



**PLANNING DIVISION**  
**STAFF REPORT**

**Planning and Zoning Board**

**October 23, 2019**

PROJECT NAME: <b>Quality Design Guideline Text Amendments</b>
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Applicant's Name:	The City of Mesa
Request:	A series of amendments to Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 15, 22, 30, 31, 33, 69, 86 and 87 of Title 11 of the Mesa City Code, relating to the adoption of quality design guideline standards.
Hearing Date(s):	<b>October 23, 2019 / 4:00 p.m.</b>
Report Date:	October 17, 2019
Staff Planner:	Rachel Prelog
Staff Recommendation:	APPROVAL

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**Background**

The creation of Quality Design Guidelines has been a goal of the City of Mesa for several years. The Mesa 2040 General Plan recognized that Mesa has not achieved the level of quality-development seen in surrounding communities and stated the need to require new development to be as good as, or better than, that of surrounding communities.

In 2018, the Development Services Department hired a consultant, Michael Baker International, to assist in the creation of Quality Design Guidelines and related public outreach efforts. The purpose of the guidelines is to serve as a visionary document that provide planning principles with details, standards, illustrations, and examples that promote high-quality development in the City of Mesa.

During the process of reviewing and discussing the creation of the guidelines, staff researched best practices from across the country as well as the standards of surrounding communities. The review also included a thorough evaluation of design standards present in the Mesa Zoning Ordinance (MZO). The MZO has far fewer codified design standards compared to other jurisdictions and the standards that exist lack specificity. Lastly staff identified several inconsistencies between chapters which provides challenges in the application of regulations.

The MZO serves as the regulatory policy document which direct land use, zoning, and development proposals. Therefore, in order to ensure that quality design standards and elements are provided in new developments, staff is recommending a series of zoning code text amendments. While the Quality Design Guidelines currently being reviewed by City Staff and the various Boards provide the aspirational vision for what quality development can consist, the zoning code text amendments propose a set of base standards that development must adhere to. The amendments will provide predictability within the development review process and establish consistent expectations for developments. In order to respond to unforeseen challenges to the development of certain sites, while being consistent with the design guidelines, the proposed text amendments include a provision for alternative compliance, which provides applicants the ability to propose alternative options to specific site design and architectural requirements.

A considerable number of the chapters in the Zoning Ordinance will be modified with the proposed changes. The majority of the proposed amendments are contained within Chapter 5: Residential Districts, Chapter 6: Commercial and Mixed Use Districts, and Chapter 7: Employment Districts. Key themes proposed in these amendments are the promotion of: character and identity development; human scaled architecture--through massing and scale, materiality, building and architectural detailing; and public view and focus on buildings rather than parking lots or garages.

The proposed text amendments also include the addition of Chapter 15 to create a new zoning district category: "Leisure / Recreation (LR)". The purpose of this district is to allow public and private parks as a specific entitled use. The zoning code currently allows for public parks and recreation uses within other zoning district but there is no provision to entitle property specifically for either public or private recreational uses. The absence of such a zoning district has often times resulted in only allowing an underlying zoning district for development proposals with areas that are intended to be specifically reserved for development of open spaces and other associated recreational uses that allow other different uses. Allowing the creation of a Leisure and Recreation zoning district will enable various development to specifically zone open space uses specifically as leisure and recreation which will minimize occasional challenges of allowed uses on those specific areas of land, especially whenever there is a transfer of ownerships.

### **General Plan Goals 2040**

The Mesa 2040 General Plan envisions Mesa as a recognizable city with a great sense of place where Mesa's built environment sets a standard of quality which is the envy of other communities.

During the General Plan's creation and citizen engagement, several common themes emerged. One of those themes was a concern for the quality of Mesa's built environment and a recognition that there are many areas of the city that struggle from not being built with the quality building materials and elements that are sustainable and maintains its quality over time. In order to build a better community, the General Plan states the need to use high-

quality design and timeless building materials to attract investment and reinvestment in the community (Executive Summary and Section II of the 2040 General Plan).

High-quality development was a key element considered in the development of the General Plan's vision statement and is evident in the Plan's overarching goals.

*Creating and maintaining a variety of great neighborhoods  
Growing and maintaining diverse and stable jobs  
Providing rich, high-quality public spaces and cultural resources. (Section II of the General Plan)*

As stated in Section II of the Plan, development that achieves a high level of quality retains value, adds to the sense of community, provides visual interest, and helps attract further investment into the community. Therefore, the creation and/or updating of design standards was an objective found throughout the General Plan and an explicit implementation strategy.

The proposed text amendments directly align with the stated principles of the General Plan, including requiring: attractive, durable materials; interesting, attractive architectural design; site planning that relates to and is appropriately integrated with the surrounding neighborhood; and building forms that create inviting spaces. The proposed amendments also considers economic realities, as directed by the General Plan, by allowing for flexibility and creative alternatives to set requirements.

### **Neighborhood Participation Plan and Public Comments**

A series of public outreach events and efforts occurred during the creation of the proposed Quality Design Guidelines. Below is a summary of outreach efforts and related participation.

Event	Date	Participants
Developer Forum	September 26, 2018	10
Community Workshop #1	September 26, 2018	12
Online Survey #1	October 8 – November 8, 2018	441
Developer Advisory Forum #1	February 13, 2019	*
Community Workshop #2	February 13, 2019	2
Online Survey #2	February 14 – March 14, 2019	40
Public Review Draft	February 14, 2019	6
Developer Advisory Forum #2	August 14, 2019	*
Community Workshop #3	August 27, 2019	11
Estimated Total:		522

\*Presentation only. Attendance not recorded.

Key themes heard from the development community were to consider site specific context, as well as creating standards that fosters opportunities for a variety of design options, allow for flexibility in design, establish predictable and consistent application review conditions, and

align the proposed guidelines with existing policy and standards. Key responses from many residents who participated in the public outreach included providing architectural variety of building, use of quality building materials, landscaping and shaded areas in development, and walkable and connected pedestrian environments.

### **Implementation**

Staff recommends the ordinance approving the proposed text amendments become effective on February 3, 2020, and any proposed development shall adhere to the requirement of Section 11-6-6 of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance, requirements for review of land use applications.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Based upon the preceding analysis and compliance with the goals and vision of the Mesa 2040 General Plan, staff recommends approval of the proposed text amendments.

### **Exhibits**

Exhibit 1-Staff Report

Exhibit 2-Text Amendments

Exhibit 3-Jurisdictional Comparisons