



Los Alamos County  
Community Development Department

**PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

**Public Hearing Date:** August 13, 2025  
**Subject:** Case No. SIT-2025-0073  
**Applicant/Owner:** Los Alamos County Capital Improvements and Facilities Division,  
on behalf of Los Alamos County, Property Owner  
**Case Manager:** Danyelle Valdez, Planning Manager

*Professional Background:*

*Bachelor's degree in business administration; 12 years' experience in Real Estate Development, Project Management, Planning and Land Use.*

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**Case No. SIT-2025-0073:** Los Alamos County Capital Improvements and Facilities Division, on behalf of Los Alamos County, property owner, requests approval of a Major Site Plan Amendment for the redevelopment of Fire Station No. 4 at 4401 Diamond Drive.

**Executive Summary**

The applicant, Los Alamos County Capital Improvements and Facilities Division, on behalf of Los Alamos County, property owner, requests approval of a Major Site Plan Amendment to allow development of a replacement Fire Station No. 4 facility located at 4401 Diamond Drive. The project site is zoned Institutional (INS), consists of approximately ±2.24 acres, and is situated within the North Community No. 2 Subdivision.

The proposed development will replace the existing fire station with a modernized facility that meets current public safety and operational standards. The new station will improve emergency response capabilities, address infrastructure deficiencies, and support continued service delivery in the surrounding area.

The site plan has been reviewed for compliance with all applicable requirements of the Los Alamos County Development Code and other adopted regulations and policies. The project meets all zoning and dimensional standards for the Institutional (INS) district. Engineering and utility standards have been satisfied, and all applicable code requirements have been addressed. The site plan is considered compliant with County regulations.

**Property Information**

The subject property is located at 4401 Diamond Drive and is legally described as Tract G of the North Community No. 2 Subdivision (NC2 G), Parcel No. 1033114467039. The property is zoned Institutional (INS) and is designated Institutional under the Comprehensive Plan. The subject property consists of approximately ±2.24 acres and is located along Diamond Drive, with access provided from both Diamond Drive and Range Road. The site is bordered by designated open space to the north, east, and west, providing a natural buffer from adjacent properties. The location,

zoning, and surrounding context are consistent with the property's current and proposed use as a public safety facility.



Figure 1: Area Location

## Background

Fire Station 4 was originally constructed in 1964 and underwent renovation in 2002. The facility includes five apparatus bays, living quarters, and work areas. An auxiliary structure known as “The Annex” was added later to house additional equipment and reserve equipment. Despite previous upgrades, the station no longer meets modern operational demands or safety standards and must be replaced.

In 2024, Los Alamos County initiated the site selection process for the replacement facility. The County engaged VEGA Architecture to lead public outreach and technical analysis of three County-owned properties. The current Fire Station 4 location was ultimately selected due to its ability to maintain emergency response times, utilize existing services and infrastructure, and support continued operations during construction. The Los Alamos County Council formally approved this location on November 12, 2024.

Community engagement for the Fire Station 4 project included a series of public meetings and outreach efforts. The first community meeting was held on September 23, 2024, followed by a public survey that closed on October 7. A second community meeting on October 15 presented conceptual site plans, reviewed environmental and response time studies, and discussed preliminary cost estimates. Participants engaged in a facilitated discussion of the potential site's advantages and challenges. A third neighborhood meeting on October 21 provided additional site context and neighborhood-specific information. Following this outreach, the Los Alamos County Council approved the selected site location during its November 12, 2024, meeting.

## Entitlement Process Overview

Replacement of Fire Station No. 4 required a three-step land use entitlement process to establish the appropriate zoning and parcel configuration for the proposed site:

1. Comprehensive Plan Amendment – Expanded the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) Institutional designation to incorporate the full extent of the proposed development site. Adopted by County Council on June 24, 2025.
2. Minor Zone Map Amendment – Rezoned ±18,735 square feet from Open Space – Passive Open (OS-PO) to Institutional (INS). Approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission on July 9, 2025.
3. Summary Plat – Adjusted parcel boundaries between Tracts G and H (4401 Diamond Drive and 9999 Range Road) consolidating the rezoned area into a single parcel consistent with the proposed development. Formally approved and recorded following the close of the Minor Zone Map Amendment appeal period.

In accordance with the Development Code, the entitlement process ensured alignment between adopted land use policy and the proposed use. These coordinated actions resulted in a single parcel with sufficient area and consistent zoning to support redevelopment of the replacement station.

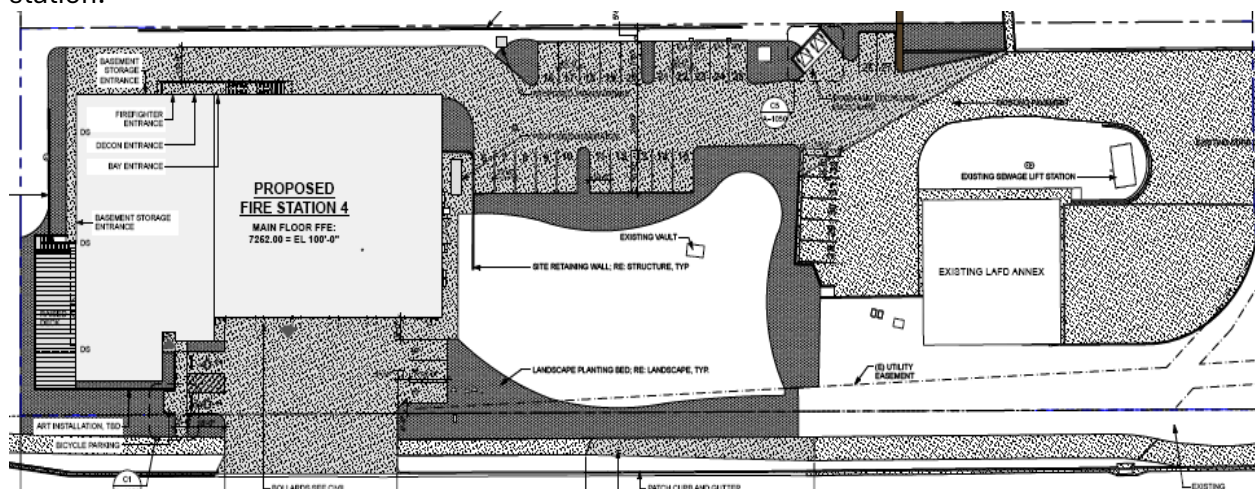


Figure 2: Proposed Architectural Site Plan

## INTERDEPARTMENTAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (IDRC) REVIEW

A pre-application meeting was held on July 10, 2025, between the applicant and members of the Interdepartmental Review Committee (IDRC) to review schematic plans for the new Fire Station No. 4 site plan. The IDRC was sent requested revisions from the July 10 meeting on July 13. The Department of Public Utilities reported no capacity constraints and had previously provided preliminary guidance for extending service to the new building earlier in the other application reviews. Comments from Environmental Services, Planning, and the Department of Public Utilities were received, and all requested revisions were completed and approved by the respective departments prior to the case hearing.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

The Los Alamos County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 16 – Development Code, Sec. 16-71 Procedures Summary Table, sets forth the notice requirements. Section 16-72(c) Notifications establishes the notice requirements for a public hearing:

- *Published and posted notice [16-72(c)(4)]:*
  - Notice published in a newspaper of general circulation within the County at least 14-calendar days before the meeting or hearing. **Published July 24, 2025.**
  - Posted notice of at least one sign on a street abutting the property that is the subject of the application – visible from the street – at least 14-calendar days before the public meeting or hearing. **Posted July 24, 2025.**
- *Mailed Notice [16-72(c)(5)c.]:*
  - Notice shall be mailed 14-days prior to the public hearing to all owners of record, as identified in the records of the County Tax Assessor, or occupants of properties within 300 ft., excluding public rights-of-way, of exterior lot lines of the subject property. **Mailed July 22, 2025.**

## PRE-APPLICATION MEETING

Section 16-74(i)(3) establishes procedures for the applicant in submitting a Major Site Plan Amendment application.

- Prior to the submission of a major site plan amendment application the applicant shall conduct a pre-application meeting pursuant to section 16-72(b)(1). **Conducted July 10, 2025.**

## SITE PLAN APPROVAL

Section 16-74(i) of the Los Alamos County Development Code states that an application for a Major Site Plan Amendment shall be approved if it meets all the following criteria. The planning and zoning commission shall approve or deny the proposed amendment pursuant to the decision criteria within section 16-74(i)(4):

- a. **The site plan substantially conforms to the intent and policies of the comprehensive plan and other adopted county policies and plans.**

***Applicant Response:*** This site plan substantially conforms to the intent and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and other adopted County policies by providing emergency service upgrades to support the current and future growth of the community. Furthermore, it supports the County's Strategic goals of Environmental Stewardship, Operational Excellence and Quality of Life.

***Staff Response:*** It is in the expert opinion of staff that this criterion is met. The proposed site plan substantially conforms to the intent and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and the 2025 Strategic Leadership Plan. The project supports key goals in the Comprehensive Plan by providing essential public safety infrastructure, promoting the efficient use of public land, and reinvesting in an existing developed area.

The replacement Fire Station No. 4 also aligns with the Strategic Leadership Plan in several areas:

- Operational Excellence - The project enhances delivery of community-focused emergency services through responsible financial management, collaborative decision-making, and efficient implementation.
- Infrastructure Asset Management - The project reflects a strategic investment in critical public safety infrastructure and supports the long-term stewardship of County assets by prioritizing the replacement and modernization of existing facilities.
- Quality of Life - The replacement facility improves overall community safety by strengthening fire protection and emergency response capabilities in accordance with hazard mitigation and emergency management goals.

**b. If the subject property is within an approved master plan, the site plan is in conformance with any relevant standards in the master plan.**

*Not Applicable*

**c. If the subject property is within an approved PD zone district, the site plan is consistent with any applicable terms and conditions in any previously approved PD zoning covering the subject property and any related development agreements and/or regulations.**

*Not Applicable*

**d. The site plan is in conformance with all applicable provisions of this Code and other adopted county regulations.**

**Applicant Response:** This site plan, within INS (Institutional) zoning conforms to all applicable provisions of the Municipal code and other county regulations as detailed within the submitted site plan documents.

**Staff Response:** It is the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. The proposed site plan is in conformance with all applicable requirements of the Development Code and other adopted County regulations. The project has been reviewed for compliance with the standards of the Institutional (INS) zone district, including dimensional standards, permitted use, parking, landscape, access, and site design. No variances or deviations have been requested or are necessary for approval.

The site plan has also been reviewed by the Interdepartmental Review Committee (IDRC). No conflicts were identified with respect to other applicable County regulations, including utility infrastructure, drainage, and solid waste access. All required revisions have been incorporated into the final submittal.

**e. The county's existing public infrastructure and services, including but not limited to water, sanitary sewer, electricity, gas, storm sewer, streets, trail and sidewalks have adequate capacity to serve the proposed development, and any burdens on those**

**systems have been mitigated in compliance with the county's construction standards to the maximum extent practicable.**

***Applicant Response:*** This new Fire Station will be replacing the existing Fire Station in the same general area. Utilities will need to be upgraded and modified. We have been assured that the county Has adequate capacity for these upgrades.

***Staff Response:*** It is the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. The proposed development will be adequately served by existing public infrastructure and services, including water, sanitary sewer, electricity, gas, storm sewer, solid waste, information technology, and transportation systems. The Department of Public Utilities has confirmed sufficient system capacity and has provided instructions for required utility upgrades and service extensions. Information Management has also provided specifications necessary to ensure adequate service. All proposed improvements have been reviewed comprehensively by relevant County departments, and their locations have been approved.

The site is accessible from Diamond Drive and Range Road and is integrated into the existing street and sidewalk networks. No additional off-site improvements are required. Stormwater management has been addressed through the re-establishment of an appropriate drainage system in compliance with applicable engineering standards.

The proposed development will not place an undue burden on existing County infrastructure, and all potential impacts have been mitigated in accordance with County regulations.

**f. The site plan mitigates any significant adverse impacts to properties within the vicinity to the maximum extent practicable.**

***Applicant Response:*** This site plan was designed to minimize disruption to adjacent open space through the use of retaining walls, Building placement and tree mitigation. The exterior was designed to compliment the surrounding area Through the use of familiar and durable building materials and an attempt to minimize the height and impact Of the new building.

***Staff Response:*** It is the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. The site plan mitigates any significant adverse impacts to surrounding properties and adjacent open space to the maximum extent practicable. The proposed building placement and site design were carefully configured to minimize grading and preserve natural features, including the use of retaining walls to reduce disturbance to the adjacent open space. Tree mitigation and preservation measures have been incorporated to soften visual impacts and maintain compatibility with the natural surroundings.

The building's exterior design utilizes durable materials and a subdued architectural style that complements nearby development. Massing and height have been minimized to

reduce visual impact, and the site layout maintains adequate setbacks and buffers. No significant adverse effects related to noise, lighting, traffic, or viewshed disruption are anticipated.

- g. Provisions shall be made to serve the development with tot lots and/or neighborhood parks in accordance with the comprehensive plan. A fee may be paid as approved by county council to accomplish the purpose of the comprehensive plan in lieu of the development of tot lots or neighborhood parks.**

**Applicant Response:** *This project is replacing an existing use on the same lot. Extensive effort has been made to maximize open And maintain low lot coverage upon the completion of the project.*

**Staff Response:** *Not applicable.*

## **DRAFT MOTION**

### **Recommended Motion:**

I move to **approve** Case No. SIT-2025-0073, a request by the Los Alamos County Capital Improvements and Facilities Division, on behalf of Los Alamos County, property owner, for a Major Site Plan Amendment to allow development of the replacement Fire Station No. 4 facility located at 4401 Diamond Drive.

Approval is based on the findings established at the hearing and the conclusion that the Applicant has met the decision criteria for a Major Site Plan Amendment per Section 16-74(i)(4) of the Los Alamos County Development Code. The Commission acts under the authority of Section 16-69(b)(2) and (6) of the Development Code.

I further move to authorize the Chair to sign the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law for this case that reflects the decision of the Commission. This document will be prepared by county staff based on this decision.

**Motion Option 2:** I move to **conditionally approve** Case No. SIT-2025-0073, a request by the Los Alamos County Capital Improvements and Facilities Division, on behalf of Los Alamos County, property owner, for a Major Site Plan Amendment to allow development of the replacement Fire Station No. 4 facility located at 4401 Diamond Drive.

Approval is based on the findings established at the hearing and the conclusion that the Applicant has met the decision criteria for a Major Site Plan Amendment per Section 16-74(i)(4) of the Los Alamos County Development Code, subject to the following conditions:

- 1.
- 2.

The Commission acts under the authority of Section 16-69(b)(2) and (6) of the Development Code.

I further move to authorize the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law for this case that reflects the decision of the Commission. This document will be prepared by County staff based on this decision.

**Motion Option 3:**

I move to **deny** Case No. SIT-2025-0073, a request by the Los Alamos County Capital Improvements and Facilities Division, on behalf of Los Alamos County, property owner, for a Major Site Plan Amendment to allow development of the replacement Fire Station No. 4 facility located at 4401 Diamond Drive.

Denial is based on the findings established at the hearing and the conclusion that the Applicant has not met the decision criteria for a Major Site Plan Amendment per Section 16-74(i)(4) of the Los Alamos County Development Code. The Commission acts under the authority of Section 16-69(b)(2) and (6) of the Development Code.

I further move to authorize the Chair to sign the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law for this case that reflects the decision of the Commission. This document will be prepared by county staff based on this decision.

**REFERENCES:**

Los Alamos County, Chapter 16, Development Code: <https://lacnm.com/MunicipalCode>

Los Alamos County, 2016 Comprehensive Plan: <https://lacnm.com/ComprehensivePlan2016>

Los Alamos County, 2025 Strategic Leadership Plan: <https://www.losalamosnm.us/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/government/council/documents/2025-strategic-leadership-plan.pdf>