

4. Urban Design & City Character

Encourage new development to be mixed-use, compact and community oriented.

Santa Fe is a city of contrasts with unique public spaces and winding roads that contrast with the automobile-age city of today. The original layout and formation of Santa Fe encouraged a walkable and pedestrian environment. The older sections of Santa Fe contain building and design features that should be used in new developments.

Residential Design

Encourage compact design and smaller lots, connecting streets, and neighborhood vitality. Improve the community orientation of new residential developments.

The traditional pattern of residential design in Santa Fe consisted of adobe buildings lining narrow streets that were built with no front yard on the street. Residences were often built around a central patio or placita. In the southwestern desert climate the placita offered privacy and refuge from the dust and noise of the streets and formed the nucleus of family activity. Remnants of this development pattern can be found in areas settled during the Colonial Period, such as the Canyon Road neighborhood and the area surrounding the Plaza; Sena Plaza is a good example of this design.

While the city had small “subdivisions” in the early 1900’s, such as those south of downtown, larger subdivisions did not occur until after World War II. The neighborhoods built in the 1950s and 1960s maintained some architectural characteristics of the traditional neighborhoods. However, residential development from this era was quite different and reflected a much more regulated layout of lots and wider streets for cars in neighborhoods like Casa Solana.

Today, concern over high housing prices has led to calls for greater single-family residential densities and more multi-family housing, especially in “Planned Communities.” Smaller lot sizes and smaller block sizes with narrower streets are encouraged.



*Photo Credit: Best Southwest Travel Destination - Historic Santa Fe New Mexico
Amy Bell 2015*



Rendering Credit: Richard Macpherson

Community Oriented Downtown

Reinforce and encourage the historic ambiance of downtown and its unique setting as the heart of the city. Allow and encourage residential uses on second and upper floors for all downtown development and new commercial development.

Downtown Santa Fe, and especially the plaza, remains the heart and soul of the city. Ringed by Paseo de Peralta, and approximately 240 acres in area, downtown contains the remnants of 17th century Santa Fe including the Plaza, the Palace of the Governors and Barrio de Analco neighborhood. Hotels, restaurants, art galleries, small shops and small-scale offices are common north of the Santa Fe River and its adjoining Alameda. The State Capitol, state office buildings and the city rail yard dominate the land uses south of the river. The city should encourage the continued use of downtown as a center of cultural activities and local celebrations.

Corridor Redevelopment

Encourage and help create vibrant corridors that have well-designed public spaces, shade trees and excellent pedestrian and bike facilities.

Almost all commercial development outside of downtown is less than 60 years old. The development pattern along the city's major corridors is no accident; as far back as 1946, the city's General Plan sought to extend almost all new commercial development south of the city on either side of Cerrillos Road. The 1983 General Plan called for commercial districts "along major city corridors where commercial uses have been established within a corridor 600 feet from the streets."

The city's major commercial streets are often criticized for the lack of architectural and urban design quality. There are three primary problems with the existing urban design and land use along these streets:

1. Over-sized parking lots are a poor, inefficient use of land;
2. The streetscape is not beautiful nor enjoyable in a city known for both;
3. The automobile orientation of these streets discourages pedestrians and bicyclists.

These commercial corridors provide the focus of efforts to encourage additional development that contains a mix of uses, including residential. Unused parking areas provide infill opportunities that add land value and provide a more enjoyable street. A mix of commercial and residential uses along these corridors could change the rhythm of the street and create a livelier environment.

Landscaping is a very important part of any corridor re-development project. Walkways with well landscaped edges can direct customers safely into retail and commercial areas. Street trees, along the street edge can soften the development mass and create a more pleasant and natural setting. Trees planted along these major thoroughfares are vital to creating a desirable urban environment.

Basic design criteria to enhance new developments along Santa Fe's major corridors (St. Michael's Drive, Airport Road, Cerrillos Road, & St. Francis Drive) include:

- Building placement
- Sidewalk width
- Street trees
- Street width and design
- Pedestrian realm – sidewalks and street trees

The city should recommend a full mix of uses along the city's major corridors (See Centers and Corridors Map).



Rendering Credit: Steve Price of Urban Advantage, Inc.

Employment Centers

Encourage mixed-use employment centers that include retail and residential uses even in business parks

The city contains significant areas of undeveloped land for office development. Additional office space is provided downtown, along major corridors and in business parks. Offices are also permitted in Community Commercial areas where new office uses may be located.

Offices should be encouraged to locate in or near commercial centers. Future industrial uses that are not compatible with residential land uses have land reserved to them near the airport. Meanwhile, older industrial areas, such as the Siler Road area, should be allowed to re-develop with a full range of uses, including residential.



Photo Credit: City of Santa Fe, Tourism Santa Fe, Farmers Market at the railyard

Railyard Redevelopment

Continue to encourage and support vibrant activities and uses in the Railyard district to allow for a broad range services for the entire Santa Fe community.

On February 9, 1880 the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company pulled its first train into the Santa Fe, New Mexico depot. By the 1940s, The Railyard was an activity center for Santa Feans. The site remained a central hub until rail transportation began to be eclipsed after World War II by the interstate highway system and the airlines.

Like other railroad-related locales around the U.S. Santa Fe's station, tracks, equipment and surrounding neighborhood began to decline. The city purchased the railyard in 1995 and began a community-based planning process.

In February, 2002 the Railyard Master Plan was approved and the Santa Fe Railyard Community Corporation was awarded a lease and management agreement with the city to oversee development of the 50 acre site, which began in 2006.

Neighborhood Centers

Actively support the re-use of aging school sites as neighborhood centers with a mix of community uses.

Introduce the neighborhood center concept, through the use of existing school sites. Public schools are often located at or near the center of neighborhoods and therefore are perfectly situated to act as "Neighborhood Centers". In areas where student populations have declined, and the school district may no longer have need for a school, older schools can find new life as a neighborhood activity center. Encourage the development of former schools for neighborhood centers as gathering spots serving surrounding residents.

School Site /Neighborhood Centers could include the following:

- Meeting Rooms
- Offices
- Medical Clinics
- Non-profit agencies
- Recreation; indoor and outdoor
- Senior Activities
- Small Shops



Photo Credit: Richard Macpherson

Urban Design Essentials

Commercial Design

The following urban design essentials are necessary in the creation of a well-designed built-environment. These items will help make the city more pedestrian friendly, visually appealing and add to the overall enjoyment of Santa Fe for residents and visitors.

- ...Give people priority over cars.
- ...Ensure that streets do not become barriers to pedestrian crossings.
- ...Recognize bicycling and walking as viable alternatives to motorized transportation.

A. Buildings Near The Street (Create a Streetscape)

Create a “building frontage” along the commercial corridors rather than a “parking lot frontage”.

1. New buildings should be as close to the street frontage property line as possible to create an active streetscape that includes adequate room for pedestrians, street trees and other landscaping.
2. Buildings should have windows and doors facing the street and should incorporate other architectural features (see “Building Design” Section).
3. Setbacks – Buildings should be located not more than 10 feet from the street frontage property line.
4. Outdoor seating is encouraged, especially restaurants.

B. Street Trees And Sidewalks

Create a more enjoyable and healthy pedestrian environment and beautify the city’s major corridors.

1. Street trees (deciduous/shade) should be planted by the developer /builder along the entire street frontage at a maximum spacing of 30 feet between trees.
2. Street trees should be planted close to the street and between the street edge and sidewalk.
3. Tree size at planting should be of sufficient diameter and height.
4. Protective tree wells, grates, or other means of hydration should be used around the base of each tree.
5. New sidewalks should be a minimum of 5 feet wide, or be at least 10 feet wide from the back of curb.

C. Parking Lots, Drive-Thrus & Gas Pumps

Encourage design of parking lots, drive-thrus and gasoline pumps to be located at the rear of buildings.

1. New on-site parking spaces, drive-thrus and gas pumps should not be located between a building and a street.
2. Parking lots located between buildings should be shared and credited as part of each building’s total parking space requirement.
3. Develop new parking requirements that reduce the amount of on-site parking.
4. Sidewalks should be included between double-loaded parking rows.



Photo Credit: Richard Macpherson



Photo Credit: Richard Macpherson

D. Lighting

Ensure on-site lighting contributes to the character of the site and does not disturb adjoining development.

1. Lighting should be provided in parking lots and along pedestrian walkways and should be decorative.
2. Lighting fixtures should not exceed the height of the building they service, and generally should not exceed 20 feet for parking lots and 12 feet for walkways.

E. Landscaping

Emphasize deciduous trees and xeric plants. Minimize expanses of rocks and stone without an adequate mix of vegetation.

1. Deciduous trees, xeric plants and shrubs are encouraged around the base of buildings and along property boundaries as well as in curbed islands at the ends of parking rows.
2. Flowering trees and plants are encouraged to add seasonal color to the landscaping.
3. Walls around the edges of the property should be solid masonry or colored stucco and should not exceed three feet above the grade of the sidewalk along the street. Wherever possible, discourage chain-link fencing along major corridors.

F. Building Design

Ensure that the design of buildings within the city's commercial corridors is in keeping with the city's scale and representative of Santa Fe's unique architectural qualities.

1. Height - Ensure that building heights are limited along the corridors to maintain Santa Fe's low cityscape and building profile.
2. Step-Backs – Utilizing architectural and building façade step-backs on upper floors along the corridors is encouraged in keeping with Santa Fe's architectural tradition. They can also be effective in creating outdoor patios and spaces.
3. Window Area and Placement – Ensure that buildings contain substantial window area and other visually interesting features along the length of street frontages.
4. Multiple Tenants – Encourage multi-tenant buildings rather than large, single tenant buildings along commercial corridors, with each tenant space entrance opening on to the street frontage.
5. Courtyards & Patios – Encourage the inclusion of patios and courtyards in all commercial development to add visual relief and in keeping with traditional Santa Fe building design.



Rendering Credit: Richard Macpherson

Residential Design

Good residential street design is fundamental to a successful neighborhood environment & there are certain design essentials that ensure a well-designed neighborhood setting.

A. Street Connectivity

The logic of inter-connecting streets is to provide continuous flow and ease of travel, for both motorized and non-motorized traffic and to encourage pedestrian and bicycle useage, in all neighborhoods.

1. Limit cul-de-sacs because they can limit street connectivity, thus providing few travel options.
2. A grid, or modified grid, is encouraged in all neighborhood designs & layouts.

B. Parks

Parks should be designed to encourage public use and should be placed in easily accessible areas.

1. Parks should be located along major roadways or next to schools and should not be gated or hidden in their location.
2. Canopy deciduous tree parks encouraged.

C. Sidewalks

The best sidewalks are separated from the curb by a landscaped strip and/or street trees. This creates a more beautiful and safer pedestrian and city environment.

1. Planting strips should contain shrubs and trees.
2. Sidewalks should have a minimum width of five feet in residential areas.

D. Block Lengths

Block lengths are key to street connectivity and shorter block lengths have been shown to enhance neighborhood livability.

1. Shorter block lengths are a reason older, pre-World War II neighborhoods are desirable.
2. Residential block lengths in new neighborhoods should not exceed 250 to 300 feet, based on studies of older neighborhoods.

E. Street Widths

Street widths are very important in creating safe neighborhoods for children and all pedestrians. Overly-wide residential streets encourage unsafe traffic speeds.

1. Residential streets should generally have a pavement width that does not exceed 25 to 30 feet in width.

F. Roundabouts

Roundabouts can be very effective in safely controlling traffic near residential areas.

1. Roundabouts are often an excellent alternative for intersections that would otherwise have traffic signals or all-way stops. Because of one-direction movement, roundabouts have proven to be safer.
2. Roundabouts eliminate the need for left- only turn lanes / unnecessary street widths.
3. Roundabouts are a good place for low-scaled landscaping or sculpture

G. Curve Roads to Narrow Site Lines

Gentle curves in a roadway will slow down traffic.

1. Curves can add visual interest and still work on a grid with connecting streets.
2. Curves tend to require drivers to slow down.

H. Street Trees

Street trees provide beauty, shade, and offer an element of protection for pedestrians. Street trees are an essential feature of residential street design.

1. Street trees should be planted at regular intervals along sidewalks.
2. Tree variety is important: different shapes, colors of foliage in fall & disease resistant trees are all important characteristics.
3. Trees should be planted on each side of the street
4. Adequate space and irrigation methods should be employed

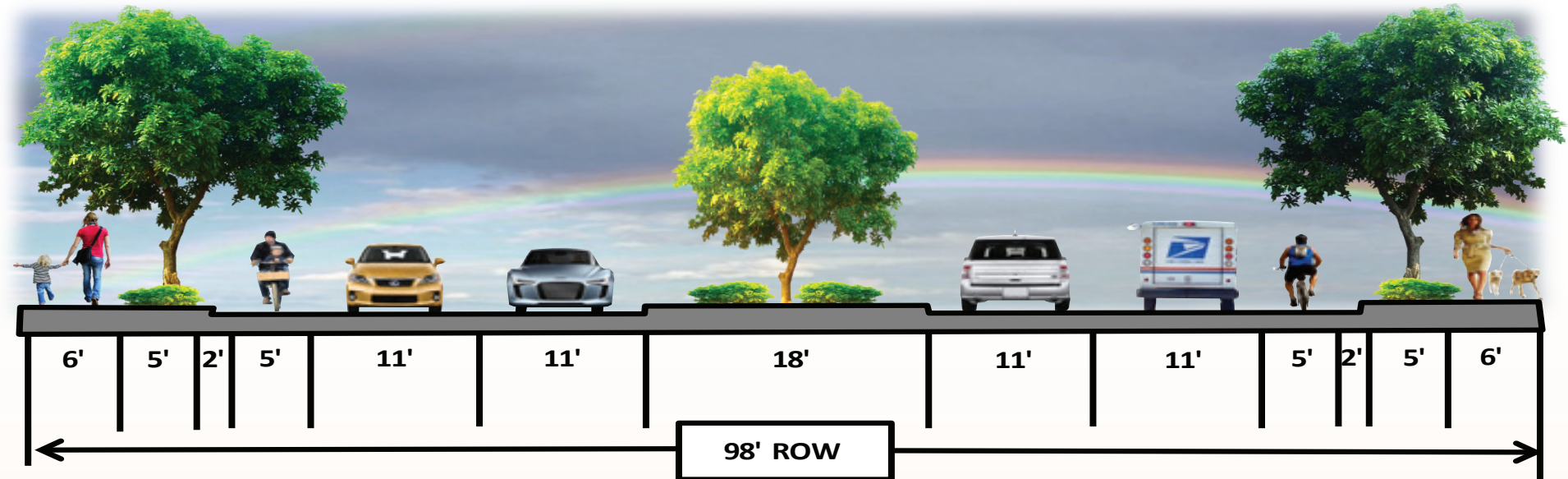


Photo Credit: City of Santa Fe Cycling Infrastructure

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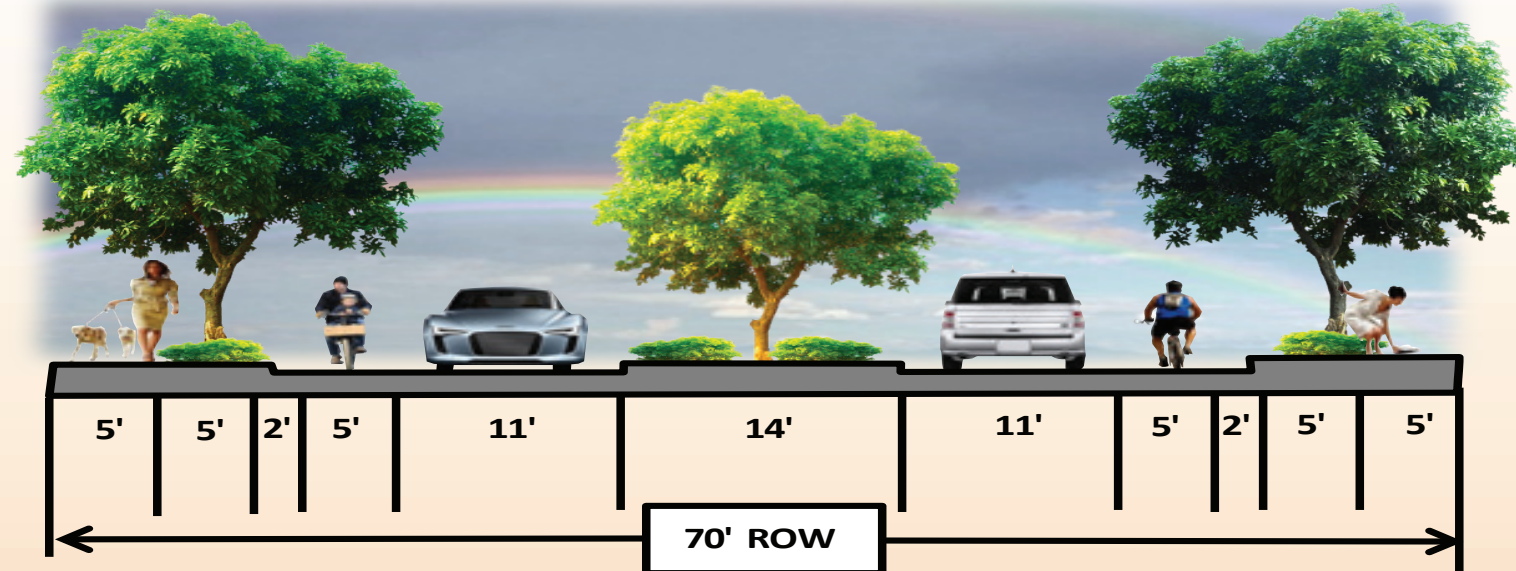
4-Lane Arterial

This roadway design is a total of 98 feet wide and includes the following roadway elements: wide sidewalks, planter strips, two bike lanes, four travel lanes and a wide landscaped median.



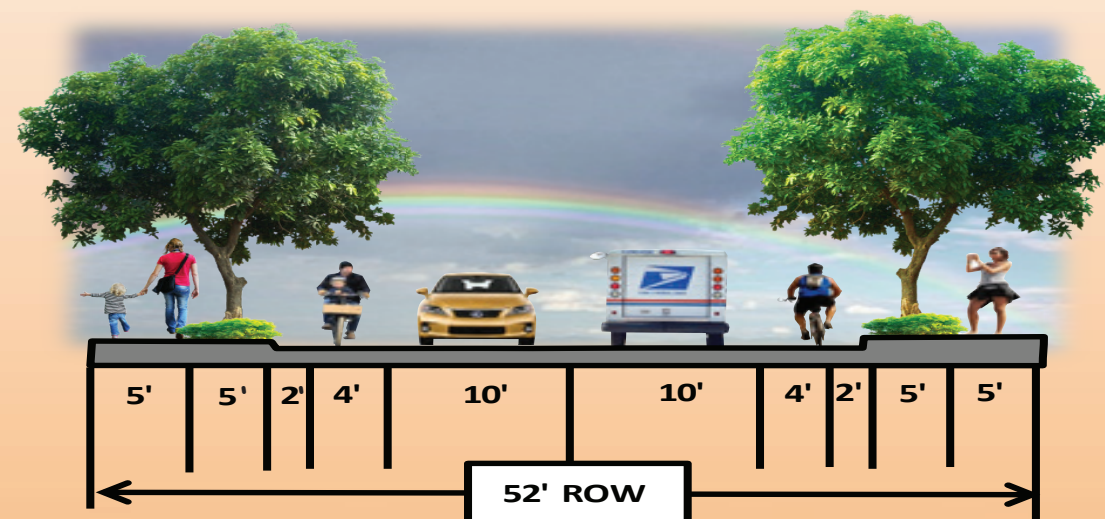
2-Lane Arterial

This roadway design is a total of 70 feet wide and includes the following roadway elements: wide sidewalks, planter strips, two bike lanes, two travel lanes and a wide landscaped median.



Collector

This roadway design is a total of 52 feet wide and includes the following roadway elements: wide sidewalks, planter strips, two bike lanes, and two travel lanes.



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Other Design Elements

Flags and Banners – Flags can add visual interest and color to the streetscape.



Photo Credit: Jackie Jadrnak Albuquerque Journal

Sculpture – Public sculpture can play a significant role in the character and quality of a plaza or major arterial; they also act as excellent entryway statements for districts or neighborhoods.



Photo Credit: Museums in New Mexico

Lighting – Decorative, pedestrian-scaled lighting creates a more enjoyable environment.



Photo Credit: The Architect's Newspaper Blog, 2012 Creative Commons

Sidewalk textures – Brick, stone, and textured concrete with color can enhance sidewalks.



Photo Credit: Tamar Carson Hardscapes Pinterest Creative Commons

Roadway textures – Textured roadways can be effective for traffic calming and pedestrian crossings.



Photo Credit: Travel Gadget Review burro alley

Clocks – Large, public (non-digital) clocks can be both enjoyable sculpture and serve a valuable purpose in commercial areas.



Photo Credit: Street Clocks, Pinterest Creative Commons

Water and fountains – A fountain can be a pleasant, calming design element of a plaza.



Photo Credit: Beth Campbell, Turquoise Bear Creative Commons

Seating & Park-lets – Artistically designed public seating areas and tiny park-lets add to the enjoyment of the city's commercial areas.



Photo Credit: The Architect's Newspaper Blog, 2012 Creative Commons

Plants & Flowers – Plants and flowers add color and much needed vegetation in commercial areas and along corridors.



Photo Credit: Travel Writer Rants and Raves Creative Commons

Kiosks & Bike Racks – Allow for announcements of Neighborhood and city-wide news, events, etc.



Photo Credit: Traveling Twosome, sunflower bike rack, Creative Commons