

SUPPORTING PLANS & POLICIES

The Paseo del Norte study area is influenced by over 40 land use documents, including Comprehensive Plans, Sector Plans, Master Plans, and Facility Plans. (The complete list can be viewed in Appendix XX). From this variety of plans, the following documents have the most immediate and direct influence on the study area:

- **Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan**, a Rank I Plan covering the entire County.
- **Westside Strategic Plan**, a Rank II Plan covering City and County areas west of the Rio Grande.
- **Volcano Heights Sector Development Plan**, covering the area near the intersection of Paseo del Norte and Unser Boulevard.
- **Volcano Cliffs/Trails Sector Development Plans**, each covering an area that lies along Paseo del Norte near the Unser Blvd./Paseo del Norte intersection.
- **North Interstate 25 Sector Development Plan**, covering the northern portion of the area near the eastern terminus of the study area.

Growth and development in areas proximate to the study corridor exert pressure by funneling additional traffic toward the corridor. The City of Rio Rancho, in particular, has seen explosive growth over the last decade, placing greater strain upon the Paseo del Norte corridor to convey traffic. This study will also review the **Rio Rancho Comprehensive Plan**, which contains policies dictating growth in a way that will inevitably affect the study corridor.

Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan

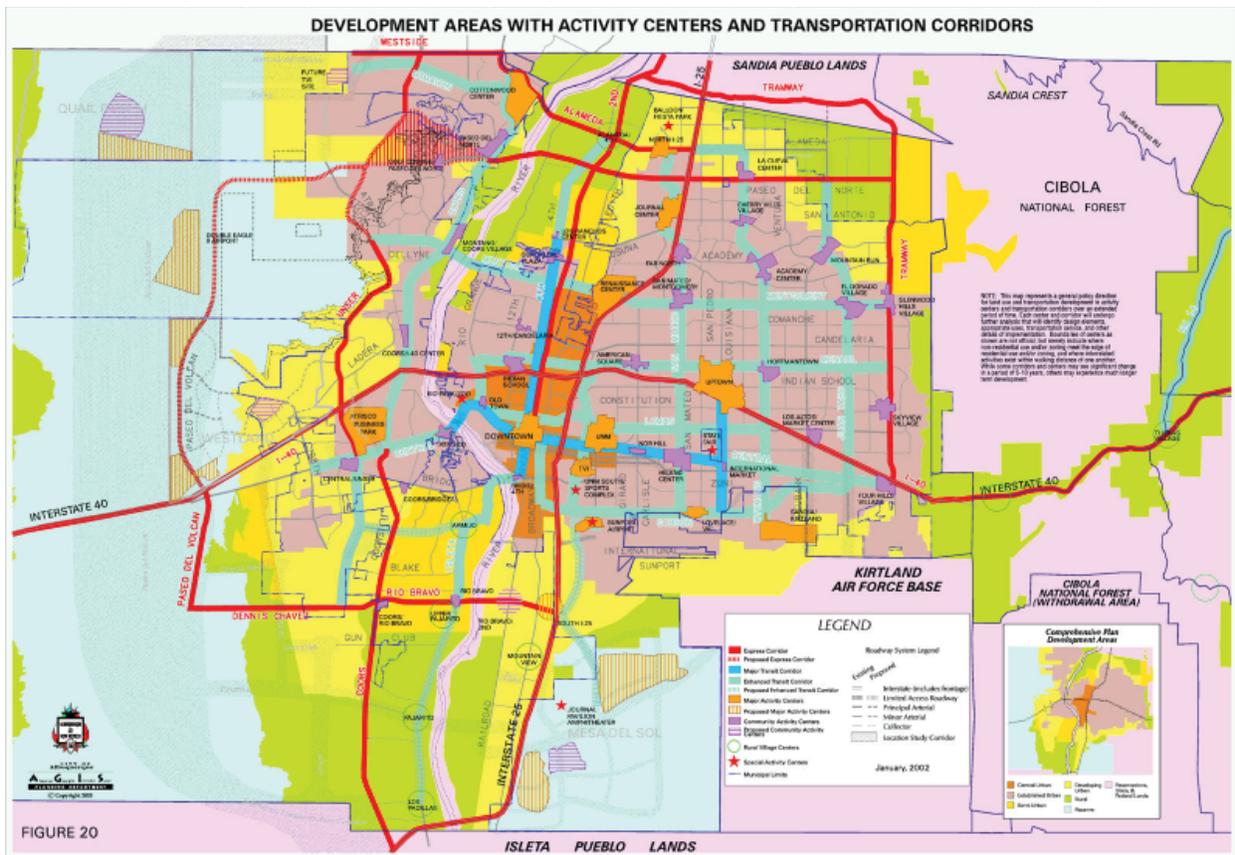
As a Rank I Plan, the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan (A/BC

Comprehensive Plan) provides broad policy direction for development in Bernalillo County and the City of Albuquerque. Although the current document dates from 1988, there have been several periodic revisions to the plan in the past twenty years. For the Paseo del Norte study area, the following policies from the A/BC Comprehensive Plan inform the land uses and transportation decisions:

A primary policy directive is the Centers and Corridors Plan that emphasizes growth along established transportation corridors and within designated activity centers. The intent of this policy is to create higher concentrations of growth at strategic locations throughout the city and connect them with transportation corridors that enable multimodal mobility. Land uses along the corridors are intended to have higher density than the surrounding areas and a mix of land uses, enabling citizens to reduce their need to drive. The Paseo del Norte study area contains all or portions of five designated Major Activity Centers: Journal Center, Volcano Heights, North I-25, Cottonwood Center and Renaissance Center. Activity Centers are defined as follows:

Existing and proposed Activity Centers are designated by a Comprehensive Plan map where appropriate to help shape the built environment in a sustainable development pattern, create mixed use concentrations of interrelated activities that promote transit and pedestrian access both to and within the Activity Center, and maximize cost-effectiveness of City services. (IID7a, p.11-35)

Paseo del Norte Boulevard is designated in the A/BC Comprehensive Plan as an Express Corridor. This means that the primary emphasis is on mobility, with limited access to adjoining parcels. Paseo del Norte connects two Major Activity Centers – Journal Center on the east and Volcano Heights on the west. (see Figure



Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan centers and corridors map

30, ABC Comp Plan, II-42)
 For an Express Corridor like Paseo del Norte Boulevard, the A/BC Comp Plan has the following standards:

- Level of Service (LOS) D or better
- 45-55 mph posted speed
- Decel lanes, right turn lanes
- No on-street parking
- Pedestrian connections required from development to transit stops
- Sidewalk: 6' wide
- Sidewalk setback: 8' minimum
- Bike Lanes: trail preferred (exists now on south side of PdN from the Diversion Channel to Coors Boulevard)

Whereas the standards for roadway designs are specific, the standards for land use along an express corridor like Paseo del Norte are more

flexible. The A/BC Comp Plan lists the following guidelines for express corridor adjacent lands:

- Building Access from Street: Flexible
- Building Setback: Based on zoning ordinance
- Parking Location: Flexible
- Parking Reductions: 10% encouraged if transit stop available
- Employment Density Targets for New Development: Flexible
- Housing Density: 5-12 DU/ac.

Related transportation and transit goals:

- The Goal is to develop corridors, both streets and adjacent uses, that provide a balanced circulation system through efficient placement of employment and services, and encouragement of

bicycling, walking, and use of transit/paratransit as alternatives to automobile travel, while providing sufficient roadway capacity to meet mobility and access needs. (IID4, p. II-81).

- Balance the street system by encouraging bicycling, walking, and use of mass transit in and between Activity Centers. (IID4, p. II-81).
- Pedestrian opportunities shall be promoted and integrated into development to create safe and pleasant non-motorized travel conditions. (IID4g, p. II-86)

In addition to the limited nature of connections to an Express Corridor like Paseo del Norte, the A/BC Comprehensive Plan designates a wide swath of land adjacent to the corridor as “rural”. This designation, along with the limited access nature of the Paseo del Norte corridor, reinforces the rationale for focusing redevelopment efforts and changes to land use patterns at the eastern and western ends of the corridor.

West Side Strategic Plan

The West Side Strategic Plan (WSSP), a Rank II Area Plan adopted by both Bernalillo County and the City of Albuquerque, articulates policies for a large swath of land west of the Rio Grande. The WSSP document covers a wide range of policy, from preserving views to defining community activity centers. At the time this document was created, Paseo del Norte did not extend past I-25 on the east or past Golf Course Road on the west. The WSSP anticipated that most commercial activity would be concentrated along Coors Boulevard and in the vicinity of Cottonwood Mall. The document has broad policies about encouraging transit and transit-supportive land use policies but it is not specific about where

and how those policies are implemented. For instance, it encourages Park and Ride facilities but does not identify exact locations:

Ideally, park and ride lots shall be 10 acres in area. This will allow for development of the lot in phases as demand warrants. This also allows for prospective joint development of the lot with private or public uses of benefit to the transit facility. They should provide connections to transit corridors, public transit facilities, as well as bike/pedestrian trails, and be located near Community Centers. (2002 WSSP, p. 190)

As its name implies, the intent of the WSSP is to provide strategic direction, not specific land use standards. It outlines general concepts of transit-based development:

- The “transit friendly” design issues identified above shall be incorporated into the Unified Development Code. All new developments, especially those in the Regional Center, Employment Centers, and Community Cores, must address transit connections, linkages, and opportunities within proposed development. (2002 WSSP, p. 192)

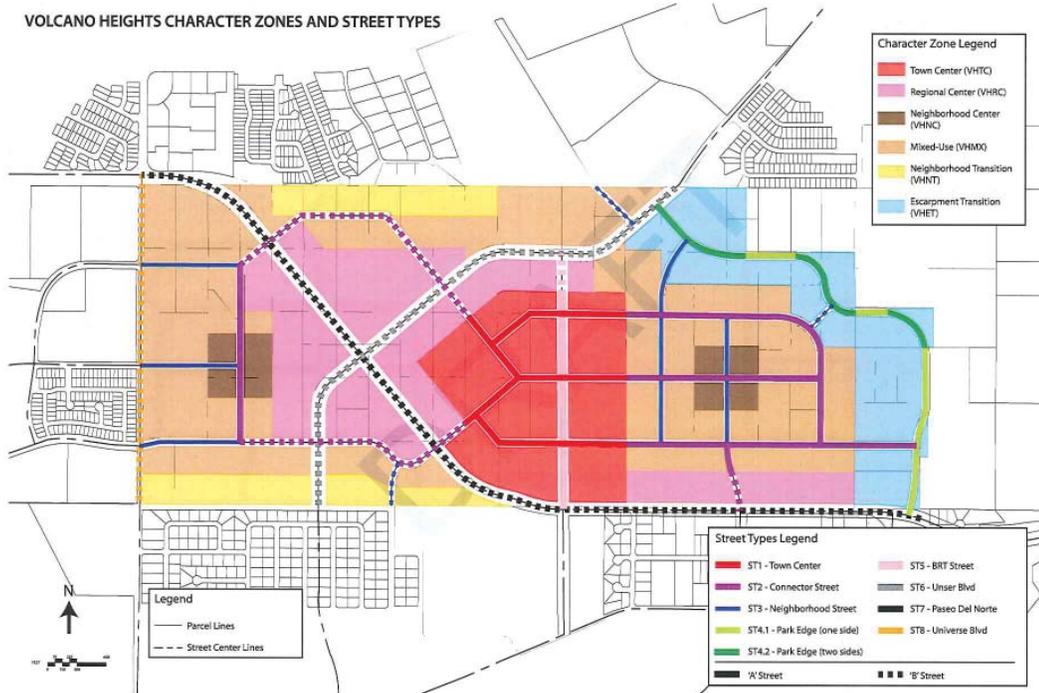
While the WSSP supports transit and transit oriented development, it relies on sector plans and changes to the zoning code to provide specific standards for how to implement those policies.

Volcano Heights Sector Development Plan

The City of Albuquerque is close to finalizing a Volcano Heights Sector Development Plan (VHSDP) that covers the area near Paseo del Norte Boulevard and Unser Boulevard. The City has designated the area as a Major

CHAPTER II: REGULATIONS

4.0 Streets and Streetscape Standards

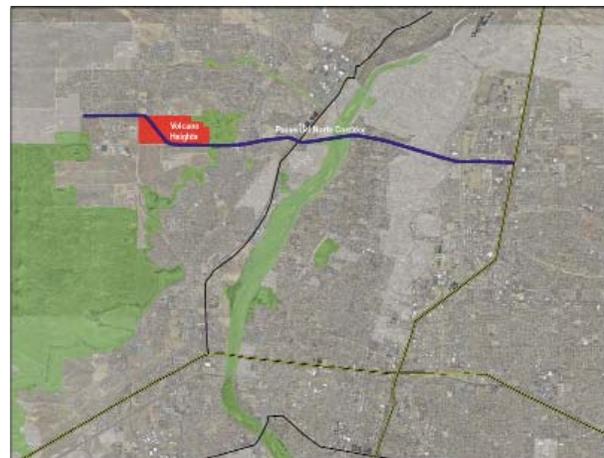


Proposed zoning for Volcano Heights

Activity Center, anticipating that this area will evolve into a regional commercial and employment hub. The draft VHSDP has undergone several revisions, but each version reinforces the central concept of creating a town center designed to accommodate transit and pedestrians. It is a strong form-based plan that proposes a distinctly different land use pattern for the west side of Albuquerque. The road network emphasizes connectivity, land uses are mixed, and buildings have design standards intended to create a more pedestrian environment.

The accompanying exhibit (above) illustrates the proposed zoning for the VHSDP. The proposed zoning categories have a range of development intensity but all allow a mix of uses and are designed to work in sync with the overall street network.

The Town Center zoning proposes buildings up to three stories, with more height allowed with various incentives.



Volcano Heights plan area

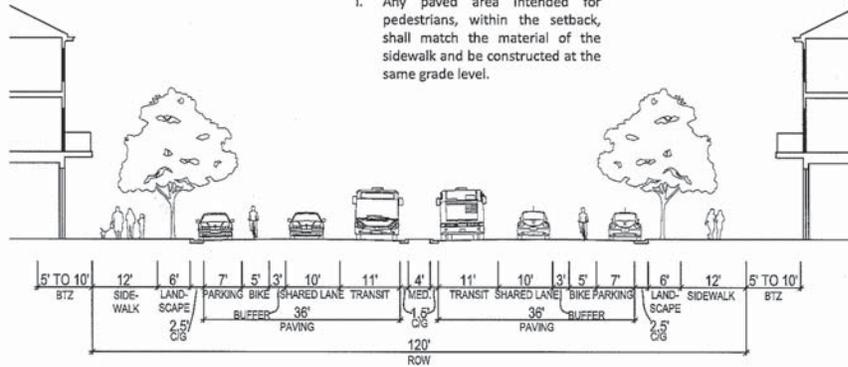
This area presents a prime opportunity for establishing a transit facility that could anchor the western end of the transit route for PdN.

4.0 Streets and Streetscape Standards

4.6.5. Street Type 5: Transit Corridor

- (i) **Intent/Purpose.** The Transit Corridor serves multiple modes of transportation, including the proposed Bus Rapid Transit. The walkable, dense, urban Town Center is organized around this Transit Corridor, which acts as a "Main Street" for Volcano Heights.
- (ii) **Cross Section.** See Exhibit X.
- (iii) **Frontage Standards**
 - a. Front Setback: 5 feet
 - b. Side Setback: 0 feet

- c. Build-to Zone (BTZ) along A Streets and Civic Spaces: 5-15 feet
- d. Build-to Zone (BTZ) along B Streets: 5-75 feet
- e. Frontage requirement along "A" Streets and Civic Spaces: 60%
- f. Frontage requirement along "B" Streets: 30%
- g. Civic/Open Space within the BTZ shall count toward the frontage requirement.
- h. A Commercial Ready ground floor shall be required for buildings along Mandatory "A" Streets and Civic Spaces.
- i. Any paved area intended for pedestrians, within the setback, shall match the material of the sidewalk and be constructed at the same grade level.
- j. Where a surface lot is visible from the public ROW, a street screen shall be used.
- k. See Section 4.X for other Streetscaping Standards.
- l. Encroachment regulations are regulated by Character Zone and can be found in Section 6 of this plan.



STREET TYPE 5 - TRANSIT BLVD THROUGH TOWN CENTER

Proposed cross section for Paseo del Norte

The proposed cross section for Paseo del Norte Boulevard shows a dedicated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lane along with three general use lanes in each direction. While the VHSDP cannot by itself determine the configuration of Paseo del Norte, it does establish a policy precedent for creating additional transit capacity in this area.

The VHSDP also proposes a direct link between Paseo del Norte Boulevard and Unser Boulevard, through the town center portion of Volcano Heights. This road, proposed as a BRT Street, would be the "Main Street" for the town center and have dedicated transit lanes in the median, on street parking, bike lanes, and wide sidewalks.

Volcano Cliffs Sector Development Plan (VCSDP) & Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan (VTSDP)

These sector plans are for areas located directly adjacent to the VHSDP and promote land uses that support the Major Activity Center concept of the City/County Comprehensive Plan. The plan also builds upon the goals and policies of the West Side Strategic Plan. The plans recommend a mix of land uses that are complemented by pedestrian friendly design guidelines for buildings and streets.

Below are a number of goals and standards from each sector plan that impact the High Capacity Corridor Study area.

Land use and urban design goals for Volcano Cliffs Sector Development Plan:

- Recognize walkable neighborhoods and districts as contributing to a more sustainable city and region. (Ch. 1, p. 12)
- Bring homes, businesses, and daily destinations—such as retail and

I – Zoning

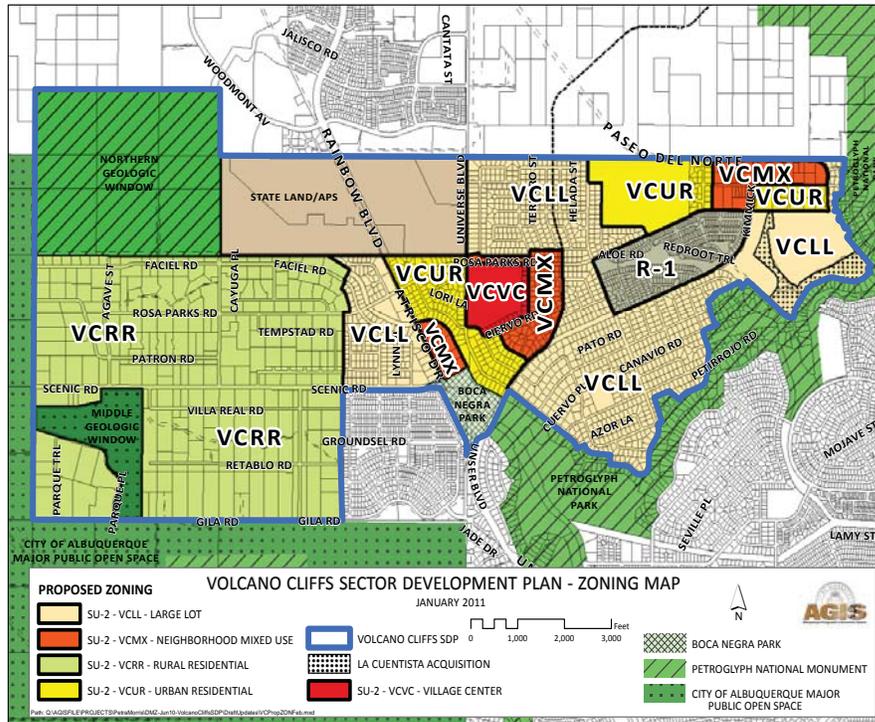


Exhibit 7, Zoning Established by the Volcano Cliffs Sector Development Plan

Proposed zoning for Volcano Cliffs

I – Zoning

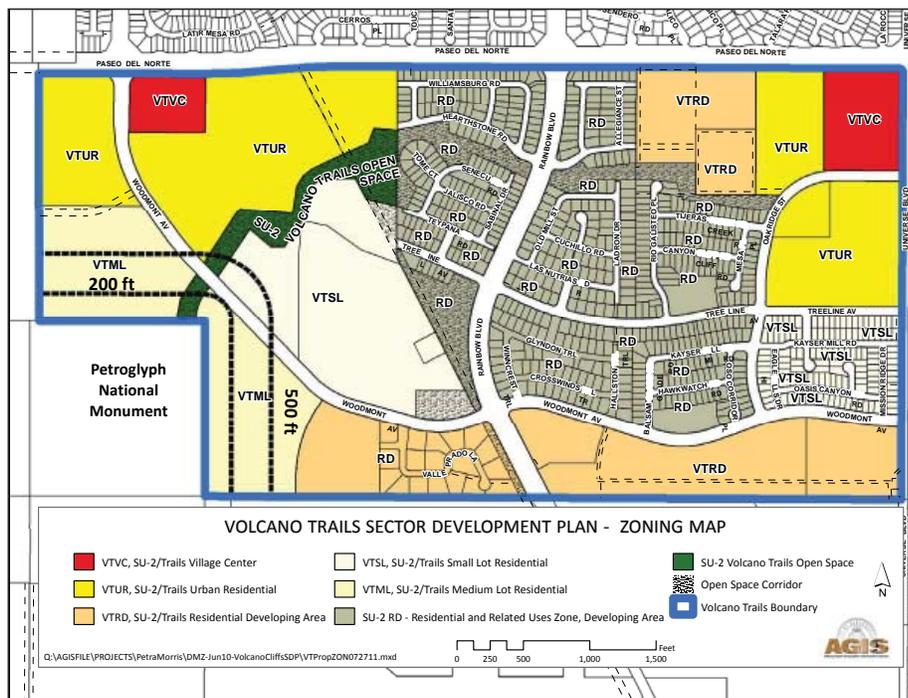


Exhibit 10, Zoning Established by the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan

Proposed zoning for Volcano Trails

community facilities—closer together within neighborhoods and districts. (Ch. 1, p. 12)

- Establish a Village Center as a mixed-use Neighborhood Activity Center that offers a range of service, commercial, and entertainment uses; urban housing; and some employment opportunities. (Ch. 1, p. 13)
- Orient Residential Development toward Residential Collector Streets. (Ch.3, p. 30)
- Design streets to accommodate Bus Rapid Transit Routes. (Ch.3, p. 31)
- Adopt Street Cross Sections that ensure safe multimodal design. (Ch.3, p. 39)



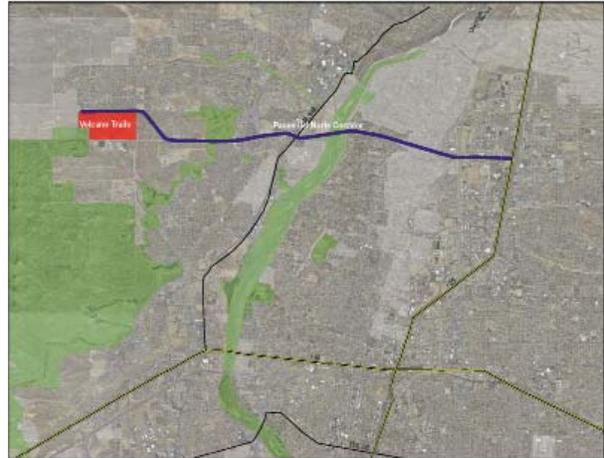
Volcano Cliffs plan area

Goals for the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan:

- Promote Residential Diversity. (Ch.2, p. 14)
- Create Healthy Residential Neighborhoods. (Ch.2, p. 14)
- Create Neighborhood Retail Centers. (Ch.2, p.14)

Each sector plan includes two village centers (shown on the previous page). VCSDP includes one directly adjacent to Paseo del Norte and another within a quarter mile of the

thoroughfare. VTSDP proposes both village centers to be located along the arterial. The centers consist of vertical mixed use development with adjacent urban residential land uses.



Volcano Trails plan area

The proposed street network and designs strengthen land use designations by providing enhanced connectivity, traffic calming features, and prioritized pedestrian and bicycle facilities within the right-of-way. Additionally, Paseo del Norte and Unser Boulevard are designed to accommodate future BRT.

North I-25 Sector Development Plan

Adopted by the City of Albuquerque in 2010, the North I-25 Sector Plan is a Rank III Plan for the area bounded by Sandia Indian Reservation to the north, Paseo del Norte to the south, Louisiana Blvd. to the east, and a combination of Edith Blvd as well as the North Diversion Channel to the west.

The plan responds to the Centers and Corridors concept of the City/County Comprehensive Plan by designating a Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zone at the intersection of Alameda Boulevard and Jefferson Street. NC districts are intended to contain more intense, mixed-

use developments than in other areas, with higher concentrations of pedestrian-oriented commercial, residential, and employment uses. Similarly, Regional Commercial (RC) allows for residential construction above retail and office spaces. This designation exists in two areas that lie adjacent to I-25. (see proposed land use map below)

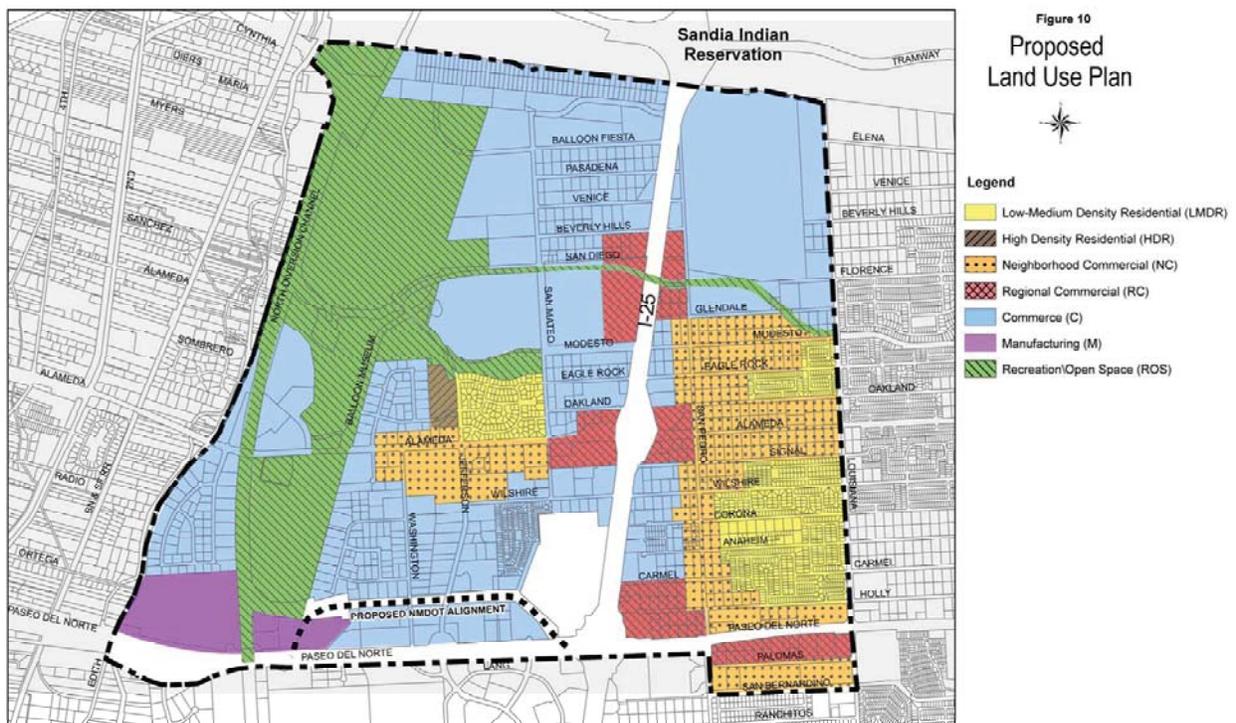
The designation of these Activity Centers points to the reality that the Journal Center, while technically defined as stopping at Paseo del Norte, is from a transit ridership perspective better defined as continuing north to Alameda Boulevard, at the very least. During this document's publication, the City was in the process of including the large parcel that lies at the northwest corner of I-25 and Paseo del Norte into the North I-25 plan area. This parcel is likely to be zoned RC. With the emergence of major employers such as Blue Cross/Blue

Shield and Presbyterian Health Services along I-25, as well as increasing residential and commercial activity, transit must also consider how to serve the north side of Paseo del Norte.



North I-25 plan area

In addition to encouraging residential development, the North I-25 Sector Plan also promotes land uses that help off-set some of



North I-25 proposed land use

the transportation challenges through policies such as the following:

- Encourage a mix of uses that will balance the time and direction of traffic movements and promote other means of vehicular trip reduction so as to minimize increases in vehicular traffic produced by new development. (Ch.3, p. 24)

Community Design Policies:

- Pedestrians and bicyclists should have safe, convenient access to the various functions of a site. A coordinated pedestrian and bicycle circulation system that fits the character of the site and minimizes conflicts between vehicular traffic should be provided. (Ch.4, p. 30)
- Exterior building facades should contribute to the human scale and encourage pedestrian integration by featuring a variety of design elements. (Ch.4, p.30)

With regard to transportation, San Mateo Boulevard is envisioned as a traffic relief corridor to facilitate improved north-south circulation. The boulevard runs parallel to Jefferson St. and bisects land that is slated for further development. All of the land uses designated within the plan call for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle pathways and linkages to enable and encourage alternative transportation modes.

Transportation Policies:

- Encourage the provision of pedestrian and bicycle links between and among commercial properties, community facilities, and nearby residential neighborhoods. (Ch.5, p. 41)
- Establish an interconnected system of right-of-way to provide for safe and

efficient movement of pedestrian and bicycle traffic. (Ch.5, p. 41)

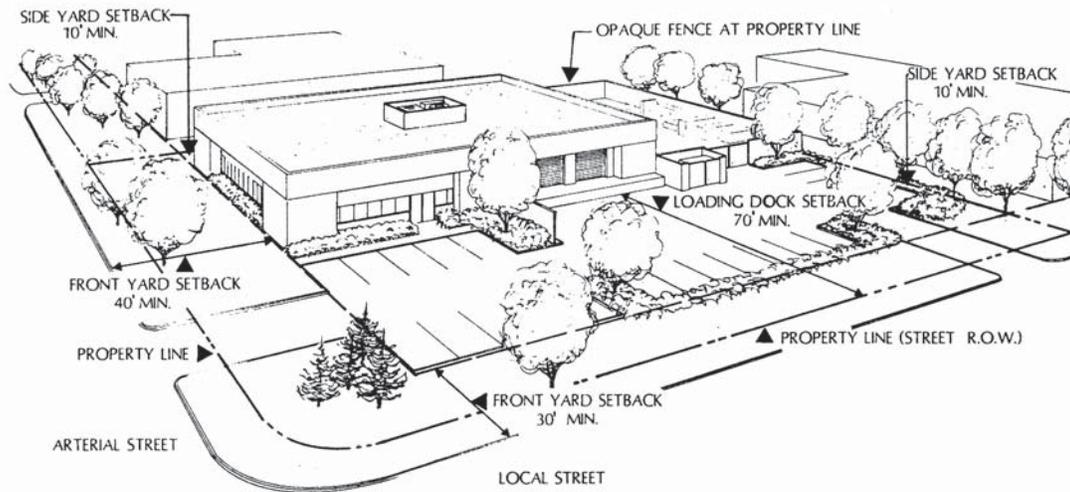
- Enhance access from the Plan area to the Rail Runner Express platform located at Paseo del Norte and Edith Boulevard. (Ch.5, p. 41)
- Provide additional transit routes and stops within the plan area. (Ch.5, p. 41)
- Improve pedestrian access to public transit facilities.(Ch.5, p. 41)

Journal Center Standards

The Journal Center is a planned business industrial park that is approximately bounded by Paseo del Norte Boulevard to the north, Masthead Street to the south, Interstate 25 to the east, and Tiburon Street to the west. The Journal Center Corporation manages the development and operation of Journal Center through a set of covenants and design guidelines.

Most of the Journal Center is zoned Industrial Park (IP). This zoning allows for a wide range of uses, from commercial to manufacturing. But the covenants in the Journal Center restrict uses to, "Engineering, research facilities, laboratories, light to medium industrial uses, offices, warehousing and such other uses as Developer shall permit in its sole discretion, consistent with applicable zoning codes and regulations applicable to the Property from time to time." (Article 4.2, Journal Center Corporation Covenants)

Project Development Plan and Standards were adopted by the Journal Center Corporation in an effort to manage the aesthetic of the industrial park. According to the Project Standards document, the intent of the plan is to "create a business community within a campus-like atmosphere integrating architecture and nature." An Architectural Review Committee



Journal Center minimum setback lines

is designated to review all plans for new construction as well as overseeing proper maintenance for the Journal Center. Projects also go through the typical City review process.

The standards covered by the document include the siting, egress and ingress, signage, parking and circulation, and landscape. The requirements of the document are largely aimed at controlling the aesthetics of the business industrial park. The standards are designed to create a park-like environment: for instance, to buffer the buildings from the roadway, the minimum setback from Jefferson is 40 feet. This setback is intended to be heavily landscaped and possibly bermed to create a landscaped edge that separates the building from the arterial. This may create an aesthetically pleasing driving experience along Jefferson, but it does little for the pedestrians walking along the street. Design factors like this, along with the general lack of continuous sidewalks and bike lanes make it challenging for pedestrians and bicyclists to navigate the Journal Center.

The Village of Los Ranchos 2020 Master Plan

The Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque (the Village) borders Paseo del Norte from the east side of the Rio Grande to Second Street. The Village has three main north/south corridors, one of which is Fourth St. Fourth St. is the primary commercial corridor for the Village; the corridor's character reflects its Route 66 legacy, with a scattering of automobile-related uses and motel courts. The mix of businesses reflects the rural nature of the Village, ranging from veterinary care clinics to restaurants to small scale professional offices. The roadway is rural in design, with no curb/gutter and virtually continuous access to adjacent properties. Near the north end of the corridor, 4th St. intersects El Pueblo Rd., the primary route to the Los Ranchos/Journal Center Rail Runner Station.

The Village of Los Ranchos 2020 Master Plan outlines the Village's overall goals and describes the different "character areas". These character areas and the related goals, objectives and policies should be considered as the study advances. Overall,

the Village is committed to preserving its rural character and low density development though recognizes the changing and unique transportation characteristics of the Village and has developed transit supportive vision for some areas of the Village, particularly near 4th Street and along El Pueblo Rd. (currently not in Village jurisdiction east of 2nd Street):

- The goal is to reflect a village character through:
 - * Relatively low density and diversified residential land uses
 - * Density and intensity of village scale; commercial development appropriate to village needs and primarily focused on Fourth Street, the Village Center and Transit District (Section One, Overall Village Goals, p. 11)
- Policy A of the Transportation Goals section identifies Fourth Street as the primary roadway and as the connection to other metropolitan transportation systems, which presumably includes high capacity transit on Paseo del Norte. (Section One, Transportation Goals, p. 20)

Gateway District Zoning:

The Village has zoned the area east of Fourth St. along El Pueblo as the “Gateway District”. This area allows moderate density development, up to twelve dwelling units per acre and C-1 commercial uses. Maximum height of buildings in this zone is 26 feet.

C-1 Commercial Zoning:

Most of Fourth Street is zoned C-1, Retail Commercial. Permissive uses include residential up to six dwelling units per acre, and typical commercial activities such as retail stores, clinics, restaurants, and hotels/motels. Maximum building height in this zone is 26 feet.

Rio Rancho Comprehensive Plan

Rio Rancho’s growth trajectory, particularly along the primary corridors of Unser Boulevard and NM 528, promises to generate additional, significant traffic. Major destinations and activity centers such as Intel, Rust Medical Center, and City Center are highly likely to generate increasing traffic volumes in both directions in the future. These areas, in addition to others, are designated as Development Nodes within the City of Rio Rancho Comprehensive Plan. These nodes (shown on the following page) are intended to comprise higher concentrations of mixed-use development, be more pedestrian in scale, and foster a sense of place. Urban design guidelines are also in place to support the designated land uses so that these areas will provide for an increasingly pedestrian-friendly environment that maximizes mass transportation and other mobility alternatives.

Land Use Policies:

- Encourage mixed uses – retail, office, and residential centered on pedestrian-oriented developments along principal arterial roads. (Ch.5, p. L-8)

Transportation Policies:

- Plan land uses to increase mode share

Summary

As this summary of existing land use plans suggests, the Paseo del Norte corridor has land use policies that both encourage transit and perpetuate some of the auto-oriented land use patterns. The demographic trend of continued growth on the West Side and the adoption of some forward-thinking sector plans support the viability of high capacity transit in the corridor. With designated Major Activity Centers on the east and west side of the study area, coupled with major constraints on expanding capacity in the corridor, there is good potential for a shift in historical patterns of land use to become more transit-supportive. Continued growth in Rio Rancho on the north end of the study area could also increase the viability of the Major Activity Center at Unser Boulevard and Paseo del Norte.

Present land uses throughout the corridor are designed for access primarily via automobiles. As an express corridor, as defined in the A/BC Comprehensive Plan, Paseo del Norte Boulevard is designed for limited access and mobility. In areas adjacent to the corridor, many arterial streets are not conducive to walking or bicycling and feature buildings that, as a result of zoning and parking requirements, are separated from the street by parking lots, creating a horizontal scale that is uninviting to anyone not in a vehicle. Finally, building densities are relatively low throughout the corridor, creating a challenge to generate the critical mass necessary for high capacity transit to be viable.

Our review of sector plans within the corridor indicates that policies are in place to reinforce the overall Comprehensive Plan framework of creating Centers and Corridors. Existing land use patterns on the Westside – low density subdivisions with little roadwork connectivity – present a challenge for increasing transit

ridership. The Journal Center has its own set of challenges, including an auto-dominated circulation system and a relatively uniform distribution of employees from Alameda on the north down to Osuna Road on the south. But current City land use policy does encourage changes to facilitate development patterns that are more conducive to multimodal transit use.