

## **B. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### **1. Setting**

Alameda Boulevard is an east-west primary arterial with a bridge connecting the eastern Albuquerque communities, Interstate 25, and the Corrales/Rio Rancho communities west of the Rio Grande. The boulevard traverses the north-south oriented North Valley river corridor. Cottonwood Mall is located west of the Rio Grande, the Journal Center Industrial Campus is located to the south and east, and the new Balloon Fiesta Park is located in the eastern section.

### **2. DOZ Area Description / Visual Analysis**

Recent roadway, bridge, and landscape improvements have been made to Alameda Boulevard between 2<sup>nd</sup> Street through the bridge. Alameda Boulevard is a primary arterial with speed limits ranging from 35 mph in the western portions, to 50 mph east of the North Diversion Channel. Traffic flows and speeds divide the residential neighborhoods to the north and south of Alameda. Although speed limits are clearly posted, vehicles seem to speed throughout the area.

The fabric of the area includes the Alameda Boulevard Corridor, a strong east-west regional feature, laced with several north-south networks of acequias, channels, local roads, and the railroad. The valley's established rural residential atmosphere is reflected in the western portions of the area by the Rio Grande and bosque, acequias and canals, recreation trails, agriculture (orchards, vineyards, and valley gardens), and several vacant parcels. In the eastern section, the area elevates to the benches, which have been quarried for sand and gravel to build the city of Albuquerque. This area is undergoing reclamation for other purposes, characterized by newer commercial/industrial uses, the Balloon Fiesta Park, and a nursing care center.

Traveling eastward along Alameda Boulevard, there are spectacular views of the Sandia Mountains, particularly at the elevated portion of the bridge and on the bench at the North Diversion Channel. Views to the east are particularly dramatic from four view points: (1) Bridge over the Rio Grande, (2) 4<sup>th</sup> Street Village Center, (3) Bridge over north diversion channel, and (4) from the San Mateo Boulevard area. Lacking dramatic landforms, views to the west are most remarkable at sunsets.

### **3. The Neighborhoods**

The following neighborhoods are within the Alameda Boulevard corridor:

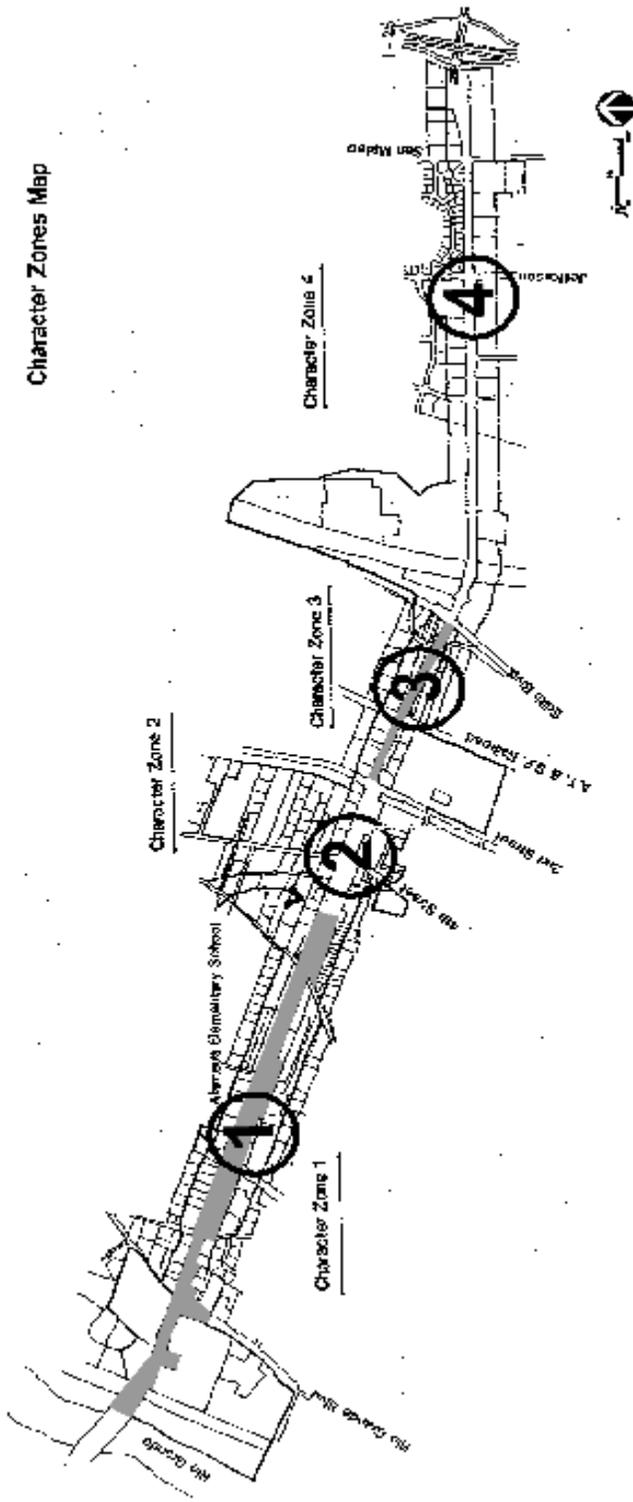
Alameda North Valley Association, North Valley Neighborhood Association, Alameda Alliance, Sun North Estates Association, Wildflower Area Neighborhood Association, Pleasant View Mobile Home Association, Western Meadows Neighborhood Association.

### **4. Character Zones**

The project area will be divided into four character zones (refer to page 12) to reflect the different design, development, reclamation, and redevelopment opportunities. Character Zones 1, 2, and 3 are within Bernalillo County jurisdiction, while most of Character Zone 4 is within the City of Albuquerque.

- **Character Zone 1 - Established Rural Neighborhoods**, Rio Grande to Alameda Elementary School
- **Character Zone 2 - 4<sup>th</sup> Street Village Center**, Alameda Elementary School to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street
- **Character Zone 3 - Eastern Bench Area**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to Edith Boulevard
- **Character Zone 4 - Balloon Fiesta Park/Commercial Campus**, Edith Boulevard to Interstate 25

Character Zones Map



- Character Zone 1 - Established Rural Neighborhoods: Rio Grande to Alameda Elementary School
- Character Zone 2 - 4th Street Village Center: Alameda Elementary School to 2nd Street
- Character Zone 3 - Eastern Bench Area: 2nd Street to Edith Boulevard
- Character Zone 4 - Balloon Fiesta Park/Commercial Campus: Edith Boulevard to Interstate 75

Figure 4

## Alameda Boulevard Design Overlay Zone

Elements that contribute to the particular Character Zones and form the basis for the design regulations and guidelines are described below. Alameda Boulevard divides generally into the west and the east segments. Within these two broad areas there are two transition areas. The 4<sup>th</sup> Street Village center provides the transition between the residential/commercial areas in the western portion of the Alameda DOZ, while the Balloon Fiesta Park creates the transition in the residential / commercial / industrial area west of Interstate 25.

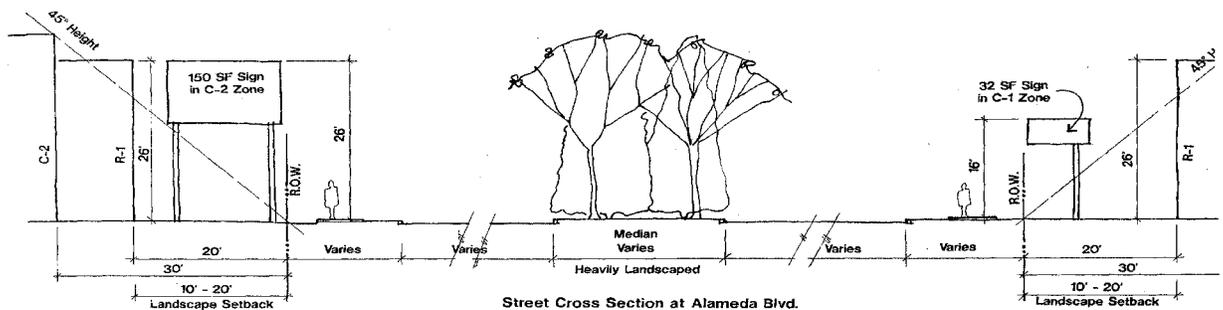
### Character Zone 1 - Established Rural Neighborhoods (Rio Grande to 4<sup>th</sup> Street)

#### STREETSCAPE: LANDSCAPE AND SITE DESIGN

- An excellent rural landscape character occurs adjacent to the Rio Grande. This area contains residences with large lots and deep setbacks. There are large, dense tree groves.
- North and south Alameda frontages are long-established, mixed-use neighborhoods, with small, intricate lot patterns. Agricultural uses remain, including horses, livestock, and small crops.
- Shallow vacant or agricultural lots (40'-60' depths) occur on both north and south frontages. These lots give the impression of a rural landscape as you travel along Alameda.
- Cottonwood windrows, at a large scale, and visually complex homes, at a small scale, together typify a strong rural character.
- Tree groves extend south along the Rio Grande, and also eastward across Rio Grande Boulevard visually tying the area.
- Cottonwood Corral Strip Commercial has multiple curb-cuts, a proliferation of signs, little landscaping and tight setbacks. Although disorganized, some of this frontage gives a strong feeling of local character.
- Some uses, such as the existing junkyard, are associated with rural landscapes.
- The water pump station walls create a cold, technological image on Alameda at Thomas Lane.

#### TRAFFIC AND CIRCULATION

- Traffic travels at faster than posted speed limits (35 mph). Traffic lights are located at most intersections.
- Equestrian connections crossing Alameda Boulevard are not overly evident, although a multi-use trail exists along the southside of Alameda Boulevard.
- A good off-road multi-use trail exists on the south side of Alameda Boulevard.
- There are uncomfortable pedestrian crossings along Alameda Boulevard due to fast traffic and poorly defined crossings.
- Bus stops are not well defined and do not have furniture.



Existing Conditions and Zoning  
Character Zones 1 and 3

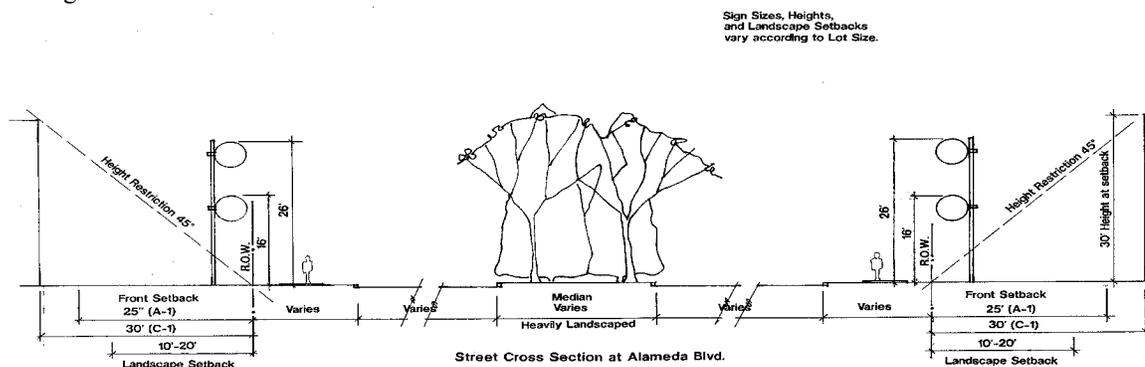
## Character Zone 2 - 4<sup>th</sup> Street “Village Center” (Alameda Elementary School to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street)

### STREETSCAPE: LANDSCAPE AND SITE DESIGN

- The combination of school, church, neighborhood commercial area on 4<sup>th</sup> Street south of Alameda Boulevard and the major intersections of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets provide an opportunity for enhancement as a “Village Center”. This focal point and potential mixed-use area contains visual and functional components to include: church, schools, gardens, community center, acequias, and neighborhood commercial uses.
- Alameda Elementary School and its parking at the NW corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Alameda Boulevard are under-developed.
- A major multi-use trail, Nativity Churchyard, and school yards form a major open space opportunity.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Street, north of Alameda Boulevard, contains good walks connecting the Alameda Elementary School and the community center. However, crossing areas could be upgraded.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Street, south of Alameda Boulevard, has an excellent tight, intricate building pattern and should be propagated.
- Small “storefronts” on 4<sup>th</sup> Street define the commercial character of the valley.
- Neighborhood Retail / General Retail - Circle K, Sonic Burger are generic, standardized designs that reduce uniqueness of the area character; Café/gallery, used-goods shop are “grass-roots” type retail that foster neighborhood uniqueness.

### TRAFFIC AND CIRCULATION

- Major car flow occurs on 4<sup>th</sup> Street, which is designated as a minor arterial.
- There is a non-continuous sidewalk along 4<sup>th</sup> Street south of Alameda Boulevard, narrow right-of-way, high car flow, and the street curves.
- The transit stops on Alameda Boulevard and 4<sup>th</sup> Street are not well defined.
- There are uncomfortable pedestrian crossings along Alameda Boulevard due to fast traffic and poorly defined crossings.



Existing Conditions and Zoning  
Character Zone 2

Figure 6

## **Character Zone 3 - Second Street to Edith Boulevard**

### **STREETSCAPE: LANDSCAPE AND SITE DESIGN**

- Agricultural parcels predominate from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to the channel, forming a soft, rural entrance to this section.
- An exceptional windrow grows on the north side of Alameda Boulevard.
- Commercial uses with generic, standardized designs predominate from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to the AT&SF Railroad
- Vacant parcel south of Alameda Boulevard - This parcel is separated from Alameda Boulevard by a row of parcels, bounded by the rail on the east frontage, and orients to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. It offers a mixed use opportunity to complement the village center with strong connections.
- Low land near Edith Boulevard - Parcels without access to major roads form a quiet enclave of homes that have been affected by the mining operations. Renovations should be supported.

### **TRAFFIC AND CIRCULATION**

- The intersection at Edith Boulevard and Alameda Boulevard is difficult and dangerous. This situation should be corrected as quickly as possible.
- The road pavement and right-of-way narrows at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, and the bicycle lane ends.
- Pedestrian and bicycle access to the “bench” area and Balloon Park is unsafe and require connections.
- Equestrian connections crossing Alameda Boulevard are not evident.
- There are uncomfortable pedestrian crossings along Alameda Boulevard due to fast traffic and poorly defined crossings.
- Temporary signs within and near the R.O.W. detract from the local character.

## **Character Zone 4 - Balloon Park / Commercial Campus (Edith Boulevard to Interstate 25)**

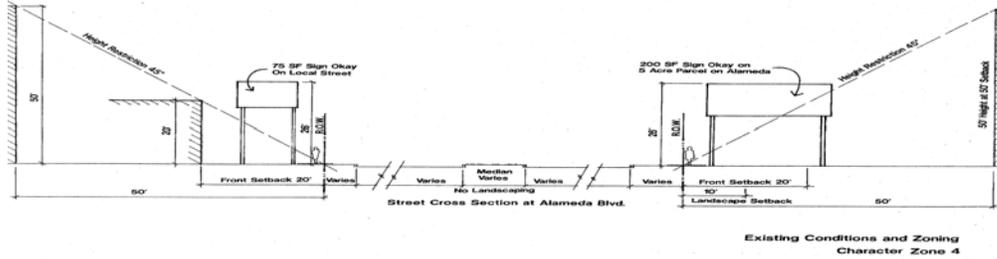
### **STREETSCAPE: LANDSCAPE AND SITE DESIGN**

- The medians are not landscaped.
- The entrance image to Alameda Boulevard at Interstate 25 is poor due to lack of landscape at Interstate 25 and Pan American.
- The landscape edge is disconnected by the vacant land parcels with no landscape. This detracts from the attractive existing campus/industrial and Wildflower Neighborhood landscapes.
- Large buildings and expanses of open space give this a large scale and modern appearance. Broad, continuous setbacks could benefit from additional planting.
- Balloon Fiesta Park / Nazareth Hospital - The walk on the south side of Alameda Boulevard is not continuous. Walking between the two sides of the Balloon Park is difficult. Entries have little definition. The master plan for the Balloon Fiesta Park is underway.
- Wildflower Neighborhood - This walled community, as an island, would benefit from median planting in Alameda and enhancements to the wall design. The informal landscape character is attractive and could be introduced in other areas.
- Hotel Parcels - This area lacks a sense of place. This is the entrance to the area hosting the Balloon Park. A possible theme/announcement statement should be considered. The area lack continuous walks.

## Alameda Boulevard Design Overlay Zone

### **TRAFFIC AND CIRCULATION**

- Existing trail along the north diversion channel was paved Summer of 1997. There are no safe pedestrian, bicycle, or equestrian connections between trails, balloon park, and neighborhoods.
- Due to fast traffic and poorly defined crossings, uncomfortable pedestrian crossings along Alameda exist.



### **SIGNAGE**

- Well-designed signs, such as “Chick’s” sign contribute to an organized streetscape. Numerous temporary signs detract.

## **5. Land Use and Zoning**

County zoning designations are A-1, R-1, C-1, and MH, per the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, Bernalillo County, New Mexico, amended through December 1992. A variety of Special Use Permits are applied. The City of Albuquerque Zone Code includes M-1; IP; IP-EP; C-1 and RD, with SU-1 and SU-2 designations.

The City areas are subject to the requirements of the City Zone Code, North Interstate 25 Sector Development Plan - Section VII Design Standards, Street Tree Ordinance. In addition, rear yards fronting on Alameda Boulevard should be subject to the same setbacks, street tree requirements, and design standards as front yards as the industrially zoned properties which front on Alameda Boulevard NE (comments from Albuquerque Zoning Department). Refer to Figure 4 for Existing Land Use and Zoning.

## **6. Infrastructure**

The following discussion provides additional information to the previous information contained in the individual Character Zone descriptions.

Alameda Boulevard. Comments from various divisions of the City of Albuquerque Public Works Department include: Alameda Boulevard is classified on the Long Range Major Street Plan as a principal arterial. This facility needs to maintain a safe and efficient corridor for vehicular traffic. Designs that would inhibit Alameda from performing as such, by changing the number of lanes or reducing the roadway width, require approval by the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments Urban Transportation Policy Planning Board. Alameda Boulevard is designed to concentrate traffic traversing the far North Valley onto one corridor so as to preserve the quality of life in the surrounding neighborhoods. Signal coordination should be established along the entire length of the roadway in order to attract traffic to this facility. Speed limits just east of the river should be set to maintain Alameda Boulevard as a principal arterial constructed to move traffic safely and conveniently.

## Alameda Boulevard Design Overlay Zone

At present, Alameda Boulevard is the single arterial serving the balloon park. The portion within the City is within the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department (NMSHTD) maintenance jurisdiction. Written concurrence prior to any construction, reconstruction or landscaping is needed from the NMSHTD.

Acequias - The network of acequias support agriculture and join the neighborhoods to Alameda Boulevard with informal pedestrian ways. Plantings along them impart a memorable agricultural image to the area.

Medians. Landscaped medians exist from Rio Grande Boulevard to the Railroad. No medians exist on Alameda Boulevard from the AT&SF railroad to the Balloon Park. Medians from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to Interstate 25 are not landscaped.

Traffic Speeds. Traffic is heavy and fast moving on Alameda Boulevard, steady and slow-moving on the cross-streets. The speed limit ranges from 50 mph near Interstate 25, to 40 mph at Edith, and 35 mph in the western portion. Traffic Signals occur at San Mateo Boulevard, Jefferson 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, North Guadalupe, North Rio Grande, and Rio Grande Boulevard.

Road Sections. The Alameda Boulevard right of way varies from 86' to 124'. Alameda Boulevard from Rio Grande to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street has been recently improved with 4 travel lanes, landscaped medians and parkway, an 8' multi-use trail on the south side, and a bike lane and 6' sidewalks on the north side. From 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to the North Diversion Channel there are 4 travel lanes, with narrower pavement. There are 6 travel lanes from the North Diversion Channel to Interstate 25 with non-continuous sidewalks and no bike lanes. The sidewalks and bike lane are not continuous. Landscaping is not continuous on the north side.

Parking. There is no on-street parking along Alameda Boulevard.

Crosswalks. Crosswalks occur throughout with the exception of Edith Boulevard and Washington Street. At intersections new and rebuilt signals should include left turn arrows from Alameda Boulevard to the intersection street.

Street Lighting - City policy requires arterial streets lighted to Illuminating Engineering Society standards. Under these standards lighting is recommended after studying the speed of the roadway, the required height of the light pole and the type of luminare under consideration. Street lights must have cut-off luminaries. Existing street lighting is in place at some intersections.

Overhead Power Lines - Overhead power lines, both distribution and transmission, exist throughout the area. Lines cross and parallel Alameda Boulevard.

Water, Sewer and Gas - Sanitary sewer service is generally not available west of Edith. Some other areas may need minor sewer line extensions to provide service. Water service is available to the entire area. Natural gas is not available north of Alameda on Edith Boulevard.

Hydrology/Storm Drainage - New development will be required to comply with the standard policies of the Drainage Ordinance. Streets must be designed to insure that existing street capacity for storm drainage conveyance is not reduced. Current drainage in this area is adequate. Storm Drainage systems are currently underground pipe systems that drain to the North Diversion Channel. Drainage Systems do not extend West of the North Diversion Channel.

Transit. Currently, transit service is provided on Alameda Boulevard by Route 98, a commuter/express peak hour route. Alameda Boulevard is also intersected by two north/south local, all day routes-- Route 10 on 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Route 4 on San Mateo Boulevard. The City of Albuquerque Transit Department is

### Alameda Boulevard Design Overlay Zone

interested in providing bus bays along Alameda Boulevard and any streetscape designs should incorporate the dedication of right-of-way for these facilities; and capital plans should include the cost of bus bay construction.

Consult the Transit Department to discuss specific bus by locations on Alameda Boulevard. Streetscape improvements should focus on improving convenience and safety for pedestrians. A good start would be to provide better sidewalks, and slowing speeds/increasing signalization times, pedestrian pavements or highly visible striping at pedestrian crossings. (comments from Transit Department)

