

Rezoning, Site Plan, and Design Review Applications

for



**West of the Southwest Corner of
Val Vista Road and Thomas Road**

by:

NexMetro Development, LLC

Case Nos.: PLN2016-00140

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction	1
II. Site and Surrounding Area	1
III. Proposed Rezoning, Site Plan, and Design Review	1
A. Site Plan.....	2
B. Landscaping, Amenities, and Open Space	3
C. Architecture	4
D. Theme Walls, Entry Gates, and Entry Monument	5
E. Development Standards.....	6
IV. NexMetro Corporate Background.....	7
V. Miscellaneous.....	7
A. Parking	7
B. Phasing	7
C. Grading and Drainage	7
VI. Project Team.....	7
VII. Conclusion	8
<u>Appendix A: General Plan Compatibility.....</u>	<u>i</u>

TABLE OF EXHIBITS

Exhibit No.	Description
1	Aerial Map
2	Preliminary Site Plan
3	Landscape Master Plan
4	Typical Courtyard Layout
5	Building Elevations
6	Floor Plans
7	Conceptual Amenity Area
8	Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation Plan
9	Color and Material Palette
10	Office Elevation and Pool Area
11	Garage Elevations
12	Conceptual Community Theme Walls, View Fencing, and Entrance Features
13	Conceptual Wall Plan
14	Preliminary Grading and Drainage Plan

AVILLA LEHI

I. INTRODUCTION

NexMetro Development, LLC (“NexMetro”) is building a reputation for developing high quality and successful single story, detached, bungalow-style residences in Chandler, Gilbert, the Phoenix area, Tucson, and other parts of the country. Building on their experiences, NexMetro is the proposed developer of approximately 11.34 gross (10.03± net) acres west of the southwest corner of Val Vista Road and Thomas Road (the “Site”). NexMetro is in escrow to acquire the Site and redevelop it with a unique, innovative, and high-quality, high-density residential community known as “Avilla Lehi.” Avilla Lehi will contain 118, 1-story, predominately detached residences that will be an attractive presence in the area and provide an appropriate transition between the existing residential development west and south of the Site to the future commercial developments to the east and north.

Avilla Lehi represents a lifestyle choice, presenting future residents a unique living experience and an alternative housing choice to the traditional options of single-family residences or apartment complexes. Avilla Lehi combines the best elements of residential single-family living with multi-family-like lease terms and management. The combination of these elements create a desirable residential option with upscale features and spacious indoor/outdoor living areas maintained by a professional management company, without the mortgage payment or HOA fees of a typical single-family development. The bungalow-style residences are one story in height, with the majority of them containing no more than 1 du/building, creating a “single family subdivision” feel throughout the neighborhood. This gated community is designed with move-up market finishes and features in an efficient setting. Avilla will be compatible with the neighboring developments and will provide high quality, unique, and additional housing opportunities within the City of Mesa (the “City”).

To achieve this, NexMetro requests the following:

- Rezone the Site from Limited Commercial/PAD (LC) to RM-2/PAD;
- Site Plan approval for 118, 1-story residences; and
- Design Review approval for the Site Plan, Landscape Plan, Building Elevations, etc. for Avilla Lehi.

II. SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

An aerial of the Site is attached as **Exhibit 1**. The Site is designated on the City’s General Plan as Neighborhood Village Center and is zoned Limited Commercial/PAD (LC). The Site is part of the Lehi PAD. East of the Site are citrus orchards, designated on the General Plan Neighborhood Village Center and zoned RS-43. The Site is bordered by an existing residential neighborhood on the west and south, designated on the General Plan as Neighborhoods and zoned RS-9. The property to the north is designated on the General Plan as LC and zoned as General Industrial (GI).

III. PROPOSED REZONING, SITE PLAN, AND DESIGN REVIEW

As discussed, NexMetro is proposing the Site be rezoned from LC/PAD to RM-2/PAD. NexMetro’s proposed Rezoning, Site Plan, and Design Review applications for an upscale, unique, medium-high density neighborhood is compatible with the City’s General Plan and is an

appropriate transition from the existing residential (less intense land use) to the future commercial (more intense land use). The General Plan's Goals and Policies identified in *Appendix A: General Plan Compatibility* support NexMetro's applications. NexMetro's requests will provide for a coordinated and compatibly arranged variety of land uses in the area through innovative site planning. Moreover, the requests will provide additional residential housing choices in the area, that when coupled with the existing residential and future commercial creates a more diverse, mixed-use environment. The proposed zoning change responds to the existing and future needs of the community by providing alternative housing for people seeking to live in the area.

Rezoning the Site from commercial to residential makes sense given the Site's inability to develop thus far as a commercial development. Challenges to developing the Site under its current zoning are its location and size. The Site is not located on the "hard corner" of Val Vista and Thomas Roads, reducing visibility from the intersection of two major arterial streets with direct freeway access (the Loop 202). The Site's size (approximately 10 acres) would require a significant anchor tenant to be successful. However, the ability to attract an anchor tenant to the Site is unlikely given its location (mid-block) and there are more desirable locations in the area for commercial to be developed.

A. Site Plan

As is depicted on the Preliminary Site Plan attached as **Exhibit 2**, careful consideration has gone into planning Avilla Lehi. NexMetro has created a community that is attractively designed, aesthetically landscaped, and provides an appropriate use of the Site. Avilla Lehi is a gated community that will consist of approximately 118 residences at a density of approximately 10.4 gross (11.8 net) du/ac. The residences are a mix of one, two, and three bedrooms, with approximately 75% of the residences being detached and the one-bedroom residences being attached in a duplex style. Unlike traditional apartment complexes where the majority of the units are 1 and 2 bedrooms (typically 50-60% 1 bedrooms, 30-40% 2 bedrooms, and less than 10% 3 bedrooms), Avilla Lehi has more 2 and 3 bedroom residences (25% 1 bedrooms, 44% 2 bedrooms, and 31% 3 bedrooms).

The residences will range in square footage between approximately 625 sq. ft. and 1,250 sq. ft. The 1-story buildings are similar to what would be found in traditional single-family residential subdivisions and are a lower profile than what would be found in traditional garden style multi-family communities (2- and 3-story buildings) or commercial developments. The residences are grouped around pedestrian courtyards to create a sense of arrival and place within the greater context of the community and greater connection within the community. See **Exhibit 4, Typical Courtyard Layout**. All homes and garages will be fire sprinkled, allowing a reduced building separation that enhances the impact of the courtyard design. The home interiors are an open concept design with 10-foot ceilings, large windows, and high end finishes such as stainless steel appliances and granite countertops.

The placement of the buildings and yard walls interact with the streetscape and adjacent developments by varying the roof lines and orientations, providing small scale pedestrian courtyards, amenities and landscape features, and architectural detail. Materials for both hardscape elements and housing product establish a theme and work harmoniously to create a visually pleasing environment. A unique feature for Avilla Lehi is that every residence includes a private, 6-foot masonry wall enclosing the rear yard (average of approximately 400 square feet)

that is nearly as wide as the residence itself, with a minimum depth of 8 feet. Prior to residents moving in, the entire yard will be covered with decomposed granite and a minimum of one tree will be installed. Residents are allowed to customize their yards upon approval by the property management company. Common improvements by residents include brick paver patios, barbeques, patio furniture, and trellises or umbrellas. Where the residences are adjacent to the amenity area, the private rear yard will be a 6-foot high wall that is a combination of masonry (4 ft.) and wrought iron (2 ft.). Small scale pedestrian courtyards and outdoor seating areas are also provided to create a seamless and smooth transition between public and private portions of the community.

B. Landscaping, Amenities, and Open Space

The overall landscape theme is inspired by luxury living while also embracing an adapted Sonoran Desert style landscaping. See **Exhibit 3, Landscape Master Plan**. Notwithstanding the Sonoran Desert style landscaping, citrus trees will be provided along the Site's frontage and in the rear yards along the southern and western boundaries to reflect the citrus heritage of the Site and surrounding area. As shown on the Conceptual Master Landscape Plan, the design, elements, and materials create a sense of community and neighborhood, while adding a fresh approach to timeless desert environments for Arizona residential communities. The elements and features are designed to create a "sense of place" and a permanence achieved by relating the elements to the "human scale" and integrating with the architecture.

The landscaping theme draws from the lush desert look and feel of an adapted Sonoran landscape tempered for the Arizona climate through the use of drought tolerant elements. The use of palms at the entry and pool area creates a sense of entry and a resort style landscape look and feel. The landscape elements provide a diversity of colorful plant materials and are evocative of luxury living. The landscaping theme also integrates design cues from the timeless architecture and design elements of the Southwest reflected in the materials and detailing. Avilla Lehi draws from traditional southwest architecture through the use of stone, stucco, and tile that contrast in color and texture. Together these elements embrace the southwest architecture of the proposed homes and blend with the existing built environment of the area.

The landscape palette for Avilla Lehi consists of multiple tree species that include Palo Verde species, Mesquite species, and Oak species that are fast growing and medium to large in height. See **Exhibit 3**. The palette includes smaller trees such as Mulga and Mastic that are moderate in height and provide shade for smaller spaces. The shrubs, accents, and groundcovers have been selected to provide year round color and complement one another and the tree species. The plants have been chosen for their color, texture, and form, creating a landscape environment that is adapted to the desert and inviting to the residents and visitors of Avilla Lehi.

Avilla Lehi has been planned with quality neighborhood scale amenities consistent with NexMetro's desire to create an upscale, suburban community where residents will be able to play, relax, or socialize in a pleasing environment. See **Exhibit 7, Conceptual Amenity Area**. The amenity areas within Avilla Lehi are designed to enhance the community character and quality of life by providing recreational opportunities and connectivity for residents through the integration of effective internal and external open spaces. The amenity and theming elements have been integrated to maintain the overall "sense of place" and identity of the community. Avilla Lehi will contain a main amenity area and linear park, providing active and passive open space for residents and guests to enjoy. Pedestrian paths are provided throughout the Site,

connecting the residences to the amenities and allowing opportunities to connect to the future commercial to the east. See **Exhibit 8, Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation Plan**. Additional amenities include: resort style swimming pool and spa, outdoor lawn and lounge areas, ramadas, and gathering areas for residents to congregate. NexMetro's neighborhoods have traditionally attracted singles, young couples, and seniors, with a very limited number of school aged children. For this reason, the amenities provided focus on recreation and socialization of adult residents.

Open space requirements for multi-family residential developments are a result of the lack of private usable space typically associated with standard two and three-story multi-family communities. The minimum requirement for open space is 200 square feet per residence, resulting in a required minimum open space requirement of approximately 0.54 acres (23,600 sq. ft.). Avilla Lehi will contain approximately 3.88 acres of common area open space and approximately 1.49 acres of private (rear yards) open space. When combined together, this result in a total amount of open space area of approximately 5.37 acres, which is approximately 53% of the net Site area (10.03 net acres)—far exceeding the minimum required (0.54 acres). The public open space occurs in convenient locations throughout the Site for residents to use and enjoy. The private open space is located within the rear yards of the residences for each resident's own personal use and enjoyment, which is more typical of a single-family development than a traditional multi-family community. The use and amounts of public and private open space continues to demonstrate the innovative design of Avilla Lehi.

C. Architecture

The proposed architecture for Avilla Lehi is in keeping with the adjacent single-family residences in Lehi Crossing and the surrounding area. There are three floor plans (1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom residences), each with three distinct architectural themes, materials, and colors. See **Exhibit 5, Building Elevations and Exhibit 6, Floor Plans**. The architectural theme for the homes surrounding each courtyard will be similar in order to create a consistent identifiable aesthetic. Each architectural style will feature specific detailing to the homes and the courtyards, with architectural details and elements providing shade to doors and windows on the front and rear elevations. The varied colors and materials will aid in creating the distinct character for each courtyard within the community. See **Exhibit 5 and Exhibit 9, Material and Color Palette**.

The proposed architectural elevation styles for Avilla Lehi are Spanish, Ranch and Tuscan. Each architectural style has been carefully chosen to be distinct to itself yet blend well with each other and the existing surrounding communities. The architectural styles all feature pitched rooflines, which reinforce the aesthetic of the architectural style. In addition, each homes has layered architectural massing to create shade and shadow. These varying elevation planes also create opportunities to provide natural changes in colors & materials giving further depth to the architecture.

- **Spanish Style:** The Spanish style was inspired by the eclectic rural architecture of Spain and Latin America. Typical features include a low-pitched roof with little or no eave overhang, "S" tiled roofs, decorative wrought iron detailing, simple detailing at doors and windows, style specific window muntin grillwork. Porches with square pillars, and a stucco wall surface with deep accent colored doors and shutters.

- Arizona Ranch Style: The Arizona Ranch style was inspired by the homes on early rural western ranches. The ranch style homes originated in 1930s and are characterized by one-story, low pitched roofs and asymmetrical massing. The roofing will be textured with flat concrete tile to emulate the traditional cedar shake shingle roofing that would have been used on the rural western ranches. The exterior wall materials include stucco and horizontal and vertical siding. The windows will have style specific window muntin grillwork. Careful interplay of the horizontal and vertical siding helps to balance the asymmetrical massing of the home. Additionally, brick veneer accents are utilized at column bases to accentuate the entry and ground the home to its natural surroundings. Because of the rural origins of this style natural earth tone colors and textures tend to be used with strong but simple color blocking on the façade.
- Tuscan Style: The Tuscan architectural style was inspired by the rural Tuscan farmhouses of Italy. The true beauty of the Tuscan architectural style comes from its simple roof forms, natural materials, and warm colors and textures that imbue the home with a timeless organic quality. The Tuscan style homes will have low pitched “S” tile roofs, trellised windows, exposed beam ends, and stone veneer accents. The windows for this style will also have style specific window muntin grillwork. They will be primarily stucco exteriors with simple classic detailing similar to the farmhouses of Tuscany. In addition to the primary stucco massing of the home, these homes feature stone veneer architectural elements such as porches that give the homes a sense that they were built over generations.

The pool amenity and management office welcomes residents and guests at the main entrance to the community off of Thomas Road. See **Exhibit 10, Office Elevation and Pool Area**. The design of this entry area is intended to give residents and visitors the ability to park outside the gate and visit the management office. See **Exhibit 2, Preliminary Site Plan**. The management office is designed to be a focal point of the entrance area. At approximately 25 feet in height, the management office is slightly taller than the homes. This building incorporates the architectural elements, materials, and colors of the homes, with layers of horizontal and vertical planes. The resident postal boxes are incorporated with the building, making it truly a neighborhood-gathering place where residents can regularly interact with management and one another.

Noticeably absent from the four-sided elevations are garages. Due to the unique design of Avilla Lehi, detached garages and covered parking are internalized and screened from adjacent roadways. The garage elevations incorporate similar elements from the residences in order to create a consistent design throughout the neighborhood. Parking canopy covers are consistent with the buildings’ color and will be architecturally integrated with the surrounding structures. See **Exhibit 11, Garage Elevations**.

D. Theme Walls, Entry Gates, and Entry Monument

As depicted in **Exhibit 12, Conceptual Community Theme Walls, View Fencing, and Entrance Features**, the theme walls, view fencing, and entry monument have been designed to be consistent with the home elevations and landscaping theme.

There is a hierarchy of four wall types that will be used in various locations throughout Avilla Lehi. See **Exhibit 13, Conceptual Wall Plan**. Areas with a greater visual importance

will use the theme wall, which incorporates integral color CMU block with bands of split-face integral colored CMU block. Long runs of wall will be broken by columns integrating similar split face block used in the theme wall and finished with a decorative cap. In appropriate locations, partial and full view fencing is provided to create visual relief and diversity. The entry gates will use a material palette similar to the architecture and perimeter walls, with the gates being primarily composed of tubular steel, steel panels and wrought iron. See **Exhibit 12**. Automobile gates will be automatic wrought iron gates with design articulation to match the architecture of the development. Pedestrian gates will also be wrought iron.

The materials of the monument sign will include variations of earth tone paint colors on stucco over CMU with some smooth face CMU. See **Exhibit 12**. Other materials incorporated into the sign wall will be woven steel artwork that complements the Avilla Lehi logo.

E. Development Standards

Given the unique nature of Avilla Lehi and the traditional requirements of the City's RM-2 development standards, which are not readily applicable to this distinct, one-story, predominantly detached, multi-family community, NexMetro is proposing the following development standards for Avilla Lehi (changes in development standards are noted in **bold**):

Regulation¹	City of Mesa RM-2 Development Regulations	Avilla Homes Proposed Development Regulations
Min. Lot Area (sq. ft.)	7,200	7,200
Min. Lot Width (ft.) – Multi-Family Res.	60	60
Min. Lot Depth (ft.) – Multi-Family Res.	94	94
Max. Density (du/net ac.)	15	15
Min. Lot Area per du (sq. ft.)	2,904	2,904
Max. Height (ft.)	30	25 ft./1 story
Building Setbacks		
Front (Thomas Rd.)	20 ft.	25 ft.
Side (east)	20 ft.	10 ft.
Side (west)	25 ft.	25 ft.
Rear (south)	25 ft.	25 ft.
Landscape Setback²		
Front (Thomas Rd.)	25 ft.	20 ft.
Side (east)	25 ft.	10 ft.
Side (west)	25 ft.	25 ft.
Rear	25 ft.	25 ft.
Separation Between Buildings (1-story)	25 ft.	6 ft.
Max. Building Coverage	45%	45%
Min. Open Space (sq. ft./unit)	200	200

¹ Per Table 11-5-5.

² Per §11-5-5(A)(1).

The proposed development standards reflect the uniqueness of Avilla Lehi, the property itself, and the surrounding properties. The placement of homes on the perimeter of the property, with the rear yards facing the adjacent street and properties is designed to complement the streetscape and adjacent developments by providing a similar scale and visual aesthetic as single-family homes, but without traditional street facing garages. Internal vehicular circulation and parking also reduce the visual impact of the community by hiding it from the public view.

IV. NEXMETRO CORPORATE BACKGROUND

NexMetro Communities is a pioneering development company that builds private leased home neighborhoods, featuring homes that offer thoughtfully-designed spaces, high-end finishes, and indoor/outdoor living in appealing locations for people who seek stability through flexibility. The Board of NexMetro is comprised of five Directors that have over 200 years of collective experience in the development and operation of nearly \$3 billion in real estate projects, including the management of growth-oriented enterprises in the southwest region. NexMetro and its affiliates have nearly 1,300 like-kind rental home neighborhoods already completed or currently under construction in Arizona and Texas, with future neighborhoods planned in the Arizona, Texas, and Colorado markets.

V. MISCELLANEOUS

A. Parking

Avilla Lehi is providing 251 parking spaces, where 248 are required. Of the 251 parking spaces, 36 will be enclosed garage spaces that reduce the visual impact and scale of the parking spaces. The final site plan will meet the City's parking requirements.

B. Phasing

It is anticipated that Avilla Lehi will be constructed in two phases, with the necessary off-site improvements being made, on-site infrastructure being constructed, and models homes and the management office being built. The second phase will consist of building out the remaining homes. Staff may administratively approve deviations from the proposed phasing.

C. Grading and Drainage

The Preliminary Grading and Drainage Plan is attached as **Exhibit 14**. All project drainage systems will be designed and constructed in accordance to the latest MAG Standard Specifications and Details and the latest City of Mesa Standard Details and Specifications. Onsite drainage (including adjacent half-street areas) and retention shall consist of some onsite surface retention and an underground storm drain system that will be designed to capture storm water runoff according to the City's calculation requirements.

VI. PROJECT TEAM

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VII. CONCLUSION

Avilla Lehi's bungalow-style community is an exciting and unique housing choice that makes good use of this Site. The proposed Rezoning, Site Plan, and Design Review approvals are supported by the City's General Plan and are compatible with the surrounding area. Avilla Lehi creates a sustainable solution for this Site and an attractive presence in the area. We request your approval.

NexMetro Development, LLC

APPENDIX A: GENERAL PLAN COMPATIBILITY

The Avilla Lehi Rezoning, Site Plan, and Design Review applications are supported by the City's General Plan goals, objectives, and policies as follows:

Community Character

Neighborhood Village Centers

Avilla Lehi complies with the Form and Guidelines of the Neighborhood Village Center as follows:

- Building heights generally one to three stories; respecting adjacent residential.
- Convenient, safe, and attractive pedestrian connections from the adjoining neighborhoods and transit.
- Site design includes creating spaces for pedestrian activity and creating direct connection to adjacent neighborhood.
- Buildings placed in proximity and orientation to each other to help create a sense of place, energize streets, and improve pedestrian circulation to the center.

Traditional

Additionally, Avilla Lehi complies with the description of the Neo-Traditional neighborhoods as it has greater connectivity to recreational and commercial uses to the east. Avilla Lehi further complies with the Form and Guidelines of the Neo-Traditional neighborhood as follows:

- The predominant building height is one-stories.
- Density is generally between two and 12 dwelling units per acre. Higher densities are generally more appropriate on the edges of a neighborhood, at higher traffic volume locations, as a transition from non-residential areas.
- Accessible, usable community space is spread through the community and provides a focus for smaller neighborhood areas.
- Open space designed with homes or other uses that front it.

Guiding Principle 1: Create and maintain a variety of great neighborhoods.

Key Element 1: Safe, Clean and Healthy Living Environment

- Initial site planning and design/redesign that includes application of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards.
- Maintenance of streets, sidewalks, street lighting, etc. to ensure roadways, paths and trails are safe; improve lighting where needed.
- Avoiding incompatible land uses and/or providing appropriate transitions between uses.
- Encouraging new development and redevelopment that improves walkability between housing and key amenities and services.
- Locate and design public spaces so that there is a high degree of natural surveillance.
- Provision of active outdoor open space for all ages.

Key Element 2: Build Community and Foster Social Interaction

- Designing new developments with anchors or focal points, such as schools, parks or shopping areas that are designed and located to facilitate meetings and interactions.
- Providing pedestrian systems that link residents to neighborhood focal points to naturally bring people together.

Key Element 3: Connectivity and Walkability

- On the smaller micro-neighborhood level some degree of disconnection, particularly for vehicles, can be helpful to create neighborhood identity.
- It is also important to design and maintain neighborhoods to be walkable. Walkable neighborhoods have streets, sidewalks, and trails designed and maintained to help people feel safe and comfortable using them.
- Block lengths developed consistent with the character area standards.
- Trees and shade provided along streets and pedestrian ways consistent with the character area standards in a way that does not interfere with night time lighting of the street, sidewalk and paths.
- Utilizing Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design standards and techniques for the design of lighting, landscaping, and buildings along streets.
- Providing shade and comfortable places to stop along a street or trail.
- Encouraging a development pattern that provides easy, multimodal access to shopping, work, recreation, and other nearby amenities.

Key Element 4: Provide for Diversity

- Having a variety of housing types provides interest to the built environment and provides the opportunity for differing people to live in close proximity to one another. The variety of housing also allows people to stay in the same neighborhood as their housing needs change throughout their life.
- Neighborhoods become interesting place to live when you can encounter a variety of people. Diverse and inclusive neighborhoods allow people of different incomes, ages, races, and ethnicities to gather and get to know each other which make the community stronger.
- Encouraging a variety of dwelling types within each area of the community consistent with the character area standards and not allowing an over concentration of multi-residence dwellings in an area.

Key Element 5: Neighborhood Character and Personality

- Requiring the use of high quality architecture, building materials and landscape design and maintenance in all developments.
- Creating neighborhood boundaries and limiting through traffic into the neighborhoods.

Key Element 6: Quality Design and Development

- In smaller lot and multi-residence areas, requiring developer-provided landscaping of front yards throughout the development and a mechanism for ongoing maintenance.
- Requiring that all building facades that face a street or public space have architectural interest.
- Using a variety of high-quality, durable materials that are appropriate for this climate.
- Unique public or community spaces that provide a focal point to draw people together.

Neighborhoods Policy 1: Encourage the appropriate mix of uses that will bring life and energy to neighborhoods while protecting them from encroachment by incompatible development.

Neighborhoods Strategy 5: Investigate strategies and incentives to encourage appropriate infill and property reuse consistent with neighborhood goals and values.

Housing

- Providing a mix of high quality housing options throughout the city, in conjunction with supporting uses and activities, is the key to achieving the goal of creating and monitoring a variety of great neighborhoods.

Housing Policy 1: Encourage a range of housing options in all areas of the city in order to allow people to stay in their neighborhood as their housing needs change.

Transportation

Transportation Goal 2

- Objective 2 – Make walking safe, convenient and enjoyable while encouraging social interaction in public places.