



Los Alamos County  
Community Development Department

**PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

**Public Hearing Date:** July 9, 2025  
**Subject:** Case No. REZ-2025-0020  
**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.*

**Case No. REZ-2025-0020:** Los Alamos County Capital Improvements and Facilities Division, on behalf of Los Alamos County, property owner, requests a Minor Zone Map Amendment to rezone portions of Fire Station 4 and adjacent open space. The subject properties, 4401 Diamond Drive and 9999 Range Road in the North Community 2 Subdivision, are currently zoned Institutional (INS) and Open Space–Passive Open (OS-PO). The proposed amendment would rezone approximately 18,735 square feet from OS-PO to INS, expanding the Institutional area.



Figure 1: Proposed Institutional Rezone Area

**Executive Summary**

The Capital Improvements & Facilities Division seeks approval of a Minor Zone Map Amendment to rezone approximately 18,735 square feet ( $\pm 0.43$  acres) of 9999 Range Road (Tract H) from Open Space–Passive Open (OS-PO) to Institutional (INS). The Minor Zone Map Amendment is processed concurrently with an administratively approved Summary Plat. The Summary Plat reconfigures the boundary lines between Tracts G and H (4401 Diamond Drive and 9999 Range Road). Together, the rezoning and Summary Plat create a consistently zoned parcel sized and configured to accommodate the replacement of Fire Station No. 4. With the rezoned area incorporated, 4401

Diamond Drive will increase from 78,746 square feet ( $\pm 1.81$  acres) to 97,481 square feet ( $\pm 2.24$  acres).

This amendment implements County Council Resolution 2025-10, adopted June 24, 2025, following a unanimous Planning & Zoning Commission recommendation on May 14, 2025, to expand the Comprehensive Plan's Institutional designation at the site. Together with the lot line adjustment and Minor Zone Map Amendment, it ensures the entire fire station site is zoned Institutional and provides adequate area for facility operations.

### **Property Information**

The subject properties, 4401 Diamond Drive (Tract G, NC2 G) and 9999 Range Road (Tract H, NC2 H), are part of the North Community 2 Subdivision and carry two zoning designations: Institutional (INS) and Open Space–Passive Open (OS-PO). Tract G comprises 78,746 square feet ( $\pm 1.80$  acres), is zoned INS, and contains Fire Station No. 4. Tract H contains 2,787,211 square feet ( $\pm 63.99$  acres), is zoned OS-PO, and is reserved for passive recreational uses such as hiking, biking, nature observation, and other low-impact activities that require minimal infrastructure.

### **Background**

Fire Station 4, located at 4401 Diamond Drive, 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 later added to house additional equipment and reserve units. 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 process of selecting a new site 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.

### **Public Engagement – Site Selection Process**

A series of public meetings and presentations supported the site selection process:

- 1st Community Meeting – September 23, 2024
  - o Public survey closed October 7, 2024
- 2nd Community Meeting – October 15, 2024
  - o Presented conceptual site plans
  - o Reviewed environmental and response time studies, and preliminary cost estimates
  - o Facilitated discussion of pros and cons
- 3rd Neighborhood Meeting – October 21, 2024
  - o Provided additional site context and neighborhood information
- County Council Presentation – November 12, 2024
  - o Council approved the selected site location

- 4th Neighborhood Meeting – March 6, 2025
  - o Focused on land use entitlement applications, including the Minor Zone Map Amendment and Summary Plat

### Entitlement Process Overview

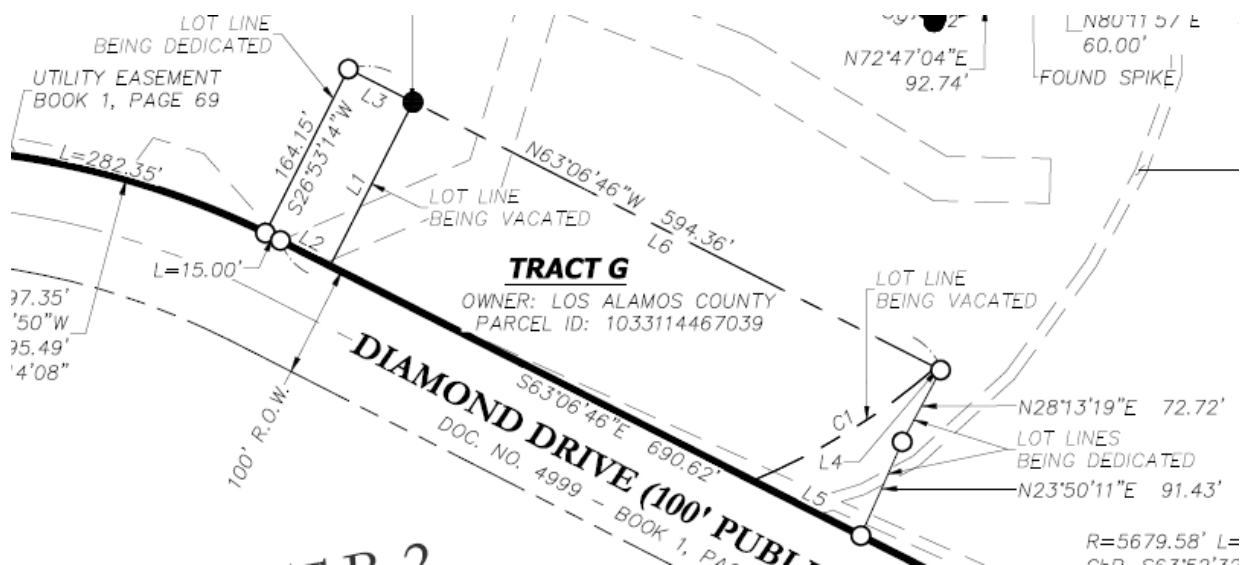
Replacing Fire Station 4 requires a three-step land use entitlement process:

1. Comprehensive Plan Amendment – Expand the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) Institutional designation to encompass the proposed site.
2. Minor Zone Map Amendment – Rezone a portion of the site from Open Space – Passive Open (OS-PO) to Institutional (INS).
3. Summary Plat – Adjust parcel boundaries to consolidate the site for development.

The complete applications were submitted to the Community Development Department on March 19, 2025, initiating the required review and hearing process. As required by the Development Code, the Comprehensive Plan amendment had to be adopted before proceeding with the rezoning.

On May 14, 2025, the Planning & Zoning Commission unanimously recommended approval of the FLUM amendment. The County Council adopted the amendment on June 24, 2025, through Resolution No. 2025-10, expanding the Institutional designation at 4401 Diamond Drive. Following adoption of the FLUM amendment, the Minor Zone Map Amendment advanced to the Planning & Zoning Commission for consideration. Concurrently, the associated Summary Plat underwent administrative review in preparation for approval.

The Summary Plat realigns the parcel lines between Tracts G and H (4401 Diamond Drive and 9999 Range Road) and is being processed for administrative approval. It will be approved and recorded upon completion of the Minor Zone Map Amendment process, which rezones approximately 18,735 square feet from OS-PO to INS. Together, these actions configure the development site into a parcel with appropriate area and consistent zoning for the development of the new Fire Station 4 facility.



## INTERDEPARTMENTAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (IDRC) REVIEW

A pre-application meeting was held on February 11, 2025, between the applicant and the Interdepartmental Review Committee (IDRC) to review schematic plans for the replacement Fire Station No. 4. The IDRC reconvened on April 11, 2025, to confirm the schematic design and application scope; no issues or concerns were noted. The County Engineer determined that a traffic impact study was unnecessary and offered no additional comments. The Department of Public Utilities reported no capacity constraints and provided preliminary guidance for extending service to the new building. All reviewing departments expressed support for the project to proceed.

## 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 public 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 June 18, 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 June 20, 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 June 20, 2025.**

## NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

Section 16-74(h)(2) establishes procedures for the applicant in making the minor zone map application.

- Prior to the submission of a zone map amendment application the applicant shall conduct a neighborhood meeting pursuant to section 16-72(b)(2). **Conducted March 6, 2025.**

## MINOR ZONE MAP AMENDMENT

Section 16-74(h) of the Los Alamos County Development Code states that an application for a Zone Map Amendment of the Official Zoning Map shall be approved if it meets all the following criteria. The planning and zoning commission shall approve or deny the proposed zone map amendment pursuant to the decision criteria within section 16-74(h)(3):

- a. **The proposed Zone Map Amendment is consistent with the health, safety, and welfare of the County as shown by conformance with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and other adopted County plans or policies.**

**Applicant Response:**

The Zone Map Amendment shall conform to the comprehensive plan and aligns with the HSW goals of the County. Exhibit A indicates the 2016 Comprehensive plan along with the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) showing current zoning of Institutional and Open Space - Passive Open.

Approving this zone map amendment would allow for a Fire Station No. 4 replacement, thus adhering to the Council's Strategic Goals by improving public safety, creating effective, efficient, reliable services, and reduces greenhouse gases.

**Staff Response:**

It is the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. The amendment advances the health, safety, and welfare of the County by facilitating the replacement of Fire Station No. 4 with a modern, code-compliant facility that addresses current operational and safety deficiencies.

The amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Goal of Quality Governance, which promotes the maintenance of essential public services and efficient infrastructure investment. Redevelopment of the existing fire station site, rather than expansion into undeveloped areas, constitutes efficient land use, reduces infrastructure redundancy, and supports long-term sustainability objectives. The selected site preserves established emergency response coverage, as confirmed by response time analysis.

The amendment further aligns with the 2025 County Council Strategic Leadership Plan and the following Strategic Priorities:

- Quality Governance – Fiscal Stewardship: Utilizing an existing County-owned site and maintaining operations on-site during construction maximizes the use of public assets and avoids additional land acquisition and associated costs.
- Operational Excellence: Co-location of public safety functions and uninterrupted service during phased construction enhance operational efficiency and reliability.
- Environmental Stewardship: The replacement facility will include energy-efficient systems designed to reduce emissions and environmental impact.

**b. The existing zone district designation is shown to be inappropriate for one or more of the following reasons:**

- 1. It was established in error;**
- 2. Changed conditions warrant the rezoning; or**
- 3. A different zone is more advantageous to the community as articulated by conformance with each applicable goal and policy of the Comprehensive Plan, including the future land use map.**

**Applicant Response:**

This site was approved by County Council on 11/12/24 to locate the Fire Station No. 4 replacement. The existing fire station needs to remain fully operational during construction, a lot line expansion via a Summary Plat application is required. Once the lot lines are expanded these portions of the property warrant making the zoning consistent within the property; therefore, re-zoning these portions from OS-PO to INS would allow for the property to be consistently zoned INS.

Approving this zone map amendment would allow for a Fire Station No. 4 replacement, thus adhering to the Council's Strategic Goals by improving public safety, creating effective, efficient, reliable services, and reduces greenhouse gases. which, in particular, accomplishes the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Staff Response:**

It is the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. Changed conditions and a shift in community needs warrant the proposed rezoning. The County Council formally approved the subject site on November 12, 2024, as the location for the replacement of Fire Station No. 4. To maintain emergency service operations during construction, the project requires a boundary adjustment via a concurrent Summary Plat, which incorporates additional County-owned land into the development site.

The existing OS-PO zoning designation does not accommodate public safety facilities, thereby making it incompatible with the approved use. Rezoning approximately 18,735 square feet from OS-PO to Institutional (INS) will result in a single, consistently zoned parcel appropriate for civic infrastructure and compliant with Section 16-7(d) of the Development Code.

Additionally, the INS zoning district is more advantageous to the community, as it enables construction of a modernized, robust public safety facility without requiring expansion into undeveloped areas. This approach supports multiple Comprehensive Plan goals, including Quality Governance, Land Use and Growth Management, and Environmental Sustainability.

- c. The proposed zoning will not designate a zone district different from surrounding zone districts to one small area, i.e. create a spot zone, unless one or more of the following criteria are met:**
- 1. Granting such zoning accomplishes the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan;**
  - 2. Unique characteristics specific to the site exist; or**
  - 3. The zoning serves as an appropriate transition between land uses of higher and lower intensity.**
  - 4. The County's existing and proposed infrastructure and public improvements including, but not limited to utilities, streets, sidewalks, or trails have adequate capacity to serve the development made possible by the Zone Map Amendment.**

**Applicant Response:**

The existing infrastructure and public improvements have adequate capacity to serve the expansion of the INS zone of the site. This approval will allow for improved public amenities such as trail access and fire fighter's health, public safety and general welfare of the community through Fire Station No. 4 replacement building. Review with the County Engineer and Department of Public Utilities during pre-application meeting has assured that this Zone Map Amendment will maintain access to existing public utilities and there are no adverse impacts.

The proposed zoning is expanding the existing zone district of the subject property to the revised lot line extents. This summary plat does not create a spot zone or add new zoning to the area.

**Staff Response:**

It is in the expert opinion of staff that this criterion has been met. The request expands the existing Institutional (INS) zoning to reflect the full extent of the newly configured lot, as proposed through a summary plat. The zoning remains consistent with the historical and ongoing use of the property as a fire station. The Minor Zone Map Amendment does not constitute spot zoning nor introduce a new zoning district to the area; therefore, criteria c.1 through 4 are not applicable.

**d. The establishment, maintenance, or operation of uses made possible by the Zone Map Amendment will not be detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of persons residing or working adjacent to or within the proximity of the subject property.**

**Applicant Response:**

The existing fire station building was developed by Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and later conveyed to the County by Department of Energy (DOE) in 1998. The existing fire station currently operates in providing essential operations beneficial to public health, safety, and welfare. The re-zone request will allow for the County to construct a new fire station allowing modern amenities to continue this effort to serve the Los Alamos County residents and businesses. Various studies conducted at the existing fire station site indicate that response times are within targets and utilizing this locations is suitable for a new fire station. See Exhibit D. The new fire station, made possible by this Zone Map Amendment, will further improve firefighter response efficiencies and their own and the public's health, safety, and welfare through the design of the new fire station.

**Staff Response:**

It is the staff's expert opinion that this criterion has been met. The continued operation of the fire station within an expanded Institutional zone is consistent with existing land use on-site and does not introduce a new or intensified use that would generate adverse effects on adjacent properties. The site is bordered by municipal and utility infrastructure, public open space, and roadways, which provide adequate physical separation from residential uses and mitigate potential impacts related to noise, lighting, or traffic.

The facility's purpose to serve the public through emergency response is inherently aligned with protecting community health and safety. The amendment allows for improved facilities but does not alter the use in a way that creates new off-site effects.

**DRAFT MOTION**

**Recommended Motion:**

I move to **approve** Case No. REZ-2025-0020, a request by Los Alamos County Capital Improvements and Facilities Division, on behalf of Los Alamos County, property owner, requests a Minor Zone Map Amendment to rezone portions of Fire Station 4 and adjacent open space. The subject properties, 4401 Diamond Drive and 9999 Range Road in the North Community 2 Subdivision, are currently zoned Institutional (INS) and Open Space–Passive Open (OS-PO). The proposed amendment would rezone approximately 18,735 square feet from OS-PO to INS, expanding the Institutional area.

Approval is based on the Findings of Fact established at the hearing and determination that the Applicant has met the decision criteria for a Minor Zone Map Amendment per Section 16-74(h)(3) of the Los Alamos County Development Code. The Commission acts under the authority of Section 16-69(b)(2) of the Development Code.

I further move to authorize the Chair to sign a Final Order approving the application, as well as the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law for this case. This document will be prepared by county staff based on this decision.

**Motion Option 2:**

I move to **deny** Case No. REZ-2025-0020, a request by a request by Los Alamos County Capital Improvements and Facilities Division, on behalf of Los Alamos County, property owner, requests a Minor Zone Map Amendment to rezone portions of Fire Station 4 and adjacent open space. The subject properties, 4401 Diamond Drive and 9999 Range Road in the North Community 2 Subdivision, are currently zoned Institutional (INS) and Open Space–Passive Open (OS-PO). The proposed amendment would rezone approximately 18,735 square feet from OS-PO to INS, expanding the Institutional area.

Denial is based on the Findings of Fact established at the hearing and determination that the Applicant has failed to meet the decision criteria for Subdivision per Section 16-74(h)(3) of the Los Alamos County Development Code. The Commission acts under the authority of Section 16-69(b)(2) of the Development Code.

I further move to authorize the Chair to sign a Final Order approving the application, along with the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, as 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>