



Community Alliance

May 5, 2015

John Wesley, Planning Director  
City of Mesa

Dear John:

We understand the Planning and Zoning Board, at its May 20 meeting, will consider a Site Plan Review/Special Use Permit for Case Z15-012, a proposed gas station, convenience store and car wash at 809 N. Dobson Road, at the western entrance to Riverview Shopping Center. We would like to make several comments about this proposed project.

First, we understand from City staff that a formal public participation process was to have been a part of this application, but evidently that has not yet occurred. We received paper copies of the proposed site plan from the applicant's representative, Jesse Macias, but found them to be unreadable because of their small size. We asked on April 28, in an e-mail to Mr. Macias, for a copy of the plans to be e-mailed to us in hopes that such a copy would be more legible, and also would be easier for us to distribute to our membership for comment. To date we have not received any response to that e-mail request. We also requested information as to the applicant's plan for public participation/neighborhood input. Again, we have received no information to date. As you know, public input is a crucial part of any improvements to be made at Riverview, as we have worked long and hard as a neighborhood organization to try to ensure that a high standard is maintained at this important gateway property in West Mesa. We believe we should have the opportunity to meet with the applicant, have him explain his plans, and allow us to ask questions and offer comments on the record to him before his project comes up for final approval at the City; in fact, we think that is one of the requirements for such a proposal. Unfortunately, that has not happened as yet.

Secondly, as we viewed the materials the City has online regarding this project, we were struck by how 'ordinary' it appears to be. We made the effort to visit several similar installations in the East Valley which have improvements such as those proposed for the Riverview site, and we were disappointed to see that even the very best of these locations looked just like what they are: ordinary gas stations with ordinary convenience stores, and at some sites, add-on car washes. Nowhere did we see upgraded construction materials used in order to enhance the physical appearance of the facilities, nor did we see much creative screening or landscaping used in an effort to make the sites less 'industrial' looking. In this key area where we already have premier recreational, commercial and sporting venues all coming together, a design that is 'extraordinary' is needed to maintain the high standard for the area which already has been established.

As we have tried to review the plans for the Riverview proposal, we have sought evidence that this site would be treated differently; that it would not be 'just' a gas station/convenience store/car wash like you might find on any street corner in the Valley. Because of its highly-visible, pivotal location – that is, its proximity not only to the Riverview Shopping Center west entrance, but also to one of the primary access routes to Mesa's world-class Riverview Park, and to its signature neighbor, the Chicago Cubs' heavily-used new stadium, Sloan Park (during 2015 Spring Training, the site with the highest Cactus League attendance in the Valley) – this site needs special aesthetic and site plan consideration. We would hope for a thoughtful, customized layout which would create a smooth transition among the varied uses around the site, and in particular would make allowances for the high pedestrian traffic which creates a potential conflict with the vehicle-intensive uses anticipated on this site.

We see that the applicant has proposed a lovely decorative seating area and extra landscaping along Riverview Drive, ostensibly to offer pedestrians a pleasant experience as they walk past the facility. However, this does not remedy the safety concerns we have, with pedestrians (LOTS of them, on busy days at the park and stadium) still having to walk across the rather wide gas station access driveway off of Riverview Drive. Because of the positioning of the buildings on the site, a serious conflict between pedestrians and vehicles is inevitable, and impedes the transition between the commercial uses on the east side of Dobson and the extensive, popular recreational uses on the west.

We can see that a gas station/convenience store most certainly could be an appropriate use in this area of Mesa, as there are none in the immediate vicinity. But the same factors that make this infill proposal attractive to the developer (ie., it is a high-traffic area which will draw both vehicular and pedestrian customer traffic to the site) also make it a challenge to design in such a way that it supports not only the business, but also the unique sense of place that has evolved as more and more people come to enjoy the array of commercial and recreational services available in this unique area.

This proposal, in its current configuration, does not appear to maintain the high standard of development all around this site – and does, in fact, introduce some design and safety concerns which in our opinion tend to bring that standard down.

The Mesa Grande Community Alliance (MGCA) Steering Committee would be pleased to meet with the applicant to discuss our concerns further and to see if a satisfactory compromise/redesign can be achieved. Absent that opportunity, on behalf of MGCA, we wish to oppose this project and respectfully ask the Planning and Zoning Board to reject the submitted Site Plan and deny the requested Special Use Permit.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Wright and Tanya Collins, co-chairs  
on behalf of the MGCA Steering Committee:

Lynn Burnham	Dennis Lloyd	Mark A. Freeman
Dea Montague	Linda Lloyd	
Tim Boyle	Carolyn Crandell	
DJ Stapley	David Montague	
Deborah McIlff	Heather Scantlebury	