



Planning and Zoning Board

Case Information

CASE NUMBER: Z16-050 (PLN2016-00670)
LOCATION: 3100 block of North Recker Road and 5700 through 5900 block of Longbow Parkway
GENERAL VICINITY: Located south of Loop 202 and west of Recker Road
REQUEST: Site Plan Review
PURPOSE: To authorize development of a group commercial center.
COUNCIL DISTRICT: District 5
OWNER/APPLICANT: Dover Associates LLC./Earl, Curley & Lagarde, P.C.
STAFF PLANNER: Andrew Spurgin, Principal Planner

SITE DATA

PARCEL NO.: 141-41-009
PARCEL SIZE: 11.3± gross acres
EXISTING ZONING: LC-PAD
GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: Mixed Use Activity District
PROPOSED LAND USE: Commercial retail

SITE CONTEXT

NORTH: Loop 202 Red Mountain Freeway
EAST: (Across Recker) single residential development
SOUTH: (Across Longbow) Vacant land zoned LI
WEST: (Immediately adjacent) Vacant land zoned LC

ZONING & PROPERTY HISTORY

May 14, 1979: Annexed into City (Ord. #1234)
August 8, 1979: Rezoning from County R-43 to AG (Z79-109; Ord. #1272)
June 1, 1987: Rezoned to M-1 (Z87-31; Ord. #2217)
March 4, 2002: Acceptance of Development Master Plan for Longbow Business Park and Golf Club with conceptual BIZ overlay (Z02-01; Ord. #3972)
November 2, 2005: Design Review Board approval of Design Guidelines, including the sign package, for the Longbow Business Park and Golf Club DMP (DR05-093)
January 17, 2006: Zoning Administrator approved a Special Use Permit for the Comprehensive Sign Plan for the Longbow Business Park and Golf Club DMP (ZA06-02)
November 17, 2008: Rezoned from M-1 to C-2 (Z08-063; Ord. #4897)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval with conditions

PROPOSITION 207 WAIVER SIGNED: ☒ Yes ☐ No

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The site is located south of Loop 202 at the northwest corner of the intersection of Recker Road and Longbow Parkway and is part of the much larger 313-acre Longbow Development Master Plan (DMP, now a Planned Area Development, PAD) that envisions a mixture of employment, commercial and hospitality service land uses between Higley and Recker Roads. The land subject to the request for site plan approval consists of 11.3 gross acres out of a larger 49-acre area zoned LC. The site plan documents depict phase 2 development located on the land west of the subject property yielding a large commercial “power center” format with large parking fields between the retail stores and Longbow Parkway. A land split application is under review by the City that will establish a 9.1 net acre tract for the subject property, however driveway improvements with this proposed phase 1 site plan extend into the land to the west to serve future phase 2 development.

The area subject to the site plan proposes a group commercial center featuring a 30,000 square foot anchor, identified as Major 1, as well as in-line retail buildings, identified as Shops A and B, consisting of 21,000 square feet. Three additional restaurant pads are planned for phase 1B of development. These are shown in the proposed site plan but will be subject to Design Review Board review at such time site plans are submitted for those locations. The applicant has submitted for Design Review on phase 1A concurrent with this application and anticipates construction on a rapid timeline pending municipal approvals.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The applicant has notified surrounding property owners within 1000-feet of the subject site, registered neighborhoods within one mile and homeowner’s associations within one-half mile of the site. A community meeting was held on August 22nd. The applicant submitted a Citizen Participation Report on September 21st. According to the applicant’s report, the majority of citizen questions and comments were informational in nature to understand the scope of the proposed project. Several citizens provided comments on the traffic divider that inhibits east-west traffic from crossing Recker Road between Longbow Parkway and the Ridgeview neighborhood. Staff has not received any comments from the public on the request.

CONFORMANCE WITH THE MESA 2040 GENERAL PLAN

Summary: The proposal is consistent with the concepts of the Mixed Use Activity District established in the Mesa 2040 General Plan. The development will support adjacent residential neighborhoods by improving retail convenience and provide a location to help build community and foster social interaction through civic spaces. The proposal supports build out of the Falcon Field area through the proposed building design and site layout.

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.

Criteria for review of development

The Zoning Ordinance requires that all site plans 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. Strengthening neighborhoods and the commercial centers that serve them is also important. There is an emphasis on retrofitting auto-centered form of suburban development with infill developments that provide pedestrian connections.

Section II of the General Plan establishes the primary elements of the document:

- A. Creating and maintaining a variety of great neighborhoods,
- B. Growing and maintaining stable and diverse jobs,
- C. Providing Rich, High Quality Public Spaces and Cultural Resources, and
- D. Community Character.

The proposed group commercial center at this location is consistent with the guiding principles of the General Plan by providing commercial development featuring multiple uses designed in a quality environment with rich building materials, landscaping with plaza and patio spaces and a development form that will allow pedestrian circulation within the site. Approval of this site plan will facilitate creation of commercial retail opportunities to adjacent residential neighborhoods that are currently disconnected from convenient commercial retail and service land uses. The proposed buildings are shown with a mixture of materials and treatments to create value and provide visual interest. The development proposes landscaped entries with median dividers and several civic spaces to create gathering places that make this development unique compared to other retail spaces in Northeast Mesa.

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

The proposed development is located within the Falcon Sub-Area Plan, which promotes airport compatible development for the areas around Falcon Field, including goals for additional employment and guidelines for architectural quality. The Plan references the opportunity for more retail, entertainment and service uses along Loop 202 near Recker Road, which would be consistent with the development scheme presented in the proposed site plan. The non-residential nature of the proposed site plan further ensures consistency with the land use goals for lands around Falcon Field. The Sub-Area Plan includes a separate Design Inspiration document, which is supported by this proposal through its use of contemporary architecture and detailing such as concrete block, steel and exposed wood elements in logical arrangements. These elements are accompanied by flanking tile walls and composite planking accents to depart from typical strip retail development into a composition with visual interest.

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 identifies this location as a Mixed Use Activity District which are community and regional activity areas characterized by significant retail commercial component and often include other uses such as office, entertainment and residential. 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.

Form and guidelines outlined in the General Plan relevant to the proposed development include policies calling for urban forms that balance autos with pedestrians and designing buildings and parking fields to promote walkability from the street and between buildings.

The proposed development is consistent with the Mixed Use Activity District Character type due to the mixture of land uses set in an environment with pedestrian linkages and outdoor gathering spaces. Given the location adjacent to the Loop 202 freeway, limited transit availability and low nearby residential density it is understood that automobile travel will be the predominant means of travel to and from the center and therefore substantial parking fields will be necessary to serve the tenants of the center for it to be successful.

Acknowledging this situation staff has worked with the developer through several discussions to create a walkable environment inside of the center with walkways leading to patios, plazas and other gather spaces and to provide thoughtful street considerations to ensure interaction with adjacent properties as the Longbow development builds out in future phases. The additional street setbacks established by the Longbow PAD create areas for additional landscape from the street that the site plan shows for a variety of desert appropriate landscaping.

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

• Providing appropriate infill development;

While not situated in an infill location, development of this property does present the opportunity to improve resident convenience by capturing pass-by traffic for East Mesa thus reducing driving distances to reach areas for retail and service uses.

• 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;

This particular Mixed Use Activity District established in the General Plan covers areas on both sides of Loop 202 adjacent to Recker Road. The immediate freeway access provides a location for businesses and attractions that bring people to Mesa from the larger region. The mix of proposed land uses, site layout and functional elements such as building materials appear to establish high quality that that will set a standard within this undeveloped Mixed Use Activity District for future projects.

• Improving the streetscape and connectivity within the area;

The proposal builds upon street improvements previously provided for the Longbow planned community, but adds inviting entries featuring medians and landscaping as well as pedestrian connections from Recker Road and Longbow Parkway into the center, and multiple paths of travel within the center to promote connectivity between uses. As development moves beyond the first phase there will be a need to reevaluate the current

traffic calming feature blocking east-west movement at the intersection of Longbow Parkway and Recker Road to ensure resident convenience and optimal circulation.

- **Improving safety within the area;**

The addition of a commercial retail center at this location will bring employees and customers at many hours of the day thereby improving visibility on adjacent streets and sites and reducing opportunities for unsafe activities within the vacant property. The applicant's lighting plan indicates adequate lighting will cover the site yet not introduce excessive light spillover to adjacent properties.

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

The proposed group commercial development has proposed a consistent architectural theme, landscape palette and use of the Longbow branding logo to create a cohesive development that differs from other commercial centers in Northeast Mesa. The project elevations and materials submitted demonstrate creative elements such as sloping and extended roof elements, exposed wood and decking materials as well as trellis elements woven into the building facades in a quality composition. A robust landscape plan also contributes to the sense of place.

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

The Longbow development is a planned community of employment, hospitality and related land uses. This proposal advances the build out of the Longbow development and compliments adjacent residential neighborhood to the east that was built in the early 1990s.

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;

The proposed development borders the Loop 202 Red Mountain Freeway to the north, Recker Road to the east and Longbow Parkway to the south and vacant commercial land to the west and, therefore, the site is not located contiguous with any other established land uses. The residential community across Recker Road sits at roughly the same grade level as the subject property. The property line for the site plan is 75-feet from the center line of Recker Road, plus features an additional 30 foot landscaped setback which helps ensure a transition distance between residential uses and this commercial project.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

The applicant proposes to develop approximately 11 acres of land with approximately 64,000 square feet of commercial retail and service space. The initial phase comprises 51,000 square feet featuring a 30,000 square foot retail anchor (Major 1) with an additional 6,100 square feet of retail and restaurant space attached (Shops C) and two additional inline buildings for restaurant and retail space providing approximately 14,500 square feet of space (Shops A and B). Phase 1B adds to the initial phase with three additional pads providing 13,000 additional square feet shown as likely restaurant uses. Phase 2 development is shown west of Phase 1 and requires site plan review at a later time. Staff proposes two conditions of approval relative to the interface of phase 1 and 2. First, installation of temporary landscaping and curbing along the edges of any drives or parking areas adjacent to this boundary, as well as establishment of future cross-access

and maintenance agreements of shared driveways crossing parcel lines (conditions #7 and 8)

Though the 3 additional pads are not part of the initial phase of development, the associated parking fields, access drives and the majority of the site improvements are all planned for the current phase of development. Given the level of detail provided on the site plan, staff supports a future administrative site plan process with Design Review Board work sessions for the 3 restaurant pad sites indicated as Phase 1B construction (condition # 9). The current site plan would also provide temporary landscaping and curbing to separate Phase 1B as necessary pursuant to condition #7 discussed above.

Site layout

The General Plan form guidelines found on page 7-20 for the Mixed Use Activity District establish several policies that merit consideration:

- “Usually more suburban in design and form with auto dominant characteristics, but more urban forms that balance autos with pedestrians are encouraged for new development and redevelopment”
- “Building and parking fields should be located on the property to establish a connection to the street and promote walkability between buildings”
- “Size and scale of parking fields is broken up to improve visual appearance, reduce heat islands, and improve walkability”

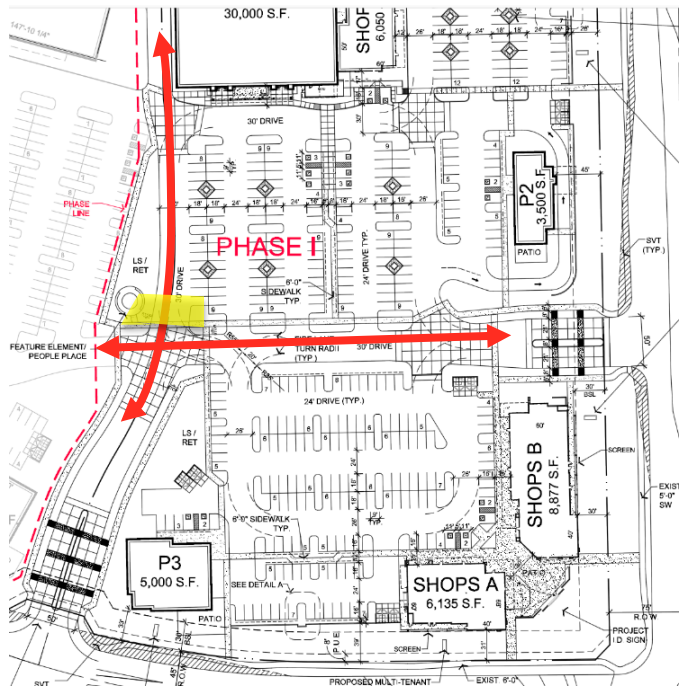
Given the Mixed Use Activity District designation in the General Plan and the available 38 acres of additional land within the Phase 2 development area, the preference of staff is for development of a park-once setting that is walkable and creating a unique experience that differs from typical strip commercial and pad development.

In discussions with the applicant, staff was informed that the 30,000 square foot retail anchor is driving many project considerations and is essential to the success of the overall project. The design team has responded well to staff concerns and suggestions with site plan updates to establish a setting with civic spaces, pedestrian circulation that is separated from vehicular traffic and interesting streetscape presence. While a more urban form is desirable, staff acknowledges the responsiveness of the design team, the need to provide commercial retail and services to this section of Northeast Mesa and opportunities to establish urban formats within other sections of the surrounding Longbow PAD.

The design team has presented quality designs for the proposed buildings. The elevations show a contemporary style with a mixture of building materials, colors and a large shed roof canopy at the anchor retail building as part of a 20-foot-wide foundation base area as well as a patio space covered by a trellis. Wide entry drives are planned with landscape medians to provide a unique entry experience into the development. At the intersection of Recker Road and Longbow Parkway two inline retail buildings meet with a unique shaded patio space, as shown in the renderings. This informal gathering place contributes to the unique environment and supports General Plan policies for creating public spaces.

An additional public space is shown along the west side of Phase 1 where the main east-west and north-south driveways intersect, shown in the plans as “feature element/people place.” The project narrative provides images of how this public space inside the parking lot could function. The preference of staff would be to have such a feature closer to the buildings but the applicant has indicated that the parking field for the retail anchor tenant is critical to project success and it must be kept as planned.

Relative to vehicular circulation adjacent to the “feature element/people place,” staff has encouraged the applicant to monitor potential circulation conflicts between trucks, vehicles using the drive aisle and parking vehicles and opportunities for pavement treatments, signage or curb extensions to provide awareness of multiple operational characteristics of this location. The applicant has proposed using a stop sign at the intersection and decorative pavement in the four-way driveway intersection as a demarcation of this different location. All crosswalks through the development are requested to provide pavers, decorative pavers or stamped concrete to ensure demarcation of pedestrian space (condition #10). It is recognized that as phase 2 of the project continues the development of the retail center to the west and, when built, it appears that trucks will use the perimeter driveway around the edges of phase 2 rather than the north-south drive aisle discussed above.



Alternative Landscape Plan

In conjunction with the site plan, the applicant requests consideration of an Alternative Landscape Plan (ALP) as authorized by section 11-33-7 of the Zoning Ordinance for the northern parking field adjacent to the entry for Major 1 and Shops C. In this one area, the applicant proposes to use 6'x6' parking lot diamonds consisting of 36 square feet of landscape space featuring a 24" box Desert Willow tree as an alternative to some of the required parking lot islands, which by ordinance are typically 120 square feet in size and planted with 1 shade tree (24-inch box) and 3 shrubs from 1 to 5 gallon on size depending on the components of the overall landscape plan (50% must be 5 gallon). The 6' by 6' diamonds would be surrounded by an addition 12' by 12' area of permeable pavers to ensure water seepage into the area intended to support tree growth.

The applicant's approach provides the opportunity to provide a tree between every 4 parking spaces, instead of the typical 8 spaces between parking islands. In the area with parking lot diamonds, parking lot islands would still be provided between every 12 parking spaces. The applicant has furnished an exhibit to show how this approach yields a larger landscape area. Specifically, as shown in the exhibit, where 72 parking spaces are provided, their approach yields 2,266 square feet of landscape area rather than the 1,713 square feet that would meet the minimum required by ordinance. Staff supports this alternative approach to parking lot landscaping however the final determination will be made by the Zoning Administrator (condition #11)

RELATED ITEM:

An unusual “dog-bone” traffic calming feature exists blocking through movement across Recker Road at Longbow Parkway. It is believed that this feature was installed as a traffic calming

device prior to the 2007 extension of Loop 202 to Power Road. The likely purpose of the feature was to preclude cut-through traffic along Longbow Parkway from entering the Ridgeview subdivision on East Preston Street, which would provide a through route between Higley Road and Power Road.

The continued presence of this feature will limit residential access to the Longbow retail development due to the absence of median breaks along Recker Road, and prohibit commercial vehicles turning from Longbow Parkway left onto Recker Road towards Loop 202. To legally navigate to the proposed retail center a resident of Ridgeview would need to access McDowell Road through the neighborhood or proceed north on Recker Road from Preston and perform a u-turn north of the Loop 202. U-Turns are not something that the City would typically encourage. The applicant included discussion of this topic in their citizen participation meeting and the feedback was provided that supported removal of the device as well as others desiring to retain the feature in place. As the retail area expands into phase 2 the need to address this issue becomes more important. The City of Mesa encourages review of this issue and consideration of modification through a public process to get community feedback about their desires for removing the medians or keeping them.

CONCLUSIONS:

Staff supports the overall project due to the potential benefits it adds to Northeast Mesa by providing community serving retail and service lands uses that will facilitate resident convenience and the level of design quality provided with the submittal. The project depicted in plans, elevations and as described in the project narrative introduces retail and entertainment uses as suggested in the Falcon Field Sub-Area Plan and consistent with the Mixed Use Activity character area designation of the General Plan. Staff believes that sufficient detail is provided with the site plan submittal to authorize site plan approval of Phase 1, provided that additional site plan review occurs for the pads marked Phase 1B. The Design Review process will be used to address any additional concerns regarding the building designs and therefore staff recommends approval of this case subject to the following conditions:

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

1. Compliance with the basic development as described in the project narrative and as shown in the site plan, landscape plan and elevations submitted.
2. Compliance with all Design Review requirements.
3. Compliance with all City development codes and regulations except as modified by the Longbow Master Plan PAD.
4. Completion of a land split and satisfaction of the conditions of approval of the requested land split.
5. All required street improvements shall be installed with the first phase of development.
6. Compliance with all requirements of the Airfield Overlay District including the following:
 - A. Written notice be provided to future tenants, and acknowledgement received that the project is within 2 miles of Mesa Falcon Field Airport.
 - B. Owner shall grant an Avigation Easement and Release to the City, pertaining to Mesa Falcon Field Airport that will be prepared and recorded by the City (concurrently with the recordation of the final land split or prior to the issuance of a building permit).
 - C. Noise attenuation measures are to be incorporated into the design and construction of the buildings to achieve a noise level reduction of 25 db.
7. **Temporary landscaping of at least five feet in width and curbing shall be provided along the edges of any drives or parking areas adjacent to the**

boundaries for Phase 1B and Phase 2.

- 8. Prior to issuance of first building permit, recordation of a cross-access easement and maintenance agreement for the shared driveway along the western property line with the parcel located adjacent to the west.**
- 9. Future site plan and design review of pad sites P1, P2 and P3 per Code.**
- 10. Pavers or decorative/stamped concrete shall be provided for pedestrian crosswalks throughout the development.**
- 11. Compliance with the parking lot landscaping requirements of Chapter 33 of the Zoning Ordinance or, prior to issuing a building permit, approval of an alternative landscape plan as approved by the Zoning Administrator.**