



## **Environmental Planning Commission**

**Agenda Number: 3  
Project Number: 1010181  
Case #: 14EPC-40050, 14EPC-40058  
October 9, 2014**

### **Staff Report**

<b>Agent</b>	Laurie Moye
<b>Applicant</b>	Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM)
<b>Requests</b>	<b>Site Development Plan for Subdivision Amendment</b> <b>Site Development Plan for Building Permit</b>
<b>Legal Description</b>	Block D, American Square
<b>Location</b>	2300 Richmond Dr. NE, between Richmond Dr. NE and Bryn Mawr Dr. NE, north of Menaul Blvd. NE
<b>Size</b>	An $\approx$ 5.4 acre portion of the $\approx$ 55 acre American Square shopping center site
<b>Zoning</b>	C-2 (No change proposed)

#### **Staff Recommendation**

**APPROVAL of 14EPC-40058, based on the Findings beginning on Page 12, and subject to the Conditions of Approval beginning on Page 14.**

**APPROVAL of 14EPC-40050, based on the Findings beginning on Page 14, and subject to the Conditions of Approval beginning on Page 18.**

**Staff Planner  
Catalina Lehner, AICP-Senior Planner**

#### **Summary of Analysis**

This request is for a site development plan for building permit and a site development plan for subdivision amendment for an approximately 5.4 acre, vacant site between Richmond Dr. NE and Bryn Mawr Dr. NE (the "subject site"). The request was not heard in September due to a notification issue, which has been corrected.

The applicant proposes an electric switching station (the "Richmond Switching Station") to add capacity and serve the SE part of the City. The switching station would consist of electrical equipment surrounded by a wall.

Overall, the request furthers applicable goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan and mostly complies with applicable design standards in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan. Minor conditions of approval are needed.

There is no known opposition as of this writing. A couple of nearby property owners have expressed concern about screening. Staff recommends approval.

City Departments and other interested agencies reviewed this application from 8/4/2014 to 8/15/2014.  
Agency comments used in the preparation of this report begin on Page 20.

**I. AREA CHARACTERISTICS**

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

	<i>Zoning</i>	<i>Comprehensive Plan Area; Applicable Rank II &amp; III Plans</i>	<i>Land Use</i>
<i>Site</i>	C-2	1. Established Urban 2. Facility Plan: Electric System Transmission & Generation (2010-2020)	Vacant
<i>North</i>	C-2	Same as above	Vacant, City recycling center
<i>South</i>	C-2	Same as above	Retail (shopping center)
<i>East</i>	C-2	Same as above	Retail big-box store (shopping center), City pump station
<i>West</i>	C-3	Same as above	Manufacturing, nursing home, motel, flood control

**II. INTRODUCTION**

***Request***

This request is for a site development plan for building permit and an amendment to a site development plan for subdivision for Block D, plat of American Square, an approximately 5.4 acre site (the “subject site”). The subject site is part of a larger, approximately 55-acre site known as the American Square Shopping Center.

The applicant proposes to develop an electric switching station. The “Richmond Switching Station” would serve as a transfer point on the existing electric system, and would “switch down” power from the large 345 kV bulk transmission lines to the smaller 115 kV transmission lines and distribution substations. The proposed switching station is project #24 on the “Description of proposed electric facilities projects for 2010- 2020” in the Facility Plan: Electric System Transmission & Generation (2010- 2020) (the “2010 Electric System Facilities Plan”) (see Table 5, p. 24) and is required to comply with applicable design standards contained therein.

***Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) Role***

The EPC is the final approval body for the request, unless the EPC decision is appealed. The 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan states that projects included in the Plan’s list of proposed electric projects for 2010-2020 are to be submitted to the EPC for review (see Table 1, p. 20).

***Context***

The subject site is in the Established Urban Area of the Comprehensive Plan. The Facility Plan: Electric System Transmission & Generation (2010- 2020), a Rank II facility plan, applies. No sector development plans apply in this area.

The subject site abuts the American Square Community Activity Center, but is not located within its boundaries. Nor is it in a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA). Menaul Blvd. is designated an Enhanced Transit Corridor.

The subject site is located approximately 545 feet north of Menaul Blvd., between Richmond Dr. NE and Bryn Mawr Dr. NE. A variety of land uses surrounds the subject site. To the north is an parking lot with a City recycling center on it and various manufacturing uses (machine shops, towing, cooling/heating) along Richmond Dr. NE. Also along Richmond Dr. NE is the Santa Barbara Pump station, part of which consists of three, large water tanks. To the east is big-box retail store and some smaller retail shops. To the south are two large commercial uses. To the west are various manufacturing uses, a nursing home, an extended stay hotel and a non-concealed wireless facility. Further west is the North Diversion Channel.

#### ***Long Range Roadway 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 Menaul Blvd. as an Urban Principal Arterial. Richmond Dr. NE, Bryn Mawr Dr. NE, and American Drive NE are local streets.

#### ***Public Facilities/Community Services***

A few public and community facilities are near the subject site. About a mile to the northeast is a fire station. There are 8 parks within a mile of the subject site. The subject site is within the 1000 feet buffer of a landfill designed by the Environmental Health Department (EHD).

»Please refer to the Public Facilities map (see attachment).

### **III. HISTORY**

The area near Carlisle and Menaul Blvds. is part of a larger area that was annexed into the City in the 1950s. The earliest available record (Z-409) indicates that the City Planning Commission (CPC) denied a zone change from C-1 to C-2 along both sides of Carlisle, between Menaul Blvd. and Claremont Ave., in February 1957.

Another early record (Z-1091) was a proposal for various zone changes in the area bounded by Menaul Blvd. and Comanche Rd., and Claremont Ave. and Carlisle Blvd. (see attachment). The area was zoned R-1 and R-2 and the changes were to M-1, R-3 and O-1. In August 1961, the CPC denied the M-1 portion of the proposal and deferred it in order to consider developing the area holistically. In October 1961, the CPC approved zone changes and a plan for the Duke City Industrial Area, which was mostly zoned C-3 except for a C-1 strip along Carlisle Blvd. and the Duke City Drive-In between Claremont and Phoenix Aves. adjacent to the C-1 strip.

The Duke City Industrial Area did not develop as planned. In 1986, the EPC approved a two-part proposal for a zone change and a site development plan for the northwest corner of Carlisle and Menaul Blvds. which became known as American Square (Z-86-12). The zone change, from various descriptors to C-2, was finalized by issuance of a certification of zoning (CZ) in October 1988 (see attachment). The original site development plan, finalized in July 1986, showed a variety

of commercial buildings (small shops and anchors), an office complex, a six story hotel a large major tenant building and restaurants. A restaurant was envisioned between Claremont and Phoenix Aves., abutting Carlisle Blvd. (see attachment), where the smaller subject site is currently proposed.

#### **IV. ALBUQUERQUE COMPREHENSIVE ZONING CODE**

##### ***Definitions (§14-16-1-5)***

Public Utility Structure: A structure, owned by a unit of government or by a public utility company which is an electric switching station; electric substation operating at voltages greater than 50 kilovolts (kV); gas transfer station or border station; city-owned lift station, odor control (or chlorine) station, water well or pump station, or water reservoir; or any other public utility structure controlled by a rank two facility plan.

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.

Structure: Anything constructed or erected above ground level which requires location on the ground or attached to something having a location on the ground but not including a tent, vehicle, vegetation, or public utility pole or line.

##### ***Zoning***

The subject is zoned C-2 Community Commercial (Zoning Code §14-16-2-17). The purpose of the C-2 zone is to provide “suitable sites for offices, for most service and commercial activities, and for certain specified institutional uses.” Though the SC designation is not used, the subject site is a shopping center site by definition because it is greater than five acres and zoned C-2.

Subsection (A)(7) states that a public utility structure is a permissive use, “provided its location is in accord with an adopted facility plan and a site development plan for building permit purposes has been approved by the Planning Commission.” The proposed electric switching station is being reviewed, through the EPC process, for compliance with the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan.

#### **V. ANALYSIS -CONFORMANCE TO ADOPTED PLANS AND POLICIES**

##### **A) Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan (Rank I)**

The subject site is mostly located in an area that the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan has designated as Established Urban, with a small portion designated as Developing Urban. The goal of the Developing and Established Urban Areas is “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:

*Land Use Policies-Developing & Established Urban Areas*

Policy II.B.5d: 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 would result in development of a new electric switching station. Its location and intensity would be generally appropriate for the area, which has developed with a mixture of manufacturing and retail (C-2) uses. A pump station and a diversion channel are nearby. Colors and materials would be generally compatible with existing development and surroundings. There is no known neighborhood opposition, though some concern has been expressed. The request generally furthers Policy II.B.5d-neighborhood /environmental/ resources.*

Policy II.B.5e: 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 request furthers Policy II.B.5e-programmed facilities/neighborhood integrity. The subject site is vacant and contiguous to developed land where urban services are available. Existing overhead power lines are available for the proposed switching station, which is unlikely to affect the integrity of any existing neighborhood regarding use of existing facilities and services.*

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

*The proposed electric switching station would be a new development, with standard PNM design that includes a CMU wall, gates and gravel and specified colors. The colors would generally be appropriate for the area. The design does not lend itself to quality and innovation; this is a standard utility, though a design feature could be added to the wall to improve its quality. The request partially furthers Policy II.B.5l-quality design/new development.*

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

*The proposed switching station would be located near manufacturing, commercial and other utility uses. However, switching stations consist of a large area with utility structures and equipment. These would be visible from the roadways nearby, the trail along the diversion channel and the shopping center. The quality of the visual environment would generally not be improved, though the wall may blend in sufficiently with other, nearby walls and additional screening (landscaping) could be added. The request does not further Policy II.B.5m- site design/visual environment.*

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Policy II.C.4a: Noise considerations shall be integrated into the planning process so that future noise/land use conflicts are prevented.

*The proposed electric substation is required to follow the design standards in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan. Design Standard #11 states that the noise level of new substation facilities shall not exceed National Electric Manufacturer's Association (NEMA) guidelines (see Appendix E of the 2010-2020 Electric System Facilities Plan). Noise considerations are integrated into the planning process for electric facilities to help prevent land use/noise conflicts, though a note is needed on the site development plan. The request partially furthers Policy II.C.4a.*

*Community Resource Management- Service Provision*

The Goal is to develop and manage use of public services/facilities in an efficient and equitable manner and in accordance with other land use planning policies.

*The proposed electric switching station can be considered a public service/facility. It was planned to address the need for additional electric capacity and was included in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan project list, which is a mechanism to manage development of electric facilities. Land use planning policies are applied to the proposed project through this review. The request furthers Goal D-1.*

*Community Resource Management- Energy Management*

The Goal is to maintain an adequate, economical supply of energy through energy management techniques and use of alternative and renewable energy sources.

*The proposed switching station would address vulnerability to overloads and low voltages in the SE part of the City, which could occur there because the electric system is at capacity. The switching station is included in the project list in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan, which is a tool to manage electric facilities to ensure availability of electrical energy. Alternative and renewable energy sources, however, are not included in this request. The request partially furthers Goal D-3.*

*Community Resource Management- Economic Development*

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

*The supply of electric energy generally supports economic development. The proposed electric switching station would help address that the electric system is at capacity in the SE part of the City. The design standards in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan will help ensure balance with visual, ecological and land use considerations which further overarching environmental goals. The request generally furthers Goal D-6.*

**B) Facility Plan: Electric System Transmission & Generation (2010-2020)- Rank II**

OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND

The Electric Facilities Plan is a Rank II facility plan that addresses the electric transmission system and electric projects. Electric distribution to individual customers and rates are not addressed. In 1971, the Albuquerque City Council and the Bernalillo County Board of Commissioners (BCC) adopted the first Electric Facilities Plan, which was subsequently amended in 1972, 1981, 1985, 1995, 2005 (County only) and 2011.

The Albuquerque City Council adopted the Rank II Facility Plan: Electric System Transmission & Generation (2010-2020) (the “2010 Electric System Facilities Plan”) via Council Bill No. R-11-311 on February 22, 2012 (see attachment). The Plan became effective in March. The BCC adopted the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan via Resolution 69-211 on November 15, 2011. The Facility Plan: Electric Service Transmission & Subtransmission Facilities (1995-2005) was repealed by both bodies.

The 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan describes the electric transmission and generation system serving the City of Albuquerque and unincorporated Bernalillo County. The Plan’s main components are a list of proposed projects for 2010-2020, a table explaining the review process, location standards for transmission line corridors, design standards for electric transmission facilities and examples of generation technologies. The purpose of the 2011 update was to update the project list, clarify the review process and address generation technologies.

#### SITING STUDY

The Electric Facility Plans contain the “Outline for a typical siting study.” This is Appendix A in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan. A siting study has been prepared and submitted for the proposed “Richmond Switching Station” in accordance with the outline (see attachment). The siting study describes the proposed project and addresses the need for it, alternative sites, and siting considerations. Staff would like more explanation regarding the alternative sites considered and the preferred alternative (see Executive Summary, Section B).

#### LOCATION & DESIGN STANDARDS

The Electric Plans, including the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan, contain standards for the location and design of transmission and substation facilities to be applied to minimize potential siting impacts when building new facilities (p. 3, 2010 Plan). The following standards apply to the request:

Location Standard #9: In siting new transmission and station facilities, the following siting constraints shall be considered:

- a. Exclusion Area – Resource factors or land use values that preclude siting electric facilities due to officially stated or approved safety restrictions, plans or policies such as FAA-regulated areas at airports.
- b. Environmental Considerations –Resource factors or land use values where the presence of electric facilities may conflict with that resource or land use value. Environmental sensitivities do not preclude development of an overhead transmission line, but because of their conflict potential, are given special consideration in designating the alignment, substation location, and facility design and construction.

- c. FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area—Due to their conflict potential, these areas are given special consideration at the early stages in the designation of the line alignment, substation location and facility design and construction.

*The subject site is not located in an Exclusion Area (a) or in an area where electric facilities may conflict with resource factors or land use values (b). The subject site could be in a flood hazard area, however, because it's approximately 320 feet from the North Diversion Channel. Additional information to demonstrate that special consideration has been given needs to be provided and a note added to the site development plan. The request partially complies.*

Design Standard #11: The noise level of new substation facilities shall not exceed guidelines set by the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) in Appendix E. Electric facilities shall be located and screened to minimize sound impacts to the surrounding environment.

*The proposed switching station would be located in an area characterized by commercial and manufacturing uses. There is a nursing home and an extended stay hotel across Richmond Dr., to the west, which could be affected. A note should be added to the site development plan regarding compliance with NEMA noise guidelines. The request partially complies.*

Design Standard #12: When physically and economically feasible, new substations shall be located immediately adjacent to transmission and subtransmission corridors to preclude the extension of new lines.

*The proposed switching station would be located near an existing 345 kV transmission pole near the site's western side, which would help preclude extension of new lines. The request complies.*

Design Standard #13: Substations should be located to take advantage of available topography and vegetation to minimize their visual impact. Screening shall be provided by the appropriate electric utility according to the standards set out in Appendix C as appropriate.

*The subject site is surrounded by commercial (and some manufacturing) development, which would help screen it to some extent. The new pole structures inside the switching station are 51 feet tall. On-site vegetation consists of low-lying wild plants of various types. Additional landscaping, for screening purposes, would be beneficial- especially along Richmond Dr. since it faces a nursing home and extended stay hotel. The switching equipment would be located centrally on the subject site, so it would not take advantage of topography to lessen visual impact. The request partially complies.*

Design Standard #14: Substation profile and size should be as unimposing as possible. Sample station plans are shown in Appendix B.

*The proposed switching station is relatively imposing compared to the uses in the vicinity (commercial, small-scale manufacturing, etc.). However, its tallest vertical structure would*



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*be 51 feet, and that would connect to an existing transmission line that's about twice that height. The proposed switching station is designed using the Appendix B example as a baseline, but differs with respect to wall design and structure height. These differences would make the proposed substation less imposing than the example, though maybe an updated example is warranted. The request partially complies.*

Design Standard #15: All new and expanded substations will be standard PNM design, surrounded by a 12-foot wall and landscaped and approved through the site development plan approval process. If located in the City of Albuquerque, they shall be landscaped pursuant to Section 14-16-3-10 (Landscaping regulations pertaining to apartment and nonresidential development) of the City of Albuquerque Zoning Code and the Water Conservation Landscaping and Water Waste Ordinance. All existing substations that undergo expansion shall meet the design standards for new substations. All facilities shall be maintained free of graffiti.

*The proposed switching station would be standard PNM design, with the standard 12 foot wall, steel grills, and equipment. Proposed landscaping includes short trees and shrubs/groundcovers. Trees do not count toward the coverage requirement of 75%, so it appears that some more plants are needed. The Water Conservation Ordinance would be adhered to. A note can be added regarding maintenance free of graffiti. Overall, the request partially complies.*

## VI. SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR SUBDIVISION AMENDMENT

The subject site is located in the American Square Shopping Center, which is governed by an existing site development plan for subdivision (sps) (Z -86-12). An amendment is needed to reflect the current request. The applicant has provided an exhibit to denote the changed portion of the larger sps site (see attachment). A cluster of small offices, which has not developed, was originally approved on the subject site.

Note that the boundaries of the American Square Community Activity Center differ from the boundaries of the American Square Shopping Center, which is the subject of the site development plan for subdivision.

## VII. SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR BUILDING PERMIT

The applicant proposes to develop an electric switching station on an approximately 5.4 acre site contained within the boundaries of the larger, approximately 55-acre American Square Shopping Center. The proposed "Richmond Switching Station" would be located at the western edge of the shopping center, but outside the boundaries of the American Square Community Activity Center.

Zoning Code §14-16-3-11 states, "...Site Development Plans are expected to meet the requirements of adopted city policies and procedures." Staff has reviewed the proposed site development plan for building permit (spbp).

⇒ Applicable design standards in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan are discussed in Section V of this report.

### ***Site Plan Layout / Configuration***

The proposed site development plan for building permit consists of various types of electrical equipment surrounded by a wall and landscaping. A control box is at the site's southern end and pole structures are proposed mostly in the middle of the site. The equipment would connect to two large, off-site transmission poles via electric wires.

### ***Vehicular Access, Circulation and Parking***

Vehicular access, for maintenance purposes only, would be from a couple of gates facing Richmond Dr. NE. A Traffic Impact Study (TIS) was not required.

### ***Walls/Fences***

The electrical equipment is proposed to be surrounded by a 12-foot CMU wall (PNM standard height). The wall would have split-face block along the bottom portion and smooth-face block along the top portion, and a block cap. Two shades of medium brown are proposed. A wall detail, in elevation view, is needed. A note needs to be added to state that the switching station will be maintained graffiti free, see Design Standard #15 in the 2010 Electric Systems Facility Plan.

### ***Lighting and Security***

The proposed switching station would be secured and inaccessible by the public. No lighting is proposed.

### ***Landscaping***

Landscaping is proposed around the switching station's perimeter, in a buffer that varies from approximately 15 to 27 feet wide. Three types of short trees (Desert Willow, NM Olive and Vitex) and seven types of shrubs/groundcovers are proposed.

Landscaping has been reduced from the original (v.1) of the landscaping plan, but the calcs remain the same. The landscaping calculations need to reflect what's shown; landscaping quantities should be re-instated to at least what was originally shown. Small trees have been removed from the southern buffer entirely, though the adjacent property owner has requested screening with trees. Evergreen screen would be beneficial here.

Zoning Code §14-16-3-10, Landscaping Regulations Applicable to Apartment and Non-Residential Development, applies. The request would need some more plant material to meet the minimum requirement for 75% coverage with living, vegetative materials. Trees don't count toward this requirement. The interior of the switching station would be graded and covered with tan rock.

A neighboring property owner has requested that some evergreen trees be added to the southern landscaping buffer. Screening would also be improved by adding more trees along Richmond Dr., or at least re-instating what was shown in v.1 of the landscaping plan. Note that the Street Tree Ordinance refers to "Major Local Street", which arguably Richmond Dr. is. Bryn Mawr Dr. and American Way are internal, local streets. The development across the street, a nursing home, provided street trees; the same should be done here for consistency and screening for the nursing home and extended stay hotel.

***Grading & Drainage Plan***

The subject site slopes downward from northeast to southwest, from the 5,124 contour to the 5,112 contour. The site will be graded, though some slope would remain- especially in the NE corner. Water flows along the site's southern side, in a concrete channel, and heads toward the North Diversion Channel. Information regarding the site's flood status and any water harvesting/reuse features should be included.

***Utilities***

The proposed switching station would connect to the existing 345kV transmission lines just west of the subject site, which run along the North Diversion Channel. An existing 10 foot utility easement runs along the site's eastern side.

***Design***

The proposed switching station would consist of various types of electrical equipment, such as an electric control box, pole structures and lines, which would be enclosed by a block wall with landscaping around it and two gates facing Richmond Dr. NE.

The elevations are not scaled. It appears that the proposed electrical equipment would be 51 feet at its highest point; it would connect to an approx. 100 foot transmission tower outside of the subject site. There are four steel poles of this height. The insulators and connection wires would also be visible. All would be an aluminum grey color. The surfaces would be non-reflective.

***Signage***

Two standard, wall mounted signs are proposed. The warning sign would be on all elevations and the PNM sign would be on only the north and east elevations. The warning sign is 20 sf in area, with black lettering and a white and orange background. The PNM sign, 16 sf, shows the PNM logo and the name of the switching station. Lettering is white and background is medium blue for part and black for part.

**VIII. COMMENTS**

***Concerns of Reviewing Agencies/Pre-Hearing Discussion***

City Departments and other agencies reviewed this application from 8/4/2014 to 8/15/2014. Zoning Staff have no adverse comment. The Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Metropolitan Flood Control Authority (AMAFCA) states that onsite measures for water quality treatment since the site drains to an AMAFCA rundown to the North Diversion Channel. Police Department Staff recommends installing motion lighting to detect or illuminate possible sabotage or threats to the infrastructure.

The applicant attended the pre-hearing discussion meeting on August 20, 2014. Agency comments begin on p. 20.

***Neighborhood Concerns***

The affected neighborhood organizations are the Bel Air Neighborhood Association (BANA) and the District 7 Coalition of NAs. This request was deferred for 30 days at the September hearing to ensure proper notification. The applicant notified BANA when Staff realized that the site development plan for subdivision for American Square (~55 acres) would have to be amended.

Property owners within 100 feet of the larger, 55 acre subject site were also notified as required. The District 7 coalition had already been notified.

A facilitated meeting was neither recommended nor held. There is no known neighborhood or other opposition, although some nearby property owners have expressed concern about screening. Specifically, owners of tracts in the American Square Shopping Center want additional screening to help mitigate the “industrial message” the switching station would send to retail customers, and are requesting that additional evergreen trees be planted.

## **IX. CONCLUSION**

The request is for a site development plan for building permit and a site development plan for subdivision amendment. The ≈5.4 acre subject site is part of a larger, ≈ 55-acre American Square Shopping Center. The applicant proposes to develop an electric switching station.

The “Richmond Switching Station” would add capacity and serve the SE part of the City. The request is listed as project #24 in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan. Overall, the request furthers applicable goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan and mostly complies with applicable design standards in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan.

The request was not heard in September due to a notification issue, which has since been corrected. Staff realized that the site development plan for the shopping center would have to be amended to include the switching station, which expanded the boundaries for notification. The applicant then notified the Bel-Air NA as required.

There is no known neighborhood or other opposition, although some owners of tracts in the American Square Shopping Center have expressed concern about screening and request evergreen screening along the southern boundary. There are a few conflicts with applicable policies and regulations, but these can be addressed through minor conditions of approval.

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***FINDINGS -14EPC-40058, October 9, 2014-Site Development Plan for Subdivision Amendment***

1. The subject request is for a site development plan for subdivision amendment for Block D, American Square, an approximately 5.4 acre portion of an approximately 55-acre American Square shopping center (the “subject site”), located at the northwest corner of Carlisle and Menaul Boulevards, zoned C-2.
2. The subject request is accompanied by a request for a site development plan for building permit (14EPC-40050) for an electric switching station (the “Richmond Switching Station”), which is project #24 on the “Description of proposed electric facilities projects for 2010- 2020” in the Facility Plan: Electric System Transmission & Generation (2010- 2020) (the “2010 Electric System Facilities Plan”).
3. The 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan specifies approval processes; requests for development of projects on the Project List are required to be reviewed through the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) process.
4. The subject site is located in the Established Urban Area of the Comprehensive Plan, but is just outside of the boundaries of the American Square Community Activity Center. The 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan also applies. No sector development plans apply.
5. The Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, the Facility Plan: Electric System Transmission & Generation (2010- 2020) (the “2010 Electric System Facilities Plan”) and the City of Albuquerque Zoning Code are incorporated herein by reference and made part of the record for all purposes.
6. Though the SC designation is not used, the subject site is a shopping center site by definition because it is greater than five acres and zoned C-2.
7. The request furthers the following, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goals and policies:
  - A. Goal- Service Provision. The electric switching station can be considered a public service/facility. It was included in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan project list, which is a mechanism to manage development of electric facilities. Land use planning policies are applied to the proposed project through this review.
  - B. Goal- Economic Development. The electric switching station would provide additional electric energy and support for existing electric energy sources, which generally support economic development. The design standards in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan will help ensure balance with visual, ecological and land use considerations.
  - C. Policy II.B.5d-neighborhood /environmental/ resources. The location and intensity of the electric switching station would be generally appropriate for the area, which has developed with a mixture of manufacturing and retail (C-2) uses. A pump station and a diversion

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channel are nearby. Colors and materials would be generally compatible with existing development and surroundings. There is no known neighborhood opposition, though some concern has been expressed.

- D. Policy II.B.5e- programmed facilities/neighborhood integrity. The subject site is vacant and contiguous to developed land where urban services are available. Existing overhead power lines are available and are unlikely to affect the integrity of neighborhoods regarding use of existing facilities and services.
8. The request partially furthers the following, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goal and policies:
- A. Goal- Energy Management. The switching station would address overloads and low voltages in the SE part of the City, which could occur there because the electric system is at capacity. The switching station is included in the project list in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan, which is a tool to manage electric facilities. Alternative and renewable energy sources, however, are not included in this request.
- B. Policy II.B.5l-quality design/new development. The switching station would be a new development. Though its colors would generally be appropriate for the Plan area, the standard utility design does not lend itself to quality and innovation.
- C. Policy II.C.4a-noise/planning. Noise considerations are integrated into the planning process for electric facilities. The proposed substation cannot exceed National Electric Manufacturer's Association (NEMA) guidelines, though a note is needed on the site development plan.
9. Minor conditions of approval are recommended to provide clarification.
10. The affected neighborhood organizations are the Bel Air Neighborhood Association (BANA) and the District 7 Coalition of NAs. This request was deferred for 30 days at the September hearing to ensure proper notification; the BANA was notified in a timely fashion for the October hearing. The District 7 coalition had already been notified as required.
11. As of this writing, there is no known neighborhood or other opposition. A facilitated meeting was neither recommended nor held. A couple of nearby property owners have expressed concern about the switching station's "industrial message" in a shopping center area, and request evergreen screening.

***RECOMMENDATION - 14EPC-40058, October 9, 2014***

**APPROVAL of 14EPC-40058, a Site Development Plan for Subdivision Amendment pertaining to Tract D of American Square, an approximately 5.4 acre portion of an approximately 55-acre shopping center site, located between Richmond Dr. NE and Bryn Mawr Dr. NE, north of Menaul Blvd. NE, zoned C-2 Community Commercial, based on the preceding Findings and subject to the following Conditions of Approval.**

***CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL -14EPC-40058, October 9, 2014–Site Development Plan for Subdivision Amendment***

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 final approval, the applicant shall meet with the Staff planner to ensure that conditions of approval are met. Evidence of this meeting shall be provided at the time of application.
  3. The prior amendment (Project #1008124, March 2014) shall be called out for informational purposes and its easement notes deleted.
  4. The applicant shall coordinate with the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Metropolitan Flood Control Authority (AMAFCA) regarding the onsite measures for water quality treatment that AMAFCA will require.
  5. **CONDITION FROM THE CITY ENGINEER:**

The Developer is responsible for permanent improvements to the transportation facilities adjacent to the proposed site development plan, as required by the Development Review Board (DRB).
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***FINDINGS -14EPC-40050, October 9, 2014-Site Development Plan for Building Permit***

1. The subject request is for a site development plan for building permit for Block D, American Square, an approximately 5.4 acre portion of an approximately 55-acre American Square shopping center (the “subject site”), located between Richmond Dr. NE and Bryn Mawr Dr. NE, north of Menaul Blvd. NE, zoned C-2.
2. The applicant proposes to develop an electric switching station (the “Richmond Switching Station”). The proposed switching station is project #24 on the “Description of proposed electric facilities projects for 2010- 2020” in the Facility Plan: Electric System Transmission & Generation (2010- 2020) (the “2010 Electric System Facilities Plan”).
3. The subject request is accompanied by a request for a site development plan for subdivision amendment (14EPC-40058).

4. The 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan contains “Standards for the Location and Design of Transmission and Substation Facilities” with which the switching station is required to comply. The 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan also specifies approval processes; requests for development of projects on the Project List are required to be reviewed through the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) process.
5. The subject site is located in the Established Urban Area of the Comprehensive Plan, but is just outside of the boundaries of the American Square Community Activity Center. The 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan also applies. No sector development plans apply.
6. The Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, the Facility Plan: Electric System Transmission & Generation (2010- 2020) (the “2010 Electric System Facilities Plan”) and the City of Albuquerque Zoning Code are incorporated herein by reference and made part of the record for all purposes.
7. Though the SC designation is not used, the subject site is a shopping center site by definition because it is greater than five acres and zoned C-2.
8. The request furthers the following, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goals and policies:
  - A. Goal- Service Provision. The electric switching station can be considered a public service/facility. It was included in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan project list, which is a mechanism to manage development of electric facilities. Land use planning policies are applied to the proposed project through this review.
  - B. Goal- Economic Development. The electric switching station would provide additional electric energy and support for existing electric energy sources, which generally support economic development. The design standards in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan will help ensure balance with visual, ecological and land use considerations.
  - C. Policy II.B.5d-neighborhood /environmental/ resources. The location and intensity of the electric switching station would be generally appropriate for the area, which has developed with a mixture of manufacturing and retail (C-2) uses. A pump station and a diversion channel are nearby. Colors and materials would be generally compatible with existing development and surroundings. There is no known neighborhood opposition, though some concern has been expressed.
  - D. Policy II.B.5e- programmed facilities/neighborhood integrity. The subject site is vacant and contiguous to developed land where urban services are available. Existing overhead power lines are available and are unlikely to affect the integrity of neighborhoods regarding use of existing facilities and services.



9. The request partially furthers the following, applicable Comprehensive Plan Goal and policies:
  - A. Goal- Energy Management. The switching station would address overloads and low voltages in the SE part of the City, which could occur there because the electric system is at capacity. The switching station is included in the project list in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan, which is a tool to manage electric facilities. Alternative and renewable energy sources, however, are not included in this request.
  - B. Policy II.B.51-quality design/new development. The switching station would be a new development. Though its colors would generally be appropriate for the Plan area, the standard utility design does not lend itself to quality and innovation.
  - C. Policy II.C.4a-noise/planning. Noise considerations are integrated into the planning process for electric facilities. The proposed substation cannot exceed National Electric Manufacturer's Association (NEMA) guidelines, though a note is needed on the site development plan.
10. The request complies with Design Standard #12 in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan because the switching station would be located near an existing 345 kV transmission pole near the site's western side, which would help preclude extension of new lines.
11. The request partially complies with the following, applicable standards in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan:
  - A. Location Standard #9: The subject site is not located in an Exclusion Area (a) or in an area where electric facilities may conflict with resource factors or land use values (b). The subject site is approximately 320 feet from the North Diversion Channel. Additional information is needed to demonstrate that special consideration was given.
  - B. Design Standard #11: The switching station would be screened with the standard 12 foot wall. A note is needed regarding compliance with NEMA noise guidelines.
  - C. Design Standard #13: The subject site is surrounded by commercial and some manufacturing uses. The pole structures inside the switching station are 51 feet tall. Additional landscaping, for screening purposes, would be beneficial- especially along Richmond Dr. since it faces a nursing home and extended stay hotel. The switching equipment would be located centrally on the subject site, so it would not take advantage of topography to lessen visual impact.
  - D. Design Standard #14: The switching station is relatively imposing compared to the uses in the vicinity (commercial, small-scale manufacturing, etc.). However, its tallest vertical structure would be 51 feet, and that would connect to an existing transmission line that's about twice that height. The proposed switching station is designed using the Appendix B example, but differs with respect to wall design and structure height.

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- E. Design Standard #15: The proposed substation would be standard PNM design. Landscaping regulations would be met and the Water Conservation Ordinance adhered to, though maintenance of graffiti-free conditions needs to be addressed.
12. Minor conditions of approval are recommended to ensure compliance with the design standards in the 2010 Electric System Facilities Plan and to provide clarification.
13. The affected neighborhood organizations are the Bel Air Neighborhood Association (BANA) and the District 7 Coalition of NAs. This request was deferred for 30 days at the September hearing to ensure proper notification; the BANA was notified in a timely fashion for the October hearing. The District 7 coalition had already been notified as required.
14. As of this writing, there is no known neighborhood or other opposition. A facilitated meeting was neither recommended nor held. A couple of nearby property owners have expressed concern about the switching station's "industrial message" in a shopping center area, and request evergreen screening.

***RECOMMENDATION - 14EPC-40050, October 9, 2014, Site Development Plan for Building Permit***

**APPROVAL of 14EPC-40050 a site development plan for building permit for Tract D, American Square, an approximately 5.4-acre portion of an approximately 55-acre shopping center site, located between Richmond Dr. NE and Bryn Mawr Dr. NE, north of Menaul Blvd. NE, zoned C-2 Community Commercial, based on the preceding Findings and subject to the following Conditions of Approval.**

***CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL- 14EPC-40050, October 9, 2014, 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. 2010 Electric Systems Facility Plan- Siting Study:  
Additional explanation regarding the chosen project site shall be provided (Executive Summary, Section C).

4. 2010 Electric Systems Facility Plan- Design Standards:
    - A. A note shall be added to state that the substation will comply with NEMA noise guidelines (Design Standard #11).
    - B. A note shall be added to state that the substation will be maintained graffiti free (Design Standard #15).
  5. Screening & Design:
    - A. A wall detail, in elevation view, shall be added to the detail sheet and specify dimensions, material(s) and colors.
    - B. The split-faced and smooth-faced block shall be noted as different colors so they match the color rendering.
  6. Landscaping:
    - A. The landscaping removed from the buffer along Richmond Dr. NE shall be re-instated, and not by removing landscaping from another portion of the subject site.
    - B. A minimum of 6 evergreen trees shall be provided in the southern landscape buffer.
    - C. Quantities of shrubs shall be indicated [14-16-3-10(C)(3)].
    - D. Make the reference, in the first line of the general notes, consistent with Santa Ana Tan and Santa Fe Brown.
  7. Minor Clarifications:
    - A. A different symbol shall be used for standard sidewalk and colored, stamped concrete.
    - B. Add a keyed note to explain that the switching station will connect to transmission lines that are just west of the subject site.
  8. The applicant shall coordinate with the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Metropolitan Flood Control Authority (AMAFCA) regarding the onsite measures for water quality treatment that AMAFCA will require.
  9. **CONDITION FROM THE CITY ENGINEER:**

The Developer is responsible for permanent improvements to the transportation facilities adjacent to the proposed site development plan, as required by the Development Review Board (DRB).
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*Notice of Decision cc list:*

Laurie W. Moye, PNM, Public Participation & Regulatory Relations, System Engineering,  
Alvarado Square MS 0600, Albuquerque, NM 87158  
Bill Hoch, District 7 Coalition, 813 Calle del Corte NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110  
Lynne Martin, District 7 Coalition, 1531 Espejo Dr. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112  
Amy Henne, Bel-Air NA, 2713 Monroe NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110  
Barb Johnson, Bel-Air NA, 2700 Hermosa NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110

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## CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE AGENCY COMMENTS

### PLANNING DEPARTMENT

#### Zoning Enforcement

Proposed public utility structure; allowed as a permissive activity through EPC approval per Sec. 14-16-2-17(A)(7). Project appears to meet applicable standards for landscaping, screening (wall/fence), and use. No adverse comment to this proposal.

Office of Neighborhood Coordination (ONC)- No comments received.

Long Range Planning- No comments received.

Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency- No comments received.

### CITY ENGINEER

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

- The back of the sidewalk needs to be located at the property line.

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

- For DRB, look at moving the sidewalk away from the back of curb. The sidewalk will be built per the Work Order process; therefore an infrastructure List will be required at DRB.

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

- Reviewed, but there are no comments pertaining to roadway, trail, or bicycle facilities.

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

- No comments received.

#### **New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT):**

- The NMDOT has no objections to the site development plan.

#### **RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS FROM CITY ENGINEER, MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT and NMDOT:**

The Developer is responsible for permanent improvements to the transportation facilities adjacent to the proposed site development plan, as required by the Development Review Board (DRB).

### DEPARTMENT of MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

#### Transportation Planning

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

**WATER UTILITY AUTHORITY-** No comments received.

Utility Services

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT-** No comments received.

Air Quality Division

Environmental Services Division

**PARKS AND RECREATION**

Planning and Design

No comments.

Open Space Division- No comments received.

**POLICE DEPARTMENT/Planning**

The verbiage from EPC 1010180 is not included in the packet for review. However, agency comments will assume a similar procedure – i.e., Siting Study, D-5, Lighting indicates “The substation will not be illuminated” except during emergency situations. Recommend the installation of motion lighting along the perimeter of the wall line and at both approaches to the facility. Motion lighting could detect or illuminate possible sabotage or threats to the infrastructure.

**SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT**

Refuse Division- No comments received.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT/Planning-** No comments received.

**TRANSIT DEPARTMENT**

<b>Project # 1010181</b>  <b>14EPC-40050 SITE DEVELOPMENT –                  BUILDING PERMIT</b>  2300 RICHMOND NE, LOCATED ON INTERSECTION OF RICHMOND AND AMERICAN WAY. 5.3158ACRES. (H-16)	Adjacent and nearby routes	Route #8, Menaul route, is located 500’ south from the southwest corner of the property.
	Adjacent bus stops	There is an existing bus stop, on Menaul, serving the above-mentioned route, located 560’ south from the southwest corner of the property.
	Site plan requirements	None
	Large site TDM suggestions	None.
	Other information	None

## ***COMMENTS FROM OTHER AGENCIES***

***BERNALILLO COUNTY-*** No comments received.

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

1. No objection to Site Development Plan for Building Permit.
2. Since the site drains to an AMAFCA rundown to the North Diversion Channel, AMAFCA will require onsite measures for water quality treatment.

### ***ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS***

2300 Richmond NE is located on the intersection of Richmond and American Way. The owner of the above property requests approval of a Site Development Plan for Building Permit to allow for the development of an Electric Switching Station. This will have no adverse impacts to the APS district.

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

MRMPO has no adverse comments.

### ***MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT***

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

As the applicant, PNM is available to answer any questions that the EPC or staff may have about the proposed Richmond Substation Project.