**CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE**
PLANNING DEPARTMENT
URBAN DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
600 2nd Street NW, 2nd Floor, Albuquerque, NM 87102
PO Box 1293, Albuquerque, NM 87103
Office (505) 924-3860

# ZONING HEARING EXAMINER
# NOTICE OF DECISION

**Special Exception Number**: VA-2026-00142

**Project Number**: PR-2024-010171

**Hearing Date**: 20 October 2026

**Closing of Public Record**: 20 October 2026

**Date of Decision**: 04 November 2026

**Case Description**: Nicole Ackerman (Owner) & Jim Strozier (Agent) request a Variance to the opacity requirement for walls/fences adjacent to the Petroglyph National Monument for Lot 13, Block 6, Volcano Cliffs Unit 22, located at 6208 Camino Alto NW, zoned R-1 (D-11) IDO § 14-16-5-7(E)(4)(c)

On October 20, 2026 Jim Strozier ("**Agent**") as agent for Nicole Ackerman ("**Applicant**") was scheduled to appear before the Zoning Hearing Examiner (the "**ZHE**") requesting a Variance to the opacity requirement for walls/fences adjacent to the Major Public Open Space ("**Application**") upon the real property located at 6208 Camino Alto NW (the "**Subject Property**"). Below are the ZHE's findings of fact and decision:

## FINDINGS, VARIANCE TO MAJOR PUBLIC OPEN SPACE LANDSCAPE BUFFER:

1. Applicant is requesting a Variance to opacity requirements of IDO § 14-16-5-7(E)(4)(c), pursuant to City of Albuquerque Code of Ordinances Integrated Development Ordinance ("**IDO**") Section 14-16-6-6(O).
2. Applicant has authority to pursue this Application, pursuant to 14-16-6-4(D).
3. Applicant has a duly authorized Agent to act on Applicant's behalf regarding the Application.
4. The Planning Director's delegee has determined that the Application is complete, pursuant to IDO Section 14-16-6-4(G).
5. The Application was forwarded to commenting agencies pursuant to IDO Section 14-16-6-4(I).
6. The content of the notice of the Application satisfies IDO Section 14-16-6-4(J)(1).

7. Applicant has provided evidence that they sent an electronic mail notice to the email addresses on file with the Office of Neighborhood Coordination for each pertinent Neighborhood Association as required by IDO Section 14-16-6-4(J)(2).
8. Applicant has provided evidence that they sent mailed notice to all property owners within 100 feet of the subject property as required by IDO Section 14-16-6-4(J)(3).
9. Applicant has provided evidence that they posted sign notice(s) as required by IDO Section 14-16-6-4(J)(4).
10. The Subject Property is located at 6208 Camino Alto NW in an R-1 zone district, adjacent to the Petroglyph National Monument.
11. IDO § 14-16-5-7€(4)(c) requires view fencing with a maximum opacity of 10 percent on lots adjacent to the Petroglyph National Monument.
12. The Applicant proposes to construct a wall/fence with 50 percent opacity.
13. Therefore, a Variance to the opacity requirements of 14-16-5-7(E)(4)(c) on the Subject Property requires a Variance - ZHE approval pursuant to IDO Subsection 14-16-6-6(O).
14. IDO Section 14-16-6-6(O)(3)(a) (Review and Decision Criteria– Variance) 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 a single lot that are not self-imposed and that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone district and vicinity, including but not limited to size, shape, topography, location, surroundings, physical characteristics, natural forces, or by government actions for which no compensation was paid. Such special circumstances of the lot either create an extraordinary hardship in the form of a substantial and unjustified limitation on the reasonable use or economic 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 this IDO, the applicable zone district, or any applicable Overlay Zone.*
    5. *The Variance approved is the minimum necessary to avoid extraordinary hardship or practical difficulties."*
15. 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).
16. 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).
17. Applicant and Agent appeared at the October 20, 2026 ZHE hearing and gave sworn testimony in support of the Application.
18. WSCONA issued a letter in opposition to the Application.
19. Three members of the public submitted statements in opposition to the Application.
20. The City Traffic Engineer submitted a comment stating no objection to the Application.
21. The Open Space Division of the City of Albuquerque submitted a letter in opposition to the Application.

22. The United States Department of Interior - National Parks Services submitted a letter in opposition to the Application.
23. Applicant has not established that special circumstances create a qualifying hardship or practical difficulty requiring the requested 50 percent opacity under IDO Section 14-16-6-6(O)(3)(a)(1). The ZHE acknowledges testimony about the trail's proximity, limited separation by grade, lot configuration and privacy concerns. The evidence does not explain why those conditions require the specific proposed opacity or why applicable compliant wall options would be inadequate. The owner confirmed that 6208 is presently vacant and has no current residential development plan, leaving the asserted privacy needs of a future dwelling undefined.
24. The Open Space Division expressly stated that it had no adverse comments on increasing opacity from 10 percent to 50 percent, provided other IDO requirements were met. That is favorable evidence under IDO Section 14-16-6-6(O)(3)(a)(2). The ZHE does not base denial on a finding that the proposed opacity is materially contrary to public safety, health or welfare.
25. Under IDO Section 14-16-6-6(O)(3)(a)(3), Applicant offered an illustration of a masonry base with open metal fencing and testimony that the design balances privacy and views. The National Park Service and other opponents raised visual-impact concerns. Those competing positions do not establish the necessity of the requested percentage. The ZHE need not resolve the disputed degree of visual impact because criteria 1 and 5 are not met.
26. IDO Section 14-16-6-6(O)(3)(a)(4) requires attention to the Monument-edge and overlay purposes stated in the IDO. The ZHE applies Section 14-16-5-7(E)(4)(c) together with its exceptions and does not find that 50 percent opacity necessarily undermines the IDO merely because it exceeds the general 10 percent limit.
27. Applicant has not demonstrated that a discretionary increase to 50 percent opacity is the minimum necessary under IDO Section 14-16-6-6(O)(3)(a)(5). The desire to emulate walls found elsewhere and seeking privacy explain Applicant's preferred design, but do not establish why the proposed percentage is the least relief necessary for this lot. The record does not evaluate a lesser increase against the specific privacy and grade conditions. Criterion 5 is not met.

## DECISION:

DENIAL of a Variance to opacity requirements of 5-7(E)(4)(c)

## APPEAL:

If you wish to appeal this decision, you must do so by September 20, 2025. Pursuant to IDO § 14-16-6-4-(U), you must demonstrate that you have legal standing to file an appeal.

Successful applicants are reminded that other regulations of the City must be complied with, even after approval of a special exception is secured. If your Application is approved, submit this Notice of Decision when you apply for any related building permit or other necessary permit.



Robert Lucero, Esq.
Zoning Hearing Examiner

cc: **Applicant**
Nicole Ackerman, cole_lee@aol.com
**Agent**
Jim Strozier, cp@consensusplanning.com
Alyssa Ortiz, ortiz@consensusplanning.com
Jonathan Turner, turner@consensusplanning.com
**ZHE File**
**Zoning Enforcement**
**Other interested parties**
Michael T. Voorhees, mike@cyonic.com
Jim Walton, jqwalto1@gmail.com
Jane Baechle, Jane.Baechle@gmail.com
Nancy, Koenigsberg, nmkberg@gmail.com
**Commenting Agencies**
Charles Thacker, Interim Superintendent, NPS, charles_thacker@nps.gov
James Lewis, CABQ Open Space, jlewis@cabq.gov
James Sattler, CABQ Open Space, JSattler@cabq.gov
Adryana Vialpando, CABQ Open Space, avialpando@cabq.gov