

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL COMMUNITY POLICIES

QUALITY OF LIFE STATEMENT

Through citizen understanding of and commitment to land use approaches, we want a clean environment for healthy communities to prosper and for the rural quality and character to be maintained. Beauty of the open areas is enhanced through natural processes, environmental preservation and awareness, peaceful surroundings and resource conservation. The rural quality and character throughout the community should be emphasized through cultural promotion and facilitates viable farmland. By recognizing the values of our community, its pattern of historic villages and plazas, and agricultural areas, a positive image will be enhanced, encouraging new generations to stay in the area.

POLICY 1

Techniques to ensure water quality and to enhance water conservation shall be established by the appropriate governmental agencies to enforce policies adopted in the Ground-Water Protection Policy and Action Plan and to prevent further groundwater contamination in the Plan area.

ACTIONS:

- a) Encourage and facilitate appropriate wastewater management actions as recommended in the Southwest Valley Service Options Evaluation. Appropriate wastewater management actions are:
 1. **Urban style:** similar to City system;
 2. **Semi-urban style:** smaller capacity lines; collection of liquid septic tank effluent for central treatment;
 3. **Community-cluster style:** clusters of homes on one well or disposal system; or,
 4. **Individual on-site style:** private wells and liquid waste disposal systems.
- b) Encourage alternative waste water systems which substantially improve the treatment and disposal of waste water to appropriate County standards for new development, including, but not limited to: 1) contour systems, particularly for those areas with steeper terrain; 2) intermittent sand filters; or, 3) constructed wetlands or centralized community systems.
- c) Provide information to the public on bioengineered options, installation and maintenance of septic tanks, including alternative treatment methods.
- d) Prevent ground water contamination that may result from commercial, industrial, or any other private/public facilities or systems. In event of such occurrence, the responsible party and the appropriate County and/or City departments shall take immediate action.
- e) Protect the soils and avoid fertilizer build-up by utilizing native and naturalized landscaping in the plan area.

"The U.S Geological Survey estimates that 12% of wells in farm areas have elevated nitrate levels, while the Environmental Protection Agency figures that 23 million septic systems and 1.2 million underground storage tanks pose threats to ground water. (Throughout the United States)"

George Homsy

- f) Promote surface and groundwater quality by requiring development to conform to water standards identified in the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, the Subdivision Ordinance, the Ground Water Protection Policy and Action Plan, Southwest Valley Service Options Evaluation and other applicable and adopted water management strategies.
- g) Evaluate all major development in terms of potential impact upon the ditch and irrigation systems. All new subdivisions and developments shall endeavor to maintain existing conveyance system to ensure flow to downstream water users.
- h) Prohibit new septic tanks, new septic tank drain fields and substandard sewer lines within 200 feet of public and 100 feet of private water supply wells.
- i) Prohibit underground petroleum storage tanks within 200 feet of public and private water supply wells.
- j) Develop a water resources management plan which shall be included as part of the zone map amendment application for environmentally sensitive areas in the County. The water resources management plan shall include the following information:
 - 1. proposed water use;
 - 2. impacts to surrounding water users;
 - 3. water rights availability;
 - 4. impact on water quality;
 - 5. impact on surface water rights; and
 - 6. identifiable water waste.

POLICY 2

All lands designated as proposed Major Public Open Space as identified in adopted Bernalillo County/Albuquerque plans shall be pursued for acquisition by County, City and/or other agencies.

ACTIONS:

- a) Acquire and maintain Major Public Open Space as identified in the Albuquerque/ Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, the County Capital Improvements Program, mil levy ballot items or lands in the plan area that possess historical and cultural significance, agricultural potential, environmentally sensitive (i.e., 9% or greater slopes) and/or significant aesthetic views as defined by County open space criteria.
- b) Acquire a 500-foot wide strip, which contains the Lateen Sandy Loam soil on the top eastern edge of the Southwest Mesa from Central Avenue/Interstate 40 to the Isleta Pueblo Reservation. This area shall be designated as Major Public Open Space.
- c) Develop a feasibility study to examine the potential of establishing density transfer, transfer of development rights, and purchase of development rights.
- d) Promote enabling legislation, which allows density transfer, development rights, and purchase of development rights.
- e) Designate the irrigable agricultural lands, escarpment and ceja as areas to be protected through density transfer, as a requirement for granting increased residential density in designated comparable zoned areas.
- f) Prohibit individual liquid waste disposal systems, sewage lagoons or storm water holding ponds within the designated Major Public Open Space area on top of the Eastern Ceja.
- g) Develop a survey, which shall determine the exact boundaries of the designated Major Public Open Space area for the Eastern Ceja.

Open Space

Soil type must be considered in planning for development in the plan area. The area west of Coors Boulevard is very porous, highly erodible on the edges of the Southwest Mesa, its escarpment and lower slopes. The combination of highly erodible soils and steep topography create a real potential for many tons of soil to erode.

These eroded soils travel through the action of wind and water down the escarpment and are deposited on the lower mesa slopes, and arroyos. The same potential for high rates of erosion also exist in the Plan area west of the escarpment.

- h) Preserve the vegetative cover (due to the critical nature of the area) on the West Ceja sand dunes and sheets through maintenance or by leaving undisturbed. Develop a survey, which shall determine the exact boundaries for the portions of the Western Ceja as Major Public Open Space. No vehicular activities and development shall be allowed in the sand dunes and active sand sheets area.
- i) Designate the network of acequias and drains to provide a trail network in the South Valley consistent with the Trails and Bikeways Facility Plan.
- j) Establish a schedule and funding process for recreational trails and small nodal, scenic overlook parks within the open space networks.
- k) Cooperate with the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District to identify abandoned canals and laterals (public and private) for open space designation.

POLICY 3

Bernalillo County shall investigate amending contract procedures to allow farming contracts of open space agricultural properties for more than one year at a time. This will make it more practical for contract farming to continue to keep the open space lands in agricultural production.

The County shall have an open public policy process to ensure that the public interest is maintained, anti-donation requirements are ensured, and contracted production can be profitable.

POLICY 4

All public utility facilities proposed to be located in the plan area shall be approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

POLICY 5

In areas zoned R-2, multi-family dwellings, a minimum amount of usable on-site open space shall be a requirement for the development.

ACTIONS:

- a) Provide on-site open space equal to 400 square feet for each efficiency or one bedroom dwelling unit, 500 square feet for each two bedroom dwelling unit, and 600 square feet for each dwelling unit containing three or more bedrooms.
- b) Require xeriscape landscaping for usable open space on any lot where two or more dwelling units are constructed.

Drainage & Erosion

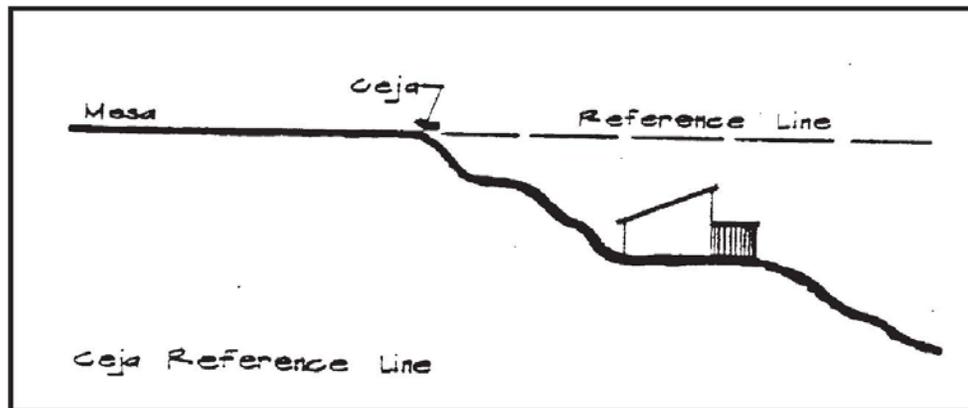
POLICY 6

As development occurs in the Plan area, provisions shall be made to ensure erosion is controlled during and after construction. Runoff and erosion controls shall be developed throughout Soil Conservation Service Zones 3 & 4 to protect Zone 5.

ACTIONS:

- a) Bernalillo County and other appropriate agencies shall develop a drainage management plan for the mesa top of the entire area south of I-40.
- b) Require major development applicants in zones 3 and 4 to develop a soil and erodability statement (to be included in the zone change application) that identifies the appropriateness of soil conditions for the proposed development.
- c) Establish an open space buffer strip to protect the mesa edge and slope area greater than 9%. Promote development of a plan for erosion control, runoff delay filter dams, or other drainage management design for the 9% slopes protected area.
- d) Implement acquisition of the 9% or greater slope area through approval of new density consistent with this plan in exchange for higher density in areas with lower or less erosive slopes as a requirement for zone changes.
- e) Protect the visual setting of the escarpment by regulating the reflectivity on buildings above and below the escarpment in order to minimize color contrast with the natural surrounding area (see graphic next page).
 1. The recommended colors include the yellow ochres, browns, dull reds, and grey-greens which currently exist on the mesa and escarpment.
 2. Residential structure height shall not exceed the reference line drawn straight eastward from the Eastern Ceja.
 3. Residential structures further than 250 feet from the escarpment face on sites with gross residential densities less than one dwelling unit per acre may have height up to 26 feet.

- f) Prohibit development on slopes greater than 9%. Establish an erosion setback that considers the erodibility and vegetative cover of the area to protect the fragile edge of the mesa top from erosion and to preserve existing native vegetation.
- g) Applicants for new development shall address soil erosion and sediment control for new and impermeable surfaces, such as new roofs, paving, etc. for development more than 2,500 square feet.
- h) Require a "no build" buffer consistent with County Public Works drainage standards for all development at the edge of the erosion setback drainage ways, arroyos and other waterways. This will help to ensure the full capacity of drainage ways, and protect public health and safety by keeping structures for human habitation out of flood danger.
- i) Allow density transfer and cluster development in an effort to provide economic compensation to landowners and developers for the protection of the 9% slope area, productive agricultural land and other fragile areas.



POLICY 7

Specific land use regulations, with performance and improvement standards, shall be created to protect agricultural lands.

ACTIONS:

- a) Identify methods to preserve agricultural lands that the Extraterritorial Land Use Authority shall consider for implementation.
- b) Agricultural land in the valley shall not be acquired or used for public facility development unless all other land use options have been fully evaluated, including an impact analysis and an approved Facilities Plan of the recommended alternative.
- c) Develop a Land Evaluation Site Assessment ordinance to determine which lands are appropriate for protection from conversion to non-agricultural uses.
- d) Promote small-scale agriculture to assist local growers and promote valley producers by allowing County facilities to be used for farmers market activities and agricultural pilot projects.
- e) Examine the feasibility of implementing one or more of the following: agricultural districting, agricultural overlay, conservation easements or performance-based zoning.
- f) Pursue alternative land preservation techniques such as transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights, conservation and agricultural easements, density bonuses, and other equitable land density increases. These market mechanisms shall be used to provide compensation by exchanging higher density for the preservation of agricultural lands.
- g) Preserve the historic agricultural practice in the South Valley by controlling the scale of adjacent subdivisions.

h) Cluster housing shall be permitted when it meets the following general guidelines:

PROPOSED CLUSTER DENSITY GUIDELINES FOR THE SOUTHWEST AREA PLAN								
ZONE TYPE	SWAP AREA	COMP PLAN AREA	SEWER AVAILABLE	EXISTING DENSITY IN SWAP	CLUSTER	% OF OPEN SPACE	PROPOSED DENSITY PER ACRE	LOT SIZE SQ FT +/-
A-1	RES-1	DEV-URBAN	YES	MINIMAL	YES	50%	1 DU/ACRE	17,220
A-1	RES-1	DEV-URBAN	YES	MINIMAL	NO	NONE	MINIMAL	N/A*
A-1	RES-2	RURAL	YES	1/DU/ACRE	YES	50%	1.5 DU/ACRE	11,616
A-1	RES-2	RURAL	YES	1/DU/ACRE	NO	NONE	1 DU/ACRE	43,560
A-1	RES-2	RURAL	NO	1.25 DU/ACRE	YES	50%	1.5 DU/ACRE	11,616
A-1	RES-2	RURAL	NO	1.25 DU/ACRE	NO	NONE	1.25 DU/ACRE	54,450
R-1	RES-3	SEMI-URBAN	YES	3 DU/ACRE	NO	NONE	3 DU/ACRE	14,520
R-1	RES-3	SEMI-URBAN	YES	3 DU/ACRE	YES	30%	3.5 DU/ACRE	6,970

THESE FIGURES ASSUME 2% OF THE OVERALL SITE IS NECESSARY FOR ROADS AND OTHER RIGHTS-OF-WAY. THE OPEN SPACE IS THEN DEDUCTED FROM THE NET AREA TO OBTAIN THE BUILDABLE AREA. THE NUMBER OF CLUSTERED UNITS IS BASED ON THE CLUSTER DENSITY TIMES THE TOTAL SITE ACREAGE. THE LOT SIZE IS ESTIMATED BY DIVIDING THE NUMBER OF CLUSTERED UNITS INTO THE BUILDABLE AREA.

* ALL CLUSTER PROPOSALS WILL BE EVALUATED ON A SITE-BY-SITE BASIS.

Agricultural District

POLICY 8

The unincorporated area between the Gun Club Lateral and Arenal Main Canal on the west, Central Avenue on the North, the Rio Grande River to Rio Bravo Blvd., then Second Street on the east, and the Isleta Pueblo on the south is an area where agricultural preservation is most appropriate and should be prioritized.

ACTION:

- a) Provide incentives to encourage farmers to join the agricultural district. Incentives include right-to-farm laws, protection from annexation, Open Space purchase priority and cluster development regulations.
- b) Work with the community to explore the feasibility of the following: Automatic eligibility for greenbelt tax assessment, conservation easement programs, establishing a sending zone for transfer of development rights.

POLICY 9

Bernalillo County shall work with community representatives to create a South Valley agricultural land trust or incorporation within an existing land trust to establish procedures for voluntarily donated and purchased conservation easements where appropriate.

POLICY 10

Bernalillo County shall amend the Subdivision Ordinance to require the preservation of existing private ditches and ancillary facilities. Bernalillo County shall amend the Subdivision Ordinance to require the depiction of all ditches and ancillary facilities on all approved plats in order to preserve the irrigation system network.

POLICY 11

In order to preserve and enhance the unique heritage of the South Valley, review requirements shall be established for historic and cultural sites, as well as landmarks and archaeological areas. These historical sites include, but are not limited to, the New Mexico Cultural Properties Review Committee designated structures or properties that may contain historic or prehistoric structures, ruins, sites or objects to be preserved in some form. Desecration or destruction of these sites would result in an irreplaceable loss to the public of their scientific, educational, informational, or economic interest or value.

ACTIONS:

- a) Preserve historic, cultural, landmark and archaeological sites by establishing a procedure for discovering, evaluating, reporting and treating such resources at the application stage of development proposals.
- b) Ease the financial burden on historic property owners that result from difficult preservation demands by encouraging adaptive reuse of eligible structures, as identified by the New Mexico Historic Preservation criteria, for commercial and residential purposes.
- c) Develop an information brochure for owners of historic properties that addresses the benefits of historic preservation for both the built environment and landscapes.
- d) Develop an inventory of historic buildings, beginning with resources on the State and National register, to provide information on important local and vernacular sites as they relate to development proposals.
- e) Use General Obligation Bonds to aid in programs that promote historic preservation for sites identified by the community.
- f) Amend the zoning and building code in ways that can aid in the preservation, restoration, and renovation of historic sites.

Historical Cultural & Archaeological Sites

- g) Identify and recognize the importance of historic preservation and its role in defining the unique character of the South Valley and its relationship to appropriate levels of economic development.
- h) Avoid unwarranted deterioration and destruction of historical, cultural, natural, and other community assets when approving subdivisions.