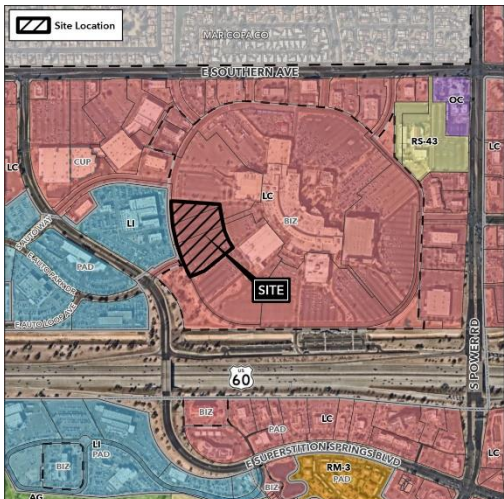




**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
**PLANNING DIVISION**

**Board of Adjustment Board Staff Report**

**June 4, 2025**

Case No.	BOA25-00303		
Project Name	Sanctum of Horror		
Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Special Use Permit to exceed the maximum number of days allowed for a special event</li></ul>		
Project Location	6555 East Southern Avenue		
Parcel No(s)	141-54-044C, 101-54-044F, & 141-54-044K		
Project Area	5.6± acres		
Council District	District 6		
Existing Zoning	Limited Commercial with a Bonus Intensity Zone Overlay (LC-BIZ)		
General Plan Designation	Regional Center		
Applicant	Sanctum of Horror, LLC.		
Owner	East Mesa Mall, LLC.		
Staff Planner	Kwasi Abebrese, Planner II		

**Recommendation**

Staff finds that the requested Special Use Permit (SUP) meets the required findings outlined in Mesa Zoning Ordinance (MZO) Section 11-70-5.

**Staff recommends approval with conditions.**

## **Project Overview**

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### **Request:**

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit to exceed the maximum number of days allowed for a special event (Sanctum of Horror) in the LC-BIZ district. Section 11-31-27(A)(2) of the MZO limits a special event to a maximum of four (4) days but Section 11-31-27(D)(1) specifies that the maximum number of days may be exceeded with the approval of a SUP. The SUP will allow the proposed special event to operate for a maximum of 20 days over a six-week period as defined in the submitted project narrative for approximately the same isochronal period each year and shall expire November, 2030.

The Sanctum of Horror is a family-owned and operated haunted house that has been operating in Mesa for the past eleven years. In 2015, the haunted house was moved to the west parking lot of Superstition Springs Center. The haunted house has operated annually at this location since 2015 and is proposing to continue to operate in the same area with this application.

## **Site Context**

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### **General Plan:**

- The Placetype for the project site is Regional Center and the Growth Strategy is Evolve.
- Per Chapter 3 of the General Plan, the focus of the Regional Center Placetype is commercial activity and its principal uses include retail, entertainment and recreation, eating and drinking establishments, personal services, etc.
- The request is consistent with the Mesa 2050 General Plan.

### **Zoning:**

- The project site is zoned Limited Commercial with a Bonus Intensity Zone Overlay (LC-BIZ).
- Special events are permitted in all zoning districts per Section 11-31-27 of the MZO.

### **Surrounding Zoning & Use Activity:**

The proposed commercial recreation facility will be located at the west parking lot of Superstition Springs Center and is compatible with surrounding land uses, which include retail shops.

<b>Northwest</b> LC Retail	<b>North</b> LC-BIZ Retail	<b>Northeast</b> LC-BIZ Retail
<b>West</b> LI-PAD Auto Sales	<b>Project Site</b> LC-BIZ Retail	<b>East</b> LC-BIZ Retail
<b>Southwest</b> LC-BIZ Vacant	<b>South</b> LC-BIZ Retail	<b>Southeast</b> LC-BIZ Retail

### Site History:

- **August 18, 1988:** The City Council annexed 485± acres, including the project site, into the City of Mesa (Case No. A88-008; Ordinance No. 2358).
- **October 3, 1988:** The City Council established City zoning of C-2 (equivalent to current Limited Commercial [LC]) on the project site (Case No. Z88-056; Ordinance No. 2382).
- **December 19, 1988:** The City Council approved a rezone of 100± acres, including the project site, from C-2 to C-2 with a Bonus Intensity Zone Overlay (C-2-BIZ) and a Site Plan to allow for the development of a Regional Shopping Mall (Superstition Springs Center) (Case No. SPR88-010; Ordinance No. 2401).
- **August 5, 2015:** The Board of Adjustment approved a Special Use Permit (SUP) to allow a special event to exceed the number of days allowed in a calendar year in the LC-BIZ District. The SUP approval authorized a haunted house at the west parking lot of Superstition Springs Center, which was valid for approximately the same isochronal period each year and expired in November 2018 (Case No. BA15-032).
- **September 4, 2019:** The Board of Adjustment approved a SUP for a special event to exceed the maximum number of days allowed for a special event in the LC District. The SUP approval allowed for the continuation of the operation of the haunted house at the west parking lot of Superstition Springs Center. This approval was valid for approximately the same isochronal period each year and expired in November 2024 (Case No. BOA19-00584).
- **January 4, 2023:** The Board of Adjustment approved a SUP to allow a special event (Fun Box Fun Park) to exceed the number of days allowed in a calendar year at the project site. The SUP approval allowed the special event to operate for a total of 180 days between January 2023 and February 2024 (Case No. BOA22-01226).

### Project/Request Details

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#### Site Plan:

- The project site is located within a 99± acre, regional shopping center property (Superstition Springs Center) in the LC-BIZ district.
- The proposed haunted house attraction would be constructed in the west parking lot of the shopping center, just east of the internal mall loop between the old Sears and JCPenney stores.

- The site is not visible from Southern Avenue or Power Road. The subject property also abuts the US 60 Freeway right-of-way along its southern border; however, the visibility of the attraction is very limited from the freeway.

### **Special Events:**

Section 11-31-27 of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance allows for special events in all zoning districts provided the event meets certain requirements, which the special event at issue meets as follows:

1. **Licensing:** The proposed event will be required to obtain all necessary licenses as required by Title 5 of the Mesa City Code. The event coordinator has obtained a special license for all of their annual events, and has acknowledged that they will continue to do this for future events.
2. **Duration:** The maximum time period for a Special Event is limited to 4 consecutive days. With approval of the requested SUP, the proposed special event will be permitted to operate a maximum 20 days over a six-week period as defined in the submitted project narrative.
3. **Number of Events:** This proposed special event is an annual occurrence.
4. **Utilities and Facilities:** The event and site is adequately served by utilities and portable restroom facilities.
5. **Safety and Impacts:** Staff confirmed with City of Mesa Police that there have been no complaints from surrounding properties regarding the previous operations of the haunted house. The proposed event will not present a safety or public disturbance issue and will not cause substantial adverse impacts on surrounding properties.
6. **Parking:** The event is conducted on a paved and dust proof parking surface with permanent driveway access.
7. **Compliance with all Applicable Regulations:** Staff has included a condition of approval that the special events shall comply with all requirements of the Development Services Department in the issuance of building permits.

### **Special Use Permit:**

Per Section 11-70-5(E) of the City of Mesa Zoning Ordinance, the Board of Adjustment must find specific criteria is met for approval of a SUP and the special event at issue meets such requirements as follows:

1. **Consistency with the General Plan and other Plan/Policies:** The proposed special event is consistent with the Regional Employment Center Placetype, and furthers the implementation of, and is not contrary to, the Vision, Guiding Principles, Strategies, and applicable elements of the Mesa 2050 General Plan.
2. **Zoning District Intent:** The proposed event is consistent with the location, design and operating characteristics and conforms to the goals and purposes of the LC zoning district designation on the project site.
3. **Project Impact:** The proposed special event will not be injurious or detrimental to surrounding properties or the welfare of the city.
4. **Adequate Public Facilities:** The City of Mesa utilities and public infrastructure are available to serve the special event.

## Citizen Participation

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The applicant conducted a Citizen Participation process, notifying surrounding property owners, HOAs, and registered neighbors.

### Required Notification:

- Property owners within 500 feet of the project site were notified of the public hearing.
- Neither the applicant nor staff has received any comments or concerns from surrounding property owners on the proposed event.

## Conditions of Approval

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Staff recommends **approval** of the Special Use Permit subject to the following conditions:

1. Compliance with the site plan, project narrative and Sanctum of Horror Fright Team Safety Handbook, except as modified by the conditions below.
2. Signage shall be restricted to the boundaries of the special event area. Signage visible from outside the boundaries of the site shall not be displayed prior to or after the dates of the special event except that such signage will be allowed during active construction and break down days immediately prior to and after the event, as specified in the Special Event License.
3. Compliance with all requirements of the Development Services Division regarding the issuance of building permits.
4. Compliance with all requirements of the Business Services Department regarding application for and issuance of a Special Event License.
5. The Special Use Permit shall be valid for approximately the same isochronal period each year and shall expire in November 2030. The Special Use Permit is non-transferable for both location and applicant. Each year, the special event shall comply with the operational plan details submitted. Minor changes in dates from year-to-year may occur.

## Exhibits

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Exhibit 1 – Vicinity Map

Exhibit 2 – Project Narrative

Exhibit 3 – Site Plan

Exhibit 4 – Floor Plan

Exhibit 5 – Operating Plan

Exhibit 12 – Power Point Presentation