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Staff finds that the Proposed Project does not meet the criteria for approval of a Bonus Intensity Zone (BIZ) Overlay as specified in Chapter 21 of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance (MZO), and it does not meet the criteria for Site Plan Review as outlined in MZO Section 11-69-5.

**Staff recommends denial.**

## Project Overview

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### Request:

The applicant is requesting to rezone a 0.6± acre property from Multiple Residence-2 (RM-2) to Multiple Residence-4 with a Bonus Intensity Zone overlay (RM-4-BIZ), and Site Plan Review, for a three-story, 15-unit multiple residence development (Proposed Project).

### Concurrent Applications:

- **DRB24-00996:** The Design Review Board (DRB) discussed the proposed elevations and landscape plan at their Work Session on June 10, 2025, and provided comments as outlined in the Meeting Notes (Exhibit 10).

## Site Context

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### General Plan:

- The Placetype for the project site is Urban Residential and the Growth Strategy is Evolve.
- Multi-Family Residential, up to 43 dwelling units per acre, is a principal land use in the Urban Residential Placetype.
- The RM-4 is a principal zoning district in the Urban Residential Placetype.

### Zoning:

- The project site is zoned Multiple Residence 2 (RM-2).
  - A multiple residence development is a permitted use within the RM-2 District with a maximum density of 15 dwelling units per acre.
- The applicant is requesting to rezone the property to Multiple Residence 4 with a Bonus Intensity Zone Overlay (RM-4-BIZ).
  - A multiple residence development is a permitted use within the RM-4 District with a maximum density of 30 dwelling units per acre.
  - The proposed development has a density of 25.9 dwelling units per acre.

### Surrounding Zoning & Use Activity:

The proposed multiple residence development is compatible with surrounding land uses, which include medical office and multiple residence uses.

<b>Northwest</b> (Across Mesa Dr.) RM-2 4-plex	<b>North</b>  NC Medical Office	<b>Northeast</b>  RM-2 Duplex
<b>West</b> (Across Mesa Dr.) RM-2 Single Residence	<b>Project Site</b>  RM-2 Vacant	<b>East</b>  RM-2 4-plex
<b>Southwest</b> (Across Mesa Dr.) RM-2 Duplex	<b>South</b>  RM-4 Multiple Residence	<b>Southeast</b>  RM-4 Multiple Residence

### Site History:

- **December 6, 1948:** City Council annexed 2,419 acres into the City of Mesa including the project site (Ordinance No. 228).

### Project/Request Details

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#### Site Plan:

- **Building Design:** The 15-unit development is comprised of three-story buildings with attached two-car garages on the ground floor. Every unit has two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a 60 square foot balcony and 60 square foot entry/patio. The exterior walls are finished with smooth and English style stucco and painted vertical siding. The majority of the exterior walls are painted neutral/grey colors, but angled wall panels are painted accent colors.
- **Access:** The site is accessed off Mesa Drive. A single driveway is provided, which dead ends at the east end of the development.
- **Parking:** Per Table 11-32-3.A of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance (MZO), 32 parking spaces are required. The Proposed Project includes 30 garage spaces and four guest spaces, which meets the minimum requirement;
  - The Proposed Project site is located on an arterial street that does not allow for on-street parking.
  - Any additional guest parking would likely be on neighborhood streets either across Mesa Drive to the west, which does not provide a direct pedestrian connection to the Proposed Project, or to Franklin Avenue, located approximately 500 south of the Proposed Project.

- **Landscaping:**

- The common open space / amenity area features tiered landscaped planters watered by the condensation from the air conditioning units and any rain run-off.
- Additional landscaping is located at the front of the site, as well as in narrow landscaped planters along the exterior walls of the buildings.

### **Bonus Intensity Zone Overlay:**

Per Section 11-21 of the MZO, the purpose of a BIZ overlay is to provide for variation from the application of residential densities and other development standards to allow greater intensity of development and encourage unique, innovative developments of superior quality. The BIZ overlay must demonstrate that the resulting development will further the goals and objectives of the General Plan, Specific Plans, and Council policies and will provide significant social or economic benefits to the City.

The requested deviations for the Proposed Project include:

<b>Development Standard</b>	<b>Required RM-4</b>	<b>Proposed RM-4</b>
<u>Maximum Lot Coverage</u> (% of lot) – MZO Table 11-5-5	70%	<b>79%</b>
<u>Minimum Yards</u> – MZO Table 11-5-5 - Front and Street Facing Side - (6-lane arterial – S. Mesa Dr.)  - Interior Sides and Rear: 3 or more units on lot	30 feet   Multiple Story: 15 feet per story (45 feet total)	<b>15'-10"</b>   <b>0' to shade structure; 3 feet per story for buildings (9 feet total)</b>
<u>Minimum Separation Between Buildings on Same Lot</u> – MZO Table 11-5-5 - Three-Story building	35-feet	<b>17-feet</b>

Development Standard	Required RM-4	Proposed RM-4
<u>Attached Garages</u> – MZO Section 11-5-5(B)(4)(f)(iii)	<p>When multiple garage doors are located within one (1) building, the maximum number of garage doors adjacent to one another shall be limited to three (3), unless there is a break in the building façade between garage doors. The break shall contain a major architectural feature, such as a building entrance or equivalent feature.</p>	<p><b>When multiple garage doors are located within one (1) building, the maximum number of garage doors adjacent to one another shall be limited to seven (7), unless there is a break in the building façade between garage doors. The break shall contain a major architectural feature, such as a building entrance or equivalent feature.</b></p>
<u>Materials</u> – MZO Section 11-5-5(B)(5)(b)	<p>Buildings must contain at least two (2) kinds of primary exterior materials distinctively different in texture or masonry pattern, with each of the required materials covering at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the exterior walls of the building.</p>	<p><b>Buildings must contain at least two (2) kinds of primary exterior materials distinctively different in texture or masonry pattern, with each of the required materials covering at least fifteen percent (15%) of the exterior walls of the building.</b></p>
<u>Setback of Cross Drive Aisles</u> – MZO Section 11-32-4(A)	<p>Parking spaces along main drive aisles connecting directly to a street and drive aisles that cross such main drive aisles shall be set back at least 50 ft from the property line abutting the street.</p>	<p><b>Parking spaces along main drive aisles connecting directly to a street and drive aisles that cross such main drive aisles shall be set back at least 20 ft from the property line abutting the street.</b></p>

Development Standard	Required RM-4	Proposed RM-4
<u>Landscaping for Non-Single Residence Uses Adjacent to Other Non-Single Residence uses or districts – MZO Section 11-33-3(B)(2)(a)(ii)</u>	Properties that are not part of a group C-O-I Development, as defined in Chapter 87, must provide a 15-foot landscape yard except where a cross-access drive aisle occurs within the required landscape yard.	<b>Properties that are not part of a group C-O-I Development, as defined in Chapter 87, must provide a 1'-10" landscape yard except where a cross-access drive aisle occurs within the required landscape yard.</b>
<u>Plant Material within Foundation Base – MZO Section 11-33-5(B)(4)</u>	Trees shall be in planters that are at least 8 feet wide. Other plant material shall be in planters that are at least 3 feet wide.	<b>Trees shall be in planters that are at least 4'-7" wide. Other plant material shall be in planters that are at least 3 feet wide.</b>

Per MZO Section 11-21-3(B), the City Council may approve modifications to the underlying district standards proportionate to the number of deviations and degree of compliance that comply with a combination of the criteria for the BIZ. This includes a combination of either:

- Criteria (1) Providing distinctive, superior quality designs. (See Section 11-31-32, Superior Design) and Criteria (2) Addressing environmental performance standards; or
- Criteria (1) Providing distinctive, superior quality designs. (See Section 11-31-32, Superior Design) and Criteria (3) Providing documented evidence that the building(s) will meet or exceed nationally recognized environmental performance standards. For purposes of this criterion, buildings that are designed to earn Green Globes, LEED™ Silver, or to be in compliance with the International Green Construction Code and/or equivalent third-party criteria, are considered to be energy efficient and no higher standard shall be required.

Projects with fewer modifications will comply with a lower percentage of the Criteria requirements in their request for the BIZ overlay. Projects with a higher number, and greater deviation from, the adopted standards are required to comply with a higher percentage of Criteria in their request for the BIZ overlay.

The Proposed Project includes a significant list of modifications to development standards and would be required to comply with a higher percentage of Criteria as staff evaluates the project and makes a recommendation.

The following summarizes an evaluation of each Criteria for the BIZ overlay request.

1. Provide distinctive, superior quality designs. (See Section 11-31-32, Superior Design)

**Per MZO Section 11-31-32, for a project to reflect Superior Design it will incorporate all of the following elements:**

- A. Holistic Approach to Project Design. Varied, high-quality, regionally-appropriate building materials, used in distinctive building forms, building massing and detailing that result in a note-worthy example of holistic site design, architecture, landscaping and signage; and

***The Proposed Project includes stucco and vertical paneling, which are regionally appropriate building materials; however, one of the requested deviations is a reduction to the required percentage of secondary materials from 25% to 15%. These requirements, as outlined in Section 11-5-5.B of the MZO and the Quality Development Design Guidelines, are a tool to foster unique, high quality development.***

***Another requested deviation is to the dimensional requirements for the landscape areas. While the landscape plan meets the number of trees and shrub requirements the requested reduction to the dimensional requirements for the landscape areas will limit the ability of the trees to grow to a height that will provide privacy and screening of the proposed three-story buildings.***

***When looking at the collective impact of the requested reductions to the required material percentages and the landscape planting areas, staff finds that these do not contribute to a high-quality, holistic design.***

- B. Responsive Approach to Site and Sub-Area Context. Architectural and landscape architecture details and features that reflect the character defined in Sub-Area Plans or the General Plan's Placetype urban design characteristics, that are harmonious with adjacent development patterns, integrate with the physical conditions of the immediate site, and create a unique sense of place; and

***The Proposed Project design has angled planes painted in accent colors. Per the applicant's narrative, these angles can create an appearance of engaging the street beyond the site frontage and can give a dynamic visual for passersby.***

***According to the narrative submitted, the applicant chose the colors often used in south-central Mesa like the Fiesta district and Mesa Urban Gardens. The color details are harmonious with surrounding developments and are not a concern for the Proposed Project.***

- C. **Sustainable Design.** Site design, architecture and landscaping features that address the local climate to reduce summer sun penetration and provide summer sunshade protection for pedestrians, promote energy and water conservation, promote the preservation or creation of open space, provide for and encourage the use of multiple modes of transportation, utilize existing infrastructure, and create the opportunity for social interaction; and

***The perimeter landscaping adjacent to the units on the east side of the site will be planted in planter areas as small as four feet and seven inches in depth and will be directly adjacent to the patio walls for the units. The limited***

*planting area, in such close proximity to the site and patio walls, will make it difficult for the trees to be successful.*

*There are two amenity areas proposed for the site. The primary amenity area that is centrally located and a smaller amenity area is located on the north side of the site. Both of these amenity areas include seating areas but no other active uses (dog parks, tot lots, etc.) are included. In these two amenity areas, there are few amenities that foster social interaction.*

*Per the applicant's narrative, the orientation of the units is appropriate for the local climate, and the recessed balconies will provide shade for residents. The primary amenity area will use rainwater and HVAC condensate to conserve water. Both of these techniques are effective, sustainable design features of the Proposed Project.*

*The development uses existing infrastructure and is near public transportation options and is not a concern for the Proposed Project.*

- D. **Exceeds Standards.** Provision of details and features that exceed the criteria and standards specified in Sections 11-5-3, 11-5-5, 11-6-43, 11-6-4 (as applicable), 11-7-3, 11-8-5, 11-8-6 and Chapters 30 through 34, where applicable; and

*The Proposed Project involves significant modifications to the development standards specified in Section 11-5-5, and in Chapters 32 and 33 of the MZO. These include reductions to setbacks and landscaping throughout the project site and increases to the number of garages allowed in a row without architectural breaks.*

*The Proposed Project exceeds the private open space requirement for two-bedroom units by providing 120 square feet per unit where 100 square feet is required per Section 11-5-5.3 of the MZO. Per Table 11-5-5 of the MZO, developments in the RM-4 district are required to provide 150 square feet of open space per unit, which is combined between private and common open space areas. Per the applicant's calculations, the Proposed Project exceeds the total open space requirements by a total of 168 square feet or 11.2 square feet per unit. The Proposed Project also exceeds the minimum number of required parking spaces by providing two additional guest spaces.*

*When reviewing the requested deviations in totality with the areas where the Proposed Project exceeds standards, staff feels that the Proposed Project does not demonstrate the innovative development or superior quality required for a BIZ overlay as outlined in Section 11-21 of the MZO.*

- E. **Great Public Spaces.** Details and features that create attractive, comfortable environments for pedestrians; ensure safe, useful and well-integrated open or public spaces; and include high quality amenities.

*The Proposed Project includes a primary amenity area with raised planters watered by the air conditioner condensate and occasional rain. This amenity area is accessed by stairs and a ramp, and totals a maximum of 618 square*



**feet. The ramp is approximately three feet wide and will require a handrail. It is not clear whether the amenity area will meet ADA requirements for accessibility.**

**Potential seating is provided in this area on one-foot-wide planter walls. While a uniquely design area, both staff and the Design Review Board (Exhibit 10) provided comments that this amenity area should be larger.**

**In response to these comments, the applicant has proposed a second amenity space located along the north property line and west of the solid waste enclosure. This additional space includes benches, a table and a shade structure but no additional details have been provided for this space.**

**Based on the above discussion, staff finds that the Proposed Project does not provide distinctive, superior design, and therefore does not comply with Criteria 1 required for approval of a BIZ overlay.**

2. Address environmental performance standards outlined below:

a. Site selection criteria. Sites shall meet one or more of the following criteria.

- i. Redevelop and rehabilitate economically distressed properties (particularly greyfield sites), damaged sites or environmentally contaminated 'brownfield' sites.

**The project site is an infill parcel that is currently vacant.**

**The Proposed Project meets this Criteria.**

- ii. Utilize areas with existing utility and transportation infrastructure and existing community services. This criterion is preferred for higher density and higher intensity development, when feasible.

**The site has access to existing utilities.**

**The Proposed Project meets this Criteria.**

- iii. Utilize locations within ½ mile of a planned light rail line or ¼ mile from an existing or planned bus stop. This criterion is preferred for higher density and higher intensity development, when feasible.

**The site is located directly across the street from a southbound bus stop on Mesa Drive and approximately 300 feet from a northbound bus stop on Mesa Drive.**

**The Proposed Project meets this Criteria.**

b. Site design criteria. Designing the site to facilitate alternative modes of transportation and to reduce onsite environmental impacts.

- i. Provide safe and secure storage for bicycles. For residential projects, safe and secure bicycle storage areas shall be provided on-site for a minimum 15% of the residents.

**Residents can store bicycles in garages or use the proposed six bicycle parking spaces.**

***The Proposed Project meets this Criteria.***

- ii. Include priority location parking for low-emission vehicles in parking areas.

***Per the applicant's narrative, low-emission vehicles are provided priority parking in the attached private garages of the units.***

***Four additional spaces are provided for visitor parking.***

***The Proposed Project meets this Criteria.***

- iii. Provide priority location parking spaces for carpool or vanpool vehicles.

***Priority parking locations for carpool or vanpool vehicles is not provided.***

- iv. Provide the number of parking spaces designed to serve a development site consistent with the number of spaces required to meet the minimum parking ratio. Parking spaces over the minimum number is discouraged.

***The proposed parking on site meets the minimum parking requirements of the MZO. The design of the project allows for only four uncovered guest parking spaces for a 15-unit development.***

***The development is located on a mid-block parcel adjacent to a four lane arterial roadway. There are limited opportunities for additional guest or overflow parking.***

- v. For greenfield sites, protect or restore natural areas on site with native vegetation to encourage biodiversity and for enjoyment by people. For previously developed sites, restore areas with native or adapted vegetation to encourage biodiversity and for enjoyment by people. The size of the space should be appropriate for the size of the site and the activity level or use of the site.

***The site is currently vacant.***

***Two amenity spaces are proposed. The primary amenity area includes a unique watering design that involves using condensation from HVAC systems and rainwater runoff to sustain the landscaping which will be designed as recessed retention areas.***

***While unique and sustainably designed, the size of the individual amenity areas will impact residents of the Proposed Project in that they will not foster social interaction and activity.***

- vi. Design the project to be energy efficient including, but not limited to, designed to reduce summer heat gain, reduce winter heat loss, utilize day lighting strategies and provide the opportunity for occupants to take advantage of renewable energy. The design also mitigates the effects of solar exposure for users and pedestrians. For purposes of this criterion, buildings that have efficient HVAC systems, incorporate passive solar heating, cooling and day lighting strategies within an efficient building envelope, as recommended by the Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) section, including buildings

designed to earn the EPA ENERGY STAR or designed to meet LEED™ Silver or equivalent third-party criteria are considered to be energy efficient and no higher standard shall be used.

***The buildings are oriented to reduce eastern and western sun exposure and include recessed balconies.***

***According to the applicant, each unit is proposed to be equipped with an efficient heat pump.***

***The Proposed Project meets this Criteria.***

- c. Provide documented evidence that the building(s) will meet or exceed nationally recognized environmental performance standards. For purposes of this criterion, buildings that are designed to earn LEED™ Silver, Green Globes, and/or equivalent third-party criteria, and no higher standard shall be required. Avoid sites considered inappropriate, such as prime farmland, land identified as habitat for endangered species, and wetlands or riparian areas associated with wildlife.

***There is no documented evidence that the buildings will meet or exceed nationally recognized environmental performance standards.***

***The proposed project does not meet this criteria.***

- d. Utilize areas with existing utility and transportation infrastructure and existing community services. This criterion is preferred for higher density and higher intensity development, when feasible.

***The site is in close proximity to existing bus stops and existing utility infrastructure. Nearby there are schools, churches, shops, and grocery stores.***

***The Proposed Project meets this Criteria.***

- e. Redevelop and rehabilitate economically distressed properties (particularly greyfield sites), damaged sites or environmentally contaminated 'brownfield' sites.

***The property is a small infill parcel and although surrounded by development, has never been developed. The property is not blighted or economically distressed.***

***The Proposed Project does not meet this Criteria.***

- f. Utilize locations within ½ mile of a planned light rail line or ¼ mile from an existing or planned bus stop. This criterion is preferred for higher density and higher intensity development, when feasible.

***The site is within ¼ mile of existing bus stops.***

***The Proposed Project meets this Criteria.***

- 3. Provide documented evidence that the building(s) will meet or exceed nationally recognized environmental performance standards. For purposes of this criterion, buildings that are designed to earn Green Globes, LEED™ Silver, or to be in compliance with the

International Green Construction Code and/or equivalent third-party criteria, are considered to be energy efficient and no higher standard shall be required.

***There is no documented evidence that the Proposed Project will meet or exceed nationally recognized environmental performance standards.***

***The Proposed Project does not meet this criterion.***

Based on the above analysis, staff finds that the Proposed Project is not consistent with the purpose of a BIZ overlay as outlined in MZO Section 11-21. The BIZ overlay provides for variation from the application of residential densities and other development standards to allow greater intensity of development and encourage unique, innovative developments of superior quality.

The Proposed Project is a small mid-block infill parcel, which has been vacant for many years. While a number of factors have likely contributed to the site being undeveloped, the proposed project does not demonstrate the unique, innovative design or superior quality required by Section 11-21 of the MZO that would justify the number of requested deviations.

## **Impact Analyses**

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### **School Impact:**

The Mesa Public School District reviewed the project and found that the development will not negatively impact school capacity. The estimated demand on local schools shown below is within capacity:

- Elementary: **2 students (Holmes)**
- Middle School: **1 students (Kino Jr High)**
- High School: **1 students (Mesa High School)**

## **Citizen Participation**

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

### **Neighborhood Meeting:**

A neighborhood meeting was held on January 16, 2025, with no residents in attendance.

### **Required Notification:**

- Property owners within 1,000 feet, HOAs within ½ mile, and registered neighborhoods within one mile of the subject site were notified of the public hearing.
- Staff received a phone call on June 3, 2025, from the adjacent property owner to the north, who had received notification of the DRB Meeting. She expressed concerns regarding the proposed density and height of the development. Staff informed her that she would receive a public notice letter for the Planning and Zoning Board hearing once that was scheduled.

## **Recommendation**

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Based on the preceding analysis, Staff recommends denial of the requested rezoning and Site Plan Review.

## **Exhibits**

Exhibit 1 – Vicinity Map

Exhibit 2 – Project Narrative

Exhibit 3 – Site Plan & Details

Exhibit 4 – Landscape Plan

Exhibit 5 – Preliminary Grading and Drainage Plan

Exhibit 6 – Elevations

Exhibit 7 – Citizen Participation Plan

Exhibit 8 – Citizen Participation Report

Exhibit 9 – Citizen Comment

Exhibit 10 – Design Review Board June 10, 2025, Work Session Meeting Notes

Exhibit 11 – Power Point Presentation