



Planning and Zoning Board

Case Information

CASE NUMBER: **Z15-025 (PLN2015-00250)**
LOCATION: The 1600 through 1900 blocks of South Val Vista Drive (west side)
GENERAL VICINITY: Located on the northwest corner of Val Vista Drive and Baseline Road
REQUEST: Site Plan Modification, Council Use Permit and Rezoning
PURPOSE: This request will allow the addition of residential, retail, office, hotel and theater buildings to the existing commercial center
COUNCIL DISTRICT: District 2
APPLICANT: Nelson Partners – George Melara
STAFF PLANNER: Kim Steadman

SITE DATA

PARCELS NO.: 140-65-214D, 214E, 222A, 222B, 222C, 222D, 223A, 223B, 223C
EXISTING ZONING: Limited Commercial – Bonus Intensity Zone-Planned Area Development (LC-BIZ-PAD)
GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: Mixed Use Activity District;
Sub-type: Community-Scale Districts
CURRENT LAND USE: Commercial center & vacant land (“Dana Park Village Square Lots 7, 8 and 9” [MCR 666-09] & part of Lot 1 of “Dana Park Village Square” [MCR 543-05])
LOT SIZE: 60± acres

SITE CONTEXT

NORTH: US 60 freeway (Across US 60: residential, zoned RS-9 & RM-3)
EAST: (Across Val Vista Dr.) Commercial, zoned LC & residential, zoned RM-3
SOUTH: (across Baseline Rd. in Gilbert) Commercial, zoned GC
WEST: Residential, zoned RS-7 & RS-9

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:
P&Z BOARD RECOMMENDATION:
PROP-207 WAIVER:

Approval with Conditions

☒ Approval with conditions. ☐ Denial
☒ Signed ☐ Not Signed

ZONING HISTORY

- June 18, 1973:** South half of DMP site annexed via Ord. 812 and subsequently zoned (Case # Z79-160)
- Dec. 16, 1974:** North half of DMP site annexed via Ord. 907 and subsequently zoned (Case # Z79-145)
- Jan. 18, 1994:** Approval of Dana Ranch DMP (Case # Z93-30). DMP site zoned R1-7-DMP (conceptual C-2, R1-6-PAD, R-3, R1-6) and R1-9-DMP (park site)
- Oct. 16, 1997:** Request to modify the conditions of the Dana Ranch DMP (construction of the park and Inverness Street prior to development of Parcel 3) (Case # Z97-86). The case was withdrawn at the Planning and Zoning Board.
- Oct. 19, 1998:** Approval of C-2-BIZ-DMP for development of a Triple Five retail center with residences and a hotel (Case # Z98-79); a legal protest was filed against this case. Because there was no zoning district, which allowed for a mixed-use project, Council directed staff to amend the Mesa Zoning Ordinance to include a Council Use Permit in the C-2 district which would permit the combination of commercial / retail activity with residential development.
- Dec. 21, 1998:** Council approved an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance for a Council Use Permit (CUP) in the Commercial districts for mixed-use developments.
- April 19, 1999:** Council approved a Use Permit on the subject site to allow the mixed uses on the approved DMP (as allowed by the amended Zoning Ordinance). (Case # Z99-23)
- April 27, 2000:** The applicant addressed the City Council in a study session regarding this DMP and requested a site plan modification (13 “parcel” buildings in lieu of the approved 16 “parcel” buildings) and minor ordinance changes. Council voted to approve the proposed changes.
- Nov. 5, 2001:** Council approved a major Site Plan Modification and deletion of the Council Use Permit for Phase 1 & 2 – to delete all residential units and mixed-use component, and approve a strip commercial center. (Case # Z01-49)
- June 24, 2002:** Council approved Mesa 2025 General Plan. The subject site was changed from a Neighborhood Commercial land use category to a Mixed Use – Residential land use category to be in conformance with the approvals granted for high density residential through the Council Use Permit.
- Aug. 15, 2005:** Council approved Site Plan Modification for the construction of retail uses in Phase 3, a 14.3 acres site at the northern end of the center (Case # Z05-60).
- May 3, 2006:** Design Review Board approved Phase III building and revised site plan. (DR06-49)
- April 16, 2007:** Council approved CUP for a Freeway Landmark Sign (Case# Z07-17)
- Mar. 7, 2007:** Design Review Board approved Freeway Landmark Sign (DR07-28)
- May 15, 2008:** Site Plan Modification to add pad #9 (never vested) (Z08-030)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This request modifies the Master Plan for Dana Park Village Square, modifies the design guidelines, and requests approval of a Council Use Permit to allow residential use in a commercial zone. The existing center includes retail, restaurant, and office uses. Proposed revisions and additional uses are:

- Hotel: a 102,000 square-foot hotel in the northeast corner of the center;
- North Mixed-Use Cluster: including 153,000 square-feet of office space along with retail and restaurant uses grouped around a central green space, and served by an urban-style auto/pedestrian street with on-street parking;
- Multi-residential/parking garage: the northwest corner of this center has long been approved for a parking garage. This proposal reduces the footprint of the garage, wrapping it on three sides with 325,300 square-feet of residential distributed on four levels and a reduced-footprint of penthouse units on the fifth level. This residential cluster is accessed by the same auto/pedestrian street the North Mixed-Use Cluster. The addition of residential to a commercially-zoned property requires a Council Use Permit.
- Movie Theater: a 40,000 square-foot facility will replace retail space at the northwest elbow of the current retail strip. This will consist of either a remodeling, or a new building. A new street with sidewalks will connect the front of the retail with the parking garage behind the shops.
- South Mixed Use Cluster: Two buildings adjacent to a green space will house retail, restaurant and possibly office uses. As with the north cluster buildings, these buildings are placed at the street front to create a pedestrian sidewalk, with diagonal on-street parking and street trees.
- Streetscape/Pedestrian Revisions: The unusually-wide drive aisles of the existing center will be narrowed. Diagonal street parking will be added, along with street trees and shading devices along the pedestrian sidewalks to improve the pedestrian experience. The improved pedestrian paths will extend from the center, out to the public streets, along the main entry drives to the center. In addition, the proposed design adds shaded pedestrian ties between the new and old sections of the center.
- Design Guidelines: The existing center has developed to the “Dana Ranch Village Square Design Guidelines” established in 1998. Many of the signature elements of the center, such as alternate paving, site furniture, architectural style, and some landscape elements were established in the guidelines, or tied into the guidelines by reference to the plans. The Narrative modifies these guidelines, revising architecture and pavement standards. Also, new, expanded landscape information is added.
- Landscape Revisions: The proposed landscape plan adds trees and shade structures to improve the pedestrian experience. Turf is being removed from the street front and being replaced with more trees and mass plantings of shrubs and ground cover. Throughout the site planting counts will exceed required minimums.

REQUEST

LOCATION	USE	AREA / UNITS	HEIGHT	FLOORS
NE Corner	Hotel	102,000 sf/ 116 Units	73'	6
North Mixed-Use Cluster	Retail / Restaurant	Rest/Retail: 60,375 sf	N/A	Ground Floor
	Office Above	Office: 92,700 sf	52' & 38'	Floors: 2 & 3
NW Corner	MULTI-RESIDENTIAL	325,200 sf 260 – 320 Units	---	4 Stories & Penthouse
	Misc. Bldgs.*	---	---	1
	PARKING STRUCTURE	790 Spaces (158 Spaces / Level)	---	5 Levels
NW Corner	Movie Theater	40,000 sf (replacing existing space.)	---	1
South Mixed-Use Cluster	Retail / Restaurant	13,050 sf	24'	1

*These are shown around the base of the residential building. Two are identified as “Picnic Pavilion” & “Commercial/Amenity Building”.

MODIFICATION:

The parking field of the original center developed with required landscape islands every 10 spaces. Current code requires islands every 8 spaces. The request is to continue this pattern. This request also modifies the design guidelines approved with the original zoning case.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The applicant’s Citizen Participation efforts included a mailing to surrounding property owners within 1,000-feet of the subject site, Homeowners’ Associations within a half mile, and registered neighborhoods within a mile of the site.

Neighborhood Meetings were hosted for two separate focus groups, as follows:

- Larger Neighborhood – June 30th – (4) in attendance
- Larger Neighborhood – July 14th – (15) in attendance
- Immediate Neighborhood – July 1st – (6) in attendance
- Immediate Neighborhood – July 15th – (0) in attendance

All meetings were held at 1744 S. Val Vista Dr., Suite 110 at 6:00 p.m. The Citizen Participation Report lists specific questions and answers. In summary, the concerns raised were: additional traffic and the circulation patterns of the multi-residential, increase in crime from additional residential density. There were also questions about potential tenants, the likelihood of a movie theater or hotel, and the timeline for the project. The applicant also received (4) emailed request for information and (1) phone call as a follow-up from an email. All emailed requests received the site plan.

Staff received one email raising the concerns of residents from the Mission Bay Estates which is located behind the commercial uses on the south side of Baseline Rd. Their general concerns were additional traffic and the effect of additional students (from the proposed multi-residential) on the Gilbert Public Schools. Their email has been included in this report.

CONFORMANCE WITH THE MESA 2040 GENERAL PLAN

Summary: this proposal achieves the vision and goals of the General Plan, adding uses, improving connectivity and pedestrian spaces, and reinvesting in the viability of an existing commercial center within a Mixed-Use Activity District.

Criteria for review of proposal: The following criteria (Ch. 15 of the General Plan) have been developed for use during the review process to determine whether the proposed development is achieving the vision and goals established in the General 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.

The existing development has established a sense of place, as a well-regarded, high-end commercial center. The mix of uses has been limited to retail, restaurant and office. The current proposal can be seen as building on that reputation, revising some site design elements, and adding new uses to attract more users, and build sustainability.

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

Mesa has not established a neighborhood or sub-area plan for this area.

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

The Character Area map of the Mesa 2040 General Plan defines this location as Mixed Use Activity District with a sub-type of Community-Scale Districts which are defined as follows:

Character Area: Mixed Use Activity District

“Focus: Mixed Use Activity Districts are large-scale (typically over 25 acres) community and regional activity areas that usually have a significant retail commercial component including shopping areas such as malls, power centers, or lifestyle centers that are designed and developed to attract customers from a large radius. These districts often include other uses such as office, entertainment and residential. Big box development...is appropriate in these districts. Particularly with redevelopment of shopping centers, these districts may take on a

significant residential character, but will still have a mix of uses. The goal is to help these districts be strong and viable centers of commercial activity that attract people to unique shopping and entertainment experiences.”

The proposed modifications to Dana Park comply with the above references to “a significant residential character” and “strong and viable centers...that attract people to unique shopping and entertainment experiences”.

Sub-type: Community-Scale Districts

“Community-Scale Districts (primarily serving up to a 4-mile radius) typically contain one or two big box buildings and associated shops and pad sites. These character types are typically at the intersection of two arterial streets and are typically auto-dominant unless part of a Transit District. As part of redeveloping older community commercial areas, this character type may transition into providing a greater mix of uses including office and residential activities and should take on a more pedestrian-friendly environment... The primary goal of this character type is to provide high quality opportunities for commercial and entertainment activities consistent with the needs of today’s consumer.”

The proposed mix of uses are all specifically listed in the General Plan as appropriate uses within this Sub-type. (See P.7-17 of the Plan.) The proposal also complies with provisions in the Sub-type for “more urban forms that balance autos with pedestrians” and building and parking fields that are “located on the property to establish a connection to the street and promote walkability between buildings.”

4. Will the proposed development serve to strengthen the character of the area by:

- **Providing appropriate infill development;**

This proposal infills the unbuilt pads of the center, adding a hotel on one, and residential/parking garage on the other. It also infills part of an underused area of the center – the existing parking field. The original center was over parked, which is no longer allowed by code. The intent is to establish more of a walkable street setting in these areas.

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

N/A

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

As mentioned above, the proposed new uses are listed in the Plan as appropriate to this Character Area.

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

The proposal improves the streetscape within the center, and improves pedestrian connectivity outward to the public streets.

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

The existing Dana Park Design Guidelines are modified through the current Project Narrative. The preliminary architectural sketches establish a high level of quality. The Design Review process is required and will be useful in determining that the final product meets these standards.

5. Does the proposed development provide appropriate transitions between uses? In more urban areas these transitions should generally be accomplished by design elements that allow adjacent buildings to be close to one another. In more suburban locations these transitions should be addressed through separation of uses and/or screening;

In a standard approach to zoning it can be very defensible to transition from a commercial zone, through a multi-residential zone into a single-residential zone. The current proposal adds the multi-residential use between two existing uses, and the burden of “transitioning” falls fully on this new use. A site visit raises concerns about placing four stories of residential units 87’ from the rear property line of single residences. The proposed design reduces this impact by breaking the west elevation into three wings, so it is not a solid wall. The final design should further develop this concept to ensure a sensitive solution that eases the transition.

Chapter 3 of The Plan also identifies 5 fundamentals to be considered to help move the City toward the goal of becoming a more complete, recognizable City. The five elements include:

1. High Quality Development
 - a. *Dana Park will continue to develop to the same quality with revised Design Guidelines that address some issues in the center and the changes being made to the mix of uses.*
 - b. *The current proposal specifies additional materials and design elements.*
 - c. *As with the original development, each new building will need Design Review approval.*
2. Changing Demographics
 - a. *Formerly, in Land Use Zoning we distributed all uses into separate, individual districts. The move to now combine uses can partly be seen as a response to changing demographics. By providing more choices in the housing types on the market we can meet the needs of a wider demographic.*
3. Public Health
 - a. *Increased opportunities for walking: making it possible, as with this proposal, to walk from home to a park, a restaurant, or shopping can improve health.*

4. Urban Design and Place-Making
 - a. *In 1998 when Dana Park originally proposed multi-story residential within a mixed-use center Mesa didn't even have a zoning district for such a mix. To meet this intent for a more urban approach to design, Council went on to approve residential as a contributing use in commercial districts. Today a residential component is again being proposed for Dana Park, along with other uses intended to result in a more urban, pedestrian-friendly place.*
5. Desert Environment
 - a. *This plan proposes increased density of tree plantings along the pedestrian routes. Lack of shade has been identified as a shortcoming of the existing center.*

STAFF ANALYSIS:

EXISTING COMMERCIAL CENTER: Dana Park Village Square has established itself as a unique East Valley retail destination. Its ±66 acre site includes multiple restaurant and retail pad buildings lining the perimeter street frontages on the east and south sides of the site. The main center (including retail, restaurant and office uses) is set behind the parking field, and forms the west and north sides of the site. There is also a neighborhood park, behind the retail center, for the use of the adjacent residential neighborhood. The current proposal affects ±60 acres of the center, excluding most of the street-front pads. It develops the two remaining un-built pads, adds uses, and seeks to fine-tune some elements of the retail center. The proposed changes are discussed under the headings below.

The site plan provided is somewhat conceptual for the design; it will be further refined when the specific development is proposed. If a development proposal follows very closely what is shown in this site plan, only design review will be required. Minor adjustments can be addressed through an administrative site plan review. If substantial changes are made the amended site plan would need to come back to the P&Z Board.

HOTEL – NE CORNER: At 6 stories, the hotel is the tallest structure proposed for the center. It is located along Val Vista Dr., just south of the freeway. This location does not create any adjacency problems as it is fairly separate from all other uses. The hotel use is allowed in the LC zoning district and the additional height will be a function of the BIZ overlay. The hotel will observe the Design Guidelines, and will require Design Review approval.

NORTH MIXED-USE CLUSTER: This addition of office/retail/restaurant uses clusters 2 and 3 story buildings around a useable green space, and is served by a walkable, pedestrian/auto street grid. This addition, within the existing parking field, begins to establish a pattern of walkable streets that tie into the existing center, using up some of the excess parking field.

Key features for the continued development of this space include the angled “on-street” parking in front of the shops, strong pedestrian connections within this space and connections to the other retail locations, building fronts that engage the pedestrian spaces, architecture that helps enhance the public space and creates a pedestrian friendly environment, and the appropriate treatment of the backs of the buildings.

The cluster will observe the Design Guidelines, and will require Design Review approval.

MULTI-RESIDENTIAL/PARKING – NW CORNER (COUNCIL USE PERMIT): This undeveloped pad in the northwest area of the site has, historically, been reserved for a parking garage. The current proposal scales back the footprint of the garage, wrapping it on 3 sides with multi-residential. The multi-level bays of residential need additional design to achieve an effective transition on the west, to the existing single-residential.

Key features for the continued development of this space include the design of the buildings around the street and cul-de-sac that connects the multi-residence area to the retail area to ensure they create a pedestrian friendly space that invites people to walk, design of the “alley” between the commercial space and the residential space to ensure it is attractive, safe, and walkable, and design of the west side of the multi-residence building to ensure an adequate transition from the single-residences uses to the west.

The buildings in this area will observe the Design Guidelines, and will require Design Review approval.

CUP STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL USES: The Zoning Ordinance requires compliance with the following standards to justify a Council Use Permit allowing residential uses in a commercial zoning district:

- “The use is found to be in compliance with the General Plan, Sub Area Plans and other recognized development plans or policies, and will be compatible with surrounding uses; and
- A finding that a plan of operation has been submitted, which includes, but is not limited to, acceptable evidence of compliance with all zoning, building, and fire safety regulations; and
- A finding that a “good neighbor policy” in narrative form has been submitted, which includes, but is not limited to, descriptions of acceptable measures to ensure ongoing compatibility with adjacent uses; including measures to assure that commercial activity will remain as a viable activity on this site; and
- Evidence that acceptable documentation is present demonstrating that the building or site proposed for the use is in, or will be brought into, substantial conformance with all current City development standards, including, but not limited to, landscaping, parking, screen walls, signage, and design guidelines.”

The General Plan analysis in this report establishes that the residential use complies with the General Plan. A staff condition will require approval of the Plan of Operation, and the Good Neighbor Policy at the time the residential component is developed. This will assure these policies treat the specific elements of the development.

SOUTH MIXED-USE CLUSTER: A smaller version of the North Cluster, this is proposed as 2 single-story retail/restaurant buildings around a useable green space, with buildings fronting, at least on one side, shaded walkable streets rather than parking lots. The walkability of the area is improved by extending the pedestrian treatments from this area, out to the perimeter of the commercial center and inward, to the existing shops. The design sketch for this area suggests a 2-story design, which is acceptable within the framework of the LC zoning district, although not specifically identified here.

Key features for the continued development of this space include the angled “on-street” parking in front of the shops, strong pedestrian connections within this space and connections to the other retail locations, building fronts that engage the pedestrian spaces, architecture that helps enhance the public space and creates a pedestrian friendly environment, and the appropriate treatment of the backs of the buildings.

The cluster will observe the Design Guidelines, and will require Design Review approval.

STREET/PEDESTRIAN/LANDSCAPE REVISIONS: Staff is in support of revisions to the drive aisles and sidewalks and the proposals to add diagonal parking along drive aisles, more consistent tree coverage on the sidewalks, and shade structures that are indicated on the landscape plans. New mass plantings throughout the site go well beyond required minimums.

REVISIONS TO BIZ OVERLAY: The Zoning Ordinance limits the height of buildings to 30’ in commercial districts. 40’+ is standard for the existing buildings at Dana Park. While the BIZ was originally intended to permit multi-story buildings, the center did not develop that way. The BIZ was used, instead, to allow taller-than-average, buildings that are mostly single-story. With this proposal multi-story buildings are again being proposed for the center. The BIZ can be used for this exception to height limits when a project proposes amenities of exceptional quality. In 2005 the BIZ approval was modified to allow two 8-story buildings. The current proposal is for a 6-story hotel and 5 stories of residential.

The Design Guidelines and Design Review approval will be used to ensure the high standard of quality which justifies the BIZ overlay.

REVISIONS TO THE DESIGN GUIDELINES: The existing Design Guidelines (established through the PAD) have directed the design choices for this recognizably superior development. The current Project Narrative revises the Guidelines as follows:

- New buildings are to be complementary to the existing style, but with the flexibility to have a less-specific architectural style associated with them.

- Pavers in the drive aisles are to be replaced with asphalt, but the Narrative does not specify a designed surface. Pavement design has been a strong identifying element of this center, and helps justify the BIZ overlay. A staff condition clarifies that the replacement is to be some form of alternative pavement, such as stamped, colored asphalt. The work of replacing street pavers with this kind of pavement has already begun in the center and is an acceptable alternative.
- “Concrete” sidewalks are proposed in place of pavers. The site plan, however, identifies a paving pattern. As with the drive aisle paving, sidewalk pavers make an important contribution to the quality of this center. A staff condition clarifies that sidewalks are to be alternative pavement, to include pavers or other materials such as colored, patterned, textured concrete.
- The 10’-wide parking stalls required in the original Guidelines were built at 9’ wide. This standard width will continue to be allowed. Staff supports the request to continue with landscape islands every 10 spaces. Rather than a 10’ width, new landscape islands will have the standard 8’ width. Also, a requirement for pedestrian paths in these islands has been deleted.
- The Project Narrative (P. 2) includes several specific revisions to the section “Buildings Typical” allowing for flexibility, while requiring compatibility. An example is the requirement for arcades at building entries, which is replaced with language requiring shading.
- A staff condition of approval requires the Design Guidelines to be updated with these modifications. This will make all standards easily accessible to designers and plan reviewers alike.

PARKING: The landscape plans include a parking study. (See A-100 Master Site Plan.) Specific uses are broken out and the analysis demonstrates adequate parking for the proposed uses. The Zoning Ordinance uses a different approach to calculate required parking for shell commercial buildings. Staff ran the numbers and found the proposed site to be adequately parked, based on assumptions in the current proposal.

The parking calculations are based on projected building areas and uses that may be revised as development proceeds. The applicant will be required to demonstrate compliance with parking standards, based on the final building area and use, as plans for each phase of development are presented for review.

CONCLUSIONS:

The existing development has established a sense of place as a well-regarded, high-end commercial center. The mix of uses has been limited to retail, restaurant and office. The current proposal can be seen as building on that reputation, revising some site design elements, and adding new uses to attract more users, and build sustainability. Staff recommends approval of the PAD design guideline modifications, the site plan modification and the Council Use Permit for the residential use.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

1. Compliance with the development as described in the Project Narrative and revised Design Guidelines and as shown in The Village at Dana Park Master Site Plan document dated July 27, 2015, and the landscape plans dated July 27, 2015, and the Dana Park Master Plan Update dated June 2, 2015;
2. Design Review and approval of all development;
3. Compliance with all City development codes and regulations;
4. Compliance with all requirements of Design Review approval;
5. **Modification of the 1998 “Dana Ranch Village Square Design Guidelines” document as described in the project narrative and as herein modified, with final approval of the Planning Director prior to approval of any design review applications on the property;**
6. **The west face of the multi-residential building to be designed to minimize impact on existing residences to the west, with final approval by the Planning Director;**
7. **Replacement of pavers in the drive areas is to be with alternative pavement such as stamped, colored asphalt, as established in the revised Design Guidelines;**
8. **New or revised drive aisles are to be paved with alternative paving, as established in the revised Design Guidelines, with final approval of the Planning Director of the areas of standard pavement vs. alternative pavement;**
9. **New or revised pavement on sidewalks and other non-auto areas is to be alternative pavement such as colored, patterned concrete, etc. as established in the revised Design Guidelines;**
10. **The alley between the parking garage/residential and the back of the commercial center to be designed to provide interest as a high use pedestrian area;**
11. **The “Commercial/Amenity Building” to have a pedestrian-scaled street façade that provides interest at the street level and engages the sidewalks;**
12. **Approval of the Planning Director of a “Plan of Operation” and a “Good Neighbor Policy” for the multi-residential component, in conjunction with Design Review approval;**
13. **Any proposed modification to signage standards will require modification of the existing Comprehensive Sign Plan.**

