



CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
ZONING HEARING EXAMINER
NOTIFICATION OF DECISION

Rachel Marie Salas requests a Permit-Wall or Fence-Major for Lot 34, Heritage Hills Unit 5, located at 8921 Democracy Rd NE, zoned R-1C [Section 14-16-5-7(D)]

Special Exception No:..... **VA-2021-00124**
Project No: **Project#2021-005420**
Hearing Date: 08-17-21
Closing of Public Record: 08-17-21
Date of Decision: 09-01-21

On the 17th day of August, 2021, property owner Rachel Marie Salas (“Applicant”) appeared before the Zoning Hearing Examiner (“ZHE”) requesting a Permit-Wall or Fence-Major (“Application”) upon the real property located at 8921 Democracy Rd NE (“Subject Property”). Below are the ZHE’s finding of fact and decision:

FINDINGS:

1. Applicant is requesting a Permit-Wall or Fence-Major.
2. The City of Albuquerque Integrated Development Ordinance Section 14-16-6-6(H)(3) Permit-Wall or Fence-Major reads: “*An application for a Permit – Wall or Fence – Major for a wall in the front or street side yard of a lot with low-density residential development in or abutting any Residential zone district that meets the requirements in Subsection 14-16-5-7(D)(3)(g) (Exceptions to Maximum Wall Height) and Table 5-7-2 shall be approved if the following criteria are met:*
 - 6-6(H)(3)(a) *The wall is proposed on a lot that meets any of the following criteria:*
 1. *The lot is at least ½ acre.*
 2. *The lot fronts a street designated as a collector, arterial, or interstate highway.*
 3. *For a front yard wall taller than allowed in Table 5-7-1, at least 20 percent of the properties with low-density residential development with a front yard abutting the same street as the subject property and within 330 feet of the subject property along the length of the street the lot faces have a front yard wall or fence over 3 feet. This distance shall be measured along the street from each corner of the subject property's lot line, and the analysis shall include properties on both sides of the street. (See figure below for an illustration of this measurement.)*
 4. *For a street side yard wall taller than allowed in Table 5-7-1, at least 20 percent of the properties with low-density residential development with a side yard abutting the same street as the subject property and within 330 feet of the subject property along the length of the street the lot faces have a street side yard wall or*

fence over 3 feet. This distance shall be measured along the street from each corner of the subject property's lot line, and the analysis shall include properties on both sides of the street.

- 6-6(H)(3)(b) *The proposed wall would strengthen or reinforce the architectural character of the surrounding area.*
- 6-6(H)(3)(c) *The proposed wall would not be injurious to adjacent properties, the surrounding neighborhood, or the larger community.*
- 6-6(H)(3)(d) *The design of the wall complies with any applicable standards in Section 14-16-5-7 (Walls and Fences), including but not limited to Subsection 14-16-5-7(E)(2) (Articulation and Alignment), Subsection 14-16-5-7(E)(3) (Wall Design), and all of the following:*
1. *The wall or fence shall not block the view of any portion of any window on the front façade of the primary building when viewed from 5 feet above ground level at the centerline of the street in front of the house.*
 2. *The design and materials proposed for the wall or fence shall reflect the architectural character of the surrounding area.*
3. The applicant bears the burden of providing a sound justification for the requested decision, based on substantial evidence, pursuant to IDO Section 14-16-6-4(E)(3).
 4. The applicant bears the burden of showing compliance with required standards through analysis, illustrations, or other exhibits as necessary, pursuant to IDO Section 14-16-6-4(E)(4).
 5. All property owners within 100 feet and affected neighborhood associations were notified of the application.
 6. The subject property is currently zoned R-1C.
 7. City Transportation issued a report stating that it does not object.
 8. Based on photographs, maps and oral evidence presented by Applicant, at least 20 percent of the properties within 330 feet of the lot where the wall or fence is being requested have a wall or fence over 3 feet in the front yard area.
 9. Based on evidence presented by Applicant, the proposed wall would strengthen or reinforce the architectural character of the surrounding area. Specifically, photographs were submitted showing several walls/fences in the neighborhood. It appears from the evidence that the proposed wall would not be out of character with the surrounding area, but rather would reinforce the architectural character of the neighborhood by being in harmony with the other improvements on the Subject Property.
 10. Based on evidence presented by Applicant, the proposed wall would not be injurious to adjacent properties, the surrounding neighborhood, or the larger community. Specifically, applicant provided testimony that the wall would enhance the safety of both the subject property and neighboring properties by discouraging trespassers from coming into the community and property. A neighbor submitted correspondence stating that the wall would obstruct views for traffic, but the City Traffic Engineer submitted a report indicating no interference with traffic or driveway views.
 11. Based on evidence presented by Applicant, the design of the wall complies with any applicable standard in Section 14-16-5-7 (Walls and Fences), including, but not limited to Subsection 14-16-5-7(E)(2) (Articulation and alignment) and Subsection 14-16-5-7(E)(3) (Wall Design), and all of the following: (a) The wall or fence shall not block the view of any

portion of any window on the front façade of the primary building when viewed from 5 feet above ground level at the centerline of the street in front of the house; and (b) The design and materials proposed for the wall or fence shall reflect the architectural character of the surrounding area.

12. A neighbor submitted correspondence arguing that the proposed wall violates private covenants. However, it is not the role of the City to enforce any private covenant to which it is not a party.
13. The ZHE finds that the proper “Notice of Hearing” signage was posted for the required time period as required by Section 14-16-6-4(K)(3).
14. The ZHE finds that the Applicant has authority to pursue this Application.

DECISION:

APPROVAL of a Permit-Wall or Fence-Major.

APPEAL:

If you wish to appeal this decision, you must do so by September 16, 2021 pursuant to Section 14-16-6-4(V), of the Integrated Development Ordinance, you must demonstrate that you have legal standing to file an appeal as defined.

Successful applicants are reminded that other regulations of the City must be complied with, even after approval of a special exception is secured. This decision does not constitute approval of plans for a building permit. If your application is approved, bring this decision with you when you apply for any related building permit or occupation tax number. Approval of a conditional use or a variance application is void after one year from date of approval if the rights and privileges are granted, thereby have not been executed, or utilized.



Robert Lucero, Esq.
Zoning Hearing Examiner

cc:

ZHE File
Zoning Enforcement
Rachel Marie Salas, rachel@eaglerocknm.com



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ZONING HEARING EXAMINER
NOTIFICATION OF DECISION

Rachel Marie Salas requests a variance of 3 feet to the 3 feet maximum wall height in the front yard for Lot 34, Heritage Hills Unit 5, located at 8921 Democracy Rd NE, zoned R-1C [Section 14-16-5-7-D]

Special Exception No:..... **VA-2021-00232**
Project No: **Project#2021-005420**
Hearing Date: 08-17-21
Closing of Public Record: 08-17-21
Date of Decision: 09-01-21

On the 17th day of August, 2021, property owner Rachel Marie Salas (“Applicant”) appeared before the Zoning Hearing Examiner (“ZHE”) requesting a variance of 3 feet to the 3 feet maximum wall height in the front yard (“Application”) upon the real property located at 8921 Democracy Rd NE (“Subject Property”). Below are the ZHE’s finding of fact and decision:

FINDINGS:

1. Applicant is requesting a variance of 3 feet to the 3 feet maximum wall height in the front yard.
2. The City of Albuquerque Integrated Development Ordinance, Section 14-16-6-6(N)(3)(a) (Variance-Review and Decision Criteria) reads: “... an application for a Variance-ZHE shall be approved if it meets all of the following criteria:
 - (1) *There are special circumstances applicable to the subject property that are not self-imposed and that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone and vicinity such as size, shape, topography, location, surroundings, or physical characteristics created by natural forces or government action for which no compensation was paid. Such special circumstances of the property either create an extraordinary hardship in the form of a substantial and unjustified limitation on the reasonable use or return on the property, or practical difficulties result from strict compliance with the minimum standards.*
 - (2) *The Variance will not be materially contrary to the public safety, health, or welfare.*
 - (3) *The Variance does not cause significant material adverse impacts on surrounding properties or infrastructure improvements in the vicinity.*
 - (4) *The Variance will not materially undermine the intent and purpose of the IDO or the applicable zone district.*
 - (5) *The Variance approved is the minimum necessary to avoid extraordinary hardship or practical difficulties.”*
3. The applicant bears the burden of providing a sound justification for the requested decision, based on substantial evidence, pursuant to IDO Section 14-16-6-4(E)(3).

4. The applicant bears the burden of showing compliance with required standards through analysis, illustrations, or other exhibits as necessary, pursuant to IDO Section 14-16-6-4(E)(4).
5. Applicant appeared and gave evidence in support of the application.
6. All property owners within 100 feet of the subject property and the affected neighborhood association were notified.
7. The subject property is currently zoned R-1C.
8. Based on evidence submitted by or on behalf of Applicant, it appears that there are special circumstances applicable to the Subject Property that are not self-imposed and that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone and vicinity such as size, shape, topography, location, surroundings, or physical characteristics created by natural forces or government action for which no compensation was paid, as required by Section 14-16-6-6(N)(3)(a)(1). Specifically, Applicant testified and provided written evidence that, the Subject Property has special circumstances because of its location on a cul de sac and abutting a drainage channel, which give rise to the need for this request. These special circumstances create an extraordinary hardship in the form of a substantial and unjustified limitation on the reasonable use or return on the Subject Property, because compliance with the minimum standards would not provide sufficient privacy or protection for the Subject Property.
9. Based on evidence submitted by or on behalf of Applicant, the variance will not be contrary to the public safety, health and welfare of the community as required by Section 14-16-6-6(N)(3)(a)(2). Specifically, evidence was submitted supporting that, if granted approval, the Applicant intends to construct the wall in a manner that is consistent with the IDO and the Development Process Manual (DPM).
10. Based on evidence submitted by or on behalf of Applicant, the variance will not cause significant adverse material impacts on surrounding properties or infrastructure improvements in the vicinity as required by Section 14-16-6-6(N)(3)(a)(3). Specifically, the proposed wall is designed to be in harmony and consistency with what currently exists in the neighborhood, which was supported by photographic evidence and oral testimony. Photographs were submitted showing the neighborhood. Although not all walls were of the same construction, it appears from the evidence that neighborhood architectural styles differ. The proposed wall would not be out of character with the surrounding area, but rather would reinforce the architectural character of the neighborhood by being in harmony with the other improvements existing and proposed for the Subject Property.
11. Based on evidence submitted by or on behalf of Applicant, the variance will not materially undermine the intent and purpose of the IDO or applicable zone district as required by Section 14-16-6-6(N)(3)(a)(4). Specifically, Applicant presented evidence that the intent of IDO will still be met in that the subject site will continue the existing use and the proposed variance would merely add to the safety and usability of the site.
12. Based on evidence submitted by or on behalf of Applicant, the variance approved is the minimum necessary to avoid extraordinary hardship or practical difficulties as required by Section 14-16-6-6(N)(3)(a)(5). Specifically, Applicant submitted evidence that any smaller variance would be ineffective to provide for the privacy, safety, and usability of the site. Thus, the applicant is not requesting more than what is minimally necessary for a variance.
13. City Transportation submitted a report stating no objection.

14. A neighbor submitted correspondence arguing that the proposed wall violates private covenants. However, it is not the role of the City to enforce any private covenant to which it is not a party.
15. A neighbor submitted correspondence stating that the wall would obstruct views for traffic. However, as stated, above, City Transportation submitted a report indicating no interference with traffic or driveway views.
16. The proper "Notice of Hearing" signage was posted for the required time period as required by Section 14-16-6-4(K)(3).
17. The Applicant has authority to pursue this Application.

DECISION:

APPROVAL of a variance of 3 feet to the 3 feet maximum wall height in the front yard.

APPEAL:

If you wish to appeal this decision, you must do so by September 16, 2021 pursuant to Section 14-16-6-4(V), of the Integrated Development Ordinance, you must demonstrate that you have legal standing to file an appeal as defined.

Successful applicants are reminded that other regulations of the City must be complied with, even after approval of a special exception is secured. This decision does not constitute approval of plans for a building permit. If your application is approved, bring this decision with you when you apply for any related building permit or occupation tax number. Approval of a conditional use or a variance application is void after one year from date of approval if the rights and privileges are granted, thereby have not been executed, or utilized.



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