

3. History & Preservation

Santa Fe was established as a provincial capital of New Spain in 1610 and officially named – La Villa Real de la Santa Fe de San Francisco de Asis, attaching the name of its Patron Saint, St. Francis of Assisi. The city was settled near the banks of the Santa Fe River as it flowed out of the nearby mountains, and was laid out according to the “Laws of the Indies”, issued by Spain’s King Philip II in 1573 to be used for Spanish settlements in the new world. The city’s central downtown plaza and the layout of the surrounding streets are evidence of the King’s decree.

After the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, it was left to Diego de Vargas and a military force to reclaim the settlement for the Spanish 12 years later. Santa Fe soon settled into its role as a northern trading outpost and small provincial administrative center for the Spanish Crown. Mexico’s independence from Spain in 1821 had far-reaching effects for Santa Fe as trade was officially opened with the United States. The Santa Fe Trail was established between the city and Independence, Missouri. Trade turned into U.S. military occupation just 25 years later in 1846. After the war with Mexico, New Mexico became a territory of the United States in 1850, when statehood was denied by a narrow U.S. Senate vote, and was finally admitted as the 47th state of the union January 6, 1912.



Photo Credit: New Mexico State Archives



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The Preservation Movement

Even before New Mexico became a state, a strong grassroots movement began in Santa Fe to preserve native New Mexico architecture in the city and end the spread of “imported” architectural styles. The authors of the first city plan in 1912, “Plan for Proposed Improvements in Santa Fe,” (the same year New Mexico gained statehood), recommended that the city only approve building permits that should be issued were those reflecting the architecture of what was termed “Santa Fe Style” or Spanish-Pueblo Revival architecture that consisted of a stucco façade with rounded corners that emulated native adobe construction.

“We further recommend that no building permits be issued to any person intending to build on any of the streets listed hereafter and indicated on the map as old or ancient streets until proper assurance is given that the architecture will conform exteriorally with the Santa Fe style.”

- Report of the Santa Fe City Planning Board, December 3, 1912.

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, preservation-minded citizens worked to put those recommendations into law. In 1957, Santa Fe adopted its first historic styles ordinance, which also established the city’s first historic district. Through amendments to this ordinance in 1983, additional districts were created and the city’s Historic Districts Review Board was established to review requests for demolition, alterations and new construction in these districts.

Historic Buildings

As Santa Fe continues to grow to include more contemporary development, the historic sections of town become even more critical to preserve. The half-century of historic preservation law in the city has become part of the city government’s daily functions. Some believe the historic preservation ordinances are too restrictive, while others believe that the city’s historic district regulations do not go far enough. The city continues to try and balance broad community support for preservation while allowing some flexibility for owners to modify their historic homes and properties.

The city contains over 100 individually listed properties on the National Register of Historic Places and State Register of Cultural Properties, Sites and Districts. In addition, four sites are listed as National Historic Landmarks:

- Palace of the Governors
- Santa Fe Plaza
- Barrio del Analco Historic District
- National Park Service Headquarters (located on Old Santa Fe Trail)

The preservation of the above listed buildings and historic areas are of local, state and national interest. The city will work closely with state and federal agencies to provide appropriate maintenance and protection of these areas.

The city separates historic properties into “significant”, “contributing” and “non-contributing” categories based on the level of historic integrity of the property and its social importance in the history of Santa Fe. Sena Plaza, an old family hacienda, is an example of a significant historic site in downtown Santa Fe. City staff and the city’s Historic Design Review Board combine to review hundreds of cases annually where applicants request some modification to historic homes and buildings in the city’s historic districts. Building additions, wall or fence construction, and door or window replacement are common changes to historic buildings that the city reviews for historic integrity.



Photo Credit: Maria Clokey, City of Santa Fe Multi Media

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Historic Neighborhoods

The city recognizes five historic districts that represent eras of common architectural styles or themes. These districts are shown on the Historic Districts and Landmarks map and include:

- Downtown and Eastside District
- Don Gaspar District
- Westside-Guadalupe District
- Historic Transition District
- Historic Review District

The Eastside, Don Gaspar and Westside Guadalupe districts represent thriving residential neighborhoods, and ones that are closely watched when it comes to physical change. The Eastside District contains some of Santa Fe's oldest and most physically intact neighborhoods. Old Santa Fe compounds are common in this area and street patterns are more irregular than in other parts of town suggesting some of the oldest development patterns off the Plaza.



Photo Credit: Richard Macpherson

The Don Gaspar District, part of the larger South Capitol Neighborhood, reflects railroad era development in Santa Fe (1890-1930). The district contains a variety of architectural styles including the bungalow. In some respects, this district reflects a time at which architecture was becoming a major topic of public debate in the City Different. New manners of design were being rapidly introduced in the city, and specifically this district, as an influx of people from the eastern part of the country settled in Santa Fe. The district is also characterized by a tightly-knit grid of streets, typical of the era's planned residential layout.

The Westside-Guadalupe Transition District includes homes along Agua Fria Street, the original Camino Real, or royal highway that connected Santa Fe to Mexico City. Most of the original homes are gone, but some houses in this area pre-date 1900. The district grew slowly from a more rural development pattern through most of its history until the rail yard was developed on the edge of the district. According to a study of the area, considerable growth occurred between 1920 and 1946.

Historic Downtown

The centerpiece and showcase of Santa Fe is its downtown. Built around the centuries old Plaza and the adjoining Palace of the Governors, the oldest public building in the United States, downtown has been a magnet for visitors for over a century. Spanish Pueblo Revival architecture and the small town pedestrian-oriented atmosphere have captured the hearts and minds of people from around the world. The combination of architecture and history provide Santa Fe with a strong tourist economy.



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Archaeological Sites

The city's preservation efforts are also geared toward identifying, cataloging and, where possible, preserving archaeological sites. In 1987, the city established archaeological review districts that require official reporting of archaeological discoveries as part of the land development review process. These districts include:

- Historic Downtown Archaeological Review District
- River and Trails Archaeological Review District,
- Suburban Archaeological Review District.

The city works with the New Mexico Archaeological Records Management Section of the State's Historic Preservation Division to allow on-site inspections, recovery and cataloging of sites in Santa Fe. This can involve the excavation and removal of human remains for scientific analysis after which reburial occurs.

Prehistoric sites have been discovered in Downtown Santa Fe, along the Santa Fe River and along two historic entrances into the city – Agua Fria and Galisteo Streets as well as in the area along the Old Santa Fe Trail. These finds remind us that the Santa Fe area had a substantial pre-columbian history.

So far, most of the archaeological sites analyzed that pre-date the European settlement of Santa Fe fall into either the latter part of the Developmental Period (A.D. 600-1200), the Coalition Period (1200-1325) or the Classic Period (1325-1600). The Developmental Period includes the period of the Anasazi culture, a people who were ancestors of the pueblo culture. It is believed that the pueblos of the Anasazi were abandoned by 1425 due to environmental conditions. But by the time Spanish exploration occurred in the 1540s, the pueblo culture had been re-established.

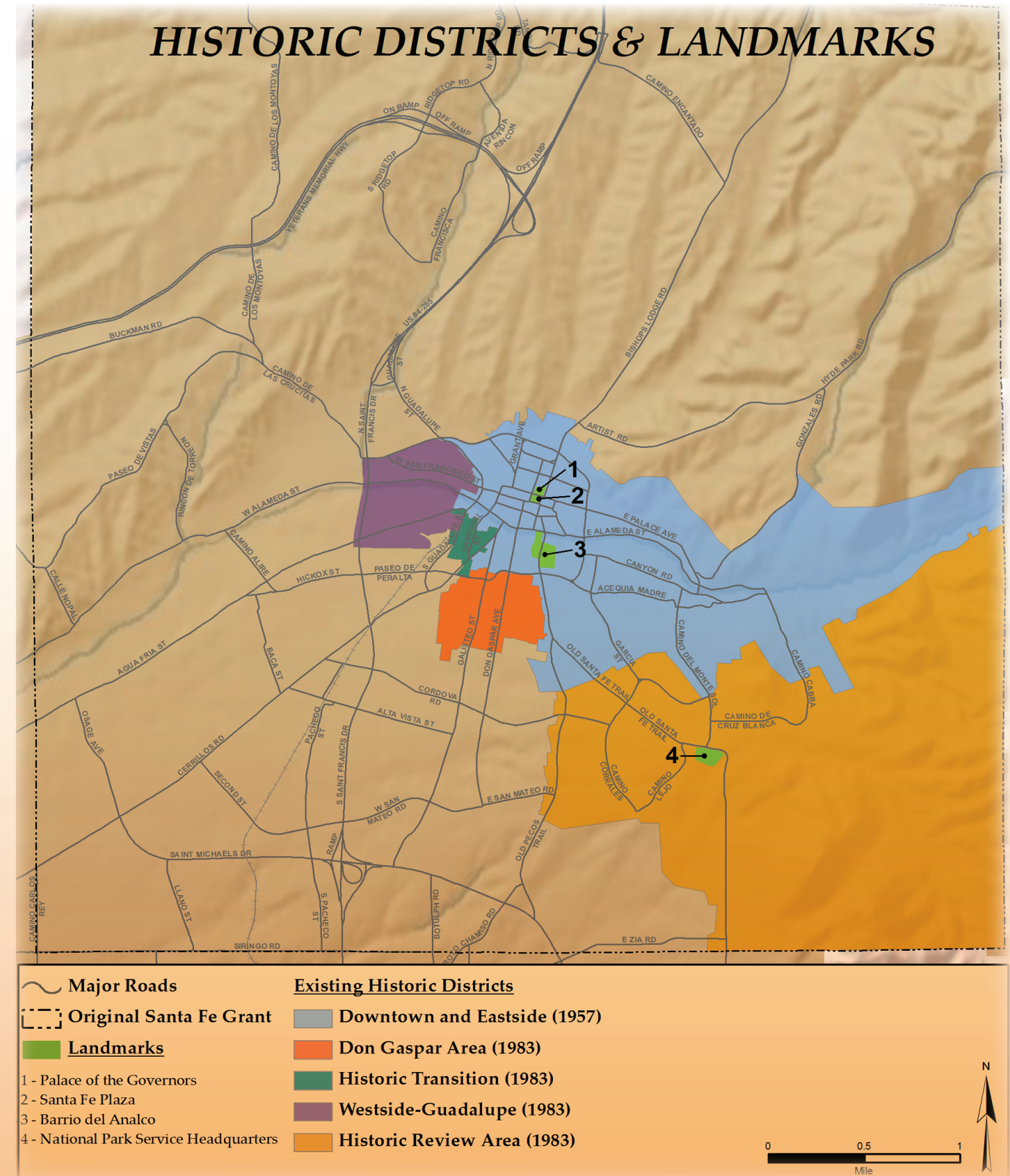


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