



**Environmental
Planning
Commission**

**Agenda Number: 02
Project Number: 1000606
Case #: 11EPC-40002
March 10, 2011**

Staff Report

Agent	Zia Engineering & Environmental
Applicant	Walmart Stores East L.P.
Request(s)	Amended Site Development Plan for Building Permit
Legal Description	Lot B-1, Replat of Tract B, Sycamore Plaza
Location	Academy Blvd. NE between Wyoming Blvd. and Moon Rd. NE
Size	Approximately 13.6 acres
Existing Zoning	C-2 (Shopping Center)
Proposed Zoning	same

Staff Recommendation

APPROVAL of 10EPC-40071 based on the Findings beginning on Page 12, and subject to the Conditions of Approval beginning on Page 14.

**Staff Planner
Carrie Barkhurst, Planner**

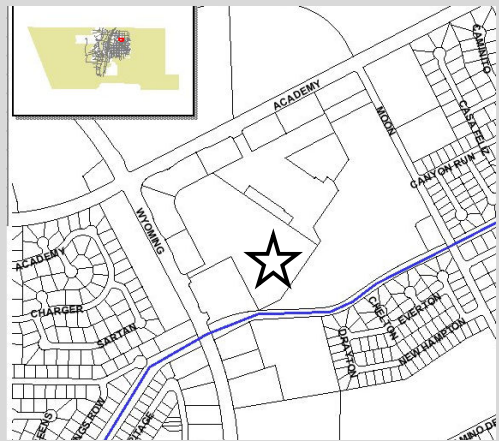
Summary of Analysis

The request is for a commercial addition to a Walmart Store. Sycamore Plaza is a fully developed shopping center at the southeast corner of Wyoming and Academy. The applicant proposes to add 7,432 SF of new storage space to the rear of the rear of the building. The applicant is also proposing façade improvements, new signage, and additional landscaping. This amendment will also serve to officially approve the “Existing Seasonal Shop” 4,456 SF addition to Walmart that does not currently have EPC approval.

Sycamore Plaza has an approved Site Development Plan with design guidelines. The building expansion is less than 3% of existing square footage. This request qualifies as a minor amendment. An Administrative Amendment is not possible because the 1992 Conditions of Approval require EPC approval of amendments that increase the approved building size of 270,000 SF.

The site is in the Established Urban Area of the Comprehensive Plan, and the Bear Canyon Arroyo Corridor Plan. The request generally meets the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan, the Bear Canyon Arroyo Corridor Plan, and the City Zoning Code. A facilitated meeting was offered to the affected neighborhood associations, but the offer was declined. There is no known opposition to this request.

Staff recommends approval with conditions.



Lot B-1, Replat of Tract B, Sycamore Plaza

City Departments and other interested agencies reviewed this application from 1/31/2011 to 2/11/2011. Agency comments used in the preparation of this report begin on Page 16.

I. AREA CHARACTERISTICS AND ZONING HISTORY

Surrounding zoning, plan designations, and land uses:

	Zoning	Comprehensive Plan Area; Applicable Rank II & III Plans	Land Use
Site	C-2 (Shopping Center)	Established Urban, and Bear Canyon Arroyo SDP	Commercial Shopping Center
North	SU-1 PRD	Established Urban	Park; Albuquerque Academy (Public Facility)
South	SU-1 Senior Cit Housing & Related Facilities; R-2	Established Urban, and Bear Canyon Arroyo SDP	Multi-Family Residential; Office; Jewish Community Center (Public Facility)
East	O-1; R-2	Established Urban	Office; Multi-Family Residential
West	R-3; O-1	Established Urban	Multi-Family Residential; Office

Proposal

The request is for an Amended Site Development Plan for Building Permit for an addition to a Walmart. The site is zoned C-2 (Shopping Center) and it is within a designated community activity center per the Comprehensive Plan.

The subject site, lot B-1, is located within Sycamore Plaza, a 47-acre shopping center site. Sycamore Plaza is located at the southeast corner of Wyoming Blvd. NE and Academy Blvd. NE. Twenty-two acres on the southeast corner are developed as residential with a Conditional Use granted for R-2 uses. The subject site, lot B-1, consists of 13.6 acres. The applicant proposes to add 7,432 SF of new storage space to the rear of the building. The applicant is also proposing façade improvements to update the site, new signage, and additional landscaping to meet landscape buffer requirements. The addition is below the 10% increase over existing building square footage, which qualifies this as a minor amendment to the Site Development Plan. However, a previous Condition of Approval was that City Staff shall not approve amendments to this site that exceed the approved maximum building area of 270,000 SF (Z-91-51-1). The most recent EPC approval was in 1997, which allowed an increase in the total square footage of the development to 271,943 SF. Therefore, EPC is the reviewing body for this request.

In performing the site plan review and project history research, staff has identified an addition on the front of the building made in 1999 with no record of EPC or Administrative Amendment approval. This additional building space, titled “Existing Seasonal Shop,” eliminated two landscape planting and pedestrian seating areas shown on the approved site development plan. It also reduced the width of the pedestrian access pathway significantly. The walkway is currently 8.5-feet wide. There was an error made in approving the building permit request, because there was no approved site development plan in close conformity with the approved plans. Further,

because this addition was made after the 1997 approval that exceeded the 270,000 threshold, this addition should have gone before the EPC for approval. EPC approval of this site development plan will serve as the approval for both the existing seasonal shop 4,456 SF addition and the present request for 7,432 SF.

Context

The Sycamore Plaza shopping center site was developed throughout the 1990s. It consists of several large retail stores to the rear of the site with six smaller building pad sites oriented along the arterial streets. The site is fully developed, so there is little potential for land-use conflicts.

The shopping center site contains a bank with drive-through service, several restaurants and retail stores, office uses, and multi-family residential. The main retail development contains a Walmart and Smiths as the major anchors, with Petsmart, and a number of other smaller retailers classified as Junior Anchors. The perimeter pad building sites are developed with a number of restaurants, neighborhood retail service stores, and a bank.

The subject site, lot B-1, is adjacent to the Bear Canyon Tributary Arroyo. Pedestrian access to the arroyo and the adjacent apartment site is provided on an adjacent parcel. The shopping center site and adjacent development is all in the mission architectural style, and has consistent tan stucco with terra-cotta roof tiles.

The subject site is located at the southeast corner of the Academy and Wyoming intersection. To the north of the subject site is Albuquerque Academy property that is currently vacant. It is zoned SU-1 with an approved Master Plan that calls for residential and commercial development. North Towne Plaza shopping center is located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Academy and Wyoming. The southwest corner of the intersection is residential development, including an apartment complex along Wyoming. A medical clinic, offices, and a church are located to the east of the subject site along Academy. South of that is single-family residential and apartments.

History

The subject site has had a number of site development plan approval requests since annexation and establishment of C-2 zoning for Tract B in 1973 (AX-73-15, Z-73-73). Several of the requests for site plan approval have been controversial and contested by area neighborhoods. The primary objections neighbors articulated were regarding the density of the development, and that it would generate additional traffic and cause degraded air quality in the area.

This parcel is subject to site development plan control under the Shopping Center regulations. It is part of a larger area that is governed by a "Master Plan." The original plan was approved in 1979. The second was approved in 1985. The 1985 amendment increased the amount of retail and office on the site to 1,100,000 SF and established a set of design standards (Z-79-43-1).

In 1991, an amendment was approved that substantially reduced the amount of development on the site and changed the development from office-oriented to a primarily retail development (Z-91-51). One finding stated: "The most significant impacts of this development involve traffic and air quality. These impacts can be reduced through street improvements." The development was

approved for a total of 310,000 SF, in a phased build-out. The second phase of development was contingent on a reduction of carbon monoxide levels (Condition 3).

The site development plan was appealed by neighbors (AC-92-1), which resulted in a revised site development plan. Case Z-91-51-1 was approved on May 22, 1992. The revised plan was approved for a maximum building area of 270,000 SF, with a condition that “Future amendments by City Staff shall not be approved on this site for items concerning design guidelines or increases in building area beyond that approved by the Environmental Planning Commission.”

Throughout the 1990s, a number of Administrative Amendments were approved to develop the building pad sites around the perimeter. The most recent plan amendment that was before the EPC was in 1997 (Z-97-49). The request was to develop Pad 5, which would result in an excess of 1,943 SF over the 270,000 square foot threshold set in 1992. The EPC approved the request as a modest increase that would have no significant impact on the Academy/Wyoming intersection.

The Walmart Store itself has a history of Administrative Amendments. In 2002, an AA was approved to increase the Garden Center by 3820 SF to 11,620 SF. In 2003, an AA was approved for a 10,289 SF addition for a stockroom to the rear of the Walmart.

This request for a 7,432 SF addition, a site development plan for subdivision amendment, is before the EPC because it exceeds the thresholds for building square footage as approved by the EPC in 1992 (Z-91-51-1). This request will also serve to officially approve the seasonal shop addition to the Walmart building that was not approved through the appropriate channels.

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 Wyoming Blvd. as a Principal Arterial, with a right-of-way of 124'. The Long Range Roadway System designates Academy Blvd. as a Minor Arterial, with a right-of-way of 86'. Moon St. is a local street.

Comprehensive Plan Corridor Designation

Wyoming is an Enhanced Transit Corridor, which is designated as an Enhanced Transit Corridor, which aims to “improve transit and pedestrian opportunities ... and develop adjacent land uses and intensities that promote the use of transit.” There are two commuter bus lines that pass by the site, on Wyoming and Academy. Wyoming also has a local service route. There are six bus stops adjacent to this shopping center.

There are proposed bicycle facilities on three sides of the shopping center, and on the south side is an unimproved trail along the Bear Tributary and a short segment of sidewalk near the apartments. Wyoming has an existing bicycle lane between Osuna and Academy. There is a bicycle path along Wyoming between Academy and Harper.

Public Facilities/Community Services

The area has a number of public facilities within a one-mile buffer of the site including parks, a library, a school, and a police station. For more information, see the Public Facilities Map.

Definitions (if any apply)

LARGE RETAIL FACILITY. A single tenant structure with at least 75,000 square feet of net leasable area for the purpose of retailing. A shopping center site with a main structure of 75,000 square feet or more is a LARGE RETAIL FACILITY. Refer to §14-16-3-2 for Large Retail Facility Regulations.

SHOPPING CENTER SITE. A premises containing five or more acres; zoned P, C-1, C-2, C-3, M-1, M-2, or a combination thereof; or a large retail facility; but excluding premises used and proposed to be used only for manufacturing, assembling, treating, repairing, rebuilding, wholesaling, and warehousing. Shopping center sites are subject to the shopping center regulations of the Zoning Code, §14-16-3-2.

IV. APPLICABLE ORDINANCES, PLANS AND POLICIES

§14-16-3-11 of the Zoning Code states, "...Site Development Plans are expected to meet the requirements of adopted city policies and procedures." As such, staff has reviewed the attached site development plan for conformance with zoning regulations and applicable goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, and the Bear Canyon Arroyo Corridor Plan.

Albuquerque Comprehensive Zoning Code

The subject site is zoned C-2 for community commercial use. The C-2 zone permissively allows all of the uses that currently take place at the subject site, including the proposed addition.

As a commercially zoned site which is five or more acres, the subject site qualifies as a shopping center site. As specified in the Comprehensive Zoning Code (§14-16-3-2), the shopping center site shall develop in conformance with an approved site development plan. Further, a "building permit for a shopping center site shall be issued only upon presentation of working plans and specifications drawn in close conformity with an approved Site Development Plan." The procedure for approval and revision of plans is the same procedure as for SU-1 plans.

In 2007, the City adopted Large Retail Facility regulations which apply to shopping center sites "with a main structure of 75,000 square feet or more" §14-16-3-2(D). The current request is subject to the Large Retail Facility regulations. The test for applying this regulation to existing structures is based on the size of the building expansion. For this situation, criteria (c) applies: "Building expansion up to 10% of the existing square footage and building renovation of an existing large retail facility *shall comply with the design regulations in this section to the extent possible as determined by the Planning Director.*" (emphasis added). The applicant met with the Planning Director's designee to determine which sections would be applied to this request. As documented in the PRT forms, select Design Regulation portions of §14-16-3-2(D) were determined to be relevant to this request. The applicant was advised to comply with the following sections:

- (5)(d) numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 regarding signage;
- (5)(g) regarding truck bay design and buffering;
- (5)(h) landscaping requirements are determined as required by the General Regulations;

- (5)(j)(2)(b) provision of adequate seating space
- (6) Main Structure Design, with subsections (a) through (d)

The remainder of the Large Retail Facility design regulations was determined to be outside the scope of the improvements proposed at this time.

Albuquerque / Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan

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

The subject site is located in the Established Urban Area, as designated 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:

Policy II.B.5.d: The location, intensity, and design of new development shall respect existing neighborhood values, natural environmental conditions and carrying capacities, scenic resources, and resources of other social, cultural, recreational concern.

The request is a minor amendment to add approximately 5% square footage to an existing retail building. It will provide additional operation capacity at an existing commercial shopping center. The addition will not impact any natural or cultural resources or carrying capacities. The request is consistent with Policy II.B.5.d.

Policy II.B.5.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 site has been developed to include a mix of residential, retail and office space, and designed to minimize negative impacts on the adjacent neighborhoods. The development is proposing additional landscaping in the buffer areas, between the commercial development and the residential land use to the south and east. The proposed minor addition will not significantly increase the noise, pollution or traffic in the area. The request is consistent with Policy II.B.5.i.

Policy II.B.5.l: Quality and innovation in design shall be encouraged in all new development; design shall be encouraged which is appropriate to the Plan area.

The request includes façade improvements to an aging commercial building. The colors and materials are generally consistent with design in the area. The request furthers Policy II.B.5.l.

Policy II.B.5.m: Urban and site design which maintains and enhances unique vistas and improves the quality of the visual environment shall be encouraged.

The proposed addition will not further obstruct views to the Sandia Mountains. The adjacent apartment complex is on higher ground, so their vista will not be impacted. The façade

improvements will further improve the quality of the visual environment. The request further Policy II.B.5.m.

The subject site is located in a Community Activity Center, as designated by the Comprehensive Plan with a Goal 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.”

Policy II.B.6.j: The City will structure capital expenditures and land use regulations in support of creating multi-use Activity Centers, and will promote ongoing public/private cooperation necessary for private market conditions that support the development and functioning of Activity Centers

By approving this request, the City will support the development and continued functioning of this Major Anchor in the Community Activity Center. The request further Policy II.B.6.j.

Bear Canyon Arroyo Corridor Plan (Rank III)

The Bear Canyon Arroyo Corridor Plan was adopted in 1991 in order to provide guidance on future trail development along the Bear Canyon Arroyo and its tributaries. The Plan generally encompasses properties adjacent to the Bear Canyon Arroyo between the foothills and the North Diversion Channel. It includes a Design Overlay Zone, with specific boundaries shown on pages 47-51. The overlay zone was created to preserve “highly scenic natural features or views” and to guide the development of the form of the city. The regulations and guidelines generally only apply to the property edge adjacent to the corridor. The entire Sycamore Plaza shopping center site falls within the Design Overlay Zone.

The Design regulations generally address drainage issues, and require additional review for drainage outlets to the Bear Canyon Arroyo and its tributaries. The goal is to preserve the channel in its natural, vegetated state.

The section of the Bear Tributary adjacent to the proposed addition is concrete-lined. The development is not proposing any additional impervious surface, which would alter the site’s drainage capacity. There are no changes proposed by this request that conflict with the goals and regulations of the Bear Canyon Arroyo Corridor Plan. The request is consistent with the Bear Canyon Arroyo Corridor Plan.

V. SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR BUILDING PERMIT

The request is for an Amended Site Development Plan for Building Permit for an addition to a Walmart. The applicant proposes to add 7,432 SF of new warehouse and storage space to the rear of the rear of the building. The applicant is also proposing façade improvements to update the site, new signage, and additional landscaping to meet landscape buffer requirements.

In performing the site plan review and project history research, staff has identified an addition on the front of the building with no record of EPC or Administrative Amendment approval. This additional building space, titled “Existing Seasonal Shop,” eliminated two landscape planting

areas shown on the site development plan. It also significantly reduced the width of the pedestrian access pathway. The walkway is currently 8.5-feet wide. There was an error made in approving the building permit request, because there was no approved site development plan *in close conformity* with the plans. This addition violates the shopping center regulations §14-16-3-2(A)(1), which states, “No structure shall be erected on a shopping center site except in conformance with a duly approved site development plan.”

Further, the building permit was approved in 1999, therefore, it occurred after the 1997 increase of the site plan to 271,943 SF. The 1992 EPC Conditions of Approval state that amendments to building size shall not be approved by City Staff that are “beyond that approved by the Environmental Planning Commission.” Staff finds that because this addition was not approved through the appropriate procedures, this existing building space should be addressed as part of the current request. This will remedy the discrepancy between the approved site plan and the existing conditions.

Site Plan Layout / Configuration

The proposed addition at the rear of the building is compatible with the existing development on the shopping center site. The rear of the building (south side) currently has minimal articulation, consisting of intermittent roof drains and the horizontal division of split-face CMU and regular CMU blocks. The proposed addition will look nearly identical to the existing exterior and maintains setback and height requirements for the site.

Regarding the “existing seasonal shop” addition to the front of the building, the primary implication is its impact on the pedestrian walkway and public outdoor space.

Staff has discussed with the applicant an opportunity to widen the front walkway. It would be possible to shift the main driveway north by rebuilding the parking end-caps 10-feet north of their present location. If this were performed along the entire frontage of the building, it would result in a loss of 14 parking spaces and require the applicant to reconstruct four landscape planters. The benefit of this action would be to increase the public outdoor space by 440 SF; it would allow additional landscape plantings and seating as required on the approved site development plan. Staff recommends this as a condition of approval.

The applicant has requested for this addition to be treated as an existing condition that is outside the scope of this approval process. The property owner has indicated that the quantity of parking provided on Lot B-1 is deficient *according to corporate standards*, and does not want to lose any parking spaces as discussed in the paragraph above. According to City parking regulations, the site has an excess of 356 parking spaces. In Staff’s opinion, the applicant is only exacerbating the parking deficit by continuing to make the building larger, which shrinks the remaining available space for circulation, landscaping, and parking.

Public Outdoor Space

There is one existing public outdoor space shown on the Site Development Plan. It is an approximately 625 SF recessed space near the main entrance. There is a covered picnic table

area. Tall walls surround three sides of this space with, no articulation or windows. The current request proposes bicycle racks where the existing picnic table is located. It is unclear if the pedestrian amenities will be replaced in this area.

One raised planter on the east side of the entrance is proposed. The dimensions of the planter narrow the walkway to approximately 4-feet adjacent to the drive aisle for a length of 20-feet. Staff recommends resizing or relocating to preserve a minimum 6-foot clear width that connects to the adjacent retail stores. The raised planter would provide some pedestrian seating in front of the building and meet the requirements of §14-16-3-2(D)(5)(j)(2)(b), provision of adequate seating space. Staff recommends that two additional landscape planters with pedestrian seating be included along the western side of the building frontage, which would be consistent with the current approved site development plan. The drive aisle would have to be relocated further north in order to widen the pedestrian circulation walkway and to provide additional seating and landscaping, as discussed above.

Vehicular Access, Circulation and Parking

Wyoming Blvd. has one signalized, vehicular access point. Academy Blvd. has one signalized vehicular access and one un-signalized vehicular access point. There are two main circulation routes through the site – one is along the main retail building frontage and another route rings the primary parking field, providing access to the six building pad sites.

The 1992 Site Development Plan parking calculations require one space per 200 SF of building space. This is more strict than the current zoning regulations, which reduce the rate for buildings over 15,000 SF. The total parking required is 1,350 spaces for the shopping center, with a total build out of 270,000 SF. Staff counted 1,474 parking spaces shown on approved Site Development Plans and the Amended Site Development Plan for Building Permit. The total approved square footage is 271,943 SF. This request would bring the total to 279,375 SF. At the rate of one space per 200 SF of building space, per the Site Development Plan, the total parking required is 1,397. There is an excess of 77 parking spaces at the shopping center site.

Further, the shopping center site qualifies for a parking reduction of 20% because the two adjacent transit stops have transit-rider shelters and pull-off lanes. Accounting for this reduction, there is an excess of 356 parking spaces. However, the applicant has corporate requirements about the number of parking spaces provided on the Walmart property, exclusive of other shared parking agreements, and does not wish to reduce the amount of parking provided.

Twenty-four disabled parking spaces are required for the shopping center site; the subject site provides 16. Sixteen disabled parking spaces are required for the site if the parking calculations are for this retail building, exclusive of the remainder of the site. The shopping center is required to have 9 motorcycle parking spaces; the subject site provides 8 of the total 9 required. For the shopping center site, 70 bicycle parking spaces are required. The subject site provides 26. Thirty-five spaces would be required based on the size of this retail building alone.

Truck Bay Design Regulations

Portions of the Large Retail Facility Regulation §14-16-3-2(D)(5)(g), regarding truck bay design and buffering, are not met by this site development plan. The regulation requires:

“Truck bays adjacent to residential lots must be separated from the adjacent lot by a minimum of 40 feet. A minimum 15 foot wide landscape buffer and a six-foot high solid masonry wall shall be provided along the property line. The landscape buffer shall contain evergreen trees or trellises with climbing vines to provide year round screening and buffering from noise. Dock and truck well facilities must also be screened with a masonry wall that extends vertically eight feet above the finish floor level and horizontally 100 feet from the face of the dock. Screen walls shall be designed to blend with the architecture of the building...”

The site development plan provides the minimum 40-foot separation between residential lots. The existing landscape buffer provided is typically 25-feet wide and it is currently minimally landscaped. At the southwestern end of the buffer strip, 10 new parking spaces are proposed, which will narrow the landscape buffer to approximately 10-feet wide for 95-feet. This request is not compliant with the Large Retail Facility regulation cited above. The applicant has adequately justified the request for these additional parking spaces, based on corporate parking requirements. Staff finds that allowing these spaces is a reasonable accommodation, in exchange for the parking reduction proposed at the front of the building in order to increase the pedestrian realm.

Staff believes that the requirement to provide a 6-foot high solid masonry wall would not benefit the subject site and surrounding area. The applicant proposes additional landscaping along this buffer area. Requiring a solid wall would negate the positive aesthetic benefit of the new landscaping.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Access and Circulation, Transit Access

A walkway, that varies between 9-feet and 19-feet, is proposed along the major façade. As discussed above, the applicant narrowed the pedestrian access along the building frontage without the appropriate approvals in 1999, and created this site development plan violation. Staff recommends increasing the width of the pedestrian walkway to comply with the approved site development plan as a condition of approval.

No pedestrian access is proposed along the southwestern side of the building along the Garden Center. On the adjacent parcel is a sidewalk that connects to the Bear Canyon Tributary. Access to this trail is provided from the subject site.

There is pedestrian access to nearby transit shelters through a signalized intersection on Wyoming and the site access road, and across Academy at the signalized Academy and Wyoming intersection. There is no direct route across the Walmart store parking lot to Academy.

The site proposes 26 bicycle parking spaces. This is approximately one third of the required bicycle parking spaces for the entire shopping center site. Staff finds that this amount is

reasonable because the remainder of bicycle parking can be met by providing 5 spaces at each of the other buildings.

Walls/Fences

The applicant has indicated that a truck wall will be included as part of this request. No new walls or fences are identified on the site development plan. The applicant should include dimensions on the building elevations and a note describing the height, width, color and materials of the proposed wall on sheet 1 of the site plan.

Lighting and Security

Three new lighting fixtures are proposed. The proposed light standard height is 35'-4". According to the Area Lighting Regulations, § 14-16-3-9, "For sites five or more acres, the maximum height of a light pole, measured from the finished grade to the top of the pole, shall be 30 feet." The new light poles should be a maximum of 30-feet.

Landscaping

In the Pre-application Review Team meeting, it was determined that this site should comply with the landscaping requirements in the general regulations, and not the Large Retail Facility requirements. The project should also be consistent with the approved site development plan and previous EPC conditions.

The 1992 Conditions of Approval require that "landscaping on the sidewalk areas in front of the primary retail area should be a minimum of 10 feet in width." There is one landscape planter, 10-feet by 20-feet in length. It reduces the pedestrian access route to approximately 4-feet, which does not comply with the general regulations. The approved site development plan also provides two landscape planters on the west side of the major building façade. Staff recommends replacing the two landscape planters, and providing a 6-foot clear width for the entire building façade.

Grading, Drainage, Utility Plans

A revised grading and drainage plan was and does not significantly alter site drainage or increase impervious surface.

Two new utility easements are proposed. A variety of upgraded and relocated utility lines are proposed, including new waterlines, sanitary sewer lines, and electrical conduits. The request also proposes two new fire hydrants, a new transformer, a new gas meter, and a new domestic water meter.

Architecture

The proposed façade modifications are an improvement to the aging building frontage. However, the design is not entirely compatible with the style of the surrounding development. The request proposes to eliminate a terracotta tile pyramid-shaped roof articulation which is characteristic of the shopping center site. The 1992 Site Development Plan Design Guidelines indicate that:

“All buildings shall be consistent with architectural materials, colors, and details of the Mission Architectural Style (including terra cotta roofs, synthetic plaster, ceramic accent tile, split-face CMU, etc.)”

Additional mission style details such as tile veneer or other details would serve to better integrate the style with the surrounding development.

The applicant was advised to comply with §14-16-3-2 (D)(6)(a) through (d) regarding Large Retail Facilities Main Structure Design. The request generally complies with these regulations, with two minor deficiencies noted. Subsection (b)(1) requires

“Where patios are provided, at least one of the recessed walls shall contain a window for ease of surveillance and the patio shall contain shading and seating. Where retail suite liners are provided, they shall be accessible to the public from the outside.” The patio adjacent to the main entrance should have a surveillance window and pedestrian seating and shade provided.

The second deficiency, regarding pedestrian amenities along 40% of the length of the major façade, would be resolved with the addition of two landscape planters along the western side of the front elevation, as previously discussed in the Site Layout, Public Outdoor Space and Landscaping sections.

Facades adjacent to a public right-of-way or internal driveway and facades that contain a primary customer entrance shall contain features that provide shade along at least 40% of the length of the façade for the benefit of pedestrians.

Signage

The site development plan is consistent with the Large Retail Facility regulations (5)(d), numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6, regarding signage and design guidelines from the approved site development plan.

A sign permit is not required for the two monument signs. The applicant proposes to replace a new plastic panel sign in the same size in an already approved location. “The changing of the advertising copy or message, including the interchange of sign facings, on an approved painted or printed sign structure or on a marquee or similar approved sign [does not require a sign permit], provided the size of the sign is not changed” (§14-16-3-5-(A)(6)(a)).

IV. AGENCY & NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS

Reviewing Agencies/Pre-Hearing Discussion

All of the outstanding agency comments have been addressed in the revised submittal or have been addressed as a condition of approval. The outstanding issues addressed in the conditions of approval are to revise the parking count to exclude motorcycle spaces and cart corrals, to provide a minimum six-foot wide path between the building and public sidewalks, and to improve key pedestrian connections and amenities.

Neighborhood/Public

There are five affected neighborhood associations and/or coalitions that are affected by this request –Academy Estates East NA, Academy Hills Park NA, Arroyo del Oso North NA, Cherry Hills Civic Association, and District 4 Coalition of NAs. A facilitated meeting was offered, but none held.

Previous neighborhood concerns about traffic and air quality do not appear to be current issues. Staff believes that the transportation facility improvements and air quality improvements since 1992 have assuaged these concerns. There are no letters in support or opposition to this request.

V. CONCLUSION

This is a request for an Amended Site Development Plan for Building Permit for an addition to a Walmart. The site is zoned C-2 (Shopping Center) and it is within a community activity center. The subject site is a fully-developed shopping center at the southeast corner of Wyoming Blvd. NE and Academy Blvd. NE called Sycamore Plaza. It is a 47 acre site, with 22 acres developed as residential. The most recent EPC approval was in 1997, which allowed an increase in the total building size to 271,943 SF. The EPC is the reviewing body for this request.

The applicant proposes to add 7,432 SF of new warehouse and storage space to the rear of the building. The applicant proposes façade improvements, new signage, and additional landscaping. EPC approval will also serve as the approval for the existing seasonal shop 4,456 SF addition at the front of the building which was constructed in 1999.

The major outstanding inconsistencies with the applicable Large Retail Facility regulations and the approved site development plan are a direct result of the existing seasonal shop. Staff finds that requiring a larger pedestrian walkway with landscaping planters will remedy the site development plan noncompliance pertaining to the walkway width, landscaping, and open space and addresses the Large Retail Facility regulation deficiencies pertaining to provision of public outdoor space and the architectural requirements for pedestrian amenities.

The request is generally consistent with intent of the Zoning Code, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies, and the site development plan design guidelines. Staff recommends approval of the request, subject to conditions.

FINDINGS - 11EPC-40002, March 10, 2011, Amended Site Development Plan for Building Permit

1. This is a request for an Amended Site Development Plan for Building Permit for Lot B-1, Replat of Tract B, Sycamore Plaza, located at the intersection of Wyoming Blvd. and Academy Blvd. and containing approximately 13.6 acres, within a shopping center site that contains approximately 47 acres.
2. The applicant is proposing to construct for a 7,432 SF addition to the rear of the building, add landscaping to the buffer areas, and make façade improvements to the store-front. The applicant proposes to replace existing signage with compatible equivalents. This request will result in a total building size of 149,894 square feet.
3. This amendment will also serve to approve the existing 5,600 SF seasonal shop addition to the front of the building. The existing seasonal shop does not currently have an Administrative Approval or EPC approval.
4. The subject site is zoned C-2, and is a shopping center site. The proposed use is permissive under the current zoning.
5. This request is before the EPC because it exceeds the thresholds for the maximum building square footage as approved by the EPC in 1992 (Z-91-51-1). There was one previous request that exceeded the threshold set by the EPC that was approved in 1997, making the total square footage of the development 271,943.
6. The request proposes to expand the allowable square footage for Sycamore Plaza beyond the approved threshold of 270,000 SF to 284,975 SF, an expansion of 13,032 SF above the previous approval.
7. The 270,000 SF building cap was established to control possible negative impacts regarding traffic and air quality. The current request is considered “minor” and does not trigger a traffic impact study or an air quality analysis.
8. The site is located within the Established Urban Area of the Comprehensive Plan and within the boundaries of the Bear Canyon Arroyo Corridor Plan. The Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, the Bear Canyon Arroyo Corridor Plan, and the City of Albuquerque Zoning Code are incorporated herein by reference and made part of the record for all purposes.

9. This request generally furthers the Comprehensive Plan policies for Developing and Established Urban Areas:
 - i. Policies II.B.5.1 and m are furthered because the façade improvements and landscaping preserve and enhance the visual environment in the area.
 - ii. The request is consistent with Policy d and i because it provides additional operational capacity to an existing shopping center site without negatively impacting natural or cultural resources.

10. The request is consistent with the Bear Canyon Arroyo Corridor Plan because it does not create any additional run-off or impact the Bear Canyon Tributary in any way.

11. The Site Development Plan includes design standards. Staff finds that the proposed façade improvement does not comply with the design guidelines regarding mission style architecture. The design proposes to remove the red tile pyramid-shaped roof, which is used consistently throughout the shopping center site.

12. The approximately 5,600 SF seasonal shop addition eliminated two landscaped planting areas, reduced the walkway by approximately 20-feet in width, and shifted the drive aisle north approximately 20-feet by eliminating 6 parking spaces and reconstructing the end-cap planters further north. This addition to the Walmart building does not have Administrative Amendment approval or EPC approval.

13. The pedestrian walkway in front of the building is reduced to less than 6-feet wide for a length of 20-feet adjacent to the raised planter. Per §14-16-3-1(H)(1), Off-street parking regulations, pedestrian connections, the “clear width may be reduced to 4 feet 6 inches at planting areas for a maximum distance of 10 feet.”

14. Staff finds that requiring a larger pedestrian walkway with landscaping planters will remedy the approved site development plan inconsistencies pertaining to the walkway width, landscaping, and open space; and it addresses the Large Retail Facility regulation deficiencies pertaining to provision of public outdoor space and the architectural requirements for pedestrian amenities.

15. A 6-foot pedestrian access to the Bear Tributary Arroyo and to the public sidewalk is provided, but the connection between the building front and the adjacent parcel is poorly designed for pedestrians. Modifications to the site plan to improve pedestrian circulation can be accomplished without compromising the basic integrity of the site.

16. There is a note on the building elevation sheets number 1, 2, and 3 that reads: "Building images shown are an artistic representation of the design intent. Actual color or materials may vary from those shown due to final design detailing." The colors and materials are subject to EPC approval, and shall remain as described, unless otherwise modified by EPC.
17. The subject site has an excess of parking of at least 77 spaces. There is an excess of 365 spaces after the 20% transit reduction is included in the calculations. The site nearly provides enough motorcycle parking spaces for the entire shopping center as well as one-third of the site bicycle parking required. The EPC has jurisdiction to modify landscape buffers for shopping center sites.
18. The applicant has adequately justified the request to reduce the rear perimeter buffer to 10' for a length of 95' in order to provide additional parking spaces, as requested for corporate parking standards. Staff finds that allowing these spaces is a reasonable accommodation, in exchange for the parking reduction proposed at the front of the building that serves to increase the pedestrian realm.
19. Staff finds that the requirement to provide a 6-foot high solid masonry wall would not significantly benefit the subject site and surrounding area and would negate the positive aesthetic benefit of the new landscaping. Staff recommends waiver of this requirement, in the context of the additional landscaping and screening provided.
20. The affected neighborhood associations (Academy Estates NA, Academy Hills Park NA, Arroyo del Oso North NA, and Cherry Hills Civic Association) and affected coalition (District 4 Coalition of NAs) were notified. A facilitated meeting was offered, but was not desired or held.

RECOMMENDATION - 11EPC-40002, March 10, 2011, Amended Site Development Plan for Building Permit

APPROVAL of 11EPC-40022, a request for an Amended Site Development Plan for Building Permit for Lot B-1, Replat of Tract B, Sycamore Plaza, based on the preceding Findings and subject to the following Conditions.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL - 11EPC-40002, March 10, 2011, Amended Site Development Plan for Building Permit

1. The EPC delegates final sign-off authority of this site development plan to the Development Review Board (DRB). The DRB is responsible for ensuring that all EPC Conditions have

been satisfied and that other applicable City requirements have been met. A letter shall accompany the submittal, specifying all modifications that have been made to the site plan since the EPC hearing, including how the site plan has been modified to meet each of the EPC conditions. Unauthorized changes to this site plan, including before or after DRB final sign-off, may result in forfeiture of approvals.

2. Prior to application submittal to the DRB, the applicant shall meet with the staff planner to ensure that all conditions of approval are met.
3. Site Plan Layout:
 - a. The traffic circulation driveway along the front of the building shall be modified to allow for a larger pedestrian area along the building frontage.
4. Public Outdoor Space:
 - a. Benches or a picnic table shall be shown in the recessed public open space on the site development plan, in order to comply with §14-16-3-2(D)(6)(b)(1).
 - b. The planter on the northeast side of the entrance shall be resized or moved to preserve a minimum of 6-feet clear width that connects to the adjacent retail stores.
 - c. Two additional landscape planters with pedestrian seating, and a minimum width of 10-feet shall be included along the southwestern side of the building façade, to be consistent with the current approved site development plan.
5. Vehicular Access, Circulation and Parking:
 - a. A truck-bay facility screen wall shall be identified and dimensioned on the site development plan and the south (rear) building elevation.
 - b. The note in the “proposed site analysis table” that states that the parking count includes motorcycle parking spaces and cart corrals shall be revised to exclude motorcycle parking spaces and cart corrals. The parking space count shall be revised to match the actual parking spaces provided on the subject site.
6. Pedestrian Circulation
 - a. A minimum 15-foot wide pedestrian walkway shall be provided as well as two additional raised planters along western side of building frontage, per approved site development plan. The planters in front of the building shall serve as pedestrian seating area, in order to comply with §14-16-3-2(D)(5)(j)(2)(b). The pedestrian walkway in front of the building shall not be reduced to less than 6-foot wide, per zoning enforcement comments.

- b. The visibility and legibility of the pedestrian crosswalk on the west side of the building shall be improved. This crosswalk shall be redesigned to cross the drive aisle perpendicularly, and that the connection to the existing pedestrian access to the arroyo shall be made more direct and legible. This may be accomplished by reducing the curb return radius and/or by providing additional surface treatment, such as colored, textured concrete.
7. Architecture:
- a. Additional façade articulation shall be provided that is in the Mission Architectural Style, which can include terracotta roof tiles, decorative veneer tiles, or other elements that are consistent with the architecture at the shopping center site.
 - b. The patio adjacent to the main entrance shall incorporate a surveillance window, pedestrian seating, and shade shall be provided to comply with §14-16-3-2(D)(6)(b)(1).
 - c. On the building elevation sheets number 1, 2, and 3, the note “Building images shown are an artistic representation of the design intent. Actual color or materials may vary from those shown due to final design detailing” shall be removed.
8. Conditions of approval from the City Engineer, Municipal Development and NMDOT:
- a. The Developer is responsible for permanent improvements to the transportation facilities adjacent to the proposed site development plan, as may be required by the Development Review Board (DRB).
 - b. All the requirements of previous actions taken by the EPC and/or the DRB must be completed and/or provided for.
 - c. Site plan shall comply and be designed per DPM Standards.
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***K. Carrie Barkhurst
Planner***

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Attachments

Official Notification of Decision dated November 22, 1991
Official Notification of Decision dated May 22, 1992
Addendum, City Council of the City of Albuquerque, Action Summary, August 17, 1992

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE AGENCY COMMENTS

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Zoning Enforcement

Parking

- ❖ The submittal needs to demonstrate all of the parking calculations, including reductions.
- ❖ Those parking spaces utilized for cart corrals cannot be included in the calculation of parking spaces.
- ❖ A six foot wide path is required between the building and public sidewalks.

Lighting

- ❖ No information has been provided on lighting for the site. A general note needs to be included indicating that the site will meet the standards of 14-16-3-9, Area Lighting Regulations.

Landscaping

- ❖ The landscaping plan needs to contain square footage of each landscaped area.
- ❖ Total landscaping calculations need to be provided.
- ❖ The number of trees required will need to be consistent with the required number of off-street parking spaces.

Large Retail Facility

- ❖ The site may need to comply with Section 14-16-3-2(D) as determined by the Planning Director.

Office of Neighborhood Coordination

This project has been recommended for facilitation. Affected Neighborhood and/or Homeowner Association(s) and Coalition(s): ACADEMY ESTATES EAST N.A. (AEE) "R", ACADEMY HILLS PARK N.A. (AHP) "R", ARROYO DEL OSO NORTH N.A. (ADN) "R", CHERRY HILLS CIVIC ASSOC. (CHC) "R", DISTRICT 4 COALITION OF N.A.'S

Long Range Planning

The subject site is located in the Established Urban area of the comprehensive plan and is within the boundaries of the Bear Canyon Arroyo Corridor Plan.

The site is zoned C-2 SC and this expansion of less than 10% of the existing square footage requires compliance with the Shopping Center Regulations, Section 14-16-3-2, and to the extent possible, the Large Retail Facility Regulations, Section 14-16-3-2 (D). If achievable, enhanced pedestrian amenities and connections to adjacent right-of-way and improved landscaping should be considered across the entire site, especially in the parking area (Section 14-16-3-2(D)(1)(c)).

CITY ENGINEER

Transportation Development Services

- The Developer is responsible for permanent improvements to the transportation facilities adjacent to the proposed site development plan, as may be required by the Development Review Board (DRB).
- All the requirements of previous actions taken by the EPC and/or the DRB must be completed and/or provided for.
- Site plan shall comply and be designed per DPM Standards.

Hydrology

- A Conceptual Grading and Drainage Plan is required for DRB approval.

DEPARTMENT of MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Transportation Planning

- Reviewed, and no comments regarding on-street bikeways or roadway system facilities.

Traffic Engineering Operations

- No comments received.

Street Maintenance

- No comments received.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS FROM CITY ENGINEER, MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT and NMDOT:

Conditions of approval for the proposed Site Plan for Building Permit Amendment shall include:

- a. The Developer is responsible for permanent improvements to the transportation facilities adjacent to the proposed site development plan, as may be required by the Development Review Board (DRB).
- b. All the requirements of previous actions taken by the EPC and/or the DRB must be completed and/or provided for.
- c. Site plan shall comply and be designed per DPM Standards.

WATER UTILITY AUTHORITY

Utility Services

ABCWUA has no adverse comments on the three cases scheduled for the March 10, 2011 EPC.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Air Quality Division

Environmental Services Division

PARKS AND RECREATION

Planning and Design

Reviewed, no objection. Request does not affect our facilities.

Open Space Division

City Forester

POLICE DEPARTMENT/Planning

No Crime Prevention or CPTED comments concerning the proposed Amended Site Development Plan for Building Permit request at this time.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

Refuse Division

FIRE DEPARTMENT/Planning

Please be aware of Fire Flow and Hydrant Requirements for this project.

TRANSIT DEPARTMENT

<p><i>Project # 1000606</i> 10EPC-40007 AMEND SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN – BLD PRMT</p>	Adjacent and nearby routes	Route #3, Wyoming route, and Route #98, Wyoming commuter route, pass near the site on Wyoming. Route #93. Academy commuter route passes near the site on Academy.
	Adjacent bus stops	Nearest bus stops located on Wyoming and Academy serving the above-mentioned bus routes.
	Site plan requirements	None.
	Large site TDM suggestions	N/A
	Other information	None

COMMENTS FROM OTHER AGENCIES

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

- No comments received.

BERNALILLO COUNTY

ALBUQUERQUE METROPOLITAN ARROYO FLOOD CONTROL AUTHORITY

Reviewed, no comment.

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This will have no adverse impacts to the APS district.

MID-REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

The following staff comments relate to transportation systems planning within the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA). Principal guidance comes from the 2030 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (effective 6/30/07) and the maps therein; Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for 2010-2015 (approved with an effective date of October 6, 2010); the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Regional Architecture; and the Roadway Access Policies of the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) of the Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB).

For informational purposes, Wyoming Blvd is classified as an urban principal arterial and Academy Blvd is classified an urban minor collector, as per the Current Roadway Functional Classification System Map.

MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY OF NEW MEXICO

PNM has no comment based on information provided to date.