



City of Albuquerque

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Richard J. Berry, Mayor

Interoffice Memorandum

April 19, 2011

To: Don Harris, President, City Council

From: Deborah L. Stover, Planning Department Director

Subject: Project# 1008444 –10EPC-40046 - The Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) recommends approval to the City Council of the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan. Petra Morris and Mikaela Renz-Whitmore, Staff Planners

Introduction

The Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) recommends approval of the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan (the Plan), an approximately 446-acre area within the city's Volcano Mesa. The Plan contains goals that address housing, retail uses. Located adjacent to the Petroglyph National Monument, the Volcano Mesa is an area of unique features and special characteristics and conditions, worthy of preservation and protection.

The Plan's Land Use chapter proposes zoning and general regulations to guide future development within the area. The policies and regulations in the Plan were developed to reflect the Goals of the plan, and to implement the policies of the West Side Strategic Plan (WSSP) and applicable goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

The EPC reviewed the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan and received presentations and testimony from Planning staff, commenting City departments and other agencies, property owners, and other interested parties at multiple public hearings (02 Sept 2010, 04 Nov 2010, 03 Feb 2011, and 03 Mar 2011). The EPC finds that the Plan furthers the applicable goals, policies and intents of the Comprehensive Plan and the West Side Strategic Plan. The EPC also finds that the Plan's proposed zone changes meet and further the criteria and policies of R-270-1980 (see EPC Official Notice of Decision).

History and Background

In 2004, the City Council initiated a planning process for the Volcano Mesa area, which consists of approximately 1,700 small, undeveloped lots in a subdivision that was platted in the 1960s and annexed in 1981. In the following years, the City studied and developed plans for Volcano Cliffs as part of a larger, 3,532-acre area then referred to as "Volcano Heights." The Volcano Cliffs Property Owners Association (VCPOA), who did not support the 2006 plan, appealed the plan to District Court, where the plan was subsequently remanded to the City in 2009.

Early in 2010, the Planning Team began work on an amendment to the WSSP and three separate, but related and contiguous sector development plans for the larger 3,532-acre area, consisting of the Volcano Cliffs, Volcano Heights and Volcano Trails Sector Development Plans. The WSSP amendment for the

Volcano Mesa Community and the three sector development plans create recommendations, goals, policies, and new land use regulations for the Volcano Mesa.

The WSSP amendment is based on policy language from the remanded 2006 plan and is applicable to the larger, 3,532-acre area. The amendment provides the policy basis for the three proposed sector development plans regarding land use, environment and open space, and transportation. Previously, the WSSP did not address the Volcano Mesa area specifically, but rather contained policies that only addressed the Petroglyph National Monument. The Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP was adopted by the City Council on 23 February 2011 (R-10-177).

Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan

The Planning Team contacted and invited the master developer, Longford Homes, to participate in goal setting for the future of the area. The master developer and the Planning Team arrived at an overall purpose of the plan that balances existing and future development with the area's existing, natural amenities (Petroglyph National Monument, views, etc.). The resulting goals, policies and regulatory language provide guidance for development within the Plan area.

The Volcano Trails SDP includes detailed planning for development of a community consisting of residential villages, parks, trails, neighborhood retail and services, and a possible Albuquerque Public School (APS) site. The Plan adopts zoning and land-use strategies that support area-wide policies for high-quality development with a range of housing densities and that are responsive to the area's unique location and landscape. The plan's strategies are based on implementing the policies of the Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP.

The planning area for the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan currently consists entirely of R-D zoning. R-D zoning allows for the development of residential uses, but without the benefit of commercial services or overall coordination for land use, transportation, utility, and open space issues.

The draft Plan proposes new zoning for future development: SU-2 Trails Village Center, SU-2 Trails Urban Residential, SU-2 Trails Small Lot, SU-2 Trails RD, SU-2 Trails Medium Lot, and SU-2/SU-1 for Open Space. Special design and site standards are customized for the area and its conditions. The proposed zoning categories allow for expanded uses, such as office and commercial, in relatively close proximity to residential areas with adequate transitions, buffering, and even mixed uses, depending on the area and the desired community form. Some R-D zoning is retained for development that already exists within the Plan area.

Conclusion

The planning, drafting, and EPC public review processes have brought to light several important issues that the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan addresses in ways that result from an effort to create consensus and/or compromise among all interested parties whenever possible. The EPC review itself resulted in a substantial number of recommended conditions of approval that advance a more comprehensive plan without compromising the goals for the sector plan area.

The Administration and the Planning Department support the EPC's recommendation for approval of the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan.

