

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE



PLANNING DEPARTMENT
URBAN DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
600 2nd Street NW, 3rd Floor, 87102
P.O. Box 1293, Albuquerque, NM 87103
Office (505) 924-3860 Fax (505) 924-3339

OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION OF DECISION

November 10, 2017

Land Advisors Organization, LLC
6565 Americas Parkway NE
Suite 200
Albuquerque, NM 87110

Project# 1004075
17EPC-40049 Text Amendments to the
Mesa del Sol Level B Community Master Plan

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

The above action for the Mesa Del Sol Level B Community Master Plan, Tracts 6, 7, and 14, Bulk Land Plat of Mesa del Sol (Parcel 1); Tract 12-B, Plat of Tracts 12-A & 12-B, Mesa del Sol, Innovation Park (Parcel 2); Lots numbered 5, 6, 13, 14, 15, 17, and 25 of Bulk Land Plat of Mesa del Sol, Innovation Park (Parcel 3); Tracts lettered F, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, R. OS-1, OS-2, OS-3, OS-4, OS-5, OS-6, and OS-7, Bulk Land Plat for Mesa del Sol Innovation Park II, a replat of Tracts 1, 12, 15, 4-A-2, 4-A-3 and 4-A-4, Mesa Del Sol, and Tracts 2-A, 2-B, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, OS-1, OS-2, OS-3, and OS-6, Mesa del Sol Innovation Park)(Parcel 4); and Tract lettered 'I-2' Mesa del Sol Innovation Park II (a replat of Tract "I", Mesa del Sol Innovation Park II) (Parcel 5); zoned PC (Planned Community), located east of Broadway Blvd. and south of Los Picaros Rd. SE, containing approximately 3,100 acres. (Q-15, R-14, R-15, R-16, R-17, S-14, S-15, S-16, S-17, T-13, T-14, U-13)
Staff Planner: Catalina Lehner

PO Box 1293

Albuquerque

NM 87103

On November 9, 2017 the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) voted to DENY Project 1004075/17EPC-40049, Text Amendments to the Mesa del Sol Level B Community Master Plan, based on the following Findings:

FINDINGS:

1. The request is for two text amendments to the Mesa del Sol Level B Community Master Plan (the "Level B Plan") to allow for additional flexibility for developing single-family homes in the residential village areas. The Level B Plan allows a wide variety of housing types and designs.
2. The Level B Plan area (the "subject site") encompasses approximately 3,100 acres, located generally south of the Tijeras Arroyo and Montessa Park; north of the Level A Plan Area and Isleta Pueblo; west of Broadway Blvd. and Interstate-25; east of the Level A "La Semilla" Reserve Area.

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF DECISION

Project #1004075

November 9, 2017

Page 2 of 7

3. The Level B Plan area is contained within the larger, approximately 13,000-acre area of the Mesa del Sol Level A Community Master Plan (the "Level A Plan"). All of Mesa del Sol, the Level A and Level B Plan areas, is zoned Planned Communities (PC). No change to the zoning is proposed.
4. The text amendments have to do with how one type of single-family home (front-loaded) relates to the Connector roadway type in the Level B Plan area. The text amendments would amend Chapter 3-Transportation, Section 3.3-Access, so that: i) alley loaded housing would no longer be the dominant housing type on Connector streets (p. 51), and ii) driveway cuts for individual lots would be allowed on Connector streets (p. 52).
5. The Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) is the final approval body for this request, unless the EPC decision is appealed. The Level B Plan designates the EPC as the final approval body for the Level B Plan itself, and also for the proposed text amendments (p. 104, 7.1.b).
6. The Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, the Planned Communities Criteria (PCC): Policy Element, the Mesa del Sol Level A Community Master Plan (the "Level A Plan") and technical appendices, the Mesa del Sol Level B Community Master Plan (the "Level B Plan") and technical appendices, the City of Albuquerque Zoning Code, and the Development Process Manual (DPM) **are** incorporated herein by reference and made part of the record for all purposes.
7. The City's DPM, Chapter 23-Transportation Design, contains technical specifications regarding street design. The purpose is to promote consistently sound design of street systems and ensure comfort, safety, and quality in transportation design. **In** general, the text amendments would make the Mesa del Sol Level B Plan area subject to requirements that are less stringent than the DPM minimum requirements that apply to the rest of the City.
8. The text amendments conflict with specific DPM requirements as follows:
 - A. DPM Chapter 23, Section 2.A: Streets must conform in character, location, and arrangement to governing, adopted plans. Governing, adopted plans may be the LRTS (Long Range Transportation System) or approved site or sector development plans.

The Level B Plan is an adopted sector development plan. The text amendments would alter the character and function of the Connector streets, a key component of the transportation network.
 - B. DPM Chapter 23, Section 2.A.7. Closely spaced driveways conflict with safe pedestrian movement by creating multiple vehicle crossings over sidewalks and by eliminating on-street parking, which slows traffic speeds. Alleys may be provided to substitute for direct street access from closely spaced driveways that interfere with pedestrian movement, create a harsh environment, and/or prohibit on-street parking.

With a driveway for each lot, multiple conflict points are created between vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Generally, fewer access points means less opportunity for conflicts and therefore a safer environment. Also, with fewer conflicts and no backing out, a street can function smoothly and carry traffic, pedestrians, and bicyclists through an area via a grid

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF DECISION

Project #1004075

November 9, 2017

Page 3 of 7

system, and connect to higher classified streets.

- C. DPM Chapter 23, Section 6- curb cuts and driveways. Subsection A.1. states: Private driveway access to single-family lots is not permitted on principal arterial, minor arterial, or collector streets. Access to single family lots is discouraged on major local streets.

The Mesa del Sol Connector streets function like collector streets. Throughout the City, the best and most functional location for front-loaded driveways is off of local streets or alleys. This is because local streets and alleys carry less traffic, have slower speeds, and therefore provide a safer environment for prevention of conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists that result when motorists back out of driveways and onto busier streets.

9. The request does not further the following, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goals and policies from Chapter 6-Transportation:

- A. Goal 6.1 Land Use – Transportation Integration: Plan, develop, operate, and maintain a transportation system to support the planned character of existing and future land uses.

Policy 6.1.7- Multi-Modal Corridors: Balance the competing needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, autos, and transit in street design and improvements by slowing auto traffic, minimizing curb cuts, and encouraging primary auto access to parking lots to be provided from intersecting streets.

Mesa del Sol is planned to be an integrated, mixed-use, community with a highly defined sense of place and a variety of options for working, living, and recreating. The transportation system was carefully developed to support the mixture of future land uses. The proposed text amendments would change the way the Connector streets function, and would compromise an integrated, established transportation system.

University Blvd. is designated a Multi-Modal Corridor in the Comprehensive Plan; the Connector streets carry traffic to it. Slowing traffic and minimizing curb cuts are strategies to balance the competing needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and autos. Allowing driveways (curb cuts) onto individual lots in residential areas would result in more conflict points and less efficiency and balance.

- B. Goal 6.2- Multi-Modal System: Encourage walking, biking, and transit, especially at peak-hour commuting times, to enhance access and mobility for people of all ages and abilities.

Policy 6.2.1 -Complete Networks: Design and build a complete, well-connected network of streets and trails that offer multiple efficient and safe transportation choices for commuting and daily needs.

A multi-modal transportation system, which includes a street grid, is the cornerstone of Mesa del Sol. The transportation network is designed to minimize traffic volumes on major and minor roadways, including Connectors (Level B Plan, p. 44). Emphasis on local roadways encourages walking, biking, transit, and enhanced access. The proposed text amendments would de-emphasize local roadways in the residential areas and create conflict points that would make the environment less pedestrian friendly and discourage walking, biking, and

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF DECISION

Project #1004075

November 9, 2017

Page 4 of 7

transit.

- C. Policy 6.3.2- Pedestrians: Improve safety for pedestrians through street design.

Policy 6.3.3- Cyclists: Improve safety for cyclists through street design.

The Connector streets are intended to link residential neighborhoods, centers, and community facilities; adding individual curb cuts along them would compromise the safety of pedestrians and cyclists by creating more conflict points and a less-friendly connection to other streets.

- D. Policy 6.2.8- Auto Network: Prioritize automobile travel on Commuter Corridors and balance it with other travel modes on other streets.

The request would disrupt the intended balance of autos and alternative transportation modes on Connector streets because it would prioritize auto travel and de-emphasize walking and biking by creating numerous conflict points.

10. The request does not further the following, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goals and policies from Chapter 7- Urban Design:

- A. Goal 7.1-Streetscapes & Development Form: Design streetscapes and development form to create a range of environments and experiences for residents and visitors.

The variety of streetscape design and development form (ex. the many types of housing allowed in the residential villages) characterizes Mesa del Sol. The request would lessen the range of environments and experiences over time because the front-loaded housing type would predominate like in other parts of the City, and the Connector street type would no longer provide safe, continuous travel for all modes but would function more like local streets that have multiple conflict points.

- B. Goal 7.2- Pedestrian-Accessible Design: Increase walkability in all environments, promote pedestrian-oriented development in urban contexts, and increase pedestrian safety in auto-oriented contexts.

Policy 7.2.1-Walkability: Ensure convenient and comfortable pedestrian travel.

The residential villages are planned to emphasize walkability, since pleasant walking conditions are a key component of Mesa del Sol. The proposed text amendments, with multiple driveway cuts along Connector streets, would decrease walkability and lessen pedestrian safety by creating conflict points with moving traffic from the local streets. Convenient, comfortable, and safe pedestrian travel, which characterizes Connector streets, would no longer be ensured.

- C. Policy 7.2.2 -Walkable Places: Promote high-quality pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods and districts as the essential building blocks of a sustainable region.

The streetscapes in Mesa del Sol are purposefully designed to provide a range of environments, from large boulevards to small local streets. The Connector streets are designed to link the residential villages with higher classified streets and the rest of the development.

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF DECISION

Project #1004075

November 9, 2017

Page 5 of 7

The proposed text amendments would allow multiple access points, which would compromise the intended function of the Connectors. The neighborhoods are planned to be high-quality and pedestrian-oriented. The proposed text amendments would make the residential villages less pedestrian and bicycle friendly by altering the functionality of the Connector streets.

11. The request does not further the following, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goals and policies from Chapter 9- Housing:

Goal 9.1 Supply: Ensure a sufficient supply and range of high-quality housing types that meet current and future needs at a variety of price levels to ensure more balanced housing options.

Policy 9.1.1- Housing Options: Support the development, improvement, and conservation of housing for a variety of income levels and types of residents and households.

Mesa del Sol is intended to offers a range of high-quality housing types at various price levels. The design requirements create quality and variety. The proposed text amendments would allow front-loaded housing types along Connector streets, which would compromise the function of the transportation system and character of the neighborhood by placing alley-loaded homes on Connector streets and no longer having a continuous sidewalk. Front-loaded homes are already allowed on local streets, which are the majority of neighborhood streets. The request would contribute to a decrease in the variety and balance of housing options.

12. The request conflicts with the following Level A community building principles:

- A. 1.2.4 Diversity and Balance (p. 11): “Achieving the PCC goals of reduced traffic congestion and improved air quality requires creating viable alternatives to the private automobile. Transit is an important alternative to driving, and the design of streets and blocks at Mesa del Sol will optimize the potential for transit service. ...the street system at Mesa del Sol will be designed to make bicycling safe efficient, and pleasurable...Walking, of course, is the most fundamental and sustainable form of transportation...Making places where it is pleasant, safe, and convenient to talk requires diversity and balance of uses.”

The Mesa del Sol roadway system, with its hierarchy of street types and functions, was designed to foster viable alternatives to the private automobile and allow for efficient circulation for vehicle trips. The local streets in residential areas provide direct access to homes and accommodate most local trips. The collector streets do not have individual curb cuts and create a safe environment for bicycling and walking, and for vehicles that won't have to back out. Directing trips through residential neighborhoods and onto higher classified streets is a key component of a functional grid system that supports diversity and balances land uses. The proposed text amendments would facilitate private vehicle trips on a street type intended to accommodate and support pedestrians, bicyclists, and through traffic.

- B. 1.2.5 Human Scale (p. 11): “Streets and buildings as Mesa del Sol will be designed to exhibit human scale detail and variation. The majority of street widths will be relatively narrow, to make pedestrian crossings safer and easier. Sidewalks, landscaping building entries, and parallel parking will shelter and enhance the walking environment. Traffic calming features, such as curb extensions and traffic circles, will ensure that vehicular traffic is kept to speeds and volumes that are compatible with neighborhoods.”

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF DECISION

Project #1004075

November 9, 2017

Page 6 of 7

The street network for Mesa del Sol was carefully designed to function in a way that supports connections throughout the plan area and between centers and neighborhoods. The Connector streets form a grid through the residential villages, where traffic calming and relatively narrow streets support safe vehicle circulation and alternative modes such as walking and biking. Allowing individual access onto Connector streets via multiple driveway cuts would take away from the enhanced walking environment by creating conflict points that compromise pedestrian crossings.

13. The proposed text amendments would affect Connector streets, which are one of the four types of streets in Mesa del Sol. The street types serve varying degrees of mobility and access, and work together to form a transportation network that serves vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic throughout in the Plan area. The Connector is the most prevalent street type in Mesa del Sol (see Technical Appendices, Figure 3B-1). Continuous traffic flow, and pedestrian and bicycle friendliness, are key characteristics of Connector streets.
14. Local streets, which serve residents directly, are already allowed to have individual access on each lot and are not limited in the number of access/conflict points between vehicles and non-auto modes. Many locations are currently available for front-loaded housing types that would not compromise the functioning of the Connector streets and the carefully planned transportation grid system.
15. The cumulative effect of text amendments applicable to the residential villages could begin to change the character and functionality of neighborhoods in the Level B Plan area, moving toward homogeneity and away from the diversity intended to characterize the residential villages. The single-family homes along Connector streets would be front loaded, like the single-family homes on the local streets that don't have alley access, which would also lessen diversity of streetscapes.
16. The Mesa del Sol Neighborhood Association (NA), the District 6 Coalition, and property owners within 100 feet of the subject site were notified as required. A facilitated meeting was not held. There is no known opposition.
17. The applicant has provided three letters of general support as of this writing. One states that the area needs more residential activity and investment. The other states that front-loaded homes in other areas of the City sell and that people won't buy Mesa del Sol homes due to lack of a private back yard. Another letter states that more housing at different price points is needed.
18. It is important to explore and consider options and solutions that would have less impact on the transportation system and the integrity of the Mesa del Sol plans. Concerns such as lack of a private back yard and desire for affordable housing types can be addressed by amending design regulations and creating homes with a shared access point (for example), rather than through wholesale changes that affect the larger Plan area.

APPEAL: If you wish to appeal this decision, you must do so within 15 days of the EPC's decision or by **NOVEMBER 27, 2017**. The date of the EPC's decision is not included in the 15-day period for filing an appeal, and if the 15th day falls on a Saturday, Sunday or Holiday, the next working day is considered as the deadline for filing the appeal.

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF DECISION

Project #1004075

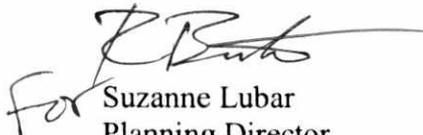
November 9, 2017

Page 7 of 7

For more information regarding the appeal process, please refer to Section 14-16-4-4 of the Zoning Code. A Non-Refundable filing fee will be calculated at the Land Development Coordination Counter and is required at the time the appeal is filed. It is not possible to appeal EPC Recommendations to City Council; rather, a formal protest of the EPC's Recommendation can be filed within the 15 day period following the EPC's recommendation.

You will receive notification if any person files an appeal. If there is no appeal, you can receive Building Permits at any time after the appeal deadline quoted above, provided all conditions imposed at the time of approval have been met. Successful applicants are reminded that other regulations of the City Zoning Code must be complied with, even after approval of the referenced application(s).

Sincerely,


For Suzanne Lubar
Planning Director

SL/CL

cc: Land Advisors Organization, LLC, 6565 Americas Parkway NE #200, ABQ, NM 87110
Dekker/Perich/Sabatini, Attn: Will Gleason, 7601 Jefferson NE, #100, ABQ, NM 87109
Mesa Del Sol NA, Stephen Nelson, 2305 Penn Ave. SE, ABQ, NM 87106
Mesa Del Sol NA, James Thompson, 2227 Stieglitz Ave. SE, ABQ, NM 87106
District 6 Coalition of NAs. Gina Dennis, 1816 Buena Vista Dr. NE #2, ABQ, NM 87106
Dist 6 Coalition of NAs, Marian Jordan, 816 Arizona SE, ABQ, NM 87108
Jim Thompson, 2227 Stieglitz Ave SE, 87106
Samuel Carreon, 2227 Stieglitz Ave SE, 87106
Don Aldridge, 5731 University Blvd SE, 87106
Dean Savas, 5748 Wilkin St. SE, 87106
John Bratzel, 2515, Stieglitz, Ave SE, 87106
Barbra Lingmaid, 9 Paseo De Paz, Tijeras 87059
Mike Fitz, 11251 San Francisco, NE, 87122
Argelia Carreon, 2519 Stieglitz SE, 87106
Susan Kelly, 713 Camino Espanol NW, 87107
Eric Eckles, 3504 Reina Dr. NE, 87111
Ron Bohannan, 5571 Midway Park Pl, 87109
MaryAnne Rizza, 2405 Cunningham Ave SE, 87106