

chihuahuita  
NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN





# chihuahuita

## NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Published by authority of Mayor and City Council.

Approved By:  
City Plan Commission on February 12, 2004  
City Council on March 2, 2004



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*Special thanks to Chihuahuita advocate and local historian Freddie Morales and the El Paso Public Library Southwest Heritage Center for use of their historic photos.*



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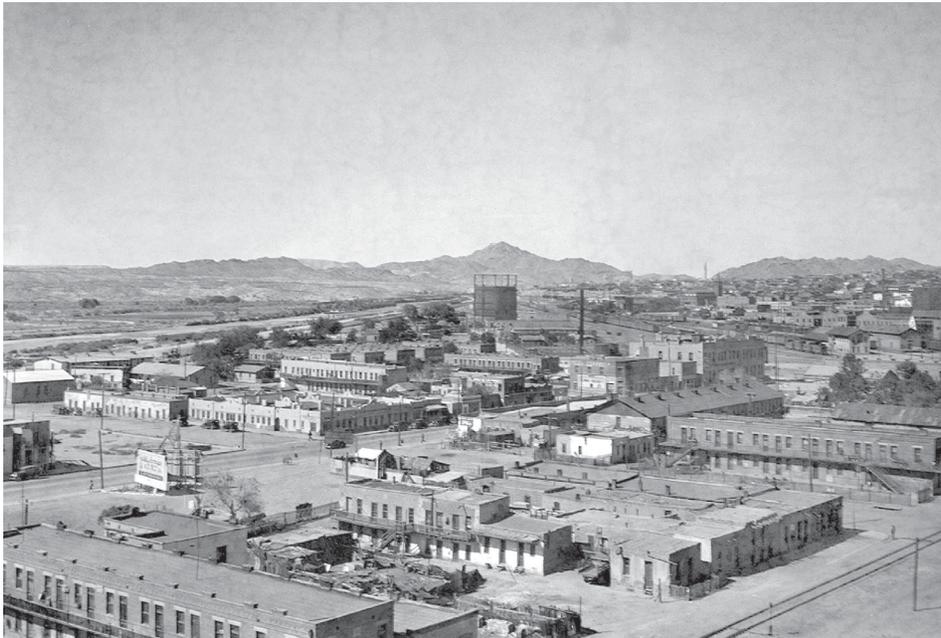


## 1. CHIHUAHUITA NEIGHBORHOOD PERSPECTIVE

The Planning, Research and Development Department has been working with the Chihuahuita Neighborhood since the Neighborhoods Matter! Program began on August 19, 2002. The Planning Department's role as a facilitator has resulted in this Plan, which represents residents, property owners, business owners, area institutions, and other stakeholders of this community, and the City as a whole.

The goals, objectives, and action items were developed at numerous Chihuahuita Neighborhood Planning Team meetings. The Plan is a culmination of months of collaboration between all stakeholders, inside and outside the neighborhood.

Freddie Morales - Chihuahuita



Citizens in the area participated in the plan development and have been very active in directing its content. The need for a Plan became evident when residents heard in the media or through rumors about projects that would have a direct effect on this neighborhood, yet no involvement from area residents into these proposals had been solicited.

The neighborhood wanted to participate in the creation of a plan specific to the Neighborhood's goals and objectives. The Plan demonstrates a proactive process to protect the neighborhood. As more and more area neighborhoods become organized and seek to improve their quality of life, Chihuahuita can become an example for future neighborhood groups and plans.

Above: Chihuahuita in the early days.

1492

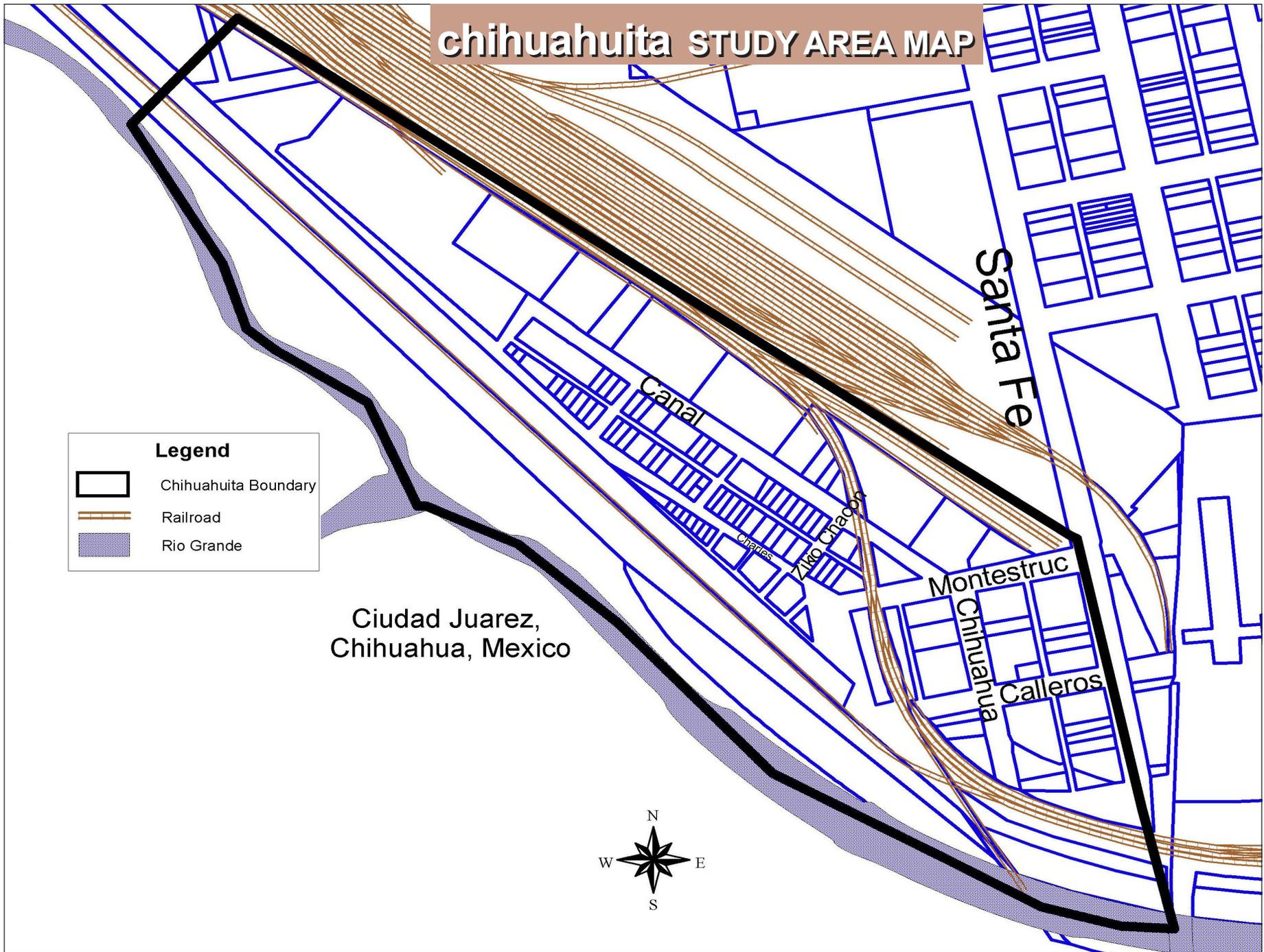
Columbus departs Palos, Spain on August 3, 1492.

1493

Juan Ponce de Leon accompanies Columbus on his second expedition to the Americas.

### HISTORIC TIMELINE

# chihuahuita STUDY AREA MAP



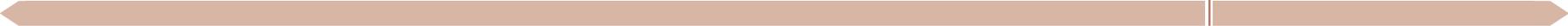


## STUDY AREA

The Chihuahuita Neighborhood is in El Paso's Central Neighborhood Planning Area. As shown in *The Study Area Map*, the neighborhood's boundaries are as follows:

- The southern / western boundary is the centerline of the Rio Grande River, the US - Mexico international border
- The eastern boundary is the centerline of Santa Fe Street up to Montestruc Court
- From the intersection of Santa Fe Street and Montestruc Court, the boundary runs northwest, parallel to the railroad tracks
- The boundary line continues past the water treatment plant and turns southwest at the cardboard recycling facility, from whence it continues to the river centerline.

The Neighborhood's location is adjacent to the Santa Fe Street Port of Entry, and within a few blocks of the Downtown and Union Plaza sections of the City.



Late 1400's

The Manso Indians inhabit the area along the Rio Grande.



## 2. PURPOSE AND ELEMENTS

The Chihuahuita Neighborhood Plan represents a unique opportunity for one of El Paso's oldest neighborhoods to preserve, protect, and improve the quality of its current and future residential life. The Plan seeks to support the successes of existing and future economic opportunities in the area by creating a proactive neighborhood plan that includes every stakeholder.

This Plan is a tool to help conserve the Neighborhood's distinctive attributes by protecting and enhancing its significant characteristics and by responsibly regulating change. In creating the Chihuahuita Neighborhood Plan, the neighborhood directed the Planning Department to prepare a plan element to address each of the following areas of importance to the neighborhood:

- |                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Land Use & Zoning          | 5. Cultural Resources    |
| 2. Traffic & Circulation      | 6. Historic Preservation |
| 3. Infrastructure & Utilities | 7. Economic Development  |
| 4. Crime & Safety             | 8. Nuisances.            |

The Plan Summary Chapter reviews the neighborhood's goals and objectives for community improvement. It includes a Community Challenges map that indicates the locations of various issues that need to be addressed. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified by community members for plan elements are summarized in this chapter.

Working with the citizens, the Planning Department studied these issues for the plan and examined the potential effectiveness of various policy actions regarding each issue. The proposed actions to achieve community objectives appear in the specific chapter relating to each plan element.

After review by the City Plan Commission, the plan will be forwarded to the City Council for adoption as a component of the City's Comprehensive Plan for El Paso. Various groups will use the approved plan as a guide for the decision-making process. Key projects may be selected from the plan to be included in the Capital Improvement Program.



Freddie Morales - Chihuahuita



**Top & Above:** Chihuahuita residents have witnessed many changes in their neighborhood, both positive and negative, and will continue to face significant development challenges in the future.



Giovanna Paparelli 1991

1598

Don Juan de Onate crosses the Rio Grande River and names this famous crossing point *El Paso del Norte*. Onate celebrates Thanksgiving near present-day San Elizario.

### 3. COMMUNITY-BASED PROCESS

The Plan was developed through a collaborative process. Various meetings held throughout the plan development involved everyone with an interest in the Neighborhood. Community stakeholders were invited and encouraged to attend all meetings and provide comments on issues important to the Neighborhood.

The following represents some neighborhood involvement milestones for the Plan:



**Above:** Chihuahuita residents discuss the neighborhood planning process at the Chihuahuita Recreation Center.

1. **January 2003** *Meeting Schedule set and Steering Committee selected*
2. **February** *Boundaries approved  
Charette resulted in twenty-seven issues*
3. **March** *Issues Prioritized for the Plan*
4. **April** *Outline for Plan elements accepted*
5. **May** *Police Community Action Team (CAT) and PAR Officers*
6. **June** *Subcommittee Participation  
Vista Volunteers joined the planning efforts*
7. **July** *Research and Analysis*
8. **August** *Presentations on Historic Ordinance Amendments  
Stakeholders - La Fe Clinic, Traffic and Transportation Consultants*
9. **October** *Plan Draft presented to Neighborhood*
10. **November** *Plan Draft meetings & discussions*
11. **December** *Plan Draft meetings & discussion with various City departments*
12. **January** *Special neighborhood meeting to discuss International Transit Terminal location*
13. **February** *Public hearing process begins for final plan approval in March*

1610

Santa Fe is founded. Its full name is *La Villa Real de Santa Fe de Francisco de Assisi*, which means The Royal City of the Holy Faith of St. Francis de Assisi.

1620

Pilgrims arrive on Plymouth Rock.



1659

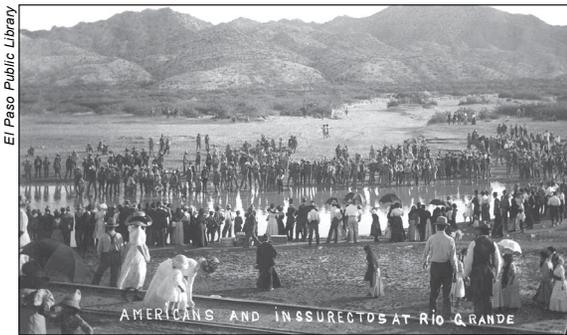
The mission, *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Mansos del Paso del Norte* is established by Fray Garcia de San Francisco y Zuniga.

## 4. CHIHUAHUITA HISTORY

The Chihuahuita Historic District was one of the first residential enclaves to be settled in the El Paso del Norte region. The first houses were built in this neighborhood around 1814. They bordered the Rio Grande, allowing the residents access to the river's water. Location has been both a challenge and an opportunity to Chihuahuita ever since.

Being close to the river was not always a benefit. Floods were a common problem in the early Chihuahuita neighborhood. In May of 1897, a storm struck the area leaving all of El Paso south of Fifth Street covered in water. A number of homes in Chihuahuita were destroyed as a result of that flood, and many of the residents moved to higher ground to what is currently Rim Road. The Mayor of El Paso and the Mayor of Ciudad Juarez decided to join together in a collaborative effort to construct a channel for the Rio Grande that would reduce any future damage caused by flooding. The levees were completed on April 13, 1899.

The El Paso Laundry building in the Chihuahuita neighborhood served as the most famous observation post during the Mexican Revolution, which began right across the river in Juarez in November 1910. The Laundry building had been built in 1896 and was owned by William C. Harvey who came from Liverpool, England. The roof offered any and all interested onlookers an opportunity to "safely" view battles as they were taking place. The bullet holes in the structure now serve as the sole reminder of that tumultuous time.



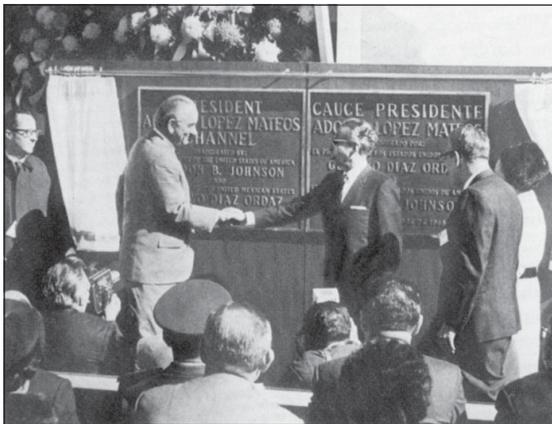
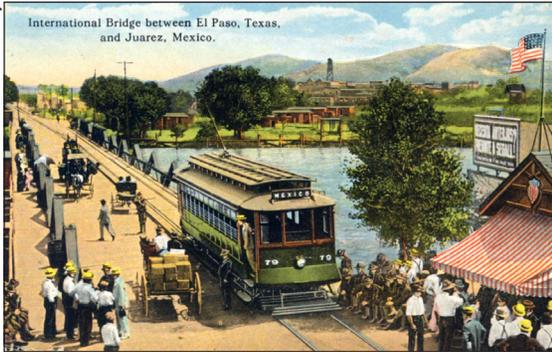
**Left Top:** Flood swollen Rio Grande near Chihuahuita

**Left Middle:** Bicycle delivery boys working out of the El Paso Laundry building

**Left and Right:** The Mexican Revolution comes to Cd. Juarez, Mexico

1684

The Mansos revolt under their leader and flee to the Florida Mountains.



During the Battle of Juarez troops from Fort Bliss were stationed at the nearby El Paso Gas and Electric Company Building to protect it from harm. Although it was not attacked then, dynamite intended to destroy the facility was found in 1912. It was later discovered that men loyal to the cause of Pascual Orozco, a Mexican revolutionary who allied with Victoriano Huerta against Constitutionalists, had placed it there.

Oscar winning actor Anthony Quinn lived in the Chihuahuita neighborhood as a young child. The Quinn family moved from Chihuahua to the El Paso area in 1915. Their house was located on what is presently Cleofas Calleros Street but it was later demolished due to a smallpox epidemic.

Tenements were built on the 900 block of South Chihuahua Street during the time of the Mexican Revolution to house refugees. The buildings sheltered many organizers, agents, and exiles from Mexico. The residents of these housing tenements frequently lined the nearby levee in order to view the battles between the rebels and federals during the Revolution. Four of the five original tenements still exist in the Chihuahuita Historic District and have since been revitalized with heating, indoor bathrooms, refrigerators and gas stoves and continue to house Chihuahuita residents.

The Chihuahuita Historic District contains one of the oldest communities in El Paso, Texas. Located along an international border, Chihuahuita has a unique history that includes both Mexico and the United States. As a result of its extensive and unique past, Chihuahuita was designated as a historic district within the City of El Paso on March 12, 1991. (Historic Guidelines can be obtained from the Planning Department.)

**Left Top:** Electric trolleys crossed the border many times daily on the Paso del Norte Bridge until the early 1970's.

**Left Middle:** Mexican President Porfirio Diaz (center) in a procession along Santa Fe St. near Chihuahuita during his historic meeting with U.S. President Howard Taft in 1909.

**Left:** As part of the ceremonies surrounding the signing of the Chamizal Treaty in 1964 President Lyndon Johnson greeted Mexican President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz on the Paso del Norte Bridge.

1768

Indigenous people construct a dam near the present-day water treatment plant on Canal Road.

1818

Ricardo Brusuelas settles the Chihuahuita area. Jose Ordaz, the Lieutenant Governor of Presidio Paso del Norte, granted Brusuelas the land who then created a prosperous ranch.

## 5. STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

The summary below outlines the strengths and challenges in Chihuahuita for each of the major issue areas identified by the neighborhood association and the neighborhood planning team. Further details and proposed solutions are found in the corresponding section of the Action Plan.

### Land Use/Zoning

#### Strengths:

- Residents agreed to develop a Plan that can address future development and zoning for the area
- All stakeholders will contribute to Plan process
- Neighborhood already mixed use where residential units coexist with commercial uses

#### Challenges:

- Land use conflicts exist within the Neighborhood
- There are violations of zoning code regulations
- Residential uses abut manufacturing and commercial properties



**Top and Above:** Neighborhood pride is evident in the homes and yards of residents who have the ability to come together over issues that threaten their way of life.

1840's

The first wooden shacks and adobe homes are built along the Rio Grande. Residents name their community "Chihuahuita" because most of them came from the state of Chihuahua, Mexico.

U.S. Library of Congress



1846-1848

The Mexican-American War ends with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Mexico cedes present-day Arizona, Nevada, California, Utah and parts of New Mexico, California, and Wyoming to the U.S. for \$15 million. The Rio Grande becomes an international boundary.



**Top:** Large trucks serve commercial businesses in the residential neighborhood.

**Middle:** Pedestrians brave heavy traffic on Santa Fe St. on a daily basis.

**Above:** This vacant lot on Canal St. is used for parking by residents.

## Traffic & Circulation

### Strengths:

- Interior streets have little traffic on them
- Many downtown destinations are within walking distance
- The improvement program to rebuild Santa Fe Street (CBD III) is funded
- The International Transit Terminal may ease independent bus operator congestion by consolidating operators in one location

### Challenges:

- There is only one point of access to the neighborhood
- The International Transit Terminal should be located somewhere nearby
- The planned Border Highway connection will be adjacent to the neighborhood
- Truck traffic to manufacturing and commercial uses within the neighborhood
- Substantial railroad tracks and yards are in the immediate area
- There are pedestrian and vehicular conflicts along Santa Fe Street
- There is limited parking for residents
- Many nonresidents park in the area
- Narrow Streets

## Infrastructure/Utilities

### Strength:

- Neighborhood streets resurfaced in 2003

### Challenges:

- Flooding & drainage problems exist
- More street sweeping is needed

1840s

The Rio Grande flowed on what is now Seventh Street. The first river connection between El Paso and Juarez was a hand-hauled ferry operated by the Acosta family of Juarez.

New Mexico BLM



1861-1865

United States Civil War.



**Above:** Chihuahuita has significant murals that figure prominently in the history of muralism in El Paso.

**Below:** This backyard shrine, visible from an adjacent parking lot, helps to foster Chihuahuita's unique cultural and historic atmosphere.



## Crime/Safety

### Strengths:

- Ingress/egress to neighborhood is limited
- A storefront Police Station is close to area
- There is a Patrol Area Representative Officer ( PAR) for the area
- The Border Patrol is normally present in the area

### Challenges:

- Refuge from law enforcement is available nearby in Ciudad Juarez
- Pedestrian and vehicular traffic conflicts are common
- Possible gang activity
- Graffiti
- ADA compliance is not 100%
- Stray animals

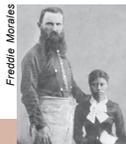
## Cultural Resources

### Strengths:

- The neighborhood has public art
- The area is rich in history
- It is close to downtown cultural amenities

### Challenge:

- Residents may lack knowledge about programs to support cultural resources



Freddie Morales

1867

Antonio Noel de Montestruc of France builds a triangular-shaped adobe structure near the north bank of the Rio Grande.

1873

El Paso incorporates.



El Paso Public Library

1881

The Southern Pacific Railroad is first to arrive in El Paso. Shortly afterwards the Texas and Pacific, the Galveston, Harrisburg & San Antonio and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroads also arrive in the city.



**Above:** Not only do these charming homes represent a piece of cultural and architectural history, they are part of a living, vibrant community.

**Below:** The historic El Paso Laundry building was a popular spot for spectators of the Battle of Juarez but is underutilized today.



## Historic Preservation

### Strengths:

- Neighborhood has a homogeneous grouping of historic architecture
- There is a coherent neighborhood identity built around the area's history and culture

### Challenges:

- Some properties are not in compliance with Historic District standards
- Property owners may lack funds for maintenance and rehabilitation to Historic District standards
- Residents and property owners may lack awareness of the implications of Historic District designation

## Economic Development

### Strengths:

- There is a core group of active neighbors who foster economic improvement
- The neighborhood can decide on projects for the entire area

### Challenges:

- Neighborhood lacks education and training opportunities
- The small area makes it difficult to balance the costs and benefits of new development
- Many residents cannot afford their own home
- Residents lack opportunities to have input on major projects affecting the area
- Public schools are not within walking distance

## Nuisances

### Challenges:

- Border crossing activity has negative spillover effects (cars & pedestrians)
- There are instances of non-compliance with zoning regulations and examples of grand fathered non-conforming uses
- Industrial and commercial traffic (trains & trucks) , environmental concerns

1882

The city's first plant to produce gas for streetlights is located in Chihuahuita.

1889

The Franklin Canal is built adjacent to the Chihuahuita neighborhood.

1891

The embankment of the Franklin Canal collapses and causes a major flood.



1892

The Santa Fe Bridge and a water treatment plant are constructed.

## 6. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

### LAND USE AND ZONING



**Top:** Trucking docks along Canal St. are directly opposite homes, forcing residents to endure fumes, vibrations and noise on a daily basis.

**Above:** Different land uses exist in close proximity to one another.

The neighborhood currently has Special Residential Revitalization (SRR) zoning in the residential core of the neighborhood. This zoning district is established in recognition that developments containing both residential and commercial uses can create an appealing and vital urban environment when carefully designed. The SRR district allows for mixing residential environments with workplaces and services. Within the boundaries, there is also C-4 (Commercial) and M-2 (Heavy Manufacturing) zoning.

**Objective:** *Maintain a balance between residential and non-residential uses in this neighborhood.*

**Action:** Allow the Neighborhood to voice their concerns, and make recommendations on zoning and land use policy. Policy makers will use the plan actions to guide policy decisions.

Possible Partners: Building Permits and Inspections, Planning Department, Sun Metro, Private Transportation Companies, Engineering-Traffic & Transportation Department, Street Department, and the Chihuahuita Neighborhood

**Action:** Amend the Land Use Element of the Plan for El Paso to incorporate the Chihuahuita Proposed Land Use Map (See pg. 18)



1895

Mule-drawn streetcars begin operation throughout El Paso and into Juarez.

1896

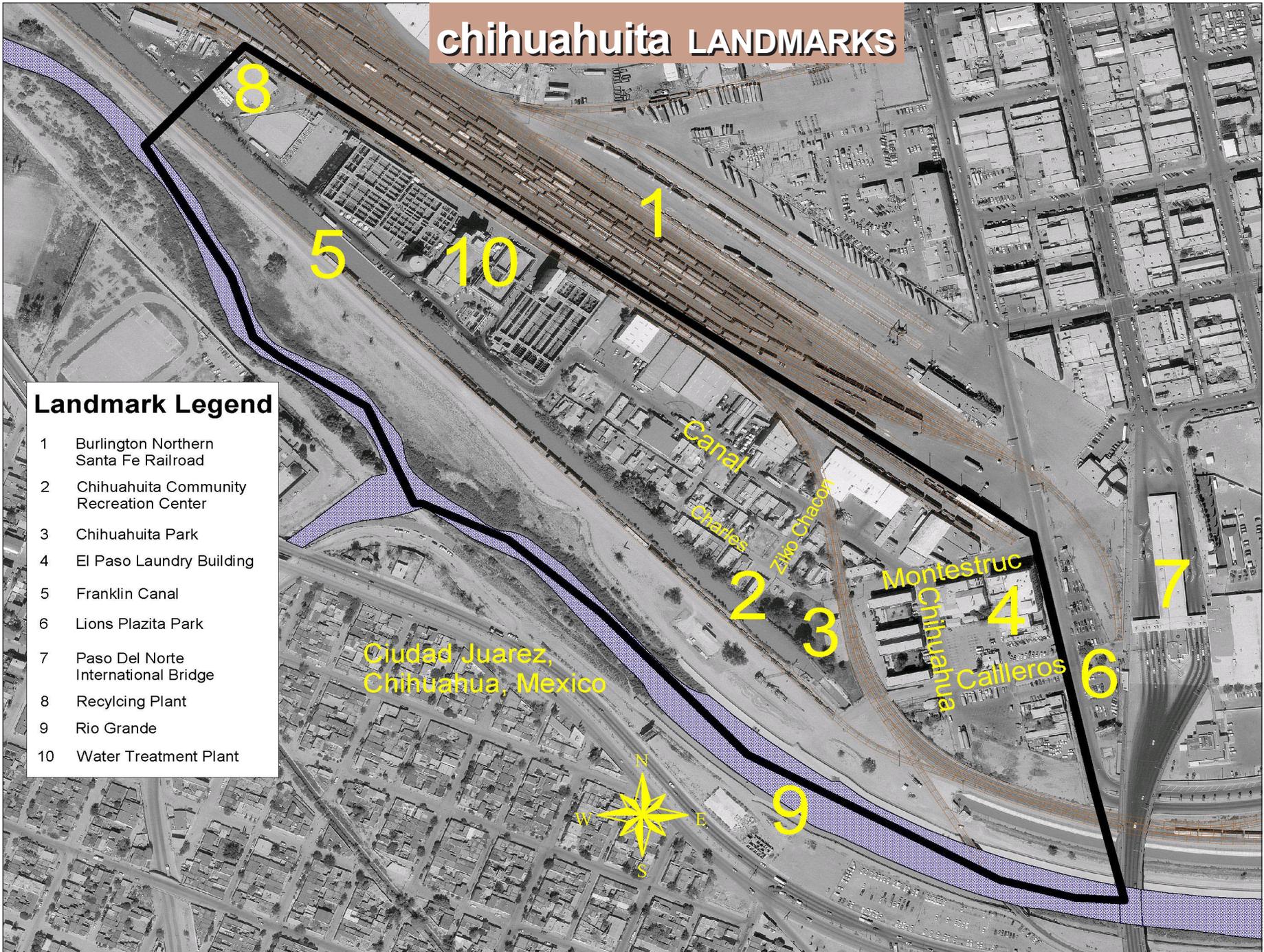
The Rio Grande relocates to the area of what is currently the 1300 block of Santa Fe St.



1897

The Great Flood causes many residents of Chihuahuita to evacuate and move to *La Mesa*. The neighborhood was the most severely hit by the storm. Flood waters poured over the Santa Fe Bridge.

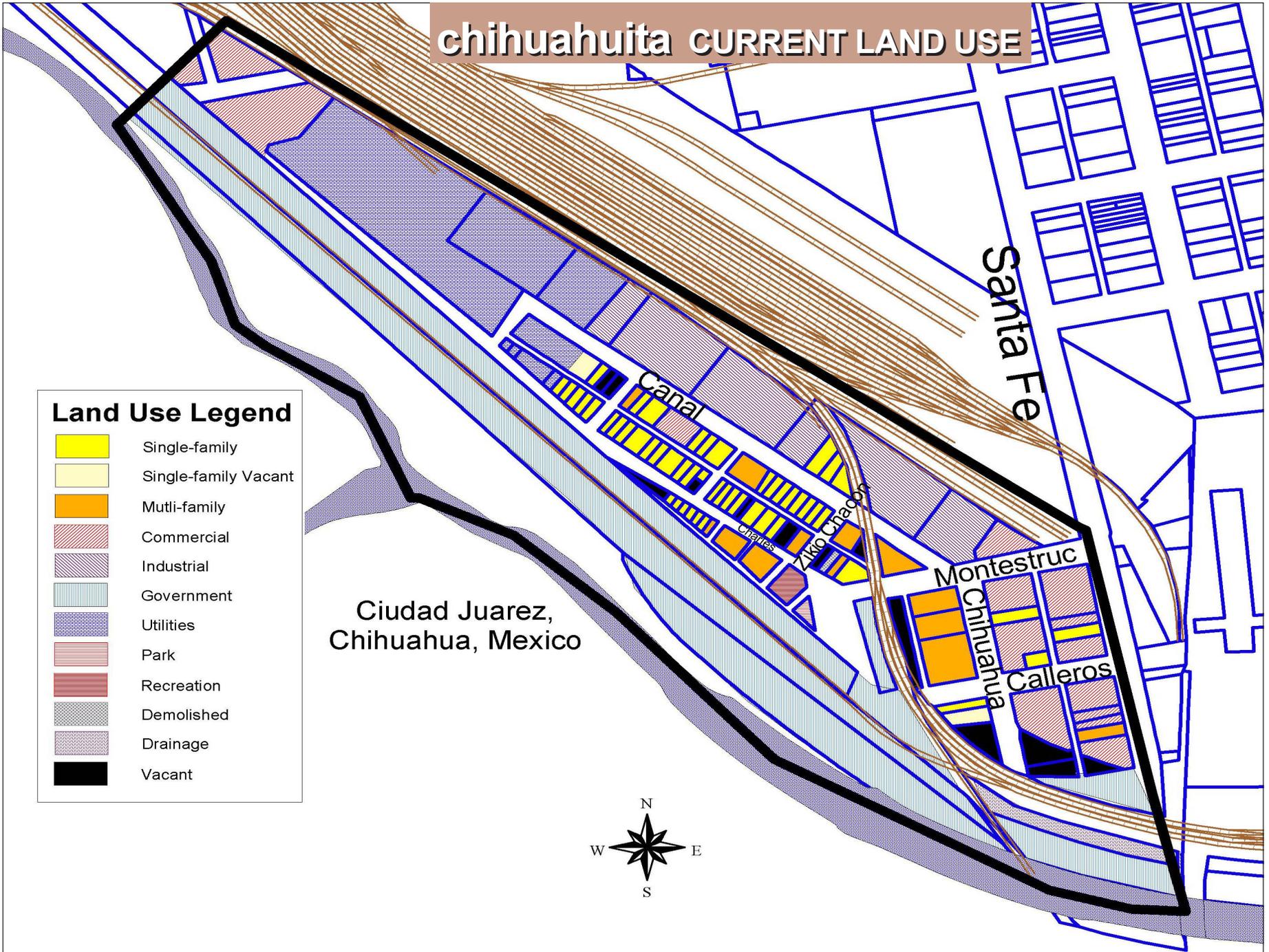
# chihuahuita LANDMARKS



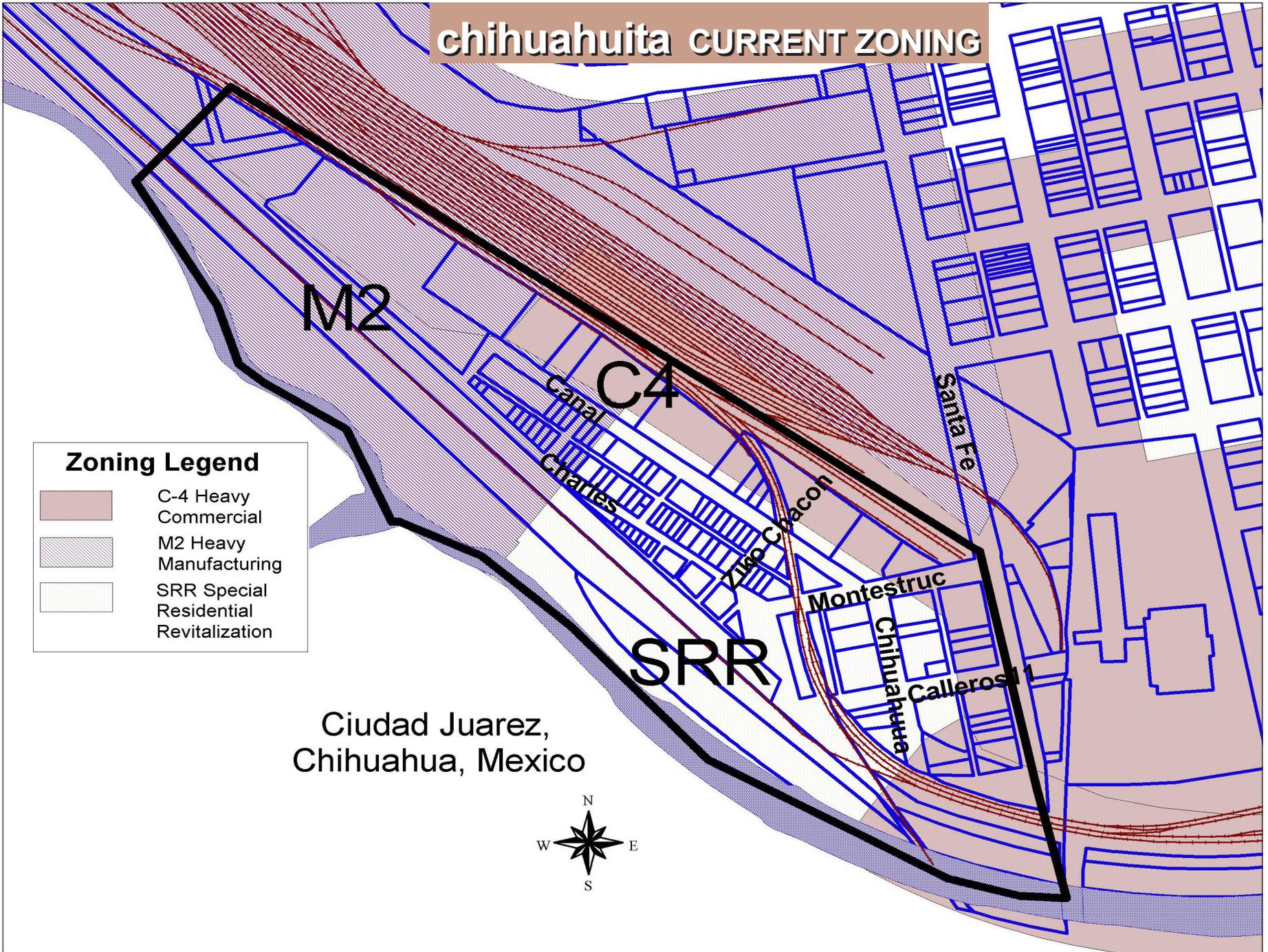
## Landmark Legend

- 1 Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad
- 2 Chihuahuita Community Recreation Center
- 3 Chihuahuita Park
- 4 El Paso Laundry Building
- 5 Franklin Canal
- 6 Lions Plazita Park
- 7 Paso Del Norte International Bridge
- 8 Recycling Plant
- 9 Rio Grande
- 10 Water Treatment Plant

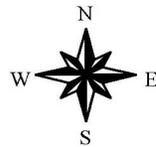
# chihuahuita CURRENT LAND USE



# chihuahuita CURRENT ZONING



Ciudad Juarez,  
Chihuahua, Mexico



# chihuahuita PROPOSED LAND USE

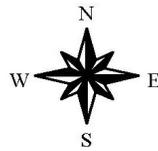
## Land Use Legend

-  Residential
-  Mixed-Use
-  Neighborhood Commercial
-  Parks & Open Space

## Additional Use Considerations

-  Utilities
-  Proposed Parking
-  Concede to Loop 375 & RR (Industrial)

Ciudad Juarez,  
Chihuahua, Mexico



## DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED LAND USE MAP:

The proposed land use map identifies the preferred land development pattern for the Chihuahuita Neighborhood. Future land uses are based on existing land uses, on community discussions and on policies from the Comprehensive Plan for El Paso. The proposed land use map indicates how vacant and occupied parcels should be developed in the future.

After City Council approval of the Chihuahuita Neighborhood Plan, the Planning Department will consult the Land Use Plan as a guide for developing staff recommendations on individual zoning cases in this area. (Refer to pg. 18 for map references)

**Residential Area:** The area designated as residential (in yellow on the map on pg. 18) in the future will include the area that is currently being used for residential purposes. By clearly indicating a residential sector, the future plan preserves the existing single and multi-family housing uses.

**Commercial Area:** The portion of the neighborhood that fronts Santa Fe Street is well positioned to take advantage of the port of entry pedestrian activity. Further, this commercial strip may be a source of potential employment for neighborhood residents. Appropriate retail uses for this area (shown in red on the map on pg. 18) include bakeries, beauty parlors, restaurants, coffee shops, and small neighborhood groceries or markets. Neighborhood opinion strongly coalesced around the need to discourage businesses that rely on heavy trucks and buses due to the adverse impact these large vehicles have had on the day-to-day quality of life of the residents.

**Mixed Use Areas:** The area immediately behind the Santa Fe district (shown in blue on the map) would serve as an appropriate transition between the commercial strip and the residential core of the area. The mixed-use area to the east side of Canal Street would serve as an appropriate buffer between the railroads and the residential area; landscaping can further buffer these uses. This area will serve as a more appropriate barrier/partition to generally mitigate incompatible or undesirable noise and views to maintain the livability and quality of life of the residential neighborhood.

**Parks and Open Space Areas:** In light of the planned development outside of, but very near to the Chihuahuita neighborhood, the importance of maintaining the park and the community center will be vital in preserving the quality of life of the neighborhood residents. By clearly indicating a park/open space area in the future land use map, the plan seeks to preserve the existing use as a public commons.

**Industrial and Railroad Land:** The neighborhood acknowledges that the railroad industry as well as the water utility treatment plant that have developed adjacent to the neighborhood will continue to operate. Further, the neighborhood acknowledges that the planned Border Highway connection will likely occur within the next ten to twenty years.

1899

River levee is constructed in an agreement between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso.

El Paso Public Library



1900

Electric streetcars begin operation in El Paso.



With these acknowledgments and **conceding** that neighboring land will continue to develop the

Chihuahuita Neighborhood Hereby **Proclaims** that

**the residential core area,  
the park and open space area and  
the neighborhood commercial areas**

within the neighborhood boundaries **will continue to be preserved.**

As part of the proclamation, the neighborhood residents desire advanced notification to the neighborhood association of any capital improvement program planned within 1,000 feet of the neighborhood boundary.



1903

The Immigration and Naturalization Service establishes a customs building.

1904

A tuberculosis epidemic plagues Chihuahuita residents.

**Table 1: Minimum Development Standards, Current Neighborhood Zoning**

<b>District</b>	<b>Primary Uses</b>	<b>Development Standards</b>
<b>C-4 (Historic) (Commercial C-1 to C-3)</b>	C-1 to C-3 uses; adult entertainment businesses; half-way houses; contractor's yards; motor carrier terminals; light manufacturing uses; wholesaling establishments; large collection facilities	15 ft Front Yard Setback 10 ft (abutting a residence) Side Yard Setback 10 ft (when abutting side street) 10 ft Rear Yard Setback
<b>M-2 (Heavy Manufacturing)</b>	M-1 Uses; industrial operations	15 ft Front Yard Setback 10 ft (abutting a residence) Side Yard Setback 10 ft (when abutting side street) 10 ft Rear Yard Setback
<b>SRR (Historic) (Special Residential Revitalization)</b>	Mix of residential & commercial uses with adequate pedestrian transportation	Restricted to South El Paso Area, but can be applied in other areas of the City.



1910

The Mexican Revolution begins.  
Chihuahuita receives nationwide attention for its deplorable housing conditions.  
Charles K. Hamilton is the first man to operate a flying machine in El Paso.



## TRAFFIC & CIRCULATION

The neighborhood is close to an international port of entry, the El Paso Street shopping area, the downtowns of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez and interstate bus transportation terminals. While this location provides good access to these attractions, the transportation impacts of other users have a negative effect on the neighborhood.

Traffic studies conducted for the neighborhood indicate little traffic originating or ending in the neighborhood. Thus plans to make the neighborhood pedestrian friendly, while providing additional commercial activities to visitors, can be accommodated.



The core of the Chihuahuita neighborhood is challenged by having only one way in or out, onto Santa Fe Street. The entrance to the neighborhood is not distinctive and needs improvement. In addition, traffic exiting the Cesar Chavez Border Highway/Loop 375 onto Santa Fe Street restricts resident's ability to exit the neighborhood through the one entry/exit to the core of the neighborhood.

Traffic is also an issue in maintaining the coexistence of the neighborhood with the railroad, manufacturing and heavy commercial businesses on Santa Fe, Montestruc, and Canal Streets. These industrial and commercial uses have become a nuisance because of the semi truck traffic they generate. Specific nuisances include loud noise and vibrations from semi trucks, many with refrigeration units, and foul exhaust fumes emitted from idling engines that enter homes through windows and air conditioners. Congestion at these businesses frequently forces trucks to idle directly in front of nearby homes. Also, a shortage of parking for residents has generated conflicts with industrial users who own lots used for employee parking.



**Left Top:** Large commercial trucks crowd Canal St. on a typical business day.

**Left Middle:** Traffic to and from the Border Highway/Loop 375 streams up and down Santa Fe St. daily.

**Left:** Pedestrians crossing the railroad tracks that pass through the heart of the Chihuahuita neighborhood.

El Paso Public Library



1911

Mexican Revolution: The first Battle of Juarez begins across the Rio Grande.



**Top:** Paso del Norte port-of-entry with northbound automobile and pedestrian traffic.

**Above:** Paso del Norte port-of-entry and southbound pedestrians.

**Below:** Commercial truck loading dock on Canal St.



The Burlington Northern Santa Fe train tracks were built across the only entrance to the neighborhood and over the years residents have become accustomed to passing trains. The long-term solution to this problem is to remove the existing railroad tracks and yard. However, near term minimization of nuisances associated with rail operations is desired. Refrigerated rail cars emit substantial noise when parked on tracks adjacent to the neighborhood. Using tracks on the opposite side of the yard would reduce this impact. But the train is most disruptive when it stops at the Canal St. entrance, holding residents, employees and idling semi trucks captive until the train moves.

The nearby Paso Del Norte Bridge, a pedestrian/vehicular/public transit bridge into Mexico, accommodates high volumes of pedestrian traffic and many visitors illegally park their cars (usually on weekend evening and early morning hours) in the neighborhood. Regrettably, those returning to El Paso from Juarez are often inebriated young people who engage in untoward behavior that includes whooping and hollering, fighting, vandalism, and public urination. These unwelcome visitors negatively impact the neighborhood on a regular basis.

In the greater El Paso region, pressure is mounting to complete the final link of the Cesar Chavez Border Highway/Loop 375 connection, which would provide relief for the regional transportation network. Due to its location, the Chihuahuita neighborhood will be directly impacted by this connection. The Cesar Chavez Border Highway/Loop 375 project could have negative impact on the neighborhood with increased automobile emissions, traffic and noise from the new freeway facility on its southern edge.

Another challenge could be an International Transit Terminal proposed nearby. Depending on its exact location, the terminal could have positive or negative effects on Chihuahuita. The planned terminal will consolidate all interstate bus lines and accommodate parking and retail space. Currently independent bus operators exacerbate traffic concerns by encroaching on the public right of way for their operations. Removing these uses may ease congestion and increase pedestrian safety.

1917

United States enters World War I.

1917-1918

Spanish flu epidemic plagues Chihuahuita.



**Above:** A parked bus on Santa Fe St. is waiting its turn to pick up passengers in a nearby terminal.

Development of both the proposed Cesar Chavez Border Highway/Loop 375 connection and the International Transit Terminal facility needs to be carefully planned so that these facilities have minimal or positive effects on Chihuahuita.

The location of an International Transit Terminal within the Chihuahuita Neighborhood boundary is strongly opposed by the neighborhood. A project of this nature within the neighborhood boundary would require acquisition and demolition of several existing buildings and their loss would jeopardize the goal of preserving Chihuahuita's unique neighborhood character or might trigger the loss of Chihuahuita altogether. For this reason, the Neighborhood Association recommends that this facility be sited outside of the neighborhood boundary and further suggested that the following sites be considered:

- Alternative Site 1:* Property bounded by East San Antonio Street, South El Paso Street, East Paisano Drive and North Santa Fe Street
- Alternative Site 2:* East Sixth Street, South Stanton Street, East Eighth Street and North Mesa Street

Both site suggestions are close to the Paso Del Norte International Port-of-Entry Bridge (PDN) where two bus terminals are presently operating and therefore meet the location criteria for the International Transit Terminal.

**Below:** Riders crowd onto an El Paso Sun Metro bus on El Paso St. near the Paso del Norte bridge.



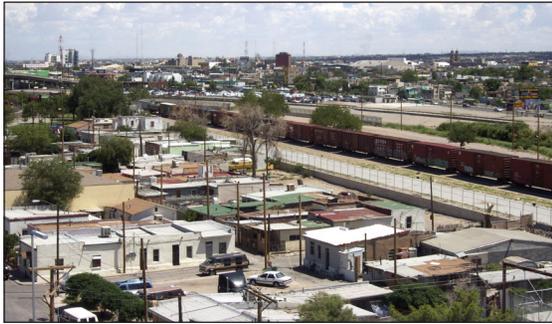
**Objective:** *Ensure that the integrity and positive characteristics of the Chihuahuita neighborhood are preserved if the Cesar Chavez Border Highway/Loop 375 connection is built.*

**Action:** Allow Neighborhood residents and landowners to voice their concerns, and make recommendations during all phases of the Cesar Chavez Border Highway/Loop 375 connection project.

*Possible Partners: Engineering Department -Traffic Division; Planning Department; Streets Department; Police Department and Fire Department; MPO (Metropolitan Planning Office); Texas Department of Transportation; Border Patrol; and, the Chihuahuita Neighborhood Association*

1919

Prohibition begins in the United States. Some residents of the Chihuahuita neighborhood participate in dope rings in order to make money.



**Top:** The right-of-way for the canal, railroad spur and international boundary area to the south of Chihuahuita is a potential site for the extension of Loop 375.

**Middle:** Bus facility on Montestruc St.

**Above:** Bus depot at Santa Fe St. and Calleros St.

**Objective:** Reduce the impact of interstate transit terminals and the concurrent parking and loitering.

**Action:** Consolidate all bus services operating in the area to an International Transit Terminal near the POE. This will include Sun Metro, cab services, and international independent bus services outside of the neighborhood boundary.

*Possible Partners: Sun Metro; Engineering Department -Traffic Division; Planning Department; Streets Department; private bus company operators including international bus service operators; cab companies; Texas Department of Transportation; Department of Immigration and Naturalization (Federal Government); and Border Patrol*

**Objective:** Maintain the balance between pedestrian and vehicular access to the neighborhood.

**Action:** The Neighborhood will request appropriate traffic control devices, traffic calming measures, and encourage downgrading of zoning districts for the commercial and manufacturing uses in the area.

**Action:** Explore developing an additional access point into the neighborhood.

**Objective:** Develop transportation recommendations that provide for all stakeholders in the neighborhood (railroad, commercial trucks, private buses, residents).

**Action:** Invite all stakeholders to review the transportation and circulation plan.

*Possible Partners: Engineering Department - Traffic Division; Building Permits and Inspections; Police Department; Planning Department; and the Chihuahuita Neighborhood Association*

1920s

Chihuahuita is referred to as iLa Mancha Rojai or iThe Red Staini because of the bootlegging activities taking place in the neighborhood.

1925

The Rio Grande overflows after heavy rains in New Mexico.



**Above:** Nonexistent, poorly maintained or obstructed sidewalks force pedestrians to walk in streets that they must share with automobiles, buses and large trucks.

**Below:** 24 Hour parking lots along Santa Fe St. cannot accommodate the volume of visitors, especially at night and on weekends, and the overflow spills into the Chihuahuita residential interior.



**Objective:** Address the parking demand in the area from the thousands of people that cross on a daily basis, while ensuring that solutions maintain the integrity of the neighborhood.

**Action:** With participation of the neighborhood, create a special "residents-only" parking area, with tow-away signage for enforcement by the Police Department as is in place on a portion of the neighborhood. This would discourage non-residents from parking in unauthorized areas.

*Possible Partners: Engineering Department -Traffic Division; Building Permits and Inspections; Police Department; Planning Department; and the Chihuahuita Neighborhood Association*

**Action:** Encourage an agreement between residents and warehouse owners to use vacant lots for residential parking at night.

**Action:** Designate well-marked free or low cost off-street parking for pedestrian tourists visiting Juarez, Mexico.

**Action:** Support construction of sufficient parking as part of any International Transit Terminal project.

*Possible Partners: Sun Metro; Engineering Department -Traffic Division; Building Permits and Inspections; Police Department; Planning Department; and the Chihuahuita Neighborhood Association*

1930s

The Great Depression causes many residents to return to Mexico.

1934

The immunization of children against scarlet fever and diphtheria begins.

1937

The Housing Authority begins operation in El Paso.



**Above:** Because of heavy traffic in a neighboring loading dock this truck was forced to idle in front of this house on Canal St. resulting in excessive noise, vibrations and exhaust fumes.

**Below:** Artist's digital rendering depicting an improved entrance to Chihuahuita. From left: New transit facility; enhanced landscaping at Lions Placita; pedestrian enhancements on Santa Fe St.; redeveloped El Paso Laundry building; archway entrance on Montestruc St.; new observation tower with historical exhibits.



**Objective:** Improve the entrance to the Neighborhood and the ease of ingress and egress

**Action:** Install traffic light at intersection of Montestruc Court and Santa Fe Street

**Action:** Ensure neighborhood input into the design of the CBD III street resurfacing project that will rebuild Santa Fe Street and involvement during the construction process to minimize inconveniences to the neighborhood residents.

**Action:** Make the entrance to the Historic Chihuahuita District distinct with landscaped access noting historical significance.

**Objective:** Maintain existing residential street network while limiting industrial truck traffic and access to non-residents, including a possible alternate access point to the neighborhood.

**Action:** Sign streets with no-thru traffic or no thru street access.

**Action:** Restrict semi-truck traffic to Canal Street.

1941

United States enters World War II.

Public Broadcasting System



1942

The Bracero Program is initiated by Mexico and the United States.

1943

The first water treatment plant is built in El Paso on 800 Canal Rd.

Dolores A. Chacon



1943

Zikio Chacon receives the Silver Star and Purple Heart for his bravery in WWII.

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

The transportation infrastructure includes the following streets:

### North-South

- Santa Fe Street - Major Arterial
- Chihuahua Street - Local
- Zikio Chacon Street - Local
- Alfredo Subia Place - Local
- Bandera Way - Local

### East-West

- Calleros Court - Local
- Montestruc Street - Local
- Canal Street - Local
- Charles Street - Local
- Alley - between Charles and Canal



**Above:** This high curb on Canal St. attempts to divert floodwaters away from the residence and into a nearby culvert intake in the street. The sidewalk is drained during storms by its own small intake.

Storm drainage is a concern on Canal Street where puddles of water collect on sidewalks and streets when it rains. Fixing potholes and new paving on dirt alleys would greatly enhance the neighborhood.

The utilities in Chihuahuita include a number of systems that are crucial for quality of life. They include storm and sanitary sewers, water lines, gas lines, electric service, telephone and cable wiring. Utility infrastructure is primarily located on streets, sidewalks and alleys.

El Paso Water Utilities (EPWU), Texas Gas Service, El Paso Electric Company, Southwestern Bell telephone and Time Warner cable did not indicate any major plans or changes specifically in the Chihuahuita neighborhood. EPWU is considering possible expansion of the water treatment plant, but not in the near future. EPWU is studying well usage in the area. This is the case with the improvements planned along Santa Fe Street. Every utility company is evaluating the construction schedule to take advantage of the comprehensive street excavation for this portion of the Central Business District III project.

Major piping and cabling along Santa Fe Street that may support the Chihuahuita neighborhood will likely be refurbished or replaced as part of this larger project, and may affect the neighborhood during the construction stage.

1950s

Chihuahuita receives gas and electricity. The neighborhood also has its streets paved.



**Above:** This alley between Canal St. and Charles St. has been paved, reducing dust.

**Below:** This Canal St. sidewalk is less than pedestrian friendly.



The agency responsible for curbs, sidewalks and streets is the City of El Paso's Street Department. During 2002 and 2003 most of Chihuahuita's dirt alleys were repaved with millings. Additionally, all of the streets were *repaved*. Since the majority of the neighborhood infrastructure concerns continue to focus on curbs, sidewalks and streets, the plan's objective will also maintain this focus.

**Objective:** *Address lack of street lighting and inadequate drainage.*

**Action:** Request installation of street lights at the following locations:

- Northwest corner at 610 Canal Street.
- Alley behind 608 Canal Street.
- Alley behind 506 Canal Street.
- Alley midpoint of Block F.
- Alley west of railroad tracks behind 319 Charles.
- Alley between Montestruc/Calleros and Santa Fe/Chihuahua Block 62 behind 911 Santa Fe.

**Action:** Improve storm drainage problems on paved surfaces in the following areas:

- Water on the west side of the Canal/Bandera intersection does not reach the storm drain on the east side of Canal and Bandera.
- Flooding in the alley behind apartments at 901-919 Chihuahua.
- Drainage in roadway along Canal Street along the following locations: 500-404 Canal and 526, 524, 522 Canal.

1960's

President Johnson and Mexican President Ordaz meet at the Santa Fe Bridge and sign the Treaty of 1963. As a result, the Franklin Canal is relocated and railroad tracks are constructed through Chihuahuita.

1969

Lions Placita Park is created.

**Objective:** Support Street Department maintenance of Chihuahuita's streets, streetlights, curbs, and alleys.

**Action:** Educate all neighborhood residents on the Street Department functions and on how best to contact them. Further, educate all residents of the Street Department's user-friendly Internet Work Request Form. With this request, any resident can submit a work request for the following items:



- Potholes
- Asphalt Work
- Alley
- Median
- Pond
- Paint Crossing
- Crack Sealing
- Unpaved Road
- Sweeping
- Traffic Lights
- Flasher
- Road Striping
- Ditch
- Medians
- Graffiti
- Traffic Signs
- Downtown Street Lighting
- Remove Old Electric Poles

**Action:** Repaint and maintain the pedestrian crosswalks and street lines throughout the neighborhood.

**Action:** Complete paving of the public alley adjacent to the parcel at 429 Charles Road.

**Action:** Educate Chihuahuita residents and the neighborhood association on the importance of streetlight replacement requests. These requests are made through the El Paso Electric Company.

**Action:** Maintain a computer and internet connection at the Community Center for residents to input work requests.

**Left:** Streetlights provide greater security and increase pedestrian activity a night.



Don Rios Collection

1974

Streetcar operation in El Paso comes to an end.

1976

Chihuahuita Improvement Association is created.

1977

Chihuahuita receives city bus service.



**Top:** The new El Paso Police Dept. storefront station in Union Plaza is seven blocks away from Chihuahuita.

**Above:** The U.S. Border Patrol constantly monitors the international boundary south of Chihuahuita which has historically been a problem area for crime.

## CRIME PREVENTION AND SAFETY ISSUES

The neighborhood's location next to the Rio Grande and U.S./Mexico International Boundary make it a prime area for illegal entry, or criminals trying to leave the United States. Most problems come from persons in transit through the area. Although occasional serious crimes have occurred, the overall crime rate is very low compared to other parts of the City.

The Patrol Area Representative assigned to the neighborhood is very active. There is also a nearby Police Storefront office in Fire Station 11 located on Leon Street in the Union Plaza District. The Community Action Team (CAT) worked in South El Paso for six months in 2003. The CAT's purpose is to educate the community on gang violence, domestic violence, crimes against children, underage drinking, alternative youth programs, and health fairs for the area. It also works with the El Paso Independent School District (EPISD).

**Objective:** *Increased Police presence.*

**Action:** Work with El Paso Police Dept. on a program to increase Police Patrols during the hours of midnight to 3 a.m., Thursday, Friday, and Saturdays.

**Action:** Begin a Neighborhood Watch Program with the Police Department.

**Action:** Keep the neighborhood residents involved in all programs, events, and projects affecting the neighborhood.

**Objective:** Restore the pedestrian-friendly, cohesive neighborhood environment.

**Action:** Consider creating traffic calming and/or other safe and aesthetically appealing amenities in the neighborhood.

*Possible Partners: Border Patrol, Building Permits and Inspections, Planning Department, Police and Fire Departments, Engineering (Traffic & Transportation) Department, Street Department, and the Chihuahuita Neighborhood Association*

1978

Chihuahuita endorses the Urban Development Action Grant.

1979

Chihuahuita receives recommendation for historic designation by the city's Historic Landmark Commission.



**Above and Below:** Chihuahuita Park and Recreation Center is the cultural and community focal point for neighborhood residents.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES, PARKS AND RECREATION

Cultural resources in the neighborhood include the people, structures, and archaeological heritage.

**Objective:** *Preserve and enhance the cultural resources of the neighborhood.*

**Action:** Initiate an education program about the neighborhood that highlights its attributes and publicizes the area as a historic gem.

**Objective:** *Maintain and improve the cultural resources offered in the neighborhood.*

**Action:** Educate the neighborhood residents on the methods and techniques to maintain, enhance and rehabilitate the neighborhoods' historic structures.

*Possible Partners: Quality of Life section of City government (Arts & Culture, Community Development, Museums, Parks, Engineering, Building Permits and Inspections), Planning Department, and other civic organizations that promote art, history, cultural events within the City.*



Freddie Moreles

1984

Kent Halla renovates several tenements in Chihuahuita on Chihuahua Street.



**Above:** The historic character of Chihuahuita is preserved in its distinctive architecture.

**Below:** Regular maintenance would prevent deterioration and more serious long term problems.



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION/ARCHITECTURAL CONTROL

The neighborhood possesses a unique physical and cultural environment, including structures, and historic character of the neighborhood. Some structures are properly maintained, but others are suffering due to lack of maintenance. Chihuahuita is in a historic district, meaning that the exterior appearance of the structures in the neighborhood is subject to review by the Historic Preservation Commission. Historic Guidelines can be obtained in the Planning Department.

**Objective:** *Ensure that all structures are properly maintained.*

**Action:** Investigate possible sources of rehabilitation and maintenance funds for residents and owners.

**Action:** Encourage the ongoing maintenance of the existing structures in the district.

**Action:** Encourage involvement of maintaining structures within the Chihuahuita neighborhood by means of a pilot rehabilitation project.

*Possible Partners: Historic Landmark Commission, Planning Department, Building Permits and Inspections, Community Development, other El Paso Historic Neighborhood Associations and local organizations that are striving to preserve the City of El Paso's rich historic past.*

1990

Chihuahuita is awarded for being the best in the city for their beautification efforts.

1991

Chihuahuita is granted historical district status by the City of El Paso.



**Top:** Existing neighborhood level commercial use on Santa Fe St.

**Above:** Potential location for new neighborhood serving commercial uses on Santa Fe St.

**Below:** Historic postcard showing onlookers on building roofs during the Battle of Juarez.



El Paso Public Library

## EMPLOYMENT/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This neighborhood is eager to improve the quality of life for themselves and others through educational opportunities and training. Chihuahuita is presently within the Empowerment Zone and eligible for a number of benefits. New small business development may be eligible for a number of grants or special funding opportunities.

**Objective:** Enhanced pedestrian environment in the area's commercial centers along Santa Fe Street.

**Action:** Encourage pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and streets, implementing traffic calming measures, and planting landscaping.

**Objective:** Create new neighborhood-friendly, locally owned, sustainable businesses that will meet the neighborhood's daily needs, build on a base of "mom and pop" businesses and bring new vitality to the neighborhood's commercial centers.

**Action:** Work with the Empowerment Zone to assist the growth of desirable businesses.

*Possible Partners: Empowerment Zone, Economic Development Department of the City, Community Development, Planning Department, and other financial institutions in the City, and the Chihuahuita Neighborhood Association*

**Objective:** Capitalize on Chihuahuita's Mexican Revolution connection and history as El Paso's oldest neighborhood.

**Action:** Promote the creation of a Mexican Revolution Museum in the old El Paso Laundry building that attracts tourists and El Pasoans, serves as an anchor for other businesses in the area and employs neighborhood residents.

*Possible Partners: Empowerment Zone, Economic Development Department of the City, Community Development, El Paso Museum of Art, El Paso Public Library, El Paso History Museum, financial institutions in the city, local historians and other interested individuals*

1993

United States Border Patrol initiates Operation Blockade and Operation Hold the Line. Henry Kissinger visits the Chihuahuita neighborhood.



Laura Bush

1996

Laura Bush, wife of Texas Governor George W. Bush's, visits Chihuahuita.



**Top:** Trucking dock and storage area for commercial import company on Canal St.  
**Above:** Bus facility adjacent to residence on Chihuahua St.

## NUISANCES

Like other residential areas, several nuisances can be found within the Chihuahuita neighborhood. Some nuisances can result from internal or external factors. For example, a negative external factor is the location of Santa Fe Street and the Paso del Norte (PDN) Bridge port-of-entry a few hundred feet from the residential core of the neighborhood. An internal example relates to the grandfathered mix of uses within the neighborhood whereby industrial and commercial businesses co-exist with residential uses.

The commercial land uses along the eastern portion of Canal Street contribute to nuisance problems for residents. In addition to traffic concerns, negative impacts include excessive noise and trash generated by commercial and warehousing businesses and the vibration and exhaust fumes from large trucks and trains that serve them. The recent proliferation of bus terminals along Santa Fe Street is not legally permitted at this location because the property is not zoned for such use. Zoning violations are an additional concern within the neighborhood and include vacant lots used for car storage or junk yards or houses with too many pets.

**Objective:** *Reconcile land use conflicts within the neighborhood*

**Action:** Use Neighborhood Plan process to consider down zoning the industrial parcels in the interior of the neighborhood to lower intensity commercial and residential districts, such as the S-D (Special Development) zoning district, apartment districts or neighborhood serving commercial

**Action:** Ensure zoning code regulations are enforced for residential uses.

**Action:** Ensure non-residential uses meet zoning code regulations within the neighborhood and identify noncompliance by existing uses.

*Possible Partners: Building Permits & Inspections Department, Planning Department*

**Action:** Discourage bus company terminals from locating on the west side of Santa Fe Street or the interior streets of the Chihuahuita neighborhood.

2002

Chihuahuita Neighborhood Plan begins.



**Above:** Paso del Norte port-of-entry southbound pedestrian entrance adjacent to Lions Placita.

**Objective:** Clean up area including Lions Placita Park and maintain it at a higher standard

**Action:** Implement daily park clean-ups and neighborhood volunteer clean-up efforts.

**Action:** Provide more trash receptacles near pedestrian ways leading to toll booth collection facilities and throughout the small park.

**Action:** Have community-clean up days that include participation from the commercial property owners in the area.

**Action:** Augment existing trees with new, low-water use, native or adapted trees and shrubs to provide additional shade and green space.

**Below:** Panoramic view of Lions Placita showing its proximity to Chihuahuita.



2003

President George W. Bush appoints Chihuahuita native Florentino A. Subia to the Board of Directors of Legal Services Corporation.

2004

The Chihuahuita Neighborhood Plan is approved by El Paso City Council.

