

# Unser Crossing 'Moving Very Quickly'



**SANCHEZ:**  
Says West  
Central could  
use TIDD

## Manager Says Work Should Start in Dec.

**BY JUAN-CARLOS RODRIGUEZ**  
*Journal Staff Writer*

Construction on the new Unser Crossing shopping center should begin in December, and stores could be open by the beginning of 2010, the project manager said Tuesday.

Angela Benson, project manager for the architecture and engineering division at DSA Architects LLC, which is designing the shopping center, said in spite of the economic downturn, Unser Crossing will be built.

"We are moving very quickly," Benson said at the Southwest Alliance of Neighbors' monthly meeting. "We are going to have our on- and off-site improvements done by August 2009."

Unser Crossing generated a hot

debate after City Councilor Ken Sanchez proposed it be included in the West Central Metropolitan Redevelopment Area — a special district that allows developments to waive impact fees and be eligible for other incentives. A portion of the site already was in the MRA area. Other councilors agreed it was a good development but argued it should not be designated as part of the MRA. They said it was on untouched land and could not be designated a blighted

site — a requirement to be part of an MRA.

Eventually councilors agreed on a compromise that cut \$1.8 million out of the developer's infrastructure costs by paying for some construction on city property around the site, but forced the developer to still pay \$1.8 million in impact fees.

Benson said a Lowe's home improvement store, a Defined Fitness gym and a CVS drugstore could be open by January 2010.

## Other economic impacts

Sanchez also addressed the group and talked about other economic issues. He said he spoke with representatives of Target, and a proposed store at Unser and I-40 has been postponed until at least 2010 because of the economic conditions. Sanchez said construction was to have started this year.

He also mentioned the possi-

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# Parent Participation Up

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bility of creating a tax increment development district along West Central. The area is already covered by an MRA plan, but Sanchez said a TIDD in the area would help with fostering new growth.

"I think we can start looking at a TIDD in this area," Sanchez said.

He said the City Council's recent approval of a TIDD for the Winrock mall area made him think the timing could be right for one on West Central. He also said the City Council will be looking at the impact fee system in Albuquerque.

"I truly believe that has hurt economic development in this area," Sanchez said.

## Good news on schools

West Mesa High School principal Blanca Lopez told SWAN she is pleased with an increase in parent participation during parent-teacher conferences this year.

"Five years ago when I first

came in, we had an open house, and we had about 200 parents. And we had at that time over 3,000 students. That wasn't very good," Lopez said. "So we decided to change things and we changed it from one night to a whole day. So we had parent conferences from 7:35 to 2:35 and then from 6 to 8 in the evening. And I'm proud to announce that right now we have 2,400 students and we had about 1,500 parents come."

Lopez said she is concerned about the poor condition of the street in front of the school and asked Sanchez what could be done. Sanchez said the city has about \$700,000 to do sidewalk and road improvements, but more money is needed because there is no stormwater drainage system in place at the location and that has to be installed at the same time.

"Hopefully we'll get that funding soon," Sanchez said.

## More buses possible

Finally, Andrew DeGarmo, an ABQ Ride planner, said the

city is considering a new bus service on the West Side.

"If you use the bus in the Southwest area, you know that our service is fairly limited. So what we're looking at doing is something kind of new to us, which is creating a circulator route in the Southwest area to try to help people get to their local destinations," DeGarmo said.

The loop route has not been determined, nor have intervals, he said, but community members were encouraged to start giving their ideas.

He said the route could use smaller vans and go into neighborhoods, taking people to schools, shopping or other destinations that are on the West Side.

"The advantage of a loop is you can cover a large area, but a disadvantage is you want to go in the opposite direction of the loop, you're going to have to go all the way around to just get a mile up the road. So we're going to have two-way service and a decent frequency," DeGarmo said.