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OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION OF DECISION

September 21, 2023

City of Albuquerque
Urban Design & Development Division
Attn: Rebecca Bolen
1 Civic Plaza
Albuquerque NM, 87102

Project # PR-2023-009110
SI-2023-01384- Community Planning Area Assessment
Report - Southwest Mesa

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Rebecca Bolen, City of Albuquerque Planning Department, Urban Design & Development Division (UDD), presents the Community Planning Area (CPA) Assessment Report for the Southwest Mesa CPA, an area generally between the following boundaries: I-40 to the north, Dennis Chavez Blvd. to the south, City municipal limits to the west, and Coors Blvd. to the east., to the EPC for review and comment pursuant to IDO 14-16-6-3(E)(7).

Staff Planner: Catalina Lehner, AICP

On September 21, 2023 the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) voted to forward a recommendation to the City Council that it ACCEPT Project # PR-2023-009110, SI-2023-01384- Community Planning Area Assessment Report - Southwest Mesa, based on the following Findings:

1. The request is for EPC review and comment regarding the Community Planning Area (CPA) Assessment Report for the Southwest Mesa CPA. The Southwest Mesa CPA is one of the twelve CPAs that the Comprehensive Plan established for the City.
2. The Southwest Mesa area is bounded approximately by Interstate 40 on the north, Dennis Chavez Rd. on the south, the Rio Grande River and Coors Blvd. on the east, and the City municipal boundaries on the west.
3. The EPC has an advisory role in the Community Planning Area (CPA) Assessments [Ref: IDO 14-16-6-2(E)(3)(f)] and is to review and comment regarding the CPA reports. The assessments shall be forwarded to the City Council for review and acceptance [Ref: IDO 14-16-6-3(E)(7)].
4. CPA assessments are intended to provide opportunities to generate community-based recommendations for new and/or revised policies for the Comprehensive Plan, new and/or revised regulations for the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO), and new and/or revised projects or partnerships with implementing City Departments.

5. IDO 14-16-6-3(E)- Community Planning Area Assessments, establishes parameters for CPA assessments. The IDO requires that CPA assessment recommendations accepted by the City Council be included in updates to ranked plans and the IDO annual update at least every five years.
6. The Comprehensive Plan and the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO) are incorporated herein by reference and made part of the record for all purposes.
7. The request is consistent with the Constitution of the State of New Mexico, which allows municipalities to adopt a charter to provide for maximum local self-government (see Article X, Section 6- Municipal Home Rule). The Southwest Mesa CPA Assessment process helps to formulate and shape Comprehensive Plan Goals and policies particular to the Southwest Mesa Area. The resulting Goals and policies will be subsequently incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan as amendments.
8. The request is consistent with the following, relevant Articles of the City Charter:
 - A. Article I, Incorporation and Powers: Conducting the Community Planning Area (CPA) Assessment process, producing a report, and subsequently updating the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate new Goals and policies, is an act of maximum local self-government that is consistent with the purpose of the Charter.
 - B. Article IX, Environmental Protection: The CPA Assessment process, the CPA reports, and future related Comprehensive Plan updates will help protect and enhance quality of life for Albuquerque's citizens by helping to promote and maintain an aesthetic and humane urban environment and ensure the proper use and development of land. Commissions, Boards, and Committees will have up-to-date guidance to better administer City policy to benefit the residents.
 - C. Article XVII, Planning- Sections 1 and 2: The acceptance of the CPA Assessment Reports, which inform future Comprehensive Plan updates, is an instance of the Council exercising its role as the City's ultimate planning and zoning authority. Future updates will help inform the Mayor and the Council about community priorities that can tie into future Capital Improvement Plans.
9. The request furthers the following, applicable Goals and policies from Chapter 4: Community Identity:
 - A. Goal 4.1 - Character: Enhance, protect, and preserve distinct communities.

One purpose of the CPA Assessment Reports is to contribute and reinforce the distinct characteristics of communities. Identification and prioritizing assets and opportunities will result in development of goals and projects that will help enhance, protect, and preserve such communities.
 - B. Policy 4.1.4 - Neighborhoods: Enhance, protect, and preserve neighborhoods and traditional communities as key to our long-term health and vitality.

The cornerstone of the CPA assessment process is community engagement of neighborhoods, in this case, in the Southwest Mesa area. This area is characterized by a rich cultural heritage and traditional communities. Understanding what is important to them will help to create recommendations for projects that enhance, protect, and preserve the long-term health and vitality of neighborhoods moving into the future.

C. Goal 4.2: Process: Engage communities to identify and plan for their distinct character and needs.

A primary goal of the CPA assessment process is to engage communities through mechanisms such as open houses, walking tours, and meetings, so that residents can identify assets and opportunities and plan for their needs based on their distinct character.

D. Policy 4.2.1 - Community Planning Areas: Use Community Planning Areas to track conditions and progress toward implementation of the community vision over time and organize planning efforts to identify distinct community character.

The Southwest Mesa CPA Assessment Report contains metrics for each chapter/subject area in the Comprehensive Plan. The metrics will be used to track progress toward implementation of the community vision over time. The Actions in the report will provide another set of benchmarks.

E. Goal 4.3- City Community Planning Areas: Protect and enhance the natural and cultural characteristics and features that contribute to distinct identity and prioritize projects and programs to meet the needs of communities, neighborhoods, and sub-areas.

The CPA assessment process aims to discover the characteristics and features that contribute to an area's distinct identity through engagement with community members, who identify local needs and challenges. Prioritizing programs and projects to meet these needs, while protecting and enhancing the area's natural and cultural characteristics, is a key component of the CPA process.

F. Policy 4.3.1- CPA Assessments: Identify the character-defining elements, priorities for capital investment, and potential programs and partnerships for each CPA through the ongoing, long-range planning assessment.

The Southwest Mesa CPA Assessment Report identifies the character-defining elements of the area, such as open spaces, parks, rural areas, a stretch of Historic Route 66, and a visitors center. This long-range planning process discusses potential programs and partnerships, as well as capital investment, for the Southwest Mesa Area.

10. The request furthers Goal 5.7 - Implementation Processes of Chapter 5 – Land Use, which is to employ procedures and processes to effectively and equitably implement the Comprehensive Plan. A key component of the CPA assessment process, the cornerstone of which is community engagement, is to equitably implement the Comprehensive Plan by employing procedures to promote equitable participation in the process and ensuring that under-represented community members are included. Comprehensive Plan Goals and policies can be effectively connected to the community through an active and extensive engagement process, in which the community takes the lead at identifying assets and opportunities.

11. The request furthers the following Goal and policy pair from Chapter 6: Transportation:

A. Goal 6.8 – Context: Provide transportation investments that are responsive to context and natural setting.

Transportation was a significant topic in the Southwest Mesa CPA process and was identified by the community as a priority, particularly infrastructure improvements and transit. The CPA process is intended to set the stage for future transportation investments that are responsive to the area's context.

- B. Policy 6.8.2 - Community Planning Areas: Provide transportation investments that are responsive to the distinct needs of each neighborhood and sub-area.

The Southwest Mesa CPA assessment report identifies transportation needs based on the distinct needs of neighborhoods and sub-areas, as identified by the community. The report identifies the desire for investment in transportation infrastructure, transit, increased transit frequency, and maintaining free fares.

12. The request furthers the following Goal and policy pair from Chapter 8: Economic Development:

- A. Goal 8.1-Placemaking: Create places where business and talent will stay and thrive.

The CPA assessment process works with residents and businesses in a given area to identify opportunities and begin to find ways to address them, which will contribute to creating vibrant and distinct places where business and talent can stay and thrive.

- B. Policy 8.1.4 -Leverage Assets: Enhance and market the region's unique characteristics internally and to outside businesses and individuals in order to compete with other regions.

The Southwest Mesa is a large, regionally-significant area. Assets that make it unique, and opportunities for improvements, are identified in the CPA assessment report. Engagement with the community and future improvements suggested via this process will support and enhance the area and help make it more competitive internally and desirable to outside businesses.

13. The request furthers Goal 10.1- Facilities & Access, from Chapter 10: Parks & Open Space, which is to provide parks, Open Space, and recreation facilities that meet the needs of all residents and use natural resources responsibly. The Southwest Mesa area's parks are a treasured community asset. A variety of park types provide open space, active and passive recreation, and ties to cultural heritage. The CPA Assessment report notes that improving park safety and programming will help meet residents' needs and encourage responsible use of natural resources in parks.

14. The request furthers the following, applicable Goals and policies from Chapter 11: Heritage Conservation:

- A. Goal 11.1-Traditional, Rural, and Agricultural Heritage: Preserve and enhance farmland, the acequia system, and traditional communities.

The Southwest Mesa area is characterized by its agricultural heritage, which is the foundation of traditional communities. The CPA Assessment report recognizes the importance of preserving the acequia system and the culture of farming; community members identified these as important to the area's character.

- B. Policy 11.1.3- Acequia Preservation: Support efforts to protect and preserve the acequia system for agricultural and low-impact recreation purposes and strengthen connections with adjacent neighborhoods and development.

The acequia system is a defining cultural asset of the Southwest Mesa area that has been used for centuries. Efforts to protect and preserve acequias support the area's traditions and agricultural

heritage. The community identified acequias as an important recreational asset; acequia trails, used for walking, biking, and horseback riding strengthen connections between neighborhoods.

- C. Policy 11.1.4- Local Heritage: Keep local traditions and heritage alive and cultivate neighborhoods and rural areas as safe and excellent places to live and raise families.

The CPA assessment process engages the community to share what is important to them, including assets that make the area an excellent place to live. In the Southwest Mesa area, long-standing local traditions and heritage are kept alive and continue to unite communities, provide a common foundation, and make them distinct; they are an important part of the planning process for these reasons.

- D. Goal 11.3- Cultural Landscapes: Protect, reuse, and/or enhance significant cultural landscapes as important contributors to our heritage and rich and complex identities.

The CPA Assessment process engages the community to identify significant natural and cultural features that should be protected, reused, and enhanced. The Southwest Mesa Area's open spaces, acequias, and farmlands are important contributors to the Area's heritage and rich and complex identity.

- E. Policy 11.3.1- Natural and Cultural Features: Preserve and enhance the natural and cultural characteristics and features that contribute to the distinct identity of communities, neighborhoods, and cultural landscapes.

The Southwest Mesa Area is defined by natural characteristics, such as open spaces and views, and by cultural characteristics, such as agricultural heritage and cruising culture. The CPA Assessment process recognizes that these characteristics contribute to the community's distinct identity, and aims to preserve and enhance them by identifying what residents believe is important and supporting efforts to address challenges.

15. The request furthers Goal 12.2- Community Facilities from Chapter 12- Resilience & Sustainability, which is to provide community facilities that have convenient access and a wide range of programs for residents from all cultural, age, geographical, and educational groups to enhance quality of life and promote community involvement. The Southwest Mesa CPA Report identifies community facilities, such as multi-generational centers, senior service centers, libraries, etc. that provide a wide range of programs for residents from a variety of groups. The CPA Assessment process is a mechanism to help plan existing and future facilities in order to support the community and address challenges.

16. The request furthers the following policies from Chapter 13: Resilience & Sustainability:

- A. Policy 13.2.1- Water Supply: Coordinate with the ABCWUA, state, and other agencies to plan and maintain an adequate water supply to meet municipal, agricultural, and ecosystem needs that ensure the overall resilience and sustainability of our community.

Water supply is particularly important in the Southwest Mesa Area because of ties to agricultural heritage. Community members expressed concern about water availability and resource usage, which is a key element of sustainability. The Southwest Mesa CPA Report mentions coordination

between Bernalillo County and the Conservancy District regarding acequias, trails, and farmland, which will help ensure the overall resilience of the community.

- B. Policy 13.5.4- Environmental Justice: Recognize and work to address adverse environmental impacts that are experienced disproportionately by underrepresented and at-risk communities, in order to help improve the health outcomes of their residents over time.

The CPA Assessment process is one avenue to address past harms and engage communities equitably. Engaging community members, especially those that have been underrepresented, to ensure they have a say in the future of their neighborhoods will help improve residents' lives over time and make the Southwest Mesa area a more vibrant place to live, work, and play.

17. The Area Profile of the Southwest Mesa CPA Assessment Report (Part 3) correlates to each chapter in the Comprehensive Plan. Each section within Part 3 identifies Actors, Plans, and Programs, discusses Assets and Challenges identified through the community engagement process, and presents relevant metrics.
18. The Southwest Mesa CPA Assessment Report (Part 4) introduces nine new policies, and several new sub-policies, particular to the Southwest Mesa Area. These new policies and sub-policies will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 4- Community Identity, Section 4.3.12- Southwest Mesa.
19. IDO 14-16-6-3(E)- Community Planning Area Assessments, establishes parameters for how CPA Assessments are conducted. The request fulfills the seven criteria of Subsection 6-3(E), as follows:
- A. 6-3(E)(1) The Planning Director shall create a regular, rotating schedule to research, study, and analyze each CPA at least once every 5 years.
- The Southwest Mesa CPA is the second CPA process to be conducted, in accordance with Council Bill No. R-22-42.
- B. 6-3(E)(2) The assessments shall analyze each CPA based on performance measures established by the ABC Comp Plan, as amended, to reflect evolving conditions, trends, and desired outcomes to reflect the unique status of each CPA while also allowing comparison of objective data across the city.
- The Southwest Mesa CPA Assessment report uses performance measures established by the Comprehensive Plan for each chapter (see 14.3.2- Comp Plan Metrics). Metrics for the Southwest Mesa CPA are found in Part 7- Appendices.
- C. 6-3(E)(3) The City Office of Neighborhood Coordination (ONC) shall be involved in each assessment to ensure adequate notification, representation, and participation of Neighborhood Associations.
- Part 3 of the Southwest Mesa Assessment Report (Area Profile) mentions ONC involvement, particularly with respect to neighborhood sign programs and association websites.
- D. 6-3(E)(4) Each assessment shall include visits and interactions with residents, property owners, businesses, neighborhood associations, business associations, and other stakeholders in each CPA.

Public engagement is a key component of the Southwest Mesa CPA assessment process, which included a variety of visits and interactions (ex. open houses, walking tours, meetings) with stakeholders such as residents, property owners, businesses, neighborhood associations, and business associations.

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- E. 6-3(E)(5) Each assessment shall reflect the history, special places, character, and capital needs of each CPA.

Part 2 of the Southwest Mesa Assessment Report discusses the area's history and special places, such as West Central/Route 66, the acequias, parks and open spaces, and the Tower-Unser area, originally subdivided in 1944. The area's character is discussed in Part 3- Area Profile. Capital needs are identified by topic as challenges that need to be addressed.

- F. 6-3(E)(6) At least every 5 years, based on the data, analyses, and findings of the assessments, the Planning Director shall recommend updates and amendments as relevant and necessary to the Rank 1 ABC Comp Plan, as amended; Rank 2 Facility Plans; Rank 3 Plans; the IDO; or the DPM. See also Subsection 14-16-6- 4(D)(4) for the annual IDO update process.

Any new Goals and policies particular to the Southwest Mesa Area are identified as part of the CPA Assessment process and, after the appropriate update process, will be included in Comprehensive Plan Chapter 4.3- City Community Planning Areas.

- G. 6-3(E)(7) The Planning Director shall report the findings and recommendations from each assessment to the EPC for review and recommendation to the City Council. Assessments shall be forwarded to the City Council for review and acceptance. Staff shall prepare resolutions and/or ordinances to accompany the assessment that will implement the findings and recommendations of the assessment for the consideration of the City Council. City Council shall review for adoption any associated resolutions and/or ordinances.

The Southwest Mesa CPA Assessment report contains recommendations that will be provided to the EPC for review and recommendation to the City Council, which will review any associated legislation prepared by Staff as part of accepting the report.

20. The cornerstone of the CPA assessment process is engagement of community members, residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. Public engagement strategies for the Southwest Mesa CPA planning effort included a range of opportunities for input, discussion, and consensus-building. Hundreds of Southwest Mesa area residents, business owners, service providers, and community leaders participated in the development of this report and contributed toward the recommendations it contains.
21. As of the writing of the Staff report, Staff received one written comment. The comment, from the Transit Department/ABQ Ride thanks Planning Staff for coordinating, suggests a couple of editorial changes, and notes that the ABQ RIDE Forward Network Plan is still under development.

Sincerely,

Catalina Lehner

for Alan M. Varela,
Planning Director

AV/CL

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