



Planning and Zoning Board

Staff Report

CASE NUMBER: Z15-028 (PLN2015-00243)
LOCATION/ADDRESS: The 5300 block of East Main Street (south side).
GENERAL VICINITY: Located east of Higley Road on the south side of Main Street.
REQUEST: Site Plan Review and Preliminary Plat
PURPOSE: This request will allow for the development of a commercial center.
COUNCIL DISTRICT: District 2
OWNER/APPLICANT: Corey Smith, DCSJ, LLC
STAFF PLANNER: Tom Ellsworth

SITE DATA

PARCEL NO.: 141-51-011G, -011H, -011J
PARCEL SIZE: 4.5± acres
EXISTING ZONING: General Commercial (GC)
GENERAL PLAN CHARACTER: Neighborhood and Transit Corridor
CURRENT LAND USE: Vacant / Undeveloped

SITE CONTEXT

NORTH: (across Main Street) Commercial uses – zoned LC and GC
EAST: (across 54th Street) Vacant / Undeveloped – zoned GC
SOUTH: Mini-Storage – zoned LC
WEST: Boat and RV Storage – zoned GC

ZONING HISTORY/RELATED CASES

August 19, 1974: Annexed into the City of Mesa (Ord. 888)
January 20, 1975: Rezone from Maricopa County C-3 to City of Mesa C-2, (Z74-085)
December 19, 1977: Rezone from C-2 to C-3 (Z77-071) to allow RV and Mobile Home sales.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval with Conditions
PROPOSITION 207 WAIVER SIGNED: ☒ Yes ☐ No

PROJECT DESCRIPTION / REQUEST

The applicant is requesting approval of a Site Plan and Preliminary Plat for a general commercial development located at 5349 East Main Street. The 4.5± acre site currently consists of 3 combined vacant lots on the south side of Main Street and the west side of 54th Street. The applicant is proposing to subdivide the site into 9 parcels with 10 buildings to create a group commercial center that will serve automotive and light assembly type uses.

The site plan shows two curb cuts providing access off of Main Street into a shared drive-aisle and parking area for the businesses within the center. A majority of the buildings on the site include gated parking areas that will allow secure overnight parking for customer and fleet vehicles. The applicant is proposing view fencing into the secured parking areas to increase visibility into these areas.

The proposal utilizes a number of re-purposed shipping containers that will complement the larger concrete tilt slab buildings. The office and retail portions of three of the concrete tilt slab buildings will utilize aluminum and glass store fronts with metal canopies to emphasize the entrance. The entrance and offices for the other buildings on the site will be configured from re-purposed shipping containers.

The following is a description of the buildings on each parcel from west to east:

Parcel-1, the western most parcel, contains a 2,040 sf 2-story office and gallery, made from re-purposed shipping containers that will be built towards the front of the property. The Gallery will have roof top access from the second story. The parcel also includes a 9,279 sf shop and storage building, also made from re-purposed shipping containers, to be built in the rear of the property adjacent to the secured parking area.

Parcel-2 has one 4,521 sf commercial building suitable for auto repair with 4 large roll up bay doors facing east. The office portion of the building faces Main Street and is configured from re-purposed shipping containers. The facility has a secured customer parking area with the water retention area along the south property line.

Parcel-3 has one 5,732 sf commercial building suitable for auto body repair the showroom and office portion of the building faces Main Street. The facility has a secured customer parking area, and a water retention area along the south property line.

Parcel-4 has one 7,560 sf commercial building suitable for auto repair with 4 large roll up bay doors facing east. The showroom and office portion of the building faces Main Street and is lower than the larger shop portion behind it. The facility has a secured customer parking area and a water retention area along the south property line.

Parcel-5 has one 5,863 sf commercial building suitable for auto repair with 4 large roll up bay doors facing east. The office portion of the building faces Main Street and is configured from re-purposed shipping containers. The facility has a secured customer parking area and a water retention area along the south property line.

Parcel-6 has one 4,595 sf concrete commercial building, expected to be used for a vehicle wrap business, with a small roll up door facing north and one matching door facing south. The north facing door is screened by a berm and enhanced landscaping along Main Street. The office portion of the building is two-story and faces Main Street.

Parcel-7 has one 3,757 sf concrete commercial building, expected to be used as a pet crematory, with a small roll up door facing north and one matching door facing south. The north facing door is screened by a berm and enhanced landscaping along Main Street. The office portion of the building is one-story and faces Main Street.

Parcels-8 and 9 each have one 2,220 sf concrete commercial building suitable for automotive related businesses the office portion of the building is configured from a single re-purposed shipping container. The facility has a small secured customer parking area.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARTICIPATION

The applicant has implemented a Citizen Participation Plan that included mailing letters to all the surrounding property owners within 1000' of the site and all registered neighborhoods and HOA's within one-half mile. The letters included a description of the proposal, a copy of the site plan and elevations, and contact information to provide comments and feedback to the applicant. To date the applicant has reported that they have not received any comments from surrounding property owners.

CONFORMANCE WITH THE MESA 2040 GENERAL PLAN

The goal of Mesa 2040 General Plan is to establish and maintain neighborhoods and to build a sense of place in neighborhoods and in commercial/employment areas of activity. Rather than focusing on individual land uses, the Plan focuses on the "character of development in different areas." Character types combine concepts of land use with building form and intensity to describe the type of area being created through the development that occurs.

General Plan Analysis Summary:

The Mesa 2040 General Plan designates the character area as a Transit Corridor within a Neighborhood Character Area. The site is also located within the Main Street Transit District Growth Area. Each of these elements of the General Plan envision the development along this section of Main Street to become more pedestrian and transit oriented with an increase in density and intensity of use towards the possible future transit station locations with development being oriented towards the street creating a more aesthetic streetscape adding to the overall sense of place.

However, the section of East Main Street from Gilbert Road to Power Road has been identified as a proposed transit corridor in the City's Transportation Master Plan. The General Plan indicates that the areas within the identified proposed transit corridors are not subject to the requirements of the Transit District character type until such time a final decision is made to implement the transit improvements. Therefore review of the General Plan for this site is based upon the Neighborhood Character type with a focus on the infill and redevelopment elements of the General Plan.

The General Plan encourages the infill and redevelopment of underutilized and by-passed parcels. This vision includes the need for development to be responsive to the surrounding context of the existing neighborhoods, land use patterns, and zoning within the area. This site is zoned GC the proposed uses on the site are allowed within the land use regulations in the zoning ordinance.

The proposed site plan is in conformance with the policies and goals encouraging the redevelopment and infill development of properties within the existing context of the area. The applicant has worked with staff to develop a site plan that is in conformance with the existing zoning entitlement on the property, is compatible with the surrounding land uses, and begins to encourage the development of a streetscape that is more aesthetically pleasing than the current conditions along East Main Street.

Supporting General Plan Analysis

State statutes require that all adopted zoning and rezoning ordinances be consistent with the adopted General Plan. Determining consistency with the General Plan requires a review of the proposal against the character area requirements and the other goals and policies of the Plan and any adopted sub-area plans. The following criteria have been developed for use during the review process to determine whether or not the proposed development is achieving the vision and goals established in this Plan and thus meeting the statute requirements.

1. Is the proposed development consistent with furthering the intent and direction contained in the General Plan?

The General Plan focuses on creating land development patterns that emphasize the character of place and focusing on those principles that build neighborhoods, stabilize the job base, and improve the sense of place.

Staff Comment: The site is located along the East Main Street Corridor. The zoning and development of the properties along this portion of Main Street are indicative of the old highway development from the time when Main Street was the US-60. The land uses also cater to the surrounding retirement communities and mobile home parks in the area. The land uses are predominantly oriented to RV and Mobile home sales and service, and auto-oriented land uses. The proposed site development is consistent with the context of the area and is providing development to a site that has been vacant for the past few decades.

The Plan also describes 5 key elements to be considered with development to help move the City toward the goal of becoming a more complete, recognizable City. The five elements include:

1. High Quality Development
2. Changing Demographics
3. Public Health
4. Urban Design and Place-Making
5. Desert Environment

Staff Comment: The proposed auto-oriented commercial center is utilizing a unique building material that will add interest to this section of Main Street. The use of shipping containers as a construction material is a unique and innovative type of construction that focuses on an adaptive reuse of a product that typically is discarded after the life of its primary use is over.

The development of this site for auto related uses is responding to the demands of service from the surrounding community. The surrounding demographic is seasonal and transient and relies heavily on auto services.

2. Is the proposed development consistent with adopted sub-area or neighborhood plans?

Staff Comment: *The proposed site is not located within a specific Sub-Area Plan or Neighborhood Plan. The site located within an identified growth area within the General Plan. The Downtown and Main Street Growth area focuses on the development and redevelopment of the Transit Corridor Identified along Main Street.*

The light rail extension is planned to extend as far as Gilbert Road with proposed future extensions as far as Power Road. This section Main Street is designated as a "proposed" transit corridor in the City's Transportation Master Plan. The General Plan indicates that areas within proposed transit corridors are not subject to the requirements of the transit character type until such time a final decision is made to implement the transit improvements for the area. It is anticipated that this section of Main Street will be the subject of a sub-area plan in conjunction with any plans for the extension of the transit corridor along Main Street.

3. Is the proposed development consistent with the standards and guidelines established for the applicable character type(s)?

Figure 7-1 of the Mesa 2040 General Plan shows this area designated as a Transit Corridor within a Neighborhood character type. The focus in this character type is to develop a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, urban environment, particularly within walking distance of transit stops. This character type overlays the other character types and is used to transition the area into a more transit- and pedestrian-oriented development form. This overall category is divided into corridors and station areas. The proposed site is appropriate to be designated as a Corridor subtype. This character type applies to development of the corridors between stations and stops and will be less intense, but should still evolve into a more urban pattern with buildings brought close to the front property lines and parking behind or beside buildings. Streets should maintain a pedestrian orientation, but first floors of buildings may not contain active uses.

Staff Comment: *The proposed development is consistent with the vision for East Main Street as described in the General Plan. The proposed use of the property is an allowed use within the GC zoning district and is consistent with the context of the surrounding neighborhood. The applicant has made efforts to create a well-designed street scape along Main Street and has brought some visual interest by bringing the uniquely design office out to the Street.*

There is an identified need for the development of an East Main Street Sub-Area Plan to address the redevelopment of Main street east of Gilbert Road to establish guidelines for development that can both meet the intent of the envisioned Transit Corridor and also meet the demands for the redevelopment of the area within its existing context

4. Will the proposed development serve to strengthen the character of the area by:
• **Providing appropriate infill development;**

This request will facilitate development on a site that has remained vacant for decades and is consistent with the surrounding context.

- **Removing development that is deteriorated and/or does not contribute to the quality of the surrounding area;**

The development of this vacant site will enhance the overall appearance and quality of this section of East Main Street.

- **Adding to the mix of uses to further enhance the intended character of the area;**

The proposed uses on the site plan are consistent with the existing character and mix of land uses in this area.

- **Improving the streetscape and connectivity within the area;**

The applicant has made efforts to provide a unique style of development that will provide interest to the streetscape along East Mains Street and that is consistent with the allowed uses and design standards of the existing GC zoning on the site.

- **Improving safety within the area;**

Development consistent with current development standards and codes will increase safety in the area.

- **Adding to the sense of place;**

The site plan creates a sense of place as it relates to an auto-oriented use consistent with the zoning of the property. The use of shipping containers as a building material will provide a feature that makes this site identifiable as a unique place.

- **Meeting or exceeding the development quality of the surrounding area?**

The redevelopment of this site to current development standards exceeds the development quality of the surrounding area.

5. Does the proposed development provide appropriate transitions between uses? In more suburban locations these transitions should be addressed through separation of uses and/or screening?

The proposed development is immediately adjacent on the west and south sides to a mini-storage facility with ancillary RV and Boat Storage. The development creates a fully landscaped streetscape that meets current development standards that softens the impacts of the surrounding uses along Main Street as it transitions towards the intersection with 54th Street.

STAFF ANALYSIS

This 4.5± acre site is located along the East Main Street Corridor. The applicant is requesting a site plan review and preliminary plat approval for the development of a general commercial center. The site plan consists of 10 buildings on 9 proposed parcels. The buildings and parcels are designed as one commercial center with shared drive aisles and parking. A majority of the buildings on site are designed for auto service type uses with roll-up bay doors and gated parking areas to secure the overnight parking of customer vehicles.

The site is currently zoned General Commercial (GC) and is designated as a “proposed” Transit Corridor within a Neighborhood character type. The proposed site development is consistent with the context of the area and is providing development to a site that has been vacant for the past few decades. The proposed site plan meets the development standards identified in the

zoning ordinance for GC zoned properties.

The proposed auto-oriented commercial center is utilizing a unique building material that will add interest to this section of Main Street. The use of shipping containers as a construction material is a unique and innovative type of construction that focuses on an adaptive reuse of a product that typically is discarded after the life of its primary use is over.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed use of the property is an allowed use within the GC zoning district and is consistent with the context of the surrounding neighborhood. The applicant has made efforts to create a well-designed streetscape along Main Street and has brought some visual interest to the site by bringing the uniquely designed office building out to the Street.

Therefore, Staff is recommending approval the proposed site plan and preliminary plat with the following conditions:

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

1. Compliance with the basic development as described in the project narrative, and as shown on the site plan and preliminary plat submitted, and preliminary elevations as approved through the Design Review process, (without guarantee of lot yield, building count, lot coverage).
2. Compliance with all requirements of Design Review.
3. Compliance with all City development codes and regulations.
4. All street improvements and street frontage landscaping to be installed in the first phase of construction.
5. Compliance with all requirements of the Subdivision Technical Review Committee.
6. **Gates for the secured parking areas shall remain open during business hours.**
7. **Outdoor storage is prohibited within the secured parking areas.**
8. **Gates shall be designed with a material that allows visibility into the secure parking areas.**