The proposed amendments would apply the demolition rules currently limited to HPOs, City Landmarks and certain SDPs and apply them to the entire city. The effect would be a de facto declaration of the entire city as an HPO. Certainly any official submittal of city wide HPO status would not be taken seriously.

The earlier January zoom on this project left the distinct impression that the decision to refer for Commission review was at the sole discretion of the Historic Preservation Planner. The only objective criterion seems to be that the property be 60 years old. Anything beyond age seems to be the subjective analysis by the Planner. Depending upon who occupies that position at any point in time, absent any additional objective criteria, the result could be differing opinions of what should be preserved. This opens the doors to appeals alleging arbitrary and capricious decisions.

It should be noted that the purpose of a “Development Ordinance” is to facilitate development. As recent as 20 years ago the long term growth of Albuquerque was presumed to occur through gradual expansion onto the west mesa. However, that plan was abandoned when Albuquerque was stripped of its annexation powers and unilateral control of the water system. Growth going forward will be through densification which will of necessity be vertical. Witness the plethora of four storey multifamily complexes currently being built. Is it the intent to prevent these as they are certainly “out of character” with surrounding single family neighborhoods in which they are typically being built. As vacant land becomes scarcer the need to raze and replace will increase.

There need to be objective criteria with which to evaluate demolition requests. While perhaps not appropriate for inclusion within the IDO, then reference to them, to be adopted by the LC.

There is no question that one of the most, if not the most, iconic buildings in Albuquerque is the Simms Building. Could it be built today if it came at the expense of the Richardsonian Romanesque Commercial Club?
Alan Schwartz
Albuquerque