



***Environmental  
Planning  
Commission***

***Agenda Number: 05  
Project Number: 1008444  
Case #: 10EPC-40046  
September 2, 2010***

***Staff Report***

<b><i>Agent</i></b>	COA, Planning Department
<b><i>Applicant</i></b>	City of Albuquerque
<b><i>Request(s)</i></b>	Recommend Adoption of the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan
<b><i>Legal Description</i></b>	See attached map
<b><i>Location</i></b>	Area boundaries are Universe to the east, State land, APS school sites and the North Geologic Window to the south, vacant Bernalillo County land to the west and Paseo Del Norte to the north.
<b><i>Size</i></b>	Approximately 400 acres
<b><i>Existing Zoning</i></b>	RD
<b><i>Proposed Zoning</i></b>	New zoning: SU-2 VT Village Center, SU-2 VT Residential Developing area, SU-2 VT Urban Residential, SU-2 VT Small Lot Residential, SU-2 VT Medium Lot Residential.  General Design Regulations are associated to varying degrees with all properties within the Volcano Trails SDP boundary.

***Staff Recommendation***

***CONTINUANCE of 10EPC-40046 for 60 days to November 4<sup>th</sup> 2010, based on the Findings beginning on Page 17.***

***Staff Planner***

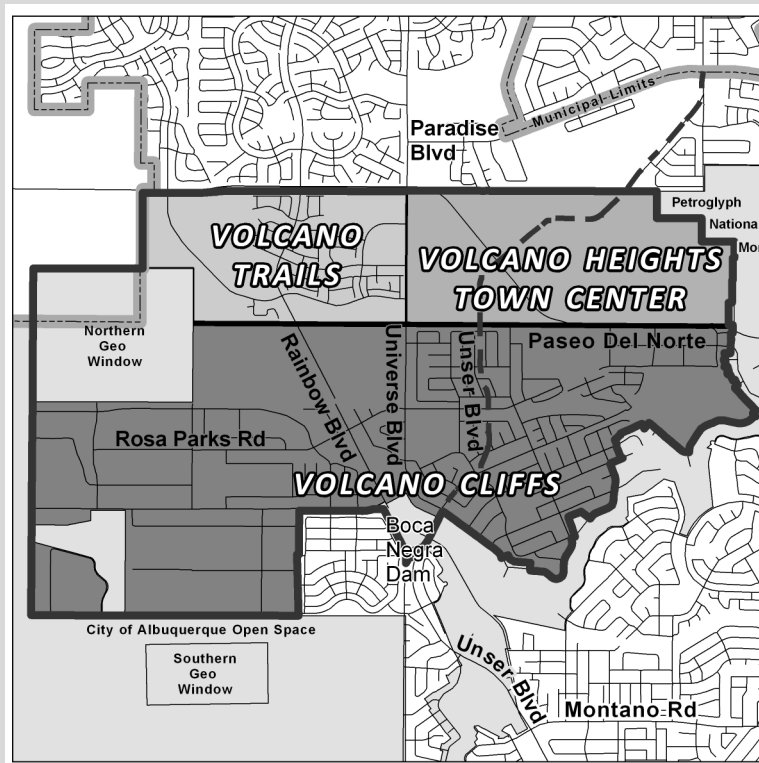
***Petra Morris, Planner***

### ***Summary of Analysis***

The Planning Department requests an Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) recommendation to City Council to approve the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan.

The Volcano Trails SDP provides regulatory guidance for the development of the Trails, a 400-acre master planned community by Longford Homes. The plan adopts zoning and land use strategies which support area wide policies for high quality development with a range of housing densities and that is 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 Department requests that the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) begin discussing the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010 and continue the hearing until November 4<sup>th</sup> 2010 in order to obtain comments concerning the Plan's transportation recommendations and to allow Planning staff to address the agency and public comments and recommendations that have been received. This staff report will cover analysis of applicable plans and policies in relation to the proposed Volcano Trails SDP, and includes all comments received to date. The subsequent staff report will address comments and proposed changes to the plan.



City Departments and other interested agencies reviewed this application from 08/02/2010 to 08/13/2010. Agency comments used in the preparation of this report begin on Page 17.

***I. AREA CHARACTERISTICS AND ZONING HISTORY***

*Surrounding zoning, plan designations, and land uses:*

	<b><i>Zoning</i></b>	<b><i>Comprehensive Plan Area; Applicable Rank II &amp; III Plans</i></b>	<b><i>Land Use</i></b>
<b><i>Site</i></b>	RD	Developing Urban, Westside Strategic Plan Northwest Mesa Escarpment Plan	Vacant, Residential, Park
<b><i>North</i></b>	RLT	Established Urban, WSSP, NWMEP	Residential- Single family
<b><i>South</i></b>	RO-20	Reserve, WSSP, NWMEP	School site, State land
<b><i>East</i></b>	RD	Developing, WSSP, NWMEP	Vacant
<b><i>West</i></b>	A1 County and SU1 for Major Public Open Space	Developing, WSSP, NWMEP	Petroglyph National Monument (North Geologic Window) and Vacant

***II. INTRODUCTION***

***Background, Planning Process and History***

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 and the plan was subsequently remanded to the City in 2008/9. Please see attached appeal (Attachment 1) and memo from City Legal staff (Attachment 2).

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 the three sector development plans (SDP) that are Volcano Cliffs, Volcano Heights and Volcano Trails and an accompanying amendment to the Westside Strategic Plan (WSSP). Therefore this is a four part submittal of three contiguous, related but unique Rank III Sector Development Plans (SDP) and an

amendment to the Rank II Westside Strategic Plan. The plans will create recommendations, goals, policies, and new land use regulations for the Volcano Mesa community.

The Westside Strategic Plan amendments are based on the language from the remanded 2006 plan and are applicable to the whole area, as opposed to just the Volcano Cliffs SDP, the Volcano Heights SDP, or the Volcano Trails SDP. The amendment will provide the background for the proposed policies in the three SDPs on land use, the environment and open space and transportation. The WSSP amendments will strengthen the proposed SDPs by providing the appropriate policy background. Currently the WSSP does not address the Volcano Mesa area specifically, but contains policies that only address the Petroglyph National Monument.

***Context***

The Volcano Mesa community covers approximately 3,532 acres. The area is surrounded on three sides by more than 7,000 acres of open space under City, State and Federal jurisdictions. The shape of the open space holdings includes large tracts and long, narrow bands of escarpment. The Volcano Mesa area includes portions of the land the US Congress set aside as Petroglyph National Monument (the “Monument”) in 1990. From east to west, the Volcano Mesa area extends from the volcanic escarpment to the Major Public Open Space surrounding five dormant volcanoes. From north to south, the Volcano Mesa area extends from south of the grant line and Paseo Del Norte to the Petroglyph National Monument. The Volcano Mesa area’s boundary also includes a small area of unincorporated Bernalillo County land, in the Monument’s North Geological Window. Any future actions in this area would require County review and approval. The Volcano Mesa area’s cultural, natural and built conditions were used to inform the planning process and to guide the development of policies that are sensitive and responsive to the area’s unique needs, challenges and opportunities. The Volcano Mesa area is made up of three separate planning areas, reflecting their distinct characters and planning needs: Volcano Cliffs, Volcano Heights and Volcano Trails.

***Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan summary***

The Volcano Trails SDP provides regulatory guidance for the development of the Trails, a 400-acre master planned community by Longford Homes 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 which support area wide policies for high quality development with a range of housing densities and that is 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.

***Transportation System***

The Long Range Roadway System (LRRS) map, produced by the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG), identifies the functional classifications of roadways.

The Long Range Roadway System designates Unser and Paseo Del Norte as a Limited-Access Principal arterial, with a right-of-way of 156’.

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The Long Range Roadway System designates Universe as a Minor Arterial, with a right-of-way of 86'.

The Long Range Roadway System designates Rainbow as a Principal Arterial, with a right-of-way of 124' (Established & Developing Urban) or 156' (elsewhere).

### ***Comprehensive Plan Corridor Designation***

The Albuquerque/Bernalillo Comprehensive Plan designates Paseo Del Norte and Unser as Proposed Express Corridors.

### ***Trails/Bikeways***

A bike trail and or lane are proposed for Paseo Del Norte and Unser. A bike trail is shown on Gila Road on the MRCOG Long Range Bikeway map.

### ***Transit***

The MRCOG High Capacity Transit map shows Paseo Del Norte and Unser as Potential High Capacity Transit Corridors.

## ***III. APPLICABLE ORDINANCES, PLANS AND POLICIES***

Policy Citations are in Regular Text; ***Staff Analysis is in Bold Italics***

### **Albuquerque / Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan**

The subject site is located in the area designated Developing and Established Urban by the *Comprehensive Plan* with a Goal to “create a quality urban environment, which perpetuates the tradition of identifiable, individual but integrated communities within the metropolitan area and which offers variety and maximum choice in housing, transportation, work areas, and life styles, while creating a visually pleasing built environment.” Applicable policies include:

#### II B 5 Developing and Established Urban Areas

##### II B 5 Policy c

Where needed to guide more detailed planning, major portions of the Established Urban Area and Developing Urban Area and adjacent Plan map areas shall be formed into districts for rank two area planning which should use the following process:

- Determine boundaries for each area plan based upon design character, social and cultural identity, and visual and environmental features.
- Determine content of each area plan based upon needs analysis, including but not limited to characteristics, conditions, trends and opportunities in land use, the built and visual environment, and social and economic environment.

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- Determine development potential of each plan area in keeping with density objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
  - Determine activity center appropriateness and character for each area in coordination with the area wide Activity Centers implementation planning program.

*The proposed amendment to the WSSP provides new policies to guide the three accompanying Rank III Sector Development Plans. The proposed WSSP amendment provides policy to create the Volcano Mesa community, which is not currently in the WSSP. The WSSP currently contains only policy to address the Petroglyph National Monument. The amendment proposes a Major Activity Center for the Volcano Heights SDP and a Village Center for the Volcano Cliffs SDP.*

#### II B 5 Policy e

New growth shall be accommodated through development in areas where vacant land is contiguous to existing or programmed urban facilities and services and where the integrity of existing neighborhoods can be ensured.

*The proposed Volcano Mesa community will contain a mixture of uses. By providing employment opportunities, the development of the area should assist in addressing the imbalance of jobs to residences on the Westside. To the east of the area is the Taylor Ranch community and to the north is Ventana Ranch.*

#### II B 5 Policy g

Development shall be carefully designated to conform to topographical features and include trail corridors in the development where appropriate.

*The Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP proposed language in section B.4 that addresses the treatment of natural features. Conservation of significant rock outcroppings is encouraged, as well as the preservation of View Corridors. These policies guide regulations in each of the SDPs that address grading and drainage. The Volcano Cliffs SDP also includes policy on the treatment of arroyos because it contains two major arroyos- the North and Middle Forks of the Boca Negra Arroyo. The Volcano Heights SDP includes a park and trail network, designed to preserve the significant rock outcroppings located there. The Volcano Trails SDP contains open space areas and trails that run through the residential area and connects to the North Geologic Window.*

#### II B 5 Policy i

Employment and service uses shall be located to complement residential areas and shall be sited to minimize adverse effects of noise, lighting, pollution, and traffic on residential environments.

*The Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP proposes designation of the Volcano Heights Town Center as a Major Activity Center. This provides an opportunity for development of an employment center, as well as an area for residents of the Westside and greater Albuquerque city to shop and seek entertainment and an opportunity to try to address some of the imbalance between jobs and housing on the Westside. The town center area is surrounded by increasingly less dense and less intense uses in order to buffer the single family residential from the intensity of the town center. The Volcano Cliffs SDP and the Volcano Trails SDP also propose areas where development of neighborhood services and retail can be provided.*

II B 5 Policy k

Land adjacent to arterial streets shall be planned to minimize harmful effects of traffic; livability and safety of established residential neighborhoods shall be protected in transportation planning and operation.

*The Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP contains policy 3.109, calling for the adoption of the road network map. The road network map, which is the same in all three SDPs, provides a net work of connections through the area. Accompanying the road network map are a series of cross sections showing how different roads should be planned. The cross sections include planting strips, and wide sidewalks and trails to create a safe and attractive pedestrian, bicycling and driving environment.*

II B 5 Policy m

Urban and site design which maintains and enhances unique vistas and improves the quality of the visual environment shall be encouraged.

*The Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP includes a view study, section B.2. The View Study draws the conclusion that there are important views to and from the Volcano Mesa area. Policy 3.99 contains three points; important views to and from Volcano Mesa should be protected with height restriction; development should not be visually intrusive; and that the Rank III plans should contain regulations to address this. Each of the three SDPs contains regulations covering color, height, reflectivity and other aspects that can have a visual impact.*

II B 5 Policy n

Areas prematurely subdivided and having problems with multiple ownership, platting, inadequate right-of-way, or drainage should be reassembled or sector planned before annexation and service extension is assured.

*While the Volcano Mesa area was annexed prior to any reassembly of lots or sector planning effort, the area is now being sector planned. The Volcano Cliffs area will most likely develop through a series of Special Assessment Districts in order to address issues related to premature platting and infrastructure access. The Volcano Trails SDP is almost entirely under the ownership of one development group- Longford Homes. Volcano Heights contains multiple owners, each with large tracts of land. Roads have not been platted in this area and at this juncture it is not clear how the process of development in the Volcano Heights area will occur.*

II B 1 Open Space

II B 1 Policy c

Development in or adjacent to the proposed Open Space network shall be compatible with open space purposes.

*The Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP contains policies in Section B that address the Environment and Open Space, in particular Policy 3.98 states that development should respect the sensitive ecological, historical and cultural importance of the area. Each of the SDPs locates its lowest density and intensity land uses where development will meet with Open Space. In all of these situations height is limited to 18 feet with limited potential for 26 feet maximum allowed only on 50% of the building footprint. Through out the Volcano Mesa SDPs color and reflectivity*

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*are limited. The Volcano Cliffs SDP, which has the majority of the properties that are adjacent to Major Open Space, contains language in the General Standards restricting the type of fencing allowed adjacent to the Petroglyph National Monument and Major Open Space.*

II B 1 Policy f

A multi-purpose network of open areas and trail corridors along arroyos and appropriate ditches shall be created. Trail corridors shall be acquired, regulated, or appropriately managed to protect natural features, views, drainage and other functions or to link other areas within the Open Space network.

*Policy 3.98 of the Volcano Mesa amendment to WSSP includes maintaining travel paths as a way of preserving the sensitive historical, ecological and cultural importance of the area. The Volcano Cliffs SDP contains policy on the treatment of arroyos. This treatment includes an Open Space access easement to allow a trail to run through the arroyos. The Volcano Cliffs SDP also contains policy on Scenic Corridors, Chapter 2 Policy 3. The Volcano Heights SDP proposes a series of locations for parks, located where the most significant rock outcroppings are located. The parks are linked by trails. Dedication of detached Open Space is required in the Volcano Heights SDP SU-2 VH Town Center, Neighborhood Mixed Use and Urban Campus zones. The Volcano Trails SDP contains privately held Open Space, which runs through the community. Trails in the Volcano Trails SDP are proposed to connect with the Volcano Heights SDP, while trails from the escarpment will connect through the Boca Negra Dam and the North and Middle Forks of the Boca Negra arroyo to the Petroglyph National Monument. The network is mapped in the WSSP amendment in Exhibit 7.*

II B 1 Policy j

Design of neighborhood open areas should tie into other open spaces, where appropriate, to create an Open Space network.

*Policy 3.112 in the Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP proposes to expand and adopt a multi use trail network. This is illustrated in the amendment by Exhibit 7. The trail network will connect the Major Public Open Space that surrounds the Volcano Cliffs SDP, bring connections along the arroyos in Volcano Cliffs and connect with the proposed trails and park facilities in the Volcano Heights SDP and the Volcano Trails SDP. The Volcano Heights SDP requires that detached open space be dedicated and maps appropriate locations for this. The Volcano Trails SDP contains privately held Open Space, which was platted prior to the drafting of the SDP.*

II B 7 Activity Centers

The Goal is to expand and strengthen concentrations of moderate and high-density mixed land use and social/economic activities which reduce urban sprawl, auto travel needs, and service costs, and which enhance the identity of Albuquerque and its communities.

*The Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP, policy 3.96 proposes that Volcano Heights Town Center be designated as a Major Activity Center. This will provide an opportunity to the jobs/housing imbalance in the area. The Volcano Heights Town Center is proposed as a mixed use, high density area. The Volcano Heights Town Center is at its most intense in the SU-2 VH Town Center zone, with the surrounding zones decreasing in intensity and range of uses. A Major*

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*Activity Center in Volcano Heights, a Village Center in Volcano Cliffs, and mixed use zoning on Paseo Del Norte in Volcano Trails, all provide opportunities to reduce sprawl, auto travel needs and provide retail, service and office needs closer to residences- proposed and existing.*

II C 6 Archeological Resources

II C 6 Policy c

Public understanding of and appreciation for the area's archaeological and paleontological past shall be promoted.

*The Volcano Mesa area contains archeologically significant and sensitive sites. The amendment the WSSP proposes a series of policies to address preservation of archeological and culturally significant sites. The policies address a range of guidance from preservation, to adequate setback to interpretive features to the preservation of significant rock outcroppings. The Volcano Cliffs SDP contains language to address Archeological sites in the general regulations, and this is addressed in the Trails and Heights SDP under the Heights and Setbacks general standards. The Volcano Heights SDP also proposes to use a detached Open Space dedication as method to ensure the preservation of significant rock outcroppings as part of a series of parks and open areas.*

II C 9 Community Identity and Urban Design

The Goal is to preserve and enhance the natural and built characteristics, social, cultural and historical features that identify Albuquerque and Bernalillo County sub-areas as distinct communities and collections of neighborhoods.

II C 9 Policy b

In each Community Area, strategic planning, neighborhood planning, development and redevelopment shall be evaluated in light of its relationship to and effect upon the following:

- 1) The natural environment
  - Indigenous vegetation and other materials appropriate to landscapes.
  - Topography and landscape features such as arroyos, the Rio Grande and bosque, the foothills and escarpments
  - Soils and erosion potential
  - Colors and textures of the natural environment
  - Views
- 2) Built environment
  - Height and massing of buildings
  - Setbacks from the street
  - Placement of entrances and windows
  - Walls and fences
  - Parking areas design and relationship to buildings
  - Road widths, sidewalks, curb cuts, medians
  - Grain of streets/size of parcels
  - Patterns of movement (e.g. pedestrian connections, access to transportation/transit)
  - Street furniture (e.g. bus stops, street lights, signs)
  - Landscaping materials, both planting and hardscape

- Public infrastructure (e.g. drainage facilities, bridges)
- Social interaction opportunities
- Relationship between built and natural environment

3) Local history

- Architectural styles and traditions
- Current and historic significance to Albuquerque
- Historic plazas and other Activity Centers

4) Culture and traditions

- Cultural characteristics of residents
- Community celebrations and events

*The Volcano Mesa area is already endowed with certain distinct characteristics. The area commands great views of the Volcanoes to the west and the Sandia Mountains to the east. Volcano Mesa is surrounded by thousands of acres of Major Public Open Space in the form of the Petroglyph National Monument. Large rock outcroppings of basalt and arroyos with wildlife run through the area. Volcano Mesa is culturally important to the Pueblo community today, as well as containing archeological sites. The Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP contains a View Study and policies to address the distinct characteristics listed above. The study and policies guide the three SDPs. All three plans address views through height limitations and setbacks for single family homes, regulations on color and reflectivity. All three plans contain regulations to address archaeological sites. The Volcano Cliffs SDP area contains two significant arroyos- the North and Middle Fork of the Boca Negra Arroyo- and Chapter 3, Policy 1.1 addresses two possible treatment options- the prudent line treatment or an improved naturalistic channel. The Volcano Heights SDP requires the dedication of Detached Open Space in the SU-2 VH Town Center, Neighborhood Mixed Use and Urban Campus zone, in conjunction with locations shown as appropriate for parks. This is designed to help preserve the significant rock outcroppings by guiding the location of future parks and open spaces. The Volcano Trails SDP has privately owned Open Space that runs through the community- shown (incorrectly) on the map as SU-2/SU-1 for Open Space. All three SDP contain regulations on the appropriate plants for area with two planting lists. For more sensitive areas Plant List A (shown as an appendix in each plan) is proposed. These plants are from a survey of the Petroglyph National Monument conducted by Bleakley between 1994 and 1995. For the remainder of the area Plant List B applies, and these are xeric plants listed in the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority "How to Guide to Xeriscaping".*

II C 9 Policy e

Roadway corridors (collectors, arterials, Enhanced Transit and Major Transit) within each community and that connect the community's Activity Centers shall be designed and developed to reinforce the community's unique identity; streetscape improvements to these roadways shall be designed to:

- minimize water use
- screen parking areas
- create useful and attractive signage and building facades
- facilitate walking safety and convenience

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*The Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP contains policies that address transit, a bicycle network and multi use trails, as well as proposing the adoption of the road network. The road network in the WSSP amendment is that of the three SDPs, and in each plan the network is illustrated with cross sections address how each section of road should be treated.*

II D 6 Economic Development

The Goal is to achieve steady and diversified economic development balanced with other important social, cultural, and environmental goals.

II D 6 Policy a

New employment opportunities which will accommodate a wide range of occupational skills and salary levels shall be encouraged and new jobs located convenient to areas of most need.

*The creation of a Major Activity Center in the Town Center, as proposed in the Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP and in the Volcano Heights SDP, will provide new employment opportunities for a wide range of occupations and skill levels. The Town Center is envisioned to include offices, services, and retail opportunities. The village center proposed for the Volcano Cliffs SDP and the mixed use zoning in the Volcano Trails SDP will also provide new employment opportunities and possible locations for new, small businesses.*

II D 6 Policy g

Concentrations of employment in Activity Centers should be promoted in an effort to balance jobs with housing and population and reduce the need to travel.

*The proposed Major Activity Center will create a concentration of employment opportunities on the Westside. This will help to alleviate some of the jobs/ housing imbalance. While some future employees may live elsewhere in the Albuquerque Metropolitan area with commutes opposite of the norm, it is logical to expect that many will be Westside residents, thereby reducing their need to travel. The Volcano Cliffs SDP and the Volcano Trails SDP both contain small clusters of mixed use zoning in order to address neighborhood retail and service needs, as well as provide employment opportunities.*

**Westside Strategic Plan (Rank 2)**

***West Side Strategic Plan (WSSP) (Rank II)***

The *West Side Strategic Plan (WSSP)* was first adopted in 1997 and amended in 2002 and 2009. The WSSP area is bounded by the Sandoval County line on the north, the Rio Puerco Escarpment on the west, a line south of Gun Club Road (the Atrisco Grant line) on the south, and the Rio Grande on the east for areas north of Central, and Coors Boulevard on the east for areas south of Central. It encompasses over 96,000 acres of land, or approximately 150 square miles. Specific boundaries are shown on the Plan Boundary map on p.2 in the WSSP.

The *WSSP* identifies thirteen communities in established areas of the West Side that are partially developed and describes how community concepts can be applied. A Community is comprised of a Neighborhood Center(s) and Community Center(s), and the Plan outlines uses that should occur within the centers, as well as uses that should occur in areas adjacent to the centers. The WSSP

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emphasizes throughout its text the concept of commercial development in cluster configurations in contrast to the traditionally evolved strip commercial development. Applicable policies include:

Policy 1.1: Thirteen distinct communities, as shown on the Community Plan Map and described individually in this Plan, shall constitute the existing and future urban form of the West Side. Communities shall develop with areas of higher density (in Community and Neighborhood Centers), surrounded by areas of lower density. Bernalillo County and the City of Albuquerque Planning Commissions shall require that high density and non-residential development occur within Community and Neighborhood Centers. Low density residential development (typical 3-5 du/acre subdivisions, or large lot rural subdivisions) shall not be approved within the Centers.

*The proposed amendment to the WSSP for the Volcano Mesa community and the accompanying three SDPs support this policy. High density and non-residential uses are proposed in nodes- the Major Activity Center in the Volcano Heights SDP, around the village center and close to the Town Center in Volcano Cliffs SDP and in two small nodes in the Volcano Trails plan, on Paseo Del Norte. These nodes are surrounded by lower density residential uses. (See also Comprehensive Plan Policy II.B.7.e).*

Policy 1.14 The typical Community Activity Center shall be accessible by a major street or parkway, provide a hub for transit service, and be accessible by pedestrians and bicyclists.

*The Major Activity Center proposed by the amendment to the WSSP and the Volcano Heights SDP will be accessed from two Principal arterials- Paseo Del Norte and Unser. A transit center is proposed to anchor the Town Center and could be the catalyst for development of the Town Center. The transit center is proposed to handle bus rapid transit as well as local transit connections. Although the Major Activity Center will be bounded on two sided by Paseo Del Norte and Unser, both limited access Principal arterials, pedestrian and bicycle connections are proposed between the surrounding residential areas and the Town Center at the full intersections shown on the Road Network map that accompanies the WSSP amendment and the three SDPs.*

### **Northwest Mesa Escarpment Sector Development Plan (Rank 3)**

The Northwest Mesa Escarpment Sector Development Plan was first adopted in 1987, and amended in 1989. The Plan generally encompasses properties between Coors and Paseo Del Volcan, the Bernalillo/Sandoval County Line and I40. It sets forth goals and policies regarding Escarpment face and the Volcanoes. Applicable policies include:

Policy 20. The predominant colors used on structures within the View Area shall blend with the natural colors of the Mesa.

*The Volcano Mesa amendment to the WSSP View Study Policy 3.99 proposes that to minimize the visual impact of development color should be limited in accompanying Rank III SDPs. Color and reflectivity are limited in all three SDPs, with the range of possible colors illustrated in an appendix in each plan.*

Policy 21. Structures above and below the escarpment shall not dominate the views of the Escarpment from the East side.

*Through a combination restrictions on height, color, setback and reflectivity, as well as intensity of land use, development in the Volcano Mesa area should not dominate views of the Escarpment from the East side of the City. The Volcano Mesa WSSP amendment contains guiding policy, while the Volcano Cliffs SDP, the Volcano Heights SDP and the Volcano Trails SDP all contain regulations to address this.*

Policy 23. A system of recreational pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian trails related to the Escarpment shall be provided on the Northwest Mesa, including linkages to other Northwest Mesa features.

*The Volcano Mesa WSSP amendment Exhibit 7 is a map showing the trail network for the Volcano Mesa area. The trail network is a combination of scenic corridors, trails on established street sections, and trails along arroyos. In concert with the trails is a collection of proposed park areas in the Volcano Heights, arroyos in Volcano Cliffs and the privately held open space in Volcano Trails. These provide links between different areas within the Volcano Mesa area, open spaces, parks and Petroglyph National Monument.*

#### **IV. REQUEST FOR ZONE MAP AMENDMENT**

##### **Resolution 270-1980 (Policies for Zone Map Change Applications)**

This Resolution outlines policies and requirements for deciding zone map change applications pursuant to the Comprehensive City Zoning Code. There are several tests that must be met and the applicant must provide sound justification for the change. The burden is on the applicant to show why a change should be made, not on the City to show why the change should not be made.

The applicant must demonstrate that the existing zoning is inappropriate because of one of three findings: there was an error when the existing zone map pattern was created; or changed neighborhood or community conditions justify the change; or a different use category is more advantageous to the community, as articulated in the Comprehensive Plan or other City master plan.

##### ***Analysis of Applicant's Justification***

***Note:*** Applicant's justification is in regular text; staff's analysis is in bold italics

- A. A proposed zone change must be found to be consistent with the health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the city.

*The zone changes proposed by the Volcano Cliffs SDP are consistent with furthering the health, safety, morals and general welfare of the city. The purpose of the SDP is to ensure that as the area develops it is development that furthers the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and other applicable plans- in this case the WSSP and the NWMEP. The plan proposes residential, commercial, office and service uses, in pattern designed to support transit.*

- B. Stability of land use and zoning is desirable; therefore the applicant must provide a sound justification for the change. The burden is on the applicant to show why the change should be made, not on the city to show why the change should not be made.

*The proposed zoning changes will provide the area with stability. The Volcano Trails SDP is currently zoned RD. RD allows for a range of densities and uses with no requirement for coordination and/or planning. The proposed zoning for the SDP is designed to create a high quality development with a range of housing densities and to bring neighborhood services and retail to the Volcano Trails area. The proposed zoning is designed to ensure that non residential uses, mixed use, multifamily residential, townhouses, and single family uses all develop in a pattern and location that are supportive of creating a stable built environment.*

- C. A proposed change shall not be in significant conflict with adopted elements of the Comprehensive Plan or other city master plans and amendments thereto, including privately developed area plans which have been adopted by the city.

*The proposed Volcano Trails SDP supports applicable goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan, Westside Strategic Plan and the Northwest Mesa Plan. Please see the analysis above.*

- D. The applicant must demonstrate that the existing zoning is inappropriate because:
1. There was an error when the existing zone map pattern was created; or
  2. Changed neighborhood or community conditions justify the change; or
  3. A different use category is more advantageous to the community, as articulated in the Comprehensive Plan or other city master plan, even though (D)(1) or (D)(2) above do not apply.

*The proposed zoning would be more advantageous to the community because it furthers applicable goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan, the WSSP and the NWMEP. The proposed zoning is designed to create a healthy community that contains a mix of uses, is transit accessible, bicycle friendly, and encourages pedestrian activity. Please see preceding analysis.*

- E. A change of zone shall not be approved where some of the permissive uses in the zone would be harmful to adjacent property, the neighborhood, or the community.

*The proposed zoning does not contain uses that would be harmful to adjacent properties, neighbors or the community. Where residential and commercial properties are adjacent, the*

***height of the non residential zone is required to step down. Per the Zone Code, non residential properties are required to buffer residential properties when they meet.***

- F. A proposed zone change which, to be utilized through land development, requires major and unprogrammed capital expenditures by the city may be:
1. Denied due to lack of capital funds; or
  2. Granted with the implicit understanding that the city is not bound to provide the capital improvements on any special schedule.

***None of the Plan's zone changes require major capital expenditures.***

- G. The cost of land or other economic considerations pertaining to the applicant shall not be the determining factor for a change of zone.

***The cost of land is not discussed in the Plan.***

- H. Location on a collector or major street is not in itself sufficient justification for apartment, office, or commercial zoning.

***The location of mixed use and higher density residential zoning is related to the vision proposed for the whole Volcano Mesa area.***

- I. A zone change request which would give a zone different from surrounding zoning to one small area, especially when only one premise is involved, is generally called a "spot zone." Such a change of zone may be approved only when:
1. The change will clearly facilitate realization of the Comprehensive Plan and any applicable adopted sector development plan or area development plan; or
  2. The area of the proposed zone change is different from surrounding land because it could function as a transition between adjacent zones; because the site is not suitable for the uses allowed in any adjacent zone due to topography, traffic, or special adverse land uses nearby; or because the nature of structures already on the premises makes the site unsuitable for the uses allowed in any adjacent zone.

***The proposed zone changes would not create unjustified spot zones. The proposed zoning furthers applicable master plan goals and policies and creates transitions between adjacent zones.***

- J. A zone change request, which would give a zone different from surrounding zoning to a strip of land along a street is generally called "strip zoning." Strip commercial zoning will be approved only where:
1. The change will clearly facilitate realization of the Comprehensive Plan and any adopted sector development plan or area development plan; and
  2. The area of the proposed zone change is different from surrounding land because it could function as a transition between adjacent zones or because the site is not suitable for the uses allowed in any adjacent zone due to traffic or special adverse land uses nearby.

*The proposed zone changes would not create unjustified strip zones. The proposed zoning furthers applicable master plan goals and policies and creates transitions between adjacent zones.*

## **V. AGENCY & NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS**

### ***Reviewing Agencies/Pre-Hearing Discussion/ Neighborhood/Public***

Staff has received letters from the property owners in the area, the general public, agencies, and other interested parties. Some letters address the entire area, other specific SDPs, however they have been collected and are part of all four staff reports associated the Volcano Mesa Area. The letters are attached at the end of the report. General concerns raised (separate from editorial comments): include increased traffic, open space, arroyos, an overlay zone in the Volcano Heights SDP, phasing for the Town Center, language to address utilities, as well as letters of support for the plans.

Strata Design have also submitted comments containing language to address so concerns raised subsequent to submittal to the EPC, as well as some editorial concerns.

Staff received comments from Commissioner Yardumian through a series of emails, these have been complied and are also attached to the report.

In order to address the comments received to date and to allow the Transportation Department time to review and comment on the plan, a continuance of 60 days is requested.

## **RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS FROM CITY ENGINEER, MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **and NMDOT:**

Conditions of approval for the proposed Sector Development Plans and Sector Development Plan Amendment shall include:

- a. Deferral for 60 days, at a minimum, to allow adequate time for review and comment.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

The Planning Department requests an ultimate Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) recommendation to City Council to approve the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan.

The Volcano Trails SDP provides regulatory guidance for the development of the Trails, a 400-acre master planned community by Longford Homes 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 which support area wide policies for high quality development

with a range of housing densities and that is 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 Department requests that the EPC begin discussing the Volcano Trails SDP on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 and continue the hearing until November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010 in order obtain comments concerning the Plan's transportation recommendations and to allow Planning Staff to address the agency and public comments and recommendations that have been received.

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***FINDINGS - 10EPC 40046, September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010. Recommendation of adoption of the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan.***

1. These findings are written to support a staff recommendation of continuance and do not reflect the more complete findings required to support a recommendation of approval at this time.
2. The Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan covers an area of approximately 400 acres. The plan boundaries are Universe to the east, State land, APS school sites and the North Geologic Window to the south, vacant Bernalillo County land to the west and Paseo Del Norte to the north.
3. Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan currently contains RD zoning and proposes SU-2 VT Village Center, SU-2 VT Residential Developing area, SU-2 VT Urban Residential, SU-2 VT Small Lot Residential, SU-2 VT Medium Lot Residential, as well as General Design Regulations are associated to varying degrees with all properties within the Volcano Trails SDP boundary.
4. The Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan supports the following goals and policies in the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan: Policies II.B.5.c, e, g, I, k, m, n; II.B.1.c, f, j; II.B.7. Goal; II.C.6.c; II.C.9.b, e; II.D.6. a, g.
5. The Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan supports the following policies in the Westside Strategic Plan: Policies 1.1, 1.14.
6. The Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan supports the following policies in the Northwest Mesa Plan: Policies 20, 21 and 23.
7. The Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan is justified per Resolution 270-1980. The proposed zoning is more advantageous to the community because it furthers applicable goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan, the WSSP and the NWMEP. The proposed zoning is designed to create a healthy community that contains a mix of uses, is transit accessible, bicycle friendly, and encourages pedestrian activity.
8. Additional time is necessary to allow staff to coordinate review and comments with Transportation Planning, and to address comments received from other agencies and the public. A continuance is warranted to allow for these interactions.

***RECOMMENDATION – 10EPC 40046, September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010***

**CONTINUANCE of 10EPC 40046, the Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan for 60 days to November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010, based on the preceding Findings in order to prepare Plan revisions in the form of conditions.**

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***Petra Morris  
Planner***

***Attachments***

**Attachment 1. December 2008 Ruling on the 2006 Volcano Heights SDP appeal**

**Attachment 2. Memo from City Legal Staff**

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## ***CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE AGENCY COMMENTS***

### ***PLANNING DEPARTMENT***

#### ***Zoning Enforcement***

#### ***Office of Neighborhood Coordination***

#### ***Long Range Planning***

### ***CITY ENGINEER***

#### ***Transportation Development Services***

##### **Transportation Development (City Engineer/Planning Department):**

- See Transportation Planning.

#### ***Traffic Engineering Operations***

##### **Traffic Engineering Operations (Department of Municipal Development):**

- *No comments received.*

#### ***Hydrology***

##### **Hydrology Development (City Engineer/Planning Department):**

- The Hydrology Section has no adverse comments on the sector plans.

### ***DEPARTMENT of MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT***

#### ***Transportation Planning***

##### **Transportation Planning (Department of Municipal Development):**

- The two weeks allotted staff to review the proposed Volcano Mesa Area Sector Development Plan is not adequate.

##### ***Recommendation:***

- Request an additional 60 days, at a minimum, to allow adequate time for review and comment.

##### **Street Maintenance (Department of Municipal Development):**

- No comments received.

**WATER UTILITY AUTHORITY**

**Utility Services**

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

**Air Quality Division**

**Environmental Services Division**

**PARKS AND RECREATION**

**Planning and Design**

**Open Space Division**

See attached letter from Open Space and separate letter from the National Park Service.

**City Forester**

**POLICE DEPARTMENT/Planning**

**SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT**

**Refuse Division**

**FIRE DEPARTMENT/Planning**

**TRANSIT DEPARTMENT**

**COMMENTS FROM OTHER AGENCIES**

**BERNALILLO COUNTY**

***ALBUQUERQUE METROPOLITAN ARROYO FLOOD CONTROL AUTHORITY***

- P#1008444    Volcano Cliffs Sector Development Plan  
AMAFCA has an interest in the Sector Development Plan since the plan area falls within AMAFCA's Boca Negra – Mariposa Arroyo Drainage Management Plan, adopted by the AMAFCA Board of Directors in 2005. The Sector Plan will be presented at the August 26, 2010 Board meeting. We will discuss the design standards as related to the natural arroyos, rights-of-way and maintenance. AMAFCA staff will coordinate additional comments from the meeting with City Planning Department staff.
- P#1008444    Volcano Heights Sector Development Plan  
Reviewed, no comment.
- P#1008444    Volcano Trails Sector Development Plan  
Reviewed, no comment.
- P#1008444    Westside Strategic Plan Amendment  
Reviewed, no comment.

***ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS***

***MID-REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS***

***MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT***

***PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY OF NEW MEXICO***

See attached letter