***Project Number****: PR-2023-008842*

***Application Number****: SI-2023-01209*

***Project Name****: MDS Innovation Park II*

**Request**: *Alternative Landscape Plan*

*\*These are preliminary Planning comments. Additional reviews and/or revised comments may be needed for any modifications and/or supplemental submittals.*

**Note: Items in orange type require a response.**

**Note: Items in green type are Compliant items.**

**HISTORY AND FINDINGS**

* The subject property is located in Mesa del Sol and zoned PC (Mixed-use – Planned Community).
* The subject property is part of previously approved Site Development Plans for the Albuquerque Studios Expansion located at 5650 University Blvd. SE at Mesa del Sol (PR-2021-005573 approved 3/2/22 and PR-2021-005629 approved 10/27/21).
* This subject property has previously been reviewed for Administrative Amendment. On **11/29/2021 (PR-2021—005629) Alternative Landscaping Plan was approved:** “Site landscaping distributed along publicly-visible portions of site such as along major internal roadways and in open space; additional planting also located along University Blvd. No reduction of tree planting or other landscaping requirements”. On **11/29/2021 (PR-2021—005629) Alternative Landscaping Plan was approved (MDS North)** On **2/24/2022 (PR-2021—005573) Alternative Landscaping Plan was approved (MDS East): “**No reduction in tree planting requirements; no parking lots will be visible from the street; tree locations deviate from placement required in IDO 5-6(F) to ensure studio operational requirements are met; trees are located along major internal roadways, between sidewalks and parking lots, and in central open space called the Arroyo; plantings also located along University”.

Planning staff will compare most recent submittal (7/11/2023) with the Alternative Landscaping Plan approved 2/24/2022 and 11/29/2021.

* The applicant is seeking approval of an amendment to the Alternative Landscape plan for the Albuquerque Studios Expansion. This amendment requests to consolidate the two previously approved site plans (north & east) into one, to comply with the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA)’s condition that both site plans be consolidated per ABCWUA’s policy of one meter per legal parcel. The Site Plan per 5-6(B), triggers compliance with the Landscaping, Buffering, and Screening standards of the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO) Section 5-6.
* Eastman Crossing SE is a local street and University Blvd. is a major collector.
* An additional Production Support Center & parking area is shown in the Alternative Landscape Plan submitted 7/11/23. An unirrigated native seed area north of the proposed Production Support Center has also been altered as a result of the additional Production Support Center.

**COMMENTS**

5-6 LANDSCAPING, BUFFERING, AND SCREENING STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

* The Alternative Landscaping Plan is compliant with the overall intent of Section 5-6 of the IDO. (All following comments were addressed on the Alternative Landscaping Plan). **However**, the Alternative Landscape Plan submitted July 11, 2023 is missing landscaping that the previously approved Alternative Landscape Plan **2/24/2022 (PR-2021—005573) and 11/29/2021 (PR-2021—005629)** had featured. The following areas were landscaped on the previously approved Alternative Landscape Plan and are notshowing landscaping on the proposed Alternative Landscape Plan:
1. Production Office 2
2. Stages 17 & 18 (previously Stages 19 & 20).
3. Southeast of parking area southeast of Stage 17 & 18.
4. Stages 19 & 20 (Previously Stages 15 & 16).
5. Stages 15 & 16 (Previously Stage 12 & Stage 14).
6. Stages 17 & 18 (Previously Stages 19 & 20).
7. Trees southeast of Backlot B.
8. East of roadway at Production Support Centers.
9. West of Backlot A along road.
10. South of Backlots A & B in islands.
11. East of Mill 3 (previously Mill 2).
12. South of Production Support Services.
* Areas that have additional landscaping that was not shown on the previously approved Alternative Landscape Plan are the following:
1. Island between Stages 15 & 16 and Stages 19 & 20 has additional landscape in the proposed Alternative Landscape Plan.
2. There is an increase in trees south of Existing Mill 2 and Existing Stage 9 on the proposed Alternative Landscape Plan submitted for review July 11, 2023.
* Per 5-6(C)(2)(a) a minimum of 15 percent of the net lot area of each development shall contain landscaping; minimum required landscape area (15% of net lot area) is 488,883 SF; the provided landscape area is 577,153 SF (17% of net lot area).
* Per 5-6(C)(2)(c) tree canopies and ground-level plants shall cover a minimum of 75 percent of the total landscape area as measured by canopy width or the area beneath the dripline of the mature size of the actual vegetation. Required vegetative coverage is 432,865 SF; provided vegetative coverage is 502,534 SF.
* Per 5-6(C)(2)(c) of the required vegetative coverage, a minimum of 25 percent shall be provided as ground-level plants (shrubs, grasses, etc.) as measured of the mature size of the actual vegetation. Required ground-level vegetative coverage is 108,217 SF; provided ground-level vegetative coverage is 123,300 SF of shrubs (28% of Required vegetative coverage). The Alternative Landscape plan also includes irrigated native seeds which accounts for and additional 233,434 SF of ground level vegetative coverage, which well exceeds the required percentage outlined in 5-6(C)(2)(c).
* Per 5-6(C)(5)(e) Organic mulch is required as ground cover under trees within a 5- foot radius around the tree trunk, but not directly against the trunk. In these areas, weed barrier fabric is prohibited.

Comment response memo received 9/20/23 addresses this comment.

“*The applicant requests that deviation from this requirement be considered as part of the Alternative Landscape Plan. One reason for the design team to submit an alternative landscape plan was due to the inability to accommodate trees in typical required locations – the nature of filming production prevents for any tree planting within parking lots, for example. Trees are concentrated mainly as part of inner streetscape in strips between sidewalks and curbs and in the large stormwater basins (Central Arroyo). Organic mulch rings within 6’-0” wide inner streetscape areas are not feasible as those areas are designed to accommodate stormwater runoff via curb cuts. Concentrated flow of runoff displaces organic mulch and creates long-term maintenance problems. Trees planted within Central Arroyo are planted within native seed ground cover with no filter fabric. Planting trees within a native seed ground cover as an alternative to organic mulch meets the criteria of IDO Section 14-16-5-6(C)(16) and creates a visually attractive, sustainable desert landscape.”*

Planning staff have contacted City Forester regarding the bark mulch requirement, and have determined that not providing bark mulch in the stormwater collection and infiltration areas is justifiable per reasoning in comment above **as long as the trees are being planted in native seed areas with no weed barrier.**

**However, there are landscape beds that do not appear to be collecting or carrying stormwater runoff, and in those areas, bark mulch is required per IDO 5-6(C)(5)(e).**

Update planting details on Planting Details sheet LP501. Details are currently showing mulch (gravel mulch?) over weed barrier fabric. Details must show organic mulch at 5’ radius around the tree trunk, and in this area, weed barrier fabric is prohibited.

* Per 5-6(C)(7)(a) Vegetation required by this Section 14-16-5-6 shall be located at least 3 feet in any direction from any fire hydrants, valve vaults, hose bibs, manholes, hydrants, and fire department connections.

Comment response memo received 9/20/23 addresses this comment. Please add a General Note stating that vegetation shall be located at least 3 feet in any direction from fire hydrants, valve vaults, hose bibs, manholes, hydrants, and fire department connections.

* Per 5-6(C)(5)(f) All landscaped areas shall be protected from vehicular encroachment by curbs or wheel stops located 2 feet outside the landscaped area, with openings to accommodate surface collection of stormwater runoff in vegetated swales and stormwater infiltration areas.
* Per 5-6(C)(5)(c) the use of gravel or crusher fines as ground cover is limited to a maximum of 75 percent of any landscaped area. Total provided landscape area is 577,153 SF. Total area covered with gravel or crusher fines should not exceed 432,865 SF; total rock mulch ground cover provided is 380,892 SF. ­­­
* Overall Landscape Plan states that *shredded wood mulch will be removed from project since after plan consolidation the above requirement is met without using it.*
* Comment response memo received 9/20/23 addresses this comment. Landscape calculations show this requirement is being met.
* Per 5-6(C)(10)(b) trees shall not be planted within 10 feet in any direction of the centerline of a sewer or water line.
* Updated drawings received 9/20/23 added a general note & plan is in compliance with this requirement.
* Per 5-6(C)(10)(e) all screening and vegetation surrounding ground-mounted transformers and utility pads must allow 10 feet of clearance for access and to ensure the safety of the work crews and public during maintenance and repair.

Comment response memo received 9/20/23 addresses this comment. Please update General Note ‘S’ currently states that “vegetative screening surrounding ground-mounted transformers and utility pads shall allow 10’ of clearance ~~minimum in front of the equipment door and 5’ of clearance minimum on the remaining~~ on all sides for safe operation and maintenance.” 10’ clearance is required **on all sides** of ground-mounted transformers and utility pads.

* Per **5-6(D)(1) Required Street Trees**, trees are generally required along street frontages every 25’ on center.
* **The Justification letter states that *Tree requirements associated with Street Frontage Landscaping per 5-6(D) are met where there is space available and no public utility easement.* And that the Alternative Landscape Plan does not include a reduction of tree planting requirements.**

Street trees shown in the Alternative Landscape Plan appear to exceed the street trees shown on the Alternative Landscape Plan approved 2/24/2022. Specifically, there are more trees south of Existing Mill 2 and Existing Stage 9 on the proposed Alternative Landscape Plan submitted for review July 11, 2023.

* The alternative landscape plan meets all of the criteria in 5-6(C)(16); “A buffer meeting the standards of Section 5-6(E)(2)(a)(1) is provided, and the proposed Alternative Landscape Plan does not indicate a reduction in the landscape requirements from the previously approved Alternative Landscape Plan (2/24/2023)
* Per 5-6(F)(1)(i), any parking lot located within 20 feet of a side or rear lot line shall be screened by a landscaped strip at least 6 feet wide containing at least 2 trees and 6 shrubs per 25 feet of the parking lot edge closest to the lot line, or by other means that the Planning Director determines provides equal or better screening of the headlights of parked vehicles.
* Per 5-6(F)(2)(c) one (1) tree is required per 10 parking spaces. Total number of parking spaces is 2,674. 267 trees are required for the parking lot. Total provided parking lot trees are 729.

**GENERAL STATEMENTS**

* All Plan sheets must be sealed and signed by a design professional licensed in the State of New Mexico. Future Landscape Plans must be sealed and signed by a Landscape Architect licensed in the State of New Mexico.



*Disclaimer: The comments provided are based upon the information received from the applicant/agent. If new or revised information is submitted, additional comments may be provided by Planning.*

FROM: Bonnie Strange/Jay Rodenbeck/Jolene Wolfley DATE: 9/26/23

 Planning Department

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