

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 27, 2021 PLANNING & ZONING MEETING

- *4-f ZON20-00861 District 6.** The 3600 to 4400 blocks of South Ellsworth Road (east side), the 3600 to 4200 blocks of South Eastmark Parkway (west side), the 9200 to 9600 blocks of East Elliot Road (south side), and the 9200 to 9800 blocks of East Warner Road (north side). Located south of Elliot Road and north of Warner Road between Ellsworth Road and Signal Butte Road (325± acres). Major Amendment to the Eastmark Community Plan. This request will modify the character descriptions for Development Units 1 and 2 of the Eastmark Community Plan. Jill Hegardt, DMB Associated, Inc., applicant; DMB Mesa Proving Grounds LLC, owner.

Planner: Tom Ellsworth

Staff Recommendation: Approval with conditions

Summary: Principal Planner Tom Ellsworth presented case ZON20-00861 to the Board. Mr. Ellsworth explained this is a request for a Major Amendment to the Eastmark Community Plan and the purpose of this request is to modify the character descriptions for Development Units 1 and 2 specifically. Eastmark is located in the southeastern corner of Mesa between Ellsworth and Signal Butte Roads, from Elliott Road down to approximately Williams Field Road and the new 24 Freeway alignment. Development Units 1 and 2 are specifically located at the southeast corner of Ellsworth and Elliott Roads to Warner Road on the south and east to what will be Eastmark Parkway.

The General Plan character designation for the area is Mixed Use Community which allows for a mixture of uses to create a complete community. This designation allows for the property to be zoned as a Planned Community District. The subject property is zoned as a Planned Community District with an approved Community Plan for the Eastmark development. The Eastmark Community Plan sets forth the overall vision for the community, sets the Land Use Budget that shows land use allocations, and includes the character descriptions for each of the Development Units within the plan.

Mr. Ellsworth showed Exhibit 3.3 from the Community Plan which illustrates the overall vision of a complete connected community. Specifically, the exhibit shows a connected community of Neighborhood Villages, Activity Areas, and a Technology Enterprise Corridor. The plan also shows the connectivity of these areas through the use of open space. The open space areas within the Community Plan primarily consist of the Great Park and the linear park that acts as a buffer between the neighborhood and the employment area.

As a reminder, the focus of this request is on Development Units 1 and 2 (DU1 and 2) and are currently described as the Northeast Activity Area for Development Unit 1 (DU1) and, Development Unit Two (DU2) is discussed as a Transition Area. Specifically, this request is to modify the character descriptions in Section 8.4 of the Community Plan for DU1 and DU2. These character descriptions describe the overall design theme of what could develop in these DUs. These character descriptions, along with the Land Use Budget, are considered at the next stage of entitlement for the creation of specific Development Unit Plans. Each Development Unit Plan includes a Development Unit Land Use Plan that describes in more detail how the specific Land Use Groups are allocated within the DU.

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This request will allow flexibility and options within each Development Unit (i.e DU 1&2) to develop with either a mixture of uses at varying intensities or to allow the ability for large employment campus type uses. The proposed request is compatible with the adjacent Elliott Tech Corridor and planned employment areas across Ellsworth Road. The request will allow the flexibility for this property to respond to market demands for either a large employment campus use or a mixture of uses.

Mr. Ellsworth stated the applicant conducted a Citizen Participation Plan which included outreach to property owners within 750 feet of the site. The outreach efforts also included a community meeting held on January 12 with quite a bit of participants in attendance. In fact, the number of participants at the virtual meeting maxed out the capacity allowed on the platform. A summary of what was discussed at that meeting is contained in the Citizen Participation Report that was included in the packet.

He concluded that the request before the Board today for Development Unit 1 and 2 (DU1 and 2) comply with the Mesa 2040 General Plan, is consistent with the Mesa Gateway Strategic Plan, compatible with the purpose of a Planned Community District in the Mesa Zoning Ordinance and meets the required elements for the Community Plan. Staff is recommending approval with conditions.

Boardmember Crockett stated how this request conforms with the goals of the employment opportunities in the area. He stated he understands the City has had a pretty good string of successes in terms of attracting employers to this part of Mesa. He feels there is quite a bit of demand for some large assemblages of property in this area and asking if this amendment will make it easier to attract an employer that may want to locate a large piece of property, or will the amendment make it more difficult.

Mr. Ellsworth responded this is exactly the flexibility that the request is asking for. He discussed the opportunities along the Elliot Tech Corridor with several existing companies in the area such as Apple and Google. This request allows the option to be assembled for a large employment use. It is not removing the flexibility of a mixed-use development but is allowing the option to assemble a large tract of land. Planning Director, Nana Appiah, stated this will provide the opportunity for large industrial users to come in and may attract other users that want to be located close to other larger industrial developments.

Mr. Crockett asked if staff about the position of the City's Economic Development Office. Dr. Appiah responded staff has definitely had extensive discussions with the Economic Development Department and they are strongly in support of this request.

Boardmember Allen asked, for marketing purposes, will this be the largest piece of property in the Elliot Tech Corridor and will it be one of a kind. Mr. Ellsworth responded currently there are other large tracts of land along the Elliott Tech Corridor that are available. This area is developing constantly, for example, there was another request before the Board today for a site plan within the Elliot Tech Corridor. This request makes this property compatible and competitive with those other properties in the area.

Boardmember Villanueva-Saucedo asked Mr. Ellsworth to clarify if the intent of the red line paragraph in Section B of the attached amendment to the community plan describing residential uses be a significant change in what is being currently allowed.

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She explained she is always a little bit leery of allowing predominantly residential in an area that is supposed to be mixed-use. Mr. Ellsworth stated the language in the Development Unit description includes three options. It is the third option that uses the term “predominantly residential uses.” He further explained that this language captures what is approved today through the Development Unit Plan that was approved by this Board back in January of last year which was predominantly residential and showed a mixture of land uses that concentrates the non-residential uses at the arterial intersections.

Applicant Jill Hegardt with DMB Associated and Karrin Taylor Robson spoke to the Board. Ms. Hegardt stated they do not have anything more to add to the presentation. She stated staff has done a great job of explaining the request.

Chair Astle confirmed there were no comments or requests to speak by the public on this agenda item.

Boardmember Crockett motioned to approve case ZON20-00861 with conditions of approval. The motion was seconded by Boardmember Boyle.

That: The Board recommends the approval of case ZON20-00861 conditioned upon:

1. Compliance with the Eastmark Community Plan with the modifications to Section 8.4 as shown in attached Exhibit 3.2.
2. The Planning Director is authorized and directed to correct the Community Plan for grammatical, formatting, and other errors that do not affect or change the meaning of the CP’s substantive requirements or standards.
3. Compliance with the Infrastructure Master Plans as approved by the City Engineer and City Traffic Engineer.
4. The appeal of decisions made in the approval of, or amendment to, a Community Plan, Development Unit Plan, or a Site Plan will be per the requirements set forth in the City of Mesa Zoning Ordinance.

Vote: 7-0 Approval with conditions

Upon tabulation of vote, it showed:

AYES – Sarkissian, Boyle, Allen, Crockett, Villanueva-Saucedo and Ayers

NAYS – None

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Note: Audio recordings of the Planning & Zoning Board Meetings are available in the Planning Division Office for review. They are also “live broadcasted” through the City of Mesa’s website at www.mesaaz.gov