

# Mesa AZ Eastmark Meetinghouse Mesa AZ Eastmark Stake

10621 E. Williams Field Road  
Mesa, AZ 85212

## Project Narrative

**Site Plan Approval & SUP – ZON24-00127**

and

**Design Review Approval – DRB24-00037**

with

**Alternative Compliance for Building Elevations**

&

**Alternative Compliance for Landscape Requirements**



## **PROJECT NARRATIVE:**

### **Synopsis:**

This project is located at the intersection of South 222<sup>nd</sup> Street and East Williamsfield Road at the SE corner. The project consists of 5.32 gross acres (5.05 net acres) with a new church building of approximately 18,114 sf. It will also have a small storage building (190 sf) adjacent to the refuse/recycle bin enclosure.

### **Conformance with the Mesa 2040 General Plan:**

**Neighborhoods:** Primarily residential areas with supporting parks, schools, churches, and small commercial areas. Focus: Per the General Plan, neighborhoods can contain associated non-residential uses such as places of worship.

This development complies with the 2040 General Plan. It is a "Place of Worship" designed and located to bring people together and will enhance the neighborhood as a place where people live. It is a development that will help ensure a clean, safe, and healthy area. It will establish a sense of place and feel connected to the larger community by establishing a "safe landmark". While this development will be a "secondary" land use, it will be a major iconic building establishing it as a place of safe haven and a center of cultural/religious gatherings. Thus, this place of worship will fulfill the requirements of the General Plan and is a permitted use in the RS-9 zoning district.

**Conformance with the District:** This development is consistent with the purposes of the district (Neighborhood), and is within the flexibility of the PAD designated for this site. While the PAD permits flexibility, this place of worship development complies with the PAD except for the total height of the building which included the steeple.

**Special Use Permit for AOA 3:** An SUP, discretionary permit, is required due to the height of the steeple.

- 1. Advance the goals and objectives of the General Plan:** As seen in the above part of the narrative, this place of worship development is consistent with the General Plan, Zoning, and other policies.
  - designed and located to bring people together and will enhance the neighborhood as a place where people live
  - establish a sense of place and feel connected to the larger community by establishing a "safe landmark"
  - it will be a major iconic building establishing it as a place of safe haven and a center of cultural/religious gatherings
- 2. Location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the project are consistent with the purposes of the district and General Plan:** The project complies with all applicable requirements to the zoning district and General Plan. The type of use, size, and location are in harmony with the requirements. (See "Conformance with the Mesa 2040 General Plan, above.)
- 3. The project will not be injurious or detrimental to the surrounding properties:** The project is located south of Eastmark and to the east of Cadence and is located on the SE corner of Williamsfield and 222<sup>nd</sup> St. It is located well away from the surrounding properties. The project is residential in scale with the ridge only 26'-7" above the finish floor line of the building. This leaves only the iconic steeple which tops out at 66'-4" above the finish floor line. The steeple is an important philosophical, physical statement of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

The steeple is not injurious or detrimental to the Mesa Gateway airport as stated in the following email conversation: *"If the steeple height remains at 67' and, since that height does not penetrate the 1:100 slope based on distance from the airport and structure height needed for FAA filing, that should not be needed. If they wanted to file with the FAA as part of overall due diligence, I would not discourage that, but with the taller light poles further west at Legacy Sports Park those would likely be a controlling obstacle(s) in the vicinity". Thanks, Tony Bianchi*

- 4. Adequate public services, public facilities and public infrastructure are available to serve the proposed project.** As shown on the submitted drawings, there are adequate public services, facilities, and infrastructure to serve the project. Water connection is within ¼ mile of the site, and all other utilities and infrastructure are adjacent or on the site.

**Site:**

Any offsite utility improvements will need to be verified and located at both 222<sup>nd</sup> Street and Williamsfield Road. Further street and driveway improvements will be required at both. Retention will be handled in the landscaped areas located on the east, south, and west sides of the building.

Landscaping will be a combination of various drought-resistant desert trees, shrubs, groundcover, accents and crushed granite in a variety of shapes and sizes, placed to enhance and frame the building, with a complete automatic irrigation system.

A small utility storage building, matching the materials of the main building will be located with the double dumpster enclosure on the east side of the site within easy access of the building. The refuse and recycle enclosure will comply with Solid Waste's navigational requirements and City of Mesa standard detail.

**Architectural Character:**

This meetinghouse will present a warm and stately image at this intersection. The new church building is designed to face Williamsfield Road to the north and will provide new driveway entrances both on 222<sup>nd</sup> Street and Williamsfield Road. All building and site development work is to be performed in one phase. Existing zoning is "RS-9". A change of zoning is not being requested.

The 18,114 +/- square foot religious facility exterior has a rusticated brick base, brick pilasters and brick field in soft neutral brown/grey tones. Precast concrete "steps" on the pilasters will be left natural and sealed for a "cast stone/granite" appearance. The body of the building is set off from the roof by a traditional white fascia, soffit and drip edge which allows for the roof to "feel" lighter. The roof is a flat concrete roof tile in grey-brown tones capped with a white steeple. 2 gables accent the long sides of the building with the larger of the two identifying the entrances on either side and create a covered area.

The subtle Arts and Crafts style of this building is very traditional and will be a beautifully integrated addition to the surrounding, developing residential neighborhoods. It will visually anchor this street corner and be a center point and way-finding icon for local congregations and citizens.

As can be seen in the many buildings of the Church in the Mesa and surrounding areas, the building is instantly recognizable due to the nature of the architecture, especially the steeple. The overall design is reminiscent of figurative tent stretched forth as a shelter for worship, as described in the Old Testament. *"Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes" (Isaiah 54:2).* The word *stake* is taken from Old Testament tent imagery in which the "tent," or church, is held up by supporting stakes. In the scriptures, tent-dwelling symbolizes the condition of God's people, who are like wanderers awaiting the time when a permanent city of Zion will be established, which itself anticipates a heavenly home in the celestial kingdom. The ancient Israelites, for instance, had a tabernacle (or tent) that functioned like a portable temple as they wandered in the wilderness before they could enter the promised land.

The steeple figuratively expresses a message of faith and devotion to God (literally lifting the eye heavenward) and is an age-old symbol identifying the building as a house of worship. There are no lights or bells in or on the steeple.

**Architectural Elevations – Alternative Compliance:**

We are requesting to be allowed to utilize Alternative Compliance for the building elevations in lieu of the requirement that no single material on any façade be greater than 50% of the total facade. The design of the

building utilizes 3 colors of brick, a premium material, to add subtle differences to the façade of the building. These 3 brick colors are:

- Interstate Brick “Pewter L-4 Matte” for the field color above the wainscot soldier course
- General Shale “Thundercloud” for the rusticated wainscot
- Interstate Brick “Platinum Matte” for the accent brick for soldier courses, and around windows

Other materials help break up the façade of the building:

- White trimmed windows with integral, interior mullions
- White storefront with grey tinted glass (Solarban 70 SL)
- White pre-finished metal fascia and soffit.
- EIFS accent panels with decorative tooled joints on the front and rear of the building. Color to be Dunn-Edwards DEC766 “Steveareno Beige” LRV 44.

The following demonstrates the areas of each material on the building with the associated percentages for each of the four elevations:

<b>North</b>	<b>1,980 sf</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>1,940 sf</b>
Brick – Field:	988sf (47%)	Brick – Field:	1073sf(51%)
Brick – Accent:	42sf (2%)	Brick – Accent:	40sf (1%)
Brick – Wainscott:	438sf (21%)	Brick – Wainscott:	295sf (14%)
EIFS – Panels:	133sf (6%)	EIFS – Panels:	37sf (1%)
Precast Conc:	46sf (2%)	Precast Conc:	47sf (2%)
Steeple:	153sf (7%)	Steeple:	153sf (7%)
Storefront + Glass:	23sf (1%)	Storefront + Glass	97sf (4%)
Windows + Glass:	50sf (2%)	Windows + Glass:	50sf (2%)
<b>East</b>	<b>2,749 sf</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>2,754 sf</b>
Brick – Field:	913sf (31%)	Brick – Field:	1010sf(35%)
Brick – Accent:	82sf (3%)	Brick – Accent:	81sf (2%)
Brick – Wainscott:	853sf (29%)	Brick – Wainscott:	849sf (29%)
Precast Conc:	79sf (3%)	Precast Conc:	73sf (2%)
Steeple:	153sf (5%)	Steeple:	153sf (5%)
Storefront + Glass	242sf (10%)	Storefront + Glass	196sf (10%)
Windows + Glass:	138sf (5%)	Windows + Glass:	166sf (5%)

**Site-Parking:**

The parking requirements for an assembly occupancy per City of Mesa Zoning Ordinance:

Overall size:	18,114 sf – Corridors (2,595 sf) = 15,519 sf (net)
Assembly space:	15,519 sf (net) / 75 sf per car = 207 spaces required
	207 spaces x 125% increase = 258 spaces maximum
<b>Total Parking:</b>	<b>230 spaces requested</b>

The parking count is required due to the use of the building with overlapping congregations. Each congregation has approximately 450 members attending:

Total Members:	600 x 75% attending = 450 attending per congregation
2 congregation overlap:	900 attending (1 in classrooms, 1 in Chapel/Cultural Hall)
900 / 4 occupants per car:	225 spaces

**Site-Design:**

The design of the site centers the building along E. Williamsfield Rd. with parking on three sides for easy access into the building. Islands have been placed to break up the long expanses of parking and provide adequate space for trees.

Perimeter walls on the east and south will be 6' high masonry walls. On the west and north screen walls, along Williamsfield and 222<sup>nd</sup>, have been created to mitigate the visual intrusion of cars and headlights. The screen walls will be decorative in nature with pilasters every 17'4". The pilasters will be topped and clad in brick matching the building. The screen walls between the pilasters will be painted cmu to match the building.

The new driveway entrances will be constructed in compliance with the City of Mesa Standard Details M-42.

**Outdoor Lighting:**

The parcel will be lighted using a combination of LED pole lights and building mounted wall packs. A photometric study has been provided as part of the site plan submittal process to demonstrate that adequate lighting is provided for safety and security. The site lighting will be provided such that the light intensity shall be an average of two and one-half footcandles, the poles shall not exceed 15 feet in height, and cut-off fixtures shall be shielded such that light is directed down and shall not be visible beyond the boundaries of the lot.

**Stormwater:**

All stormwaters will be routed via surface flow to a connected retention basin located on the east, west, and south sides of the property. These are sufficient to handle the required storm runoff without underground retention.

**Landscape Setbacks and Landscape Foundation Base-Alternative Compliance:**

While most of the landscaping complies with the zoning code, there are several areas that require alternative compliance. Richly designed, the landscape will be ecologically responsible but providing "desert" landscaping throughout. No turf will be utilized. Drought resistant trees and shrubs will be utilized to create a pleasant design all the while being cognizant of the arid climate we live in. Boulders will enhance the "desert" feel and create a more naturalistic look to the landscaping.

We ask for alternative compliance with the requirement of foundation landscaping. We have found that putting plant material next to the building walls is detrimental to the structural integrity of the building due to water migration under the foundation. While the idea of desert landscaping brings to the forefront of thought "water reducing", the reality surfaces that most desert plants are over watered. The creation of plants next to the building also causes issues with water runoff from the roof, unintentional pooling roof runoff water next to the building and causing the foundation to heave. The result is foundation and wall cracking.

Thus, we request the requirement for foundation landscaping be eliminated within 5' of the building perimeter. This will allow us to successfully grade that area for positive runoff.

**Water:**

Water will be provided by the City of Mesa Water Utility.

**Sewer:**

Sewer will be provided by the City of Mesa.

**Conclusion:**

We respectfully request that the City of Mesa accept this application and move the project forward with formal site plan review, design review, and ultimately the building permitting process.

# THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

## QUICK FACTS

This statement supplements the accompanying application for a chapel of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It answers questions about how the chapel will be used and its impact on the neighborhood. It also briefly explains the chapel's religious importance to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (sometimes called the Mormon Church) and its local members.

### What will the chapel look like?

While the basic elements of the chapel will be dictated by worship needs, the Church solicits the input of neighbors as to aspects of the design that do not impact religious needs. Key features will include a traditional steeple, a sanctuary, classrooms for religious instruction, clergy offices where the Church's lay clergy can confidentially counsel members and coordinate ministries, and a multipurpose room for instruction and the religious activities of ministries. The Church will propose the smallest plan that will reasonably accommodate the Church's religious needs.

### How will the chapel be used?

The chapel will be used on Sundays and, on a limited basis, one or two weekday evenings. There is no day school, day care, soup kitchen, bingo or any other commercial or political use. There is no daytime administrative staff apart from occasional maintenance personnel.

#### Key to Mormon Terminology

- Ward** or **Branch** – a local congregation of members living in a geographically defined area
- Stake** – a diocese-like grouping of 8-10 congregations
- Bishop** – the lay minister of a congregation
- Stake President** – the lay leader of a stake
- Meetinghouse** – another word for the chapel
- Cultural Hall** – a multipurpose room used for classroom space, overflow seating, and weekday youth and women's activities
- Relief Society** – the women's ministry
- Primary** – the children's ministry
- Young Men's** and **Young Women's** – the two halves of the congregation's youth ministry
- Priesthood** – all males ages 12 and over participate in the Church's lay priesthood; priesthood status does not signify clergy.
- Calling** – all congregation members serve in "callings" to staff the congregation (e.g., teaching Sunday School, leading the music, coordinating youth activities); there is no professional clergy or staff.

**Sunday Worship:** Sunday services last three hours, consisting of a congregational meeting in the sanctuary (about an hour) followed by two sessions of classroom instruction. Classroom instruction is age and sometimes gender-specific so that children, youth and adults receive the gospel in specialized classes according to their own interests and levels of understanding.

For a description of worship services and a schedule of nearby Sunday meetings, visit <http://mormon.org/worship/>. Visitors are always welcome.

**Limited use on Weekdays:** Besides Sunday services, the congregation may use the proposed chapel on one or two weekday evenings – Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday – for its youth ministry, scouting, or women's meetings. Evening activities are usually small and seldom last past 9:00 p.m. There may also be a one-hour, early morning gospel study class for teenagers on school days. Friday night or Saturday activities are seldom, and are limited to religious or family-themed gatherings. When food is involved it is prepared at home and brought to the gathering. All activities have a central purpose to knit together the religious community, provide Christian service, and strengthen faith.

## How will the chapel impact neighbors?

- **Traffic:** With virtually no daytime use during the week, the chapel will be quiet and will bring almost no traffic during commute times for six days of the week. The parking lot meets all code criteria and will be sufficient to accommodate time-honored parking needs.
- **Local Use Only:** The chapel will not become a “megachurch.” Unique religious beliefs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ensure limited use:
  - In the LDS Church, members attend services where they live. All congregations have geographic boundaries. This means the proposed chapel will be regularly used only by people who live within those defined boundaries.
  - Also, the LDS Church caps the size of its congregations for religious reasons. There is no paid ministry. Local members run the Church by participating in volunteer “callings.” Church doctrine teaches that all members need the opportunity to actively participate, and that can only happen if congregations remain small.
- **Aesthetics:** The chapel is designed to be a respectful, though understated, tribute to God. It is the smallest possible design that will accommodate worship needs. The steeple, in particular, figuratively expresses a message of faith and devotion to God (literally lifting the eye heavenward) and is an age-old symbol identifying the building as a house of worship. There are no lights or bells in the steeple. Well-maintained landscaping physically separates the chapel from other structures and promotes an atmosphere of quiet contemplation.

## We are a part of this community.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints care deeply about this community. We live and work here, actively volunteer in schools and other community endeavors, and are committed to preserving the local character. The proposed chapel will not only provide an attractive home for local worship but enable us to further contribute to the community at large.

## Why is the chapel so important?

As one court stated, “the LDS church has as an integral part of its faith the need to gather under one roof to express its strength in unity and to gain strength to express its individual faith.” *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints v. Jefferson County*, 741 F. Supp. 1522, 1524 (N.D. Ala. 1990).

The Church and its local members critically need the proposed chapel. Currently, the Church’s local congregation travels elsewhere and existing facilities are inadequate. Limited seating, commotion and other symptoms of overcrowding all combine to substantially impair both the ability to worship and the quality of services in existing facilities. Overcrowding is disruptive, prevents growth, reduces individual participation in worship, forces the elimination of religious courses, and restricts the youth ministries. Moreover, the local congregations cannot subdivide as required by the faith because there is nowhere for a new congregation to go.

## Is RLUIPA implicated?

The Church’s critical need for the chapel is such that a denial of this application or other unreasonable limitation on the scope or ability to construct the chapel would trigger the protections of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (“RLUIPA”). See 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc. Congress passed RLUIPA unanimously and the courts have upheld its constitutionality. RLUIPA does two things: First, whenever a land use decision substantially burdens the exercise of religion, including the construction of a house of worship, RLUIPA obligates the government to demonstrate that the regulation is “the least restrictive means” of furthering a “compelling” government interest. This is the strictest possible judicial standard. *Id.* § 2000cc(a).

Second, RLUIPA separately prohibits (1) treating religious assemblies on less than “equal terms” with nonreligious assemblies, (2) discriminating on the basis of religion, or (3) imposing land use regulations that exclude or unreasonably limit religious assemblies from a jurisdiction. *Id.* § 2000cc(b).

Both these provisions codify established constitutional rules; so, any violation of RLUIPA also constitutes a violation of federal and state constitutions.

Of course, RLUIPA and constitutional mandates need not come into play. As Congress noted, the best way to “avoid the preemptive force” of RLUIPA is to grant a variance, construe discretionary land use criteria in favor of the chapel, or impose reasonable conditions of approval that do not substantially burden religious exercise. *Id.* § 2000cc-3(e). Here, the Church’s application meets all relevant criteria and should be approved. Moreover, the Church affirms a willingness to accept reasonable conditions of approval, if needed.

**Substantial Burden:** Courts applying RLUIPA interpret the term “substantial burden” to mean conduct that “pressures” or “influences” the free exercise of religion. See, e.g., *Guru Nanak Sikh Soc. v. County of Sutter*, 456 F.3d 978 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2006); *Midrash Sephardi v. Town of Surfside*, 366 F.3d 121 (11<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2004); *Adkins v. Kaspar*, 393 F.3d 559 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2004).

“That the burden would not be insuperable would not make it insubstantial.” *Sts. Constantine & Helen Greek Orthodox Church, Inc. v. City of New Berlin*, 396 F.3d 895 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir 2005). Preventing or making it unreasonably difficult to build a worship site, restricting the size of a congregation, or otherwise limiting religious observance have all been held to be “substantial burdens.”