



PLANNING DIVISION

STAFF REPORT

Board of Adjustment

October 2, 2019

CASE No.: BOA19-00624	CASE NAME: Raging Wire
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Property Owner:	Whane of Mesa LP
Applicant:	Peter Norris, AIA, LEED AP
Location of Request:	Within the 10200 through the 10300 blocks of East Elliot Road (north side)
Parcel No.:	304-01-006N
Nature of Request:	Special Use Permit (SUP) to allow a parking reduction for an industrial warehouse.
Zoning District:	Light Industrial (LI) with a Planned Area Development (PAD) Overlay
Council District:	6
Site Size:	102 ± acres
Proposed Use:	Data Center
Existing Use:	Vacant
Staff Planner:	Evan Balmer, AICP
Staff Recommendation:	APPROVAL with Conditions

HISTORY

On November 3, 2014, the City Council approved a rezoning request to create the Elliot Road Technology Corridor. The corridor includes properties located between Hawes Road and Signal Butte Road on the north side of Elliot Road to the Salt River Project Transmission Line easement. The purpose for adopting the Elliot Road corridor zoning was to encourage development of a campus-like, high-technology industries along the corridor. The rezoning did not change existing underlying zoning designation on those affected properties; it only created development standards and review guidelines, as well as an option for property owners to choose (opt-in) and develop their property under the corridor guidelines. Property owners can still develop their property under requirements of the existing underlying zoning requirements, if they choose to not opt-in to the zoning requirements of the Elliot Road corridor standards.

On April 15, 2019, 92± acres of the subject property were rezoned to the Elliot Road Technology Corridor LI-PAD zoning district through the opt-in process.

On June 3, 2019, the remaining 10± acres of the subject property were rezoned to the Elliot Road Technology Corridor LI-PAD zoning district through the opt-in process.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

The request is for a Special Use Permit (SUP) to allow a reduction in the number of parking spaces required for a proposed data center within the Elliot Road Technology Corridor. The property is approximately 102± acres and will consist of multiple buildings with 195,895 square feet of office space and 1,343,105 square feet of data halls, totaling up to 1,539,000 square feet.

Table 11-32-3(A) of the City of Mesa Zoning Ordinance (MZO) does not specifically list the number of parking spaces required for data centers. Per Section 11-32-3(G) of the MZO, the Zoning Administrator has the authority to determine the number of parking spaces required for a use not specifically listed in the MZO. Such decision for parking spaces requirements shall be based upon the requirements for a comparable and similar use specified in the MZO. In this instance, office and warehouse uses are the most comparable uses to data centers. Per Table 11-32-3(A) of the MZO, office uses must be parked at one space per 375 square feet and warehousing must be parked at one space per 900 square feet. Using these parking requirements, 2,016 parking spaces are required for the proposed 1,539,000 square foot data center facility. The site plan shows the applicant is proposing 796 on-site parking spaces. According to the applicant, the proposed number of parking spaces is adequate to support the development. This is due to the uniqueness of operations of such a facility, as most of the floor area of the building will be occupied with data equipment. At full build-out, the facility will employ 747 employees. The site plan shows the development will provide 484 parking spaces for all employees and an additional 312 parking spaces for visitors.

General Plan Character Area Designation and Goals

The Mesa 2040 General Plan character area designation on the property is Employment. Per chapter seven of the General Plan, the Employment character area designation is primarily used for employment opportunities in high-quality settings. The proposed development for a data center with high-skilled personnel conforms with the goals of the General Plan.

The property is also located in the Mesa Gateway Strategic Development Plan area and specifically within the Mixed-Use Community District. The goal of this plan is to capitalize on the expansion of the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport and create a regional employment center. The proposed development conforms to the goals of the plan by bringing more than 700 high-wage jobs to the area.

Site Characteristics:

The subject property abuts an existing single residence neighborhood to the north. There is a 250 foot SRP transmission line easement located between the subject property and the adjacent residential neighborhood to the north. The proposed site plan and elevations show the buildings will be located more than 600 feet from the adjacent residential development and will be 62 feet in height. This height conforms to the requirement of the Elliot Road Technology Corridor. Per requirements outlined in the zoning standards for the Corridor, buildings further than 600 feet from the adjacent residential development are allowed to be up to 150 feet in height, while buildings closer than 600 feet to the residential development are limited to 50 feet in height.

Surrounding Zoning Designations and Existing Use Activity:

Northwest RS-6 PAD Existing Residential	North RS-7 PAD Existing Residential	Northeast RS-7 PAD Existing Residential
West LI-PAD Data Center	Subject Property LI-PAD Vacant	East AG Vacant
Southwest AG Vacant	South PC Vacant	Southeast PC Vacant

Mesa Zoning Ordinance Requirements and Regulations:

Per Section 11-32-6(A) of the City of Mesa Zoning Ordinance, the Board of Adjustment shall find the following criteria are met for approval of a SUP for reduced parking:

1. Special conditions – including but not limited to the nature of the proposed operation; proximity to frequent transit service; transportation characteristics of persons residing, working, or visiting the site – exist that will reduce parking demand at the site;

The proposed use is unique in comparison with other uses that occupy large floor area. According to the applicant, the number of employees needed to run the data center facility is significantly less than a traditional office or warehouse use and will require only parking spaces for those employees. Additionally, any visitors to the site are required to schedule an appointment in advance of arriving at the site.

2. The use will adequately be served by the proposed parking; and

At full build-out, the data center facility will employ 747 people. The applicant has provided a total of 796 parking spaces that will adequately serve employee and visitor parking needs.

3. Parking demand generated by the project will not exceed the capacity of or have a detrimental impact on the supply of on-street parking in the surrounding area.

The parking demand for the data center facility is not anticipated to exceed the number of parking spaces provided and there is no on-street parking available in this area. Per Section 11-70-5(E) of the City of Mesa Zoning Ordinance, the Board of Adjustment shall also find the following criteria are met for approval of a SUP:

1. Approval of the proposed project will advance the goals and objectives of and is consistent with the policies of the General Plan and any other applicable City plan and/or policies;

The site is located in the Employment character area of the Mesa 2040 General Plan, the Mesa Gateway Strategic Plan area, and in the Elliot Road Technology Corridor. The proposed project is consistent with the goals and objectives of the General Plan, the Mesa Gateway Strategic Plan, and the Elliot Road Technology Corridor by providing high-quality technology related employment.

2. The location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the proposed project are consistent with the purposes of the district where it is located and conform with the General Plan and any other applicable City plan or policies;

The proposed project conforms to the land use regulations of the Elliot Road Technology Corridor District and the General Plan character type designation.

3. The proposed project will not be injurious or detrimental to the adjacent or surrounding properties in the area, nor will the proposed project or improvements be injurious or detrimental to the neighborhood or to the general welfare of the City; and

The proposed project is in an area that has been designated for high technology industrial uses. Development standards in the Elliot Road Technology Corridor, such as limiting building height to 50 feet for properties within 600 feet of the north line of the SRP easement, is intended to mitigate potential impacts on the adjacent residences to the north. The proposed development is more than 600 feet from the adjacent residential development. Additionally, the data center use being proposed is unique in that the operation of the data center generates a minimal amount of traffic to the site. The proposed development will not be injurious or detrimental to surrounding properties.

4. Adequate public services, public facilities and public infrastructure are available to serve the proposed project.

Adequate public services, public facilities, and public infrastructure are required to be extended to serve development of the property.

Findings

- A. There are special conditions present with the proposed data center that warrant a reduction in the required parking per Section 11-32-6(A).
- B. Raging Wire proposes to develop a data center facility with up to 1,539,000 square feet at full build-out on approximately 102± acres within the Elliot Road Technology Corridor.
- C. The proposed development is consistent with the goals of the General Plan and the Mesa Gateway Strategic Development Plan and compatible with surrounding development.
- D. The proposed development will achieve the goals of the Elliot Road Technology Corridor by bringing high-tech industrial jobs to Mesa.
- E. The proposed project meets the criteria of Section 11-70-5(E) of the MZO for approval of a SUP.
- F. The request is consistent with the goals of the General Plan and is in conformance with the LI-PAD zoning district and the Elliot Road Technology Corridor designation on the property.
- G. Allowing reduction in the number of parking spaces on the property will not be injurious or detrimental to adjacent properties and adequate public services will be provided to the site.

Neighborhood Participation Plan and Public Comments

The applicant sent required notification letters to all property owners within 500 feet of the site. As of writing this report, staff has not been contacted by any resident or property owner to express support or opposition to the request.

Staff Recommendations:

The proposed project meets the review criteria for reduced parking outlined in Section 11-32-6(A) and the criteria for a SUP outlined in Section 11-70-5(E) of the MZO. Staff recommends approval of the request with conditions:

Conditions of Approval;

- 1. Compliance with the final site plan;
- 2. Compliance with all City development codes and regulations, except as modified by this SUP;
- 3. Compliance with all requirements of Design Review for case DRB19-00631;
- 4. The parking reduction shall apply to the data center facility use only. Any future change or expansion of use shall comply with required parking as outlined in Chapter 32, Table 11-32-3(A) of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance.