

## The Northwest Quadrant by Kurt Faust

The Northwest Quadrant (NWQ) is the only significant remaining opportunity to create affordable housing in Santa Fe near the Plaza. In 2003 the Santa Fe City Council adopted a resolution look at developing a portion of the City owned land in the NWQ into affordable housing. The Preliminary Feasibility Report recommended that only one portion of the NWQ be developed due to its access to sewer and water infrastructure.

Several public meetings have been held since 2004 (including the recent “Homework Group” meetings) to gather input from citizens about what is appropriate for the NWQ. The NWQ Homework Group is a citizen advisory board of some 50 people, from numerous backgrounds, which has met several times since March. The purpose of the group is to provide public input on subjects such as the financial viability of the project, the design of the center, promoting diversity and overall look, feel and density of the project. A Design Team, including Design Workshop and Suby Bowden and Associates, is charged with preparing a Master Plan for the development of the NWQ based on the input from the Homework Group.

The Northwest Quadrant encompasses approximately 2770 acres and the area to be developed is approximately 540 acres of which 250 acres is 20% slope or less. It is located between St. Francis on the east, 599 on the north, Camino las Montoyas on the west, and Camino Crucitas on the south. The City has recommended at least 37% of the development be affordable housing, 33% be moderately priced homes, and 30% be market rate housing. Affordability is defined in four tiers between 50% and 100% of Santa Fe area Median Income (AMI) which is adjusted annually. The moderately priced housing is from 100% to 150% of AMI.

Concerns about the proper planning of city lands, interest in having the community participate in the process, and ensuring that the housing component meets certain goals and sustainability standards are some of the primary reasons for having such a broad spectrum of citizen input. The public record shows some re-occurring themes. . Other than the preference of those who have questioned whether to develop at all, one of the biggest concerns is making sure that there is a substantial number of affordable homes built. With 70% of the homes being proposed to be affordable or moderately priced, the goals are ambitious. Another of the concerns is having mixed densities and mixed price-point neighborhoods, not having all of the low income housing in one spot. Another theme is having some mixed use commercial in a central core area with its own identity and having the development architecturally relate to Santa Fe.

Many have spoken about making the project as green and sustainable as possible with an eye toward the City’s proposed green building program. Others have talked about having open space interconnected with trails and parks, preserving the ridge tops, and having a pedestrian and public transit connection to downtown. Some have stated the need for having no more traffic or reducing the traffic through the Casa Solana neighborhood.

The NWQ Master Plan will be a forward looking and ambitious piece of architectural planning. The high percentage of affordable and moderately priced housing means that traditional for-profit development models will not work. The project will likely need some kind of subsidy or creative mechanism to get it accomplished. This means the City or some other non-profit organization(s) will have to be involved. I believe the community should get behind this endeavor and give support the creation of affordable housing in the NWQ.

Contact Kurt Faust:

Cell: 505.780.1157

[www.tierraconceptssantafe.com](http://www.tierraconceptssantafe.com)