



Planning and Zoning Board

Case Information

CASE NUMBER: **Z16-045 (PLN2015-00327)**
LOCATION/ADDRESS: 3400 to 3500 block of East Thomas Road (south side)
GENERAL VICINITY: Located west of Val Vista Drive on the south side of Thomas Road.
REQUEST: PAD modification; Rezoning from LC-PAD to RM-2-PAD-PAD; and Site Plan Review.
PURPOSE: This request will allow a multiple-residence development.
COUNCIL DISTRICT: District 1
OWNER: Engel Investments, L.P.
APPLICANT: Burch & Cracchiolo, P.A. – Brennan Ray
STAFF PLANNER: Kim Steadman

SITE DATA

PARCEL NUMBERS: 141-18-002A; 002B; 004B; 009L; 009M; 009Q
PARCEL SIZE: 11.34± acres
EXISTING ZONING: LC-PAD
GENERAL PLAN Character area: Neighborhood Village Center
CURRENT LAND USE: Agriculture

HISTORY/RELATED CASES

January 18, 2005: General Plan Major Land Use Amendment from Mixed Use/Residential to MDR 2-4; MDR 6-10; HDR 10-15; Office and Community Commercial (GPMajor 04-01)
August 15, 2005: General Plan Minor Land Use Amendment from MDR 2-4 & MDR 6-10 to MDR 2-4; MDR 6-10 & HDR 10-15 to MDR 4-6; Office to Community Commercial. (GP Minor 05-03)
November 20, 2006: Annexed into the City. (Ord. #4619)
November 20, 2006: Comparable zoning of R1-43 (Z06-073)
December 18, 2006: Rezone to C2-DMP within the Lehi Crossing Development Master Plan (Z06-084)
October 4, 2010: Modify the DMP affecting residential phasing (Z10-020)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval with Conditions
P&Z BOARD RECOMMENDATION: ☐ Approval with conditions. ☐ Denial
WAIVER SIGNED: ☒ Yes ☐ No

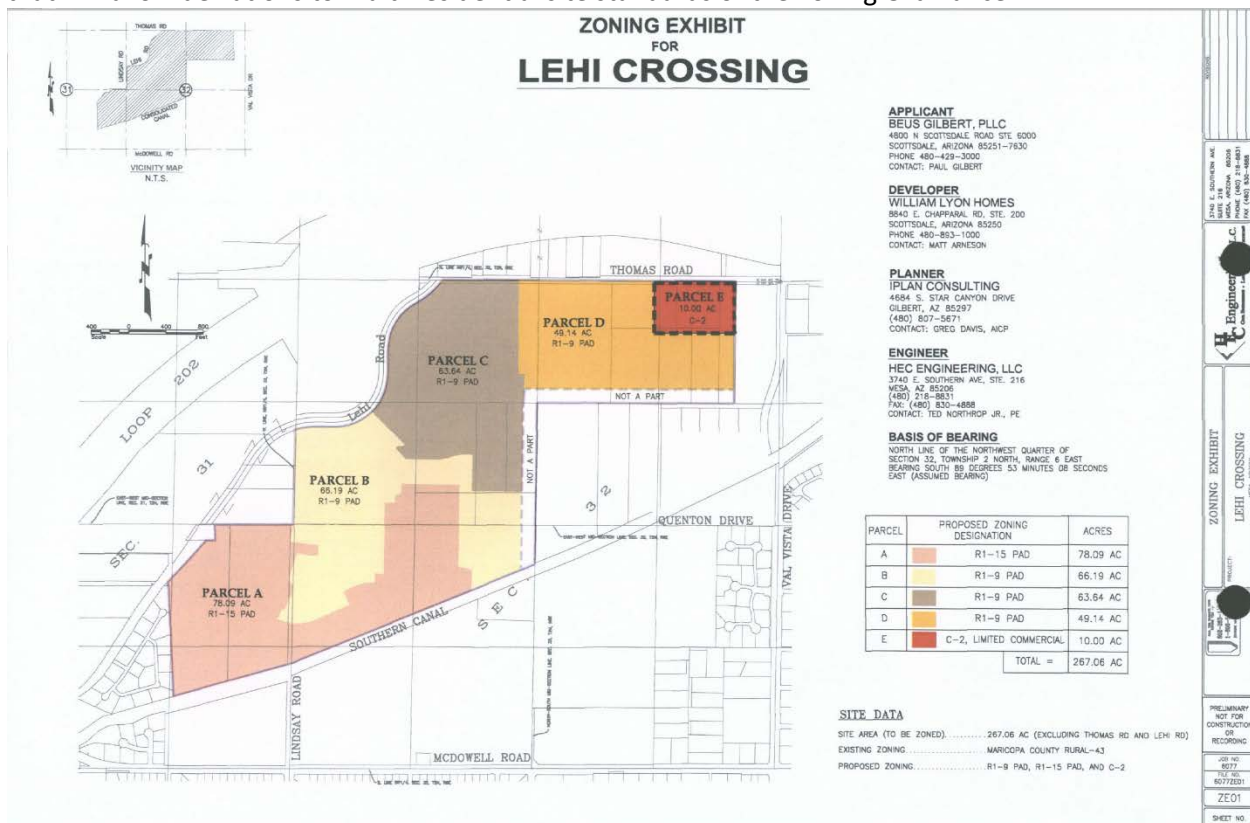
SITE CONTEXT

NORTH:	(Across Thomas Rd.) vacant land	– Zoned GI
EAST:	Agricultural fields	–Zoned RS-43
SOUTH:	Existing Residential	–Zoned RS9-PAD
WEST:	Existing Residential	–Zoned RS9-PAD

PROJECT DESCRIPTION/REQUEST

This site is located west of Val Vista Drive on the south side of Thomas Road. The applicant proposes a multi-residential development of 118 units. The request is for Site Plan Review, and Rezoning to RM-2-PAD-PAD.

The first PAD in the zoning request refers to the Development Master Plan (now designated as a Planned Area Development, PAD, in the zoning ordinance and on the Zoning Map) established for Lehi Crossing in 2006. The plan identifies this site as Parcel E, a commercially zoned site. The intent of the Master Plan to include commercial uses within the planned community will be modified by this request. Beyond including unspecified commercial use, the plan did not set conditions or development standards that would affect this site. The second PAD in the zoning request is a proposed overlay (for this site only) that will allow deviations to multi-residential site standards of the Zoning Ordinance.



(Existing) Lehi Crossing Development Master Plan – Approved through Z06-084

NEIGHBORHOOD PARTICIPATION

The applicant has notified surrounding property owners within 1000 feet of the subject site, and registered neighborhoods within one mile of the site. A community meeting was held on July 28th, and the applicant has gone door to door within 1000 feet of the site. The applicant submitted a Citizen Participation Report on October 4th. The applicant's report lists the meeting attendees, and the questions and comments made in the meeting. Neighbors raised questions about the rental community, how prospective renters are screened, the rents that are charged, and how the development will affect

Thomas Rd. Staff has not received any comments from the public on the request.

CONFORMANCE WITH THE MESA 2040 GENERAL PLAN

Summary: The Mesa 2040 General Plan Character area designation for this site is at a location where the Neighborhood Village Center (NVC), which typically means shopping areas and the Neighborhood character types come together. The applicant proposes a stand-alone multi-residence development at the perimeter of the NVC, reducing the NVC area by 11.34 acres. The General Plan does not require a Minor Amendment in this case since the proposal is under 20 acres and the remaining 46 acres designated NVC are enough for a center to develop per Plan. Multi-residential housing, which increases residential density adjacent to the NVC can be an appropriate transition from the adjacent single-residential neighborhoods (south and west of the site) toward the commercially-zoned land (east of the site).

The goal of the Mesa 2040 General Plan is to establish and maintain character areas 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 proposal:

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 (from Ch. 15 of The Plan) have been developed for use during the review process to determine whether the proposed development is achieving the vision and goals established in this Plan.

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

The General Plan focuses on the character of place and focuses on those principles that build neighborhoods, stabilize the job base, and improve the sense of place.

The Plan focuses on creating recognizable neighborhoods and opportunities to create housing diversity within Mesa. The proposed land use for this site is in keeping with the General Plan, however General Plan policies for building community and fostering social interaction through integrated shared spaces could be better addressed in the proposed site plan. Acknowledging the potential for future commercial development to the east, the proposed site plan includes a pedestrian gate for future installation, however this is just one element that is needed to show consistency with General Plan principles.

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

This area is just outside the Falcon Field Sub-Area Plan, and a mile north of the Citrus Sub-Area Plan and a mile east of the Lehi Sub-Area Plan. It is not subject to a specific local plan.

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

As mentioned above, this residential proposal, while not in keeping with the NVC character type, is allowed to develop without a Minor Amendment because it is less than 20 acres and can easily be developed as part of the adjacent Neighborhood character type. In addition, there is still a

large are that can develop with the intended character for this location. It should still develop to the standards for residential uses, which can be allowed as a secondary use within the NVC character area type. The Mesa 2040 General Plan defines NVC as follows:

Neighborhood Village Center

Focus:

Neighborhood Village Centers are typically shopping areas that serve the population within less than a two-mile radius. In aggregate, these shopping areas are generally between 15 and 25 acres in size. These centers may also include a mix of uses including residential and office. Big box uses (single retail spaces in excess of 80,000 sq. ft.) are generally not part of a village center. The goal for these areas, over time, is to provide for the regular shopping and service needs of the nearby population while also becoming a center or focal point to the surrounding neighborhoods; to become a gathering place for local residents.

The intent of the GP is for an NVC in this location which is typically a shopping area but may include a mix of uses such as office and multi-residential uses as secondary and as such the NVC accommodates "residential, either stand-alone or in a mixed-use structure" as an element of an NVC. The goal of the NVC is to provide a focal point for surrounding neighborhoods and become a gathering place for local residents. The NVC includes several Form and Guidelines relevant to the proposed site:

- *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 to help create orientation to each other to help create a sense of place, energize streets, and improve pedestrian circulation to the center.*

The proposed site plan includes a future pedestrian gate for access to future commercial development and, in the absence of a street system within the development, has provided a pedestrian network of sidewalks.

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

- **Providing appropriate infill development;**

N/A. This area cannot be regarded as a candidate for infill development. The subdivision to the southwest developed after 2006, and the remaining adjacent land is vacant or in agricultural use.

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

N/A. The land is undeveloped. The land has historically been used for citrus growing and while not located within the Citrus Sub-Area, it is nearby and contributes to the citrus identity for this section of Mesa.

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

This project adds multi-residential density to a single-residential area. This adds more housing options which in keeping with the General Plan. This density can also be seen as supporting the future commercial that is supposed to develop on adjacent land within the NVC.

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

The proposal develops the streetscape along Thomas Road. It provides a pedestrian connection to the east. The existing Lehi Crossing neighborhood, on the south and west sides of the site, did not provide any opening or connectivity to this site, so there was no possibility of connectivity between developments. The site plan provides a pedestrian circulation network within the development. Also the multi-residential districts typically require street orientation with individual street entries and related design elements in cases such as this, and this application proposes to back up to the street.

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

The applicant has visited the Lehi Crossing neighborhood in order to incorporate architectural elements into the design of the units and to make this development compatible. The quality of the proposed homes appears to meet or exceed that of the surrounding area.

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;

Multi-residential development is a logical transition from envisioned commercial development adjacent to Val Vista and Thomas Road to the single residential development in Lehi Crossing. Transitioning of buildings is being accomplished through standard 20' rear-yard building setbacks from the existing residential neighborhood. That neighborhood has a reduced rear-yard setback of 15'.

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

- *The applicant is working with the Design Review Board to establish the design quality of the homes. After an initial work session, the applicant has shifted from contemporary architecture to traditional designs that include design elements from the adjacent community.*

2. Changing Demographics

- *Providing more choices in the housing types on the market meets the needs of a wider demographic. This project adds a small-lot rental option for living in this neighborhood.*

3. Public Health

- *Residents will have access to a community pool and greenspace. A pedestrian access to the future commercial will encourage walking.*

4. Urban Design and Place-Making

- *This area is a fairly traditional suburban part of our city. Staff is recommending further development of the pedestrian courtyards within the development. This is an element of place-making. (See Condition #5.)*

5. Desert Environment

- *This plan provides xeriscaping throughout the development, with focused lawn areas and pool for community use. Each unit has a small back yard.*

STAFF ANALYSIS

Rezoning:

The subject site was identified as Parcel E, a Limited Commercial site in the Lehi Crossing master planned community. The current request is to rezone from commercial to multi-residential, which modifies the DMP for Lehi Crossing. The proposed density (118 units on 11.34 acres) is 10.4 du/ac, which falls below the RM-2 cap of 15 du/ac. Single-residential zoning to the west and south is zoned RS-9-PAD. Vacant lands to the east (zoned RS-43) and to the north (zoned GI) are expected to develop as part of a Neighborhood Village Center.

Given the overall street network in this area and the fact there will not be significant additional residential development north of the Loop 202 to support commercial uses, it is not realistic to expect commercial development of this property. Staff finds that the zoning request and density are appropriate for this area.

Planned Area Development (PAD) Modifications:

The applicant's request for a Planned Area Development (PAD) overlay will allow for deviation from development standards in these specific areas:

- Building Entrances, Orientation: Section 11-5-5(D)(3) requires all units located along public rights-of-way to have individual unit entrances facing this right-of-way. The ordinance provides an exception for 4- or 6-lane streets carrying high traffic volumes, however this section of Thomas Road is not arterial in character. This section of Thomas Road is in the Transportation Plan as a two-lane arterial with traffic counts of 1,100 vehicles per day and therefore not considered high traffic volume. A deviation from this building form standard is needed to carry out the applicant's request.
- Street-Side Building Setback: Table 11-5-5 of the Zoning Ordinance requires a 20' building/landscape setback from the Thomas Rd. Right of Way. The proposed setback to buildings meets or exceeds that standard. The setback to rear yard walls is only 18'. Staff finds the enhanced street-front landscaping, which includes 2 rows of citrus and a 3rd row of shade trees, mitigates the 2' reduction in setback width.
- Eastside Building Setback: Table 11-5-5 of the Zoning Ordinance requires a 20' setback from the sides and rear of the development. The site plan exceeds this on the south and west, but proposes a 10' setback on the east, which will be adjacent to the future commercial development. Only four units are affected by the east side setback. Two units have a side elevation at 10' from the perimeter. The rear elevation of one unit is at 15'. The fourth unit exceeds the required setback. Staff finds the impact has been minimized. An 8' perimeter wall along the east property line could serve to reduce the impact of future commercial development adjacent to this property line.
- Separation Between Buildings: This is the area of greatest deviation from code. The Zoning Ordinance requires 25' of separation between buildings on the same site. This makes sense when the development consists of several buildings, each containing multiple units. The idea with this development, however, is to separate each unit into a freestanding house with a small, fenced rear yard. The applicant proposes an 8' typical separation between units. This minimum is usually between the sidewalls of individual units. Staff has measured a sample of other separations and found they generally range from 12' to 19' between units. We are not used to reviewing freestanding rental units, but this seems a reasonable alternative to the large-block

apartment building.

- Separation Between Buildings and Parking Canopies: A 20' separation is required between buildings and parking canopies. A 6' minimum is proposed. The justification is the smaller, freestanding units. This works best when the house sides up to the parking canopy. The plan has been revised to move entry doors away from parking canopies.
- Parking Canopies:
 - Ch. 11-33-4.B.5&6 requires a 24' wide landscape island between parking canopies that are adjacent to each other in a single row. The applicant has revised the parking lot design to meet the intent of this standard.
 - Parking canopies should leave one uncovered parking space adjacent to landscaping. The applicant has revised the parking lot design to meet this standard.
- Landscape Islands: Each bay of parking, covered or not, is required to have a landscape island or area on each end that is at least 8' x 15'. The plan meets the intent of this standard.
- Fence Height: The applicant proposes 6' tall perimeter fencing, which is the code maximum. As an effort to transition between uses, staff suggests that the applicant consider an 8' tall fencing option on the east property line. This is the height allowed for the commercially-zoned land to the east, and could help buffer the two uses. This modification would be part of the PAD request.

The PAD overlay allows for modifications to Code in exchange for enhanced quality of design and construction. Staff finds the modifications noted above are needed to establish a high-quality site plan and community. The project has already begun working toward Design Review approval, assuring the quality of the house design. Staff also recommends participation in the Tri-Star Program, through Mesa Police. It is a "cooperative effort to foster a safer community in rental properties."

Site plan:

Auto and pedestrian access to the multi-residential development is from Thomas Rd., on the north. The site is auto-oriented. A driveway/parking aisle circulates, creating a large rectangle through the site. The residential units, in pods of one to six units, are distributed behind the parking canopies and garages that line the driveway. The center of the rectangle is reserved for a community lawn and the amenity pool area. In addition to these community amenities, each unit is provided a fenced rear yard for private outdoor space. The plan meets the code requirement for usable outdoor space in multi-residences.

The direction of the General Plan is to create recognizable neighborhoods with unique public gathering spaces to create a sense of place with a balance of auto and pedestrian design. This community of freestanding rental houses doesn't fit neatly into our Zoning Ordinance standards for multi-residential development, and has raised concerns about 1) parking lot dominance, and 2) hidden entries in narrow pathways that don't provide a sense of place.

From the pre-submittal staff has been working with the applicant to find ways to improve internal pedestrian connectivity and walkability. The staff goal has been to create a better long-term neighborhood look and feel for this development. While staff still has some concerns and would like to see stronger sense of connected pedestrian blocks that are perpendicular to the vehicular street, the

applicant has addressed the primary staff concerns to the point we can support approval.

Staff still has concerns with the experience in the narrow entry paths. The applicant calls them courtyards and staff believes they need to function as such. Enhanced design in the courtyards would improve the experience of walking from parking to house. The goal would be to create an identifiable center, or node for each group of houses. (See Condition #5)



Conclusion and Recommendation:

The applicant has worked closely with staff to address concerns and improve the design to address concerns of the neighbors and goals of the General Plan. The current iteration of the site plan addresses concerns about the parking lot experience. Pedestrian pathways are now ordered throughout the site to provide a network, and are called out with alternate paving and enhanced landscape islands where the paths cross the parking aisles. Staff recommends approval 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, landscape plan, and building elevations except as otherwise conditioned;
2. All street improvements to be installed with the first phase of development;
3. Compliance with all City development codes and regulations;
4. Compliance with all requirements of DR16-020 Design Review approval.
5. **Prior to issuance of a building permit, Planning Director to approve a revised site plan that improves the design of the courtyard spaces to provide the opportunity for residents to use these as common space. Courtyard design elements to vary throughout the development and include elements such as, but not limited to pavers, seat walls, trellises, etc.**