



CITY
— ON A —
HILL



YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD 360 ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

City on a Hill firmly believes that it is planted in the neighborhood of Nob Hill by God to love and serve its neighbors. Although this church has just recently moved to the Nob Hill community, City on a Hill has past involvement with this neighborhood and there is a deep commitment within the church body to know and love its neighbors well.

Located in a diverse part of the city, City on a Hill looks fairly different from its neighbors; however, the church strongly believes that with God's guidance and an open heart, it will reach community members of all backgrounds. Nob Hill is a special place where City on a Hill has the opportunity to live up to its name for the glory of Jesus.

NEIGHBORHOOD SNAPSHOT

The new City on a Hill church building lies within the historic neighborhood of Nob Hill -- a popular tourist location and treasured region in the city center of Albuquerque. The neighborhood defined for City on a Hill in this report essentially extends 1 mile in each direction from the new church location at 3715 Silver Ave SE. A map of the defined neighborhood is shown in Figure 1 and includes the 5 census tract boundaries covering the neighborhood labeled Home Base, Ridgecrest, SW, UNM Border and Big West for this assessment.

Some residents have been invested in the neighborhood for a long time while others have moved here more recently. No matter what brought them to the neighborhood, the residents of Nob Hill are friendly and passionate about where they live. While City on a Hill has been warmly received overall, the neighborhood has a strong progressive political leaning which may create some tension between the church and certain community members.



HISTORY OF NOB HILL

Nob Hill is one of the earliest developments within Albuquerque as it is located along the historic Route 66. The neighborhood was developed beginning in the 1920s and was named "Nob Hill" after the fashionable area in San Francisco.

In the 1960s, Nob Hill suffered a decline upon the opening of Coronado and Winrock shopping centers in the Northeast Heights and the opening of I-40 which drew traffic from Central Avenue. Since the 1980s and 1990s, Nob Hill has been rebounding through the designation of several historic sites and the renovation of various community sectors and neighborhoods. The development of the Nob Hill shopping district, including eclectic stores and fashionable restaurants, draws people from the surrounding neighborhoods as well as other parts of the city. Amid the neighborhood's continued development, the Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART) project significantly disrupted businesses along the Central corridor -- a new challenge to which community members and businesses are adapting.



CITY ON A HILL



The church of City on a Hill, then named Midtown Fellowship, was first planted in 1999 and led by Pastor Dave Bruskas. As the church grew, it moved to the Lobo Theater in Nob Hill and changed its name to City on a Hill. The church had a vision of reaching Albuquerque and the world with the good news of Jesus by preaching the gospel and planting churches. To further that vision, City on a Hill merged with Mars Hill Church in Seattle and became Mars Hill Albuquerque in 2009. A period of rapid church growth ensued.

After Mars Hill came to an end in 2014, the church became independent once more and was known as North Church. In the years following, the church went through a season of healing, leadership transition, and member attrition that shaped the community of the church. New members have also joined, and now roughly half of the membership have joined since the ending of Mars Hill.

In 2019, Pastor Ryan Williams became the Lead Pastor of North Church. In 2020, the church began planning to relocate from a rented space to a permanent church building. Pastor Ryan led the church in an endeavor called "First Light," to increase the spirit of generosity in the church so as to refocus on three main goals: preaching the gospel, planting churches, and serving the city.

Though this church has walked through a difficult season, many of its members are eager to return to the Nob Hill community and reaffirm some of the original mission and vision from the church's history. Appropriately, the church has reclaimed the name City on a Hill.



KEY ELECTED OFFICIALS AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHICS

CITY OFFICIALS

The elected officials who represent the City on a Hill neighborhood are:

State Senate District 16 - Antoinette Sedillo Lopez

State House District 18 - Gail Chasey; District 19 - Javier Martínez

City Council District 6 - Pat Davis

Albuquerque Public Schools District 4 - Barbara Peterson

AREA OF STUDY

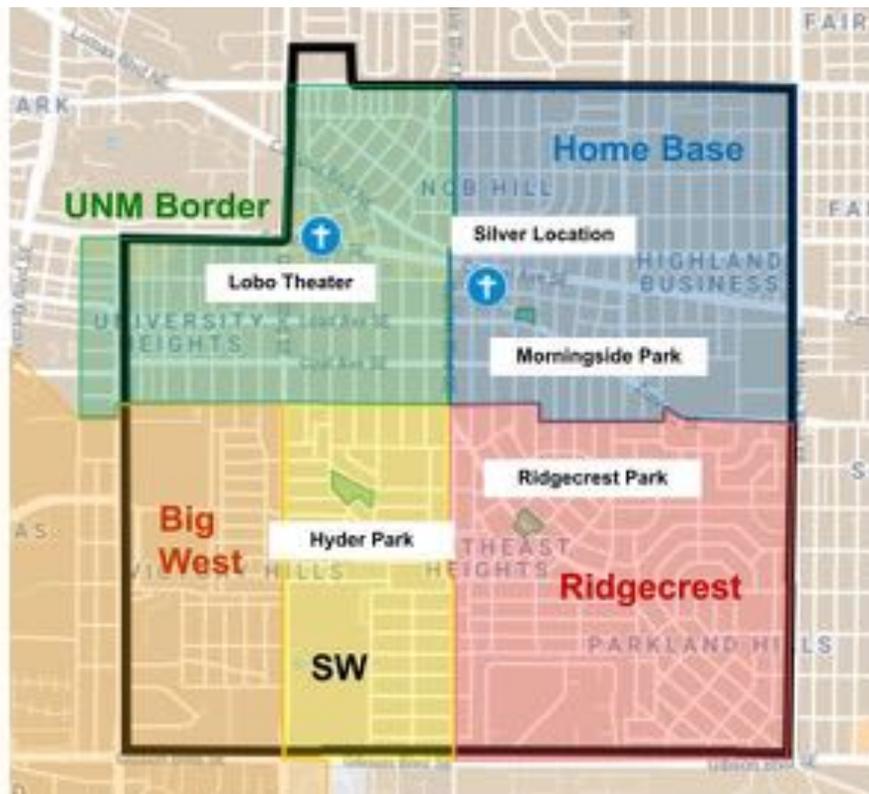
Census data was used to learn more about our neighborhood. The area within a roughly 1 mile radius (indicated by the black border) of the church comprises 5 census tracts. These tracts have been labeled Home Base (the tract immediately encompassing the church campus), UNM Border (the tract west of the church campus that borders the UNM campus), Ridgecrest (the track south of the campus), Southwest (the tract southwest of the campus), and Big West (a geographically large tract that is partially within the 1 mile radius).

Boundary we examined is:

- Lomas (N)
- San Mateo (E)
- Gibson (S)
- Yale (W)

Places of interest:

- New building
- Lobo Theater
- Hyder Park
- Morningside Park



POPULATION BY CENSUS TRACT

Figure 2 depicts where people live within the City on a Hill neighborhood. Most of the residences in the neighborhood are single family dwellings. However, particularly in the Big West census tract, there are multi-family dwellings as well.

Big West	29.5%
Ridgecrest	19.6%
Home Base	19.1%
UMN Border	19.0%
SW	12.8%

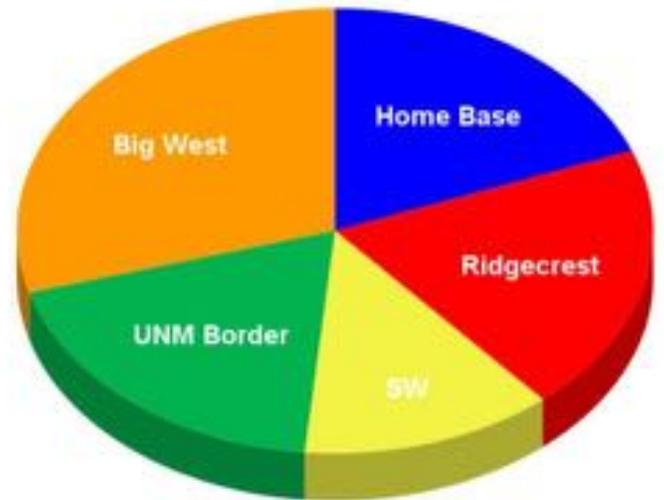


Figure 2

POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

Overall, the neighborhood age distribution is somewhat similar to Albuquerque as a whole (shown by Figure 3) with fewer children and more student/young professionals (skewed by the neighborhood location being so close to the University of New Mexico). However, within the different census tracts there are significant differences in the age distribution with the Home Base and Ridgecrest areas having an older population and the SW and Big West having significantly more children.

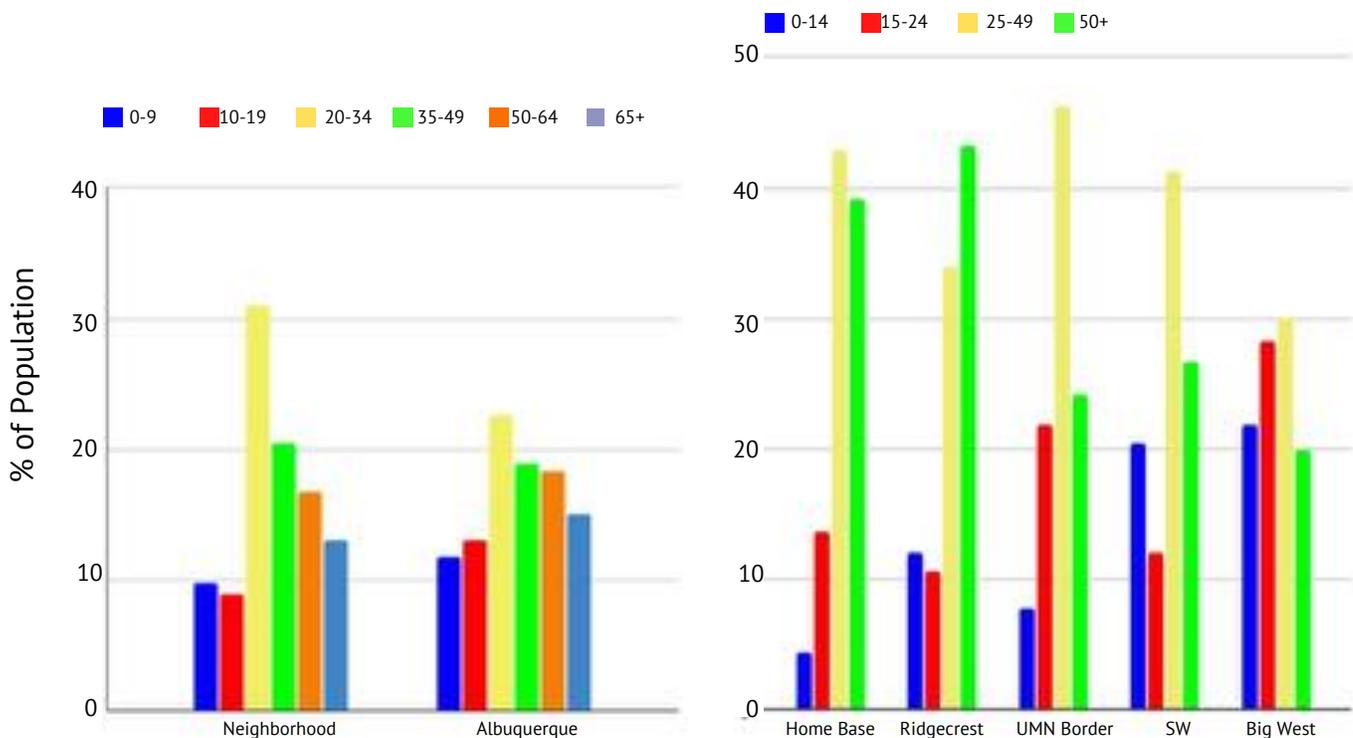


Figure 3

POPULATION BY ETHNICITY

Figure 4 indicates that the ethnicity in the neighborhood is generally more “white” than Albuquerque as a whole, but similar to age, the neighborhood varies by the different sectors.

Figure 5 shows that the SW and Big West areas have a significantly greater percentage of Hispanic/Latino representation.

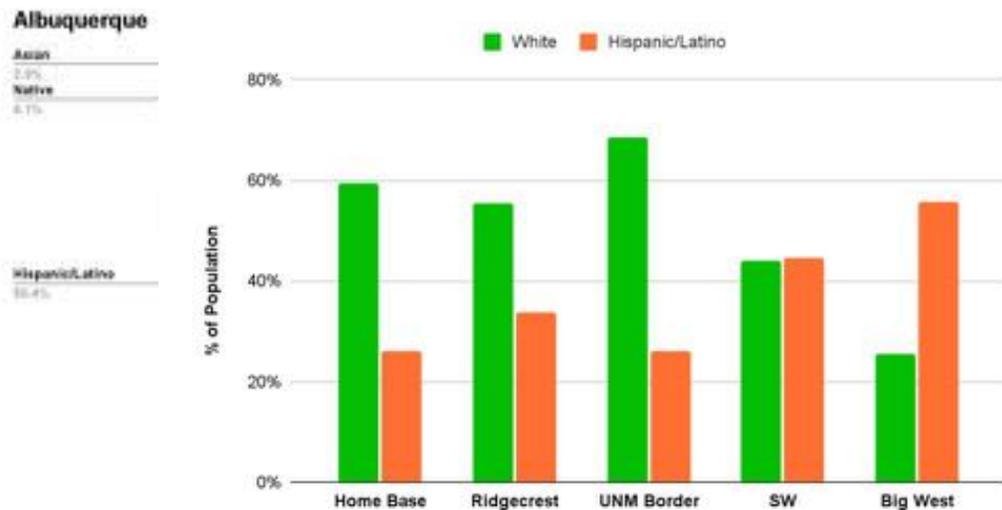


Figure 4

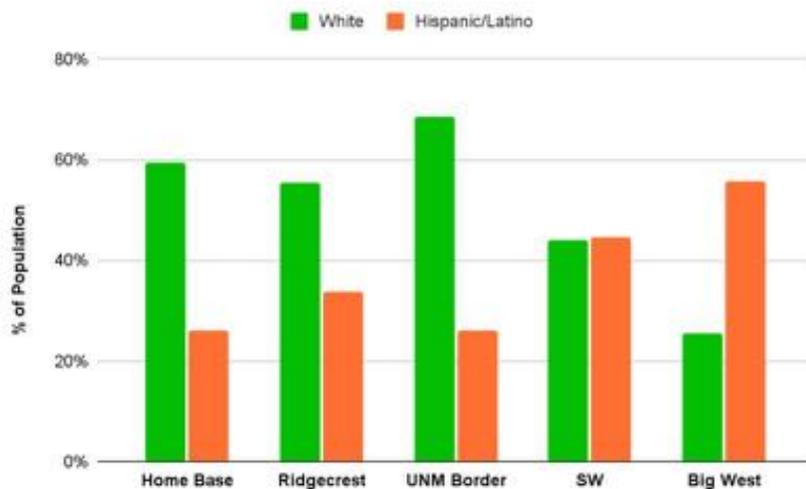


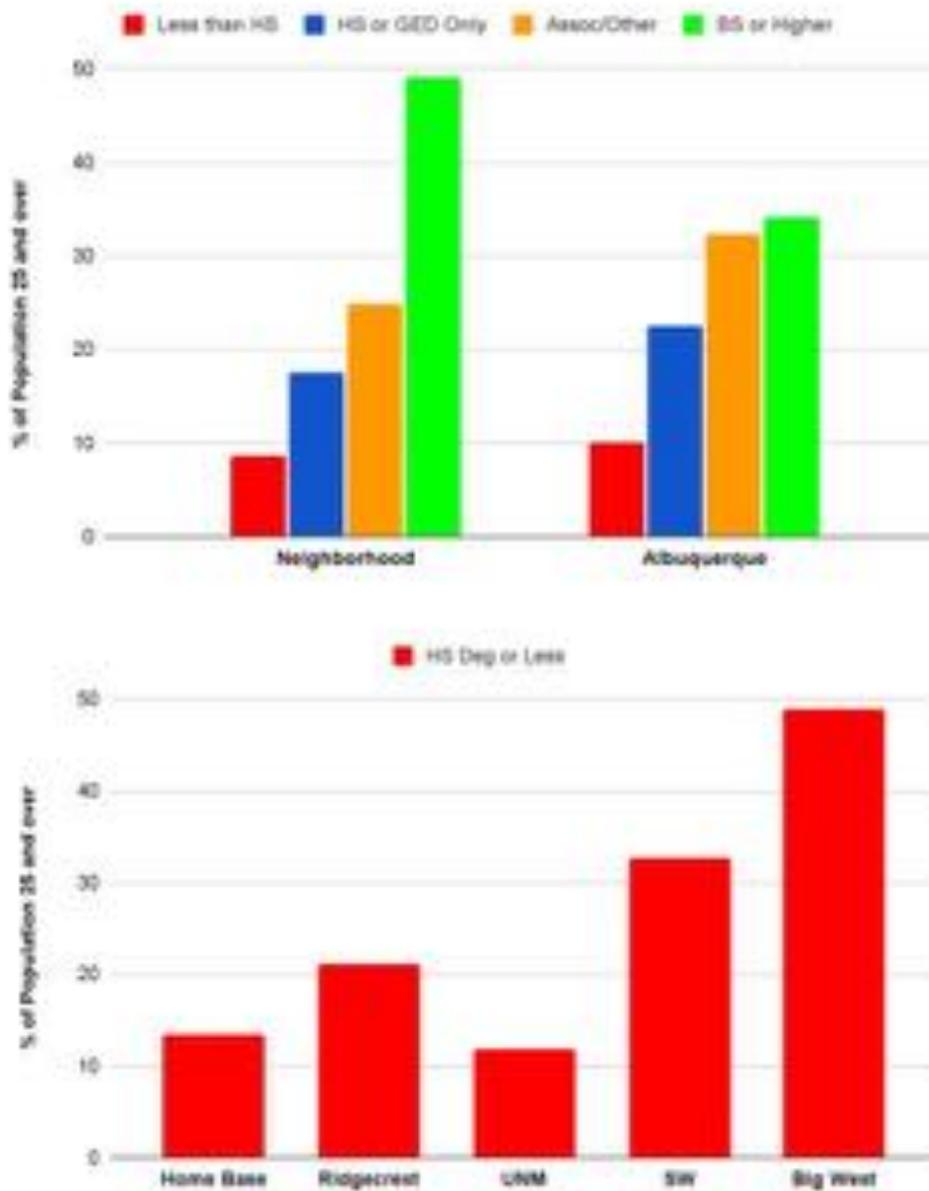
Figure 5

Census data indicate there are pockets within the neighborhood that have greater rates of poverty than Albuquerque. These pockets are in the southeast and southwest of the defined neighborhood area.

POPULATION BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

On average residents of the neighborhood are more highly educated than Albuquerque as a whole as seen in Figure 6. However, in areas slightly further out from the church, particularly in the southwest, there is a significant education gap with almost 50% of residents having only a high school diploma or less.

Figure 6



NEIGHBORHOOD OBSERVATIONS

NEIGHBORHOOD INTERACTION

While there are many locations where residents of Nob Hill gather, Hyder Park is especially popular. In the summer, people are drawn to the park by Tasty Tuesdays, which include food trucks, and throughout the year groups of people congregate around pets and other shared interests. In addition, residents regularly take advantage of the walkability of Nob Hill. Families, couples, or single individuals can be seen walking or riding bikes around the neighborhood.

People’s homes were also observed to contribute to a unique type of neighbor interaction: many homes have “In This House, We Believe” signs posted in their front yards sharing the social and political beliefs of the residents. Additionally, many homes have front porch areas with seating. Interestingly, neighbors were rarely observed occupying these seating areas.



LOCAL BUSINESS

Business plays a significant role in the life of Nob Hill. The neighborhood is dominated mostly by organizations related to education, such as the University of New Mexico (UNM), the Health Sciences Center, and grade schools, and consumer-related small businesses including restaurants and novelty shops. The business activities are largely centered around high-traffic streets such as Central and Lomas. Despite the prominence of local business in daily life in Nob Hill, small businesses have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic which led some to close. As a result, Central Avenue is now surrounded by several empty storefronts.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

Several churches and other buildings of worship for non-Christian faiths are located around City on a Hill. However, City on a Hill stands out among churches in the area for its reformed doctrinal views.

NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEYS

The following summarizes the results of 57 surveys conducted around the Nob Hill neighborhood through April and May of 2021.

FRIENDLINESS

A major draw to the Nob Hill community according to its residents was the friendliness of people in the neighborhood. Residents have experienced a sense of community where they live which makes Nob Hill a great place to live. While friendliness and community are already important parts of daily life in Nob Hill, residents also suggested that the church could help facilitate community gatherings.

LOCATION

Many residents noted the value of living in Nob Hill due to its proximity to other prominent locations in the community. Locations of note include Hyder Park, Central Avenue businesses, and the UNM campus. Given the importance of community areas around Nob Hill, many residents noted how the church could contribute to maintaining local parks and infrastructure.

ROOTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Nob Hill has a unique mix of individuals having lived in the community for decades and others having lived in the community for only a handful of years. In fact, among survey respondents, there seemed to be an almost even split between those who had lived in Nob Hill for less than five years and those who lived in Nob Hill between 10 and 20 years.

TRAFFIC

A major concern among Nob Hill residents is the amount of fast-driving traffic going through their community and, similarly, the frequency of automobile accidents. The ART line seems to have contributed to the increased traffic along major roads in Nob Hill, particularly Lead and Coal. The traffic concerns have led several Nob Hill residents to get involved in finding solutions by serving on traffic committees and seeking assistance from local government officials.

HOMELESSNESS

The most prominent concern for residents of Nob Hill is the number of unhoused people in the community. Residents noted how the unhoused population has been known to cause disturbances. Addressing housing instability is another area in which the community wants to see church participation. However, a continuing theme heard from the neighbors was a plea not to start ministries that would attract large numbers of unhoused people to the area surrounding City on a Hill.

CURRENT TENSIONS

PATHS TO COMMUNITY WELLBEING

A lot of the tension occurring in Nob Hill among both residents and church members involves conflicting views on how best to promote community wellbeing. For example, there are multiple perspectives on how to address homelessness. While some residents want to simply remove unhoused and unsheltered people from Nob Hill, others stress more individual-centered solutions such as mental health services and housing resources. Other factors of community wellbeing that have become contentious include traffic and the revitalization of the East Central business district. Neighbors around the new City on a Hill church building expressed thankfulness that the church was not torn down and converted into upscale apartments.

POLITICAL CLIMATE AND INCLUSIVITY

Nob Hill residents largely reflect a strongly progressive and inclusive political outlook, including an emphasis on racial and LGBT+ issues. Most neighbors feel strongly that progressive politics is the key to bringing about community wellbeing. The progressive nature of Nob Hill is particularly apparent in comments from some community members that churches holding to a traditional Christian sexual ethic would not be welcome in their neighborhood. To some community members, orthodox Christian beliefs appear to exclude certain populations such as the LGBT+ community from meaningful participation in church life. The age-old question persists: how can the church maintain its biblical foundation while witnessing to and welcoming people of all backgrounds? The neighborhood climate certainly challenges City on a Hill to faithfully present the gospel in a way that applies to all people regardless of politics, sexuality, gender, or class.



CHURCHES AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN NOB HILL

Nob Hill contains a diverse set of Christian churches as well as representation from other world religions, primarily Buddhism. Representatives from City on a Hill were able to meet with leaders at City Presbyterian Church whose church shares many doctrinal values with City on a Hill. Immanuel Presbyterian Church borders City on a Hill to the west. They have a large, beautiful building but a declining church population. Other Christian churches in the area include Monte Vista Christian Church, Cross Christian Fellowship Route 66, Victory Outreach, University Heights UMC, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Adat Yeshua Messianic Synagogue, Metro Church of God in Christ, Garfield Gospel Chapel, and The Experience Church.

ATTITUDE TOWARD SPIRITUALITY

The neighborhood has diverse attitudes towards spirituality and Christianity. Spirituality is valued in the community, but spiritual beliefs in Nob Hill have a notable postmodern approach. There is a Christian presence in the community that has been encountered during prayer walks and surveying. Furthermore, during door-to-door surveying, very few people disrespected or demeaned those who knocked on doors and shared their church affiliation; however, several individuals noted that a church holding to a traditional Christian sexual ethic would not be a good fit for the neighborhood. In this way, the spiritual climate of the neighborhood is closely tied to its progressive political leaning.

RELIGION AT UNM

Early research of Christian ministries at UNM has shown that many churches and ministries no longer have a presence on campus. There is a need for Christian ministries for college students near the university, and the City on a Hill church building is strategically positioned within a one mile walk of the campus border.



CITY ON A HILL ASSETS



CHURCH BUILDING

Once renovation of the new church building is completed, City on a Hill will have a beautiful, large building with a sanctuary, classrooms, and a stage. The building is placed one block from a major thoroughfare in a popular and historic part of Albuquerque which is useful in reaching the community. While in the past the church building has been a blight in the neighborhood, it will soon serve as a bright spot in the community to share the gift of hospitality. It will be well-equipped to meet the community's need for more events that draw people together. The building may also be employed for events ministering to nearby college students. Morningside and Hyder Parks are near the church building as well and offer locations to engage the community.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND INTERESTS

According to a survey conducted among the City on a Hill congregation, the church has a wide variety of spiritual gifts. Several respondents noted administrative and leadership skills which are essential for building new ministries. Many members expressed specific interest in serving unhoused people, public schools, refugee/immigrant communities, and college students. These are all prominent populations in Nob Hill that City on a Hill church has the capacity to engage with the love of Christ. For example, the new neighborhood has two elementary schools that are classified as Title 1, and the nearby high school has practical needs as well. Connections have already been made with Whittier Elementary School and Highland High School and both schools have expressed interest in growing a partnership.



PERSEVERANCE

The church has had its fair share of hardship especially with the collapse of Mars Hill and the resulting leadership dysfunction. God has given the people of City on a Hill a spirit of perseverance, and many members have developed a deep connectedness and commitment to the church. In addition, the church body has a strong faith that God has plans to grow and use the church for his purposes. By human terms, the church should have closed its doors over the last ten years given the trials and struggles; however, God has equipped the church to continue ministering in the face of these circumstances.



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

God has given the church favor among many leaders in the new neighborhood including those in local schools, the Nob Hill Neighborhood Association, and with city councilor Pat Davis. During interactions with neighbors and local leaders, church members have been well received. During prayer walks and door-to-door surveying, believers who live in the area have been a source of encouragement.



COMMUNITY WANTS, NEEDS AND DREAMS

Having listened to the neighbors, a large variety of desires were heard from them. From the input gathered and assimilated wants, needs and dreams were developed, and here is a list of what was perceived to be their priorities.

COMMUNITY WANTS

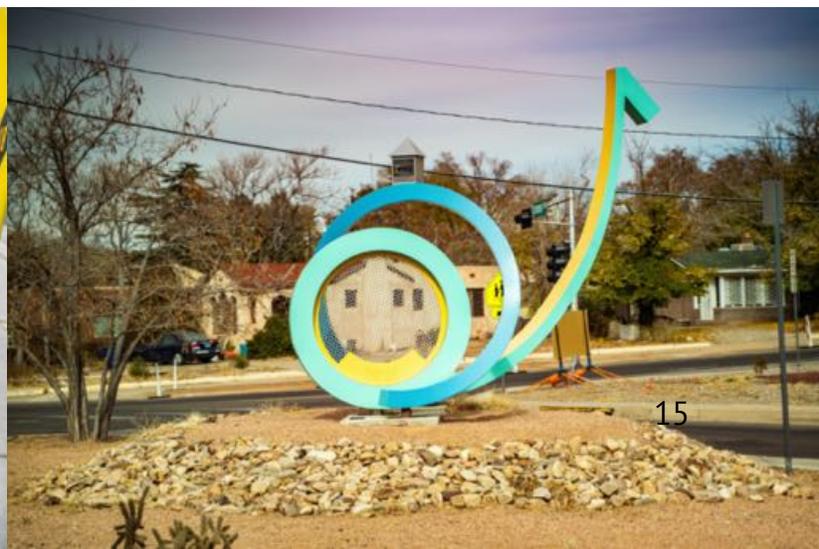
- Renovation of the church building
- Landscaping in the median outside the church at Silver and Solano
- Community-building events
- An approach to homelessness that does not attract more unhoused people to the neighborhood

COMMUNITY NEEDS

- A witness to the love of Christ and to the fruit of obedience to His Word that is for all people regardless of politics, sexuality, gender, or class
- Biblical church services, relationships, and community gatherings
- Investment in primary schools and education as well as support for Title 1 schools

COMMUNITY DREAMS

- People experiencing housing instability would have appropriate mental health and physical resources so as to be off the streets
- Streets that are safe to drive and walk without fear of accidents
- Every kid struggling in school would have a loving, effective tutor
- A well-maintained neighborhood with renovation of neglected buildings



NEXT STEPS

Given what the Neighborhood Assessment Team has learned over the process of this investigation into the neighborhood, the following steps have been determined for further action to love and engage the community.

Housing Instability

- Partner with those already working with unhoused people in the neighborhood
- Become trained to work with those experiencing housing instability
- Connect people with resources via social workers within the City of Albuquerque Community Safety Department

Education

- Highland High School - Renovate and volunteer at the HUB; Tax Project in the spring
- Whittier Elementary School - Participate in Community Council meetings, the Albuquerque Reads program, Genius Hour, and school supply drives
- UNM - Look for opportunities to support existing UNM outreach programs including International Students, Inc (ISI)

Community Building Events

- Create community-focused events that will draw people out of their homes
- Create events oriented towards moms with young kids or homeschooled children
- Collaborate with nearby neighborhood associations, especially the Nob Hill Neighborhood Association

Other Areas of Action

- Collaborate with EQUIP for training to better love LGBT+ identifying people
- Renovate the triangular median in front of the church
- Seek out partnership opportunities with other churches or organizations in the new neighborhood to make a greater impact