3-22-2013

Envisioning Downtown: Ideas for Revitalization in Los Alamos, New Mexico

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ENVISIONING DOWNTOWN

IDEAS FOR REVITALIZATION in LOS ALAMOS, NEW MEXICO

topographic map of downtown Los Alamos
This plan is based on work performed by the Fall 2005 DPAC group - a collaboration of Architecture and Planning graduate students and faculty, led by Mark Childs and Andy Pressman, architecture. (DPAC is the Design Planning Assistance Center at the School of Architecture and Planning, University of New Mexico.) Working in conjunction with county and city officials, and residents of Los Alamos, New Mexico, the group created plans to help vitalize the downtown of Los Alamos.

DPAC provides architectural and planning services to organizations and groups throughout the state who cannot afford traditional professional services. Established at the University of New Mexico in 1969, DPAC is built on a foundation of community involvement in planning and architectural design projects. The program thrives because of sustained participation from community members in projects affecting neighborhoods and communities.

DPAC has worked on projects throughout New Mexico for low-income families, disadvantaged groups, neighborhood associations, Native American communities, social service organizations and others. It also provides a unique opportunity for architecture, landscape architecture, and planning students to work and learn together while benefiting their community.

Note: the work contained within this document was performed by students and faculty at the School of Architecture and Planning, UNM and is intended only as an informative aid to the City of Santa Rosa, NM. The document should not be substituted for professional design consultation.

Special thanks to the State Legislature for funding the DPAC's work with the New Mexico Main Street program in the economic development department.
Central Avenue to create social flow and seating

Use triangulation

Whyte were not. “William each other as if they people and prompts a linkage between

This is a process by place is triangulation.

“A sign of a great unwelcoming.

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street traffic,

Public art

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- homes or as a downsized units can serve as starter above. The residential

commercial space, and

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and 20th Street, this proj

ner at Central Avenue

trian underpass from the

Conceptual drawing of

Center

New Mexico

Colin Morris

DEVELOPMENT

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Los ALAmos to share.

ISSUES OPPORTUNITIES

to sit.

to choose where allowing users are preferred,

gathering.

provides an

or performing)

and play.

reason to stop

street

GARAGE PLAN

PATIO BALCONY

RAILING DETAIL AT

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ONE LEVEL CONDOS

outdoor recreation.

under shade trees, And provides planted Areas for

physiCAL ConneCtions to the pArk from mesA

SITinG the BuiLdinG At the Current western pArkinG

TRANsFERS TO 20TH STREET

10. dressing rooms

5. outdoor dining

4. kitchen

3. bar

2. restaurant

1. courtyard

site

FLOOR PLAN-

TOILETS

VITREOUS CHINA

K-3422

WELLWORTH

TOILETS

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Goals:
Reconnect the park with the community.

Connect the green space of the park with the green space of the canyon via a safe pedestrian underpass.

Tie together the downtown, park and community center complex with the Canyon Rim trail.
Interior view of the community center.

View looking north along the Canyon Rim trail.

Conceptual drawing of view through the pedestrian underpass from the park.
ASHLEY POND
AMPITHEATER
LOS ALAMOS, NEW MEXICO

LOCATION MAP

Jonathon Wright
Ashley Pond Amphitheater

- Space is defined by a series of Shade/Shelter structures that skirt the back edge.
  These structures are fully operable and may be manipulated by park patrons.
- Phase II- A set of frames that tie into the shade frame.
  One that branches out across Trinity, and one that crosses Central.
  Both hold digital signs to display information to motorists.
- Seating created by terraces cut into the natural slope of the site.
  On the faces of the terraces would be plaques that tell the history of Los Alamos.
**CIVIC CENTER**

Los Alamos, New Mexico

**Location Map**

**View In Lower Gallery**

**Site Plan**

- Siting the building at the current western parking lot, south of the library maintains the sanctity of Ashley Pond Park, and preserves visual and physical connections to the park from Mesa Library, the senior center, and Fuller Lodge.

- The parking area accommodates 96 parked cars under shade trees, and provides planted areas for outdoor recreation.

- East-West building orientation takes the best advantage of passive solar design—more spaces get more natural light, more of the time.

- Sunlight enters high glazing in the breakout rooms, bounces off the northern wall, and filters through a wooden screen to indirectly light the space.

- Planted roofs and permeable paving reduce runoff, pollution and micro-climate heat.

- Planted roofs provide extra occupiable space, with great views.

- Vegetation cleans the air we breathe and creates a more enjoyable spatial experience.
Each conference space has an outdoor courtyard or terrace attached.

The public courtyard has several shade devices and deciduous trees, making a comfortable summer- or winter-garden.

Lease space on the first floor can provide a source of revenue.

At the second level, both the ballroom and the executive boardroom open onto roof terraces with expansive views over Ashley Pond Park.

A broad approach sequence from Central Avenue clarifies way-finding to the library entrance.

At the cafe, wood lattice strips over full-wall glass controls light and solar heat entering the space, while also allowing views out to Central Avenue.

Cafe seating spills out into the public courtyard.

Articulated entrances increase legibility of the facade.
Los Alamos Convention Center is proposed on the Lavy lane on the south of the Trinity drive. Site is of 3.2 acres owned by Los Alamos county.

Los Alamos Convention Center is designed with meeting rooms, conference rooms, auditorium breakout rooms which is supported by a Hotel and a Food court. Main access to the site is from the trinity drive and all the buildings on the site are connected with a covered pathway. A parking structure is proposed behind the quest communications building so that it is accessible to all the build-
Food court is located between the conference center and hotel which features indoor and outdoor dining spaces to take the advantage of the Los alamos canyon views. Outdoor dining space is partially covered by the trellis.

Hotel can be accessible from the main entry and a separate entrance from the trinity drive. Design features are rooms with the views of the canyon, visitors lounge, terrace garden and decks opening into the natural landscape of the canyon.
CANONES de la LUZ

Canyon Block Plan:
- Master-planned city block with transition from town center to neighborhood center
- Mixture of unit types
- Units step down with topography giving each a canyon view
- Daylit interior spaces
- Pedestrian-centered community
- Community facilities at the point

LOCATION MAP

14
- TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE VIEW
- NEED FOR NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- ENCOURAGE PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC
The striking views off the cliff side provide that Lavy Lane should be a treasure for all of Los Alamos to share. This project focuses on defining the canyon edge as communal and civic space. Therefore, this proposal concentrates on a civic center which features both indoor and outdoor venues for performing arts, a great hall, meeting rooms, and an inviting courtyard that transitions onto the natural terrain.

1. courtyard
2. restaurant
3. bar
4. kitchen
5. outdoor dining
6. entry/lobby
7. gallery
8. theatre
9. stage
10. dressing rooms
11. great hall
12. meeting rooms
13. ampitheatre

The striking views off the cliff side prove that Lavy Lane should be a treasure for all of Los Alamos to share. This project focuses on defining the canyon edge as communal and civic space. Therefore, this proposal concentrates on a civic center which features both indoor and outdoor venues for performing arts, a great hall, meeting rooms, and an inviting courtyard that transitions onto the natural terrain.
The building volumes allude to the hull of a ship. These lines symbolize sculptural form and are to be seen from adjacent mesas. The architecture’s formal geometry converges at the project epicenter, the amphitheatre. Its backdrop faces onto the natural landscape. The main central corridor acts as the spine which all traffic flows. The spine’s interior space is a canyon itself with dramatic plays of light and spaces to be discovered. The project is a gateway, a means to celebrate nature.
MULTI-GENERATIONAL CENTER

LOS ALAMOS, NEW MEXICO

LOCATION MAP

UNM - SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING
DESIGN PLANNING ASSISTANCE CENTER
STUDIO - FALL 2005
TIMOTHY RYBARCZYK
"A sign of a great place is triangulation. This is a process by which some external stimulus provides a linkage between people and prompts strangers to talk to each other as if they were not." William Whyte

Use triangulation where pedestrian flow and seating come together to create social opportunities.

UNM - SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING
DESIGN PLANNING ASSISTANCE CENTER STUDIO - FALL 2005
WADE PATTERSON

**ISSUES**

- Wide sidewalks and blank arcades provide little reason to stop and ponder.
- With small windows, no doors or signage, this frontage feels cold and unwelcoming.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- Public art play structure, buffered from street traffic, provides a reason to stop and play.
- Nearby seating and shade provides social opportunities for parents and others.
- Orientation along pedestrian flow ensures this space will be well used.
- Awnings, seating and flowers create a sense of enclosure and sensory delight that invites gathering.

**RESOURCES**

William Whyte's contribution to public space design is rooted in his extensive work directly observing social behaviors of people. The *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, published in 1980, provides extensive information about how people behave in public spaces. It is an accessible and useful tool to begin thinking about how to stimulate social activity downtown.

The Project for Public Spaces is a nonprofit organization focused on creating and sustained public places that build communities. They provide technical assistance, education, and research through programs in parks, plazas and central squares; buildings and civic architecture; transportation; and public markets. A great deal of useful information can be found on their website: [http://www.pps.org/](http://www.pps.org/)

Open Air Market-NET is the World Wide Guide to Farmers' Markets, Flea Markets, Street Markets, and Street Vendors. It is an all-volunteer research and educational project that aims to gather and provide information about open air marketplaces around the world, both formal and informal. [http://www.openair.org/](http://www.openair.org/)
### Issues
- Blank frontage reveals little about the diversity and vibrancy of civic life.
- Empty storefronts and failed businesses can create an impression of neglect and decline.
- Office and retail space could accommodate civic organizations downtown.
- Spaces between buildings provide opportunities for special and sacred places.

### Opportunities
- Making Los Alamos a great place for our young scientists to live is in the national interest. Public/private collaboration (especially with LANL’s managing partners) can find creative solutions to the obstacles that face small businesses.
- Offering a wide range of business opportunities, from very small (ex. street vending) to large, supports local entrepreneurship and initiative. Breaking large offices into smaller retail spaces can help support emerging business ventures and public life.
- Public art (especially murals) created by youth can give young people an empowering voice in public life.
- A range of seating options allow young people and others to come together in different ways. Young people need a visible space within the civic core in order to feel part of the community.
- Attracting non-profits to the downtown core can help to intensify social life, generating the feeling of a thriving and democratic civic space. Small, affordable spaces and the opportunity to share resources with other groups are possible incentives to encourage relocation.

### Resources
- Christopher Alexander wrote about the interrelationships among the way we build and the way we live. His popular book *A Pattern Language* is organized as a reference tool and may serve as a resource for integrating a wide range of Los Alamos’ civic goals.
- Concentrate local businesses & non-profits of varying size downtown to generate the look and feel of a vibrant and varied civic culture.

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“One of the greatest problems in existing communities is the fact that the available public life in them is spread so thin that it has no impact on the community.”

Christopher Alexander

Information from the 2004 Regional Forum on Sustainable Infrastructure: Sustainable Streets and Streetscapes provides pertinent information on sustainability incentive programs instituted by Portland, Seattle and Vancouver. Information from the conference can be found at [http://www.cityofseattle.net/environment/building.htm](http://www.cityofseattle.net/environment/building.htm)

What Kids Can Do, Inc. (WKCD) is a national not-for-profit organization founded in 2001 for the purpose of making public the voices and views of adolescents. They have extensive information about a variety of programs, including mural arts. [http://www.whatkidscando.org](http://www.whatkidscando.org)
Infilling the southeast corner at Central Avenue and 20th Street, this project anchors downtown at the western edge. The ground floor provides 8,000 square feet of commercial space, and there are three levels of condominium homes above. The residential units can serve as starter homes or as a downsized home for empty nesters, addressing a market ranging from young single persons to retired couples. These units are intended to be for sale.
This building features:

- Ground floor retail
- Twenty-two one to two bedroom condominiums on upper floors, ranging from 1000 square feet to 1500 square feet. The two bedroom condos have two levels and a double-height living space
- All condos have two reserved spaces in the parking garage below the building, which has capacity for 130 cars
- Private 12’ x 10’ patio balconies in every condominium
- Community balconies at north and south ends of hallway
- Perforated metal shading devices on west and east facades
- Recessed windows on south facade
- Electronic mesh shades at curtain wall windows
• Central and 15th St. location provides excellent access for residents to museums, shops and civic centers
• Density increase allows more live, work and play in a walkable location
• Stepped down design allows light and air into the buildings as well as bringing the building down to a pedestrian scale and provides rooftop gardens for residents
• Circulation allows for pedestrian traffic as well as vehicular traffic

• Square section beam system serves as trellis for seasonal plants
• Tufa stone wraps columns
• Rastra infill wall system provides thermal insulation, sound reduction, and is composed of recycled material
• Hollow core precast decking provides thermal performance, sound reduction and conduit space

• Ground floor parking 2/3 original parking space
• 2nd tier parking spans original parking footprint
• Parking enclosed inside central courtyard space, providing security and access
• 2nd tier parking open to Central and 15th St. as potential viewing space for civic functions
• Interior courtyard patio above 2nd tier parking for residential use

• Residential building with 32 units approx. 1300 sq/ft each
• 3 larger units and one penthouse unit on corner building
• Total approx. 172,000 sq/ft

• Commercial block with one level of commercial on corner-front, approx. 51,000 sq/ft

• Ground level retail space approx. 62,000 sq/ft
CENTRAL AVE STREETSCAPE

LOS ALAMOS, NEW MEXICO

LOCATION MAP

OBJECTIVES:
- pleasant and safe experience for pedestrians and cars
- catchment and use of rainwater for plantings and wild bird corridor
- increased density with an open, public plaza
Congruent with the 2000 Draft Masterplan for Downtown Los Alamos, the project goal is to support a mixed-use, 16-hour town center that has a “park once / pedestrian first” policy to enhance the urban life downtown.

PHASED GROWTH STRATEGY:
Development over time to increase density of Central Avenue corridor.

PHASE I - parking garage with commercial/retail at street
INFILL PHASE

PHASE II - replace low-density retail with medium-density housing
HOUSING PHASE

PHASE III - increase density along Central Ave corridor
DENSITY PHASE