

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



OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION OF DECISION

December 10, 2020

City of Albuquerque
Parks and Recreation, Open Space
3615 Los Picaros Rd. SE
Albuquerque, NM

Project #2020-004639
RZ-2020-00036– Amendment to Facility Plan

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

The City of Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Department requests the above action for all or a portion of Tract A-1-B Revised Plat Of Tracts A-1 A-2 B-1 & B-2, Tract A-1-A Revised Plat Of Tracts A-1 A-2 B-1 & B-2, Tr A-2 Revised Plat Of Tracts A-1, A-2, B-1, & B-2, Tr B-1 Revised Plat Of Tracts A-1, A-2, B-1 & B-2, Trs 16B2B1, 16B2A & 16B1 MRGCD Map 34, Tr X1 Summary Plat City Of Albuquerque Repl Tr X Alvarado, located on Candelaria Rd. NW, between Paseo del Bosque Trail NW and Rio Grande Blvd. NW, approximately 167 acres (G-12-Z) (F-12-Z) Staff Planner: Leslie Naji

On December 10, 2020, the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) voted to Continue Project #2020-004639/RZ-2020-00036– Amendment to Facility Plan, for one month to the January 21, 2021, EPC Hearing, based on the following Findings.

1. The request is a for a review and recommendation to City Council of the Candelaria Nature Preserve Resource Management Plan (CNPRMP) an approximately 167-acre site consisting of all or a portion of Tract A-1-B Revised Plat Of Tracts A-1 A-2 B-1 & B-2, Tract A-1-A Revised Plat Of Tracts A-1 A-2 B-1 & B-2, Tr A-2 Revised Plat Of Tracts A-1, A-2, B-1, & B-2, Tr B-1 Revised Plat Of Tracts A-1, A-2, B-1 & B-2, Tracts 16B2B1, 16B2A & 16B1 MRGCD Map 34, Tr X1 Summary Plat City Of Albuquerque's Replat Tr X Alvarado.
2. The site is located on Candelaria Rd NW between Paseo del Bosque Trail and Rio Grande Blvd. NW. and is zoned NR-PO-B.
3. The Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) is hearing this case because the City of Albuquerque's Major Public Open Space Facility Plan 1999 required all resource management plans be reviewed by the EPC with a recommendation going to City Council.
4. The subject site is located within an Area of Consistency, and is not along any Corridors as designated in the Comprehensive Plan. The subject site is not located within a Protection Overlay Zone.

5. There is R-A zoning to the north, east, and south of the site. To the west is the Bosque. A small portion to the south is zoned R-T and R-ML residential.
6. The Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, the City of Albuquerque Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO) and the City of Albuquerque Major Public Open Space Facility Plan (1999) are incorporated herein by reference and made part of the record for all purposes.
7. The request generally furthers the following, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goals and policies in regards to Community Identity:
 - A. POLICY 4.1.5 - Natural Resources: Encourage high-quality development and redevelopment that responds appropriately to the natural setting and ecosystem functions.

The CNP RMP is a means to encourage a natural setting and rebuild ecosystems. Although public access will be limited, it is still open to small groups.
 - B. 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 Open Space Advisory Board convened a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) including but not limited to Neighborhood Association representatives, partner agencies, and citizen biologists who guided the development of the Plan. In addition, the Open Space Division engaged in an extensive Public Process including stakeholder interviews, several public meetings, and nature discovery hikes as outlined under Public Process in the proposed RMP.
8. The request generally furthers the following, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goals and policies in regards to Parks and Open Space:
 - A. 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 proposed RMP is designed to balance available resources in the appropriate locations and implement habitat restoration to the benefit of wildlife for the purposes of nature study and wildlife viewing. The plan allows for preservation of existing Open Space lands and conversion from farming to natural habitat in certain areas, therefore allowing for additional natural habitat within the existing built environment of the North Valley neighborhood.
 - B. 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 abilities.
 - A) Design and maintain landscaping and park features appropriate to the location, function, public expectation, and intensity of use.

The proposed RMP will design and maintain park features appropriate to the location, function, public expectation, and intensity of use by outlining expectations for specific areas of the CNP as well as estimating the time-line and costs to achieve those goals.
 - C. POLICY 10.1.4: Water Conservation: Employ low-water use and reclamation strategies to conserve water.
 - A) Incorporate native vegetation and low-water use species wherever possible, particularly in areas without easy access to irrigation.

B) Integrate irrigation, water conservation, drainage, and flood control functions within parks and Open Spaces with ecological preservation and recreational purpose.

Water efficiency will continue to be a priority in managing the property. Critical to the operation of the CNP is the use of surface irrigation water rights to irrigate the property.

D. 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.

POLICY 10.3.2: Preservation: Identify and manage sensitive lands within the Open Space network to protect their ecological functions.

A) Manage public access to best protect natural resources.

B) Ensure that development within Open Space is compatible with its preservation purpose.

The proposed RMP identifies appropriate outdoor recreation activities for the CNP, as well as outlines a process, schedule, and protocols for reasonable public access consistent with the wildlife preserve objective. The proposed RMP includes a Public Access and Outdoor Recreation Implementation Plan and a Habitat Implementation Plan with detailed lists of activities and implementation schedules over the 20-year plan.

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

The proposed RMP will permit the implementation of low-impact recreational and educational opportunities consistent with the carrying capacity of the Open Space resources by including an educational program protocol.

F. POLICY 10.3.4 - Bosque and Rio Grande: Carefully design access to the Rio Grande, the Bosque, and surrounding river lands to provide entry to those portions suitable for recreational, scientific, and educational purpose, while controlling access in other more sensitive areas to preserve the natural wildlife habitat and maintain essential watershed management and drainage functions.

A) Minimize disturbance or removal of existing natural vegetation from the Bosque.

A number of bridges cross the Albuquerque Riverside Drain which runs along the western edge of the site. Access to these is somewhat limited due to the conservancy nature of CNP. This limited access will minimize disturbance of Bosque vegetation.

9. The request generally furthers the following, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goals and policies in regards to Heritage Conservation:

A. POLICY 11.1 - Acequia Preservation: Support efforts to protect and preserve the acequia system for agricultural and low-impact recreation purposes and strengthen connections with adjacent neighborhoods and development.

The CNP incorporates part of the historic acequia system and intends to preserve and maintain low-impact recreation surrounding the system as well as respecting adjacent neighborhoods that rely on the system.

B. 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 RMP preserves the natural environment and will restore wildlife habitats currently used for farming.

- C. POLICY 11.3.3 - Bosque: Regulate development on adjacent lands to preserve and enhance the Bosque as an important cultural landscape that contributes to the history and distinct identity of the region, as well as nearby neighborhoods.

Although the traditional farmland of the north valley located within the boundary of CNP will be discontinued, the traditional natural habitat will be promoted.

- 10. The request generally furthers the following, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goals and policies in regards to Infrastructure, Community Facilities & Services (ICSF):

- A. POLICY 12.1.5 - Irrigation System: Coordinate with MRGCD and other stakeholders to protect the irrigation system.

The proposed CNP RMP recognizes the importance of partnering closely with the MRGCD during the irrigation period to efficiently meet the demands of the fields and to protect the irrigation system and proposes a plan to accomplish this goal.

- B. GOAL 12.3 - Public Services: Plan, coordinate, and provide efficient, equitable, and environmentally sound services to best serve residents and protect their health, safety, and well-being.

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.

Educational programs operated through the CNP will continue to programming provided by educational institutions to expand educational opportunities for residents in all cultural, age, economic, and educational groups.

- C. GOAL 12.4 – Coordination: Coordinate with other providers to leverage resources, maximize efficiencies, bridge service gaps, and provide added value.

POLICY 12.4.5 - Facility Plans: Develop, update, and implement facility plans for infrastructure systems, such as drainage, electric transmission, natural gas, and information technology that benefit from cross-agency and public-private coordination.

The RMP lists a large number of potential donors to provide funding in order to carry out parts of its plan.

- 11. The request generally furthers the following, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goals and policies in regards to Resiliency and Sustainability:

- A. GOAL 13.2 - Water Supply & Quality: Protect and conserve our region’s limited water supply to benefit the range of uses that will keep our community and ecosystem healthy.

POLICY 13.2.2 - Water Conservation: Foster the efficient management and use of water in development and infrastructure.

The RMP fosters the efficient management and use of water in development and infrastructure.

- B. GOAL 13.4 - Natural Resources: Protect, conserve, and enhance natural resources, habitat, and ecosystems.

The proposed CNP RMP intends to protect, conserve, and enhance natural resources, habitat, and ecosystems by increasing habitat types on previously farmed lands, which will improve local and migratory wildlife and native plants interconnections

- C. POLICY 13.4.4 - Unique Landforms and Habitats: Protect areas with unique landforms, and crucial habitat for wildlife, through sensitive urban development or acquisition as Open Space.

The preservation of habitats is being promoted through the purchase of the CNP and the proposed RMP will protect the land from uncontrolled development and access.

12. The Candelaria Nature Preserve Resource Management Plan largely meets the requirements for such plans as set forth in the MPOS Facility Plan of 1999:

- A. Identify land use “carrying capacity;”

The proposed RMP will permit the implementation of low-impact recreational and educational opportunities consistent with the carrying capacity of the Open Space resources by including an educational program protocols

- B. Identify access point(s);

Current and potential public access points, both visual and physical, were reviewed to determine what kind of access to the property already exist and where additional access could feasibly be developed, what kind of and how much parking exists and could be feasibly be provided, and whether the access points could be made Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible without great expense.

- C. Identify facility locations, including utility and transportation corridors;

Vehicular access will be limited to OSD and other “authorized” vehicles, emergency vehicles, and farm machinery. The majority of vehicles are expected to stay on the existing farm roads and access the site via the existing vehicular gates. Pedestrian access is limited to guided tours, education programs, citizen science monitoring activities, and rehabilitation/renovation projects.

- D. Identify areas to be monitored and develop a monitoring and management plan;

A major portion of this RMP is the return of currently farmed land to natural wildlife preserve. This transition is expected to take place over a period of years and there is a detailed monitoring and management plan for this transition.

- E. Establish policies (in this RMP these are referenced as protocols) for resource management, access and parking, facility management, staffing, fees, interagency cooperation, and enforcement;

Site and Habitat Area Protocols are established although community review and involvement could be formally incorporated as a protocol.

- F. Classify the parcels within the RMP area by MPOS type, according to the criteria contained in Table 2-1 within the MPOS;

Although Open Space Preserve, as denoted in Table 2-1 in the MPOS, is marked for a large portion of the site, the South Candelaria area, which is possibly Protected, Undeveloped Open Space, is not denoted as such. This should be remedied.

- G. Evaluate impacts or proposed development within the Major Public Open Space on adjacent areas; and

No development is proposed for the site. Concerns about future plans for a restroom and additional parking have been discussed but nothing is finalized at this time.

- H. Evaluate reasonable alternative development schemes.

A great deal of evaluation has gone into the determined development schemes. The RMP allows for reevaluation of development every four years.

13. The applicant has adequately justified the request pursuant to the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO) Section 14-16-6-7(B)(3) of the Integrated Development Ordinance, Review and Decision Criteria for Adoption or Amendment of a Facility Plan, as follows:

A. Criterion (a) The proposed plan or amendment is consistent with the spirit and intent of the ABC Comp Plan as demonstrated through the applicant's justification.

B. Criterion (b) The proposed plan promotes the efficient use of facilities. The proposed RMP addresses the issues of access and recreation to come into LWCF compliance. The property will not be open to the public to limit disturbance to wildlife; however, a detailed implementation plan has been developed for engaging the public through citizen science, stewardship activities and guided tours through a limited access scheme. Enhanced visual access will also be offered through wildlife viewing blinds strategically located around the perimeter of the property.

C. Criterion (c) The plan or amendment will promote public health, safety, and general welfare. The proposed RMP includes a section regarding Conservation Buffers which are recommended to provide multiple benefits. By establishing a safe distance between outdoor recreation and habitat, wildlife disturbance is limited. Additional vegetation buffers serve secondary environmental functions. In addition, the recent increase in non-native vegetation has been identified as the most significant indicator of failing ecological health in the riparian ecosystem and the proposed RMP describes methods for managing non-native vegetation.

14. Property owners within 100 ft and the affected neighborhood associations, Rio Grande Compound HOA, Alvarado Gardens NA, North Valley Coalition, and Rio Grande Boulevard NA were notified as required.

15. Staff has received a number of letters in support of this RMP and opposition or reservation concerning future uses within this request.

16. The EPC wants to Continue this case for 42 days, until the next EPC hearing on January 21, 2021. A Continuance is warranted to allow time for the applicant to revise the proposed Resource Management Plan to clarify issues of procedure within the plan. These include:

A. Habitat and Access Concept panels are located in the Plan Appendix; however, they should be relocated into main document where matrices are located.

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF DECISION

Project #2020-004639

December 10, 2020

Page 7 of 8

- B. The EPC finds that expansion is necessary expand on what design issues will be included in the tree farm planning effort (parking, buffering, blind viewing, etc.) and how the public will be engaged in that process.
- C. Address dirt, dust, debris, odors and noise concerns: the installment of silt perimeter fencing to help control debris, as well as any other required measures to mitigate.
- D. Address the public's concerns before deciding on a material for the bird blind viewing walls.
- E. Trash and other waste materials shall be forbidden from the tree nursery.
- F. Ensure proper setbacks are maintained within the tree nursery from surrounding communities.
- G. Address parking concerns at the tree nursery.
- H. The commission questions the appropriateness of uses like refuse transfer, green waste transfer, and landscape material transfer at the tree farm site which is in direct contact with three residential neighborhoods. Furthermore, noise, dust and odors are a concern. It would be appropriate for Parks department to indicate in the plan that these are not to be done at this site. There are other sites in the city that are more appropriate for this kind of use.
- I. The applicant must convince the EPC that the Plan's policy regarding herbicide use is robust and careful.
- J. The assessment of the plan relative to carrying capacity is acceptable because access to sites are to be limited to accompanied tours.
- K. The City Parks and Recreation Department will define roles and responsibilities of the facilitator in regard to interactions with the public and the Plan.
- L. Permeable materials shall be used for parking area at tree nursery to ensure flooding and ponding does not continue to be an issue.

APPEAL: It is not possible to appeal EPC Recommendations to the City Council. Pursuant to the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO) 14-16-6-4(U)(2), Administration and Enforcement- Finality of Decisions, a recommendation is not a final decision and cannot be appealed. Rather, a formal protest of the EPC's recommendation can be filed within the 15 day period following the recommendation, which ends at the close of business on December 28, 2020. You will receive notification if any person files a protest. For more information regarding the appeal process, please refer to Section 14-16-6-4(V) of the IDO.

Sincerely,

for Brennon Williams
Planning Director

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF DECISION

Project #2020-004639

December 10, 2020

Page 8 of 8

BW/LN

cc: Parks and Recreation, Open Space Division, Colleen Langan-McRoberts, cmcroberts@cabq.gov
Parks and Recreation, Open Space Division, Cheryl Somerfeldt, csomerfeldt@cabq.gov
Rio Grande Compound HOA, Ann King, akingnm@hotmail.com
Rio Grande Compound HOA, Judd West, judd@westlawfirmpllc.com
Alvarado Gardens NA, Robert Poyourow, vp@alvaradoneighborhood.com
Alvarado Gardens NA, Diana Hunt, president@alvaradoneighborhood.com
North Valley Coalition, Peggy Norton, peggynorton@yahoo.com
North Valley Coalition, Doyle Kimbrough, newmexmba@aol.com
Rio Grande Boulevard NA, Doyle Kimbrough, newmexmba@aol.com
Rio Grande Boulevard NA, Eleanor Walther, eawalth@comcast.net
EPC file
avarela@cabq.gov