



Los Alamos County  
Community Development Department

**PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

**Public Hearing Date:** August 27, 2025  
**Subject:** Case No. CUP-2025-0001  
**Applicant/Owner:** Consensus Planning and Titan Development, on behalf of property owners Sonja Donaldson and Sande Cremer  
**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. CUP-2025-0001:** Consensus Planning and Titan Development, on behalf of property owners Sonja Donaldson and Sande Cremer, request approval for a Conditional Use Permit to allow the construction of a 114-unit cottage development on ±9.51 acres. The subject property, identified as Tract 4 on North Mesa along San Ildefonso Road, is legally described as: "A Subdivision of Tract D, Section 10, Township 19 North, Range 6 East, N.M.P.M., Los Alamos County, New Mexico."

**Executive Summary**

The applicants request approval of a Conditional Use Permit to develop a 114-unit cottage development on Tract 4 of the Arbolada Subdivision (±9.51 acres). The property is zoned Single-Family Residential (SFR-4), which allows cottage development subject to conditional use approval.

The proposed project is designed as a build-to-rent community of attached and detached dwellings organized around shared access drives, parking areas, and common open spaces. The development concept emphasizes a neighborhood-scale design that combines individual living units with communal amenities and managed open space, which will provide an alternative form of housing option for the Los Alamos community.

On August 27, 2025, the Planning and Zoning Commission will consider two related cases. Action on the Final Subdivision Plat must occur first, as approval of the Conditional Use Permit is dependent upon it.

1. Final Subdivision Plat (SUB-2025-0022)

Action: Consideration and vote on the Final Subdivision Plat.

Purpose: Establishes new tracts, lot boundaries, infrastructure, and legal dedications.

Dependency: Required to formally create Tract 4, which will serve as the development site for the Cottage Development.

2. Conditional Use Permit (CUP-2025-0001)

Action: Following approval of the Final Subdivision Plat, the Commission will consider and vote on the Conditional Use Permit.

Purpose: This approval allows the development of 114 cottage units with associated amenities on Tract 4.



*Figure 1: Site Layout Rendering*

## **Property Information**

The subject property (“Property”) is the eastern Tract 4 of the Arbolada Subdivision, which will be created through the approval of the Final Subdivision Plat (SUB-2025-0022) currently scheduled for consideration by the Planning and Zoning Commission on August 27, 2025. The plat reconfigures a 17.07-acre parcel into two parts: the 23-lot Arbolada Subdivision to the west and Tract 4, a vacant, rectangular-shaped tract of approximately 9.51 acres, to the east. The Property is located within the North Mesa neighborhood of the Los Alamos Townsite, with access from San Ildefonso Road to the north. It is bounded by the Broadview Subdivision to the east, Pueblo Canyon to the south, and by the 23-lot Arbolada Subdivision and County-owned open space to the west. The Property is in the service area of Fire Station 4 for emergency response and is located near community facilities such as Los Alamos Middle School, the North Mesa Softball Fields, the North Mesa Stables, and the North Mesa Recreational Area.

## **Background**

On January 11, 2023, the Planning and Zoning Commission approved a subdivision application submitted by Columbus Capital, then acting as agent for the property owners, to create 85 single-family residential lots known as the “Arbolada” Subdivision. Although the subdivision was approved, the property has remained vacant.

In March 2025, the owners retained a new agent, Titan Development, and submitted a revised plan for the property. This action initiated a new entitlement process under the Los Alamos County Development Code, requiring updated land use approvals to proceed with the proposed development.

The entitlement process for the cottage development requires three separate Planning approvals to establish the necessary parcel configuration and development patterns:

#### Entitlement Process Overview

On June 11, 2025, the Planning and Zoning Commission approved the Sketch/Preliminary Plat (SUB-2025-0021) to initiate the replat of the previously approved 85-lot Arbolada Subdivision into 24 lots and 4 tracts.

On August 27, 2025, the Commission will consider the Final Subdivision Plat (SUB-2025-0022). Approval of this plat will establish new tracts, lot boundaries, infrastructure, and legal dedications, and will formally create Tract 4, the parcel designated for the cottage development.

Also on August 27, 2025, following approval of the Final Plat, the Commission will consider the Conditional Use Permit (CUP-2025-0001) to allow the cottage development which consists of 114 cottage style swelling units with associated amenities on Tract 4.

In accordance with Section 16-74(b)(2), a pre-application meeting is required before submission of a Conditional Use Permit. The applicant completed this requirement on March 4, 2025, consistent with Section 16-72(b)(1), at which time staff confirmed the appropriate land use approval process for the project. This process is intended to ensure compliance with the Los Alamos County Development Code and alignment with adopted land use policies. Approval of the Final Subdivision Plat is required to formally create Tract 4 and must occur prior to consideration of the Conditional Use Permit.

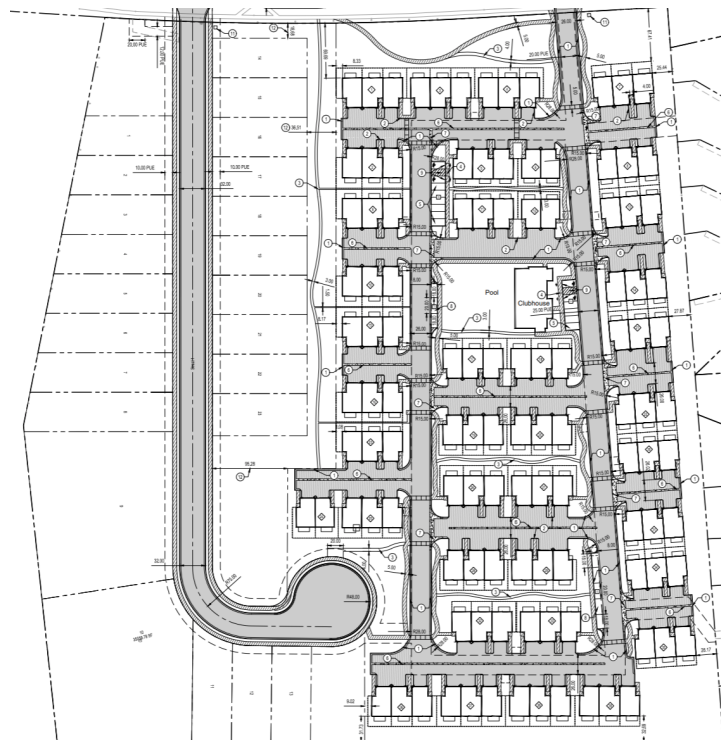


Figure 3: Site Plan

## INTERDEPARTMENTAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (IDRC) REVIEW

The final subdivision and Conditional Use Permit applications were circulated to the Interdepartmental Review Committee (IDRC) for a comprehensive review to ensure the projects function cohesively, while also evaluating each application independently for compliance with applicable development requirements. The IDRC recognized that the applications required both holistic review and separate consideration and action.

The Los Alamos Fire Marshal required two emergency access roads. This requirement was met through the extension of the road at the south end of the subdivision, near the cul-de-sac, to connect with the subdivision to the east. The Fire Marshal confirmed that the proposed fire access road between the two development areas satisfies applicable emergency response standards.

The County Engineer requested a drainage report and a comparison of the original Traffic Impact Analysis with a new Trip Generation Report certified by a licensed engineer. These items were submitted and approved prior to the public hearing.

The Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) reviewed the application and confirmed that they hold no ownership interest in the subject property.

The IDRC provided their reviews via email and worked with the applicants and staff to ensure all required information and revisions were incorporated prior to public 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 August 7, 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 August 11, 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 August 7, 2025.**

## CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT APPROVAL

Section 16-74(b) of the Los Alamos County Development Code states that an application for a Conditional Use Permit 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(b)(3):

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

**Applicant Response:** The proposed new cottage development, when completed, will yield 114 Build-to-Rent townhomes. This project is adjacent to a new single-family subdivision that creates 23 new residential lots. In total, 136 new housing units will be added to Los Alamos' housing stock when fully developed. This helps meet the goal of the 2016 Comprehensive Policy #1 by promoting and expanding the housing supply to meet the demand from employment growth. The units in the Cottage Development are intended to serve members of the 3 community of all ages, from families, the workforce, and retirees, thus addressing Policy #2, to promote housing for seniors, students, and the workforce.

Additionally, the 2024 Los Alamos Affordable Housing Plan states that nearly 55 percent of the County's workforce live outside of the County, with "anecdotal evidence suggesting majority of these in-commuters are interested but unable to become residents due to insufficient, unavailable, or unaffordable housing" (pg. 20). These developments add essential housing stock, to help preserve and retain spending in the community. This housing clearly benefits the community economically because those that may otherwise commute to Los Alamos can now shop in the community where they live, thus contributing to gross receipts taxes.

**Staff Response:** It is the expert opinion of staff that this criterion is met. The proposed conditional use (cottage development) conforms to the Los Alamos County Comprehensive Plan, the 2025 Strategic Leadership Plan, the 2024 Affordable Housing Plan, and the Los Alamos County Development Code for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development introduces 114 build-to-rent cottage units, which directly supports the County's adopted housing goals to expand overall housing supply and increase the diversity of housing types available to meet community needs. This aligns with the 2025 Strategic Leadership Plan objective to "increase the capacity for new housing development and the amount and variety of housing types," particularly for middle- and lower-income households. The smaller single-family units contribute to a broader mix of housing options consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's direction to expand housing availability for a range of household types.
2. The proposed development aligns with the 2024 Affordable Housing Plan, which identifies an acute housing shortage in Los Alamos County, documents rent increases outpacing income between 2018 and 2023 and sets a production goal of 1,300 to 2,400 new units between 2024 and 2029, with a particular emphasis on compact, diverse, and efficient "missing middle" housing types. The project adds new rental units in a form explicitly encouraged by the Plan, directly supporting these production targets and policy objectives.
3. The proposed development is consistent with the housing policies of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, which emphasize expanding the diversity of housing types and

encouraging infill development in areas already served by infrastructure and public services. Locating a cottage development within an established service area directly supports these goals and aligns with the plan's broader themes related to housing, neighborhoods, and managed growth.

**b. The conditional use is not detrimental to the public safety, health, or welfare.**

***Applicant Response:*** Approval of this cottage development is not detrimental to public health, safety or welfare because the technical criteria have been met for a Conditional Use and associated site plan. The development team met with the North Mesa neighborhood on April 10 where the full development concept was presented with the anticipated phasing of Planning & Zoning Commission hearings.

The first concern addressed was traffic. A Traffic Count Analysis was prepared that shows a total of 15 peak travel time morning and evening trips will be added by the proposed developments as shown and the City Engineer has determined that a TIA is not required, see attached email.

Also discussed was the ingress/egress to the development, with no anticipated sight obstructions present due to the deep setbacks exceeding the required front yard setback (cottage development to the east) adjacent to San Ildefonso Road. Architectural elevations were shared with the community, displaying Craftsman-inspired facades in earth tones to augment the variety of styles in the community. Lastly, concepts were discussed addressing landscape enhancements where the eastern portion of the development abuts the existing single-family development on its western edge, with a desire expressed to work with the neighbors on a design that meets development standards, provides adequate buffering, and preserves western views to the extent feasible.

***Staff Response:*** It is the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. The proposed use is not detrimental to public safety, health, or welfare. The project has been reviewed by the Interdepartmental Review Committee and determined to be compliant with all applicable County development standards, including those related to fire protection, utility infrastructure, stormwater management, and traffic circulation. The proposed internal circulation, pedestrian pathways, and open space areas have been designed to support a safe and livable residential environment. Additionally, development will be required to comply with all adopted building, fire, and environmental codes during construction, ensuring protection of public health and safety throughout the life of the project.

**c. The conditional use is in conformance with all applicable provisions of this Code and other adopted county regulations.**

***Applicant Response:*** The Development Team has submitted all required elements pursuant to the Preliminary Plat Application checklist. A fire access roadway is shown on the plat and conforms to the requirements of the Los Alamos County Fire Marshal. Grading will be in conformance with the County Development Code. Rear-yard setbacks, particularly on the

western edge of the single-family lots, avoid steep topography and adhere to all other setback and dimensional requirements pursuant to the requested SFR-5.

**Staff Response:** It is in the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. Although the applicant did not directly respond to the applicable criterion in the application letter, staff has conducted a thorough review and determined that the proposed conditional use complies with all relevant provisions of the Los Alamos County Development Code and other adopted County regulations.

The Conditional Use Permit application packet was reviewed by the Interdepartmental Review Committee (IDRC) and determined to meet the requirements of Chapter 16, including but not limited to use regulations, dimensional standards, access and circulation, and utility infrastructure.

Fire apparatus access roads have been reviewed and approved by the Los Alamos Fire Marshal. Emergency response standards are met through the creation of an access easement in the southwest portion of Tract 4, which connects to Tract 1 and provides the required secondary fire apparatus access.

Grading, drainage, and utility infrastructure will undergo further review for compliance with applicable standards during the construction permitting phase.

**d. The special use shall conform to all applicable regulations of the district in which it is located.**

**Applicant Response:** As evidenced by the attached Site Plan, the proposed cottage development conforms with all applicable regulations of the SFR-4 Zone District as follows:

Lot Size: 8,000 sf Subject Property is 9.51 acres  
Lot Width: 65 feet Subject Property is 419 feet  
Front Setback: 10 feet Proposed Cottage Buildings 78 feet  
Side Setback: 5 feet Proposed Cottage Buildings 25 feet  
Rear Setback: 15 feet Proposed Cottage Buildings 31 feet

In addition, the cottage buildings will also comply with the height restriction of 35 feet and the lot coverage maximum of 45%.

**Staff Response:** It is the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. The proposed cottage development conforms to the applicable regulations of the SFR-4 zoning district. The maximum allowable lot coverage in the SFR-4 district is 40%, and the proposed structures represent approximately 38.52% lot coverage, remaining within the permitted threshold. All other dimensional standards, including minimum lot size, lot width, and front, side, and rear setbacks, have been reviewed and are confirmed to meet or exceed the requirements of the SFR-4 district. Additional development standards related to parking, landscaping, access, and utility infrastructure have been reviewed by the Interdepartmental Review Committee and found to be compliant.

- e. **The conditional use does not cause significant adverse impacts on properties in the vicinity.**

**Applicant Response:** The Conditional Use does not cause significant adverse impacts on the properties in the vicinity. The proposed use is a residential cottage development that includes 114 dwellings and a pool and community amenities. As identified above, the setbacks far exceed those required for the SFR-4 zone. On the eastern edge of the property, where there are adjacent homes, the setback is increased from the 5-foot side yard requirement to over 25 feet that will include trees and landscaping. The cottage development also results in less buildings being adjacent to the existing homes from the prior approved single-family subdivision.

**Staff Response:** It is the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. The proposed cottage development is a residential use consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhoods and does not introduce impacts that would be incompatible with nearby residential properties.

Setbacks along the eastern property boundary, adjacent to existing single-family homes, exceed minimum requirements, with proposed building separation of over 25 feet where only 5 feet is required. These setbacks, combined with proposed tree plantings and landscaping, provide additional buffering and visual screening. The overall site layout also results in fewer buildings being placed directly adjacent to existing homes compared to the previously approved single-family subdivision design.

Traffic circulation, emergency access, drainage, and utility impacts have been reviewed through the Interdepartmental Review Committee process and determined no adverse effects on surrounding properties.

- f. **There are adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, and other necessary improvements to allow the land use, or improvements are planned to provide adequate measures.**

**Applicant Response:** Easements that have been identified as required in the recently approved Preliminary Plat submittal include a 26-foot wide emergency vehicular access between the southern end of this proposed subdivision at the cul-de-sac, connecting to the future cottage development to the east.

The primary access to the Cottage development is via San Ildefonso Road and is sufficient for emergency access by County emergency standards. Utility easements are also provided with the approved Preliminary Plan that provides sufficient utility distribution for the proposed development.

**Staff Response:** It is in the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. The proposed cottage development was determined by IDRC to have adequate access, utilities, and infrastructure to support the proposed use.



The Department of Public Utilities, which provides water, wastewater (sewer), electric, and gas services, has confirmed adequate service availability to the site. The traffic analysis, along with grading and drainage plans, has been reviewed by the County Engineer and received compliance verification confirming that requirements were met. A subsequent review will occur at the construction permitting stage to ensure continued compliance with engineering standards, including stormwater management.

**g. The location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the conditional use will be compatible with the use and development of properties in the vicinity.**

***Applicant Response:*** The terrain is relatively flat, with steeper slopes towards Pueblo Canyon along the southern edge of the cottage development tract. Setbacks along the southern edge of the project accommodate and avoid the steep slope area while providing for private patios along this edge of the project. The property was recently surveyed for the approved Arbolada subdivision and no sensitive archaeological sites or structures were identified. The location and size of the property accommodate the proposed cottage development and allows for access, circulation, appropriate setbacks and landscape buffering, and on-site amenities. This project will help the community meet its critical housing needs.

***Staff Response:*** It is in the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. The proposed cottage development is a residential use consistent with the established neighborhood character on North Mesa. The scale and design of the development, including clustered cottage-style units, provide a compatible residential form.

The overall site design reduces the number of structures directly adjacent to existing homes compared to the previously approved subdivision layout, while additional buffering and landscaping along the eastern property boundary further minimize potential impacts on adjacent single-family residences, thereby enhancing compatibility with neighboring properties.

Operating characteristics of the development, including residential occupancy, parking, access, and traffic circulation, are typical of other residential neighborhoods. No adverse operational impacts were identified.

**h. The conditional use is in compliance with the site plan procedures and requirements of section 16-74(h) and demonstrates that the site development will be compatible with properties in the vicinity.**

***Applicant Response:*** The site plan adheres to and meets the procedures and requirements of Sec. 16-74(i) and more specifically, the proposed cottage development site plan mitigates any significant adverse impacts on properties within the vicinity to the maximum extent practicable. As discussed above, the Site Plan is designed to mitigate any significant adverse impacts to other properties in the vicinity by:

- Increased setback with landscaping along the eastern boundary adjacent to the existing homes;

- Increased setback along the southern property line to protect and avoid the existing steep slopes of Pueblo Canyon;
- Safe and efficient access to San Ildefonso to the north;
- Emergency access shared with the new subdivision to the west; and
- Provision of on site amenities to the future residents.

**Staff Response:** It is the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. The Conditional Use Permit application was reviewed pursuant to the site plan procedures and requirements outlined in Section 16-74(h) of the Los Alamos County Development Code. The submittal materials, including the site plan, grading and drainage plans, utility layouts, and landscape plan, have been determined to comply with applicable procedural and technical requirements.

The proposed site development demonstrates compatibility with properties in the vicinity through compliance with zoning district standards, provision of adequate access and circulation, and buffering measures along property boundaries. Increased setbacks and landscaping adjacent to existing single-family residences further ensure that the development will integrate appropriately with the surrounding neighborhood context.

## **DRAFT MOTION**

### **Recommended Motion:**

I move to **approve** Case No. CUP-2025-0001, a request by Consensus Planning and Titan Development, on behalf of property owners Sonja Donaldson and Sande Cremer, for a Conditional Use Permit to allow the construction of a 114-unit cottage development on ±9.51 acres. The subject property, identified as Tract 4 on North Mesa along San Ildefonso Road, is legally described as: “A Subdivision of Tract D, Section 10, Township 19 North, Range 6 East, N.M.P.M., Los Alamos County, New Mexico.”

Approval is based on the findings established at the hearing and the conclusion that the Applicant has met the decision criteria for a Conditional Use Permit per Section 16-74(b)(3) 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. CUP-2025-0001, a request by Consensus Planning and Titan Development, on behalf of property owners Sonja Donaldson and Sande Cremer, for a Conditional Use Permit to allow the construction of a 114-unit cottage development on ±9.51 acres. The subject property, identified as Tract 4 on North Mesa along San Ildefonso Road, is legally described as: “A Subdivision of Tract D, Section 10, Township 19 North, Range 6 East, N.M.P.M., Los Alamos County, New Mexico.”

Approval is based on the findings established at the hearing and the conclusion that the Applicant has met the decision criteria for a Conditional Use Permit per Section 16-74(b)(3) of the Los Alamos County Development Code, subject to the following conditions:

1.

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. CUP-2025-0001, a request by Consensus Planning and Titan Development, on behalf of property owners Sonja Donaldson and Sande Cremer, for a Conditional Use Permit to allow the construction of a 114-unit cottage development on ±9.51 acres. The subject property, identified as Tract 4 on North Mesa along San Ildefonso Road, is legally described as: “A Subdivision of Tract D, Section 10, Township 19 North, Range 6 East, N.M.P.M., Los Alamos County, New Mexico.”

Denial is based on the findings established at the hearing and the conclusion that the Applicant has not met the decision criteria for a Conditional Use Permit per Section 16-74(b)(3) 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 Affordable Housing Plan: <https://lacnm.com/AffordableHousingPlan2024>

Los Alamos County, 2025 Strategic Leadership Plan: <https://lacnm.com/StrategicPlan>