Urban Design Element

10. URBAN DESIGN

10.1 BACKGROUND

Urban design describes the relationship between the physical, aesthetic, and functional components of a city. Aesthetically pleasing urban design not only creates an environment that is visually pleasing, but promotes a healthy, safe and sustainable community by encouraging walkable neighborhoods and urban centers. Urban design concepts can apply equally to new development and the revitalization of mature urban areas.

Urban design is a discipline that incorporates the disciplines of urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture and civil engineering. However, it is directly affected by the social, economic, ecological, political, legal and aesthetic forces that are influential in shaping the urban environment.

A visual preference survey was conducted in 1999 for the 2020 Integrated Comprehensive Plan (ICP). Seven aspects of urban design were shown to City of Rio Rancho residents that participated in a public open house. The design aspects included:

- Textures, color, and materials
- Streetscapes
- Multi-use paths
- Walls
- Gateways
- Arroyos
- Parks and public places

Much of what came out of the 1999 visual preference survey still applies today as they are indicative of good urban design. The following list summarizes some of the key design issues of what City of Rio Rancho residents found to be important to guiding the design of future design:

- Xeriscape landscape design
- Community identification markers
- Preservation of view corridors
- Integrate public art into development

The city of Rio Rancho is able to set guidelines and standards for existing and future development through measures such as:

- Zoning and Subdivision Regulations
- The Comprehensive Plan
- Specific Area Plans
- Master-Planned Communities
- Corridor plans
- Parks Plans
- Streetscape Design

The implementation of these guidelines and policies help to enhance the quality of life through the built and natural environment. Improving the character of the community will require environmentally and aesthetically sensitive design.

10.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The City of Rio Rancho has a history of urban design policies that support sustainability. The 2020 ICP identified nodal development that envisions different types of dense, mixed-use, walkable community designs. The 2020 ICP policies are designed to provide residents with a wide variety of housing choices, supported by multiple modes of transportation. Moreover, the City of Rio Rancho's Strategic Plan has three strategies that identify sustainability as an a priority.

It is important to note that while the City of Rio Rancho has jurisdiction over the development proposals within its incorporated boundaries, the city does not operate in a vacuum and regional involvement and cooperation are necessary from the Mid Region Council of Governments on transportation issues, the Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority on flood control issues, and the Rio Rancho Public School District on the impact of residential development on the school system.

Each agency has specific issues relating directly to existing economic and social circumstances within that agency. There is rarely one solution that can completely meet the needs of each agency, yet each agency must give and take in order for vibrant and successful development to take place.

Sustainability has become a leading influence in urban design and planning initiatives as the aforementioned Strategic Planning Goals and Strategies show. The greatest challenge to sustainable development will be overcoming the high cost and adverse effects of unfettered development manifested in loss of open spaces, natural resources, and overall quality of life.

Urban design is not simply about making sure every housing development has a park. Creating connectivity between neighborhoods and communities, how to improve movement between neighborhoods, how this movement impacts development patterns within the city and entire region is a major component of urban design. Urban design is also about resource management and providing choices and alternatives to citizens.

The analysis section identifies issues that can have a discernable impact on the quality of life for Rio Ranchos' citizens. Each presents unique challenges for the City of Rio Rancho. More importantly, each issue is firmly linked to the others, requiring multi-disciplinary solutions and coordination.

10.2.1 THE PLANNING CONTEXT

The Development Services Department prepares and implements plans to administer and recommend entitlements, and offers advice about development that will enhance the quality of life of the citizens of Rio Rancho. The department also provides technical information to the public regarding zoning and development reviews and long-range planning issues and data. Additionally, the Development Services Department makes recommendations to the City of Rio Rancho's Planning & Zoning Board and Governing Body for development applications. Therefore, it is critical for staff, the Planning & Zoning Board, and the Governing Body to work in concert when development proposals are brought to public hearing in order to ensure each development contributes positively to the overall design of Rio Rancho.

Planning & Zoning Board: The Planning & Zoning Board is a seven member board which makes recommendations to the Governing Body on the city's Comprehensive Plan, land-use applications, and other related issues, as well as makes final decisions on subdivision maps.

The Governing Body exercises legislative power by enacting ordinances, resolutions, orders and other policies necessary for the management and execution of the powers vested in the city through the City Charter.

10.2.2 SPECIFIC AREA PLANS

In response to trying to address growth within the Rio Rancho, the city has implemented Specific Area Plans (SAP) to supplement the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Element.

10.3 NEW URBANISM

10.3.1 FOCUSED GROWTH

There is a growing concern that current development patterns, dominated by sprawl, are not in the long-term best interest of our cities. Much of the existing patterns of urban and suburban development can impair the quality of life. The symptoms of sprawl are: more congestion and air pollution resulting from our increased dependence on automobiles, the loss of open space, the need for costly improvements to roads and public services, and the loss of a sense of community. There has been greater emphasis in supporting growth on the fringe of cities rather than the redevelopment of older areas within a city which increases infrastructure costs and perpetuates blight.
Focusing growth into higher density nodal development can promote environmental stewardship by maintaining open space and reducing public infrastructure costs associated with urban sprawl. The features that distinguish focused growth in a community vary from place to place. In general, focused growth invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older suburbs. Focused growth concepts include creating town-centers, transit and pedestrian oriented design, and encouraging a greater mix of housing, commercial and retail uses. The Principles of focused growth center on the preservation of open space, along with many other environmental amenities.

10.3.2 TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT (TND)

Traditional Neighborhood Development is a comprehensive planning system that includes a variety of housing types and land-uses in a defined area. The variety or mix of uses permits educational facilities, civic buildings and commercial establishments to be located within walking distance of residential areas. A TND is served by a network of paths, streets and lanes that are suitable for pedestrians as well as vehicles. TND provides residents the option of walking, biking or driving to places within their neighborhood. Present and future modes of transit are also considered during the planning stages of a TND. Public and private spaces have equal importance, thereby, creating a balanced community serving a wide

range of housing and business choices. The inclusion of civic buildings and civic space – in the form of plazas, greens, parks and squares – enhances community identity and value.

Example of TND with retail on ground floor, residential above, and public plaza.

10.3.3 SENSE-OF-PLACE

How a city looks at the design of a development and how it contributes to the overall design of a community can have a dramatic impact on whether or not people develop a sense-of-place in their community. Urban design incorporates many visual elements of a city to create a sense-of-place for its residents, and promotes attractive development designed to strengthen the physical image of the city. Creating a more unified community through design will strengthen the bond between residents and where they live and work. Forming a physically attractive, unique place will have a positive impact on visitors as well.

It is important for a community to have an identity, and form a sense-of-place for its residents. Strategically placing gateway monuments or signage at primary entry points of the city allows visitors and residents to recognize that they are entering or exiting the city. Placing a recognizable city logo in public spaces and facilities allows for identification of the city. By unifying public elements such as streetlights, landscaping, street furniture, sidewalks and signage, community identification can be achieved.

10.3.4 STREETSCAPES/ COMPLETE STREETS

A key element of urban design is roadway design. When roadways are designed to with complete street concepts, commercial developments along this type of street are attractive to a broader base of people because they are pedestrian-friendly .

A streetscape can be defined as the elements within and along the street right-of-way that define its appearance, identity, and functionality. Taken a step further, complete streets are roadways designed and operated to enable safe, attractive, and comfortable access and travel for all users. The elements of a complete street include: adjacent buildings and land-uses, street furniture, landscaping (both along the street edge and the median), trees, sidewalks, and pavement treatments, and transit and bike lanes to name a few. Community streetscapes should emphasize the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts; a streetscape should flow naturally and contain elements that contribute to the overall cohesiveness of the community.

Streetscapes can improve the pedestrian experience by creating a safe environment that is both pleasant convenient. Well designed streetscapes can also increase the commercial viability of a community and provide a unified design that can carry people through and to the area. An inviting, aesthetically pleasing streetscape has the opportunity to create a walkable, pedestrian friendly community.

Complete Street w/defined crosswalks, bike lanes and broad sidewalks.

It is important to create roads and streetscapes with the pedestrian in mind, and encourage human scale design to form a walkable community. A key element to create a well rounded streetscape that promotes pedestrian activity is the creation of narrower streets, which in turn slows traffic and increases pedestrian safety, likewise broader landscape buffers and sidewalks can create the same sense of safety for pedestrians along streets with higher speed limits and traffic volumes.

Complete street w/bulbout shortens walking distance to cross street.

10.3.5 THIRD PLACES

Connected to complete streets, third places refer to social surroundings that are separate from the first place of the home and the second place workplace where other social activities take place. Third places are anchors of community life that facilitate and foster broader, more creative interaction between community members. The creation of third places is fostered by having complete streets. Ray Oldenburg (the father of the term Third Places) suggests: "*the hallmarks of a true "third place" are free or inexpensive; food and drink, while not essential, are important; highly accessible: proximate for many (walking distance); involve regulars – those who habitually congregate there; welcoming and comfortable; both new friends and old should be found there".*

Examples of third places include: farmers' markets, coffee shops, community centers, libraries, and parks, etc.

Sidewalk Café

Farmers Market

Coffee Shop Street Scene

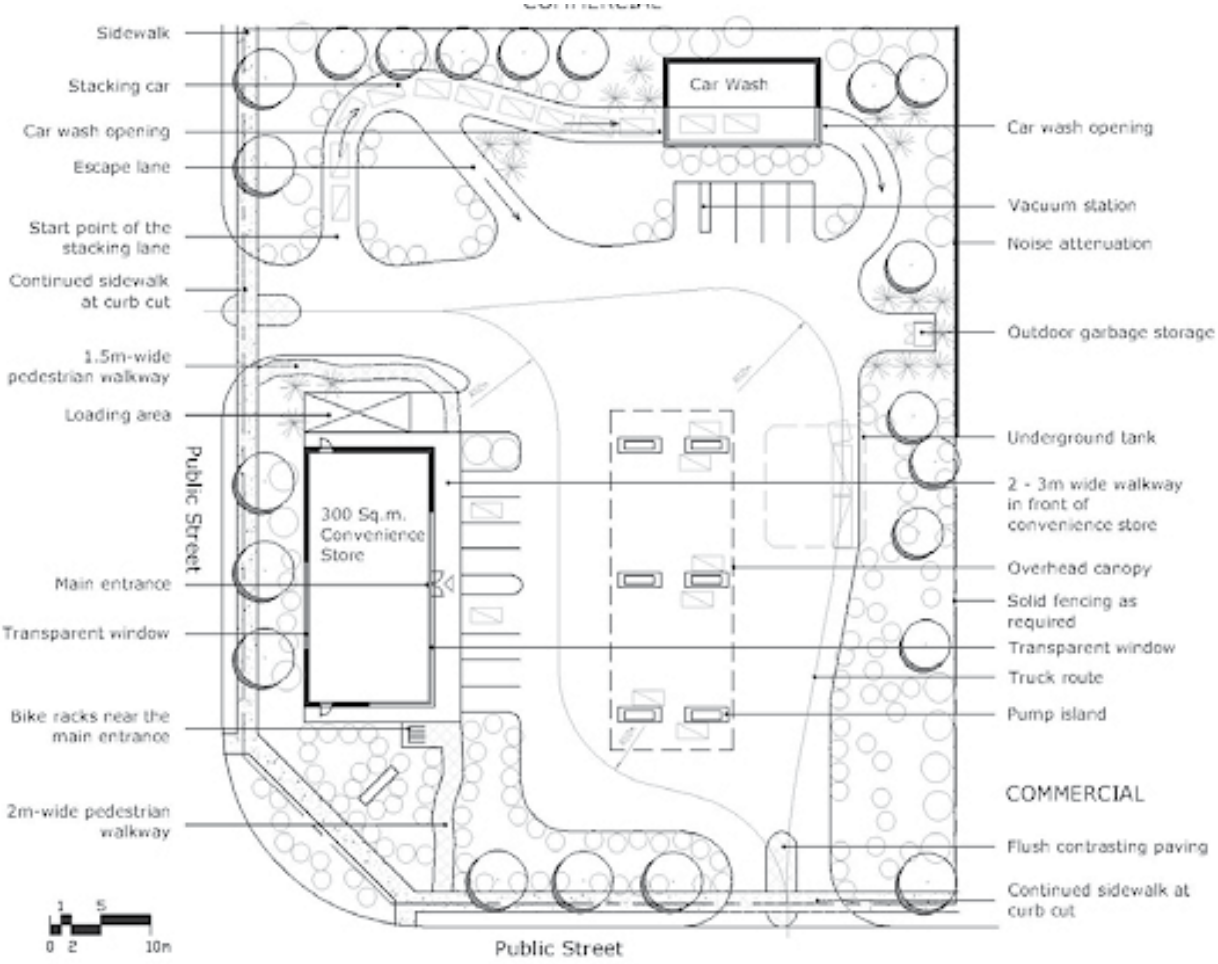
10.3.6 CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED)

It is also important to consider crime prevention and how the design of a development can either impede or promote crime. CPTED is a multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior. Consistent with the widespread implementation of defensible space guidelines established in the 1970s, CPTED principles advocate proper design and effective use of the built environment to reduce crime and improve the quality of life. The three most common built environment strategies are natural surveillance, natural access control and natural territorial reinforcement.

Natural surveillance and access control strategies limit the opportunity for crime. Natural surveillance increases the threat of apprehension by taking steps to increase the perception that people can be seen. Natural surveillance occurs by designing the placement of physical features, activities and people in a manner that maximizes visibility and fosters positive social interaction among legitimate users of private and public space. Potential offenders, therefore, feel increased scrutiny and limitations to potential escape routes.

Natural access control limits the opportunity for crime by taking steps to clearly differentiate between public space and private space. By selectively placing entrances and exits, fencing, lighting and landscaping to limit access or control flow, natural access control occurs.

Natural territorial reinforcement promotes social control through increased definition of space and improved proprietary concern. An environment designed to clearly delineate private space does two things. First, it creates a sense of ownership. Owners have a vested interest and are more likely to challenge intruders or report them to the police. Second, the sense of owned space creates an environment where "strangers" or "intruders" stand out and are more easily identified. By using buildings, fences, pavement, signs, lighting and landscape to express ownership and define public, semi-public and private space, natural territorial reinforcement occurs. Additionally, these objectives can be achieved by assignment of space to designated users in previously unassigned locations.



CEPT designed gas station with convenience store.

10.3.7 LAND-USE

Land use refers to the types of activities allowed on a particular parcel of land. However, there is a significant difference between the land-use plan and zoning. While both the land-use plan and zoning relate to the use of land, a land- use plan is a general policy document that is a guide to community development. Zoning, on the other hand, is the tool (law), by which, the land-use plan is carried out. The land-use plan identifies generally where certain categories of land uses can take place, while the specific uses, such as manufacturing, commercial and, residential are all governed by a set of designations assigned to each parcel or a group of parcels known as zoning. The zoning of a parcel restricts the uses that can legally operate on a parcel. These permissible uses are found in the zoning ordinance.

Since the late 18th and early 19th centuries, major changes in agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation began to have a profound effect on land use patterns. With the advent of Euclidian Zoning (a separation of uses by zoning districts based on compatibility), land patterns became segregated. The segregation of land uses has resulted in strip commercial development because strict Euclidian Zoning does not allow for the integration of residential uses within a commercial development. Growth that supports the integration of mixed land uses becomes a critical component of achieving better places to live. By putting uses in close proximity to one another, alternatives to driving, such as walking or biking, once again become viable.

Mixed land uses also provide a more diverse and sizable population and commercial base for supporting viable public transit. Mixed uses can also enhance the vitality and perceived security of an area by increasing the number and attitude of people on the street. Moreover, it helps streets; public spaces and pedestrian-oriented retail become a place where people meet, attracting pedestrians back onto the street and helping to revitalize community life.

Commercial and public uses in close proximity to residential areas are often reflected in higher property values, and therefore, help raise local tax revenues. Businesses recognize the benefits associated with areas able to attract more people, as there is increased economic activity when there are more people in an area to shop.

Density is an important factor in the creation of strong, utilized transit routes throughout a city. Commercial, office and high-density residential uses along major corridors produces activity in an area, and allows for increased transit routes to services provided. The clustering of mixed uses along a specific route or block allows residents to access transit services, along with other public amenities provided in the community. Transit services become more cost effective with increased density, since each route is able to serve more people within a smaller area.

10.3.8 INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

Infill and redevelopment is an important aspect of urban design because it focuses on the development or redevelopment of land where existing infrastructure is already in place. An infill site is typically found within a downtown area. Redevelopment refers to improving already developed properties. Developing an infill site adds to the density of a community, and creates a connection between developments. The higher density, in turn, creates a more walkable community, and decreases reliance on automobiles. The redevelopment of distressed properties within a community improves the aesthetics of the area, and creates a more cohesive built environment.

Infill development should be compatible with existing development. The new building or buildings should be similar in proportion, height and setbacks to surrounding buildings, to create a visually organized development and to promote pedestrian activity. Additionally, development should be compatible with the street hierarchy. For instance, higher density development is more appropriate for arterials, whereas lower density might be more appropriate on local streets designed for a lower traffic volumes and speeds.

Infill/Redevelopment foreground scaled to fit in with older development background.

10.3.9 Parking Management

Parking management is usually and overlooked aspect of urban design. Retail developments often have expansive surface parking lots due to the significantly higher cost of parking structures. Parking management includes a variety of strategies that encourage more efficient use of existing parking facilities, improve the quality of service provided to parking facility users and improve parking facility design. Parking management can help address a wide range of transportation problems and help achieve a variety of transportation, land-use, development, economic, and environmental objectives.

Specific parking management strategies include shared parking, regulations that encourage more efficient parking facility use, priced parking, parking cash out, overflow plans, transit and rideshare improvements, and implementing Transit-Oriented Development strategies.

10.3.10 Neighborhood Street Layout/Connectivity

The design of subdivisions has been know to follow one of two patterns: street grid or a curvilinear system. The grid system evolved from the survey of communities which was divided into rectangular parcels of land. The grid system creates a pattern that has the potential for expansion. All streets are "through" streets in a grid system and more easily allow a street to become an arterial road. During the 1960s and 1970s, a new concept for development involving curvilinear streets became popular. This way of design controlled the size and use of the roadway with specific design requirements such as cul-de-sacs, hammer heads and knuckles based on traffic capacity to limit the likelihood of a road to become a collector or arterial road. Of the two types of subdivision design found in Rio Rancho, the grid approach is the dominant form, although in the master-planned communities of Cabazon, Loma Colorado, and Mariposa, the street hierarchy is prevalent.

A common denominator for subdivision design is the importance of connectivity, not only for cars but pedestrians as well. By designing neighborhoods with connected, narrower streets, land is being used much more efficiently. The newer master-planned communities are designing their developments with the idea of connectivity in mind; however, the majority of land within Rio Rancho is dominated by the old Rio Rancho Estates subdivisions where no thought was placed into street design, connectivity and urban design. Connecting open spaces to trails within a subdivision will encourage different modes of transportation such as walking or bicycling.

The city center should be a well defined central business district with linkages to suburbs and surrounding communities because it is a city's lifeblood, providing both business and residential opportunities for the entire region. Creating connectivity between the downtown and surrounding areas is essential to creating a strong urban core. The greatest challenge to creating well-defined linkages between the city center and the rest of Rio Rancho is the prematurely platted subdivisions of Rio Rancho Estates.

10.3.11 Transportation/Linkages/ Connectivity

Transportation has become an increasing problem in most cities today and Rio Rancho is no different. In response to this issue, a multi-modal approach to transportation is encouraged to alleviate congestion on the roadways. In the past, many cities have simply increased the size of a roadway to increase capacity. Transportation issues can be improved through the use of an alternative transportation method such as a shared vehicles program. The use of alternative transportation such as car sharing, mass-transit, walking and bicycle riding programs contribute to improved air quality, better traffic conditions, and shorter commute times.

10.3.12 Mass Transit

The design of mass transportation amenities such as bus stops, special lanes and park and rides, can enhance service and add to the community design. It is important to have active uses such as restaurants and shopping near mass transportation hubs and stops. These active uses, located near mass transportation, become third places that allow for waiting areas, places to do business, and a sense of safety in a well lit area. In order to increase ridership, it is important to have a reliable, efficient bus system. It is also important for a city to give bus movement priority by forming special lanes designed for buses only, and easy access bus stops to reduce delays.

10.3.13 TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)

Transit Oriented Development is a fast-growing trend in creating vibrant, livable communities. Also known as Transit Oriented Design, it is the creation of compact, walkable communities centered on high-quality transportation systems. TOD contributes to the reduction of auto emissions by reducing the dependency on the single-occupant automobile trips. Additionally, many on-going issues have created the need for TOD.

Increased traffic congestion, a growing desire for a quality urban lifestyle and a desire for walkable lifestyles away from traffic have helped to bring TOD to the forefront of local development. Many communities are beginning to implement new approaches to transportation planning by blending a multi-modal approach to transportation with supportive development patterns that lead to a variety of transportation options.

Though the city of Rio Rancho's Strategic Plan calls for the city to become a sustainable community, the city does not have an established fixed-transit system, at this time, that would lead to improving the urban form through TOD.

10.3.14 OPEN SPACE

Open space is a critical component of urban design whether the open space is in the form of regional or neighborhood parks, trail development along arroyos, or golf courses open to the public. The purpose of open space was to revive a persons social spirit and remove them from the stress of everyday life as envisioned by Ebenezer Howard and others in the Garden Cities Movement at the turn of the 20th Century. It is important for every community to include areas for open space, walking paths, bike paths, and sidewalks. These amenities allow for connections between residents, and protect environmental resources.

Traditional suburban development typically divides land into a checkerboard layout of nearly identical lots with little or no area designated for open space or trail systems. This style of development can be an inefficient use of land which subtracts from the community's overall visual cohesiveness and sustainability potential. The city of Rio Rancho Parks, Recreation, & Open Space Element provides a strategy for an adequate amount of parks and recreational facilities in convenient and accessible locations to best serve the needs of the community. The element further serves to identify the adequacies and deficiencies of the present system by evaluating the spatial distribution, accessibility, location, quantity, size and facilities of the community's existing parks.

10.3.15 LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT (LID)

Urban design can also occur in the form of storm water management. One method of storm water management is Low Impact Development. A LID is an innovative storm water management, ecosystem-based approach with a basic principle that is modeled after nature. LID's goal is to mimic a site's predevelopment hydrology by using design techniques that permit infiltration, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff close to its source. Techniques are based on the premise that storm water management should not be seen as storm water disposal. LID is a versatile approach that can be applied equally well to new development, urban retrofits, and redevelopment/ revitalization projects. Low Impact Development is an environmentally sound technology and an economically sustainable approach to addressing the adverse impacts of urbanization. By managing runoff close to its source, LID can enhance the local environment, protect public health, and improve community livability.

LID below street-level water is retained on-site.

LID swale water is retained on-site.

10.3.16 ARROYOS

The vast number of arroyos or drainage channels found throughout the city is a tremendous opportunity for the development of open space and conservation of critical habitat for wildlife. The Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control District (SSCAFCA) has developed a Quality of Life Master Plan that addresses using the arroyos and adjacent lands owned by SSCAFCA as a trail and park system.

Albuquerque Arroyo Trail

10.3.17 LANDSCAPING

Creating a lush, yet water-efficient landscape can present many challenges in the high desert of the Middle Rio Grande Valley and non drought-resistant landscaping can have detrimental effects on the environment.

Water-efficient plants and trees aid in the decrease of water waste. While nearly all water used indoors can be recycled, water used outside cannot usually be recycled due to evaporation; this is known as "consumptive use." The Bureau of Reclamation, which is responsible for keeping track of Rio Grande water, deducts any returned water (return-flow credits) from New Mexico's river withdrawals. Consumptive use water, such as landscape watering, does not earn the valley any return-flow credits as the water is not returned to the system.

By decreasing the amount of water used outdoors through the use of xeriscape landscaping choices, the amount of water consumption and runoff can decrease, allowing the salvaged water to be reallocated for non-consumptive uses. Poor landscape choices in new and existing communities result in an unnecessary usage of water resources and a decreased potential for return-flow credits. Also, communities' overuse of impermeable surfaces, "hardscape," such as parking lots and sidewalks affects Rio Ranchos' water supply by contributing to run off and water waste. Hardscape surfaces seal the soil surface and do not allow fluids to pass through them. Hardscape stops water infiltration, contributes to water runoff, and hinders natural groundwater recharge.

Xeriscape can be colorful and water efficient.

Xeriscape Las Vegas Springs Preserve

10.3.18 TREE PLANTING

Trees can benefit a community in many ways. As a city grows, community, urban forests can provide for economic revitalization, resolution of development issues, and an increased quality of life. In desert regions, the urban forest canopy remains a distinctive feature of the landscape that provides residents protection from the elements and forms a living connection to earlier generations that planted and tended the trees. Trees aid by conserving energy, reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide, improving air quality, reducing storm water runoff, increasing property values, and contributing to human health.

Ethel M Desert Garden Las Vegas, NV

Xeriscape can provide a lush and dense tree canopy.

10.4. MPLEMENTATION

10.4.1 GOALS

Discussion

During the development of the City of Rio Rancho's Strategic Plan, the Governing Body identified having a community identity, providing aesthetic improvements to neighborhoods are important to the citizens of the City of Rio Rancho. The goals, policies and actions contained herein are intended to help implement the strategies in the Strategic Plan that pertain to the Urban Design Element.

GOAL UD 1: Create focused growth areas where existing public infrastructure can support higher density development.

GOAL UD 2: Create traditional neighborhood patterns that support a sense of place.

GOAL UD 3: Create street patterns with development that fosters human interaction.

GOAL UD 4: Create safe developments that discourage crime.

GOAL UD 5: Support infill and redevelopment within areas of the city that have been neglected.

GOAL UD 6: Support development that links neighborhoods and encourages the use of all modes of transportation.

GOAL UD 7: Create subdivision linkages to open space recreational facilities.

GOAL UD 8: Embrace the use of xeriscape landscaping.

10.4.2 POLICIES

POLICY UD 1: Identify specific areas within the city where growth should be focused.

POLICY UD 2: Provide development incentives for developments that create a sense of place, foster human interaction, and discourage crime.

POLICY UD 3: Provide development incentives for infill and redevelopment development projects.

POLICY UD 4: Provide development incentives for developments that utilize Low Impact Development principles.

10.4.3 ACTIONS

ACTION UD 1: Amend the impact fee ordinance to structure impact fee credits to identified focused growth and infill or redevelopment areas.

ACTION UD 2: Amend the zoning ordinance to establish higher design-oriented development standards.

ACTION UD 3: Amend the zoning ordinance to provide density bonuses and/or impact fee credits for developments that use Low Impact Development principles and/or LEED certification.

ACTION UD 4: Amend the zoning ordinance to require the use of xeriscape for all development.

ACTON UD 5: Amend the zoning ordinance to require all developments to utilize water harvesting methods for landscape areas.

10.5. DESIGN IMAGES

10.5.1 DESIGN DON'TS

Trash compactors and untreated walls shall not be visible from the right-of-way.

Landscaping with trees shall be located along both sides of a sidewalk and walls greater than eight feet in height shall be stepped with a five-foot horizontal offset with landscaping in the offset.

Subdivision entries shall manicured with signs made of permanent materials.

Weed barriers and rock mulch shall be located in areas where vegetation is absent.

Parking lots without landscaping increase surface temperatures which promotes an urban heat island.

Overgrown landscaping inhibits sidewalk use and cactus should not be located within three feet of a sidewalk.

10.5.2 Design Do's

Well landscaped medians along collector and arterial roads develop a sense of place and can provide a refuge where mid-block crossings exist.

Providing pet waste stations along sidewalks helps maintain an attractive landscape design.

Separate the sidewalk from the curb, but also landscape the space between the sidewalk and curb.

Provide subdivision entry features that create a sense of place; however, minimize the use of turf and water features.

Integrate subdivision signs into the wall design to create a sense of place.

Integrating pedestrian connections at the bulb of a cul-de-sac promotes a walkable environment.

Incorporating outside dining and public spaces adjacent to a sidewalk creates third places that foster human interaction.

Using multi-tenant signs reduces sign clutter and promotes good site design.

Incorporate different textures, vertical and horizontal planes into buildings to create visual interest.

Screen roof-mounted mechanical equipment from view with the use of parapet walls.

Incorporate pedestrian connections between commercial and residential developments to promote walkability.

Good site design incorporates identifying monuments to create a sense of place.

Complete streets have well landscaped sidewalks as well as street medians.

Screening loading areas from streets with decorative walls promotes good site design.

Provide enhanced subdivision entries to carry a complete street concept from a residential subdivision to collector and arterial roads.

Wide landscape buffers between the curb and sidewalk as well as between a subdivision wall and the sidewalk creates a more secure environment for a pedestrian.

Incorporate water collection systems into the roof design to reduce amount of water used for landscape irrigation.

Depressions and swales in a landscape design help retain water on-site and to reduce water concentration downstream.

Incorporating straw bales and wood mulch increases the water holding capacity of a landscape area and provides a water source for landscaping long after a rainfall.

Small undulations in landscape design slows surface flow rates and reduces the risk of washout of soil downstream.

Straw bales, wood mulch and undulating the land allows water to slowly enter this water collection area to protect downstream properties from increased flow rates.

Straw bales, wood mulch and water collection areas allow the property owner to use less irrigation in this landscape.

10.5.3 Transforming Streetscapes

Unser Boulevard

Current look of Unser Boulevard, south of Abrazo Road.

What Unser Boulevard could look like with landscape enhancements.

King Boulevard

Currently King Boulevard in Northern Meadows is not inviting to pedestrians with tall subdivision walls and a lack of landscaping.

With landscape enhancements like planter walls to break up the height of the subdivision wall and street plantings, King Boulevard become more pedestrian-friendly

Sara Road

Sara Road currently has an excess right-of-way that is left undeveloped.

Incorporating landscaping within medians and along the street frontage and the creation of a trail along Sara Road will create an inviting pedestrian environment.

New Mexico 528

New Mexico Highway 528 is a major corridor for the City of Rio Rancho. With the exception of a portion of New Mexico Highway 528 from Westside Boulevard to Southern Boulevard, there isn't landscape treatment in the medians and the edge of the right-of-way.

Landscaping the median and the edge of the right-of-way along New Mexico Highway 528 is important to defining this corridor to provide an image the City desires.

Walking Trail at Cabezon

The walking trail at Cabezon provides a great amenity for Rio Rancho residents; however, there is a lack of shade along the trail which discourages use of the trail in hot weather. The median of Unser Boulevard, south of Southern Boulevard is an important corridor into the City.

Landscaping placed adjacent to the walking trail at Cabezon creates shade relief during hot summer days, while landscaping the median of Unser Boulevard projects the importance of this corridor road.

Southern Boulevard

Southern Boulevard is envisioned as an entertainment district; however, this corridor road does not maintain a consistent theme necessary to establish and convey this area as an entertainment district.

By providing a consistent landscape theme within the median and along the street right-of-way will help to create a the theme of an entertainment district along Southern Boulevard between New Mexico Highway 528 and Unser Boulevard.

Broadmoor Boulevard,

Broadmoor Boulevard, south of Loma Colorado Boulevard is constrained by narrow sidewalks and minimally landscaped areas on the west side of the street.

Broadmoor Boulevard can be transformed by landscaping medians and incorporating trees and shrubs along the west side of the street to cerate a more thoughtfully designed street.

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