



Mayor Richard J. Berry

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Office of the Mayor

INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

December 16, 2010

TO: Don Harris, President, City Council

FROM: Richard J. Berry, Mayor

SUBJECT: Project# 1008444 – 10EPC-40043 - The Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) recommends approval to the City Council regarding a text amendment to the Westside Strategic Plan for the Volcano Mesa area, bounded by Petroglyph National Monument on the east, south and west and Paseo Del Norte and the grant line on the north, zoned RD, R1, A1, RO-20, SU1-PRD and SU-1 for Major Public Open Space, containing approximately 3,532 acres. Petra Morris, Staff Planner

Overview

At its November 4, 2010 hearing, the EPC voted 5 : 2 to forward a recommendation of approval with conditions to the City Council, for a text amendment to the Westside Strategic Plan (see att. Notice of Decision). The case had been continued from the September 2, 2010 EPC hearing. The amendment is proposed by the Planning Department in order to provide the policy framework to guide development within the Volcano Mesa area. Three sector development plans (SDPs) that accompanied the text amendment, Volcano Cliffs, Volcano Heights and Volcano Trails SDPs, were deferred at the November 4, 2010 hearing to the February 3, 2011 hearing.

Please note that the text amendment and the accompanying Conditions of Approval (see att.) are those recommended by the EPC to the City Council. However, the Planning Department does not support Condition 22 which proposes that the Volcano Heights Town Center be designated as a Community *or* Major Activity Center [*it. for emphasis*]. It is the Planning Department's position that the designation of the Town Center as a Major Activity Center is key to addressing the imbalance of housing and jobs on the Westside, and key to establishing the policy framework for the mix of land uses and development form appropriate to the Volcano Mesa area.

The proposed amendment to the Westside Strategic Plan (WSSP) for the Volcano Mesa area is part of the City's response to the December 18, 2008 District Court decision for the 2006 Volcano Heights Sector Development Plan to be remanded to the EPC. The amendment to the WSSP covers the area in the remanded 2006 Plan.

Intent

The intent of the proposed amendment to the Westside Strategic Plan is to provide background and

policies to guide development within the Volcano Mesa area, since the WSSP does not currently contain any policies specific to this area. The Volcano Mesa area is surrounded on three sides by over 7,000 acres of open space under City, State and Federal jurisdictions, including Petroglyph National Monument. From east to west, it extends from the volcanic escarpment to the Major Public Open Space surrounding five dormant volcanoes. From north to south, it extends from south of the grant line and Paseo Del Norte to the Petroglyph National Monument.

The amendment designates the 3,532 acres as the Volcano Mesa Community with two activity centers, and provides policies on land use, the environment and open space, and transportation that are sensitive and responsive to the area's unique needs, challenges and opportunities. The text amendment is to a Rank 2 plan, and therefore does not include any changes to the zoning for the area.

Applicability

In 2004, the Albuquerque City Council initiated a planning process for the Volcano Cliffs area of the city, which consists of approximately 1,700 small, undeveloped lots in a subdivision that was platted in the 1960s and annexed by the City in 1981. Located along the volcanic escarpment of the city's Northwest Mesa, Volcano Cliffs is an area of unique features and special characteristics and conditions, worthy of preservation and protection.

In the following years, the City studied and developed plans for Volcano Cliffs and a larger area referred to as "Volcano Heights." However, the ultimate plan that was adopted by the City Council in 2006 – the Volcano Heights Sector Development Plan – did not have the support of the Volcano Cliffs Property Owners Association, who challenged the plan in court. The plan was subsequently remanded to the City in late 2008 (see attached appeal and memo from City Legal staff).

Early in 2010 and at the direction of City Councilor Dan Lewis and Planning Director Deborah Stover, the Planning Department, City Council staff, and the Planning Team began work on an amendment to the Westside Strategic Plan (WSSP) and three new sector development plans (SDP) that cover the area: Volcano Cliffs, Volcano Heights and Volcano Trails.

The Westside Strategic Plan amendment is based on the general language from the remanded 2006 plan that pertained to the area as a whole and will be applicable to the three forthcoming SDPs.

Conclusion

The Planning Department supports the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) recommendation to City Council to approve the amendment to the WSSP for the Volcano Mesa Community, with the exception that a Major Activity Center be specifically designated in the Volcano Heights sub-area of the Community, rather than allowing the alternative of a Community Activity Center (ref. Condition 22 in the Notice of Decision).

Title/ Subject of Legislation: Project# 1008444 –10EPC-40043 - The Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) recommends approval to the City Council regarding amendment to Westside Strategic Plan.

Approved: Approved as to Legal Form:

David S. Campbell Date
Chief Administrative Officer

Robert J. Perry Date
City Attorney

Recommended:

Deborah L. Stover Date
Planning Department Director

