



PLANNING DIVISION
STAFF REPORT

City Council Hearing

December 9, 2019

PROJECT NAME: **Quality Design Guideline Text Amendments**

Applicant's Name:	The City of Mesa
Request:	Repeal and replace Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Title 11 of the Mesa City Code, relating to the adoption of quality development design guideline standards.
City Council Hearing Date:	December 9 / 5:45 p.m.
Report Date:	November 20, 2019
Staff Planner:	Rachel Prelog
Staff Recommendation:	APPROVAL
Planning and Zoning Board Recommendation: Adoption	

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). In comparison to the surrounding jurisdictions, Mesa has inadequate design standards. Specifically, the MZO has far fewer codified design standards compared to other jurisdictions and the standards that exist also lack specificity. Also, staff identified several

inconsistencies between chapters of the MZO which contributes to challenges in the application of the City's development 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. This text amendments are aimed to ensure adherence to the City's proposed quality design guidelines. 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 aid to establish a set of base standards that proposed developments must adhere to. Overall, the text 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.

Regarding the specific text amendments, a considerable number of amendments are proposed to Chapter 5: Residential Districts, Chapter 6: Commercial and Mixed Use Districts, and Chapter 7: Employment Districts; therefore, staff is recommending to repeal and replace Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the Zoning Ordinance. The proposed changes include significant reorganization of existing text to improve the chapters' structure and increase their usability. For example, Small Lot Single Residence (RSL) District standards were previously contained in a separate section within Chapter 5 of the Code due to unique design standards applicable only to the RSL Districts. With the establishment of base standards, through the proposed amendments, those design standards that were accepted to be of superior standard for the RSL District would now be considered basic development standards in the City. Therefore, the RSL standards have been combined with Single Residence District standards. Chapter 5 of the Code also contained a section of "Supplemental Standards Applicable to All Residential Districts." These standards covered a range of topics from encroachment to corral fencing. This specific section was removed with the proposed text amendments. The standards contain therein were moved elsewhere in Chapter 5 or to other Chapters in Title 11 were they were more appropriate.

Similarly, Chapters 6 and 7 of the Code were reorganized to improve their structure and readability. Chapter 6 specifically contained certain criteria and standards for development of group commercial centers. These standards included many of the key themes recommended in the proposed Quality Development Design Guidelines, such as creating character and design theme for group commercial developments; human scaled architecture, and pedestrian connectivity. The changes in Chapter 6 expanded the aforementioned standards and included requirements such as façade articulation, massing of buildings, and minimum use of façade materials. The changes in Chapter 7, which mostly contain standards for industrial developments, are similar to the refined and improved standards for the large scale commercial development as these types of developments are similar in nature to the group commercial developments.

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 becomes effective on February 10, 2020, and any proposed development shall adhere to the requirement of Section 11-1-6 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-Ordinance Amending Zoning Ordinance to Repeal and Replace Chapter 5, 6, and 7

Exhibit 3-Jurisdictional Comparisons