

**Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency (MRA)
East Gateway Metropolitan Redevelopment Area
Business Person's Meeting Minutes
4/29/10**

Manzano Mesa Multi-Generational Center Rm #3

Attending Staff:

Cynthia Borrego, Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency Division Manager, MPA
Gabriel Rivera, Project Manager, COA Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency
Susan Vigil, Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency Intern
Pat Montoya, Director of the Office of Neighborhood Coordination

Guest Speaker:

Brian Morris, Director of the Down Town Action Team

Attending Public Representatives:

Representative James White
Isaac Padilla, Policy Analyst for City Councilman Don Harris, District 9

**1) Introductions and Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Orientation,
Cynthia Borrego, MRA Division Manager MPA**

Cynthia Borrego began the meeting by introducing attending staff, Representative James White and Mr. Isaac Padilla, City Council District 9 Policy Analyst. Ms. Borrego then briefly explained how a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area is formed. A redevelopment area is designated by identifying conditions for revitalization through public meetings held with affected communities. These conditions include:

- a substantial number of deteriorating structures on sites
- Unsafe conditions
- Lack of adequate zoning enforcement
- Obsolete and impractical planning and platting
- Low levels of commercial activity and redevelopment

Once an area is approved for redevelopment by City Council and the Mayor, a redevelopment plan is drawn from public meetings with residents, and business owners. Redevelopment plans may include recommendations such landscaping, or wider sidewalks, lighting, improving public rights of way, and retail development. Examples of previous MRA catalyst projects can be observed in the Ta Lin market on Louisiana and Central or the purchase of the former Blue Spruce property on the South-East corner of Alcazar and Central. There are plans to redevelop this property as neighborhood retail through a public-private partnership. The Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency is able to achieve new developments in redevelopment areas through the use of

public-private partnerships, as well as impact fee waivers, Government Obligation Bonds, and Tax Increment Financing, which captures tax revenues from area improvements for a set period of time to be reinvested in the area. Eminent Domain, or the power to cease property for public welfare, is not within the MR Agencies power. Once drafted, the Redevelopment plan must be approved by the Albuquerque Development Commission, City Council and the Mayor before it may be implemented.

Meeting attendees questioned how the East Gateway MRA boundaries were originally determined, and why there is an empty section in the middle of the East Gateway MRA which is excluded from the designated area. Gabriel Rivera answered that the referred to area omitted East Gateway MRA section at Glenridge Park Ln. West, Linn Ave. North, Burma Dr. East, and Skyline Rd. North, is a residential area. Early in the MRA designation process, home owners decided to direct the MRA boundaries to include only commercial properties. Mr. Rivera noted that he is receiving more and more requests from parties interested in being included in the MRA area, as the benefits of inclusion become increasingly apparent.

At previous East Gateway MRA Public Meetings, information was requested on organizing a business representative body. This April 29th, MRA Business Owners meeting facilitates the previous MRA meeting attendees request with expert speakers from the City of Albuquerque Office of Neighborhood Coordination and from the Down Town Action Team. Redevelopment Initiatives are greatly enhanced by the organization and dedication of communities affected and working in the area.

2.) City of Albuquerque Office of Neighborhood Coordination(ONC) –ONC Division Manager Pat Montoya

Mr. Montoya explained the requirements and benefits to organizing as a recognized business or neighborhood association with the City of Albuquerque Office of Neighborhood Coordination (ONC) as mandated by City Ordinance O-92. The Office of Neighborhood Coordination administers 34 registered neighborhood associations, and 4 business associations. City of Albuquerque registered business associations are found on North Edith, West Central, and North 4th Street.

A group should decide on boundaries and a mission to begin the process of ONC registration. It is inadvisable to cross boundaries with another registered association. Conforming to the ONC's recommendation that registered associations not cross boundaries, currently the entire East Central MRA area has no organized business associations. In addition, there are no neighborhood associations from Juan Tabo east to Tramway along Central. A pre-existing umbrella association exists for the area known as the District 9 East Gateway Coalition of Neighborhoods. This group can be used as a

vehicle for notification and other information for the East Central Corridor Businesses.

A registered business or neighborhood association is required to hold an annual general meeting to elect officers and board members. The ONC must be informed of two contact officers to which official mail and notifications can be sent. The association will draft and submit to the ONC a set of by-laws to be followed by the association. Mr. Montoyo circulated an example of association by-laws. All registered associations are listed on the City web page. This allows another means for organized area associations to interface with City.

Associations registered with The Office of Neighborhood Coordination are notified of all developments affecting the association area and heard before the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC). The Environmental Planning Commission is an official government review board which ensures development plans adhere to zoning codes and that development plans agree with the surrounding area. At the time of the EPC hearing, communities and individuals are given the opportunity to comment on the development proposal. Another benefit to becoming a registered association with the City of Albuquerque is that all liquor applications and special events permits, such as for parades, is announced to affected associations through the ONC. Furthermore, a monthly Neighborhood Newsletter announcing review board meetings by the Development Review Board, City Council, Albuquerque Development Commission, and other official City hearings is circulated to registered associations by the ONC.

An additional benefit of organizing a City registered association includes the right to lobby state and local government bodies for project funding. The North 4th Street merchant group provides an example of effective lobbying. This group lobbied their state legislature and gained funding legislators for a recommended engineering study dictating right-of-ways and street setbacks.

3) Business Survey Results, Gabriel Rivera, Project Manager, COA Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency

To begin, Mr. Rivera asked meeting attendees to introduce themselves and describe their businesses. Businesses ranged from historical Route 66 motel's found on Central to far away medical offices located in Edgewood.

Mr. Rivera described the preliminary results of the East Gateway MRA Business Survey.

Results:

- 1) Most businesses lease the property their business is located on within the East Gateway Boundary
- 2) Customers both walk and drive to area businesses depending on the type of business, rather than available transportation systems.

- 3) Lighting and safety are the primary concerns of area businesses. Ms. Borrego described street lighting variations to include pedestrian scale solar paneled fixtures now installed at Old Albuquerque HS.
- 4) Popular themes for rebranding East Central are “Route 66” and as “Albuquerque’s East Gateway”.
- 5) Many East Gateway MRA area businesses have existed in the area for 30, 40, and 50 years, indicating an established business investment.

4.) Metropolitan Redevelopment Examples and East Gateway MRA applications-Cynthia Borrego, MRA Division Manager, MPA

Examples of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency’s projects in other redevelopment areas illustrate potentials for the East Gateway Area. Redevelopment funds applied toward landscaping benefit the West Central MRA which has many similarities to East Central. The Route 66 archways installed over West Central are another MRA coordinated project.

The Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency is also instrumental in coordinating façade improvements. In addition, the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency is able to purchase properties for preservation and redevelopment, for instance the historic Old Albuquerque High School, which was converted into a mixed use project of lofts and businesses. The MRA coordinated with the Sawmill Housing Trust and MRA to install retail, senior housing, and other improvements.

East Gateway MRA public meetings have identified the boarded up grocery store on the North East corner of Central and Juan Tabo as a possible redevelopment opportunity site. This grocery has been boarded up for the last 6 years. Ms. Borrego urged meeting attendees to preserve because redevelopment takes a long time. For instance the Blue Spruce Bar property was a neighborhood crime magnet for many years before the MRA was able to purchase it and tear it down. Already, there have been some development inquiries into the East Gateway MRA area. Once the community, businesses and city come together to create public pressure, redevelopment begins to occur.

5.) Business Improvement Districts-Brian Morris, Down Town Action Team Director

Mr. Morris described the formation of the Down Town Action Team into a Business Improvement District (BID). The only BID in New Mexico is managed by The Downtown Action Team, though Gallup’s Downtown Area is in the process of forming a BID. Albuquerque’s Downtown BID area ranges from the Rail road tracks to 10th Street to Lomas and Coal. 51% of affected property owners must agree to form a BID for it to be approved by the NM State Legislature. Commercial property owners must agree to a Special Assessment Fee of 5.08 mills which is then reinvested in the area in the form of marketing or other improvements. A BID brings value to an area but entails an additional

economic expense for interested businesses. Larger buildings in an area often enhance the BIDs financial feasibility.

The Downtown Action Team uses BID funds to employ ambassadors on the street, professionals with marketing and economic development expertise. Their team develops special events for the area, including safety measures, and marketing. In addition, The Downtown Action Team coordinates beat officers for special events, and works to remove pan-handlers from area businesses. By assisting area homeless populations, they have been able to remove several Homeless Service Providers in the area.

To conclude the meeting, Ms. Borrego explained that different sources of financing can come together to finance redevelopment in an area. For example, financing may be available from the New Mexico Main Street Program. The EDP area west of I-40 along Central Ave. created a redevelopment plan and elicited \$20,000 for façade improvements. The West Central merchants group obtained a small state legislature grant they used to compose a marketing booklet for their area. Community residents must ask themselves what they want the redevelopment process to look like and how they envision redevelopment will work in their area. What are the possibilities for the East Gateway area? A formal business association or neighborhood group is able to access the ear of the Mayor or Council City more effectively than a single individual and an organized group of invested citizens expedites the redevelopment process.

This meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.