

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE
PLANNING DEPARTMENT
URBAN DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
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ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING COMMISSION

NOTICE OF DECISION

Project Number: PR-2024-011037

Case Number: [SP-2026-00078](#) – Site Plan – EPC, Major Amendment

Hearing Date: 10-15-2026

Applicant: DNCA LLC

Subject Property: 2000 Mountain Rd NW

Case Description: DNCA LLC, agent for City of Albuquerque and Albuquerque Museum, requests a Site Plan – EPC, Major Amendment for all or a portion of Tract 233 A1, Map 38, Section 18, T10N, R3E, located at 2000 Mountain Rd NW, between 19th St NW and San Felipe St NW, approximately 8.5 acres. (J-13)

Staff Planner: Jude Miller

DECISION

On October 15, 2026, the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) voted to APPROVE Plan # [SP-2026-00078](#) – Site Plan – EPC, Major Amendment based on the following Findings and subject to the following Conditions of Approval.

FINDINGS

1. This This is a request for a Major Amendment of a Site Plan – EPC for the Albuquerque Museum, located on an approximately 8.5-acre parcel legally described as Tract 233 A1, Map 38, Section 18, T10N, R3E, located at 2000 Mountain Road NW.
2. The purpose of the amendment is to facilitate the addition of a 7,320-square-foot multi-purpose annex building at the Albuquerque Museum. Located within an existing landscaped area between the existing museum building and 19th Street NW, the proposed annex will provide dedicated space for classrooms, educational programming, and administrative offices. The

annex building is incidental to the existing museum land use. No structural modifications are proposed for the existing museum building. The proposed use is permissive under the MX-L zone district.

3. The EPC is reviewing this request as the original decision-making body on the Site Plan. Additionally, the development impacts a mature stand of trees, which requires a sensitive lands analysis [IDO § 14-16-5-2(C)(4)].
4. The Albuquerque Museum was originally established in September 1967 at the former Albuquerque Municipal Airport terminal before relocating to its current location at the intersection of Mountain Road NW and 19th Street NW. The existing museum building was designed by architect Antoine Predock and opened in 1979. In 2001, the EPC approved a Site Development Plan amendment for a major renovation and expansion [Project #01128-00754].
5. The Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO), relevant Rank 2 Facility Plans or Rank 3 plans (MRAP Master Plans, Resource Management Plans) are incorporated herein by reference and made part of the record for all purposes.
6. The subject site is located in an Area of Change as designated by the Comprehensive Plan. Areas of Change include Centers, Corridors, and Metropolitan Redevelopment Areas, where new development and redevelopment are desired and appropriate. These areas include undeveloped land and commercial or industrial zones that would benefit from infill or revitalization. Directing growth to Areas of Change is intended to reduce development pressure on established neighborhoods and rural areas, minimizing infill or redevelopment at a scale and density that could negatively impact their character.
7. The Albuquerque Museum was originally established in September 1967 at the former Albuquerque Municipal Airport terminal before relocating to its current location at the intersection of Mountain Road NW and 19th Street NW. The existing museum building was designed by architect Antoine Predock and opened in 1979. In 2001, the EPC approved a Site Development Plan amendment for a major renovation and expansion [Project #01128-00754].
8. The request is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies regarding land uses, infill development and city development areas from Chapter 5: Land Use.
 - A. GOAL 5.1 CENTERS & CORRIDORS: Grow as a community of strong Centers connected by a multi-modal network of Corridors.

The subject site is located within the Rio Grande Boulevard Major Transit Corridor. As a major civic and cultural facility, the proposed Albuquerque Museum annex expansion will potentially expand cultural offerings within an area easily accessible by public transportation.

- B. POLICY 5.1.1: Desired Growth: Capture regional growth in Centers and Corridors to help shape the built environment into a sustainable development pattern.

The Albuquerque Museum is a regional cultural institution, drawing visitors and students from across the Albuquerque metropolitan area and beyond. Capturing this regional civic demand within an established Area of Change and designated Major Transit Corridor

avoids peripheral sprawl and directs growth to existing urban infrastructure. The proposed 7,320-square-foot annex reinforces sustainable development patterns by utilizing low-impact design elements, and concentrating new educational and workforce spaces where public transit exists.

- C. GOAL 5.6 CITY DEVELOPMENT AREAS: Encourage and direct growth to Areas of Change where it is expected and desired and ensure that development in and near Areas of Consistency reinforces the character and intensity of the surrounding area.

POLICY 5.6.2 AREAS OF CHANGE: Direct growth and more intense development to Centers, Corridors, industrial and business parks, and Metropolitan Redevelopment Areas where change is encouraged.

The subject site is within an Area of Change as designated by the Comprehensive Plan. The request to amend the site plan for the addition of a museum annex building focuses growth and higher intensity land use to an area within a Major Transit Corridor and adjacent to the Old Town activity center directing change to where it is encouraged.

- 9. The request is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies from Chapter 7: Urban Design.

- A. GOAL 7.3 SENSE OF PLACE: Reinforce sense of place through context-sensitive design of development and streetscapes.

The proposed site plan maintains street trees along 19th street, while constructing a multi-purpose annex building closer to the street edge to better define the pedestrian space. A new wider walkway from 19th street provides a direct linkage to the Museum from the street. A new pavilion, and stone seat walls lie within the public space outside of the museum and connect to the surrounding streetscape.

- B. POLICY 7.3.3 PLACEMAKING: Encourage efforts to establish and strengthen district identity within Centers, business districts, and neighborhoods.

The Albuquerque Museum serves as an anchor institution within the Sawmill/Museum District, a distinct cultural node highlighted in the Central Albuquerque Community Planning Area Assessment Report. Situated alongside complementary museums, including the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science and Explora Science Center, the site contributes directly to a cohesive district identity. Constructing the proposed Annex building allows the museum to expand its institutional footprint and public programming.

- C. POLICY 7.3.4 INFILL: Promote infill that enhances the built environment or blends in style and building materials with surrounding structures and the streetscape of the block in which it is located.

The proposed design of the museum expansion (annex building) incorporates matching earth-toned stucco materials and architectural finishes to maintain visual cohesion with the main complex. Furthermore, the closer setback and building placement intentionally frame the primary museum entrance, enhance the street wall, and establish new exterior public plazas and pedestrian gathering spaces that activate the streetscape. The annex is to be built of similar style, building materials, and massing as the existing Albuquerque Museum, and

is consistent with massing and proportions are of similar proportions to structures that surround the site including the Natural History Museum and the parking structure to the north of the site. The proposed site plan increases the museum's footprint while maintaining landscaped areas that provide shade and compliment the landscaping on the existing site.

- D. GOAL 7.5 CONTEXT-SENSITIVE SITE DESIGN: Design sites, buildings, and landscape elements to respond to the high desert environment.

The proposed site plan includes building and landscape design that responds to the high desert environment. Light colored stucco finishes help the new building reflect light and heat while plantings and a new pavilion that provide shade make the site more hospitable for people using the site.

- E. POLICY 7.5.1 LANDSCAPE DESIGN: Encourage landscape treatments that are consistent with the high desert climate to enhance our sense of place.

The proposed landscaping will reduce the amount of high-water use turf landscaping approved for the site. The selected trees for the landscape are included in the official Albuquerque Plant Palette which have been selected for being adapted to the local environment and lower water use. New planting areas incorporate storm-water retention features that are intended to keep water on-site.

- F. POLICY 7.5.2 SITE DESIGN: Incorporate local climate conditions into site design.

The Proposed Site landscape plan takes local climate conditions into account by providing plantings that are approved in the official Albuquerque Plant Palette, incorporating structures that provide shade, and providing on-site rainwater harvesting by way of small water-detention areas within the landscape.

- G. GOAL 7.6 CONTEXT-SENSITIVE INFRASTRUCTURE: Match infrastructure design to intended densities and development patterns to minimize lifecycle costs and conserve natural resources.

The proposed site plan incorporates natural stone salvaged from the existing landscape and reduces the overall need for landscape irrigation by reducing the amount of irrigated turf grass on the site. Site grading and drainage is intended to reduce the amount of water-runoff from the site.

- H. POLICY 7.6.1 STORMWATER TREATMENTS: Match stormwater treatment techniques and practices to the density/intensity of land use and development context.

The landscaping plan calls for site grading around the new annex building to be focused around a series of green storm water retention ponds and planting areas. Although the peak flow of runoff is higher than the current site conditions due to increased hard surfaces, the proposed plan generally reduces runoff in regular rain events by allowing providing for on-site retention of runoff from the new building and hardscapes in new planted areas.

10. The request is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Goal and Policies from Chapter 11: Heritage Conservation.

- A. GOAL 11.5 CULTURAL TRADITIONS & THE ARTS: Emphasize and support cultural traditions and arts as vital components of the community's identities and well-being.

The Albuquerque Museum has resided on the current site since 1979 showcasing local art and history of Albuquerque and the surrounding region. This new annex building and associated outdoor areas will provide additional space for hosting cultural events, classes, and other museum programming.

- B. POLICY 11.5.1 ARTS PROMOTION: Coordinate and promote the arts and the cultural sector as key assets in a vital economy; major contributors to quality of life and healthy communities; and the heart of high-quality, special places that contribute to the identity of distinct communities.

The proposed museum annex expansion strengthens the Albuquerque Museum's physical and operational footprint, reinforcing its role as a regional cultural anchor. Expanding exhibition and administrative capacity enhances the local cultural tourism sector and elevates quality-of-life amenities in the Sawmill/Museum District.

- C. POLICY 11.5.2 CULTURAL FACILITIES: Provide and maintain high-quality public, cultural, and arts facilities to best serve the Public

Constructing a new annex directly addresses facility capacity needs by modernizing and expanding public infrastructure dedicated to art, history, and education. The addition provides enhanced space for classrooms, museum educators, and event space, directly maintaining high facility standards for a municipally owned civic institution.

- D. POLICY 11.5.3 CULTURAL PROGRAMS: Promote programs that encourage greater understanding of area history and cultural traditions.

The additional square footage created by the proposed annex dedicated to education, museum education staff, and event space allows the museum to expand its event and educational offerings. By providing dedicated physical space for educational staffing and community programming, the expansion enhances the museum's ability showcase and interpret the region's history and diverse cultural traditions for residents and visitors.

11. The request is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Goal and Policy from Chapter 12: Public Facilities.

- A. GOAL 12.2 COMMUNITY FACILITIES: Provide community facilities that have convenient access and a wide range of programs for residents from all cultural, age, geographical, and educational groups to enhance quality of life and promote community involvement.

POLICY 12.2.2 EXISTING FACILITIES: Maintain and improve existing community facilities to better and more equitably serve the community

The proposed Museum expansion builds upon an existing municipal asset within a designated transit corridor area. Expanding the facility by adding the Annex building enhances the Albuquerque Museum's capacity to offer educational workshops, and other museum programming for residents across Albuquerque.

12. The request meets the Site Plan-EPC Review & Decision Criteria in IDO §14-16-6-6(I)(3) as follows:

- A. 6-6(I)(3)(a): The site plan is consistent with the ABC Comp Plan, as amended.

The applicant has demonstrated, through a policy-based analysis, that the proposed Site Plan request would be consistent with applicable Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies found in Chapter 5 – Land Use; Chapter 7 – Urban Design; Chapter 11 – Heritage Conservation; and Chapter 12 – Community Facilities.

- B. 6-6(I)(3)(b): The Site Plan is consistent with any applicable terms and conditions in any previously approved NR-SU or PD zoning covering the property and any related development agreements and/or regulations.

The subject site is zoned MX-L and is not located in a previously approved NR-SU or PD zoning district; Criterion b does not apply.

- C. 6-6(I)(3)(c): The Site Plan complies with all applicable provisions of this IDO, the DPM, other adopted City regulations, and any terms and conditions specifically applied to development of the property in a prior permit or approval affecting the property.

The request is for a major amendment to a Site Plan – EPC to expand the Primary Museum by adding a new multi-purpose annex building within an existing landscaped area between the existing museum building and 19th Street NW. The request complies with all applicable provisions of the IDO, the Development Process Manual (DPM), and other adopted City regulations. The proposed 7,320-square-foot annex fully conforms to the dimensional, setback, height, and site development standards of the MX-L zone district, and no variances or deviations are requested or required. Based on review by CABQ Traffic Engineering, a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) was not required for this application. Pursuant to IDO § 14-16-6-4(O), the EPC may impose conditions necessary to ensure full compliance prior to Development Facilitation Team (DFT) final sign-off and building permit issuance.

- D. 6-6(I)(3)(d): The City's existing infrastructure and public improvements, including but not limited to its street, trail, drainage, and sidewalk systems, have adequate capacity to serve the proposed development, and any burdens on those systems have been mitigated to the extent practicable.

The subject site is served by existing infrastructure and public facility improvements. Any future capacity needs will be addressed through the Development Facilitation Team (DFT) and/or building permit process. All permits required with this request will comply with all required city standards.

- E. 6-6(I)(3)(e): The application mitigates any significant adverse impacts on the surrounding area to the maximum extent practicable.

Development on the subject site within the area of work complies with all development and use specific standards within the IDO. On-site pedestrian access is improved while existing off-street parking is not impacted. The Planning Department's Transportation Development Section reviewed the submittal and concluded that the expanded facility will not generate a significant number of new vehicular trips. Environmental impacts are

mitigated through updated landscaping, including a roughly 50% reduction in high-water turf, replacement with low-water xeric plantings, along with new micro-detention ponds that provide green stormwater infrastructure to manage localized drainage

- F. 6-6(I)(3)(f): If the subject property is within an approved Master Development Plan, the Site Plan meets any relevant standards in the Master Development Plan in addition to any standards applicable in the zone district the subject property is in.

The subject site is not within an approved Master Development Plan; criterion (f) does not apply.

- G. 6-6(I)(3)(g): If a cumulative impact analysis is required in the Railroad and Spur Area pursuant to Subsections 14-16-5-2(E) (Cumulative Impacts) and 14-16-6-4(H) (Cumulative Impacts Analysis Requirements), the Site Plan incorporates mitigation for all identified cumulative impacts. The proposed development will not create material adverse impacts on water quality or other land in the surrounding area through increases in traffic congestion, parking congestion, noise, vibration, light spillover, or other nuisances without sufficient mitigation or civic or environmental benefits that outweigh the expected impacts.

The subject property is not within the Railroad and Spur Small Area; no cumulative impact analysis is required

- H. 6-6(I)(3)(h): If an outdoor or site lighting performance analysis is requested, the proposed lighting design must prove it will not adversely affect the lighting requirements of § 14-16-5-2(E) without sufficient mitigation and benefits that outweigh the expected impacts.

The request does not trigger new outdoor site lighting requirements. All new lighting within the site plan area of work will meet the requirements of § 14-16-5-8 and will not exceed the lumen allowance set forth in Table 5-8-5. The new site lighting must comply with Lighting Requirement Lz1 because it is in an MX-L zone district adjacent to a low-density residential land use.

13. Proposed Site Plan Amendment

- A. The proposed Site Plan consists of a two-story, 7,320-square-foot annex expansion located along the eastern portion of the Albuquerque Museum site (between the main museum building and 19th Street NW) designed to complement the existing museum architecture and enhance the facility's cultural programming. The amendment replaces the existing outdoor sculpture garden and includes a building footprint, revised outdoor gathering areas, updated landscaping, and associated site infrastructure.
- B. The proposal complies with the dimensional and design standards of the MX-L zone district under IDO § 14-16-5-1 and Table 5-1-2. The annex structure reaches a maximum height of 33.5 feet (well below the 50-foot allowance for Major Transit Corridor areas) and maintains compliant setbacks. Ground-floor façades incorporate over 30 percent transparency, upper-story window overhangs, and wall plane projections and recesses to support human-scale design.
- C. Pursuant to IDO § 14-16-5-2(C), the application includes a Sensitive Lands Analysis addressing 52 mature trees within the proposed construction area. While full avoidance by

re-siting the building to existing parking areas was evaluated, it was determined infeasible due to operational parking needs, and advanced design constraints. Construction will require removing 38 mature trees, which will be mitigated through installation of low-water xeric landscaping on-site and required 1:1 caliper inch tree replacement in coordination with the City Urban Forester, including potential off-site plantings at Tigues Park.

- D. Landscaping & Buffering: Provided landscaping totals 60,911 square feet (18% of the net lot area), exceeding the 15% code minimum. Turf grass area is significantly reduced in favor of drought-tolerant xeric plantings adhering to the City plant palette, and supplemental street trees are provided along 19th Street NW.
 - E. Circulation & Access: Pedestrian connections are enhanced via new 24-foot-wide and 22-foot-wide sidewalks linking 19th Street NW and parking areas directly to building entrances. Vehicular access remains unchanged, and the site is exempt from off-street parking minimums due to its Major Transit Area designation.
 - F. Lighting & Signs: Site lighting utilizes LZ1-compliant shielded fixtures (wall wash, 10-foot poles, and 3.5-foot bollards) to prevent glare and light spillover. Signage is limited to a single 12-foot by 6-inch wall sign that is exempt from permit requirements per IDO § 14-16-5-12(D)(1).
 - G. Grading & Drainage: On-site conceptual landscape detention basins are integrated to capture and filter stormwater runoff from the new annex building and associated hardscapes.
- 14. At the time of application, the Traffic engineer determined that the proposal does not generate enough traffic to necessitate a traffic study.
 - 15. The subject site contains a large stand of mature trees, constituting a sensitive land feature under IDO § 14-16-5-2(C)(2)(d). Full avoidance of the tree canopy was evaluated but determined infeasible due to operational parking needs advanced state of project design, despite the site's zero-minimum parking allowance in a Major Transit Area. Pursuant to IDO § 14-16-5-2(C)(4), the inability to avoid sensitive lands serves as the procedural trigger requiring EPC review and decision. Substantive mitigation is provided pursuant to IDO § 14-16-5-6 and Conditions of Approval 1-11 which mandate Tree Protection Zones during construction and a 1:1 caliper replacement plan approved by the Urban Forestry Division prior to DFT final sign-off.
 - 16. The request was reviewed by the City Forester who identified specific technical requirements concerning landscape design, tree retention, and canopy replacement. Staff finds that all outstanding Urban Forestry comments, including tree protection zones during construction, street tree sizing, utility line separation, and final mitigation plantings, can be successfully resolved as administrative conditions. The applicant shall address all Urban Forestry Division comments prior to DFT final sign-off.
 - 17. According to the Office of Neighborhood Coordination, there are four recognized neighborhood associations within 660-feet of the subject site, the Downtown Neighborhoods Association, the Historic Old Town Association, Sawmill Area Neighborhood Association,

and West Old Town Neighborhood Association that were notified as required. Property owners within 100-feet of the subject site were also notified as required.

18. As of this writing, staff has not received public comments in support of, or in opposition to this request.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

1. After approval by the EPC, the applicant shall coordinate with the Staff Planner prior to submitting the Site Plan to the Development Facilitation Team (DFT) for final sign-off to ensure that EPC Conditions have been met. Pursuant to IDO § 14-16-6-6(I)(2)(n) Site Plans shall be reviewed administratively for compliance with conditions of approval, DPM, and zoning standards prior to the issuance of a building permit.
2. Pursuant to IDO § 14-16-6-4(O)(4) Any conditions shall be met within 1 year of the approval, unless stated otherwise in the approval. If any conditions are not met within that time, the approval is void. The Planning Director may extend the time limit up to an additional 1 year.
3. Prior to Development Facilitation Team (DFT) final sign-off, the applicant shall coordinate directly with the Parks and Recreation Department / Urban Forestry Division to satisfactorily address and resolve all technical agency comments provided on September 17, 2026.
4. Site Plan and Landscaping Plan set shall be updated to include explicit construction notes detailing contractor responsibilities for establishing and maintaining sturdy Tree Protection Zones (1 foot beyond the drip line) during construction activity, as required by IDO § 14-16-5-6(C)(12)(b).
5. The Landscaping Plan shall be adjusted to replace any proposed small street trees with approved large-canopy shade tree species along public rights-of-way, in accordance with IDO § 14-16-5-6(A)(8) to ensure adequate street shading.
6. The Landscaping Plan set shall include a formal plan note explicitly referencing City Street Tree Ordinance § 6-6-1-9 (Responsibility for Damaging Trees on Public Property), outlining repair, replacement, and liability obligations for any public tree damage incurred during construction.
7. The Landscaping Plan and Utility Plan shall be updated to ensure no proposed trees or shrubs are located within utility easements or within 10 feet of the centerline of any water, sewer, or gas line (whichever distance is greater). Any proposed trees situated directly over gas lines or within recorded utility easements shall be relocated outside of restricted buffers.
8. The applicant shall coordinate with the Urban Forestry Division to reconcile tree removal counts across all plan sheets, re-evaluate trees slated for removal, and finalize an approved tree mitigation and replacement plan—providing one-to-one caliper inch replacement (replacing each inch of removed tree caliper with an equal total caliper inch of new trees, installed on-site or off-site)—prior to Development Facilitation Team (DFT) final sign-off.
9. Prior to Development Facilitation Team (DFT) final sign-off, the applicant shall coordinate with PNM's New Service Delivery Department to verify electric service capacity and confirm

that all existing and proposed PNM distribution lines, facilities, and utility easements, specifically along the east side of 19th Street NW, are accurately depicted on the Site Plan set. No structures, canopies, or heavy metal features shall be located within recorded PNM easements without prior written agreement from PNM.

10. Prior to Development Facilitation Team (DFT) final sign-off, the applicant shall submit a formal Request for Availability to the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA), including an approved Fire 1 Plan and Utility Plan, and comply with any resulting infrastructure requirements.
11. The Site Plan shall comply with the General Regulations of the IDO and all other applicable design regulations, except as specifically approved by the EPC.

APPEAL

If you wish to appeal, you must do so within 15 days of the EPC's decision or by **October 30, 2026**. The date of the EPC's decision is not included in this 15-day period. If the 15th day falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or Holiday, the next working day is considered the deadline for filing an appeal.

For more information regarding the appeal process, please refer to the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO), [§ 14-16-6-4\(U\)](#) (Appeals). A non-refundable fee is required to be paid when the appeal is filed. It is not possible to appeal EPC recommendations to the City Council, because a recommendation is not a final decision.

You will receive notice if anyone files an appeal. If the decision is not appealed, you can receive building permits any time after the appeal deadline, provided all conditions of approval associated with the decision and all other applicable regulations have been met.

Sincerely,



for Alan Varela
Planning Director

AV/MJ/JM

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