

PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
URBAN DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT DIVISION  
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## OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION OF DECISION

August 18, 2022

City of Albuquerque  
Parks & Recreation Dept.  
Open Space Division  
1801 4th St. NW  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

**Project # PR-2020-004639**  
SI-2022-01303– Site Plan- EPC for Extraordinary Facility

### **LEGAL DESCRIPTION:**

The City of Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Department, Open Space Division, requests a Site Plan-EPC for an Extraordinary Facility for all or a portion of Tract A-1-B, Candelaria Farm Area, located at 3301 Rio Grande Blvd. NW, between Candelaria Rd. NW and Cherokee Rd. NW, approximately 7.0 acres (G-13-Z). Staff Planner: Silvia Bolivar

On August 18, 2022, the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) voted to APPROVE Project # PR-2020-004639/SI-2022-01303, a Site Plan- EPC for an Extraordinary Facility.

### Findings:

1. The request is for a Site Plan-EPC for an Extraordinary Facility for the Rio Grande Tree Nursery at the Candelaria Nature Preserve (CNP). The site is legally described as Tract A-1-B, Candelaria Farm Area, located at 3301 Rio Grande Boulevard between Candelaria Road NW and Cherokee Road NW., containing approximately 7.0 acres (the “subject site”).
2. On May 16, 1978, the EPC re-zoned the original Candelaria Farm Nature Center and Preserve lands R-1 and R-2 to SU-1 for Nature Center and Preserve. The NR-PO-B zoning for the area was established at the effective date of the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO) based upon the prior S-1 zoning.
3. The Open Space Division would like to develop an education center with accessible connections, interpretative signage, and parking along with horticultural and propagation uses.
4. The subject site is located in an Area of Consistency as designated by the Comprehensive Plan and is part of the Near North Valley Community Planning Area (CPA).
5. The subject site is within the boundaries of the Rio Grande Boulevard Character Protection Overlay Zone (CPO-11).

6. The EPC is hearing the request because the IDO states that any Extraordinary Facility shall be reviewed and decided upon pursuant to subsection 14-16-6-6(J)
7. The request requires Site Plan-EPC approval because the subject site is over 5 acres and adjacent to Major Public Open Space (MPOS). Compliance with IDO Section 5-2 Site Design and Sensitive Lands is required.
8. The Candelaria Nature Preserve Resource Management Plan (RMP) is a Rank III Plan developed by the Open Space Division of the City Parks and Recreation Department to provide guidance on how to manage and protect natural, historic, or cultural resources and/or scenic views. The Candelaria Nature Preserve Resource Management Plan (RMP) identified the Rio Grande Tree Nursery Tract as the preferred location for public access to the preserve.
9. Uses and development standards specified in a Resource Management Plan or Master Plan approved or amended by the Open Space Division of the City Parks and Recreation Department for each facility or in the Facility Plan for Major Public Open Space prevail over IDO standards and may be reflected in Site Plans approved pursuant to this IDO.
10. The resource management plan is designed to implement habitat restoration to benefit wildlife, while also taking into account the financial burden of managing, maintaining, and operating the CNP, including wildlife crops, proposed restoration, recreational activities, and educational outreach at the CNP. The plan is estimated to cover a 20-year timespan and to be implemented in quarterly phases.
11. The Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, the Major Public Open Space Facility Plan, the Candelaria Nature Preserve Resource Management Plan, and the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO) are incorporated herein by reference and made part of the record for all purposes.
12. The request is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies from Chapter 4: Community Identity pertaining to character, natural resources and process.
  - A. Goal 4.1 – Character: Enhance, protect, and preserve distinct communities.

One of the goals of the RMP is to enhance the native species of both flora and fauna and the development of the site plan made possible through the request will help to contribute to the unique character of the North Valley.
  - B. Policy 4.1.5 – Natural Resources: Encourage high-quality development and redevelopment that responds appropriately to the natural setting and ecosystem  
Vegetation is not only a natural resource by itself, but also is important in providing habitats for wildlife so the development made possible by the request will support a wide diversity of vegetation types and wildlife habits. The development will consist of an education and research center, restoration seed source fields, genotype Cottonwood study fields, heritage orchards, and buffer berms with ecozone research plantings that will respond appropriately to the natural setting and ecosystem. The site plan as per the RMP, incorporates high quality development within the natural setting of the Rio Grande Tree Nursery Tract.

- C. Goal 4.2 – Process: Engage communities to identify and plan for their distinct character and needs.

Public engagement in a planning process provides a measure of inclusion and transparency to the public decision-making process. Furthermore, as per the RMP, the Rio Grande Nursery Tract requires an approved site plan be developed with neighborhood participation and vetted through the necessary City processes which, in this case, is the EPC. The Applicant worked extensively with the community and crafted several conceptual designs while surveying public comments that resulted in the development of the site plan being presented before the EPC.

- D. Policy 4.2.2 – Community Engagement: Facilitate meaningful engagement opportunities and respectful interactions in order to identify and address the needs of all residents.

The request is consistent with this policy because the Applicant as per the RMP, has developed the site plan with neighborhood participation and held several meetings to review the project that allowed for respectful interactions in order to identify and address the needs of all residents. Furthermore, property owners and neighborhood associations received notices pertaining to meetings and were encouraged to provide input that would address their needs and concerns.

13. The request is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies from Chapter 5: Land Use pertaining to efficient development patterns and conservation development.

- A. Goal 5.3 – Efficient Development Patterns: Promote development patterns that maximize the utility of existing infrastructure and public facilities and the efficient use of land to support the public good.

The request is consistent with this Goal because the development of the Rio Grande Tree Nursery Tract will be served by existing infrastructure so the future development made possible by the request will promote efficient development patterns and use of land.

- B. Policy 5.3.4 – Conservation Development: Encourage conservation development to promote private open space and preserve natural landscape, agricultural lands, and other features of the natural environment to encourage development that is sensitive to the open, natural character of the area and the geological and cultural conditions.

The request will encourage conservation development that will promote private open space and preserve natural landscapes by protecting the property for access and education of natural systems in perpetuity. The request will allow for the Tree Nursery Tract to continue in operation and will preserve its' agricultural historical significance.

14. The request is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies from Chapter 10: Parks & Open Space pertaining to facilities and access, distribution, and universal design.

- A. Goal 10.1 – Facilities & Access: Provide parks, Open Space, and recreation facilities that meet the need of all residents and use natural resources responsibly.  
The request provides the opportunity for open space that meets the needs of all residents and use of natural resources responsibly. The request will allow for the site to be developed as a nature preserve, will provide access to open space, and will use natural resources responsibly.
- B. Policy 10.1.1 – Distribution: Improve the community’s access to recreational opportunities by balancing the City and County’s parks and Open Space system within the built environment.

The request will facilitate development of a major public open space in the North Valley and will contribute to equitable distribution of such space which is centrally located within the city’s built environment. The RMP has identified two types of outdoor recreation; physical and visual. Physical access will include walking into the area for guided walks and citizen science monitoring while visual access to the preserve will be provided in selected locations to allow visitors to experience wildlife undisturbed in their native habitat.

- C. Policy 10.1.2 – Universal Design: Plan, design program, and maintain parks, Open Space, and recreation facilities for use by people of all age groups and physical activities.

Disabilities Act and other applicable Federal and State accessibility standards in making reasonable accommodations, whenever possible and when adequate notice is given, to provide access for people with disabilities to enroll and participate in guided programs.

- D. Subpolicy 10.1.2(a): Design and maintain landscaping and park features appropriate to the location, function, public expectation, and intensity of use.

The design of the Rio Grande Tree Nursery Tract will include a restoration seed source field, arboretum and climate ready tree research field along with buffer berms and ecozone research plantings that are appropriate to the location and function of the open space. The intensity of use will be appropriate to the location.

15. The request is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies from Chapter 10: water conservation, Open Space and preservation.

- A. Policy 10.1.4 – Water Conservation: Employ low-water use and reclamation strategies to conserve water.
- B. Subpolicy 10.1.4(b): Integrate irrigation, water conservation, drainage, and flood control functions with parks and open spaces with ecological preservation and recreational purpose.

The request is consistent with Policy 10.1.4 and subpolicy 10.1.4(b) because the primary source of irrigation will be surface irrigation to utilize the property’s senior water rights. Passive water harvesting will be used throughout the site where possible such as in storm water basins and the native grass meadow. Active water harvesting in the form of rain barrels collecting water from restroom and shade structure roofs will be used as appropriate.

- C. Goal 10.3 – Open Space: Protect the integrity and quality of the region’s natural features and environmental assets and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and education.

The request will provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and education as there will be an education and research center on site along with walking paths and interpretative nodes that are to be located along such paths. There will be reasonable public access that will be consistent with the objective of preserving wildlife.

- D. Policy 10.3.2 – Preservation: Identify and manage sensitive lands within the Open Space network to protect their ecological functions.

The Rio Grande Tree Nursery tract will provide a space where the City’s Parks and Recreation Department will plant new tree species to evaluate their success rates for other parks that will include a restoration seed source field and genotype Cottonwood study fields.

- E. Subpolicy 10.3.2(a): Manage public access to best protect natural resources.

The request furthers this policy because in order to minimize wildlife disturbance and protect natural resources, the level of human activity will be limited.

- F. Subpolicy 10.3.2(b): Ensure that development within Open Space is compatible with its preservation purpose.

The site plan ensures the preservation of natural resources on the property for the access, education, and enjoyment to the public. One of the guidelines of the RMP for the subject site was to develop guidelines for reasonable public access consistent with the wildlife preservation objectives.

- G. Policy 10.3.3 – Use: Provide low-impact recreational and educational opportunities consistent with the carrying capacity of the Open Space resources.

The request is consistent with this policy because the maximum number of program participants allowed at one time will generally be limited to 24 people that is below the carrying capacity for the site. The site has been programmed with walking paths throughout the site and accessible paths and bridge to a viewing platform at the Candelaria Nature Preserve that are considered low-impact recreational opportunities. Furthermore, there are two types of outdoor recreation that have been discussed in the development of the RMP: physical and visual. Physical access will include walking the subject side for guided walks and citizen science monitoring as well as hands-on activities. Visual access will be provided in selected locations to allow visitors to experience

16. The request is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies from Chapter 11: Heritage Conservation pertaining to traditional, rural & agricultural heritage.

- A. Goal 11.1 – Traditional, Rural & Agricultural Heritage: Preserve and enhance farmland, the acequia system, and traditional communities.

The request is consistent with this Goal because it preserves the historic natural environment of the subject site and enhances existing acequias.

- B. Goal 11.1.1 – Agricultural Preservation: Promote and assist the viability of agricultural heritage, including the conservation and use of irrigated agricultural land, small-scale agriculture, and open space in the valley and other areas.

The request is consistent with this policy because Table 13 (CNP Public Access and Outdoor Recreation Implementation Plan) of the RMP outlines the phasing plan for CNP and the Tree Nursery Tract (TNT). One of the actions that is to occur in Year 1 for the TNT is to reestablish the tree nursery and cover crops that will promote the viability of agricultural heritage. Furthermore, the submitted landscape plan lists food trees that will be planted at the TNT that also furthers this policy.

- C. Goal 11.3 – Cultural Landscapes: Protect, reuse, and/or enhance significant cultural landscapes as important contributors to our heritage and rich and complex identities.

The request is consistent with this policy because the site plan protects the natural history surrounding the Rio Grande and its historic relationship to the farming and acequia irrigation in the area.

- D. Policy 11.3.1 – Natural and Cultural Features: Preserve and enhance the natural and cultural characteristics and features that contribute to the distinct identity of communities, neighborhoods, and cultural landscapes.

The request preserves and enhances the natural and cultural characteristics and features of the CNP cultural landscape.

17. The request is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies from Chapter 12: Infrastructure, Community Facilities & Services.

- A. Goal 12.1 – Infrastructure: Plan, coordinate, and provide for efficient, equitable, and environmentally sound infrastructure to support existing communities and the Comp Plan’s vision for future growth.

Water efficiency will continue to be a priority in managing the Rio Grande Nursery Tract as part of the CNP. It is critical to the success of the CNP to keep MRGCD ditches in good working condition and the site plan will provide access for proper maintenance.

- B. Goal 12.1.5 – Irrigation System: Coordinate with MRGCD and other stakeholders to protect the irrigation system.

The request is consistent with this policy because the request will facilitate the maintenance and upkeep of the MRGCD ditches to be kept in good working condition and the development of the Site Plan as part of this request will provide for proper maintenance.

- C. Goal 12.3 – Public Services: Plan, coordinate, and provide for efficient, equitable, and

environmentally sound services to best serve residents and protect their health, safety, and well-being.

The request will provide efficient, equitable, and environmentally sound services because the south side of the site will become an arboriculture research and demonstration field that will best serve residents while protecting their health, safety, and well-being.

- D. Policy 12.3.8 – Education: Complement programming provided by educational institutions to expand educational opportunities for residents in all cultural, age, economic and educational groups.

The request will facilitate the development of an open-air education center that will be available for hands-on demonstrations and workshops to support research, restoration and operations of the Rio Grande Tree Nursery and the Candelaria Nature Preserve. The space will accommodate small groups in a variety of engagement opportunities.

18. The request is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies from Chapter 13: Resilience & Sustainability.

- A. Goal 13.2 – Water Supply & Others: Protect and conserve our region’s limited water supply to benefit the range of uses that will keep our community and ecosystem healthy.  
Critical to the operation of the CNP is the use of surface irrigation water rights to irrigate the property. Through the RMP, the use of flood irrigation will be used to establish and sustain crops and restored habitat areas.
- B. Goal 13.4 – Natural Resources: Protect, conserve, and enhance natural resources, habitat and ecosystems.

The request will protect, conserve, and enhance natural resources, habitat and ecosystems. The Candelaria Nature Preserve Resource Management Plan is designed to implement habitat restoration to the benefit of wildlife. The creation of diverse wildlife habitat is an important part of the CNP’s mission. Specific goals for wildlife improvements including creating a mosaic of habitat; removing exotic species while restoring native species in phases over time.

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

- A. 14-16-6-6(J)(3)(a) As demonstrated by the policy analysis of the Site Plan-EPC for an Extraordinary Facility is consistent with the ABC Comp Plan goals and policies especially in an Area of Consistency because the project will protect and enhance the character of the surrounding area located in the Rio Grande Boulevard Character Protection Overlay Zone (CPO-11).
- B. 14-16-6-6(J)(3)(b) The subject site is zoned NR-PO-B; therefore, this criterion does not apply.
- C. 14-16-6-6(J)(3)(c) With the application of conditions of approval, the site plan would

comply with all applicable provisions of the IDO.

- D. 14-16-6-6(J)(3)(d) The City's existing infrastructure has adequate capacity for the proposed development.
  - E. 14-16-6-6(J)(3)(e) The future, proposed development would be required to comply with the decisions made by the EPC. The EPCs' conditions of approval would improve compliance with the IDO, which contains regulations to mitigate site plan impacts to surrounding areas.
  - F. 14-16-6-6(J)(3)(f) The subject property is within an approved Master Development Plan and the Site Plan meets relevant standards in the Candelaria Nature Preserve Resource Management Plan and applicable standards in the NR-PO-B zone.
  - G. 14-16-6-6(J)(3)(g) The subject property is not within a Railroad and Spur Area therefore this criterion does not apply.
20. The subject site is adjacent to Major Public Open Space and is therefore subject to all of the regulations in IDO Section 5-2(J)(2), Lots Adjacent to Major Public Open Space. Pursuant to IDO Section 5-2(C)(1) both the subdivision and site design process shall begin with an analysis of the constrains related to sensitive lands.
21. There are no known archaeological sites on the subject site. A "Certificate of No Effect" from the City of Albuquerque was issued on June 7, 2022
22. The affected, registered neighborhood organizations are the Alvarado Gardens Neighborhood Association, North Valley Coalition, and Rio Grande Boulevard Neighborhood Association which were notified as required. Property owners within 100 feet of the subject site were also notified, as required.
23. A pre-submittal neighborhood meeting was held on May 4, 2022 via Zoom to review the site design for the Rio Grande Tree Nursery Open Space. A presentation by the Open Space Superintendent and landscape consultants reviewed the history and current status of the Rio Grande Tree Nursery and its' relationship to the Candelaria Nature Preserve. The public process with the adjacent neighbors was also discussed and initial concerns were shared which residents were appreciative of.
24. As of this writing, Staff has received one phone call in opposition to the request.

Conditions:

1. The EPC delegates final sign-off authority of this site development plan to the Development Review Board (DRB) to ensure all technical issues are resolved. The DRB is responsible for ensuring that technical EPC Conditions have been satisfied and that other applicable City requirements have been met.
2. The applicant shall submit a finalized version of the site plan for filing at the Planning Department.



3. An approved grading and drainage plan shall be submitted.
4. Outdoor Gathering Areas:
  - A. Shop drawings for the shade structures shall be submitted.
  - B. Materials, colors, and LRV shall be specified.
5. Signage:
  - A. A monument sign detail shall be submitted.
  - B. The detail shall be dimensioned and shall specify colors and materials.
6. Access and Connectivity- Fully dimensioned details shall be provided for the following:
  - A. Walking path (Site Keyed Note #7);
  - B. Bicycle racks;
  - C. Surface mounted tables;
  - D. Surface mounted tables with accessible option;
  - E. Concrete accessible parking spaces with aisle and signage;
  - F. Concrete access ramp;
  - G. Pedestrian gate.
7. Landscape Plan:
  - A. Add a note to the final landscape plan that the plant palette shall be determined by the City Forrester and Open Space Superintendent, and the Candelaria Nature Preserve Managers.
  - B. Any change to the plant selection over time shall be approved by the parties listed in A, above.
8. Conditions from the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District shall be addressed:
  - A. Please add MRGCD signature line with other signatories on page 1.
  - B. Please add MRGCD Approval Note to page 1 of plat.
  - C. MRGCD Amounts Due; contact Assessments Dept to make payment.
  - D. Please add MRGCD R/W information to match MRGCD records; and survey toe to toe showing total width of ditches as well as the property line to the centerline.
  - E. Final Plat Approval Signature required by the MRGCD.

**APPEAL:** If you wish to appeal this decision, you must do so within 15 days of the EPC's decision or by **September 2, 2022**. The date of the EPC's decision is not included in the 15-day period for filing

an appeal, and if the 15<sup>th</sup> day falls on a Saturday, Sunday or Holiday, the next working day is considered as the deadline for filing the appeal.

For more information regarding the appeal process, please refer to Section 14-16-6-4(V) of the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO), Administration and Enforcement. 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 an EPC Recommendation to the City Council since this is not a final decision.

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 IDO must be complied with, even after approval of the referenced application(s).

Sincerely,

*Catalina Lehner*

for Alan M. Varela,  
Planning Director

AV/CL/SB

cc: City of Albuquerque, Parks & Recreation Dept. Open Space, [Csommerfeldt@cabq.gov](mailto:Csommerfeldt@cabq.gov)  
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