



**Summary of the December 14, 2019
Gateway Center Community Input Session**

January 3, 2020

Introduction

The City of Albuquerque hosted a Gateway Center Community Input Session on Saturday, December 14, 2019 at the Albuquerque Convention Center. This was a large-scale community conversation following the November, 2019 bond measure approved by voters to build a Gateway Center for housing and services in Albuquerque. This new Center will include emergency shelter beds and also serve as a gateway to permanent housing and other community services needed to promote housing stability.

Opportunities for Community Engagement

The Gateway Center Community Input Session is part of ongoing community conversations. Given the busy season, the invitation to participate provided an online survey as well as the in-person opportunity to provide feedback. The online survey, which is in both English and Spanish, will remain open until mid-January. The City will release the survey results in a separate report.

Over 180 people participated in the 3-hour Gateway Center Community Input Session on December 14, 2019.

Significant outreach was done to build awareness through local media, the City's website and social media channels, Mayor Keller's monthly newsletter, email distribution lists, local media outlets and word of mouth. The event was promoted through three media releases, five Facebook® and Twitter® posts resulting in seven television and newspaper stories. (See Appendix 1 for more detailed information on media outreach).

Spanish translation and sign-language interpreters were on site to provide language access support as needed. Over 140 people officially signed-in for the event via the RSVP link or through on-site registration. An estimated additional 30-40 people attended the event, but did not want to sign-in, bringing the total estimated participation to roughly 180 community members.

Gateway Center Community Input Session

The City of Albuquerque used a small group, community dialogue process to get rich, detailed input from the community for two primary objectives: access to services and site location. This was done by offering six concurrent sessions of the same topic utilizing trained facilitators. Each participant was randomly assigned a group number in advance to ensure diversity of voices and experiences of each group. Additionally, trained note-takers and content experts were assigned to each room to help guide conversations and ensure sessions were on-track and on-topic. Each group ranged in size from 20-30 participants.

Other Considerations:

- Three focus groups will occur in January to engage people experiencing homelessness.
- The site location scale was designed to get the community's 'best thinking' around the correlation between core criteria and potential fit with proposed sites. The process varied among rooms and participants acknowledged that a number of unknowns remain.

Getting Started

Prior to the first breakout session, participants gathered in one room for a presentation (available online at <http://www.cabq.gov/family/documents/gc-presentation-12-13-19-final.pdf>) to provide context and background that would be useful for the breakout session discussions. In brief, voters approved \$14 million in General



Obligation Bond funding to build a new homeless shelter, now described as a Gateway Center. The vision of the Gateway Center is to provide a big front door for people experiencing homelessness, so that they benefit from low-barrier emergency shelter and connect to permanent housing and support services.

The Gateway Center has the added opportunity to improve efficiency for first responders so they can effectively direct resources to life-critical emergencies. A first responder drop-off and triage site could provide an alternative location as the emergency room is currently the only alternative, and a costly one at that.

During a recent 12-month period, there were nearly 18,000 calls to 911 or 242-COPS reporting people in a public space that needed attention. Albuquerque Fire and Rescue (AFR) responded to 92% of these calls. With no alternative triage center, 7,000 people were transported by ambulance to a hospital emergency room. Only 110 (2%) had life-threatening conditions requiring emergency attention. This disparity cost the City \$1.7 million and many hours of fire rescue, police and EMT time (and cost another \$13.9 million to emergency rooms).

During the presentation, the Deputy Director for Housing and Homelessness conveyed other key information to set a foundation for discussions and to clarify intentions and next steps. This information included that the City has not selected a site for the Gateway Center, the design process is just getting started, and the City is open to suggestions on how to provide high impact solutions that suit populations experiencing homelessness. The City is preparing a request to the 2020 New Mexico Legislature for \$14 million in matching funds to expand facility capacity for services and, if feasible, expand dispersed site capacity. The City will continue to contract with and integrate with existing local providers and the facility will enhance the existing dispersed shelter model. Public input sessions will inform the City as it develops its plan. The timeline is to select a site and begin design discussions with neighborhoods in Spring, 2020 and begin construction in 2021 with the goal to open the front doors of the Gateway Center in Spring, 2022.

Breakout sessions discussed the same topics in each of the six breakout rooms and were provided time to first discuss access to services and secondly, to develop site selection criteria that they deemed important. This report summarizes the feedback from breakout room discussions.

Session One: Access to Services:

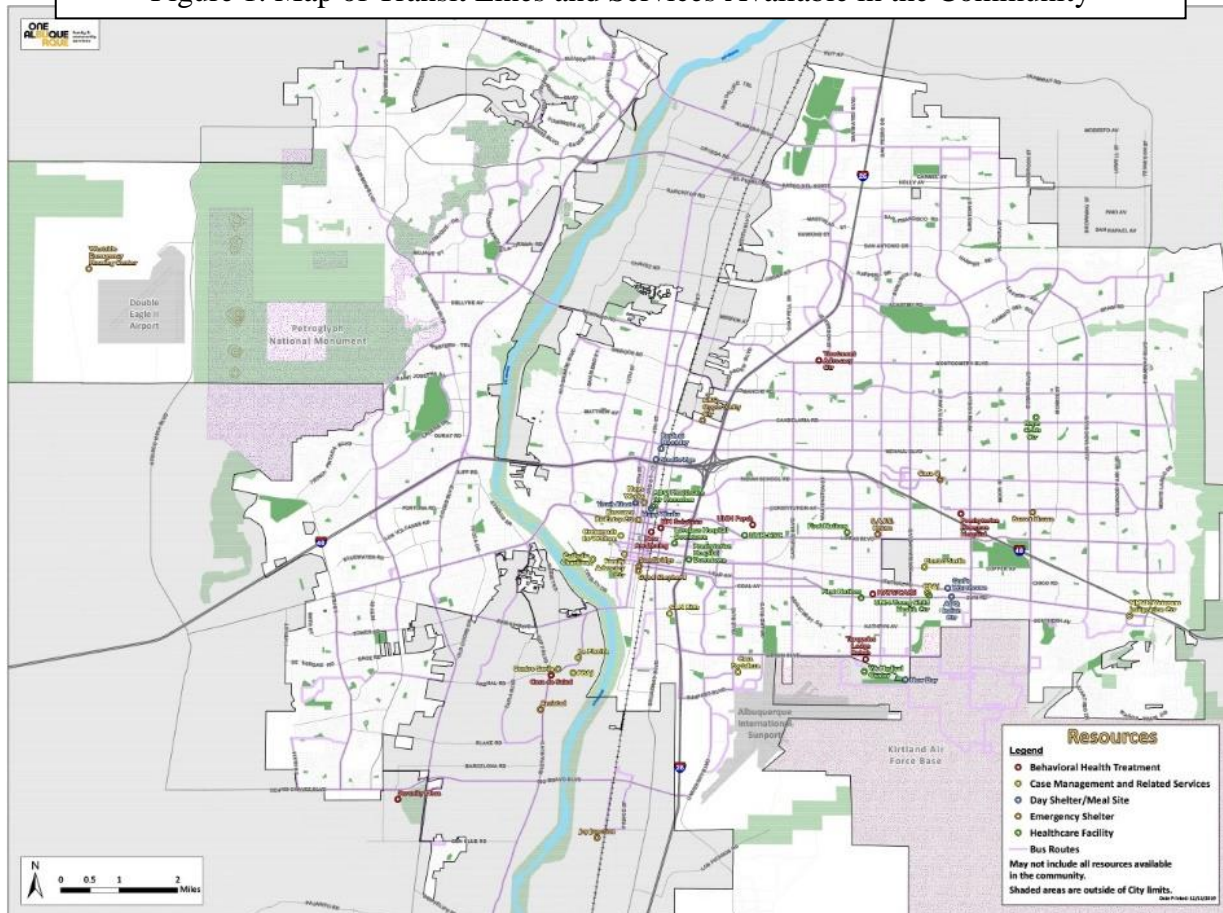
Early on, the City of Albuquerque recognized that any conversation regarding people experiencing homelessness would have to incorporate a discussion on the types of services this population would need both inside a proposed facility and within a broader system of support. With this in mind, the designers of the community engagement process developed a 45 minute, facilitated session to ask the question:

What services do you think residents of the Gateway Center will need in order to exit to permanent housing?

Using this guiding question, facilitators handed participants note pads and pens to give their input on services needed at the Gateway Center and within the community. From the broad input received, facilitators and note-takers then clustered similar ideas into categories (i.e. medical care, behavioral health, job training).

Each of the six breakout rooms had an identical large-scale map (Figure 1) showing the location of high traffic providers who provide services for people experiencing homelessness. A non-exhaustive set of services were mapped and color-coded to indicate service type, (though many entities provide services that overlap in a number of categories). Service categories included behavioral health treatment, case management and related services, day shelter/meal site, behavioral health treatment, case management and related services, day shelter/meal site,

Figure 1: Map of Transit Lines and Services Available in the Community



emergency (overnight) shelter, and healthcare (medical) facilities. Bus routes are also included in this map to provide reference for access to transportation for potential sites. This map remained on the wall during both sessions for ready reference during discussions.

Session One Summary:

Participants expressed their opinions and recommendations on services that are important to support people experiencing homelessness to exit the Gateway Center to permanent housing.

Commonly Suggested Services in Breakout Discussions:

The services categories shown below are listed in the order from most frequently identified across all groups to the least frequently mentioned.

- **Behavioral Health Services Including Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment**

In every room, participants identified behavioral health services (both mental health and substance use treatment) as critical services to have available to Gateway Center residents. Some people recommended that treatment services be provided at the Center and others thought it could be in the community as long it is accessible, consistent high quality, and relevant to client needs. Suggestions also included access to on-site medication-assisted treatment (e.g., suboxone), peer support and family counseling.

- **Case Management**

Each room emphasized the need to provide case management as a critical service to support access for Gateway Center residents to connect with support services to connect to permanent housing and, as needed, to stabilize behavioral health and gain access other critical support services. Participants recognized the key role that case management plays to support the ability for people to move forward. Case management was the one service that people thought to be important to have on site or within easy access.

- **Access to Permanent Affordable Housing**

Every room discussed the critical need for Gateway Center residents to have access to stable and affordable housing. Participants recognized the need to provide supportive case management and wraparound services to help residents be successful in retaining their housing, for instance providing life skills training to educate people on how to be a good neighbor. Participants mentioned the importance to connect residents to housing in a timely manner, and that housing should be located where there is access to public transportation and services. Also mentioned was the need for wheelchair accessibility, move-in assistance (e.g., damage deposit), and options for sober living or connection to consistent drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services.

- **Access to Medical Care**

In every room, participants identified access to medical care as a critical need for Gateway Center residents. Also mentioned was medication management, navigation of medical services, medical respite beds, and access to dental services.

- **Job Training and Employment Services**

Every breakout room discussed the importance of job readiness and job training skills, geared to help residents gain access to pre-employment skills, practical/vocational skills, volunteer and paid work experience. Also mentioned was a system to involve residents in chores and jobs on-site, including the idea of a café staffed by residents. Volunteer opportunities were thought to build work readiness and build community understanding with the opportunity to ‘give back’ through chores and service projects.

- **Education**

Participants expressed concern for children to maintain their connection to high quality education, including early learning and K-12 school; services to keep kids in the same school; access to high quality early childhood development/child care for parents working/in school/to attend medical appointments; and subsidies and access to GED and further adult education were also referenced.

- **Life Skills**

Frequent suggestions: skills to increase financial literacy, nutrition, food preparation, hygiene, self-empowerment, inter-personal communication, and problem solving. Also seen as important was mental health support prior to discharge into the community; help with basic practical living skills; and access to regularly scheduled support groups.

- **Basic Needs**

Services mentioned included those to re-establish government-recognized ID, healthy food, clean clothing and laundry, space to maintain personal hygiene, help in navigating public assistance eligibility and benefits, access to transportation and bus vouchers.

- **Triage**

Triage services were suggested to provide for first responder drop-off, to assess criticality and needs of new residents, and to support connection with providers appropriate to the identified needs such as behavioral health and housing.

- **Facility Operations**

Suggestions on ways to operate a successful facility included: Maintaining a clean facility that is safe, sanitary, wheelchair accessible and welcoming to all residents; Promoting a healthy lifestyle; Providing robust on-site security for residents and for the surrounding neighborhood; Designating spaces for specific uses (i.e., a place for children to play safely, a space to engage in spiritual reflection, outdoor areas to garden and have tree shade); Providing an activity center to stay occupied and develop skills; Ongoing maintenance to remain clean, welcoming, control noise, enable sleep, and promote self-care and hygiene; Providing safe storage of personal belongings, safe bathrooms, laundry, mail services, computers and internet to connect with employment; Providing safe LGBTQIA+ access to services; A number of people suggested that the facility provide a place people can stay all

day; provide a social/community space to welcome visitors to maintain connection with family/friends; provide a chores list; and to be pet-friendly.

- **Facility Activities:**

The following represents some of the activities that participants cited as important:

- Exercise classes
- Vegetable garden
- Cooking classes
- Art therapy
- Music groups
- Religious/spiritual support
- Businesses staffed by residents (e.g., café)
- GED classes



Session Two: Criteria Important to Selecting a Site Location

The second session was 90 minutes and was designed with two primary objectives in mind:

- To get feedback from the community on the criteria that is important to consider for a proposed site (i.e. acquisition costs of land, minimal neighborhood disruption, close proximity to services) and
- To see how five proposed sites measured up against the criteria that the community deemed important. Participants were also encouraged to propose site locations for the City to consider that were not currently under consideration.

Step 1: Developing the Criteria

In the morning plenary session, the City referred to criteria they considered to identify potential sites, including access to services, access to transportation, impact on neighborhoods, and cost. With this as a guidepost, facilitators used the following guiding question to elicit feedback:

Five large scale maps with potential Gateway Center site locations were posted on the wall.

Participants in each breakout room were asked to write suggestions on sticky notes for the following prompt:

What criteria do you see as important in a location for the Gateway Center?

After receiving broad input, facilitators then began to cluster themes until they arrived at approximately five core criteria (see Figure 2).

Session Two Summary:

Participants expressed their opinions and recommendations on criteria that are important to consider when determining the location of the Gateway Center.

Common Site Selection Criteria

Common criteria are listed below, but the reader is reminded that this was a dynamic process involving numerous points of view and are not intended to be a quantifiable ranking.

Criteria that were common among the six independent discussions included:

- **Low impact on neighborhood** (all 6 breakout rooms)
Further detailed criteria included:
 - Existing impact has not been addressed (i.e., not in neighborhood that has unaddressed impacts of homeless activity)
- **Easy access to transportation** (5 rooms)
- **Good access to services** (5 rooms) Further detailed criteria included:
 - Case management
 - Medical
 - Behavioral health
 - Job training
 - Youth/education
 - Accommodation of onsite services and programming
 - Access to off-site services
- **High level of safety & security for residents and neighborhood** (4 rooms)
Further detailed criteria included:
 - Not near schools, etc.
- **Low cost and efficient** (3 rooms)

- **Location characteristics**

A final theme emerged, summarized as location characteristics, to assemble ideas that described important criteria, though were not consistent across the five groups. These criteria included:

- Capacity to grow
- Where people are
- Sense of community
- Adequate infrastructure
- Easily accessed/seen

- **Fair and Equitable Model**

Many people expressed the preference for a dispersed model of shelters. Most groups expressed that it was difficult to evaluate proposed sites without knowing the size of the Gateway Center(s). One group expressed the preference for dispersed shelters using the term ‘fair and equitable’ and other groups used the term ‘dispersed’ or ‘population-specific’ or ‘small.’

Participants expressed the need to protect the safety of children, youth and women and recognize the diverse needs of different populations. For instance, adult males who have chronically experienced homelessness have different needs than people who are experiencing transitional homelessness. People who experience behavioral health challenges need different services than people who face medical but no behavioral health challenges and people without these challenges. People who are transitionally homeless and do not have behavioral health challenges could be sheltered in a different site with access to rapid rehousing resources.

Step 2: Assessing How Well Each Site Meets the Discussion Group’s Criteria

Each of the rooms had five large-scale maps on the wall marked with a potential location for the Gateway Center. In addition, a blank map was available for participants to suggest a potential site for the City to consider. Under each map, a grid was provided for participants to rate how each site meets the core criteria that the group identified in the previous activity. Please refer to Figure 2 shown below for the six descriptors to assess how well each site met (or did not meet) the criteria that they identified as important to site selection. Participants were provided sticky dots to indicate their assessment of each criteria for each potential site.

Figure 2: SITE LOCATION CRITERIA GRID

	1 Not at all	2 Barely	3 Neutral	4 Well	5 Very Well	6 Unknown
CRITERIA (common to all breakout rooms)						
Low impact on neighborhood						
Ease of access to services						
Ease of access to transportation						
High level of safety and security						

Response to Potential Sites

Five potential sites were listed in alphabetical order and an option was provided to write in additional suggested sites. Large scale maps were posted on the wall indicating the proposed site (red boundary line or star). A red circle showing a one-mile radius for locations in densely populated areas was drawn to include services that might be located in the area. A red circle showing a three-mile radius was drawn on locations in less-populated areas to broadly include services that might be located in the area.

- Potential Site A: Former Hospital on Gibson
- Potential Site B: Montessa Park
- Potential Site C: Second Street & I-40 Area
- Potential Site D: UNM Health Sciences Center South of the State Laboratory
- Potential Site E: Westside Emergency Housing Center (Current Location)
- Potential Site F: Other

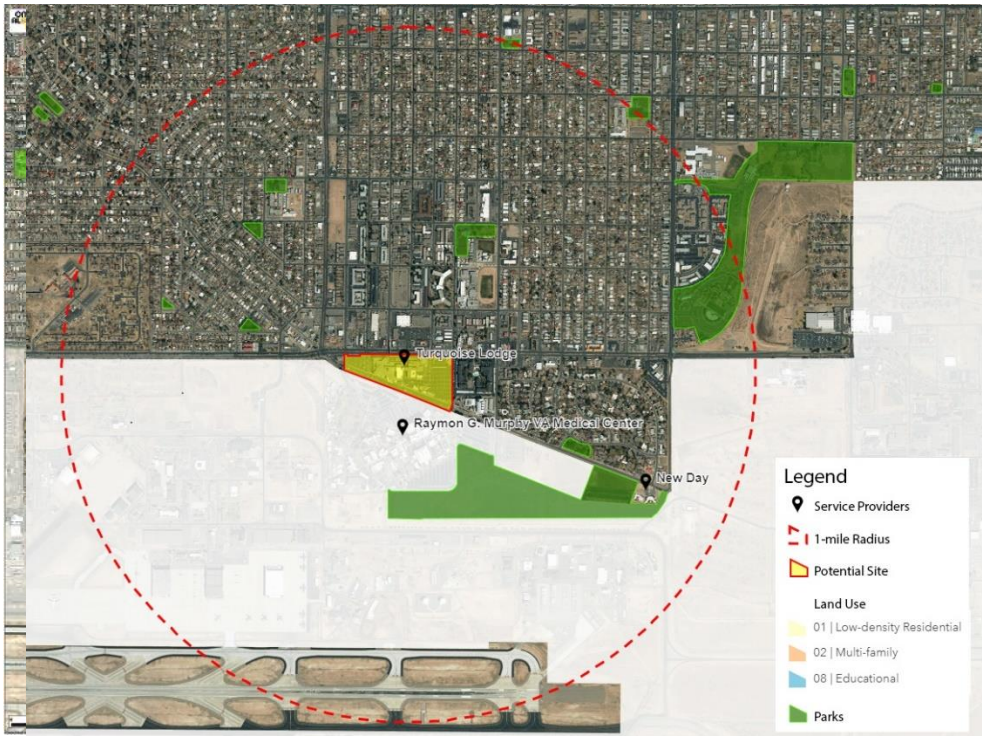
How well did potential sites A through F meet the criteria deemed important by breakout groups?

Each room assessed the potential Gateway Center sites using the criteria they developed. Four common criteria emerged from the breakout rooms:

1. Low impact on neighborhood,
2. Ease of access to services,
3. Ease of access to transportation, and
4. Safety and security for all.

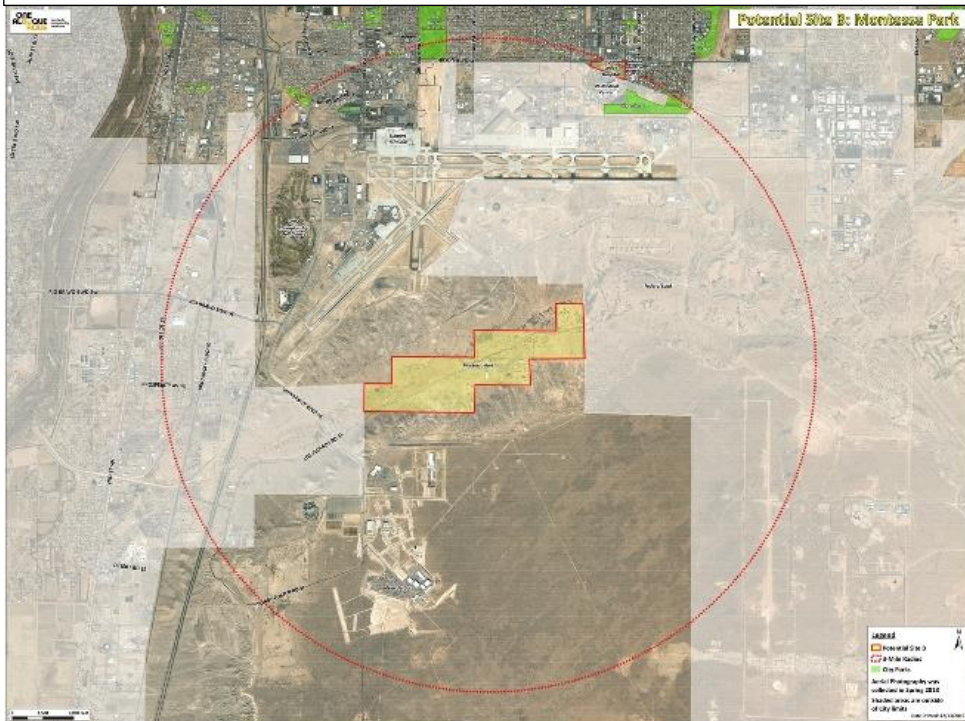
What follows is a summary of breakout room response to how well potential sites met the four common criteria listed above.

Figure 3: Potential Site A - Former Hospital on Gibson:
The property is indicated with a red boundary at the center of a 1-mile radius



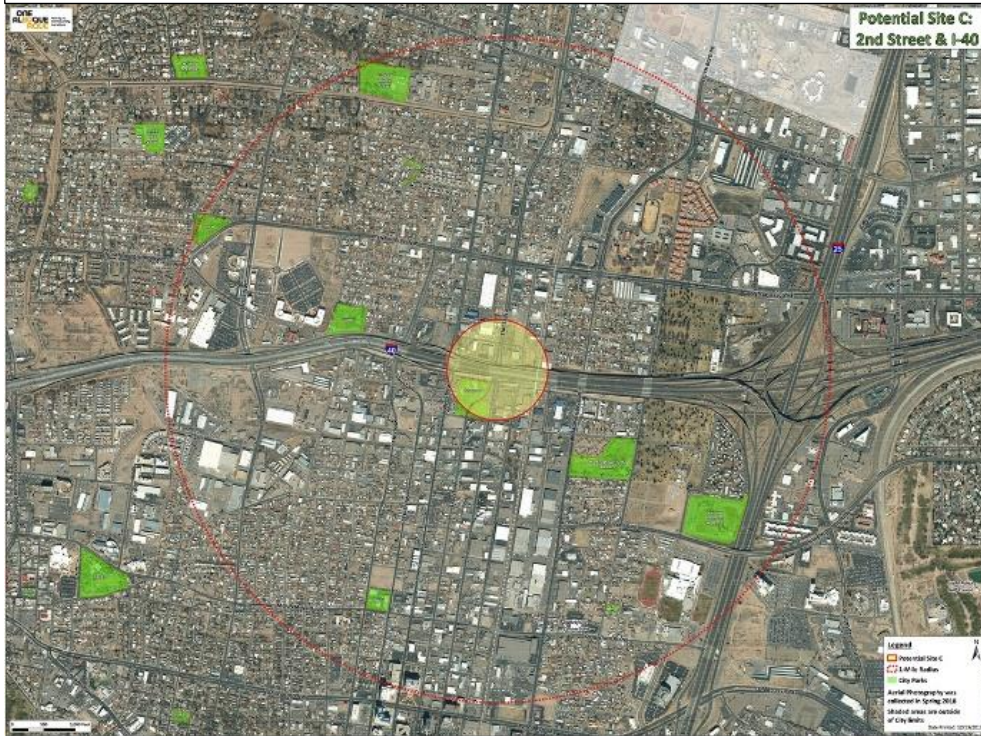
The majority of rooms thought that *Site A, the Former Hospital on Gibson* well or very well met the common criteria of 1) low impact on neighborhood, 2) ease of access to services, 3) ease of access to transportation, and 4) high level of safety and security.

Figure 4: Potential Site B, Montessa Park
Property is indicated with a red boundary with a 3-mile radius



The majority of breakout rooms thought that *Site B, Montessa Park* did not meet or barely met the common criteria of 1) low impact on neighborhood, 2) ease of access to services, 3) ease of access to transportation, and 4) high level of safety and security. However, several rooms thought that the potential site would meet criteria for low impact on neighborhood.

Figure 5: Potential Site C, Second Street & I-40 Area
Property is indicated with a small highlighted circle along with a 1-mile radius



Participants in all rooms thought Potential Site C Second Street & I-40 Area well or very well met the common criteria of ease of access to services and ease of access to transportation. However, all groups thought that this site would have an impact on the neighborhood and were mixed on how well the site would meet a high level of safety and security.

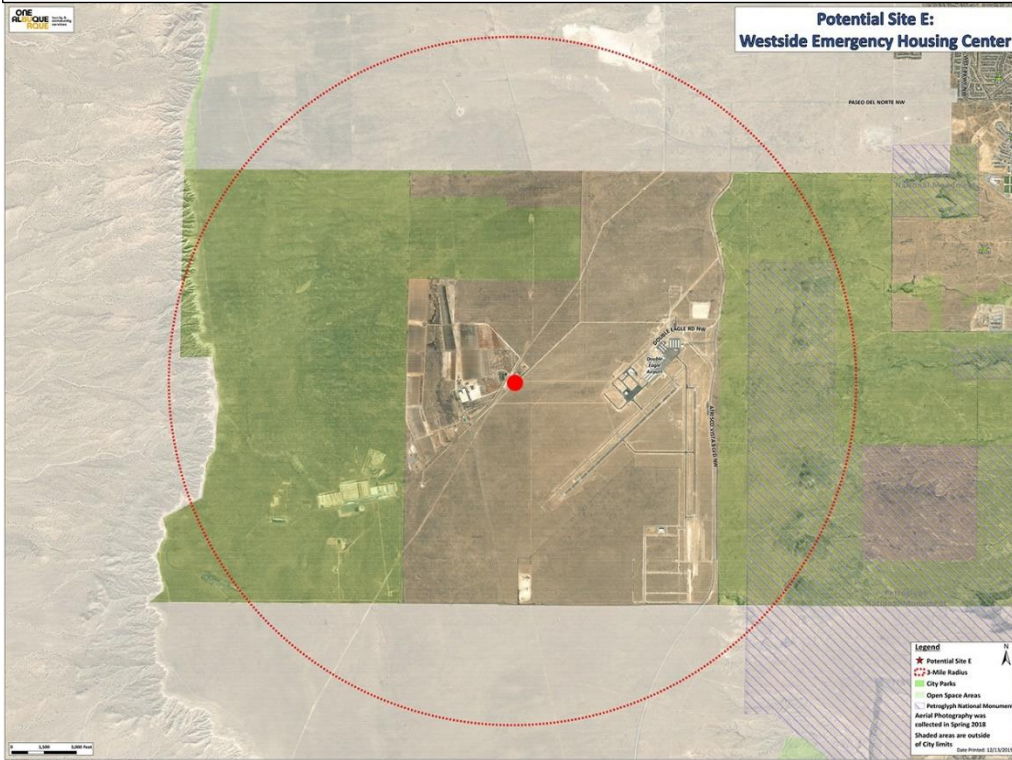
Figure 6: Potential Site D, UNM Health Sciences Center South of the State Laboratory
The property is indicated with a red circle in the center of a 1-mile radius



The majority of rooms thought that the Potential Site D, UNM Health Sciences Center South of the State Laboratory well or very well met all of the common criteria of 1) low impact on neighborhood, 2) Ease of access to services, 3) Ease of access to transportation, and 4) high level of safety and security. Two groups did not concur on meeting the criteria related to low impact on neighborhood and ease of access to services and transportation.

Figure 7: Potential Site E, Westside Emergency Housing Center (Current Location)

The property is indicated with a red circle in the center of a 3-mile radius



The majority of rooms indicated that the Potential Site E, the Westside Emergency Housing Center does not meet the criteria of easy access to transportation and good access to services. However, the majority of residents thought that the site would meet the criteria of low impact on neighborhood and high level of safety and security.

Potential Site F: Other

A map of the entire City limits was provided for participants to suggest additional potential sites to the City to consider for the Gateway Center. Sites proposed are listed below in alphabetical order (a number indicates that the site was proposed more than once).

- Arroyo del Oso Golf Course
- Big I Existing Hotel(s)
- Downtown
- First and Marble,
- Fourth Street Between Menaul and Candelaria
- Los Altos Golf Course
- Near Hope Works and Health Care for the Homeless (2)
- Near UNM Health Science Center
- NW of Big I, South of Menaul, East of Edith
- Paseo del Norte from E of tracks to Tramway
- Second Street near Bernalillo County Animal Care and Resource Center (Gabriel's Village)
- South of Broadway, East of Tracks. Under Coal & Lead. Underpass, near Gertrude Zachery Palace

- South Valley, West of tracks (2)
- State Fair Grounds
- Vacant Car Lot on Lomas and University (2)
- West Mesa
- Zuni and Wyoming

Conclusion

Information contained in this report reflects the suggestions and opinions of the 180 participants. The City extends its sincere appreciation for the time taken on a Saturday morning and the in-depth discussions that took place in each of the six breakout rooms. This is one in a series of community conversations to involve diverse stakeholders. The City appreciates the thoughtful input on this important issue for Albuquerque.

Appendix A: Media Outreach

In preparation for the Gateway Center Community input session, the Department of Family and Community Services utilized a variety of methods to promote the event and to collect community feedback. Those methods included:

- November 25, 2019: Online Survey went live
- November 27, 2019: Press Release, Registration
- November 27, 2019: KOB News Story, Carol Pierce Interview
- December 2, 2019: Press Release, Survey
- December 3, 2019: Journal Article, link to registration and survey
- December 9, 2019: Facebook Post 8:00 am
- December 9, 2019: Twitter Post 8:00 pm
- December 10, 2019: Facebook Post 10:00 am
- December 10, 2019: Twitter Post 8:00 pm
- December 11, 2019: Facebook Post 8:00 am
- December 11, 2019: Twitter Post 8:00 pm
- December 12, 2019: Facebook Post 8:00 am
- December 12, 2019: Twitter Post 8:00 pm
- December 13, 2019: Facebook Post 8:00 am
- December 13, 2019: Twitter Post 11:00 am
- December 13, 2019: KRQE Morning Show Interview
- December 14, 2019: Journal Article, Interview with Lisa Huval
- December 14, 2019: Press Release, Post event
- December 14, 2019: KRQE News Story
- December 14, 2019: KOB News Story
- December 15, 2019: Journal Article, Gilbert Ramirez quoted