

MIDMO

MIDTOWN MOTION LINK

“Culture fosters connections, both expected and unexpected, creating more opportunities for residents and visitors to collaborate, communicate and realize meaningful relationships. A powerful medium, culture also fortifies neighborhoods, instills civic pride and shapes collective identity through the sharing of experiences, story, memory, and creativity.”

-Creative Strategies 360°, *Culture Connects Santa Fe – A Cultural Cartography* (2016)

The site is located in the physical center of the City of Santa Fe and as such has opportunity to become a dynamic node for Santa Fe and to revitalize the former campus area as well as the surrounding urban fabric. It is important the new center celebrate the rich history of Santa Fe and reflects in a new way the unique identity of the City Different. Inspired by the Culture Connects initiative created by the City of Santa Fe in 2016, the new center should be inclusive. It should be a dense, vibrant and easily accessed destination for residents and tourists, with a variety of programs and uses to attract people across all demographic categories (age, race, economic strata, cultural identity and gender). As a dense magnet of spaces and activities at the geographic core of Santa Fe, it will also serve as a transportation link addressing motion of pedestrians, bicycles, and motorized vehicles including cars, scooters, buses, motorcycles, etc.

The focus on motion is both literal and figurative in that a successful city or mixed use neighborhood is always changing, perhaps growing, but certainly evolving. As a cultural hub, there will be motion of ideas, events, activities and relationships which will be reflected in the physical fabric of the area in subtle, or perhaps grand, ways.

We note that, over its history, America has moved away from its origins in communal land ownership. For many native peoples as well as the first European immigrants, land was a communal resource that was equally benefit and responsibility for all members of the community. Over time, land in America has become increasingly privatized resulting in a country where the public realm is largely restricted to the street right of way and public institutions. Cultural patterns have paralleled land ownership patterns; life has become increasingly isolated, privatized, and selfish, resulting in an “encapsulated life” (James Howard Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere*) as one moves from their house to their car to their work to car to the store to the TV at home. Manicured private outdoor spaces surrounded by retail are a sad facsimile of true public space. The resurgence of the common public realm is needed to create and foster community.

URBAN FORM

“the presence of buildings around a park is important in design. They enclose it. They make a definite shape out of the space, so that it appears as an important event in the city scene, a positive feature, rather than a no-account leftover.” — Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

Santa Fe is recognized around the world for its unique culture. It is a top tier tourist destination as well as a fabled location with caché in the worlds of history, art, cuisine, and more. For many Santa Feans it is also a beloved hometown filled with childhood memories and a huge network of family and friends. Santa Fe was named a World Heritage Award Winner last year by National Geographic for “Sense of Place: Enhancing cultural authenticity and support for the preservation of historic monuments, archaeological sites and indigenous heritage”. It is undeniably a unique and wonderful town that should celebrate and cultivate its unique heritage more than it does. In reimagining an exciting new MIDMO, it is imperative to strengthen rather than dilute the unique character of Santa Fe.

To that end, we propose to address architecture and urban form in MIDMO by taking a cue from the most noteworthy architectural complex already on the site – the splendid collection of buildings by Mexican architect

Ricardo Legoretta. We propose contemporary architecture with bold shapes, striking colors, plenty of glazing for transparency and connectivity, set within and informed by a Spanish Colonial urban form.

Spanish Colonial urban form is what gives old Santa Fe its unique character as much as the revival style architecture of tan stucco, vigas, corbels, small windows, etc. Santa Fe's Spanish Colonial urban form comes from the Mediterranean via Mexico and Spain. It is characterized by flat roofs, broad planar facades at the street edge, zaguans, courtyards, portals, balconies, roof decks and patios. Buildings abut one another rather than stand alone, with only landmark buildings freestanding. Buildings wrap around and define inviting plazas and patios that are landscaped and furnished. Streets are narrow and pedestrian friendly, with cars moving slowly and integrating well with bicycles.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

To employ contemporary architectural styling within a retro urban form is an atypical unexpected approach which seems ideal for MIDMO by reflecting Santa Fe's traditional urban form while moving decidedly away from the Spanish Pueblo Revival architectural vocabulary so prevalent elsewhere in Santa Fe. This will give the area an exciting progressive look while honoring Santa Fe's unique urban form and creating a rich pedestrian environment with compelling variety, small scale and texture. We imagine the buildings as inventive, colorful, predominately stucco and glass, some use of steel – rusted or stainless or powder coated. Buildings should provide visual interest at the ground floor level – through graphics, fenestration, art, architectural detailing, etc.

BUILDING HEIGHTS

In the interest of winter sunlight, mountain views, and respect for the historic Santa Fe townscape, we propose a mix of one, two and three story buildings. One story construction should collectively total at least 25% of the built area of the site. Three story construction is limited to no more than half the footprint of any building and no more than 25% of the total building footprint area of the site. Partial third stories will allow easy access to roof decks over the second story area of the building. Third story roofs can accommodate PV solar panels screened by the parapet. The fine-grained mix of one, two and three stories will contribute to a varied pedestrian-scale streetscape.

CHRONOLOGICAL LAYERING

We propose that all existing structures on site be retained, the best for the long hall, and the marginal ones for the next five, ten, or twenty years until demand for new construction warrants their demolition. Keeping the outdated and inadequate buildings in the short term will provide inexpensive space for live/work, warehousing, workshops, meeting or office space. This will help meet the goal of diversity for users and activities, will provide the City rent or sales income without major expense, and will help retain the site history and make a quicker transition to a lively fully-occupied site with layering of building age and a richer variety of uses and character.

PEDESTRIANS FIRST

What happens if the city is designed to prioritize the pedestrian experience? Santa Fe is fairly compact. As the crow flies, Greer Garson Theater is only 1 1/2 miles from the Plaza. Distances are not so great that most of the city can't be traversed on foot. However, we have grown to accept cars as the de facto mode of transport and to think of travel by foot as an activity reserved for vacation and leisure activities. The physical form of the city reinforces and promulgates the dominance of vehicles. Pedestrian culture can change if the physical form of the city is altered to better support the pedestrian.

On the scale of the city, a fine-grained network of beautiful pedestrian paths can provide easy access to all buildings. Strategies ranging from the addition of new trails along arroyos, to increased plantings along narrow streets, to narrowing existing wide roads and reclaiming space for new trails can be utilized to expand the pedestrian network. At MIDMO, the plan is structured around the pedestrian experience. Outdoor spaces are positive elements rather than amorphous space; the buildings are not set on a blank canvas creating left-over space that is then beatified as an after-thought. The power of the landscape does not come from quantity but from purposeful and impactful pedestrian scale spaces. A sense of surprise and discovery is achieved by arriving at these spaces through twisting pathways and layers of building, landscape and thresholds.

STREETS AND PARKING

Central to the idea of a connected midtown link is the importance of an open, porous and easily accessible site. The new pedestrian, bike, public transport and vehicular routes, as well as the programmatic elements, at the Midtown site can be thought of as stitches quilting together the various communities of Santa Fe. The small-scale streets connect to the existing network of city streets to the greatest extent possible. Stop signs rather than traffic lights are to be used at all intersections within MIDMO. Parking will be available throughout the site as parallel parking along streets and also in small landscaped and screened lots scattered throughout the site. On-street parking will have permeable paving to infiltrate water and demarcate the drive lanes. Crosswalks will be of a contrasting material to drive lanes for visual dominance. The surface lots act as land banks and, if future density warrants, can be converted to new buildings with underground parking or parking structures.

SUSTAINABILITY

In addition to solar power and rainwater used for irrigation, we propose night flush cooling, daylighting, and Low Impact Development (LID) solutions as formulated by the University of Arkansas Community Design Center. LID addresses rainwater harvesting, permeable paving, storm water management, uses and benefits of urban vegetation. All roof runoff to be either captured for underground storage or sent directly into planting areas.

NIGHT SKY PROTECTION

Artificial lighting is to be carefully selected, positioned, and regulated to prevent light spill, provide light only when and where it is needed, and to create a harmonious inviting streetscape during evening and early morning hours. Fixtures are to be wall mounted or as bollards to the greatest extent possible.

PROGRAM

“most city diversity is the creation of incredible numbers of different people and different private organizations, with vastly differing ideas and purposes, planning and contriving outside the formal framework of public action.”

— Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities

Looking forward, the Midtown site can support numerous overlapping and interwoven programs to foster interaction between communities on site and communities across the city. To become a vibrant hub, it is important the site does not become a congregation of independent and isolated campuses; the programs must be fundamentally connected to build a resilient and integrated community.

Possible Programs (list is not comprehensive)

- Joint **educational facilities** for visual, digital and performing arts, music, film, fashion design, fine woodworking, computer technology and architecture / engineering shared by several higher education institutions; a pre-K school; trade high schools; and spaces for lifetime learning.
- 2-4 new **film stages**: the number of stages is currently a limiting factor in attracting major film productions to Santa Fe; the existing high-speed, high-capacity fiber optic cable spur, dismantled super-computer stored at the State buildings, weather, and proximity to L.A. are attractive. Refurbish Greer Garson Studios into New Media facility and stages.
- **Mill and maker spaces** for various arts requiring large / expensive equipment (spaces to be shared by film, educational and community groups).
- **New media / emerging media facilities** (virtual reality, drone flight track, augmented reality, video games, animation, post-production): to be shared by film, educational and community groups.
- **Primary residences** (apartments, condos and live/work) to account for $\pm 50\%$ of the site program. City can consider ways to prevent gentrification of residential uses and how to deter short-term rentals and second homes.
- **Businesses** to provide job/intern/mentorship opportunities for youth and students. Also, businesses targeted toward families and children's recreation. Encourage business to locate in site / in close proximity to the site (St. Michael's LINC district) to strengthen relationship between being educated in the campus and subsequently employed, ideally with a high paying job, in one's field in Santa Fe. Support opportunity for folks to make a comfortable living in our city and perhaps buy a home and raise a family here.
- **Open-access outdoor WiFi over the entire site**
- **Santa Fe Contemporary Culture Center** to celebrate, communicate and explore current cultural practices; to connect to past and future traditions. Possible focus on languages, community-sourced oral histories / storytelling.
- **Community conference center** rental workspace with business equipment and support services, rental conference rooms and auditorium.
- **Teen Center** (identified as desirable in a Youth Summit) to provide assistance with writing resumes, interview skills, networking and college / job placement. Youth performance space. Incubator for youth-led initiatives.
- **Joint Daycare and Senior Center** to encourage supervised interactions between youth and elderly (historically excluded populations); research has shown both children and seniors benefit from interacting with each other. Within walking distance to cultural institutions and community services. In the SFUAD campus appraisal it was noted that more healthcare facilities and retirement housing are needed in Santa Fe.
- **Transit Center** hub for buses, bikes, Railrunner, car-sharing programs, electric vehicle charging stations, carpool/vanpool. Possible future light rail.
- **Recreation network** – site “rec loops” and connections to larger network of pedestrian trails. Provide signage / wayfinding noting mileage on-site and to parks/destinations across Santa Fe. Connect trails to Chavez Center, Salvador Perez, Fort Marcy and other key locations.

Possible Partners (list is not comprehensive)

Universities, Meow Wolf, MIX, Creative Mornings, Springboard for the Arts, Make Santa Fe, Theatre Santa Fe, SFAI, Tickets Santa Fe, Creative Capital, Santa Fe Fashion Week, Gathering of Nations, SFCC, LANL, NMSA, Opera, AIAI, Santa Fe Studios, Leadership High Schools (ACE, Health, Technology, Siembra Business), Nex-Gen Academy High School, Amazon, neighbor shopping centers, Explora, Aspen Ballet, James Turrell, Innovate ABQ, FCAP (Film Crew Advancement Program), Netflix, Sony Imageworks, Robert Redford Milagro, Telemundo, Univision, CineFesta Italia film festival, George RR Martin, Apple, Disney, Warner Bros, Raffles International School