



## ***Environmental Planning Commission***

***Agenda Number: 04  
Project Number: 1000029  
Case #: 14EPC-40063  
January 8, 2015***

### ***Staff Report***

<b><i>Agent</i></b>	COA Planning Department
<b><i>Applicant</i></b>	COA Council Services
<b><i>Request</i></b>	<b>Sector Development Plan Text Amendment (Sawmill/Wells Park)</b> The Sector Plan area bounded by I-40, Rio Grande Blvd. NW, Mountain Rd. & approximately 4 <sup>th</sup> St.
<b><i>Location</i></b>	
<b><i>Size</i></b>	Approximately 504 acres
<b><i>Existing Zoning</i></b>	SU-2 / various
<b><i>Proposed Zoning</i></b>	No change

### ***Staff Recommendation***

***Recommendation of APPROVAL be forwarded to City Council for Case # 14EPC-40063 based on the Findings beginning on Page # 14.***

***Staff Planner***

***Vicente M. Quevedo***

### ***Summary of Analysis***

The request is to amend the text of the Sawmill/Wells Park Sector Development Plan (SWPSDP) primarily as it relates to the street network and streetscape design.

The intent of the proposed amendments is to improve connectivity among the non-industrial uses within the sector development plan area, as well as insulate residential and mixed-use areas from heavy traffic, noise, vibrations, and other environmental impacts of industrial zones.

The request furthers a preponderance of applicable goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and SWPSDP.

The Planning Department requests an Environmental Planning Commission recommendation to City Council to approve the proposed text amendments to the Sawmill/Wells Park Sector Development Plan.

There is no known neighborhood opposition to this request.



***I. AREA CHARACTERISTICS AND ZONING HISTORY***

*Surrounding zoning, plan designations, and land uses:*

	<b><i>Zoning</i></b>	<b><i>Comprehensive Plan Area; Applicable Rank II &amp; III Plans</i></b>	<b><i>Land Use</i></b>
<b><i>Site</i></b>	SU-2	Central Urban Areas; Sawmill/Wells Park SDP; Rio Grande Blvd. Corridor Plan	Residential, commercial, wholesale/warehouse, industrial, transportation/utilities, public/institutional, park
<b><i>North</i></b>	(I-40), various	Central Urban Areas; North Valley Area Plan; Rio Grande Blvd. Corridor Plan; Los Duranes SDP	Public/institutional, commercial, park, residential
<b><i>South</i></b>	H-1, SU-1, SU-2	Central Urban Areas; Downtown Neighborhoods SDP; Rio Grande Blvd. Corridor Plan	Commercial, residential, public/institutional, park
<b><i>East</i></b>	C-2, C-3, M-1	Central Urban Areas; North 4 <sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Plan	Commercial, industrial, transportation/utilities
<b><i>West</i></b>	C-2, SU-1, RC, C-1	Central Urban Areas; Rio Grande Blvd. Corridor Plan; Old Town SDP	Residential, commercial, industrial

***II. INTRODUCTION***

***Request***

The request is to amend the text of the Sawmill/Wells Park Sector Development Plan (SWPSDP) primarily as it relates to the street network and streetscape design. The proposed recommendations are contained in Council Bill R-14-86 passed on August 4, 2014 and are further outlined in an accompanying exhibit document. This exhibit is included as Attachment B to this report. The intent of the proposed amendments is to improve connectivity among the non-industrial uses within the sector development plan area.

***Purpose***

Chapter 6 of the SWPSDP states that the currently recommended street design policies may be re-evaluated as part of a technical analysis to revise the standard right-of-way cross sections for each street category contained within the plan. This was the basis for a transportation network and land-use analysis that was conducted for the area in 2006. This analysis was based on the existing sector plan’s policies, property owners’ intended use of their lands and the impacts of the plan’s original street and right-of-way recommendations.

From this analysis, an interconnected roadway system was developed that seeks to insulate residential and mixed-use areas from heavy traffic, noise, vibrations, and other environmental

impacts of industrial zones. It aims to provide an efficient street system for moving vehicles and pedestrians and conducting commerce in the area. The proposed text amendments to the existing sub-sections 2 and 3 of the SWPSDP expand upon the existing recommendations as intended by the plan. These sub-sections of Chapter 6 are the only sections being amended.

### ***EPC Role***

The task of the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) is to make a recommendation to the City Council regarding the proposed text amendments. The City Council is the City's Zoning Authority and will make the final decision. The EPC is a recommending body with review authority. This is a legislative matter.

## ***III OVERVIEW***

### ***History/Background***

Sawmill / Wells Park is a historic part of the City that has undergone several changes. Different eras in its evolution are reflected in the diversity of land uses and buildings that exist within its boundaries: industry, railroads, small businesses, residential neighborhoods and museums. Lot shapes and sizes vary widely. The street network is discontinuous and hampers convenient movement through the area. Since the SWPSDP adoption in 1996 (Amended 2000 & 2002), there has been a shift from industrial to residential and mixed uses in the northeast and center of the sector plan area as evidenced in new construction and City approvals for new development. More redevelopment is anticipated on some of the remaining large industrial tracts in these same sub-areas.

#### ***Sawmill / Wells Park Sector Development Plan (Rank III)***

The Sawmill/Wells Park Sector Development Plan (SWPSDP) was adopted in 1996 and amended in 2000 and 2002. The SWPSDP generally encompasses properties between Interstate 40 to the north and Mountain Rd. to the south, Rio Grande Blvd. to the west, and properties east of 5<sup>th</sup> St. on the east. Specific boundaries are shown on page 2.

The intent of the SWPSDP is to address the area's most critical issues, foster positive change and reinforce community stability, vitality and character. The Plan adopted SU-2 zoning for the area and provides design regulations for development which are designed to promote community stability and investment that respects the community's character.

#### ***Sawmill / Wells Park Community Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan***

The Sawmill/Wells Park Community Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) Plan was adopted by the City Council in June 2006 (R-06-100). The goal of this MRA Plan is "to create a community that preserves the historic nature of the neighborhood while retaining a livable, walkable, mixed-use, mixed-income and vibrant economic and residential part of Albuquerque."

The New Mexico Metropolitan Redevelopment Code (3-60A-1 to 3-60A-48 NMSA 1978) provides cities with the authority to correct conditions in areas or neighborhoods in order to

reverse the decline and stagnation. However, such authority can only be applied in designed Metropolitan Redevelopment Areas. In 1993, the Sawmill/Wells Park Community MRA boundary was created. As a designated blighted area, Sawmill/Wells Park qualified as appropriate for redevelopment projects under the City's Metropolitan Redevelopment Code.

### ***Context***

The sector development plan boundary adjoins I-40 to the north, Old Town and the downtown residential neighborhoods to the south, an area of commercial and industrial zoning and uses to the east and an area of commercial and residential uses to the west. Much of the land on either side of 12<sup>th</sup> Street north of I-40 and south of Menaul Blvd. has been redeveloped with retail, service and public/institutional uses since the current sector development plan was adopted, which has realized the City's intent for the activity center in that location.

### ***Transportation System***

The Interim Long Range Roadway System (ILRRS) map, produced by the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG), identifies the functional classifications of roadways.

The ILRRS designates Interstate 40 as an Existing Urban Interstate.

The ILRRS designates Rio Grande Blvd., Bellamah Ave. and 12<sup>th</sup> St. as Minor Arterials.

The ILRRS designates Mountain Rd. (west of 4<sup>th</sup> St.) as a Collector street.

Other streets identified in the proposal are existing or future local streets and alleys.

### ***Comprehensive Plan Corridor Designation***

The Comprehensive Plan designates I-40 as an Express Corridor and Rio Grande Blvd. as an Enhanced Transit Corridor. 4<sup>th</sup> Street near the eastern edge of the sector development plan area is designated a Major Transit Corridor.

### ***Trails/Bikeways***

An existing bicycle lane runs north / south along Rio Grande Blvd. and an existing multi-use trail is located along the southern edge of I-40 east of Rio Grande Blvd. to 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

### ***Transit***

Blue Line Rapid Ride Route 790, Route 8 (Menaul Route) and Route 36 (12th Street/ Rio Grande Route) are all part of the transit corridor that serves the sector development plan area.

### ***Public Facilities/Community Services***

The Wells Park park and community center and three museums are within the plan area. A fire station, two police stations and an elementary school are in proximity to its boundary. Transit Routes 8 – Menaul, 21 – Old Town/Downtown Trolley, 36 – 12<sup>th</sup> St/Rio Grande and 790 – Blue Line operate in or near the plan area.

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#### IV. ANALYSIS OF APPLICABLE ORDINANCES, PLANS AND POLICIES

##### *Charter of the City of Albuquerque*

The Citizens of Albuquerque adopted the City Charter in 1971. Applicable articles include:

##### Article I, Incorporation and Powers

“The municipal corporation now existing and known as the City of Albuquerque shall remain and continue to be a body corporate and may exercise all legislative powers and perform all functions not expressly denied by general law or charter. Unless otherwise provided in this Charter, the power of the city to legislate is permissive and not mandatory. If the city does not legislate, it may nevertheless act in the manner provided by law. *The purpose of this Charter is to provide for maximum local self-government.* A liberal construction shall be given to the powers granted by this Charter.” (emphasis added)

##### Article IX, Environmental Protection

“The Council (City Commission) in the interest of the public in general shall protect and preserve environmental features such as water, air and other natural endowments, ensure the proper use and development of land, and promote and maintain an aesthetic and humane urban environment. To affect these ends the Council shall take whatever action is necessary and shall enact ordinances and shall establish appropriate Commissions, Boards or Committees with jurisdiction, authority and staff sufficient to effectively administer city policy in this area.”

***The proposed amendments are exercises in “maximum local self-government” (Article I), which the City Council has authority to implement through legislative action and the establishment of appropriate committees (Article IX). The amendments are intended to further the public interest by seeking to insulate residential and mixed-use areas from heavy traffic, noise, vibrations, and other environmental impacts of industrial zones and providing an efficient street system for moving vehicles and pedestrians and conducting commerce in the area.***

##### *Albuquerque Comprehensive Zoning Code*

The Sawmill/Wells Park Sector Development Plan (1996, amended 2000 and 2002) designated the entire plan area SU-2 Special Neighborhood Zone. The plan established general regulations as well as land use regulations for specific land uses within the plan area.

The proposal constitutes a text amendment only to the sector development plan and is subject to 14-16-4-3(A)(5) – *Sector Development Plan Procedures* of the Zoning Code which refers to the notification and procedures for changes to the text of the Zoning Code 14-16-4-1(D) – *Amendment Procedures*. The EPC is not the approving body, but is charged with making a recommendation to City Council on the proposed amendments.

##### *Albuquerque / Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan*

Policy Citations are in Regular Text; Staff Analysis is in ***Bold Italics***

The subject area is located in the Central Urban portion of the Comprehensive Plan with a Goal to “promote the Central Urban Area as a focus for arts, cultural, and public facilities/activities while recognizing and enhancing the character of its residential neighborhoods and its importance as the historic center of the City”.

However, the Central Urban Area is identified by the Comprehensive Plan as a “portion of the Established Urban Area and as such is subject to policies of section II.B.5. as well as those listed in the Central Urban Area”. The goal of the Established Urban Area is “to create a quality urban environment which perpetuates the tradition of identifiable, individual but integrated communities within the metropolitan area and which offers variety and maximum choice in housing, transportation, work areas and life styles, while creating a visually pleasing built environment”. *The amendments further the Central and Established Urban goals by creating new street connections, improving facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists and enhancing the streetscape environment.* Applicable policies include:

Policy II.B.6.b: Upgrading efforts in neighborhoods within the Central Urban Area should be continued and expanded and linkages created between residential areas and cultural/arts/recreation facilities.

*The amendments propose upgrading streetscapes and connections between residential areas in Sawmill and Wells Park with cultural/arts facilities in Old Town and 12<sup>th</sup> Street/Indian School. Development of an interactive exhibit of the acequia system would revive a historic/cultural feature within the sector development plan area. Therefore, the proposal furthers Policy II.B.6.b.*

Policy II.B.5.k: Land adjacent to arterial streets shall be planned to minimize harmful effects of traffic; livability and safety of established residential neighborhoods shall be protected in transportation planning and operations.

*The amendments do not directly affect land adjacent to arterial rights-of-way in the sector development plan area. They do however take into account the safety of established residential neighborhoods by discouraging cut through traffic from industrial uses and recommending traffic-calming features. The proposal furthers Policy II.B.5.k.*

Policy II.B.5.l: Quality and innovation in design shall be encouraged in all new development; design shall be encouraged which is appropriate to the plan area.

*If approved and implemented, the design recommendations will improve the quality of key street corridors in the area for walking and cycling, while also accommodating vehicles including trucks in the industrialized areas. This design approach is appropriate for the area that has a variety of land uses. Therefore, the proposal furthers Policy II.B.5.l.*

Policy II.B.5.m: Urban and site design which maintains and enhances unique vistas and improves the quality of the visual environment shall be encouraged.

*The street corridor projects will also improve the visual quality of the streetscape environment, which furthers Policy II.B.5.m.*

Policy II.B.5.o: Redevelopment and rehabilitation of older neighborhoods in the Established Urban Area shall be continued and strengthened.

*The street design recommendations, programs, and funding sources will facilitate continued redevelopment and rehabilitation of the older neighborhoods of Sawmill and Wells Park improving connectivity conditions for all modes of travel in the area. The proposal furthers Policy II.B.5.o.*

Policy II.B.5.p: Cost-effective redevelopment techniques shall be developed and utilized. *The proposed amendments recommend establishment of a Tax Increment Development District which would provide an incentive for private development to invest in the area. The proposal furthers Policy II.B.5.p.*

#### *Open Space Network*

Goal: To provide visual relief from urbanization and to offer opportunities for education, recreation, cultural activities and conservation of natural resources by setting aside Major Public Open Space, parks, trail corridors, and open areas throughout the Comprehensive Plan area.

Policy II.B.1.f: A multi-purpose network of open areas and trail corridors along arroyos and appropriate ditches shall be created. Trail corridors shall be acquired, regulated, or appropriately managed to protect natural features, views, drainage and other functions or to link other areas within the Open Space network.

*The proposed amendments recommend implementation of all proposed facilities in the adopted Trails and Bikeways Facility Plan (1993) and Comprehensive On-Street Bicycle Plan (2000), as well as any updates established by the draft Bikeways and Trails Facility Plan (in the adoption process as of Jan. 2015). A recommendation is also included to develop an unpaved trail providing access to Mill Pond Road from the existing paved I-40 multi-use path (which runs parallel to the existing John Baron Burg acequia/ditch) following existing rail rights-of-way. These projects serve to link or connect areas within the Open Space network. Therefore, the proposal furthers Policy II.B.1.f.*

#### *Developed Landscape*

Goal: To maintain and improve the natural and the developed landscapes' quality.

Policy II.C.8.b: Public facilities (including buildings, parks, plazas, utilities, bridges, streets, stadiums and airports) shall be designed to realize opportunities for City/County beautification.

Policy II.C.8.d: Landscaping shall be encouraged within public and private rights-of-way to control water erosion and dust, and create a pleasing visual environment; native vegetation should be used where appropriate.

*Beautification elements are recommended along several roadways within the sector development plan area through landscaping, pedestrian amenities and coordinated design. Therefore the proposed streetscape design furthers the goal and Policies II.C.8.b and II.C.8.d.*

*Transportation and Transit*

Goal: To develop corridors, both streets and adjacent land uses, that provide a balanced circulation system through efficient placement of employment and services, and encouragement of bicycling, walking, and use of transit/para-transit as alternatives to automobile travel, while providing sufficient roadway capacity to meet mobility and access needs.

Policy II.D.4.d: The frequency of driveways along principle and minor arterial streets will be reduced when possible, toward a spacing frequency of one or two drives per 300 feet of frontage on principle arterials, and one or two drives per 200 feet on minor arterials.

*The proposal includes recommendations that limit the number and widths of new driveways on 12<sup>th</sup> Street and on one of the four arterial streets in the sector development plan area, which partially furthers Policy II.D.4.d.*

Policy II.D.4.h: A metropolitan area-wide recreational and commuter bicycle and trail network which emphasizes connections among Activity Centers shall be constructed and promoted.

*The proposed amendments recommend development or study of the following trail and recreational facilities which will improve non-vehicular connectivity throughout the focus area and therefore furthers Policy II.D.4.h:*

- *Development of an unpaved trail providing access to Mill Pond Road from the existing paved I-40 multi-use path following existing rail rights-of-way;*
- *A connection from the intersection of Aspen Road and Mill Pond Road west to Zearing Ave. across the Sawmill Community Land Trust Property;*
- *A trail between Bellamah Ave. and Mountain Road following the existing rail spur right-of-way south of the intersection with 19th Street;*
- *A trail from the intersection of Mill Pond Road and Aspen Avenue, along the east side of the stormwater retention pond that is located south of Zearing, to the intersection of 18th Street and Bellamah Avenue.*
- *Cleanup and improvements to the John Baron Burg acequia, possibly as a formal “Urban Forest” outdoor recreation and interpretive space.*

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Policy II.D.4.i: Street and highway projects shall include paralleling paths and safe crossings for bicycles, pedestrians and equestrians where appropriate.

*The recommended street improvements include wide sidewalks and or pedestrian/bike trail and/or bike lanes and safe crosswalks with refuges or high visibility which further Policy II.D.4.i.*

Policy II.D.4.p: Efficient, safe access and transfer capability shall be provided between all modes of transportation.

*The proposal calls for a denser street network that will make travel through the area more efficient which partially furthers Policy II.D.4.p.*

Policy II.D.4.q: Transportation investments should emphasize overall mobility needs and choice among modes in the regional and intra-city movement of people and goods. This includes providing adequate street capacity and right-of-way to meet access and mobility needs and improving the effectiveness of the existing street system by encouraging bicycling, walking, and use of mass transit in and between the activity centers.

*The proposal is a comprehensive package of projects that improves the movement of pedestrians, cyclists, cars and trucks in the sector development plan area. It promotes additional transit services which increases choice among modes. However, it does not support retaining existing rail spurs within the area for the movement of goods. Therefore, the proposal partially furthers Policy II.D.4.q.*

## V. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENTS

*Current Public Project Design Policies Section Overview (See Attachment A for full text)*

The SWPSDP establishes street design policies for the plan area which are contained in Chapter 6 of the current plan. The goal of these policies is to conserve the historic character of the Sawmill/Wells Park area and to improve street appearance and safety for people walking, bicycling, or using wheelchairs. There are a total of eleven sub-sections included as part of Chapter 6 of the SWPSDP, the proposed amendments replace sub-sections 2 - *Right-of-way and Street Classification* and 3 - *Street Design* of the plan, which begin on page 69.

Current sub-section 2 of the SWPSDP states that existing ROW widths for segments of Mountain Rd., 12<sup>th</sup> St. and Sawmill/Bellamah Rd. shall not exceed 56 ft. The sub-section also outlines maximum right-of-way widths for new industrial area collector, major local and local streets within residential areas. The general intent of sub-section 2 is to prevent existing roadways from being widened for vehicular use and advocates that the additional space within the ROW be obtained for a public sidewalk and landscaping.

Current sub-section 3 of the SWPSDP recommends that the city strongly consider utilizing a set of proposed street cross-sections outlined on page 71 of the plan. The cross-sections outline specific streetscape design elements such as driving lane widths, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and

landscaping that should be included within the right-of-way widths for the roads outlined in sub-section 2. These elements should be implemented during street corridor renovation projects and for new construction.

*Proposed Text Amendments to Public Project Design Policies Section (See attachment B for full text)*

Chapter 6 of the SWPSDP states that the currently recommended street design policies may be re-evaluated as part of a technical analysis to revise the standard right-of-way cross sections for each street category contained within the plan. This was the basis for a transportation network and land-use analysis that was conducted for the area in 2006. This analysis was based on the existing sector plan's policies, property owners' intended use of their lands and the impacts of the plan's original street and right-of-way recommendations.

From this analysis, an interconnected roadway system was developed that seeks to insulate residential and mixed-use areas from heavy traffic, noise, vibrations, and other environmental impacts of industrial zones. It aims to provide an efficient street system for moving vehicles and pedestrians and conducting commerce in the area. The proposed text amendments to the existing sub-sections 2 and 3 of the SWPSDP expand upon the existing recommendations as intended by the plan.

The amendments propose upgrading streetscapes and connections between residential areas in Sawmill and Wells Park with cultural/arts facilities in Old Town and 12th Street/Indian School. Development of an interactive exhibit of the acequia system would also revive a historic/cultural feature within the sector development plan area.

The amendments do not directly affect land adjacent to arterial rights-of-way in the sector development plan area. They do however take into account the safety of established residential neighborhoods by discouraging cut through traffic from industrial uses and recommending traffic-calming features.

If approved and implemented, the design recommendations will improve the quality of key street corridors in the area for walking and cycling, while also accommodating vehicles including trucks in the industrialized areas. This design approach is appropriate for the area that has a variety of land uses.

Overview of proposed sub-section 2 includes the following modifications and additions:

- 1) The title of sub-section 2 has been renamed to "Streetscape Development" and includes a plan description/overview that provides the justification for the proposed interconnected roadway system text amendments (replaces section 2.a);
- 2) A definitions section has been included to assist in clarifying various streetscape element terms throughout the proposed amendments (replaces section 2.b, pg);

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- 3) A Development Process Manual (DPM) Procedure section has been included which clarifies that the SWPSDP may adopt alternate street width specifications in addition to those outlined in the DPM (replaces section 2.c);
  - 4) A Design of Blocks and Streets section has been included which for the purposes of meeting the connectivity goals of the SWPSDP states that for site plans over 4 acres that require construction of a street, each street connection should be to a different roadway. It also includes a provision that the DRB or EPC may only require one connection if site conditions prohibit the two street connection recommendation (new section 2.d.1, page 72). In addition, sub-category entitled Block Lengths and Perimeters has been added that recommends blocks be platted into rectangular shapes in order to further the plans connectivity goals. If site conditions prohibit the re-platting recommendation, the DRB or EPC may waive this recommendation (new section 2.d.2);
  - 5) A section outlining recommendations for the Improvement of Existing Local and Major Local Roadways and Intersections has been included that outlines owner and City redevelopment responsibilities with regard to public street and private streetscape improvements, setbacks, street widths, cut-through traffic, utility corridors, traffic calming strategies and historic markers (replaces section 2.e, adds new sections 2.e.1 - 8);
  - 6) A Funding for Public Projects section has been added which outlines potential funding mechanisms such as capital-implementation program funds and tax increment financing (new section 2.f);

Overview of proposed sub-section 3 includes the following modifications and additions (replaces 3.a, new sections 3.a.1 – 8):

- 1) The title of sub-section 3 has been renamed to “Specific Facility Design and Implementation” and updates/expands upon the streetscape design section contained within the existing SWPSDP. More specifically it outlines the following recommendations for the following roadways (Note that figures containing cross-sections for some of the proposed streetscapes are also included, see attachment B):
  - a. 12<sup>th</sup> Street from I-40 to Mountain Rd: Recommendations include installation of sidewalks buffered from the roadway by landscape strips, bicycle lanes, street lighting improvements, and on-street parking where right-of-way permits. Also recommends that a study be conducted for the intersection of 12<sup>th</sup> and Mountain Rd. that will improve safety for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians and the quality of life for the residents that reside near the intersections. The study should consider narrowing the roadway to two lanes north of the intersection with Sawmill in order to slow southbound traffic before it enters the residential area.

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- b. 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Street from Bellamah Ave. to Mountain Rd: Recommendations state that street improvements should foster street level activities including entertainment, dining, shopping, recreational opportunities, and public space as required for abutting existing and new development. Widened sidewalks buffered by landscape strips and on-street parking are also recommended.
  - c. Bellamah Ave. – Rio Grande to 18<sup>th</sup> St., West of 12<sup>th</sup> St., 12<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> St: Recommendations include Street improvements in the area should focus on calming traffic speeds and buffering pedestrians from traffic. This can be accomplished by installation of landscape strip buffers, widened sidewalks and on-street parking where right-of-way permits.
  - d. Mountain Rd: Recommendations include aesthetic and traffic-calming improvements to Mountain Rd. Specifically, the City should explore replacing existing striped medians with formal, landscaped medians to slow traffic near the museums and historic park. Heavy pedestrian traffic in this area also warrants traffic calming techniques, such as high-visibility crosswalks, curb-bulbouts to shorten crossing distances, and planting strips buffering sidewalks where they do not already exist.
  - e. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets from Mountain Rd. to I-40: Recommendations include a City initiated study to determine whether they can be converted from one-way to two-way facilities to help slow traffic. Improvements at intersections with local streets, such as curb bulb-outs, may reduce pedestrian crossing distances, slow turning traffic and provide some protection for on-street parking lanes. Improved street lighting is also recommended.
  - f. Sawmill Rd. and 15<sup>th</sup> St: Recommendations include developing a Neighborhood Traffic Management Program plan for reducing cut-through traffic and calming vehicle speeds on Sawmill and 15th Street. Such a study should consider the possible benefits, as well as drawbacks and potential unintended consequences to other streets in the area of closing access to these streets.
  - g. Aspen and Zearing Ave: Recommendations state that the City should consider improvements that allow for continued truck access where necessary while slowing traffic and buffering pedestrians and cyclists from the roadway.
- 2) A section entitled Bicycle, Trail and Recreational Facilities has been included which recommends implementing all proposed facilities in the adopted Trails and Bikeways Facility Plan (1993) and Comprehensive On-Street Bicycle Plan (2000), as well as any updates established by the draft Bikeways and Trails Facility Plan (in the adoption process as of Jan. 2015). It also includes a set of additional recommendations based on

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community input which includes development or study of additional trail and recreational facilities which all further the SWPSDP's intent of interconnectivity.

## **VI. AGENCY & NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS**

### ***Reviewing Agencies***

City of Albuquerque Agencies originally reviewed the first draft of the proposed SWPSDP text amendments from September 2<sup>nd</sup> to September 12<sup>th</sup> 2014. Following this review, The Planning Department requested two deferrals (an initial 60 day deferral to December 11<sup>th</sup>, followed by an additional 30 day deferral to January 8, 2014) to allow the applicant additional time to address agency comments. The most significant items included clarification of specific policy language related to streetscape cross-sections, refining recommendations regarding trails and recreational facilities and the inclusion of additional recommendations following community input.

A subsequent updated draft was submitted to the Planning Department for review in early December. The most significant comments received regarding the updated draft were submitted by Long Range Planning and The Department of Municipal Development (DMD).

Long Range Planning commented that Figure 5 should be modified to reflect an 18' median to allow for 6 foot bicycle lanes. DMD commented that the amendments should provide some discussion regarding what purposes the railroad network currently serves and more context as to how this might transition into the future given the area is transitioning away from industrial uses. These agency comments will be specifically addressed within the document by Council Services Staff prior to final adoption by City Council.

### ***Neighborhood/Public***

The City notified the contacts for the following registered organizations:

DOWNTOWN N.A., NORTH FOURTH CAMINO REAL MERCHANTS ASSOC. INC., SAWMILL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST, DOWNTOWN N.A., RAYNOLDS ADDITION N.A., THOMAS VILLAGE N.A., HUNING CASTLE N.A., RAYNOLDS ADDITION N.A., THOMAS VILLAGE N.A., HUNING CASTLE N.A., RIO GRANDE BLVD. N.A., THOMAS VILLAGE PATIO H.O.A., LOS DURANES N.A., RIO GRANDE BLVD. N.A., THOMAS VILLAGE PATIO H.O.A., LOS DURANES N.A., SANTA BARBARA-MARTINEZTOWN ASSOC., WELLS PARK N.A., MARTINEZTOWN WORK GROUP, SANTA BARBARA-MARTINEZTOWN ASSOC., WELLS PARK N.A., MARTINEZTOWN WORK GROUP, SAWMILL AREA N.A., WEST OLD TOWN N.A., NEAR NORTH VALLEY N.A., SAWMILL AREA N.A., WEST OLD TOWN N.A., NEAR NORTH VALLEY N.A., SAWMILL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST, WEST PARK WEST PARK N.A., NORTH VALLEY COALITION, NORTH VALLEY COALITION.

The Planning Department received several comments from the public regarding the original draft of the proposed text amendments. These were reviewed in detail by Planning Department and Council Services Staff. The most significant comments received were primarily focused on the fact that Sawmill Road and 15<sup>th</sup> Street east of 12<sup>th</sup> Street are being used as a cut-through route by drivers attempting to avoid the intersection of 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Mountain Rd.

While the ability to directly address this issue is beyond the purview of this amendment initiative, a recommendation that The Department of Municipal Development build on previous studies of the area to develop a Neighborhood Traffic Management Program plan for reducing cut-through traffic and calming vehicle speeds has been included on page 82 of the proposed text. A new section entitled *Additional Recommendations* has also been included on page 84 of the proposed text amendment document (See attachment B for full text) that outlines recommendations based on community input.

There is no known neighborhood opposition to this request.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

The request is to amend the text of the SWPSDP primarily as it relates to the street network and streetscape design. The proposed recommendations are contained in Council Bill R-14-86 passed on August 4, 2014 and further outlined in an accompanying exhibit document. The purpose of the amendments are to improve connectivity among the non-industrial uses within the sector development plan area.

The proposed amendments reflect changed conditions in the Sawmill/Wells Park area since adoption of the SWPSDP and a desire to improve connectivity and multi-modal travel between Sawmill and Wells Park, while protecting established residential neighborhoods and industrial areas. Overall, the request furthers a preponderance of applicable goals and policies in City Plans. The proposed interconnected roadway system provides a comprehensive description of recent development trends. Staff recommends that a recommendation of approval of the sector development plan text amendments be forwarded to City Council.

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*FINDINGS - 14EPC-40063 – January 8, 2015 – Text Amendment to Sector Development Plan*

1. The request is to amend the text of the Sawmill/Wells Park Sector Development Plan primarily as it relates to the street network and streetscape design. The proposed recommendations are contained in Council Bill R-14-86 passed on August 4, 2014 and further outlined in an accompanying exhibit document. The purpose of the amendments are to improve connectivity among the non-industrial uses within the sector development plan area.
2. Proposed amendments to the Public Project Design Policies section (Chapter 6) of the Sawmill/Wells Park Sector Development Plan include establishing roadway recommendations that facilitate multimodal connectivity, provide design recommendations for street cross sections, provide guidance for implementing community exhibits and trails and identifying potential funding mechanisms.
3. The proposed text amendments to the Sawmill Wells Park Sector Development Plan generally fulfill the overall intent of the plan as well as the goals of the Public Project Design Policies to conserve the historic character of the Sawmill/Wells Park area; and to improve street appearance and safety for people walking, bicycling, or using wheelchairs.
4. The Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, Sawmill/Wells Park Sector Development Plan, Sawmill/Wells Park Community Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan and the City of Albuquerque Zoning Code are incorporated herein by reference and made part of the record for all purposes.
5. The proposed amendments are exercises in “maximum local self-government” (Article I), which the City Council has authority to implement through legislative action and the establishment of appropriate committees (Article IX). The amendments are intended to further the public interest by seeking to insulate residential and mixed-use areas from heavy traffic, noise, vibrations, and other environmental impacts of industrial zones and providing an efficient street system for moving vehicles and pedestrians and conducting commerce in the area.
6. The sector development plan area is within the Central Urban Area of the Comprehensive Plan. The request furthers the following applicable goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan:
  - A. Policy II.B.6.b: Upgrading efforts in neighborhoods within the Central Urban Area should be continued and expanded and linkages created between residential areas and cultural/arts/recreation facilities.

*The amendments propose upgrading streetscapes and connections between residential areas in Sawmill and Wells Park with cultural/arts facilities in Old Town and 12<sup>th</sup> Street/Indian School. Development of an interactive exhibit of the acequia system would revive a historic/cultural feature within the sector development plan area. Therefore, the proposal furthers Policy II.B.6.b.*

- B. Policy II.B.5.k: Land adjacent to arterial streets shall be planned to minimize harmful effects of traffic; livability and safety of established residential neighborhoods shall be protected in transportation planning and operations.

*The amendments do not directly affect land adjacent to arterial rights-of-way in the sector development plan area. They do however take into account the safety of established residential neighborhoods by discouraging cut through traffic from industrial uses and recommending traffic-calming features. The proposal furthers Policy II.B.5.k.*

- C. Policy II.B.5.l: Quality and innovation in design shall be encouraged in all new development; design shall be encouraged which is appropriate to the plan area.

*If approved and implemented, the design recommendations will improve the quality of key street corridors in the area for walking and cycling, while also accommodating vehicles including trucks in the industrialized areas. This design approach is appropriate for the area that has a variety of land uses. Therefore, the proposal furthers Policy II.B.5.l.*

- D. Policy II.B.5.m: Urban and site design which maintains and enhances unique vistas and improves the quality of the visual environment shall be encouraged.

*The street corridor projects will also improve the visual quality of the streetscape environment, which furthers Policy II.B.5.m.*

- E. Policy II.B.5.o: Redevelopment and rehabilitation of older neighborhoods in the Established Urban Area shall be continued and strengthened.

*The street design recommendations, programs, and funding sources will facilitate continued redevelopment and rehabilitation of the older neighborhoods of Sawmill and Wells Park improving connectivity conditions for all modes of travel in the area. The proposal furthers Policy II.B.5.o.*

- F. Policy II.B.5.p: Cost-effective redevelopment techniques shall be developed and utilized.

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*The proposed amendments recommend establishment of a Tax Increment Development District which would provide an incentive for private development to invest in the area. The proposal furthers Policy II.B.5.p.*

- G. Policy II.B.1.f. A multi-purpose network of open areas and trail corridors along arroyos and appropriate ditches shall be created. Trail corridors shall be acquired, regulated, or appropriately managed to protect natural features, views, drainage and other functions or to link other areas within the Open Space network.

*The proposed amendments recommend implementation of all proposed facilities in the adopted Trails and Bikeways Facility Plan (1993) and Comprehensive On-Street Bicycle Plan (2000), as well as any updates established by the draft Bikeways and Trails Facility Plan. A recommendation is also included to develop an unpaved trail providing access to Mill Pond Road from the existing paved I-40 multi-use path (which runs parallel to the existing John Baron Burg acequia/ditch) following existing rail rights-of-way. These projects serve to link or connect areas within the Open Space network. Therefore, the proposal furthers Policy II.B.1.f.*

- H. Policy II.C.8.b. Public facilities (including buildings, parks, plazas, utilities, bridges, streets, stadiums and airports) shall be designed to realize opportunities for City/County beautification.
- I. Policy II.C.8.d. Landscaping shall be encouraged within public and private rights-of-way to control water erosion and dust, and create a pleasing visual environment; native vegetation should be used where appropriate.

*Beautification elements are recommended along several roadways within the sector development plan area through landscaping, pedestrian amenities and coordinated design. Therefore the proposed streetscape design furthers the goal and Policies II.C.8.b and II.C.8.d.*

- J. Policy II.D.4.h. A metropolitan area-wide recreational and commuter bicycle and trail network which emphasizes connections among Activity Centers shall be constructed and promoted.

*The proposed amendments recommend development or study of the following trail and recreational facilities which will improve non-vehicular connectivity throughout the focus area and therefore furthers Policy II.D.4.h:*

- *Development of an unpaved trail providing access to Mill Pond Road from the existing paved I-40 multi-use path following existing rail rights-of-way;*
- *A connection from the intersection of Aspen Road and Mill Pond Road west to Zearing Ave. across the Sawmill Community Land Trust Property;*

- *A trail between Bellamah Ave. and Mountain Road following the existing rail spur right-of-way south of the intersection with 19th Street;*
- *A trail from the intersection of Mill Pond Road and Aspen Avenue, along the east side of the stormwater retention pond that is located south of Zearing, to the intersection of 18th Street and Bellamah Avenue.*
- *Cleanup and improvements to the John Baron Burg acequia, possibly as a formal “Urban Forest” outdoor recreation and interpretive space.*

7. The request partially furthers the following applicable goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan:

- A. Policy II.D.4.d: The frequency of driveways along principle and minor arterial streets will be reduced when possible, toward a spacing frequency of one or two drives per 300 feet of frontage on principle arterials, and one or two drives per 200 feet on minor arterials.

*The proposal includes recommendations that limit the number and widths of new driveways on 12<sup>th</sup> Street and on one of the four arterial streets in the sector development plan area, which partially furthers Policy II.D.4.d.*

- B. Policy II.D.4.p: Efficient, safe access and transfer capability shall be provided between all modes of transportation.

*The proposal calls for a denser street network that will make travel through the area more efficient which partially furthers Policy II.D.4.p.*

- C. Policy II.D.4.q: Transportation investments should emphasize overall mobility needs and choice among modes in the regional and intra-city movement of people and goods. This includes providing adequate street capacity and right-of-way to meet access and mobility needs and improving the effectiveness of the existing street system by encouraging bicycling, walking, and use of mass transit in and between the activity centers.

*The proposal is a comprehensive package of projects that improves the movement of pedestrians, cyclists, cars and trucks in the sector development plan area. It promotes additional transit services which increases choice among modes. However, it does not support retaining existing rail spurs within the area for the movement of goods. Therefore, the proposal partially furthers Policy II.D.4.q.*

8. The task of the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) is to make a recommendation to the City Council regarding the proposed text amendments. The City Council is the City’s Zoning Authority and will make the final decision. The EPC is a recommending body with review authority.

9. The Planning Department received several comments from the public regarding the original draft of the proposed text amendments. These were reviewed in detail by Planning Department and City Council staff. The most significant comments received were primarily focused on the fact that Sawmill Road and 15th Street east of 12th are being used as a cut-through route by drivers attempting to avoid the intersection of 12th and Menaul. There is no known neighborhood opposition to this request.

***RECOMMENDATION - 14EPC-40063 – January 8, 2015 – Text Amendment to Sector Development Plan***

**That a Recommendation of APPROVAL of 14EPC-40063, a Text Amendment to Sector Development Plan (to amend the Sawmill/Wells Park Sector Development Plan), be forwarded to City Council based on the preceding Findings.**

***Vicente M. Quevedo  
Planner***

***Notice of Decision cc list:***

DOWNTOWN N.A., Reba Eagles, c/o Original Medicine Acupuncture, 1500 Lomas NW, Ste. B., Albuquerque, NM 87104  
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NORTH VALLEY COALITION, Kyle Silfer, 1124 Western Meadows Rd. NW, Albuquerque, NM 87114  
NORTH VALLEY COALITION, David Wood 158 Pleasant NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107

## CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE AGENCY COMMENTS

### PLANNING DEPARTMENT

#### Zoning Enforcement

No comments received.

#### Office of Neighborhood Coordination

No adverse comments.

#### Long Range Planning

#### **Project 1000029 – Text Amendment to Sector Development Plan**

Figure 5 should be modified to reflect an 18' median to allow for 6 foot bicycle lanes. This is the preferred width of bicycle lanes that are adjacent to a parking area; narrower lanes risk injury to a cyclist from opening car doors. This is the recommended width in the proposed 2014 Bikeways & Trails Facility Plan.

#### Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency

No comments received.

### DEPARTMENT of MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

#### **Project # 1000029**

#### **Sawmill Wells Park Sector Development Plan**

#### **14EPC-40063 Text Amendment to Sector Development Plan**

#### DMD Transportation Planning:

RR tracks along Aspen, for instances, precluded the installation of sidewalk along the south side of the street. Secondly, RR tracks also create huge administrative hurdles because to cross them there is a permitting process required by the NMDOT Rail Bureau in Santa Fe. I worked on the subdivision in the middle of this aerial and the tracks created lots of problems. The sector plan, in my opinion, should provide some discussion on what purposes the RR network serves currently, and in the future. If the area is transitioning to something other than industrial, is there a public process for removing the tracks (those along Aspen are within public R/W)? The tracks along Aspen have been disabled because they no longer serve their intended purpose, but the developer still had to install a fully NMDOT-compliant crossing at a cost of \$100K, in case the tracks became active again in the future.

Vacating unused tracks also create opportunities for alternative uses. There is language in the draft for a trail to connect from I-40's trail down to Zearing and to Bellamah. Vacating and removing the track would provide a corridor for trail installation.



***WATER UTILITY AUTHORITY***

***Utility Services***

No comments received.

***City Forester***

No comments received.

***POLICE DEPARTMENT/Planning***

**EPC 1000029** – This project is in the Valley Area Command.

- The proposed urban forest/bosque concept has the potential to create increased criminal activity. One of the current forest along I-40's southern right-of-way between Carlisle and Lafayette Dr. has seen instances of criminal and homeless/transient activity that cannot be easily seen via natural surveillance. Citizens utilizing the pedestrian/bicycle paths in this area have a difficult

time viewing the area from a distance. They don't have the ability to avoid unwanted contact in advance. If this concept were to be pursued, recommend landscaping be positioned to avoid restricted views along pathways. Bushes should be placed away from the path – a set-back far enough away from the path to allow surveillance on approach. Pedestrian lighting should be installed along the path to ensure adequate visibility at night. Emergency stations with direct access to 911 services could also be positioned strategically along the path. This proposed urban forest should be closed at 10:00 pm, similar to all other City parks.

***SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT***

***Refuse Division***

Approved. Must comply with SWMD Ordinance.

***FIRE DEPARTMENT/Planning***

No comments received.

## ***COMMENTS FROM OTHER AGENCIES***

***BERNALILLO COUNTY***

No comments received.

***ALBUQUERQUE METROPOLITAN ARROYO FLOOD CONTROL AUTHORITY***

No adverse comments.

***ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS***

The City of Albuquerque proposes an amendment to the Sawmill/Wells Park Sector Development Plan. This amendment includes the insertion of a proposed new Section 2 that will govern the development of bicycle, pedestrian and road connections as the area continues to develop. A proposed new Section 12 will provide guidance for implementing the unpaved trails and outdoor exhibits. And a proposed new Section 13 identifies potential funding for improvements to the public right-of-way. APS does not oppose this amendment.

***MID-REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS***

MRMPO supports the goals of these text amendments of increasing roadway connectivity and accommodating all roadway users through complete street design principles. The 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan states, "Improving the connectivity and design of the transportation system, across and between modes, through intersections and railroad crossings, is integral to maintaining a safe transportation system" (Section 3, P.53). Implementing a well-connected grid of local roads will enhance bicycle and pedestrian access to and from Wells Park as well as provide these users with less heavily trafficked roadway options.

***MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT***

No comments received.

***PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY OF NEW MEXICO***

**Project #1000029 Text Amendment to Sector Plan (Sawmill Sector Development Plan)**  
PNM has no comments based on information provided to date.