

Planning for the Pecos River District

Section 9

INTRODUCTION

In order to enhance the tourism section of its economy, to improve the quality of the visual environment, and to enhance the level of amenities offered to Carlsbad residents and visitors, the Carlsbad Department of Development has developed a plan for former industrial properties adjacent to the river and the city's central business district.

The plan strongly takes into account the needs of local residents for entertainment, recreation, cultural, and dining opportunities through repositioning Carlsbad as a regional tourist destination. The project will have major impacts on downtown Carlsbad and the adjacent uses along the river.

9.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The property under consideration for the first stage of development is currently occupied by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad. As many as 12 other parcels over a two square mile area could also be subject to redevelopment. Existing uses include parks and recreation facilities, BNSF facilities, and municipal yards. Four-fifths of the site is currently located in Flood Zone AE, which will require that any new construction be constructed at elevations higher than that of the crown of a 100 year flood. The remaining fifth of the parcel is within the floodway, and is unbuildable.

The project is planned to include a wide-range of visitor, institutional, recreational, and retail uses.

Adjacent land uses include the linear Pecos River Park, Commercial and Industrial Uses west of the site in the city's central business district, and established residential uses both north of the property and across the river. There are also included the city's convention center and indoor recreational activities. Public land and agriculture about residential development on the east side of the river.

9.2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Appropriate riverfront development that expands Carlsbad's tourist economy and supports its service sector has been recommended to local government in various planning studies since the mid-1960s. Current Federal Government support (the City has received an Economic Development Administration Grant for the project) and the cooperation of BNSF, place the City in a position to realize the project in the near term.

Because the project is surrounded by developed properties, including established residential areas that the City may not want to disturb, opportunities for wider redevelopment along the Pecos River may be limited and less necessary. Nevertheless, several opportunities present themselves.

Goal 1

The city should adopt an appropriate regulation structure to support a high degree of elasticity in the development of riverfront while ensuring a high degree of certainty over site planning and the design quality of the development.

- The city should adopt a separate zoning district for areas of the riverfront that may be subject to future development.
- Within that district the city should seek additional oversight over site planning and design while allowing the future developer wider control over density, uses, and the provision of parking.

Goal 2

The city should use the powers enabled it through the State's metropolitan redevelopment code to effectively participate in the project and to capture incremental tax increases in order to leverage additional redevelopment.

Goal 3

As its finances allow, the city should seek to assemble additional properties for redevelopment in the vicinity of the riverfront.

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Goal 4

The City should seek to buffer the impact of redevelopment on established residential communities.

9.3 POLICIES

The City will seek to revise its zoning ordinance and its official zoning map in a manner that allows for flexibility in the redevelopment of the riverfront while ensuring that it has an appropriate degree of oversight in the areas of site design, building design, and the mitigation of off-site impacts.

The City will investigate possible uses of the state's Metropolitan Redevelopment Code in order to enhance the resources that it can bring to the project in order to ensure its ultimate realization and success.

The city will take into account the concerns of business people in the central business district and the residents of adjacent neighborhoods in planning for the redevelopment of the riverfront.

9.4 IMPLEMENTATION

The City can consider revisions to its zoning ordinance and its official zoning map as it updates its ordinance. CDOD, the City attorney, and the Community Development Department should examine the State's Metropolitan Redevelopment Code for opportunities not afforded the community in other economic development enabling legislation, including amendments to the anti-donation clause of the New Mexico Constitution. Local government and the planning commission can take into account the needs of nearby property owners, residents, and business people by ensuring that the planning for redevelopment along the Pecos River takes place in the context of collective community decision making.