



“Preserve and maintain the ancient landmarks, historical structures and traditions of Old Santa Fe; to guide its growth and development in such a way as to sacrifice as little as possible of that unique charm, born of age, tradition and environment which are the priceless assets and heritage of Old Santa Fe.”

This statement was written 77 years ago by the founders of the Old Santa Fe Association. It is the voice of those who love their community and want to nurture its values.

Our surroundings, the built environment and the natural, affect how we feel. Pressures in this country today are toward homogenization. The individual, the unique, the different are pushed toward conformity. A personal sense of place anchored to a particular community disappears when every place looks like and operates like everywhere else. Our identity individually and as a community is a fragile and priceless asset. Preserving our history is more than just respecting the built environment; it is understanding and dealing with the influences that shape the community over time.

The uniqueness and creativity of this community can enrich our lives if we insist on our own style, what we want, what works here, and refuse to follow unchallenged the trends in other places. We should take pride in the Lew Wallace observation that “Every action founded on experience elsewhere fails in New Mexico.”

Indeed our economic health is based on engaging the curiosity and fascination of those who seek a unique experience in visiting here.

Our municipal rules and regulations ought to reflect our value system, not an impersonal national standard. This means regulations for zoning construction, design, demolition, usage, streets etc. should fit our own circumstances and grow out of our particular history and experience. To this end the city must maintain a strong planning department to provide the means of implementation for its vision.

The Old Santa Fe Association continues to take an active role in advocating appropriate city policies to maintain and strengthen the unique character of Santa Fe.

--Sara Melton, May 2003