

Able Steel Fabricators Project Narrative

4150 E. Quartz Circle

Submitted by

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Owner:

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Contents

I.	Introduction.....	3
II.	Existing Site Conditions.....	3
III.	Relationship to Surrounding Properties.....	4
IV.	General Plan Compliance.....	4
V.	PAD Overlay Zoning.....	4
VI.	Project Description.....	6
	1. History.....	6
	2. Aerial photos.....	6
	3. Prior Approvals.....	9
	4. Current Needs.....	9
	5. New Non-Conformities.....	10
VII.	Conclusion.....	12

I. Introduction

Hitchens Associates Architects, on behalf of 4150 Investments, LLC, is pleased to submit this project narrative and related exhibits in support of a development request for a new fabrication building at their existing property located at 4150 E Quartz Circle, which is the northwest corner of East Quartz Circle and North Norwalk in Mesa. The Property is further identified on the Maricopa County Assessor’s Map as parcel numbers 141-25-289 and 141-25-002V. (see Site Aerial below).

Figure 1 – Site Aerial



II. Existing Site Conditions

The Property is made-up of two parcels with multiple use buildings and improvements. At the southeast corner of the 10 acre site is a parking lot and two-story office building containing the corporate offices. Northwest of the office building is the main fabrication plant. These two buildings were part of the original construction back in 1981. An additional fabrication building at the northwest corner of the property was constructed in the mid 1990’s. The areas south and north of this building are for raw material staging. Other improvements include an employee lunchroom, a small storage building, and a sandblasting building. In 2007, improvements were made to the east side of the property including landscaping and a decorative site screen wall along Nowalk Street.

III. Relationship to Surrounding Properties

Table 1 below summarizes the existing and surrounding land uses and designations. Abutting the Property’s north boundary is a 15.6-acre site planned for future industrial uses and currently vacant. Across North Norwalk to the east is a Quail Run Park. To the south are two independent industrial use buildings. West of the property is the City of Mesa Public Training Facility.

Table 1 – Surrounding Uses

Direction	General Plan Character Area	Existing Zoning	Existing Use
Project Site	Employment	GI	Industrial
North	Employment	LI	Vacant
East	Park	LI	Park
South	Employment	LI	Industrial
West	Employment	AG	Municipal Facility

IV. General Plan Compliance

The existing development supports the vision, goals, and objectives of the Mesa 2040 General Plan, which encourages the development of employment based uses at this location, particularly industrial uses.

V. PAD Overlay Zoning

The applicant requests a rezone from GI to GI-PAD zoning. Over time zoning requirements changed as the city developed into this area. For example when Able Steel’s corporate office building and parking lot were constructed, Norwalk Road did not exist. When Norwalk Road was later built next to the Able Steel property, new zoning requirements came into play. By seeking the PAD overlay zoning modification, flexibility in the application of current zoning standards and requirements can be obtained. As part of the request for PAD overlay zoning it is important to call attention to the high quality design of the screen wall and landscaping along the west side of Norwalk. This wall and landscaping were installed after the construction of Norwalk occurred. Below are the before and after photos of this area.

Figure 2 – West Side of Norwalk Before (North View)



Figure 3 – West Side of Norwalk After (South View)



VI. Project Description

1. History

Able Steel Fabricators was founded by Jim and Chuck Clark, father and son, in Mesa in 1975. Their original location was at 837 South Center Street. In 1981 the Clark’s relocated the business to their current ten-acre location in northeast Mesa. Access to the site then was from Greenfield Road by a private drive that ran through what is now the Qual Run Park and the Valley Metro Bus Facility. They had a Greenfield Road address but were over a third of a mile west of Greenfield Road. The new location consisted of the office building and the main fabrication plant.

Prominent Mesa buildings that they have supplied the steel for over the years include Mesa’s tallest building, the Bank of America building at 1201 S. Alma School Road, the Mesa Municipal Courts building at 250 E. First Avenue and Sloan Park, spring training stadium for the Chicago Cubs. Other Arizona distinguished projects include the Phoenix Sky Train station at Sky Harbor Airport, Salt River Fields Stadium, spring training home to the Colorado Rockies and the Arizona Diamondbacks in Scottsdale, Arizona State University College of Nursing in Tempe, and the Western Regional Medical Center in Bullhead City. There have been many large-scale projects beyond Arizona as well. Jim Clark passed away in 2019 but Chuck is still involved in the business as well as his son Cyle. That represents three generations of Clarks that have been involved in the operation of this family owned long-standing Mesa business. Over the years, dramatic changes have occurred around the Able Steel property. Below are a series of aerial photographs that illustrate the evolution of the city in and around the Able Steel property over the years.

2. Area Aerial Photos

Figure 4 – Site Aerial 1983



Figure 5 – Site Aerial 1993



Figure 6 – Site Aerial 1998



Figure 7 – Site Aerial 2000



Figure 8 – Site Aerial 2007



3. Prior Approvals

As the business grew, requests were made to and approved by the city for relief from certain ordinance requirements sought by Able Steel to allow for growth and upgrades. Those cases are listed below.

In 1990, Case ZA90-90 approved the reduction of landscaping required at interior property lines from 15 feet to zero feet at the north and west property lines. The south property line landscape setback was to be limited to existing condition of zero feet. In addition, the setback at the west property was reduced to zero feet.

In 2006, Case ZA06-123 allowed for the street facing setback to be reduced from 20 feet to 4 feet.

4. Current Needs

Able Steel Fabricators needs to expand their business operations as demand for their fabrication services continues to increase. This expansion will include the purchase of new automated equipment. Presently none of their existing buildings are capable of housing the new equipment so a new building is needed. Part of accomplishing the construction of a new building is upgrading the site to meet all current zoning ordinance requirements. Instead of bringing the entire site up to current city ordinance standards, another process is being requested whereby the site will be rezoned from GI zoning to GI-PAD zoning. The PAD overlay zoning will allow the current conditions to stand and integrate the new improvements into one rezoning and site plan review application. Listed below are the current conditions being requested to remain as is.

Table 2 – Current Conditions

CODE SECTION	EXPLANATION	REMARKS
11-30-9.H	Screening of parking areas	Limit to existing conditions. Parking lot was installed prior to Norwalk street being built
11-30-9.I.2	Screen walls for industrial uses must provide a solid screen wall	Limit to existing conditions.
11-30-12.C	Trash enclosure material	Delete requirement to enclose and install gate at trash collection bin. Trash collection bin to remain at current location in yard behind wall.
11-32-8	Bicycle and motorcycle parking	Limit to existing conditions of two motorcycle spaces and no bicycle spaces

11-33-4.B	Parking lot landscaped islands	Limit to existing conditions
11-33-5.A.1	Foundation base landscaping shall be a minimum of 15 feet at building walls with public entrances.	Currently have 8'-8"
11-33-5.A.2	Foundation base landscaping shall be a minimum of 10 feet at building walls without public entrances.	Currently have 5 feet
11-33-5.B	Required landscaping in foundation base.	Limit to existing conditions
11-33-6.B	Retention basin required to be irregularly shaped	Limit to condition of rectilinear
11-33-6.I	Retention basin required to be landscaped	Limit to no landscaping
	Common open space	Limit to existing employee outdoor area north of the breakroom exterior shade structure.

5. New Non-Conformities

Metal siding has been incorporated into the building design to match the architecture of the other buildings on this property which have the same unique use constraints due to the presence of massive interior craneways for material handling. These are Minimalist Architectural Style buildings and extremely simple in design. The owner does not wish to deviate from this appearance as it represents the history of their steel operations. The new building will serve the same function as the other larger buildings. Both neighboring businesses to the south are representative of this historic architectural style as well. The west building is completely clad in metal siding and the east building is predominately clad in metal siding.

This property is in the Falcon Field Sub Area. As part of the Falcon Field Sub Area Plan, there are specific elements listed within the plan that support the request for metal siding. For example, Chapter 9 of the Plan mentions architectural design themes. Section 9-1 states that structures can convey a consistent theme that tie them to an area activity or its history. Chapter 9 also states that aesthetic aims must be reasonably balanced with economy and the function of the structures. Meeting the ordinance requirements would create a substantial economic hardship for the owner and be out of character with the sub area plan stated guidelines.

Part of the process for obtaining a new building will be to determine how parking will be affected. Per the Mesa Zoning Ordinance, the number of required parking spaces needed for the existing buildings and the proposed new building will be 163 spaces. Below is a tabulation of how this total was derived based on Mesa Zoning Ordinance Table 11-32-3(A):

CURRENT ORDINANCE STANDARD PARKING REQUIREMENTS PER 11-32-3(A)

USE	S.F.	RATIO	SPACES
Building 1 office use	8694	1:375	24
Building 2 industrial use	30,600	1:600	51
Building 2 storage use	22,329	1:900	25
Building 2 office use	980	1:375	3
Building 3 industrial use	1,040	1:600	2
Building 4 industrial use	11,240	1:600	19
Building 4 storage use	11,240	1:900	13
Building 5 storage use	1,152	1:900	2
Building 6 break room use	1,140	1:600	3
Building 7 industrial use (new)	9,000	1:600	15
Building 7 storage use (new)	7,875	1:900	<u>9</u>
	Total		166

Given the nature of how Able Steel operates in today's marketplace, the above parking total significantly exceeds their actual employee parking needs. The biggest reason for this is because their fabrication processes are now more automated than previously. This has led to the need for fewer employees. The automated machines are large, use a lot of building square footage, and require few people to operate. When the zoning ordinance was last updated, the implementation of automated equipment for this type of use did not largely exist. Previously, the same work was done manually by more employees which led to far greater parking needs. The evolution of automated equipment and the need for a new building has led to Able Steel's need to seek relief from the current ordinance requirements for parking. If Able Steel must meet the ordinance required parking outlined above, it will result in them having to more than triple their current parking total. This makes no sense when the additional employees needed will only increase by 6 with the addition of the new building and equipment. Should the parking for an additional 113 parking spaces be imposed, it would deprive them of existing outdoor storage and staging areas critical for their operations. Listed below are criteria supporting the need for granting a parking reduction for Able Steel Fabricators.

- Fewer employees are needed in the fabrication process now because of the use of modern automated equipment.
- Parking demand generated by the project does not exceed the 50 on-site parking spaces and the two motorcycle spaces.
- Additional employee hires for the new building are minimal.
- At the time the current zoning ordinance was written/amended, different determining factors for parking ratios existed. Those determining factors in this case are much different today. For example, the proposed new building is 16,875 square feet and will need only 6 employees to operate the new automated equipment and material handling equipment. That represents a ratio of approximately 2800 square feet of building area per employee. Compare that to the zoning ordinance requirement of 1 parking space per every 600 square feet for industrial use. This is a dramatic contrast. The ordinance does not reflect the specific nature of this type of use here.

Table 3 – New Non-Conformities

CODE SECTION	EXPLANATION	REMARKS
Quality Development Design Guidelines	Metal Siding prohibited as a building material	Request this be waived due to historic nature of other buildings on site and invoke conveying of consistent theme as expressed in the Falcon Field Sub-Area Plan
11-7-3.B.2	Publicly viewed facades articulation	Match existing architecture as building has now views to right-of-way and limited view to private property.
11-7-3.B.5	Facades incorporate 3 materials	Match existing architecture as building has now views to right-of-way and limited view to private property.
	Parking reduction request	Reduce from 166 spaces to 50

VII. Conclusion

Able Steel Fabricators has grown from a small structural steel fabricator, building grain storage facilities and mini-storage facilities in the 1970s, to one of the largest structural and miscellaneous steel subcontractors in the southwest. Today their services are in high demand. To keep pace with that demand expansion has become inevitable. Their quality and service has been consistent throughout their entire time in Mesa for soon to be 50 years. The planned expansion that has led to this submittal will allow them to continue to deliver a high level of service to their clientele. By granting the request to rezone under the PAD overlay, a blanket approval is achieved for as-is conditions and represents the best compliance alternative going forward. The use meets the general plan and with the PAD Overlay implemented the needed flexibility is achieved to allow the business to continue to succeed into the future at this location. Able Steel, by being a part of the Falcon Field Sub Area Plan, is obligated to meet the sub area goals and objectives. These include the revitalization and preservation of small geographic areas of the community. Economic development is critical as is the maximizing of long-term employment potential. Able has met that criteria and with the help of the city can expand their business model even more.