

Date: 7/11/2019

To: Kym Dicome
Albuquerque City Planning Dept.
Design Review Board Chair
PO Box 1293, Albuquerque, NM 87103

From: James Griffie,
Nor Este Neighborhood Association
PO Box 94115, Albuquerque, NM 87199-0066

Regarding: Project PR-2019-002496 at Barstow and Alameda NE
Currently scheduled for hearing on 7/17/2019

Dear Ms. Dicome,

I respectfully offer the following comments and requests for consideration by the DRB regarding the Site Plan application for the above identified project.

The Nor Este Neighborhood Association's position.

While NENA have some members who flatly oppose a multi-family development, the board of directors is not so disposed even though we understand members' frustrations with how the property's permissive uses have changed from those negotiated into the now deprecated sector plans (see Historical Notes Below). The Board would dearly love to see this property developed bringing with it the roadway improvements at Barstow and Alameda but the Board cannot support this proposed development.

We are appalled with the number and type of units that are proposed for this infill project. It is not just the density that is troubling, but in an effort to achieve this density on a relatively small tract of land, the developer has created an architecture that might be appropriate in a more urban setting but will stand out like a sore thumb here in our neighborhood.

The market segment that the developer/owner is targeting also seems incongruous for this area. The target appears to be a renter that would want to reside in a more urban community than ours with more ready access to their career/jobs, entertainment and shopping via biking, walking and mass transit rather than commuting by auto. Our neighborhoods are within one of the most sought after school districts in Albuquerque and yet, by virtue of the small size of the rental units, it is hard to imagine families of school age children will be enticed to rent from this property either. The fear here is the developer/owner will "build it and they will NOT come" putting the developer/owner at risk of failing his business needs and putting the community at risk of a blighted, or at the very least repurposed, property.

The property is located in an area identified by the Comprehensive Plan as an "Area of Consistency". It is terribly hard for us to understand how the proposed development could be considered consistent with this area's mostly single family residential, lower density multi-family residential (~20 du/gross acre as compared with the nearly 30 du/gross acre of this proposed infill project) and institutional uses.

The parking space allocation might be sufficient in a more urban setting with better walking, biking, and mass transit options, but it is far more likely that in this area more residences than not will be commuters with 2 vehicles per unit, not 1.5 that has been allocated. With a fair number of the renters

expected to be young upwardly mobile professionals and given the amenities the development is bringing to these renters, there will be a significant need for guest parking that is not being provided. There is little if any on-street parking afforded by the area to handle these guests.

The proposed development does not even satisfy the general description of the MX-L use outlined in IDO Section 2-4(B)(1) which notes multi story design are encouraged in more urban areas. Granted, the MX-L does not preclude multi story design in other than urban areas but the intent seems pretty clear. While the IDO uses terms like low, moderate and high density residential in the zone district general descriptions, it does not define them.

Nor Este Neighborhood Association's Request.

Based upon our past experience we are guessing there is nothing in our position points above, even as compelling as they are, that the DRB will find sufficiently germane to its review authority to deny the application or even make any significant demands of the. There are a few areas that we would ask the DRB give some specific attention to assure compliance with standards which might at least improve this bad deal if it can't be denied.

- 1.) While the applicant's design package provided a detail for parking spaces on the north side of the parking lot, it lacks any detail for the parking on the south side of the lot adjacent to the property line and privacy walls of the existing property owners. We have been told there will be a 1 to 2 foot barrier wall/curb to preclude encroaching on the landscaping [IDO section 5-6(C)(5)(e)] and more importantly, help prevent a vehicle overdriving the parking space and damaging the privacy wall or entering the adjacent property. Supposedly, this detail will be in something called the drainage plan. Please make sure that it is as this is very important for safety reasons.
- 2.) 5-6(E)(1)(a) "Landscaped buffers are required to mitigate the impacts of significant differences in property use, size, or scale through standards specified in Subsections (2) through (5) below." I've h this because unlike other IDO sections that provide for protections/buffers based upon zoning, this section identifies property use.
- 3.) 5-6(F)(1)(i) subsection 2 regarding rear parking lot edge landscaping. Once again, in trying to cram too much into too little, this infill project would cause problems. In this case, with only a 6' planting strip against the south property line, trees intended to provide parking lot shade and visual screening are problematic. The visual screening in this case has more to do with screening between the 3 story building and the single family homes than with headlights. As the deciduous trees mature, their canopies will encroach upon the adjacent property owner's primary structures and their root system risk damaging the privacy wall. The adjacent property owner's backyards are on the north side of their property and don't necessarily need or want more shade. This subsection gives the planning director some discretionary authority to approve alternate plans. We recommend city planning, the applicant and the adjacent property owners work together to identify a better solution for shading and screening.
- 4.) 5-6(G)(1)(b) regarding parapet screening of mechanical equipment. While the placement of the A/C – Heat pump equipment toward the center of the building might preclude the need for additional screening for street level line of site requirements, it might still be desirable for screening the equipment from sight and noise from the second floor of the homes to the south. 93 A/C compressors and condenser fans, no matter how quiet individually, has potential for being more than just a minor annoyance.

- 5.) 5-11(E)(2)(a)(1) regarding Ground Floor architecturally distinctive from upper floors. Color is the only thing we see that distinguishes the first floor from upper floors and question if that is sufficient.
- 6.) 5-11(E)(2)(a)(2) regarding façade features along public street – It sure does not appear that the Barstow side façade (Phase A west elevation) design meets this requirement but if it does, the requirement is insufficient. The current design does not provide a very attractive presentation to Barstow and Alameda intersection traffic and to adjacent property owners.

Historical Notes:

I offer the following historical notes to provide some context to better understand the neighborhood association and area property owner's concerns and frustrations. I believe them to be accurate.

At the time of the developer's first meeting with the Pre Application Review Team on 7/27/2017, the property was zoned SU-2 C1 within the Vineyard Sector Development Plan. The property did not satisfy the criteria that would have allowed residential development permissively but it could have been pursued as a conditional use up to 30 DU/Acre with EPC approval. No application was made. The Vineyard Sector Development Plan was quite clear that the intended use was to be a commercial use with only a couple of restrictions and that the development on the property was to provide a buffer between residential development to the south and Alameda Blvd traffic to the north.

The IDO converted SU-2 C1 to MX-L with no consideration given to the vision statements in the Vineyard Sector Plans or to the old zoning code's restrictions on residential development. Neither SU-2 C-1 nor MX-L allowed/allow single family detached homes as a permissive use. SU-2 C-1 conditionally allowed some lower density residential including single family detached (house) but MX-L does not.

The properties to the south of the proposed development were zoned SU-2 O-1/R-T when it was fully built out as single family homes instead of town homes or other uses. The author still does not fully understand why this was allowed but at this point it is moot. The IDO converted SU-2 O-1/R-T to MX-T. While the conversion appears to be appropriate since single family homes are a permissive use, it is zoning rather than use that determines if a property will be afforded the new neighborhood edge protections. The Nor Este Neighborhood Association contends the IDO should be amended to base these protections on property use rather than zoning but in the meantime, working in concert with the Vineyards Estates Neighborhood Association, we made these property owners aware of the voluntary zone conversion program. 12 of the 20 (60%) properties filed applications for conversion to R-1B and they did so before the application was filed for this Barstow and Alameda infill project. In all likelihood, their applications will be approved but the approval process is taking forever and the property owners who did file were dismayed to learn that the "first to file" carries no weight in the City Planning's hearing and approval process.

Respectfully,



Tim Krier, President Nor Este Neighborhood Assoc.



James Griffee, Author and NENA VP