



Livability!
A New Mexico Task Force
Report

January 2005

Livability!

*The Report of the Governor's Task Force on
Our Communities, Our Future*

January 2005

Our Communities, Our Future Task Force Members

Robert Dickson, *Co-Chair*

Paradigm & Co.

Christopher Leinberger, *Co-Chair*

Historic District Improvement Company

Dolph Barnhouse, *Esq.*

Executive Director, 1000 Friends of New Mexico

Robert Czerniak, *Ph.D.*

Geography Department, New Mexico State Univ.

Mary Day

Bloomfield City Planner

Moises Gonzales

Rio Arriba County Planner

Barbara Johnson

The Quivira Coalition

Lawrence Kline, *FAICP*

Denish & Kline Associates

Debi Lee

Portales City Manager

Leanne Leith

New Mexico Public Interest Research Group

June Lorenzo, *Esq.*

Laguna Pueblo

Benito Martinez

Santa Fe County Assessor

Claudia Moncada

Diocese of Las Cruces

Carolyn Monroe

Land America Albuquerque Title

Robert Odland, *Esq.*

American Planning Association

Maria Rinaldi

Town of Bernalillo Development Director

Arturo Sandoval

VOCES, Inc.

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Note: Quotes in the text in green boxes are from the public meetings held in Bernalillo, Mesilla, and Española.

Transmittal Letter

Dear Governor Richardson,

We are pleased to present *Livability!* The Preliminary Report of the Governor's Task Force on Our Communities, Our Future, which explores how the values of New Mexicans are reflected in the development of our communities.

Under your leadership, New Mexico is making good progress on new policies and investments to encourage community livability. Your commuter rail project in the middle Rio Grande corridor and your increased investment in Main Street programs around the state are important new measures that will improve community livability, reinforce New Mexicans' commitment to community, and attract desirable economic development to rural and urban New Mexico.

The Task Force is comprised of people from throughout New Mexico, appointed by you on Sept. 24, 2004, to carry out a preliminary effort to frame the issues, obtain initial citizen input, and present recommendations for the 2005 legislative session. There was obviously not enough time to address these issues in the most definitive way, but we believe the recommendations presented in this report are a good start toward a better understanding of the issues and toward helping New Mexicans' values about community development and land use become the basis of state policy.

The report is divided into the following sections:

Executive Summary
**Chapter 1. Values of New
Mexicans Regarding Land Use**

**Chapter 2. Experience of Other
States Regarding Land Use Policy**

**Chapter 3. Financial and Other
Incentives for Consideration by the
2005 Legislature**

**Chapter 4. Livability Grants
for Communities, Regions, and the
State for Consideration by the 2005
Legislature**

In addition, there are sidebars describing New Mexico communities and initiatives, showing how the state could implement the Task Force's recommendations.

The recommendations fall in two categories: incentives and livability grants. The incentives encourage the State as well as local governments to build infrastructure and coordinate programs and facilities in a manner consistent with the citizen values uncovered by the Task Force. The livability grants encourage communities and regions to better plan their future consistent with these same citizen values.

While the Task Force on Our Communities, Our Future has only worked for three months, we have uncovered some surprising and reassuring aspects to this great and beautiful state. We hope to continue working on the crucial issues of how we live, work, play, recreate, and gain spiritual sustenance from our home state.

Finally, we offer a big thank you to the Thaw Charitable Trust for its support of the Task Force.

Rob Dickson and
Christopher B. Leinberger
Task Force Co-Chairs



State of New Mexico
Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 2004-053

CREATING A TASK FORCE ON "OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR FUTURE"

WHEREAS, New Mexico's community heritage and culture is long-established, unique and integral to the lives of the people of the State;

WHEREAS, from pueblos to plazas, the State's history of community development has reflected the State's diversity and has helped its economy grow;

WHEREAS, today, New Mexicans can collaborate on new approaches to community growth that will contribute to the creation of high-quality jobs, mixed-use and mixed-income development, and successful new transportation systems;

WHEREAS, communities, residents, businesses and local governments, as well as state agencies, will benefit from collaboration leading to positive new community development policies; and

WHEREAS, collaboration on our communities, our future will help move New Mexico's economy forward by encouraging the development of great places in which to live, work, invest, and create jobs.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Governor of the State of New Mexico, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the State of New Mexico do hereby do hereby establish the Governor's Task Force on Our Communities, Our Future. The duties of the Task Force shall be:

1. To prepare recommendations for the Governor and Legislature by January 15, 2005, and as needed thereafter, regarding urban and rural community development and describing opportunities for high-quality investment and development in New Mexico's communities, from our largest cities to our smallest villages;
2. To meet with the public for the purpose of building a public record regarding the values that underlie New Mexico's community livability, and the best opportunities for public-private partnerships for 21st Century prosperity and community growth.

3. To respect local and county jurisdiction, recommending incentives for investment that will help reinforce New Mexico's communities and families, support transit-oriented development and jobs, and help assure that community growth is efficient and livable.

The membership of the Task Force shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor and shall represent the diverse interests of the Citizens of New Mexico, including business people, community advocates, academics, local and county government, and New Mexicans who value the State's history and culture.

THIS ORDER supersedes any other previous orders, proclamations, or directives in conflict. This Executive Order shall take effect immediately and shall remain in effect until April 30, 2005, at which time it shall automatically expire.

ATTEST:

REBECCA VIGIL-GIRON
SECRETARY OF STATE

DONE AT THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE THIS
THIS 24TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2004

WITNESS MY HAND AND THE GREAT SEAL
OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO


BILL RICHARDSON
GOVERNOR



Executive Summary

The Governor's Task Force on Our Communities, Our Future prepares this report in response to Governor Bill Richardson's Executive Order 2004-053. This report charts an enlightened, positive approach to preserving the best of New Mexico's communities, revitalizing the heart of communities that desire revitalization, and using the state's financial resources in the most efficient way possible.

The Task Force's work gets to the core of what it is to be a New Mexican and how New Mexico uses its most precious permanent resource: the land. Land use policy touches every aspect of life in New Mexico: the economy, environment, our homes and neighborhoods, the transportation system, our leisure time, and ultimately who we are as a people. The targeting of state programs and agencies that affect land use will result in wise and efficient use of financial resources in infrastructure and economic development, and protect the very things that give this state its special character.

Following are summaries of the major sections of this report.

Chapter 1: Values of New Mexicans Regarding Land Use

The Task Force conducted three public meetings and deliberated during several sessions to develop a public record of New Mexicans' values regarding land

use and development.

Participants in the three public meetings value the spirit, the style, and the tradition that characterizes New Mexico. They are concerned about their communities: safety, economic opportunity, and quality of life. This was shown through a Visual Values Survey showing photographs of various New Mexico scenes, to which participants could react on a continuum of favorable to unfavorable.

The survey revealed that New

“Four elements make Northern New Mexico appealing: natural beauty, climate, ethnic diversity, and traditional settlement patterns. We used to live in villages, now things are spreading out.”

Mexicans value the variety of cultures in the state, as well as traditional settlement patterns evident in walkable hamlets, villages, neighborhoods, towns, and cities around the state. They also value traditional New Mexico working landscapes, open space, and natural features.

Chapter 2: Experience of Other States Regarding Land Use Policy

Many states have undertaken land use policy initiatives when deemed necessary to state objectives to do so. Through a combination of “carrots” and “sticks,” states are helping communities make better use of their infrastructure investments, better understand their residents' values, and provide capacity to

resolve issues that cross over municipal and county boundaries.

Chapter 3: Financial and Other Incentives for Consideration by the 2005 Legislature

The Governor's Task Force on



Public meeting, Mesilla.

Our Communities, Our Future has recommended two sets of legislative initiatives and that its work continue until April 2007 with the goal of presenting to the legislature a comprehensive set of recommendations. These include: Incentives:

- **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**—A revitalization tool that focuses infrastructure funding on critical areas and financing them through bonds that are repaid through the taxation on new development. TIF should be part of the economic development “tool kit” for the state.
- **Endorse State Funding Programs**—Housing and land conservation programs are critical to sensible land use and development.
- **Support Local Governments**—Zoning and planning support and model codes made available to local

governments.

- **Location of State Government Buildings**—Change current state policy on building sites so that it favors downtowns and other walkable districts.
- **State Targeting of Infrastructure Investments**—Focusing capital outlay on walkable and traditional settlement patterns, local economic development goals, and transit.

Chapter 4: Livability Grants for Communities, Regions, and the State for Consideration by the 2005 Legislature

On the Ground Planning:

- **Walkable Districts**—Planning grants for 5 to 20 communities to develop diverse public areas for commerce, civic activities, and entertainment, easily accessible through efficient transportation systems that include walkability.
- **Envision the Region**—Planning grants for three types of communities to begin coordinating area-wide economic development planning, working land preservation, and transportation goals.
- **Envision New Mexico**—A statewide effort to continue the Task Force for two years, monitor the other envisioning grants, learn from other states, and develop proposals for future legislatures.

Chapter 1

Values of New Mexicans Regarding Land Use

What do New Mexicans love about New Mexico? How it looks? How it makes one feel when walking or driving through its commercial districts, rural highways, urban residential neighborhoods, or old agricultural villages?

The underlying values that the public addressed in our public meetings, and that the Task Force members themselves brought to the table, are central to life in New Mexico: opportunity, history and culture, and community.

Opportunity

New Mexicans are concerned about the quality of schools and jobs, as well as the accessibility and affordability of housing. New Mexicans want their communities to reinforce opportunities for children and families to participate in the educational system, to grow into rewarding careers, and to make safe and satisfying investments in homes that will grow in value.

History and Culture

New Mexicans recognize and appreciate the state's unique mix of cultures, reflected in both the state's architecture and physical layout (from plazas to pueblos), and in the character of our neighborhoods and villages. They want historic structures to be used and conserved. They see great value in strengthening the extraordinary places—the historic Main Streets, the plazas built around historic churches, the old neighborhood schools—that form the

backbone of many of our communities. They appreciate the importance of



natural areas, such as those along riversides, as well as the agricultural lands that remain near and dear to many downtowns because of the historic irrigation systems throughout the state. Across all lines, they are concerned that our communities need to assure adequate water supplies for public needs over coming decades.

The photos in this chapter are from the Visual Values Survey presented at the public meetings in Bernalillo, Mesilla, and Española.

Community

New Mexicans are still building communities. They appreciate older places, and they want to create new places that are safe, walkable, and affordable. They want to see investment in schools and infrastructure that reinforce strong community ties. They appreciate the need for new types of development that



will mix households of diverse incomes, bring together a variety of residential and commercial uses, and be served by transit adequate to allow people of all income levels to get and hold decent jobs.

Taken together, these concerns—opportunity, history and culture, and community—form a powerful triad of principles that can guide New Mexico's local and state leaders as they make decisions that can affect our future. In the view of Task Force members, these principles present a hopeful, coherent direction for the people of the state—a way to affirm our state's potential both to grow and to maintain the unique and special qualities that define our state.

Uniquely among the United States, New Mexico has a distinctive natural and

human history. New Mexicans respect the best attributes of the land and climate as well as the practicalities they demand. They value healthy, cohesive communities where people can interact easily in the course of their daily activities—working, shopping, going to school, and enjoying themselves. While it is counter-intuitive, New Mexico has the longest urban history of walkable communities in the country, starting with the Anasazi towns, Pueblos, Law of the Indies-scripted Spanish and Mexican towns, Anglo railroad towns and cities, 20th century sprawl, and some of the best examples of recent downtown revitalization in the country.

While not a scientifically valid sample, the more than 140 participants at three public meetings conducted by the Task Force in November 2004—held in Española, Mesilla, and Bernalillo—confirmed what many New Mexicans already believe. They were shown 75 images of New Mexico and other locations and were asked to grade them based on what they like or don't like.

What We Like: Livability

The most common element among the top-10 “most-liked” photos is people. People talking and walking along a tree-lined boulevard. People gathered around a traditional plaza, surrounded by traditional-style buildings, enjoying the walkability of the place.

They valued street scenes that evoke a more community-oriented way of life and promote human interaction. They liked houses with front porches, parks with well-maintained playgrounds

and children playing. They liked images of people strolling in shopping areas. In short: “livability.”

And they honor the settlement and building patterns of old. Adobe churches. A farming village at the base of the mountain. Natural landscapes. Tree-lined dirt roads.

What We Don't Like: Conformity

The participants at the public meetings also stated clearly the kinds of development and land use they do not like in New Mexico.

The most common element among the 10 “least-liked” photos is street traffic in the modern style; that is to say, a development form that requires a vehicle to get from place to place, does not promote personal interaction, and does not honor traditional New Mexico styles. This is how many New Mexico communities are growing in the present day.

They did not value the way new, large residential subdivisions look; neither the continuous production-line appearance from the air, nor the suburban garage-scapes from the street. They did not like the impersonality of multiple big-box “power centers” surrounded by acres of parking lots, or any type of commercial or residential activity surrounding busy intersections that are difficult for pedestrians to navigate.

They also frowned on photos showing abandonment, which also results from some development practices—an abandoned playground at a school flanked by portable classrooms, and dilapidated billboards along a highway.

What is unfortunate, and was noted by many speakers, is that public policy today encourages, subsidizes, and

even mandates the creation of types of places New Mexicans value least, and does not promote, or even discourages, the creation of the types of places that New Mexicans value most.

The overall sense of the comments made during the meetings was that physical solutions in land use and



development will not alone solve New Mexico’s social and economic problems. However, economic development, community stability, and environmental health—“livability”—cannot be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

Conclusions

New Mexico is a unique and delightful place with a distinctive history in which many New Mexicans' families have participated. But the values in land use and development that are shared by New Mexicans are generally not reflected



in how land is used today, especially in what is built and how government policy determines what is built.

While the participants at the public meetings did not represent a valid statistical sample of New Mexico's population or opinion, it was somewhat diverse in geography, ethnicity, and age. However, there remains a need for increased depth and breadth of public

outreach for the creation of a viable land use public policy roadmap for New Mexico.

The Task Force, among other things, is recommending a significant, "bottom-up" public process over the next two years to build informed, widely supported recommendations on "livability" values and the best opportunities for 21st century prosperity and growth.

The balance of this report will reflect on how to re-connect values and practices in land use and development in New Mexico.

Chapter 2

Experience of Other States Regarding Land Use Policy

Governor Richardson created the Governor's Task Force on Our Communities, Our Future partly in response to conversations with former Maryland Governor Parris Glendening. As then-chairman of the National Governors Association, Gov. Glendening was one of the leading advocates for land use policy that promotes the values of his state's citizens, preserves and enhances the environment, and is more fiscally sound. During two visits to New Mexico in 2004, Gov. Glendening shared the experience in Maryland and many other states that have implemented policies and programs regarding land use.

States have chosen to take action regarding land use for many different reasons. Among them:

- An inability at the local level to cope with the effects of high rates of growth in some areas while other areas languish.
- Traffic congestion and a lack of transportation alternatives.
- "Uglification" of the built environment.
- A chipping away of the natural environment and working landscapes.
- An inability to provide housing that is affordable and integrated into existing neighborhoods.
- A conviction that some development carries heavy fiscal, social, and environmental costs that are difficult, if not impossible, to pay.

Governance, financing, and planning systems often fail to adequately meet these concerns.

To better prepare their communities for a future that is consistent with their citizens' values, many states have begun to assert a degree of planning, housing, and infrastructure financing authority. With the intent of helping local governments solve problems beyond their capacities, some states require planning while others support, facilitate, or enable planning.

Approaches include mandated

local comprehensive planning; required consistency and coordination between local, regional, and state planning; statewide development and growth management goals; and identification of critical areas of importance and developments of statewide



[Above] Princeton's Forrestal Village; [Below] Orenco Station, Portland; [Bottom] Kentlands, Maryland. (Photos courtesy of Charles Bohl.)



significance.

A state, especially through its governor, can mobilize statewide momentum and exert leadership using a politically impartial process oriented to solutions. Successful examples include Envision Utah and Michigan's Land Use Leadership Council.

A state can also integrate agencies around development issues, as done in

the other 27 states that have gone before in finding ways to line up New Mexico's unique values with how we develop the built environment and preserve and enhance the natural areas and working landscapes.

It is anticipated that the recommendations for future legislative sessions will include a more comprehensive set of incentives for

local governments to implement, if they so desire.

One of the most important lessons learned from the experience in other states is that land use policy is bipartisan. There are few other issues that have support from all parties since

these policies conserve what the citizens value, make more efficient use of infrastructure, and tend to end up being significantly less expensive for taxpayers for future infrastructure extensions. Environmentalists, fiscal conservatives, neighborhood activists, and real estate developers have all found common cause with intelligent, thoughtful, and predictable land use policy.

The chart on page 15 summarizes the range of land use planning programs available to states.

“We’re talking about a monoculture of values, only describing things in dollars. But there are also valuable cultural traditions, like how much time you are able to spend with your family each day. We should measure values in others ways than just dollars.”

Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maine, and Arizona. California rewards local governments that target investments toward state goals, and new school construction is also meant to help build neighborhoods. And, a state can confront regulatory obstacles to redevelopment and affordable housing in local codes, processes, and land assembly. A Connecticut task force produced proposals to reduce redevelopment costs by up to 50 percent.

The Task Force is not in a position to understand what overall approach or approaches makes the most sense for the unique conditions in New Mexico at this time. That is the purpose of the bottom-up experience that would be derived from the long-term planning recommendations outlined in Chapter 4 of this report.

However, the Task Force will continue to learn from the experience of

Main Types of State Land Use Planning Programs

Type of Program	Key Characteristics	Examples
1. State Planning	State plans and zones land, develops, and maintains a statewide land use plan, implemented through state land use permits and regulations.	Hawaii comes closest to a true state planning system.
2. State Mandated Planning	State sets mandatory standards for those aspects of land use that involve state interests. Local governments must plan; their plans and implementing measures must meet state standards. The state agency reviews local planning for compliance with state standards; it may impose sanctions for failure to comply, and it may set policy through administrative rules.	Florida, Oregon
3. State Promoted Planning	State sets guidelines for those aspects of planning that involve state interests. It establishes incentives to local governments to meet the guidelines. Local governments may plan; if their plans and implementing measures meet state guidelines, they receive incentives. The state agency reviews local plans for compliance with guidelines and administers incentives program.	Georgia
4. State Review	The state requires environmental impact reports for certain types of development, thus layering a second tier of review on the traditional local planning model. The state agency reviews reports for conformance with state standards.	California
5. State Permitting	The state requires permits for certain types of development, thus pre-empting local review and permitting for those types of development. The state agency administers the reviews and permits.	Vermont
6. State Enabling	The state, through enabling legislation, authorizes local governments to plan and zone land if they so choose. The state agency may provide technical assistance, administer grants, project population growth, and train in the use of computer mapping.	Most states have adopted enabling legislation derived from models created in the 1920s.
SOURCE	Mitch Rohse, "Recommendations for the Role and Structure of State Planning Agencies," in <i>Modernizing State Planning Statutes</i> , American Planning Association, 1995.	

Transit Oriented Development

Albuquerque, Los Lunas, and Bernalillo are on the leading edge of community revitalization in New Mexico through the use of TOD, or Transit Oriented Development.

For many cities and towns in New Mexico, TODs may give communities new opportunities for new development and an increased tax base. For residents the potential exists for more jobs, less traffic congestion, more money available for housing, cleaner air, and a more livable neighborhood and city.

Simply put, TOD takes advantage of the development opportunities made available within walking distance of a commuter rail or bus rapid transit station or hub.

Through the expansion of TODs, residents will want to live and work in an area that allows them to come and go to home and work more easily, waste less time in traffic, perhaps avoiding the need to have a second or third car, and where they have employment, shopping, and entertainment opportunities within walking distance. Companies will want to locate near population centers with good transportation.

TOD features mixed uses, higher density, buildings at the sidewalk, less private and more public open space, smaller blocks, narrow streets with wider sidewalks, street trees and lights, lower parking ratios, shared parking, parking behind buildings, and on-street parallel parking. In other words, TOD embraces the look of every New Mexico downtown until the 1950s.

What makes TODs relevant now is that New Mexico is embarking on one of the most exciting and extensive transportation revolutions in its history. The Governor's commuter rail project soon will be running through downtown Albuquerque between Belen and Bernalillo in its first phase, and continuing on to Santa Fe in its second phase.

In addition, the City of Albuquerque recently started a rapid transit bus system, going east and west on Central through the city. The intersection of First and Central in downtown Albuquerque will be the best-served transit location in New Mexico by the end of 2005 when the commuter train starts rolling.

There are numerous opportunities for TODs in New Mexico, including a number that are being started now before the commuter rail system is operational. They include:

Village of Los Lunas

Los Lunas is a rapidly growing community that is working to improve and better incorporate its public transportation services into the village's development plans, including the development of a transportation center.

After the announcement of the commuter rail project, the village modified its plans for this project to include accommodations for commuter rail service, in addition to transit service, and began to evaluate how to develop the transportation center into a village "focal point."

The village's plans include the construction of a multi-story depot that includes space for office, commercial, retail, food service, and public meeting uses; improved bicycle and pedestrian connections to the near-by Valencia County administrative offices; and the feasibility of developing residential units in close proximity to this center.

Town of Bernalillo

Bernalillo is a town that is vigorously working to retain its historical character while striving to increase its economic base. The town is tying its Main Street revitalization to the development of a new plaza that will be anchored by the Town Hall on the west and a rail depot on the east. The architectural style of the depot and the new buildings within the plaza and along the pedestrian way will reflect the historical architectural style prevalent within the town. The town's development plans closely resemble TOD precepts: residential, retail, and commercial uses in close proximity to each other, excellent pedestrian connections,

(con't on page 17)

(con't from page 16)

and a developed area where residents and visitors can access rail and other forms of public transportation services—precepts that were originally used by the founders of Bernalillo.

Downtown Albuquerque

The revitalization of downtown Albuquerque started with the development of the Alvarado Multi-Modal Transportation Center at First and Central. When Phase II is completed in early 2006, Amtrak, the city bus system hub, Greyhound, the Mexican bus lines, the bus to the airport, the bus rapid transit, and the new commuter rail will all be located there.

The people who live in the hundreds of housing units built and planned in downtown Albuquerque will be literally a walk away from any point in the state, and the world.

The potential downtown arena, used for entertainment and sports, is projected to boost the ridership of the new commuter rail by over 80,000 annually.



Phase I of the Alvarado Multi-Modal Transportation Center at 1st and Central in downtown Albuquerque with Phase II under construction to the south.

Community Benefits of Proximity to Transit Centers

A 2004 study by the Transportation and Land Use Coalition projects that fully one-half of the population growth in the next 20 years in the Bay Area of California can be accommodated within one-half mile of rail stations.

Studies cited by the Victoria Transport Policy Institute analyzed the impacts of different types of transit on urban transportation patterns. It estimates a 20-25 percent reduction in single-occupant vehicles, a 27 percent increase in transit and non-motorized travel, and an 18 percent reduction in congestion compared with increasing highway capacity. The institute finds that cities with large rail transit systems have on average 400 percent higher per capita transit ridership; 36 percent lower per capita traffic fatalities; 14 percent lower per capita consumer transportation expenditures; 19 percent smaller portion of household budgets devoted to transportation; 21 percent less per capita motor vehicle mileage; 33 percent lower transit operating costs per passenger-mile; and 58 percent higher transit service cost recovery.

Design Feature	Reduced Vehicle Travel
Residential development around transit centers.	10 percent
Commercial development around transit centers.	15 percent
Residential development along transit corridor.	5 percent
Commercial development along transit corridor.	7 percent
Residential mixed-use development around transit centers.	15 percent
Commercial mixed-use development around transit centers.	20 percent
Residential mixed-use development along transit corridors.	7 percent
Commercial mixed-use development along transit corridors.	10 percent
Residential mixed-use development.	5 percent
Commercial mixed-use development.	7 percent

Chapter 3

Financial and Other Incentives for Consideration by the 2005 Legislature

The Governor's Task Force on Our Communities, Our Future presents five specific recommendations for legislation in the 2005 legislative session. These proposals would begin the implementation of public policy to achieve the type of land uses and

“Focus needs to be on preserving the ‘soul’ of the community.”

developments that New Mexicans want, and to discourage those that are less desirable. These legislative proposals were developed to make the best and most efficient use of existing infrastructure, and to preserve the integrity of our communities, natural lands, and working landscapes.

1. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts

Tax Increment Financing is a community development process that has come into wide use in recent years around the United States. It is popular because it is self-financing and promotes a community's “livability” without affecting current local and state tax revenues.

TIF permits the issuance of public bonds to build infrastructure in “walkable districts” (defined in Chapter 4), encourages planned private investment in the walkable districts to increase their property values and marketability, then applies *incremental* property and gross

receipts taxation on the new development to repay the bonds.

Under this proposal, state law would be changed to allow TIF Districts and to allow communities to participate in the program. Local governments would be required to take certain steps, including forming the TIF Districts and adopting master plans and development codes to initiate the state's financial commitment.

TIF districts would not reduce current revenues from property or gross receipts taxes, would not require a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area designation, and would not have the power of eminent domain.

The state holds the key to implementation of TIF programs through the extension of its credit resources. State-issued marketing would make initial bonds more marketable. TIF Districts would utilize a revolving fund to meet their debt service in the early years of build-out when tax increment collections are low. In later years of the bond life (up to 20 years), the increased tax increment would substantially exceed debt service and would be used to replenish the state revolving fund.

2. State Funding Programs

Provide state funds for affordable housing, parks, and natural areas.

- *Housing Trust Fund*—The Task Force endorses the creation of a State Housing Trust Fund to provide

an infusion of \$10 million for local governments and non-profit organizations to provide affordable housing.

- *Conservation Funding Initiative*—The Task Force endorses requests for \$5 million for implementation of the Natural Lands Protection Program, the Forest Legacy Program, preservation of working farms and ranches, and Natural Areas and Trails Acquisition Partnerships. The Task Force also endorses placing a Conservation Funding Initiative on the ballot in order to provide a sustainable pot of money for state parks, local natural areas, trails, and working farms and ranches.

3. Support of Local Governments

The Task Force endorses specific amendments to local government enabling laws to give local governments modern, effective tools they need to make their communities better, more resource-efficient, and more livable.

- *Zoning Enabling Legislation*—Amending enabling legislation to clarify that local governments can adopt modern land development regulations, such as form-based codes and specific plans, which are consistent with comprehensive plans that encourage livability.

- *Model Codes*—Development of model codes, annotated if possible, for use by local governments at their option in addressing such issues as mixed-use and infill development, wellhead protection, aquifer recharge, adequate public facilities, natural lands protection, and incentives (such as density bonuses) for affordable housing.

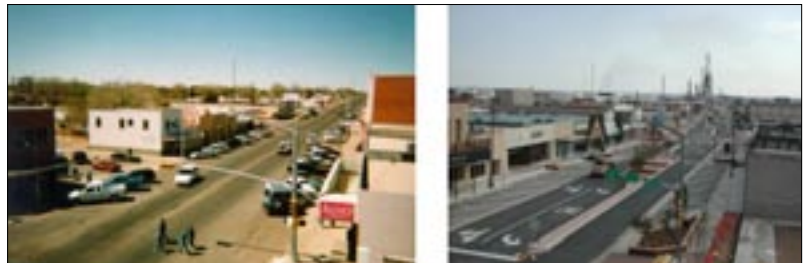
4. Location of State Facilities

Present state policy on the location of state facilities, such as offices

and educational institutions, does not explicitly promote revitalization of existing development and land use patterns, such as downtowns and other livable walkable districts, and does not discourage locating valuable properties far from people, services, and infrastructure. A legislative memorial or a Governor’s Executive Order, similar to the Presidential Executive Order which encourages a similar location of Federal agencies in downtowns, could accomplish this policy change.

5. State Targeting of Infrastructure Investments

Legislatively appropriated capital outlay funds, the State Public Project Revolving Loan Fund, and other state-funded infrastructure initiatives should be used for projects that encourage walkable and traditional



Artesia Main Street, before [left] and after [right] revitalization.

settlement patterns, promote local economic development and other local goals, and are supportive of transit and other alternative transportation modes. A legislative memorial should ask the General Services or Economic Development Department to coordinate achievement of these goals.

Santa Fe Transit Oriented Developments

Named the most beautiful city of the 20th century by urban critic John Massengale, Santa Fe has much going for it. The second largest art market in the country and cultural opportunities equivalent to a city of 2 million people, Santa Fe consistently makes the lists of the top desired places to visit.

Yet all is not rosy in the City Different. The chief complaint of residents and would-be residents is the cost of housing. Many state workers and others who work for a living in Santa Fe commute from more affordable places such as Rio Rancho and Las Vegas.

But studies show this definition of affordability rarely includes the real cost of driving, which the Hertz Corporation estimates at 50 cents per mile. With a daily round-trip commute of 100 miles, that's more than \$12,000 annually, for just one commuter.

Urbanist Roy Wroth studied two areas of Santa Fe and found that the economic scissor of unaffordable housing and long-distance commuting is not inevitable. With commuter rail service and vision, Wroth believes two areas of the city could be transformed into scintillating neighborhood centers.

One site straddles the rail line at Alta Vista Street between Cerrillos Road and St. Francis Drive (see top illustration).

That location is a five-minute walk from seven major state agency headquarters and several smaller state and local agencies, including the Departments of Transportation, Environment, Economic Development, General Services, Health, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources, Taxation and Revenue, and the Commission on Higher Education.

Wroth notes that creating a neighborhood center around the existing office sites with higher-density housing, structured parking, and commercial and retail areas could provide state workers the chance to live near their work, own at least one less car, shop more conveniently on the way to or from work, or take the train home.

The second site (see bottom illustration), referred to by Wroth as the Second Street Triangle, focuses on where Second Street crosses the railroad tracks and then goes down to St. Michael's. Some state offices currently are within easy walking distance of this site, and the area houses many small and mid-sized locally owned businesses.

Future state office space needs could be accommodated along St. Michael's, if the four-lane street were reduced to a two-lane boulevard and buildings were lined up to the street. A rail plaza could be the base for artist housing, studios, and a community arts center.

SECOND STREET TRIANGLE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
ALTA VISTA STREET TRANSIT ORIENTED PLAN



SECOND STREET TRIANGLE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
SECOND STREET TRANSIT ORIENTED PLAN



Chapter 4

Livability Grants for Communities, Regions, and the State for Consideration by the 2005 Legislature

The Governor's Task Force on Our Communities, Our Future recommends a three-level planning initiative during the next two years: a concerted effort in 2005 and 2006 to better understand the interplay of local, regional, and state values and land use considerations. The lessons learned would be used to develop more sophisticated land use and development proposals for future legislative sessions.

The three levels of planning would explore the values and visions of New Mexicans in the communities in which they live, in their interdependent metro areas and regions with core cities, and the state as a whole.

1. Walkable Districts

These efforts will be targeted at planning for "Walkable Districts" in cities and communities of all sizes. In most communities in New Mexico, there are areas with a half-mile radius where people congregate, or would congregate, for a variety of activities. They are represented by a diversity of residential, office, entertainment, government, or hotel uses, multiple ways to get there (car, walking, bike, or transit), are open to people of all incomes and ages, have some form of organized management of the area and, of course, are accessible to everyone and anyone who is on foot.

Some examples of these livable "Walkable Districts" are:

- Larger city downtowns (Las Cruces).
- Historic, cultural, and civic districts (Mesilla).
- Transit/rail stations and hubs (Bernalillo Rail Station).
- Main Streets (Lovington).
- Plazas (Taos/Taos Pueblo).
- Small town centers (Deming).
- Suburban downtowns (Uptown Albuquerque).
- University anchored (New Mexico Tech, Socorro).
- Corridors (East Downtown or EDO in Albuquerque).
- Village centers (Springer).

There is requested a maximum state participation of \$2 million during fiscal year 2005-2006 which will fund between 5 and 20 plans, depending on the size of each planning process, in a combination of matching grants. With active participation of neighborhoods, businesses, and other citizens, market and consumer research, assessment of existing infrastructure, and a comprehensive strategy for revitalization, New Mexico could start to become a different, more livable place over the next 20 years.

2. Envision the Region

It is well understood that the region is the fundamental economic unit of modern life. While generally encompassing multiple political entities,

The Las Cruces Downtown Turnaround Plan

Las Cruces may have one of the worst downtowns in the country.

As a fast-growing, mid-sized city, Las Cruces fell prey to a 1970s fad by closing its Main Street in an attempt to copy the success of the suburban mall. Essentially, the city fathers of that time turned their backs on 8,000 years of city-building history to embrace the 20-year phenomenon of suburban regional malls. Ironically, that fad is coming to an end today as suburban malls try to become faux, old-fashioned Main Streets.

The closure of Main Street in Las Cruces did to its downtown what it did in hundreds of Main Streets across the country—it killed it. Deprived of cars slowly driving past their front doors, almost every business closed, leaving the pedestrian-only mall devoid of people, except for twice a week when the Farmer's Market sets up temporary shop.

In a recent effort, Mayor William Mattiace, downtown City Councilor Jose Fietze, and many citizens and business leaders in Las Cruces decided they wanted to re-start the heart of their sprawling city where it had been since the town's founding in 1847: Main Street.

Despite the nearly dead condition of the closed Main Street, they have found a surprising number



of existing assets to bring back Main Street and downtown: a few business survivors and pioneers who showed that downtown could make sense, such as the Music Box, a successful regional-serving musical instrument store; COAS Books, probably the largest and best used bookstore in the Southwest; Insta-Copy, an office supply and reproduction store; and several more.

In addition, downtown now hosts three live performance theaters, including the restoration of the vaudeville-era Rio Grande Theater. The Bank of the West acquired a local bank whose headquarters was on Main Street and wanted to be involved in the turnaround, having watched the success of the

downtown turnaround in Albuquerque. Gov. Bill Richardson has committed to bring scattered state offices into a new office building in downtown, and also helped provide funding for the Rio Grande Theater restoration.

The City of Las Cruces also is in need of a new City Hall, due to the city's fast growth over the past two decades. The federal government has committed funds to build a \$70 million Federal Courthouse, designed by Albuquerque-based and world-wide regarded architect Antoine Predock.

Moreover, there are two more genuine downtown assets: the historic and much beloved neighborhoods to the east and west, the Mesquite and Alameda Depot neighborhoods.

The question was how to bring these assets together to create a "there there"?

The City hired Sites Southwest, an environmental design and planning firm, based in downtown Albuquerque, to craft a plan based on significant citizen input. The Sites Southwest team was led by Bob McCabe, who was Planning Director under Mayor Jim Baca when the Albuquerque downtown strategy was created and initially implemented, so he had on-the-ground experience in the process. The most

(con't on page 23)

(con't from page 22)

controversial but ultimately accepted part of the plan was to re-open Main Street to cars, but in a manner that would move traffic slowly and give priority to pedestrians.

The implementation portion of the plan laid out an exciting, yet achievable, vision. Based on market and consumer research, not idle dreams, it envisions a downtown with great complexity and interest. Church Street on the east side will be a dignified civic street with the new Federal and State buildings flanking a two lane, two-way street. Church Street will terminate at a “T” intersection at the north end where a new City Hall will be built, similar to how San Francisco Street terminates at the St. Francis Cathedral in Santa Fe. The new City Hall will become a symbol of the City, the “picture postcard” view of Las Cruces.

The re-opened Main Street will also be a two lane, two-way street with parallel parking on both sides and wide spacious sidewalks to accommodate the pedestrian and occasional sidewalk dining. There will be a new Plaza, near the site of the historic St. Genevieve Church, to anchor the middle of downtown, where the Farmer’s Market and Whole Enchilada Festival will be held.

It will be the urban entertainment and specialty retail center for the City, including a multi-plex movie theater, restaurants, and clothing stores, among other uses identified by the market study. The upper floors of the Bank of the West building could be rehabilitated into high quality, for-sale condominiums.

Finally, the western street serving downtown, Water Street, would also become a two lane, two-way avenue with parking on both sides and would have a residential character. The oldest acequia in the city, the Acequia Madre, which has been covered over, will be re-opened and restored as a linear park just south of Water to provide greenery to this residential area. The first projects will be new three-story townhouse apartments.

The effort is a private/public joint effort. The city’s role includes the contribution of land, opening up Main Street, building parking structures to free up surface lots for development, and developing the Plaza. The private sector will be spending the majority of the money to turn around downtown in business investment for commercial and residential purposes.

Las Cruces Downtown, a non-profit civic group, neighborhood groups, and businesses are united in the effort with city support.

The planning effort taking place in Las Cruces may be a model for the entire state, creating a “could only be Las Cruces” downtown that works for the city’s residents, in a public-private way.

Closing Las Cruces’ downtown Main Street in the 1970s depressed retail and other activity. The current approach from the north [page 22] shows what it looks like today while the rendering [below] shows the re-opened Main Street, anchored by a movie theater (left), restaurants, and retail and speciality stores.



each region needs careful economic development and infrastructure planning. These regions could be:

- A large metropolitan area (Albuquerque, which encompasses four counties).
- A small metropolitan area with nearby communities (Roswell).
- A larger rural region with a core

“I appreciate the Governor’s Executive Order. Let’s get some ideas, turn it into legislation, and move.”

town (the northwest New Mexico region with Farmington as the core).

Based on other national models, such as Envision Utah, the implementation time horizon would be 20 to 40 years. In New Mexico, the planning process in 2005-06 would focus on:

- economic development;
- infrastructure;
- the values of the people living in the region; and
- the preservation of natural and working landscapes.

The regional process would start with extensive citizen participation to determine the alternative future scenarios for how the region will grow, and end with public policy recommendations that will enable the regional vision to be implemented.

Envision the Region would involve matching grants, one for a large metro area, one for a small metro area, and one for a rural region, also with a \$2 million maximum state participation.

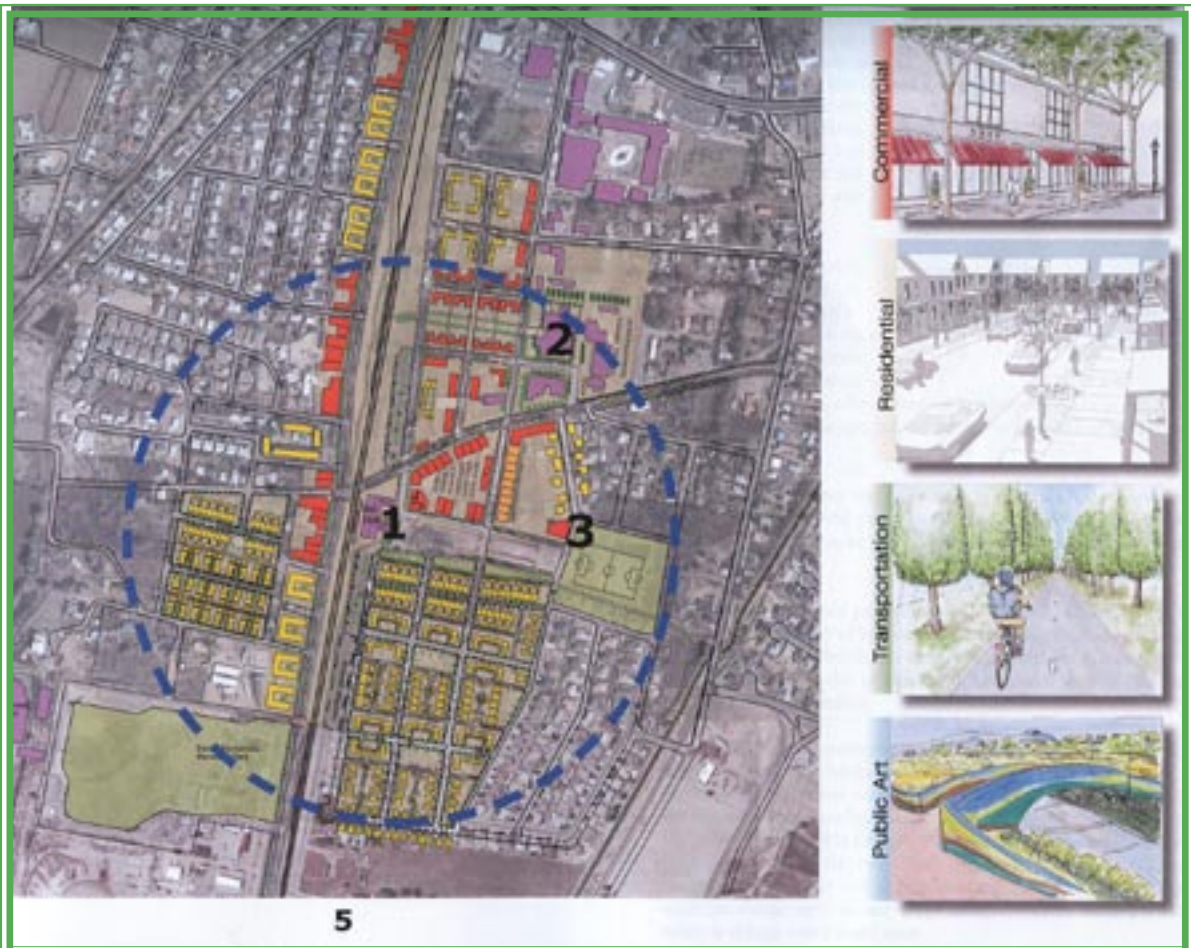
3. Envision New Mexico

The Task Force on Our Communities, Our Futures seeks to continue its work through 2007. The work during 2005-06 would be to monitor the Walkable District and Envision the Region planning grants, to learn lessons that refine future planning and apply to the state as a whole. In addition, the Task Force will monitor the implementation of the Incentive Recommendations of the Task Force and determine what modifications and additions to state policies should be recommended. Finally, the Task Force would hold much more extensive public hearings throughout the state to obtain more in-depth input.

The aim is to assemble a comprehensive legislative package for future sessions, based on on-the-ground experience with the Walkable District and Envision the Region planning processes, the implementation of the incentive recommendations, and the public hearings. The Task Force would explore the experience of the other 27 states that have similar programs, learning the best practices for economic development and land use. In addition, the Task Force will develop a baseline for New Mexico to measure future improvements in economic development and land use practices.

The future legislative recommendations will include the coordination of state policy, capital funding priorities, and making it easier to implement the Walkable District and Envision the Region plans on the ground.

The Task Force requests a \$50,000 annual budget for each of the next two years for the Task Force’s work plus ongoing staff support as at present.



[Top] Plan for downtown Los Lunas. [Bottom] Los Alamos.

