

# 718 W. Pepper Place

On Pepper Place just east of N. Extension Rd

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## Project Narrative

Request:

Development Incentive Permit, Site Plan Review &  
Design Review to add one (1) dwelling unit to an existing  
Multi-family residential building

Submitted To:

City of Mesa Planning Department

Date: August 9, 2024

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This narrative outlines the applications for a Development Incentive Permit (“DIP”), Site Plan Review and Design Review Board for the 7,000 sq. ft. property located at 718 W. Pepper Place, Mesa, AZ, generally located at the northeast corner neighborhood of Main Street and Extension Road. The Property is further identified on the Maricopa County Assessor’s Map as parcel number 135-57-126B.

This request proposes to add a 3<sup>rd</sup> apartment unit to the existing building, establishing the current duplex as a 3-plex. The new unit would consist of 2 BR and 2BA that lower-income individuals and/or families in the area would be able to afford.

## II. DEVELOPMENT REQUEST

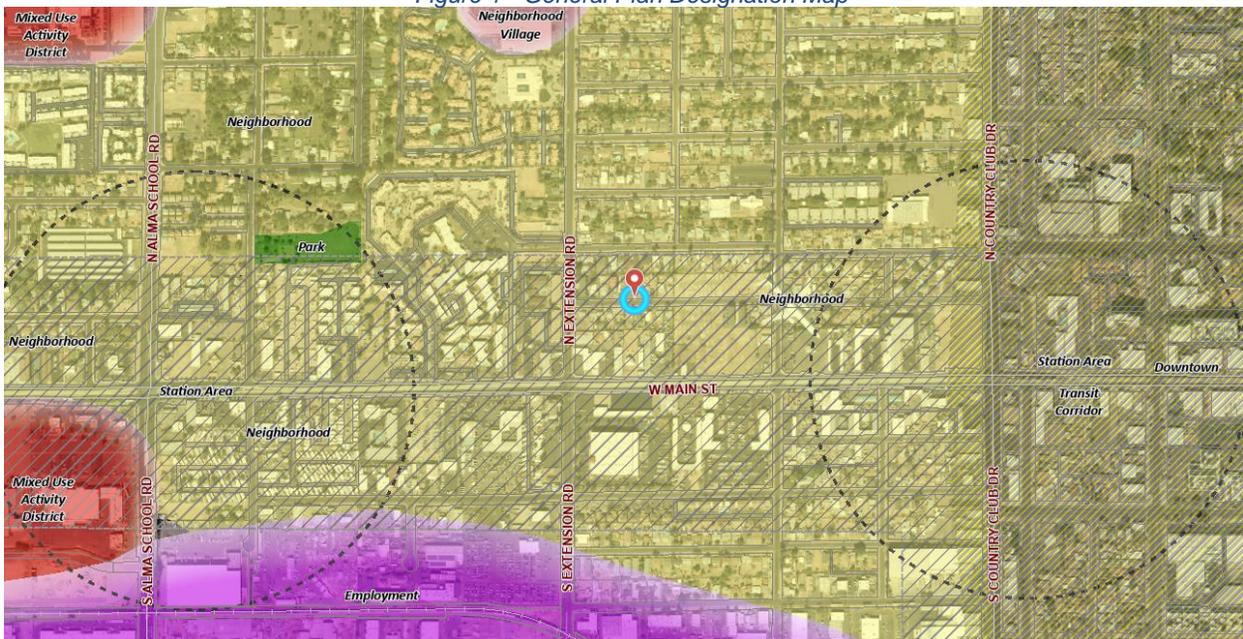
This narrative is requesting review from the City of Mesa for the following applications:

1. Development Incentive Permit through the Board of Adjustment (BOA) application
2. Design Review (by separate application)
3. Site Plan Review – Planning Director (by separate application)

## III. GENERAL PLAN CHARACTER AREA AND ZONING

The property is designated in the General Plan as the Transit Corridor Neighborhood Character Area with a base zoning of RM-3 (Multiple Residence). Per Mesa Zoning Ordinance (“Zoning Ordinance”) Table 11-5-2, multi-family residences such as 3-plexes are permitted.

Figure 1 - General Plan Designation Map



## IV. SITE PLAN OVERVIEW

The design of the additional unit ensures a logical and efficient layout that utilizes the lot’s unique size and constraints while maintaining the existing building orientation and placement. The added unit’s size and placement within the lot was taken into consideration to ensure there would be enough space for improved landscape and open space.

### A. Building and Lot Layout

The 3<sup>rd</sup> unit will be added to the rear side of the building on the north side of the lot. The added unit will be approximately 790 SF and consist of 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms bringing the total building size to approximately 2,000 SF. The below table outlines the development standards for the project.

Those standards with a yellow highlight are requesting modification through the Development Incentive Permit in Section VI of this narrative.

**Table 1 – Site Development Standards**

| Standards  | RM-3     | Development Project                         |
|--|----------|---|
| Building Height:   | 40 ft.   | 15'-5"                                      |
| Min. Lot Size:   | 6,000 SF | ± 7,013 SF (0.16-Ac.)                       |
| Min. Lot Width:  | 30 ft.   | ± 50 ft                                     |
| Min. Lot Depth:  | 94 ft.   | ± 140 ft.                                   |
| Max. Building Coverage:  | 70%      | ± 28.5%                                     |
| Building Setback   |          |   |
| <i>Front-Local (Pepper Place)</i>  | 20 ft.   | ± 26 ft.                                    |
| <i>Interior Side (East and west) – 3+ Units Adjacent to RM</i>   | 20 ft.   | ± 10 ft.                                    |
| <i>Interior Rear (East and west) – 3+ Units Adjacent to RM</i>   | 20 ft.   | ± 20 ft.                                    |
| Landscape Buffer   |          |   |
| <i>Front-Local (Pepper Place)*</i>   | 15 ft.   | ± 0 ft.                                     |
| <i>Interior Side/Rear – RM*</i>  | 15 ft.   | ± 10 ft. – West side<br>± 5 ft. – East Side |
| Parking Calculation  | Required | Development Project                         |
| Apartments/Multiple Residence – 1.4 spaces per DU (for site with >9 units located within ¼ mile of a bus or light rail station)                                      | 5 Spaces | 5 Spaces                                    |
| Covered Parking – 1 space per DU (Multiple Residence)  | 5 Spaces | 0 Spaces                                    |
| Notes:   |          |   |
|  See Section VI - Development Incentive Permit for modifications and justifications |          |   |

**B. Parking**

The property has five (5) existing parking spaces that serve the site. Under the guidelines of the MZO, the site is located near several bus stations within 1,320 feet and is approximately less than ½ mile from the Main Street and Country Club light rail station. Given the number of units (less than 9 dwelling units) and the proximity of the site to several bus stations and the Main Street Light Rail Corridor, the site qualifies for an exception to the lower parking requirement of 1.4 spaces per dwelling unit. An exhibit showing the proximities of the light rail and bus stations is provided in Exhibit I – Bus Stop & Light Rail Locations.

To view the parking, setback and building orientation and unit addition design, please refer to the submitted **Architectural Site Plan and Floor Plan**.

**C. Landscape**

The property’s existing landscape will be improved with the building of the new The total landscape area for the Project will be 2,720 SF made up of a mixture of permeable decomposed granite, desert friendly shrubs and trees.

Planting materials will exceed what is required in Sec. 11-33-3 of the MZO – planting guidelines for spaces and shade coverage – and will include the following plant materials:

**V. ARCHITECTURE**

**A. Building Materials**

The proposed architecture will include a material palette consisting of at least four (4) primary materials along each building façade, including:

- Wood Fascia, Beams
- EIFS Stucco Finish

- Ship-Lap Wood Siding
- Black Vinyl Window System

Per Sec. 11-6-3(B)(5) of the Mesa Zoning Code, no more than 50% of the total façade may be covered with one (1) single material. The proposed architectural drawings have provided a façade calculation to show that each material does not exceed the 50% threshold and will create an evenly distributed and diverse palette for each façade.

**B. Building Facades**

Each building facade contains diverse materials and colors that will create dimension and undulation for each building wall. Per, Sec. 11-6-3(B)2 of the MZO, the site is designed so that no wall plane is more than 50’ without some sort of change in texture, color and/or plane. The building also provides undulation along each building wall to help break apart any monotony in plane, or material. In addition to the undulation of each facade, the building will also feature a roofline of corning shingles and rooftop paneling to create a unique top feature that differentiates from the middle portions of the building wall while creating a vertical change in plane and dimension.

**VI. LANDSCAPE DESIGN**

The proposed unit addition offers an opportunity to enhance the property’s landscape while preserving key existing features. Currently, the site has three mature trees on the west side that provide canopy shade and greenery, which will be preserved in the new landscape plan. The redesign will modernize the overall landscape, making it more desert-friendly and less water-dependent. The existing grass will be replaced with decomposed granite, and the rear of the property will feature synthetic turf and a fireplace, creating a small common space amenity for the three units. In addition to adding two trees, the plan will incorporate more desert-friendly shrubs. The table below outlines the updated planting legend for the property:

**PLANTING MATERIAL LEGEND**

| TREES   | SIZE  | NOTES                          | QTY          |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--------------|
|  | Existing Tree to Remain - Protect in Place  | *ADWR                          | 3            |
|  | Acacia stenophylla<br>Shoestring Acacia<br>Caliper Size: 2.0"                         | *ADWR                          | 1            |
|  | Acacia aneura<br>Mulga Acacia<br>Caliper Size: 1.5"                                   | *ADWR                          | 1            |
| <b>GROUNDCOVERS</b>   |   |                                | <b>QTY</b>   |
|  | Lantana montevidensis<br>Trailing Lantana 'gold'                                      | 5 Gallon<br>can full<br>*ADWR  | 10           |
| <b>SHRUBS / ACCENTS</b>   |   |                                | <b>QTY</b>   |
|  | Agave desmettiana<br>Smooth Agave   | 15 Gallon<br>can full<br>*ADWR | 20           |
|  | Euphorbia tirucalli<br>Fire Stick   | 15 Gallon<br>can full<br>*ADWR | 5            |
| <b>LANDSCAPE MATERIALS</b>  |   |                                |              |
|  | Decomposed Granite - 1/4" minus "Apache Gold",<br>2" deep in planting areas per plan. |                                | 2720<br>s.f. |
|  | Synthetic Grass - Owner Select<br>install per mfg. requirements                       |                                | 240<br>s.f.  |
|  | Fire Pit - Owner Select - vendor purchased<br>install per mfg. requirements           |                                | 1            |

\*ADWR = Arizona Department of Water Resources  
Approved Low-Water Use Plant

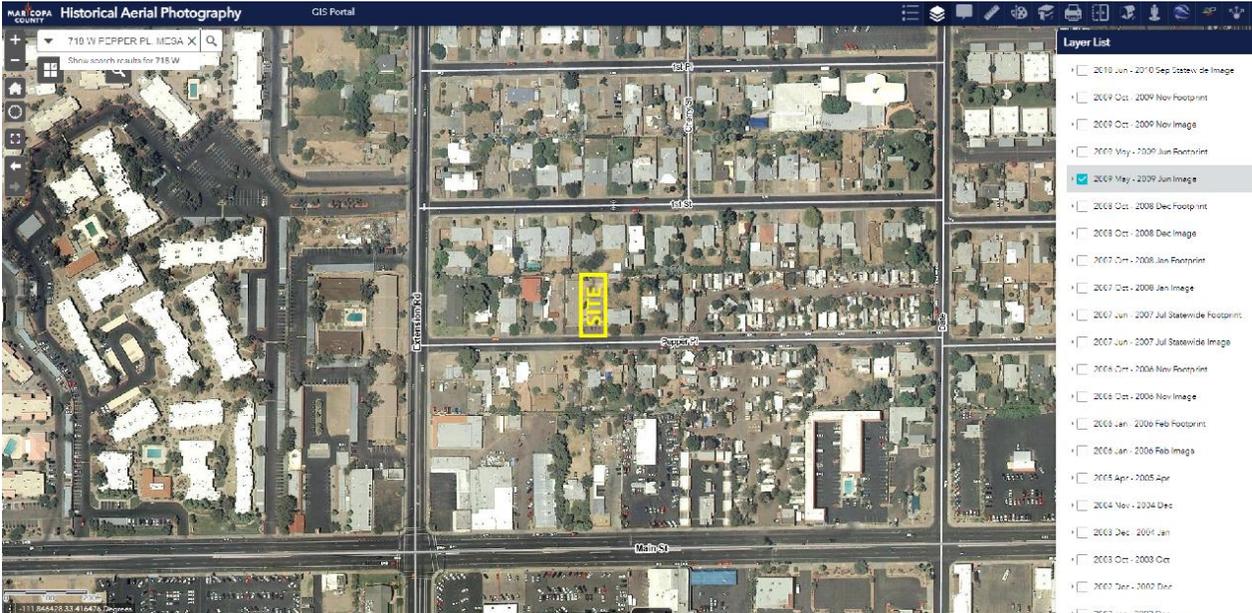
This new landscape design will create a more modern and cohesive aesthetic, enhancing both the property’s appearance and the street frontage within the neighborhood.

**VII. DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVE PERMIT**

The Development Incentive Permit (“DIP”) provides incentives for the development of smaller and older tracts that would otherwise have difficulty meeting current standards. These incentives provide for relief from certain standards (i.e. building setback, landscape design, onsite parking) so long as certain criteria and findings of the project and property are met. The table below outlines how the proposed project meets the DIP criteria:

| DIP Criteria            | Requirements   | Modification Request   |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Area                    | Total area of the parcel does not exceed 2.5 net acres, and the parcel has been in its current configuration for more than 10 years          | The subject property, located at 718 W. Pepper Place (APN: 135-57-126B) has a gross area of 7,013 SF (0.16-Ac) and has been in its current configuration for more than 10 years. |
| Area                    | Total area of the site does not exceed 5 net acres and was created by the assembly of 2 or more individual, contiguous parcels               | The subject property, does not exceed 5-net acres  |
| Utilities               | The parcel is served by, or has direct access to, existing utility distribution facilities.  | The parcel is already developed as a duplex and has existing utilities serving the parcel  |
| Surrounding Development | The parcel is surrounded by properties within a 1,200 ft. radius in which the total developable land area is not more than 25 percent vacant | The surrounding land is not more than 25% vacant   |
| Surrounding Development | Greater than 50 percent of the total numbers of lots or parcels have been developed 15 or more years ago                                     | The <i>Figure 2 Historical Aerial</i> was captured in 2009 (15 years ago) and shows that a majority of the land was already developed more than 50%                              |

Figure 2 - Historical Aerial (2009)



**A. Modifications**

This narrative and the development plan documents submitted, such as the Site Plan, Landscape Plan, and Elevations are preliminary in nature when compared with permitting documents and receive special

consideration during Design Review. The accompanying plans demonstrate how the additional unit will be consistent with the community themes and surrounding character.

Given the shortage of lower-income housing both nationwide and in Mesa, the elements of the DIP provide a unique and innovative incentive that will support many goals and objectives outlined in the General Plan and the DIP, offering opportunities for lower-income housing with modifications that ensure a cohesive development. The table below outlines the justification and compatibility of the DIP in relation to the site's constraints and modifications:

| DIP Incentive                  | Mesa Zoning Ordinance Requirement   | Modification Request  |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Building Interior Side Setback | Per Table 11-5-5: Development Standards for the RM-3 District, a side building setback of 20-ft is required for single story buildings of 3 or more units.  | The existing building was built with a 10' setback. The proposed unit addition would maintain the existing setback of <b>10' for each side.</b>   |
| Landscape Buffer               | Per Section 11-33-3.B.2.a of the MZO, non-single residence uses adjacent to other non-single residential districts and/or uses shall provide a 15 ft. landscape yard. Both the existing building and parking are located within this required 15-ft landscape yard. Both properties adjacent to the east and west are multi-residence properties and do not have shared cross access. | As the existing building and parking are currently built and in place the site does not meet the 15' required side landscape buffer and thus requests a reduction from 15' to <b>5' on the east interior side</b> ; a reduction 15' to <b>10' on the west interior side</b> and a reduction from 15' to <b>0' on the south local street facing side</b> |
| Landscape Design               | Per Section 11-33-4.B of the MZO, landscape islands of 8' x 15' shall be installed at the end of each row of stalls   | The existing parking spaces are currently built and in place and do not have a landscape island. The proposed unit addition requests a variance to remove the landscape island requirement altogether,  |
| Foundation Base                | Per Section 11-33-5.A of the MZO, all buildings shall provide a 15 ft.-wide foundation base, measured from face of building to face of curb along the entire length of the exterior wall.   | The proposed project seeks to reduce the foundation base requirement from 15' to <b>0' (or remove the 15' foundation base altogether)</b>   |
| Covered Parking                | Per Section 11-32-3.D.2 of the MZO, multiple residence projects shall provide a minimum of 1 covered parking space per DU   | The project seeks to eliminate the required covered parking   |
| Perimeter Landscape Planting   | Per Section 11-33-3 of the MZO, 1 tree and 4 shrubs are required for every 25 LF of local street frontage.  | The project seeks a reduction of tree and shrub planting requirements along W Pepper Place from 2 trees to <b>1 tree</b> and 8 shrubs to <b>7 shrubs</b>  |

**B. Justification**

The modifications listed in the above table are respectfully requested because given the distinct location, history, site constraints, existing infrastructure and the proposed design of the property, strict application of the current zoning provisions would not enable the proposed development to offer the cohesive design, open space plan, and creativity needed to promote the viability of the additional unit.

1. Building Interior Side Setback

At the time of the original development, the site was built as a duplex, conforming with the required 10 ft. setback. The project seeks to convert the existing duplex into a triplex by adding an additional

unit. Under the current Mesa zoning code, a duplex allows for a 10 ft. side building setback. However, once the building is modified to include three dwelling units, the setback requirement increases to 20 feet. To justify maintaining the 10 ft. setback, the property's small size presents few options for an alternative layout for the unit addition. Adhering to the 20 ft. setback would be impractical and significantly disrupt the architectural harmony and functional orientation of the existing building. The proposed setback variance is essential to effectively integrate the new unit without compromising the overall design integrity, ensuring that the development remains compatible with the neighborhood's character and maximizes the utility of the existing space. The adjacent properties to the east and west have very narrow setbacks that have established a condition and expectation for setbacks and distances less than what is proposed in this case. Improved landscape vegetation and open space will further mitigate any perceived impact on the adjacent properties.

2. Landscape Buffer

The property's small size poses constraints when establishing 15 ft. wide landscape buffers. Similar to the building setback challenges, adhering to a 15 ft. landscape buffer would be impractical considering the narrowness of the lot and the existing placement of the building. This would disrupt the harmony of the lot's design and building orientation. In lieu of a 15 ft. wide landscape buffer, the project proposes to maintain its current landscape buffer of 5 feet and 10 feet on the east and west property sides, orienting much of the common open space and landscape to the rear of the property on the north side.

The context of the surrounding properties also establishes a consistent design where narrow lots with similar small apartments have little to no landscape buffering. The proposed unit addition is designed to maintain the integrity of the building's design while ensuring both site design and architecture provide improved aesthetics and open space.

3. Landscape Design

The site's current parking status provides for five (5) existing spaces that are located along the south property line and currently serve the existing duplex units. Improving to existing parking row to have landscape islands on each end of the parking row would prove burdensome and would require loss of the existing parking spaces as the two end spaces would need to be converted to landscape islands, thus unnecessarily reducing the already limited parking spaces. Additionally, the lot's narrow width constraints the ability for landscape islands to be put in place.

4. Foundation Base

The current Mesa Zoning Code requires all buildings to have a foundation base that extends out to a minimum of 15 ft from the exterior wall. At the time of the original development, the building pad was built without meeting the current 15' requirement, and as such, the building currently sits on a typical foundation with some undulation extending out for the patios. The proposed unit addition continues the typical foundation, offering a base that extends out for the patio and connects to the onsite walkway. In other parts of the exterior wall, the foundation base is flush with the exterior wall and does not meet the 15 ft. extension.

To reduce the foundation base, the development intends to utilize unique architectural features that will provide unique design throughout the pedestrian connectivity, including improved vegetation, shaded walkways, and architectural features that will help further undulate the building's façade and exterior, improving the building's mass and reducing the "box" look. The unique architectural design approach will modify and improve the overall architectural theme of the building and lot more than what currently exists.

These improved architectural and landscape features, along with the site's unique conditions and history, merit consideration and support for this requested modified standard.

5. Covered Parking

The request to remove the covered parking space requirement is justified by the specific location of the parking area and its impact on the property's aesthetic appeal. The parking is situated in a manner that, if covered, would significantly obstruct the view of the front elevation, detracting from the architectural elements and visual coherence of the building. An uncovered parking area will preserve the property's frontage, maintaining an open and inviting appearance that enhances the overall streetscape and aligns with the design goals of the neighborhood character.

6. Landscape Design

The development seeks a reduction in the planting requirements from 2 trees and 8 shrubs to 1 tree and 7 shrubs along W Pepper Place due to the narrow 50-foot street frontage of the property. This limited space poses significant challenges in meeting the standard requirements while also accommodating essential site features, such as the walkway and the existing 5 parking spaces. Requiring the full planting would necessitate reconfiguring these critical elements, which could compromise the functionality and accessibility of the site. Despite the reduction, the proposed planting will still provide sufficient greenery and aesthetic value, balancing the need for vegetation with the practical limitations of the property. Therefore, the requested adjustment is a reasonable and necessary measure to ensure both effective site design and compliance with the city's broader landscaping goals.

C. Required Findings

The table below outlines the required findings that establish conformity with the guidelines and goals of the DIP:

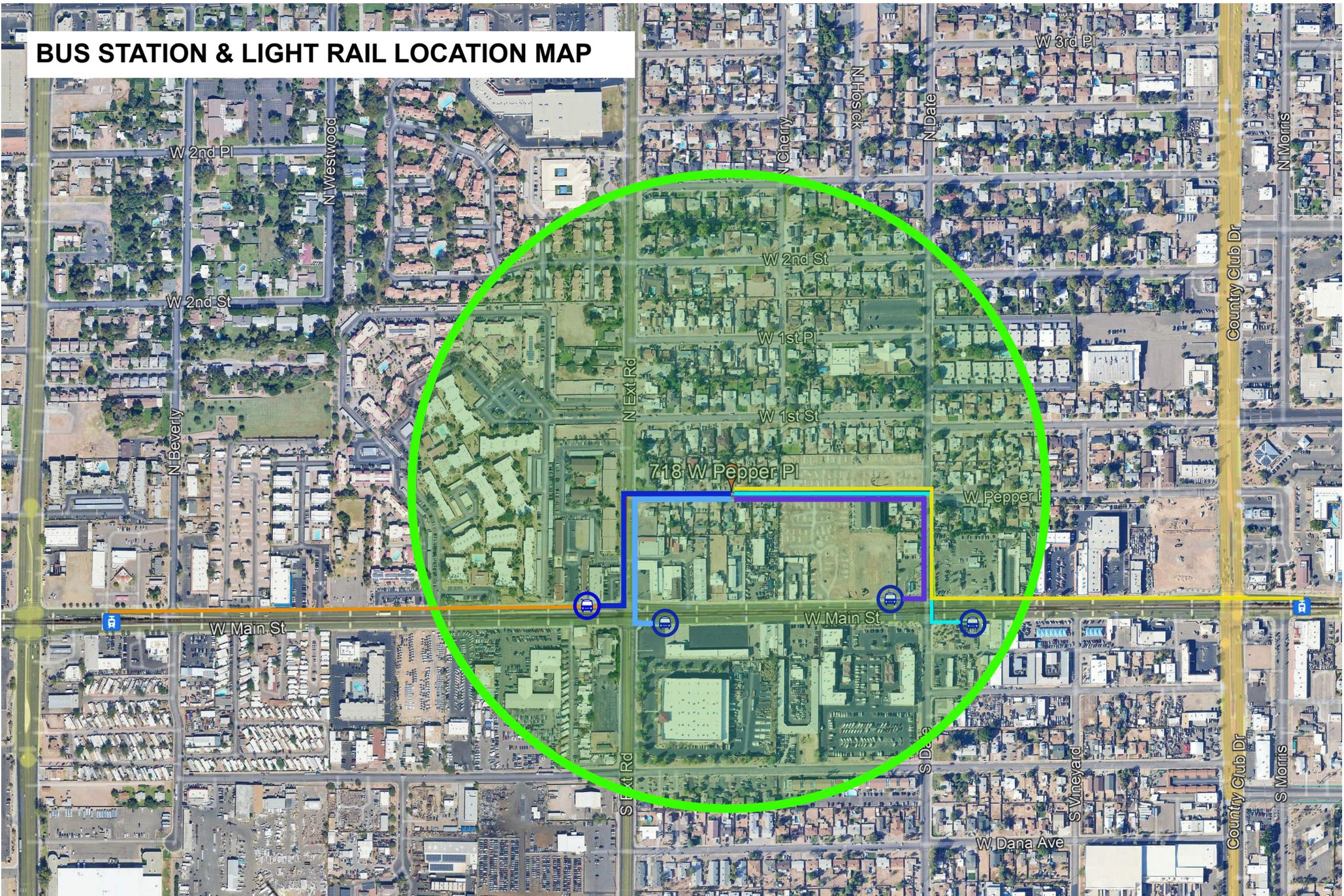
| DIP Required Findings | Requirement   | Compliance   |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| General Plan          | The proposed development is consistent with the General Plan, any other applicable Council adopted plans and/policies, and the permitted uses as specified in this Ordinance;           | The proposed development is multi-family residential which complies with the intent and goals of the General Plan and land use designation of the area   |
| Intensity             | The incentives do not allow development that is more intense than the surrounding neighborhood; commensurate with existing development within a 1,200' radius of the by-passed property | The proposed development complies with the density of the RM-3. The improvements to add the additional 3 <sup>rd</sup> unit are consistent with the overall design and multiple residence theme for this area. |
| Design and Materials  | The architectural elements, construction and landscape materials, and other site improvements of the proposed development meet the intent of the Design Standards of this Ordinance.    | The proposed architectural elements and materials would be a significant improvement to the existing building structure and would introduce a greater compliance with the design goals of the MZO              |

**VIII. CONCLUSION**

This project aims to demonstrate a high-quality, small-scale triplex residence that will enhance and redevelop the property. The project design will be compatible with the multi-family character of the neighborhood, where the site context has established a consistent setting for such small-scale multi-residential properties. The improvements to the architectural and site layout will be an enhancement over existing conditions and will contribute to a newly designed and improved housing opportunity for this property.

EXHIBIT I  
BUS STATION & LIGHT RAIL  
LOCATION MAP

# BUS STATION & LIGHT RAIL LOCATION MAP



## LEGEND

- |   |                 |   |                             |  |                                    |
|---|-----------------|---|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
|  | 1/4 MILE RADIUS |  | BUS ROUTE 1 (+/- 1,065 ft.) |  | LIGHT RAIL ROUTE 1 (+/- 2,612 ft.) |
|  | BUS STOP        |  | BUS ROUTE 2 (+/- 1,417 ft.) |  | LIGHT RAIL ROUTE 2 (+/- 3,083ft.)  |
|  | LIGHT RAIL STOP |  | BUS ROUTE 3 (+/- 1,053 ft.) |  |                                    |
|   |                 |  | BUS ROUTE 4 (+/- 1,540 ft.) |  |                                    |

