I. CALL TO ORDER (3:01 p.m.): Chair Vasquez called the meeting to order.

II. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: There was none.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA: Motion to accept the agenda by Board Member Bencomo, seconded by Board Member Abeyta-Stuve. Motion passes.

IV. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

a. December 17, 2020 Meeting: Motion to accept the agenda by Board Member Padilla, seconded by Board Member Bencomo. Motion passes.

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

a. Study and implantation area boundary confirmation: David Weir reminded the Board that during their first meeting they had discussed and reached agreement on boundary areas. A map was shown of the overlays that the
Committee agreed on. The focus of the Committee is revitalization of both the corridors, El Paseo and the South Solano areas. Staff believes the Mesquite Historic District and the University District areas would be impactful to the whole study area. A concern about overlays on top of overlays was brought up and since the Committee is concentrating on the two corridors, if suggestions are made to original overlays staff will follow the existing procedures and ordinances.

b. Development Vision - Plan Recommendations: A task in the resolution was to evaluate and review the vision and policies and actions that were in existing plans for the area.

1. Elevate Las Cruces - Future Development Program (Place-Types): Mark Miller went over Elevate Las Cruces' Future Development Program. This program utilizes a place-based approach as opposed to use-based. A policy is to "Create consistency between Elevate Las Cruces Future Development Program recommendations and development regulations." Mark Miller emphasized two of the place types, which are not parcel specific, but have approximate boundaries, urban neighborhood place type and suburban neighborhood place type. Each has various development strategies, one for thee urban is to promote higher development intensities along major thoroughfares, and one for suburban is to allow for centers of employment along major corridors. The future development map shown is with town centers, possible neighborhood centers, and mixed use corridors. Neighborhood centers are mixed use, and supported by the surrounding neighborhoods. A development strategy is to create a development character that mixes land uses with individual parcels and buildings.

Mixed-use corridors, active public realms with buildings to frame the street and create an active area. A development strategy would be to construct transitional high-density residential development along roadways that provide access to lower-density single-family development. The mixed-use corridor has a few specific actions that are applicable, "Explore the development of new incentives to encourage development along the mixed-use corridors," "Incorporate formed-based districts or concepts into a refined Las Cruces land development code to apply place type overlays and create consistency between exiting City zoning overlays," "Apply the mixed-use corridor zoning district to property flanking the thoroughfares where depicted on the Future Development Map through a remapping process or on a case-by-case basis such as a floating zone." At the present time there is no direct mixed-use category or zoning category in the zoning ordinance, but there are processes that can address that. Also this entire study area is within the Infill area.
Board Member Lynch mentioned that on December 21, 2020 the City Council passed a resolution to join Age Friendly and Livable Community network. Board Member Lynch stated on December 21 the City Council passed a resolution to join Age Friendly and Livable Community network, and he would suggest that maybe in a following meeting go over the eight domains of livability for reference. Board Member Thomas stated she heard about a missing middle development that is to the west of El Paseo where it is more suburban. Mark Miller stated there is specific action in the suburban place types which is primarily single-family and need to keep the character of the neighborhoods, and that missing middle should be allowed in those areas. Missing middle housing means the space between the multifamily apartment complex and the single-family house, including duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes. Chair Vasquez stated development of incentives for these two corridor areas, how to spur development with businesses that serve the surrounding communities based on the needs of those communities to encourage the leasing of the vacant buildings, but also existing commercial and retail property really could benefit from façade improvements, structural improvements, etc. Board Member Thomas stated another reason to push for the missing middle is we do not have the density to support the kind of commercial for these corridors. She also asked for information on numbers of density that supports commercial. David Weir also stated that will help support the transit with neighborhood employment centers, commercial centers. Chair Vasquez stated we do not have the pedestrian infrastructure or the pedestrian culture that encourages walking to the strip malls/center.

2. **El Paseo Corridor Blueprint:** David Weir stated this was started 10-12 years ago from a federal grant from EPA and HUD, focused on public engagement, and creation of vision that the neighborhood and adjacent areas to see achieved for the area. An additional grant for realizing El Paseo awarded and it identified projects to improve the neighborhood and things to encourage reinvestment in the general vicinity, and make it vibrant corridor. The vision highlights included a neighborhood built on shared ideas and common desires for economic growth and healthy living, and a thriving transit-oriented area where businesses, residents, visitors, and City work together to keep it sustainable with all modes of transportation: pedestrian, bicycles, transit and automobiles, and all citizens of the community can enjoy. The goals included being a safe, user-friendly corridor, support diverse land use and housing types, flexibility in regulation and use of buildings, become a pleasant place visually with its own sense of place and identity, development that is sustainably environmentally sensitive, and supports a healthy lifestyle. Also a series of actions were noted which included review of development regulations/zoning and consideration of a form-based code for that area, any redevelopment considers a complete street concept so that includes all modes transportation for the development. Redevelopment would
include affordable housing and green infrastructure and incentives for redevelopment.

Board Member Parsons mentioned that this corridor is right up against the Downtown area/the Arts and Culture District, which emphasizes retail, entertainment and food and beverage businesses and activities. She is wondering if there is an opportunity to think of supplemental services or another service type that would play into that ongoing project of Downtown, business services, office buildings, office complexes, more 9-5:00 workers then directly adjacent to that dining/entertainment uses. Can there be some exploration of concepts around that? Be diligent in who we are attracting and how to attract those types of services. David Weir stated that that was the intent of efforts that went into El Paseo. And also this ad hoc committee was created to encourage that and get dedicated transit service through that area. He suggested that one recommendation could be how to incentivize the corridors with additional public and private investment. Board Member Parsons questioned being able to really target investment and can the Committee make recommendations on the incentives. David Weir stated that is the role of the Committee. And that each of the monthly discussions will be building on themselves with a future meeting dedicated to a discussion of incentives.

Board Member Bencomo asked if an advanced transit plan would be discussed more specifically. Also mentioned shaded bus stops, biker friendly streets. David Weir stated that RoadRUNNER Transit and South Central Regional Transit District are participants of the Committee and a more complete discussion of transit will be a part of future meetings. Board Member Abeyta-Stuve asked about the green infrastructure and trying to trap some of the water, was there going to be any major accommodations or things that the City has to deal with or would this be more reliant on the property owners, or combined discussion. David Weir stated the result from the studies and grant, the City hosted a seminar and technical service information was provided and made available to the property owners and businesses along the corridor including technical expertise and knowledge sharing of ways to incorporate green infrastructure. Green infrastructure policies are also in Elevate Las Cruces along with some of the neighborhood plans and in the Sustainability Action Plan, and there is a review of all development codes and design standards that addresses potential drainage treatments. So staff envisions that being incorporated in the upgraded development codes with standards and the appropriate conditions to use green infrastructure.

Board Member Padilla asked about affordable housing and green infrastructure when looking at El Paseo and Solano, and if multi-story apartments, or what other kind of housing is being looked at. David Weir
stated what is being envisioned today is zoning and development standards that would encourage and make it easier to have multi-story dwelling units including a mix of uses with residential, office, and retail into one building. Chair Vasquez stated there are vacant lots adjacent to Solano that would be conducive for mix uses but it is currently owned privately. He would like to see a more vibrant use of existing housing stock and possibly convert houses into small businesses or mixed use facilities. Board Member Thomas mentioned that there is a movement across the country that people want to retire in a place that is vibrant, walkable, and has bike lanes and culture and transit, etc. These retirees cannot afford large cities, so they are attracted to small university towns. She mentioned that the transit usage has grown considerably for these communities due to this lifestyle approach.

c. Development Patterns (Zoning, Entitlements, Non-Conformities):
David Weir showed a map of the land use inventory for the study areas, and also the zoning map. He mentioned "non-conformities" and how the City approaches and regulates them. The discussion included the balancing act the City has to perform to individual and business property rights with implementing adopted plans and adopted regulations related to the plans since the goal of all zoning ordinances is to implement the vision of that community and meet the desired standards for the community.

This two corridors are also within the Infill area. This allowed all the development requirements for the defined infill area to be put into one process. The incentive was one meeting or a special meeting to have a project reviewed and approved at one time. Also some of the building fees could be waived. A consultant has been hired to update the zoning approaches; zoning which includes zone code, sign code, zoning map; subdivision which included platting, public improvements, financing; and standards which include drainage, environment, landscaping, streets, traffic, utilities, etc.

David Weir then provided information related different approaches to land use management, primarily zoning. Las Cruces has had a zoning code since 1930, Euclidean zoning has been the traditional and most utilized approach throughout the USA including Las Cruces. The logic behind Euclidian zoning is to protect residential areas and neighborhoods from noxious uses like industrial and nuisance land uses. There are specific district (zones) identifying land uses such as single-family, multi-family, commercial, office, industrial, and institutional uses. This approach does not always accommodate mixed uses or organic development of a neighborhood, and sometimes it creates difficulty for neighborhoods to change over time. This zoning approach also often takes into consideration the use of the automobile and necessary street network
over other modes of transportation. Another land use management approach is overlay zones, which are additional standards or requirements to achieve a goal of the community. The zoning that is on a property remains and those requirements are met, then there are additional standards that are applied to it. Example in Las Cruces include East Lohman Avenue, Avenida de Mesilla, the Infill area, Alameda Depot, South Mesquite, and the University District.

Pattern zoning is another tool that is considered an overlay. It identifies specific tracts that the City wants to see improves and done with an expedited process. David Weir thinks this would something the Committee should consider as a method that would conducive for vacant lots or underutilized lots to accommodate affordable housing.

Floating zones are another tool. This overlay identifies a particular area identified for development encouragement and modifies the standards and/or process for development to encourage development in the identified areas. Once that area is improved or the goals of the floating zoned achieved, they can be applied to another place. The closest we have here in Las Cruces is our Infill area.

Form-based coding is a land use tool which is to encourage and geared towards creating a sense of place. Less emphasis is placed on the uses and land use districts within area but instead the codes are aimed the buildings and structures to improve the aesthetics, make them desirable places to be. The example here in Las Cruces is the Downtown and University District. Both use form-based coding principles. Mark Miller added that a big picture idea for form-based coding is that it is emphasizes form rather than use; so form of the buildings, form of the blocks, and how those interface with the public realm. This is also a tool that is more accommodating to mixed uses within a building. It was emphasized that the different approaches are mutually exclusive.

Board Member Bencomo asked if the Committee was supposed to pick one of these approaches. David Weir stated that an approach was applicable to the corridors and then recommendations could be made, although that doesn’t need to happen today. Board Member Bencomo also asked if there was any research or data that correlates any of the zoning approaches and gentrification. Also issues of safety with the sprawl neighborhoods versus the traditional neighborhood. David Weir stated there is information related to the pros and cons and each zoning approach. He mentioned that what Elevate Las Cruces envisions for the corridor is providing opportunities for residential uses and additional folks in the corridors by accommodating building of second dwelling units, accommodating the use of smaller apartment units, including fourplexes, triplexes, and accommodating a mix of uses within the buildings. Mark
Miller stated there are a lot of different forces that go into gentrification, market, etc. Form-based codes do tend to increase the property values is his understanding.

David mentioned that City Council just reviewed the consolidated plan related to the HUD programs administered by the City, and that he saw that there are enough housing units to house everybody in Las Cruces. There is a gap in what people can afford and that is what needs to be addressed. He also mentioned two sides to the potential harm and benefits from gentrification. It provides an opportunity for new investments and improvements to a neighborhood that assists the entire area by increasing property values throughout. But the trick is to improve the area while not forcing people out of those neighborhoods and displacing them with no alternative to get into housing. We want to see investment in neighborhoods, while not forcing people out of the neighborhoods they want to be in.

Board Member Parsons asked if there is a cap on increasing property taxes on senior citizen's in Las Cruces. David Weir stated he is not familiar with that. Board Member Parsons stated it would be good to get information on this. This allows for older people who are not selling their homes to not be priced out of their own neighborhoods during revitalization. Chair Vasquez also mentioned rent freezing. Board Member Thomas stated there is some research that cul-de-sac neighborhoods drives all the traffic onto one street causing a much higher possibility that you will be in an accident in those kinds of neighborhoods. She also mentioned when the City was working on Downtown and were asked where is the smart code. Others did not want to invest unless there was a code that was in place for their vision.

Board Member Redferan mentioned targeting specific industries or businesses to locate on the corridor. He stated there is a tax lightning law on residential, not commercial in New Mexico for seniors, he believes it is either 5% or 7% that property taxes cannot be raise on seniors. He asked for more information on the nonconforming use as there are parcels on El Paseo and Solano that have been vacant for over 12 months. David Weir stated there are two avenues to address the situation; a variance can be requested in some cases with a type of hardship; the other process is Infill, but it would have to be an underutilized or vacant property, and the infill process would then allow numerous development deviation requests to be made. Both of these would require a review by the Planning and Zoning Commission. David Weir mentioned that floating zone would be another good approach to address non-conforming property issues. Examples could include certain type of land use occupancies of buildings in a corridor, that no additional parking is going to be required, waive fees for sign permits, or encourage some similar waivers or variances.
Chair Vasquez suggested standalone buildings in the concrete parking lots, homes into small retail (jewelry, shoe repair, seamstress). Board Member Bencomo asked for expansion on the floating zones that may favor private development over public interests. David Weir stated it creates a couple of dynamics, treating private development a little bit different in different parts of town. The floating zone could be used for an occupied building and they are wanting improvements, then the infill process can be used. Board Member Bencomo wants to be sure they are providing realistic, doable proposals that are not overly burdensome to developers and investors, and be aware not to push people out. There are people that want to invest in the community and how do we provide options for them to be able to do so in a way that is affordable to them and still meets the needs of the community.

Board Member Parsons stated wanting everything in an area. She asked if there was a way to drill down to figure what they are really looking for and be sure the stakeholders and that the zoning meets their needs. Board Member Redferan stated it would be useful to the City to reach out to Tierra Del Sol, NMFA and get their visuals.

Board Member Thomas stated El Paseo and Solano are quite different. El Paseo can support a lot more occupancy along the corridor, and she could see two, three, or four story buildings along there and increase the density. Solano has more small family owned kind of stores, and she believes it is more about Solano developing a character, destination kind of approach. Also do a couple of pop-up things along Solano. Board Member McCaslin mentioned vacant big box spaces that are piling up that are not mentioned under the desirable feel, and how to help those spaces.

Chair Vasquez reiterated mentions of putting up public art, entry arch. Also mentioned bringing businesses together to find out how they want to brand their business district. Facilitating home retail businesses in residential areas. He would prefer to nail down some zoning recommendations from this Committee to take to the Policy Review Committees and to the Planning and Zoning Commission in the future. Mark Miller stated they are working on an Elevate Las Cruces site that would provide information to the public and some of that would be sub-sites for specific projects.

d. Infill Projects: See above.

e. Group Discussion: Overview of Zoning Approaches: See above.

VI. NEXT MEETING:
a. February 18, 2021:

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT: There was none.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT (5:05 p.m.)

_______________________________   __________________
Chairperson     Date