5 Solano that would be conducive for mix uses but it is currently owned
6 privately. He would like to see a more vibrant use of existing housing
7 stock and possibly convert houses into small businesses or mixed use
8 facilities. Board Member Thomas mentioned that there is a movement
9 across the country that people want to retire in a place that is vibrant,
10 walkable, and has bike lanes and culture and transit, etc. These retirees
11 cannot afford large cities, so they are attracted to small university towns.
12 She mentioned that the transit usage has grown considerably for these
13 communities due to this lifestyle approach.
14

15 **c. Development Patterns (Zoning, Entitlements, Non-Conformities):**

16 David Weir showed a map of the land use inventory for the study areas,
17 and also the zoning map. He mentioned "non-conformities" and how the
18 City approaches and regulates them. The discussion included the
19 balancing act the City has to perform to individual and business property
20 rights with implementing adopted plans and adopted regulations related
21 to the plans since the goal of all zoning ordinances is to implement the
22 vision of that community and meet the desired standards for the
23 community.
24

25 This two corridors are also within the Infill area. This allowed all the
26 development requirements for the defined infill area to be put into one
27 process. The incentive was one meeting or a special meeting to have a
28 project reviewed and approved at one time. Also some of the building
29 fees could be waived. A consultant has been hired to update the zoning
30 approaches; zoning which includes zone code, sign code, zoning map;
31 subdivision which included platting, public improvements, financing; and
32 standards which include drainage, environment, landscaping, streets,
33 traffic, utilities, etc.
34

35 David Weir then provided information related different approaches to land
36 use management, primarily zoning. Las Cruces has had a zoning code
37 since 1930, Euclidean zoning has been the traditional and most utilized
38 approach throughout the USA including Las Cruces. The logic behind
39 Euclidian zoning is to protect residential areas and neighborhoods from
40 noxious uses like industrial and nuisance land uses. There are specific
41 district (zones) identifying land uses such as single-family, multi-family,
42 commercial, office, industrial, and institutional uses. This approach does
43 not always accommodate mixed uses or organic development of a
44 neighborhood, and sometimes it creates difficulty for neighborhoods to
45 change over time. This zoning approach also often takes into
46 consideration the use of the automobile and necessary street network

1 over other modes of transportation. Another land use management
2 approach is overlay zones, which are additional standards or
3 requirements to achieve a goal of the community. The zoning that is on a
4 property remains and those requirements are met, then there are
5 additional standards that are applied to it. Example in Las Cruces include
6 East Lohman Avenue, Avenida de Mesilla, the Infill area, Alameda Depot,
7 South Mesquite, and the University District.

8
9 Pattern zoning is another tool that is considered an overlay. It identifies
10 specific tracts that the City wants to see improved and done with an
11 expedited process. David Weir thinks this would be something the
12 Committee should consider as a method that would conducive for vacant
13 lots or underutilized lots to accommodate affordable housing.

14
15 Floating zones are another tool. This overlay identifies a particular area
16 identified for development encouragement and modifies the standards
17 and/or process for development to encourage development in the
18 identified areas. Once that area is improved or the goals of the floating
19 zoned achieved, they can be applied to another place. The closest we
20 have here in Las Cruces is our Infill area.

21
22 Form-based coding is a land use tool which is to encourage and geared
23 towards creating a sense of place. Less emphasis is placed on the uses
24 and land use districts within area but instead the codes are aimed the
25 buildings and structures to improve the aesthetics, make them desirable
26 places to be. The example here in Las Cruces is the Downtown and
27 University District. Both use form-based coding principles. Mark Miller
28 added that a big picture idea for form-based coding is that it emphasizes
29 form rather than use; so form of the buildings, form of the blocks, and how
30 those interface with the public realm. This is also a tool that is more
31 accommodating to mixed uses within a building. It was emphasized that
32 the different approaches are mutually exclusive.

33
34 Board Member Bencomo asked if the Committee was supposed to pick
35 one of these approaches. David Weir stated that an approach was
36 applicable to the corridors and then recommendations could be made,
37 although that doesn't need to happen today. Board Member Bencomo
38 also asked if there was any research or data that correlates any of the
39 zoning approaches and gentrification. Also issues of safety with the
40 sprawl neighborhoods versus the traditional neighborhood. David Weir
41 stated there is information related to the pros and cons and each zoning
42 approach. He mentioned that what Elevate Las Cruces envisions for the
43 corridor is providing opportunities for residential uses and additional folks
44 in the corridors by accommodating building of second dwelling units,
45 accommodating the use of smaller apartment units, including fourplexes,
46 triplexes, and accommodating a mix of uses within the buildings. Mark

1 Miller stated there are a lot of different forces that go into gentrification,
2 market, etc. Form-based codes do tend to increase the property values
3 is his understanding.
4

5 David mentioned that City Council just reviewed the consolidated plan
6 related to the HUD programs administered by the City, and that he saw
7 that there are enough housing units to house everybody in Las Cruces.
8 There is a gap in what people can afford and that is what needs to be
9 addressed. He also mentioned two sides to the potential harm and
10 benefits from gentrification. It provides an opportunity for new
11 investments and improvements to a neighborhood that assists the entire
12 area by increasing property values throughout. But the trick is to improve
13 the area while not forcing people out of those neighborhoods and
14 displacing them with no alternative to get into housing. We want to see
15 investment in neighborhoods, while not forcing people out of the
16 neighborhoods they want to be in.
17

18 Board Member Parsons asked if there is a cap on increasing property
19 taxes on senior citizen's in Las Cruces. David Weir stated he is not
20 familiar with that. Board Member Parsons stated it would be good to get
21 information on this. This allows for older people who are not selling their
22 homes to not be priced out of their own neighborhoods during
23 revitalization. Chair Vasquez also mentioned rent freezing. Board
24 Member Thomas stated there is some research that cul-de-sac
25 neighborhoods drives all the traffic onto one street causing a much higher
26 possibility that you will be in an accident in those kinds of neighborhoods.
27 She also mentioned when the City was working on Downtown and were
28 asked where is the smart code. Others did not want to invest unless there
29 was a code that was in place for their vision.
30

31 Board Member Redferan mentioned targeting specific industries or
32 businesses to locate on the corridor. He stated there is a tax lightning law
33 on residential, not commercial in New Mexico for seniors, he believes it is
34 either 5% or 7% that property taxes cannot be raise on seniors. He asked
35 for more information on the nonconforming use as there are parcels on El
36 Paseo and Solano that have been vacant for over 12 months. David Weir
37 stated there are two avenues to address the situation; a variance can be
38 requested in some cases with a type of hardship; the other process is Infill,
39 but it would have to be an underutilized or vacant property, and the infill
40 process would then allow numerous development deviation requests to
41 be made. Both of these would require a review by the Planning and
42 Zoning Commission. David Weir mentioned that floating zone would be
43 another good approach to address non-conforming property issues.
44 Examples could include certain type of land use occupancies of buildings
45 in a corridor, that no additional parking is going to be required, waive fees
46 for sign permits, or encourage some similar waivers or variances.

1
2 Chair Vasquez suggested standalone buildings in the concrete parking
3 lots, homes into small retail (jewelry, shoe repair, seamstress). Board
4 Member Bencomo asked for expansion on the floating zones that may
5 favor private development over public interests. David Weir stated it
6 creates a couple of dynamics, treating private development a little bit
7 different in different parts of town. The floating zone could be used for an
8 occupied building and they are wanting improvements, then the infill
9 process can be used. Board Member Bencomo wants to be sure they are
10 providing realistic, doable proposals that are not overly burdensome to
11 developers and investors, and be aware not to push people out. There
12 are people that want to invest in the community and how do we provide
13 options for them to be able to do so in a way that is affordable to them and
14 still meets the needs of the community.
15

16 Board Member Parsons stated wanting everything in an area. She asked
17 if there was a way to drill down to figure what they are really looking for
18 and be sure the stakeholders and that the zoning meets their needs.
19 Board Member Redferan stated it would be useful to the City to reach out
20 to Tierra Del Sol, NMFA and get their visuals.
21

22 Board Member Thomas stated El Paseo and Solano are quite different.
23 El Paseo can support a lot more occupancy along the corridor, and she
24 could see two, three, or four story buildings along there and increase the
25 density. Solano has more small family owned kind of stores, and she
26 believes it is more about Solano developing a character, destination kind
27 of approach. Also do a couple of pop-up things along Solano. Board
28 Member McCaslin mentioned vacant big box spaces that are piling up that
29 are not mentioned under the desirable feel, and how to help those spaces.
30

31 Chair Vasquez reiterated mentions of putting up public art, entry arch.
32 Also mentioned bringing businesses together to find out how they want to
33 brand their business district. Facilitating home retail businesses in
34 residential areas. He would prefer to nail down some zoning
35 recommendations from this Committee to take to the Policy Review
36 Committees and to the Planning and Zoning Commission in the future.
37 Mark Miller stated they are working on an Elevate Las Cruces site that
38 would provide information to the public and some of that would be sub-
39 sites for specific projects.
40

41 **d. Infill Projects:** See above.

42
43 **e. Group Discussion: Overview of Zoning Approaches:** See above.
44

45 **VI. NEXT MEETING:**
46

1 a. **February 18, 2021:**

2

3 **VII. PUBLIC COMMENT:** There was none.

4

5 **VIII. ADJOURNMENT (5:05 p.m.)**

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10

11

Chairperson

Date