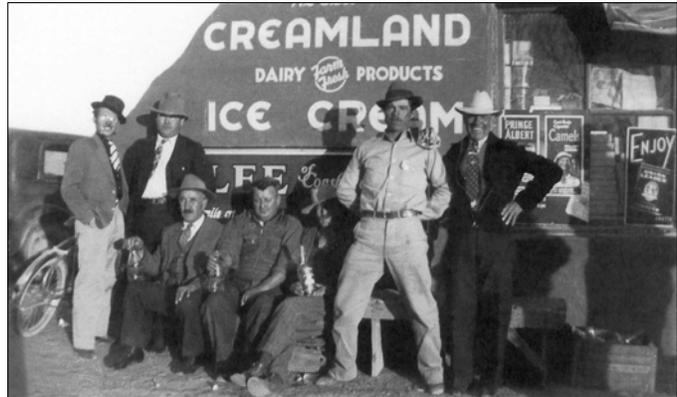


Sec.1 Introduction

The Isleta corridor is a place of contrasts. Generally speaking, Isleta Boulevard extends from Bridge Boulevard on the north to Isleta Pueblo on the south, a stretch of just over seven miles containing both farms and shopping centers, homes and businesses, neon and adobe. While the corridor is united in its history and its uniqueness, these places of contrast serve local residents as destinations, as reminders of history, and as places of future opportunity.

The Isleta Boulevard and Village Centers Sector Development Plan honors the history of this community and its resolute desire to be distinctive. The sector plan offers four new zones meant to preserve and enhance the corridor’s unique character: the Isleta Boulevard Agricultural Zone, the Isleta Boulevard Mixed-Use Zone, the Isleta Boulevard Village Center Zone, and the Isleta Boulevard Design Overlay Zone.



Isleta Boulevard as Gathering Place:
Above: Page’s Grocery, Early 20th Century
Below: Corral Tire Shop, Early 21st Century

The sector planning process for the Isleta corridor was initiated because this is *a place that matters*; residents know that better than anyone. Values of pride, people, and place are evident all along the corridor: in conversations in front of Jerry’s Market, in old-time stories passed down through generations, and at local celebrations like South Valley Pride Day. South Valley residents rally around Isleta Boulevard because it’s more than just a road; it’s the economic and social heartbeat of their community.



Through its history as a trade route, a small business corridor, and an agricultural crossroads, Isleta Boulevard has always been a corridor brimming with vibrancy. Today, much of that vibrancy is threatened due to booming regional growth, development pressures, and a loss of the area’s agricultural viability. The sector plan seeks to build upon the historic, cultural, and economic significance of Isleta Boulevard with planning strategies that protect and enhance what makes the corridor such a special place.

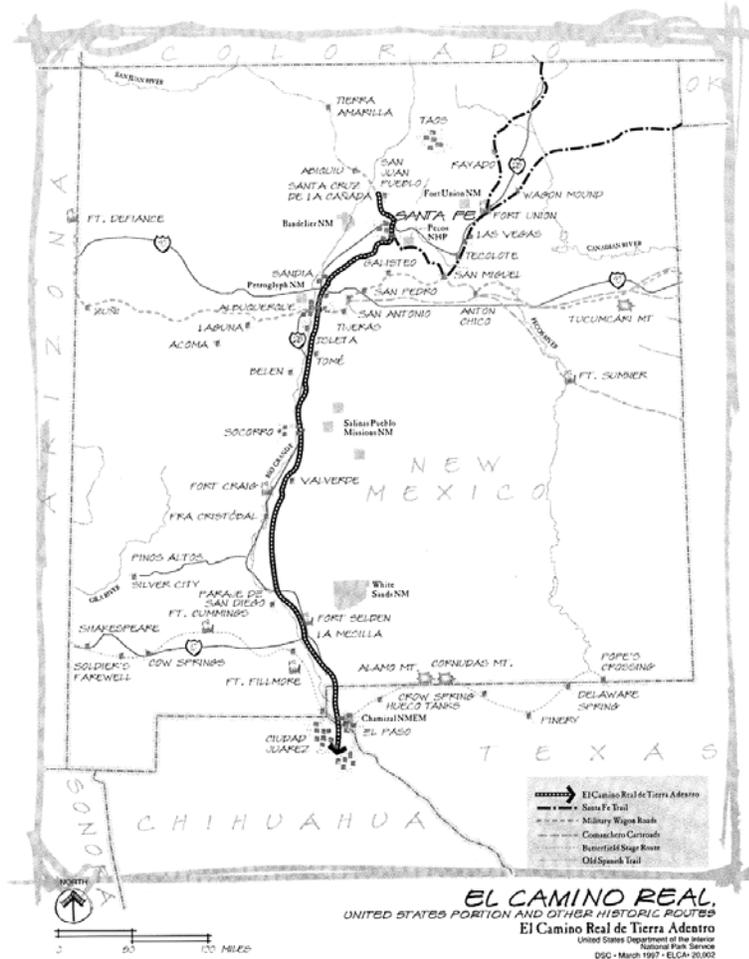
In planning for the future, the Isleta Boulevard and Village Centers Sector Development Plan celebrates the rich history of this corridor and the people who’ve made it home.

A. HISTORY OF ISLETA BOULEVARD

A drive down Isleta Boulevard today reveals to us how the roadway has been used throughout its history - from family-owned farmland worked for generations, to the Old Armijo School and the new TVI campus, to the lively restaurants and businesses that add energy to the corridor. This variety of historical uses creates a unique visual landscape along Isleta Boulevard that is like no other place, resulting in a unique mix of old and new, urban and rural, residential and commercial.

Isleta Boulevard's origins are as a trade route for indigenous peoples and Spanish explorers. Originally, the road linked great indigenous civilizations with regional trade centers in northern Chihuahua and pueblo settlements along the Rio Grande. Once known as the Chihuahua Trail, the route was renamed El Camino Real when the Spanish arrived in 1540. Traders traveled the route to reach the southern markets of Mexico. At this time, the roadway provided spaces and opportunities for social interaction and a vital connection between the frontier and New Spain.

During the time of Spanish settlement in what is now New Mexico, the roadway connected the Hispano villages established close to and along the roadway. These land grant communities were attracted to the area because of the proximity to the Rio Grande and the fertile nature of the Valley floodplain. Although some accounts give an earlier founding date for the Atrisco Land Grant, the official date is 1692, followed by the founding of Pajarito (1699) and Los Padillas (1705). With the establishment of the Santa Fe Trail in 1821, trade further developed along the roadway, as Anglo-Americans established economic ties to Mexico as well.



"By 1750, the South Valley had become a thriving economic center. The river valley was used for raising crops and the mesa slopes provided grazing land for cattle and sheep. Over the years, the farming land was divided among family members into long narrow strips (varas) with access to the acequia. As families grew and new settlers moved into the area, distinct clusters of houses took shape. These plazas or small communities, each with a church as its social and religious center, were usually named for the most prominent

families...celebration of religious and social events and the participation of residents in the community promoted cultural identity and fostered solidarity.” (Shurlock, 1988)

A relatively self-sufficient lifestyle continued for approximately 150 years along Isleta Boulevard, as Pajarito and Los Padillas (located in the southern part of Isleta Boulevard) relied on services and supplies from Atrisco (located near northern Isleta Boulevard).

Change came in 1848 when New Mexico was established as a U.S. Territory. The arrival of the railroad and the building of the Barelvas Bridge in the 1890s further hastened change in the area. Using the railroad, South Valley farmers could export sheep and cattle around the region. During this time, the historic village centers grew as more services were needed. A shift occurred in the South Valley when the railroad brought new job opportunities in Albuquerque, as the area’s singular agricultural economy transitioned into a more varied economy.



Going to market, late 1800s

The first automobiles came to New Mexico in the early 1900s, prompting the Territorial Legislature to recognize the need for public roads. They authorized funds to cut and grade the roadway and designated it as Route 1. By 1915, Route 1 was designated State Road 1 as New Mexico entered the U.S as a state. State Road 1 was surfaced with gravel and considered to be the most important road in New Mexico at the time.



Barelvas Bridge, 1920s

In 1926, State Road 1 was renamed U.S. Highway 85, which later became U.S. Route 66, part of the new U.S. Transcontinental Highway. This brought a massive increase of use along Isleta Boulevard, as well as an increase of new building types built around the car, like motels, roadside cafes, and auto-related businesses. In the 1940s, Isleta Boulevard was a hub of economic activity, hosting a variety of uses.



Rt. 66 Auto Camp, date unknown

Eventually U.S. Route 66 was straightened and ‘moved’ to Central and the earlier route was named Isleta Road, later changed to Isleta Boulevard in 1951. During the 1950s, Albuquerque’s population increase caused much of the agricultural land to be converted to residential use. Along the roadway, an increase of businesses to serve roadway-based residents was seen, and agricultural use directly along Isleta declined as competition from large-scale agribusiness in other areas weakened the South Valley’s agricultural base. For the first time, residents began to work away from the community. Still, many of the businesses were locally

owned in the South Valley throughout the 1960s. During the 1970s and 1980s, chains, branch stores, and restaurants became more common on Isleta Boulevard and local agriculture continued to decline.

B. PLAN PURPOSE

The planning process for the Isleta Boulevard and Village Centers Sector Development Plan was a community-based model that sought out a wide variety of community opinions, respected local knowledge, and was based upon information exchange rather than a top-down approach.

As expressed by community members, Isleta Boulevard is facing increasing development that could either enrich the community's valued assets or alter its character forever. The urgent planning challenges along the roadway are found in its transition from a rich agricultural corridor into an area losing its traditional agricultural and semi-rural character, facing growing traffic congestion, experiencing deficient amenities such as public spaces, parks, and trails, and in need of new economic opportunities related to small-scale business and agriculture.

In the 2001 Southwest Area Plan (SWAP), Policy 8.a calls for the creation of an Isleta Boulevard Sector Plan that would protect, rehabilitate, restore, and enhance the historic, cultural, and economic significance of the Isleta corridor. According to the SWAP, a sector plan for the Isleta corridor was needed in order to:

- Protect the visual qualities that reflect the history and heritage of Isleta Boulevard;
- Provide guidance to developers, design professionals, and property owners for new development, streetscape, and redevelopment projects;
- Examine existing and future land uses in relation to economic development opportunities;
- Examine existing and future land uses in relation to the revitalization of the adjacent properties and the efficient functioning of Isleta Boulevard; and,
- Develop incentives to encourage commercial and mixed-use development for this area.



2/16/04 CAC Meeting

This sector plan strives to meet each of the above County-prescribed goals for the plan, but it also responds with care to another set of goals: the articulated visions of community residents. The community-based planning process that led to the publication of this plan was explicitly designed to extract the hopes and desires of residents for their community and then to match those desires with policy language. Therefore, two additional fundamental purpose of this sector plan are to:

- Reaffirm community visions for the Isleta corridor; and,
- Help enact those visions with corresponding policy language for Isleta Boulevard.

"We want a plan with zoning, a plan with *teeth*," residents expressed throughout the planning process.

The Isleta Boulevard and Village Centers Sector Development Plan can be used by local residents, property owners, community groups, Bernalillo County elected and appointed officials, and County staff as the official guide for future development along Isleta Boulevard. This plan can be viewed as an overall planning strategy that builds upon the historic, cultural, and economic significance of the Isleta corridor while responding to the visions expressed by local residents in the year-long planning process.

C. PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Throughout the planning process for the Isleta Boulevard and Village Centers Sector Development Plan, the planning team worked toward fulfilling two important goals: meeting the scope of services set out by the County Planning Department and honoring the community visions articulated throughout the planning process. Thus, the sector plan is both a technical document and a testimony of community visions. It is also an expression of the underlying planning principles that inform this sector plan:

- **Building on the past to plan for the future.** A deep respect for the history of the South Valley, the local culture, and the communities that have lived here for hundreds of years fundamentally impacts every aspect of this plan. Planning for the future of the Isleta corridor is impossible without valuing the history and culture of this community, one that is rooted in a rich heritage of agriculture and small business.
- **Isleta Boulevard is more than just a road.** The sector plan treats Isleta Boulevard as a community roadway that serves as the heart of the South Valley – not just a road that carries motor vehicles. The Isleta corridor has served residents for centuries as a trade route, an economic corridor, a meeting place, and a home and is a living part of the community. This plan respects it as such.
- **Do development right.** The sector plan is an opportunity for residents to define the kind of development they want in their community, not an attempt to stop development from occurring. There is broad consensus among a variety of stakeholders that Isleta Boulevard is in need of infrastructure improvements, new service and retail opportunities, additional economic activity, and more jobs for local residents. This plan attempts to facilitate that provision in a way that doesn't



10/12/04 CAC Meeting/Meeting Exercise



5/4/05 CAC Meeting

overdevelop the community, pave over viable agricultural land, and destroy the community's unique sense of place. Rather, development could – and should – be done in a way that continues Isleta Boulevard's tradition as a vibrant corridor that serves local needs.

D. PLAN BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the Isleta Boulevard and Village Centers Sector Development Plan include all of the parcels facing Isleta Boulevard between Bridge Boulevard and Isleta Pueblo and the designated Village Centers *(See Map.1 through Map.1.3 on following page)*

Gateway Village Center: Includes parcels from those bordering Bridge to the north, the Riverside Drain on the east, Hartline Road to the west, and Waldie Road to the south (See Map.2.A).

Armijo Village Center: Includes the Old Armijo School, the AMAFCA drainage site, Armijo Park, and nearby parcels fronting Isleta (See Map.2.B).

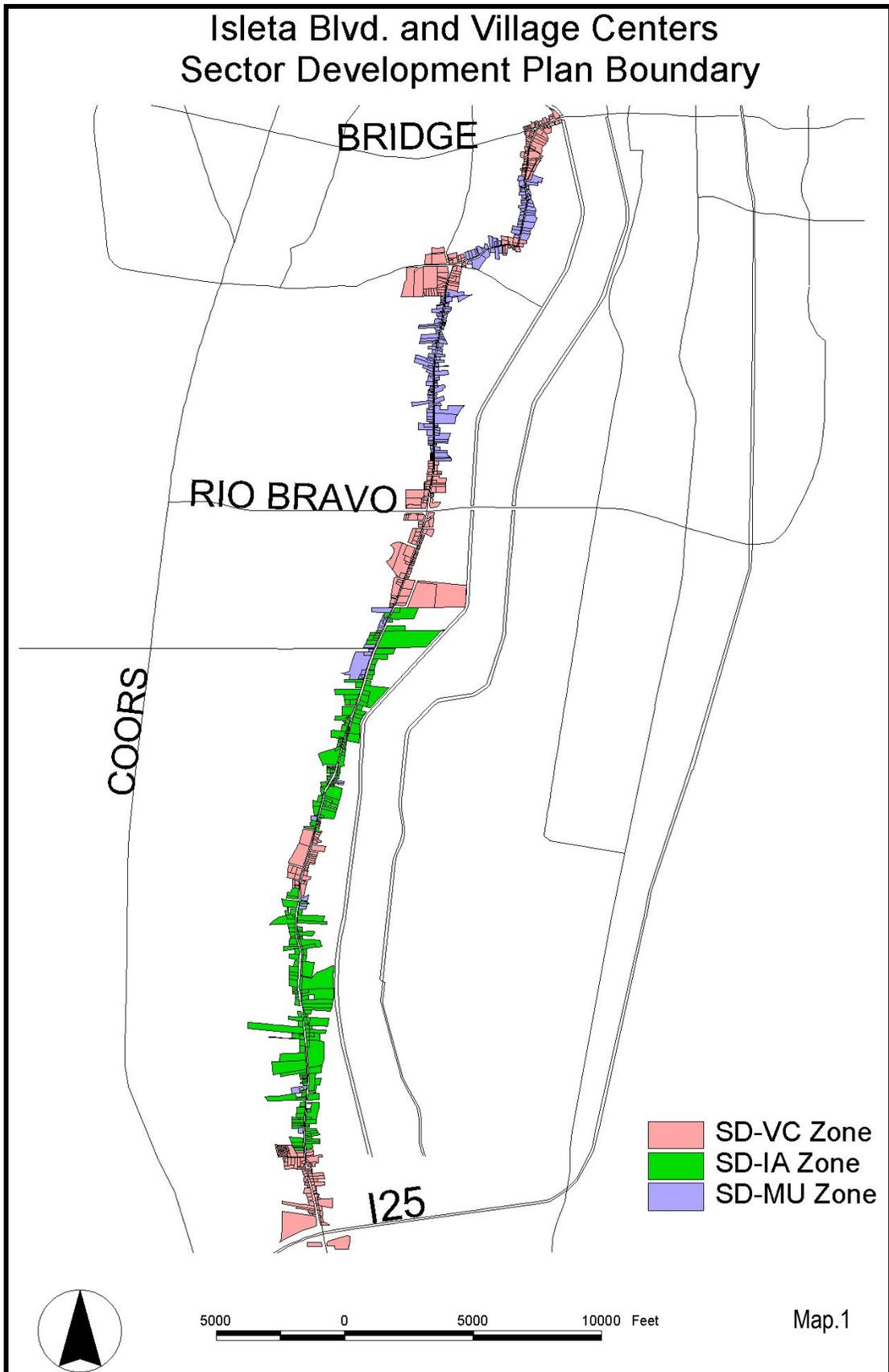
Armijo Commercial Center : Includes parcels fronting the intersection of Isleta, Goff, and Arenal in addition to the agricultural land west to the Beckham Lateral (See Map.2.C).

Rio Bravo Commercial Center: Includes Isleta-fronting parcels south of Bonaguidi to the Pajarito Lateral (See Map.2.D).

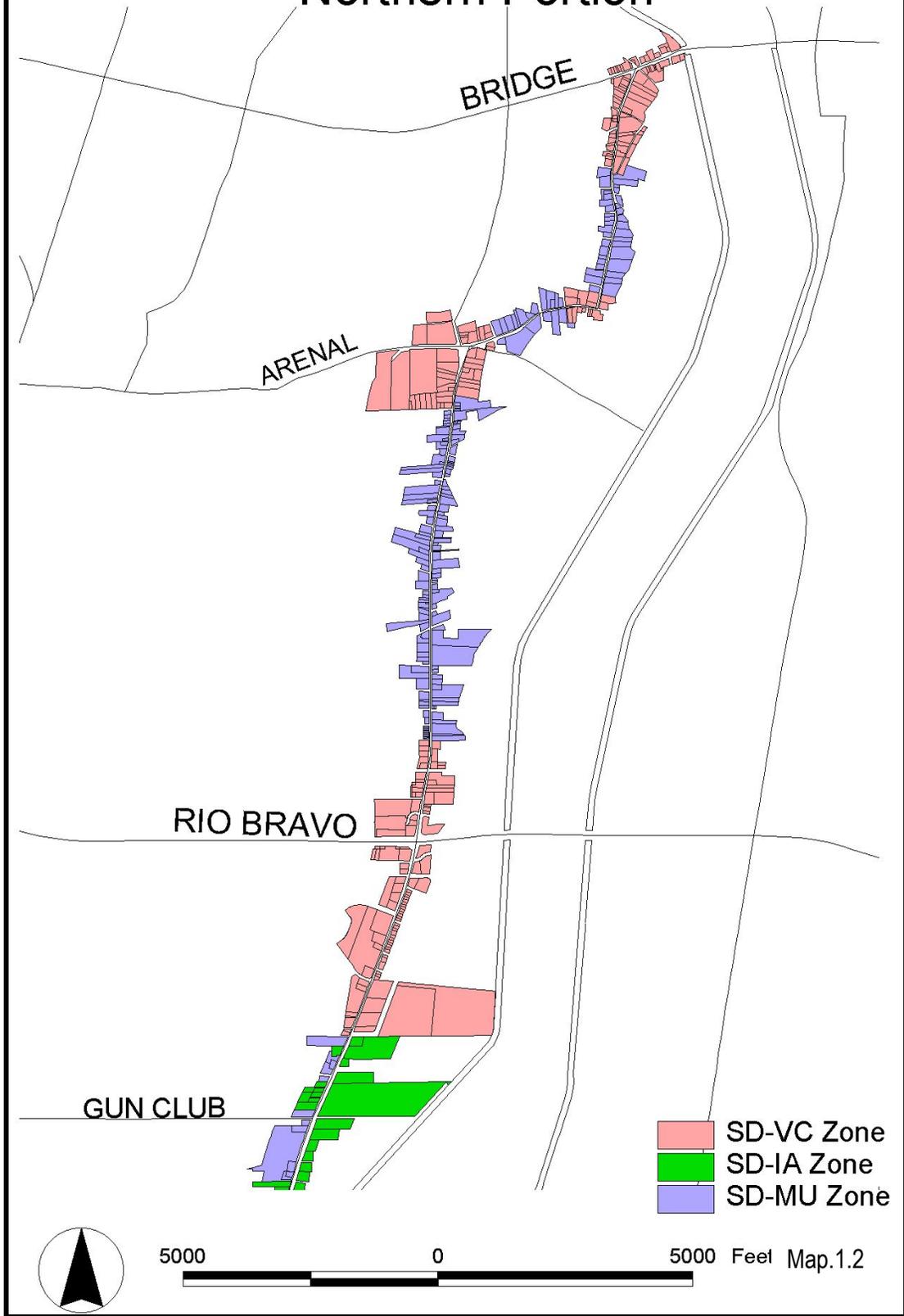
Adobe Acres Village Center: Includes parcels fronting Isleta from the Pajarito Lateral on the north to Los Padillas drain to the south (See Map.2.E).

Pajarito Village Center: Fronting parcels on Isleta from Don Felipe on the north to Louise Ave. on the South (See Map.2.F).

Los Padillas Village Center: Fronting parcels on Isleta from Desiderio on the north to just passed I-25 on the South (See Map.2.G).

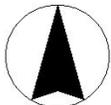
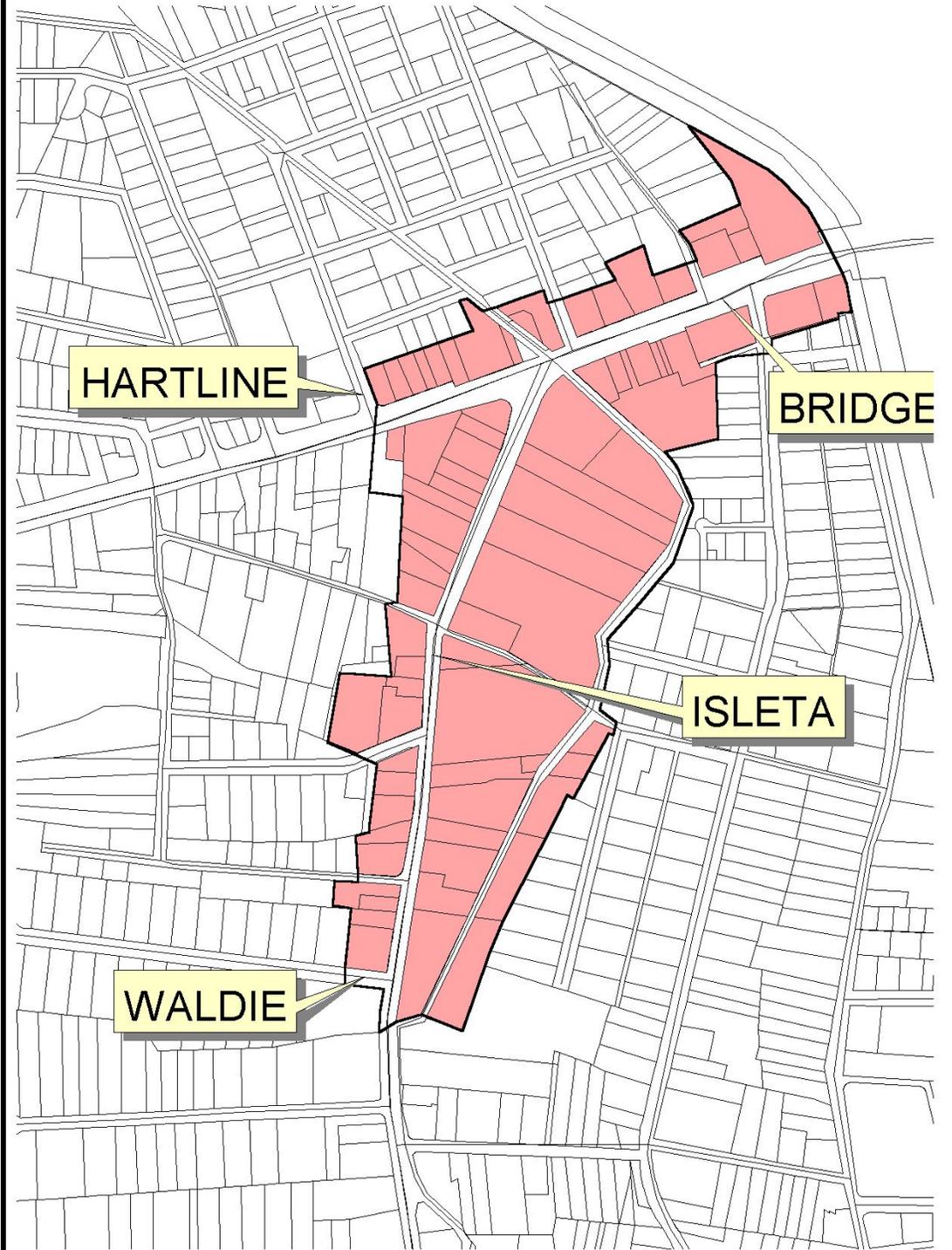


Sector Plan Boundary Northern Portion





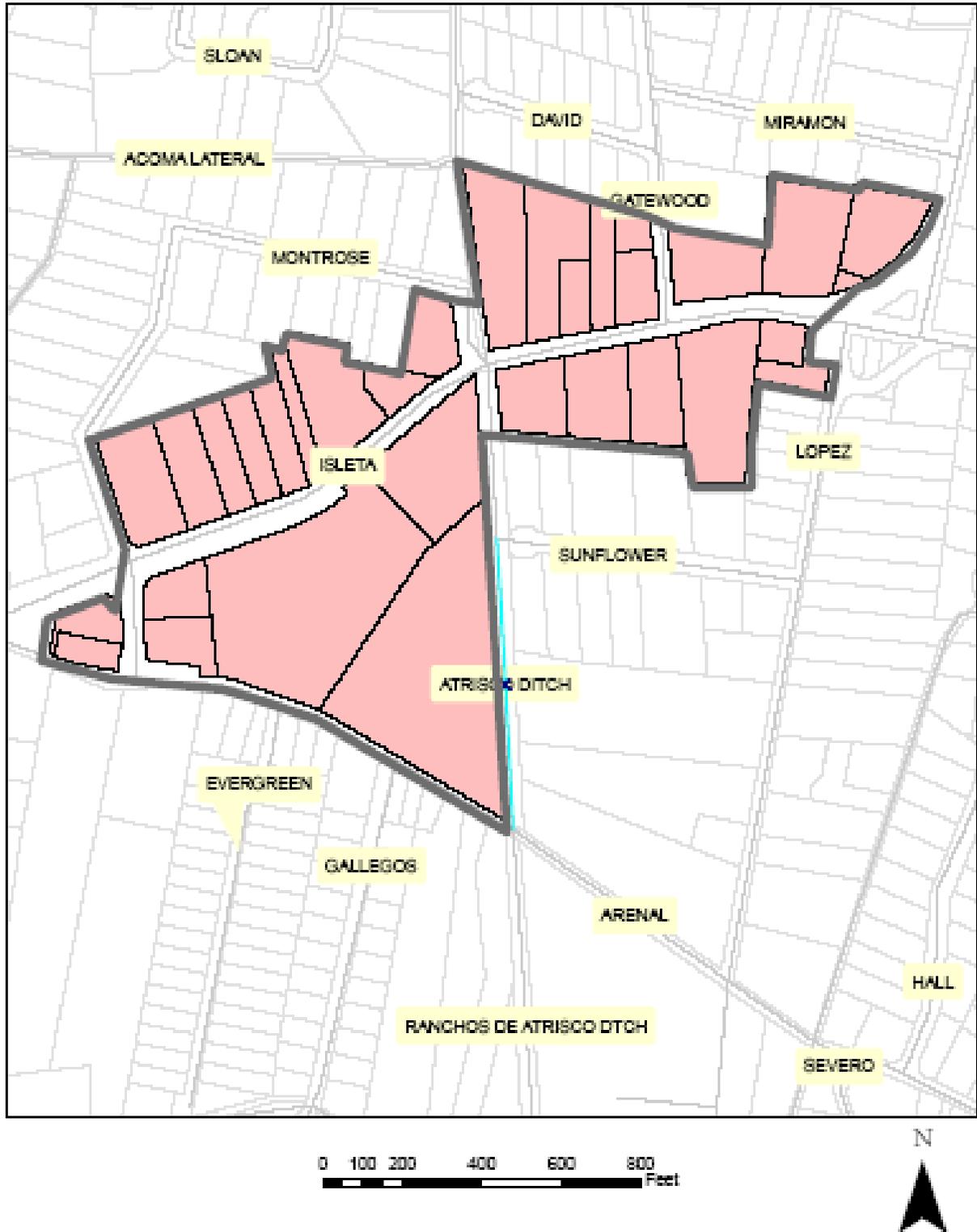
Gateway Isleta Village Center



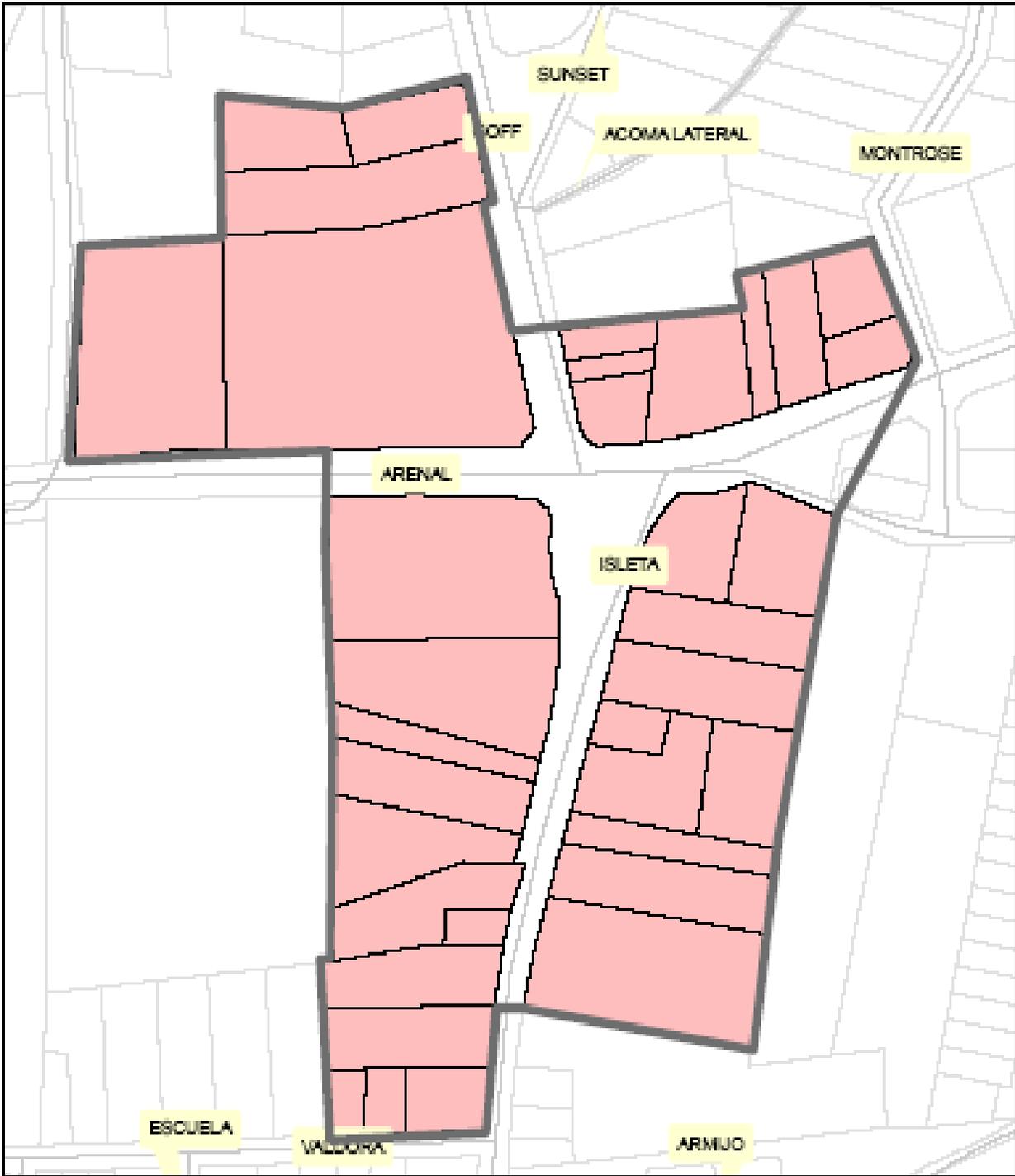
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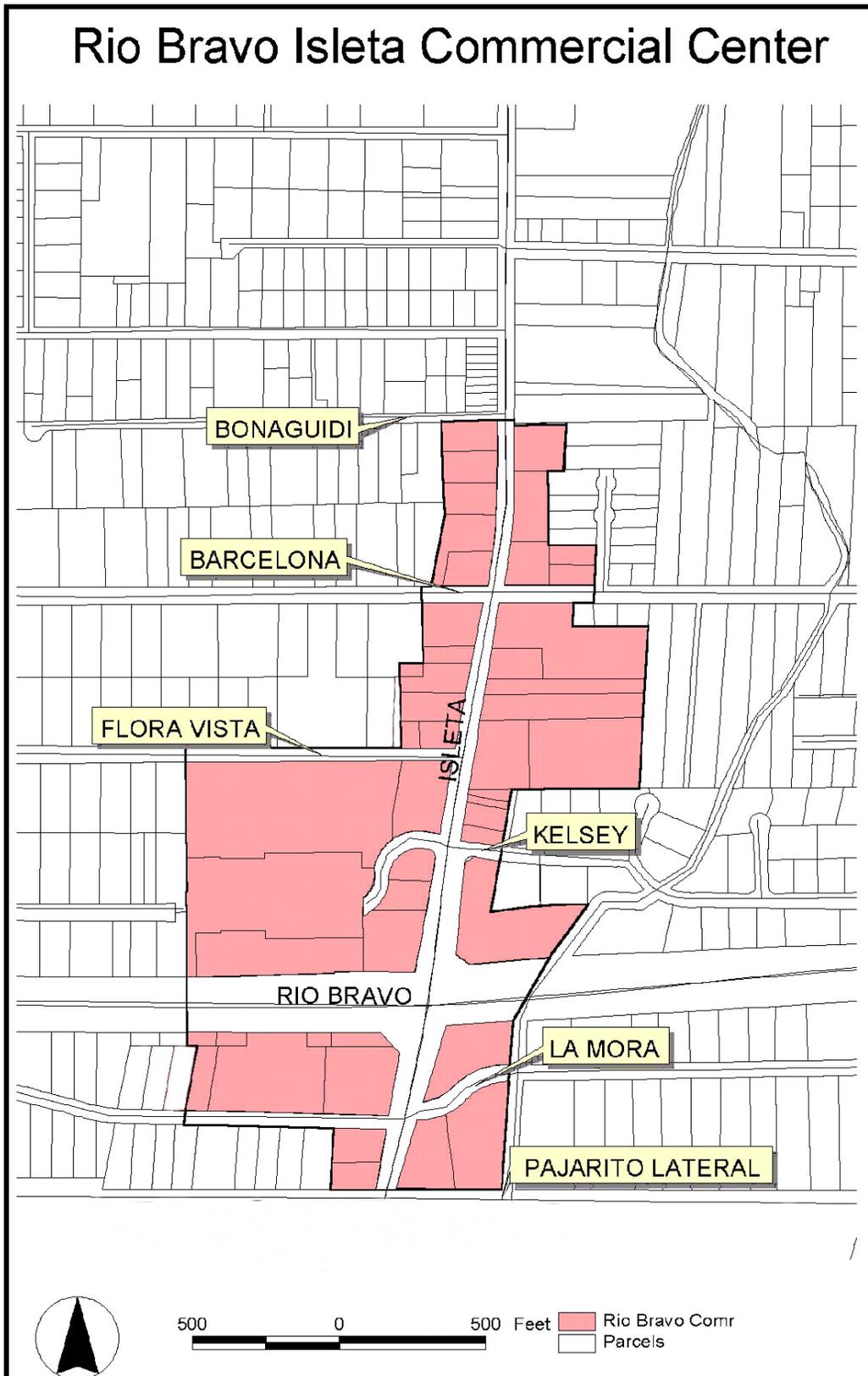
Gateway Village Center
Parcels

Armijo Village Center

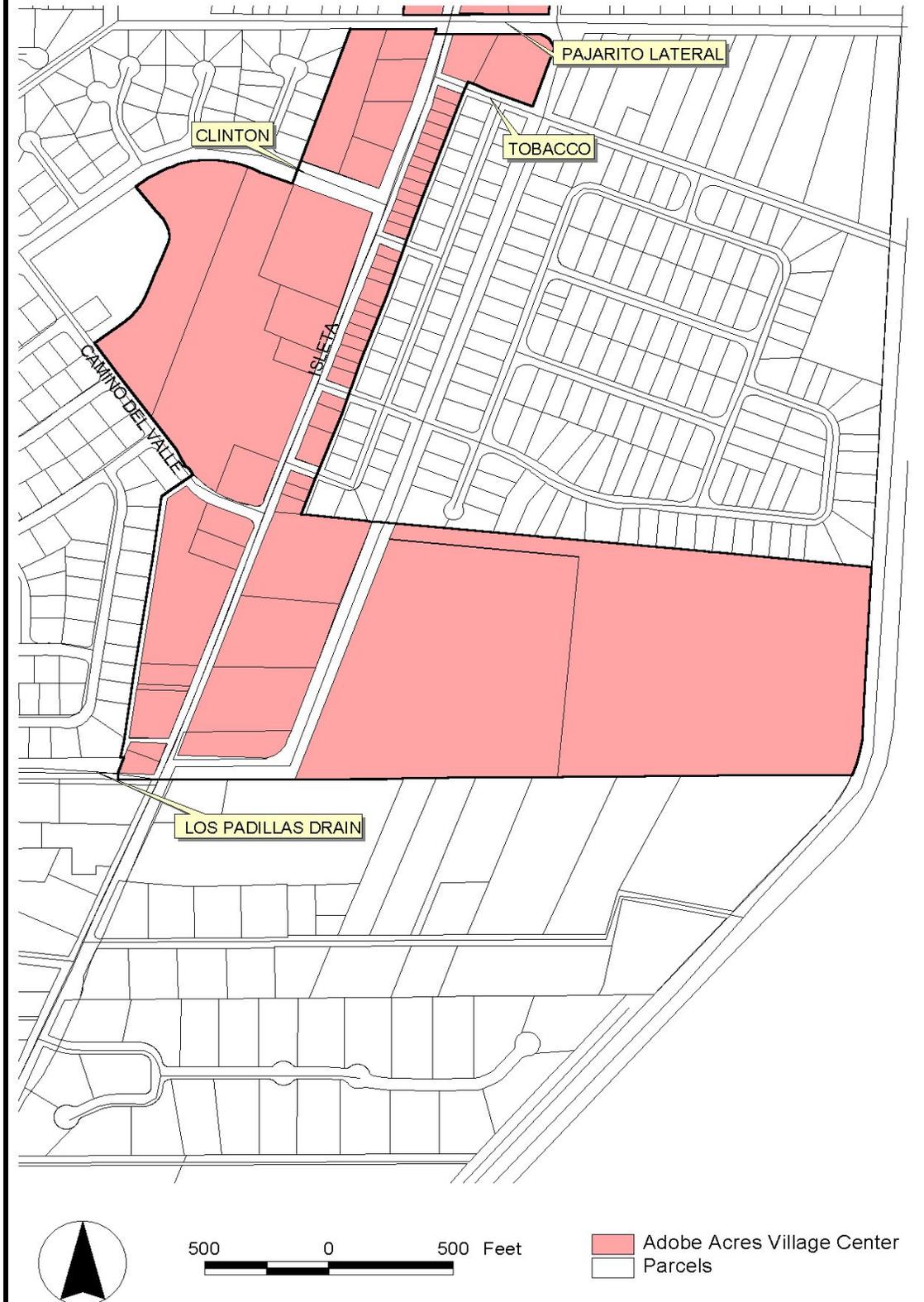


Armijo Commercial Center

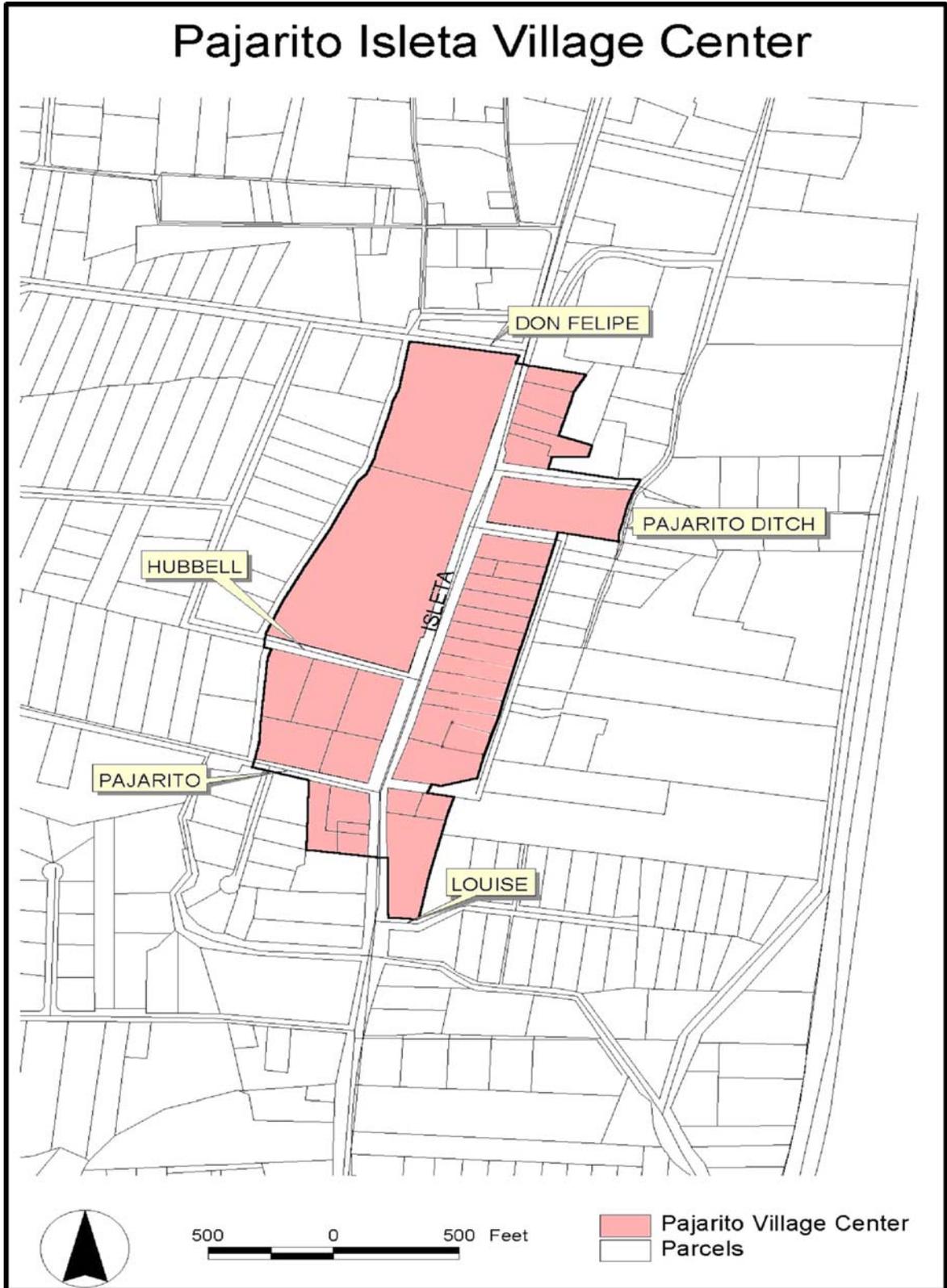




Adobe Acres Isleta Village Center

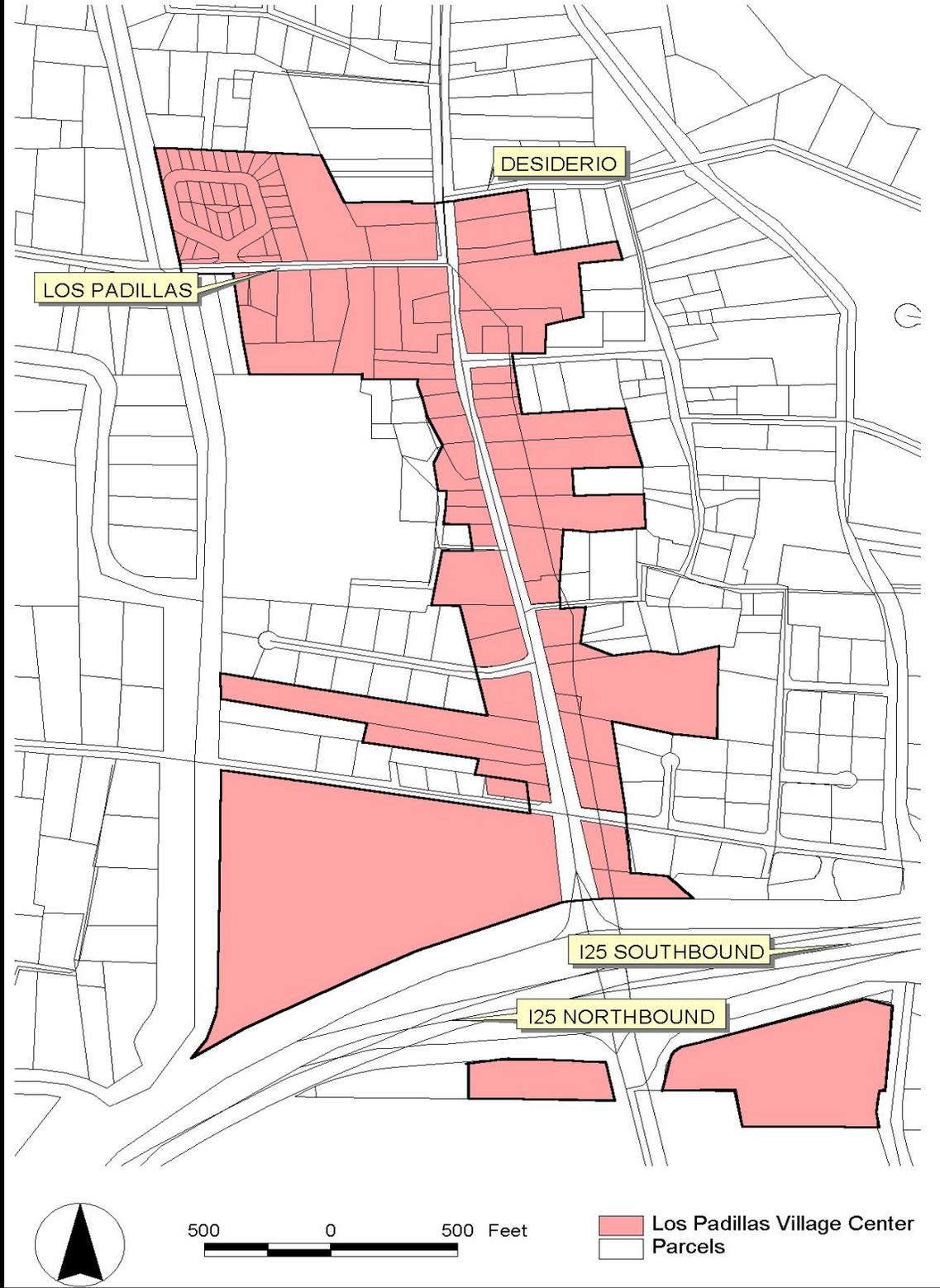


Map.2.E



Map.2.F

Los Padillas Isleta Village Center

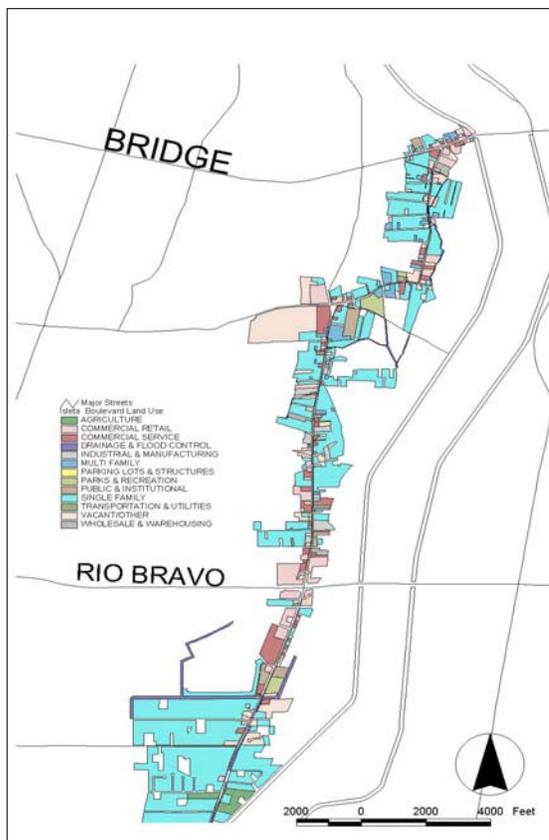


Map.2.G

Sec.2 Current Conditions

Today, Isleta Boulevard is a combination of a 3 lane hybrid road in the northern section and a two-lane road in the southern section that parallels the meandering Rio Grande for 7.3 miles between Bridge Boulevard and the Isleta Pueblo. The need for an Isleta Boulevard sector plan stems from Westside growth and traffic congestion, the loss of open space, the decline of farming, the loss of rural character, and the need for economic development.

Land uses vary along the corridor from north to south, which suggest distinct character zones along Isleta Boulevard. In the northern portion of the corridor, lots are smaller and tend to be commercial in use. After the heavily commercial intersection of Isleta and Rio Bravo, the land use along Isleta becomes markedly different with larger lot sizes and agricultural uses.



Northern portion of Isleta Boulevard contains smaller parcels with more commercial use



Southern portion of Isleta Boulevard contains larger parcels and more open space

Westside Growth and Traffic Congestion

Area residents often describe their community as being caught in the path of Westside growth. According to the U. S. Census, Bernalillo County saw a 21% rise in population from 1990-2000 alone. Much of this growth has taken place on the Westside of the city, where land that until relatively recently was open space is today growing with residential subdivisions and large shopping centers, mainly because this land is cheaper than east of the river. The considerable housing/job mismatch on the Westside greatly exacerbates traffic problems. With significantly more homes than schools, roads, and jobs, the 2000 Census saw a 69% increase in Bernalillo County drivers commuting 30 minutes or more to work since 1990.

Development geared toward commuters does a disservice to local residents and does not reflect the history or character of the community

Because Isleta Boulevard is one of only two major north-south roadways serving the residents living west of the Rio Grande, westside growth carries serious implications for development patterns on the valley floor. Recent land use changes along Isleta Boulevard also reflect a catering toward a commuter driver with a focus on speed and efficiency rather than quality and uniqueness. Along Isleta Boulevard (particularly near the Rio Bravo interchange), we see a place where the automobile rules in a sea of franchise drive-thru restaurants and strip malls and where development standards favor corporate recognition rather than the South Valley's historic character. For longtime South Valley residents who've grown up in this unique community, seeing their surroundings turned into strip malls with suburban influences is disheartening. There is an immediate need to protect the remaining character of the Isleta corridor and to invest in future development that will enhance the community's uniqueness, rather than detract from it.

What's the worst thing that could happen to Isleta Boulevard?*

- It'll be a thoroughfare, not a destination
- Full of chain stores that people ignore
- Housing development on current farmland
- Dwindling open space and farmland
- 5-lane commercial "Anywhere USA"
- Loss of agriculture
- Too much modernization at the risk of losing the cultural/historic buildings
- Lack of vision and planning
- A highway with too much economic development
- Over-development
- Loss of open space and agriculture
- Uncontrolled high-density development
- Big-box retail

*Resident responses from a survey administered during the 9/21/04 public meeting