



PLANNING DIVISION
STAFF REPORT

Board of Adjustment

August 14, 2024

CASE No.: BOA24-00585	PROJECT NAME: Together at the Landing
Owner's Name:	City of Mesa
Applicant's Name:	Chase Hawkins
Location of Request:	2613 North Thunderbird Circle. Located south of McDowell Road and west of Higley Road.
Parcel No(s):	141-36-001E
Nature of Request:	Requesting a Special Use Permit (SUP) for a Banquet and Conference Center in the Light Industrial with a Planned Area Development overlay (LI-PAD) District.
Zoning District:	Light Industrial with a Planned Area Development Overlay (LI-PAD)
Council District:	5
Site Size:	2.3± acres
Existing Use:	Vacant Commercial
Hearing Date(s):	August 7, 2024 / 5:30 p.m.
Staff Planner:	Emily Johnson, Planner I
Staff Recommendation:	APPROVAL with Conditions

HISTORY

On **November 4, 1978**, the City Council voted to annex 1,633± acres, including the project site, into the City of Mesa (Ordinance No. 1193).

On **July 16, 1979**, the City Council established M-1 zoning (comparable to the current Light Industrial [LI]) for 561 acres, including the project site (Case No. Z79-066; Ordinance No. 1254).

On **May 4, 2011**, the Design Review Board recommended approval to City Council of the Falcon Field Airport Planned Area Development Design Standards (Case No. DR11-013).

On **June 6, 2011**, the City Council approved a rezone from M-1 to M-1-PAD to allow for the creation of Design Guidelines for the airport (Case No. Z11-014; Ordinance No. 5040).

On **May 10, 2022**, the Design Review Board recommended approval to City Council of a modification to the Falcon Field Airport Planned Area Development Design Standards (Case No. DRB22-00299).

On **July 11, 2022**, the City Council approved a modification to the Falcon Field Planned Area Development Design Standards (Case No. ZON22-00157; Ordinance No. 5712).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background:

The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit (SUP) to allow for a Banquet and Conference Center in the Light Industrial with a Planned Area Development overlay (LI-PAD) District. The project site is located within the Falcon Field Planned Area Development south of McDowell Road and west of Higley Road.

Per Table 11-7-2 of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance (MZO), a Banquet and Conference Center is permitted in the LI district with the approval of a SUP (per Ordinance No. 5861 [Exhibit 6], which was approved by City Council on July 8, 2024, and became effective on August 9, 2024). Per the narrative, the proposed project includes an event venue for weddings, anniversaries, and other celebrations that will be in an existing structure formerly used as a restaurant.

General Plan Character Area Designation and Goals:

The 2040 Mesa General Plan Character area designation on the property is Specialty with an Airport sub-type. Specialty Districts are large (typically over 20 acre) areas with a single use such as an educational campus, airport, or medical facility. The character of these areas can have a significant impact on surrounding development either through the amount of traffic they generate, or the noise associated with their activities. Development in this character type maintains a campus feel and connection between buildings by having consistency in landscaping and signage and a high quality of building design and materials. The Airport sub-type includes Falcon Field and Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport. The proposed Conference and Banquet Center complies with the General Plan's Specialty District character area designation for the property as it is contributing to the growth of the Falcon Field Airport.

The project site is also within the Falcon Field Sub Area Plan. The vision statement is that the Falcon Field Sub-Area is a vibrant and progressive urban center that serves as an oasis of aviation related business and recreation; an oasis of abundant, high-quality employment for professionals, technical experts, and highly skilled labor; an oasis of regional entertainment that attracts the presence of distant visitors, local employees, and area residents; and an oasis of aesthetic beauty, possessing scenic vistas, quality architecture, and natural desert landscape. The site is within the Mixed Use / Employment area of the Falcon Field Sub-Area Plan. Development in this area must comply with FAA requirements, address flight safety requirements, and provide a compatible mix of land uses.

Site Characteristics:

The project site is located south of McDowell Road and west of Higley Road. The 2.3+ acre leased area for the proposal is located within the Falcon Field Municipal Airport which is 528.8± acres and zoned Light Industrial with a Planned Area Development overlay (LI-PAD).

The site currently consists of a vacant commercial building, formerly the Steak and Stone restaurant, with one access from Thunderbird Circle. Per Table 11-32-3.A of the MZO, the minimum parking for the proposed use is one space per 75 square feet used for public assembly. Per the submitted floorplan (see Exhibit 5), there is 8,765.5 square feet of public assembly. The project site consists of 118 parking spaces meeting the required 117.

Surrounding Zoning Designations and Existing Use Activity:

Northwest LI-PAD Hangar and Taxiway	North LI-PAD Hangar and Taxiway	Northeast (Across Higley Rd) RS-7-PAD-AS Single Residential
West (Across Thunderbird Cir.) LI-PAD Offices and Hangars	Subject Property LI-PAD Vacant Building	East (Across Higley Rd) RS-7-PAD-AS Single Residential
Southwest (Across Falcon Dr.) LI-PAD Vacant	South (Across Falcon Dr.) LI-PAD Vacant	Southeast (Across Higley Rd) RS-7-PAD-AS Single Residential

Mesa Zoning Ordinance Requirements and Regulations:

Per Section 11-70-5(E) of the MZO, the Board of Adjustment shall grant a Special Use Permit upon finding the following criteria are met for approval of a SUP:

1. Approval of the proposed project will advance the goals and objectives of and is consistent with the policies of the General Plan and any other applicable City plan and/or policies;

The proposed project is consistent with the policies of the General Plan as, per Chapter 5, to grow and maintain a diverse job base, Mesa must continue to develop and maintain Economic Activity Areas that provide busy, vibrant places which draw people and businesses together. Falcon Field has been identified as one of the major employment activity areas. Per the narrative, not only will the proposed Banquet and Conference Center provide stable and diverse jobs, but it will also bring tourism which will help to revitalize the area. Chapter 5 of the General Plan recognizes Tourism as an industry of opportunity in Mesa.

The proposal meets this criterion.

2. The location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the proposed project are consistent with the purposes of the district where it is located and conform with the General Plan and any other applicable City plan or policies;

The purpose of the LI district is to provide areas for limited manufacturing and processing, wholesaling, research, warehousing, and distribution activities take place within enclosed buildings, with restricted accessory outdoor storage as needed to support the primary uses. This district also provides for a full range of commercial activities, generally on a limited scale, including high-impact commercial uses, outdoor display and outdoor sale. The operating characteristics of a Banquet and Conference Center will contribute to the full range of commercial activities at the Falcon Field Airport. Per Chapter 5 of the Falcon Field Sub-Area Plan, a proper balance of aviation and non-aviation businesses is key to the long-term prosperity of the Falcon Field Sub-Area, therefore, the location of the proposed use conforms with the policies of the sub-area plan.

The proposal meets this criterion.

3. The proposed project will not be injurious or detrimental to the adjacent or surrounding properties in the area, nor will the proposed project or improvements be injurious or detrimental to the neighborhood or to the general welfare of the City; and

Per the applicant, the proposed project will not be injurious or detrimental to the adjacent or surrounding properties in the area, nor any neighborhood or to the general welfare of the City. The plans have been shared with Falcon Field Municipal Airport administration, who have issued no objections or concerns.

The proposal meets this criterion.

4. Adequate public services, public facilities and public infrastructure are available to serve the proposed project.

This proposed project will use the existing structure on the project site as well as the existing public services, public facilities, and public infrastructure.

The proposal meets this criterion.

Findings:

- A. The property was annexed into the City of Mesa in 1978 and subsequently zoned M-1.
- B. The project site is currently a vacant commercial space, formerly Steak and Stone Restaurant, within the Falcon Field Airport Planned Area Development.
- C. Approval of the proposed project will advance the goals and objectives of and is consistent with the policies of the General Plan and any other applicable City plan and/or policies.

- D. The location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the proposed project are consistent with the purposes of the district where it is located and conform with the General Plan and any other applicable City plan or policies.
- E. The proposed project will not be injurious or detrimental to the adjacent or surrounding properties in the area, nor will the proposed project or improvements be injurious or detrimental to the neighborhood or to the general welfare of the City.
- F. Adequate public services, public facilities and public infrastructure are available to serve the proposed project.

Neighborhood Participation Plan and Public Comments:

The applicant sent the required notification letters to all property owners within 500 feet of the site. As of this report, staff has not been contacted by any property owners or neighbors.

Staff Recommendation:

Based on the application received and preceding analysis, staff finds the proposed SUP conforms to the required findings for a Special Use Permit outlined in Section 11-70-5(E) of the MZO; therefore, staff recommends **approval** with the following conditions.

Conditions of Approval:

1. Compliance with the final site plan submitted.
2. Compliance with all City Development Codes and regulations.

Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1 – Vicinity Map
- Exhibit 2 – Staff Report
- Exhibit 3 – Narrative
- Exhibit 4 – Site Plan
- Exhibit 5 – Floor Plans
- Exhibit 6 – Ordinance No. 5861