

Planning and Zoning Board

Study Session Minutes

Virtual Platform

Date: March 24, 2021 Time: 3:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

*Chair Dane Astle
*Vice Chair Jessica Sarkissian
*Tim Boyle
*Shelly Allen
* Jeffrey Crockett
* Deanna Villanueva-Saucedo
* Ben Ayers

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

(*Boardmembers and staff participated in the meeting through the use of telephonic and audio conference equipment)

STAFF PRESENT:

Nana Appiah
Tom Ellsworth
Lesley Davis
Rachel Prelog
Jennifer Gniffke
Charlotte McDermott
Rebecca Gorton

OTHERS PRESENT:

None

1. Call meeting to order.

Chair Astle declared a quorum present, and the meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. Review items on the agenda for the March 24, 2021 regular Planning and Zoning Board Hearing.

Principal Planner, Tom Ellsworth presented case ZON20-00884 and ZON20-00888 to the Board. Mr. Ellsworth stated both cases are Development Unit Plans within the Eastmark Community Plan. Specifically, case ZON20-00884 is a modification to an existing Development Unit Plan for Development Unit 2 which this Board previously approved last year. Zoning case ZON20-00888 is a new Development Unit Plan for Development Unit 1 within the Eastmark Community.

The location of these requests is at the southeast corner of Elliott Road and Ellsworth Road. Last month staff presented a Major Community Plan Amendment for this exact area that changed the Character Descriptions for both DU1 and DU2 to allow for large campus employment type uses, in addition to the ability to do mixed use development.

The General Plan for the area is Mixed Use Community which allows for that mixture of uses that create a complete community. This General Plan designation allows the Planned Community (PC) Zoning District. The subject property is zoned PC and, as part of that zoning, has an approved Community Plan established for Eastmark. The Community Plan acts as the overall vision document for the entire Eastmark Community. It also sets forth the Land Use Budget and Land Use Groups and acts, somewhat, as the Zoning Ordinance for the site.

As a reminder, this northeast section of the Community Plan is designated as a Northwest Activity Area and is immediately adjacent to what is known in the Community Plan as Technology Enterprise Core, which is consistent with the adjacent Elliott Tech Corridor. As part of the Community Plan, the Eastmark Community is divided into nine Development Units (DU). Each of the Development Units, or portions of Development Units, are part of a Development Unit Plan. As a reminder, DU1 is designated as the Northeast Activity Area where DU2 is to act as a Transition Area. From the case presented last month, the character description for DU1 is for a high intensity mixture of uses and to also allow for the ability to do large employment campus type uses and DU2 is less intense, but still allows for a mixture of land uses including large employment uses.

The Development Units Plans (DUP) set the vision and character for the development of the actual property. There are three phases of approval, or entitlement, within a PC zoning district. The first is the Community Plan. The second is a Development Unit Plan. The third is the specific site plans or preliminary plats. The DUP further refines that vision and character from the Community Plan and it establishes the Land Use Plan for the Development Unit. It actually allocates the different Land Use Groups from the Land Use Budget within the Community Plan. The DUP also includes the Development Unit Design Guidelines and includes the Infrastructure Master Plans for development.

Development Unit Plan 2 is currently approved with the current mixture of land uses that was approved last year. The proposed modification is responding to the Major Amendment that was approved by the City Council on March 1st, that allowed large employment campus type uses within the DU. The Land Use Budget from the Community Plan shows the Campus Land Use Group (LUG) is available for up to 100% of DU2. The Land Use Budget also allows the ability to create a mixture of uses depending on which scenario is selected by the developer.

Likewise, DU1 is very similar with the difference being that the mixture of uses would be of a higher intensity. The Land Use Budget from the Community Plan also shows the different land use groups that would be allowed within DU1 as well. Whereas in DU2, it does allow the similar land uses but on a less intense scale where you can see 50% of that Land Use could be General Urban and 35% as Urban Core. It also allows some of the Village LUG which is more of a suburban type density, creating that transition from the suburban character in DU3, DU5 and DU6. It also allows for a large employment campus type uses for this area. As a reminder, the proposed DUP is consistent with the Elliott Tech Corridor and the Planned Employment Uses to the east of the site which is in the Hawes Crossing Planned Area Development.

The Citizen Participation Report was done in concurrence with the Major Community Plan Amendment and is the same report from the case heard last month. It was packaged together with the second half of the Community Plan Amendment and the other DUP's that could be part of a future case that could come before this Board. The comments staff and the applicant received were regarding DU5 and DU6, with no comments received regarding the modifications for DU1 or DU2. The Development Unit Plans are consistent with the Mesa 2040 General Plan,

the Gateway Strategic Plan, and meet the criteria from Section 11-11-5(E) of the Mesa Zoning Code and are consistent with the Eastmark Community Plan.

Staff has presented a revision to condition #3 of the conditions of approval as written in the staff report. Part of the review of a Development Unit Plan includes the Infrastructure Master Plans for the utilities and transportation and are reviewed as part of that process. The City is currently in the process of reviewing that overall Infrastructure and Transportation Master Plans. The condition that was originally in the staff report stipulated that the applicant would submit, prior to or concurrently with, the site plan the Infrastructure overall Eastmark Master Plans and the Development Unit Master Plans. The updates to the overall Eastmark Master Plans are currently being reviewed by the City. Per the Community Plan, the City Engineer can request more refinement in the DUP master plans, if requested. The way the conditions was written required that both the overall master plans and the DUP master plans be submitted. The modification is saying, if it is required, that the DUP master plans would only be required if it is determined by the City that it is needed. The revised condition gives this discretion to the City Engineer and the Traffic Engineer per the requirements of the Community Plan. There were no comments or questions by the Board.

Staffmember Jennifer Gniffke presented case ZON21-00057 to the Board. Ms. Gniffke stated the request is for a Site Plan Review to allow for the development of six industrial buildings for general manufacturing and warehouse and storage uses. The request also includes a Special Use Permit to allow the buildings to exceed the permitted height in the Airfield Overflight Area. The General Plan Land Use Designation is Mixed Use Activity and Employment. Mixed Use Activity districts are typically large scale areas over 20 acres. The primary focus of the employment character area designation is for a wide range of employment opportunities in high quality settings. The proposed development is consistent with the goals of the General Plan. The existing Zoning is Light Industrial (LI), and the proposed warehousing and manufacturing uses are permitted in the LI Zoning District. The request is scheduled to be presented to the Design Review Board in April. The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit for the height of buildings 1, 2 and 3 to 46 feet.

The applicant completed their Citizen Participation Plan, notifying property owners within 1,000 feet as well as HOA and registered neighborhoods. Neither staff nor the applicant received any response from the residents.

In summary, the request complies with the Mesa 2040 General Plan, it meets the review criteria for a Special Use Permit for Section 11-70-5 Mesa City Zoning Ordinance and meets the review criteria for Site Plan Review outlined in Section 11-69-5 of the MZO. Staff recommendation is for approval with conditions.

Boardmember Allen confirmed the Mesa Gateway Airport has reviewed the request to exceed the height and has no issues with this request. Ms. Gniffke confirmed the airport has reviewed this, and they expressed no opposition to the request.

Boardmember Boyle inquired the purpose of the case going to the Design Review Board in April. Mr. Boyle confirmed typically the Design Review Board has looked at the elevations prior to this coming before the Planning and Zoning Board. Mr. Boyle inquired if this is a good practice and should this Board be listening to the input of the Design Review prior to this Board.

Dr. Appiah stated there is always a condition of approval for the project to comply with the Design Review Board. What this Board does get are elevations that conforms to the City regulations but are not finalized until it goes to the Design Review Board. So, in certain situations, based on the timing, the Design Review Board reviews before it comes to you. There are several instances where you get a preliminary design, but the final design is reviewed by the Design Review Board..

Mr. Boyle stated his concern is that we are part of what makes Mesa a great city and a better city and feels that maybe we should be getting the input of the Design Review Board more often as part of our approval, and not wait until afterwards.

Chair Astle stated he does not disagree and sometimes can be nice. He also puts a lot of trust and faith in new Design Guidelines that everyone is to follow, and the fact that staff will advise according to what they feel meets those guidelines. Staff will receive those comments and work with applicants based on Design Review guidelines. Vice Chair Sarkissian stated she feels it is important that we stay in line with what our abilities are and our discussions and it is nice to have that information from the Design Review Board. Our decisions are supposed to be based on the architectural design and it is nice to have their input. Ms. Sarkissian stated she feels it is important for us to keep it in our wheelhouse and the stipulation that has to pass through that covers the DRB process and requirements.

Staffmember Jennifer Gniffke presented case ZON20-00877 and companion preliminary plat "Los Nietos Residential Subdivision" to the Board. The General Plan Land Use Designation is for Neighborhood Suburban, with primarily single residences, but also includes schools, parks, churches, etc. The requested zoning designation is single residential 15 with a Bonus Intensity Zone Overlay (RS-15-BIZ) and the intent of the single residence zoning district is to provide areas for detached single residence housing. This request includes a six-lot preliminary plat for "Los Nietos Residential Subdivision".

There is an amenity area on the property, specifically is in the eastern end of the property and planned to include tennis and basketball courts, a covered patio and play areas. The site has a perimeter wall that is eight feet tall and includes superior design, especially at the top. The request is for a Bonus Intensity Zone Overlay (BIZ) and it is to allow for modifications to certain required development standards, particularly the residential standards of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance. The requested variations for this subdivision include reduced lot widths for Lots 3 and 4; reduced front setback of five feet and a minimum side setback of 10 feet for 3 and 4 adjacent to the amenity area; a minimum rear setback of 10 feet for the east property lines of lots 3 and 4; and a maximum wall height of eight feet versus the six foot which is a standard and two modifications to the retention basin.

Overall, the proposed development complies with the requirements of a BIZ Overlay outlined in Section 11-21 of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance. The applicant did complete a Citizen Participation Plan and notified property owners within 1,000 feet of the site, HOA's and Registered Neighborhoods. They held a neighborhood meeting in January. Staff and the applicant have been corresponding with one of the neighbors of the site who had concerns initially about the proposed height of the homes as well as the preservation of citrus trees. The applicant has provided a citizen participation report that includes detailed responses to the comments and questions and that neighbor has requested to speak during the hearing today.

Ms. Gniffke stated staff has received an updated landscape plan which includes the perimeter trees. The original landscape plan showed 36 inch box trees, which far exceeded the requirements for landscaping for perimeter landscaping along the streets. It also included the Red Push Pistache for those trees and the updated plan includes either Chinese Pistache, or Evergreen Elm along the perimeter, and those are shown as 24 inch box trees. Despite the changes, the proposed landscape plan still exceeds the requirements of the perimeter landscaping for this subdivision.

Vice Chair Sarkissian inquired if the area on the landscape wall is that showing the white area all concrete and is the retention area also concrete. Ms. Gniffke confirmed that to be correct. Ms. Sarkissian asked if this would be a problem for maintenance and could it be under water at some point. Chair Astle stated there will be some maintenance when it is under water and explained it will naturally absorb through cracks in the concrete. There are methods to mitigate cracking with additives, but it will be expensive. Ms. Sarkissian stated on a small subdivision of this size, the maintenance costs for an HOA for each house to incur it is a lot. In terms of enforcement, would the City be sure that it is maintained and does not result in disrepair after six or seven years. Would the City respond to code violations and how does the City enforce the HOA to maintain the area.

Charlotte McDermott, City Attorney's Office, informed the Board that would be a private agreement and any obligation that is in the HOA documents for the maintenance of that area, would not be an obligation of the City. We would not be enforcing the HOA documents and any obligations in those documents.

3. Hear a presentation and discuss the Planning Division's work plan, including a list of major land use planning strategies and goals for 2021 and into the future.

Senior Planner Rachel Prelog made a presentation to the Board outlining current activities and some of the strategies staff is pursuing for the future and, specifically, more of the Long Range Planning functions which has been presented to the City Council at an earlier date. The Planning Division functions are split up into three categories. The first is Long Range Planning, the second is Current Planning and the final is Historic Preservation. She explained as a Division, staff administers the City's General Plan, our Zoning Ordinance and other land use policies. We review development to ensure they are complying with all these regulations and goals, but we also coordinate different land use strategies with other City departments and make policy recommendations to City Council and other land use boards.

She presented an overview of new submissions staff has received over the last year. In addition to reviewing cases, staff fields inquiries from the public regarding any zoning or land use questions. Planners field approximately 39 inquiries a day. Once an applicant has received their entitlements, they may proceed to Permitting. Rachel Prelog discussed the total number of building permits, residential and commercial that have been submitted over the last year. Development Services continues to see high levels of new single family residential and non-residential entitlements. Some of those projects spurring activity are the build out of Eastmark, Cadence and Avalon Crossing Planned Communities as well as the upcoming expansion of the Phoenix-Mesa

Gateway Airport. There is also a lot of activity around the southeast area of Mesa with a lot of industrial development coming in.

Even with the level of daily activities that staff is working on, we also recognize that as a City of this size, we really need to be planning for the future, and making recommendations to you as a Board and to City Council about future land use policies and projects that we can be pursuing. Mrs. Prelog presented an overview of the strategies that Long Range Planning uses. One of the strategies includes the General Plan as an overarching policy document. Mrs. Prelog stated that the 10-year update of the General Plan that is quickly approaching. This will not only need to be approved by City Council it also has to be ratified by voters by 2024. This will require a lot of coordination with other departments and sub-elements of the plan, such as the Balanced Housing Plan, and Transportation Master Plan.

Moving on to some other strategies, there are six Sub-Area Plans in the City, the last of these was adopted in 2014. Staff recognizes that it is time to reevaluate the plans to identify what areas need to be adjusted in those plans. We are also taking the opportunity to identify new areas of the City that could benefit from Sub-Area planning. We want to be planning for those areas to build upon their uniqueness and their sense of place. One the tools that we will be looking at utilizing is the use of overlay zoning. Per State Statute, zoning must be applied equitably across the city no matter where it is located. For example, if you have an RS-43 zoned property in northeast Mesa, and an RS-43 property in southwest Mesa, those standards have to be applied the same to both of those properties, regardless, if they might have very different characteristics. Overlay zones allow the City to add an additional layer of standards and requirements to somewhat tailor some of those development standards to specific areas.

The next strategy we will be looking at is pursuing our Corridor Plans which are our transportation, canal and view corridors. We will be looking at areas that are ripe for redevelopment, such as East Main Street. We also want to be looking at areas that are in need of future planning. Southeast Mesa would be a prime example. We want to ensure these corridor plans are encouraging pedestrian connectivity to neighborhoods, open space, and to other key destinations in Mesa. We want to evaluate the adjacent land standards along those corridors to make sure they are appropriate and that they are promoting what the vision and the goals are for those corridors. And lastly, we want to see how we can harness some of these corridors more as amenities.

The next few strategies of what we will be pursuing are Entryway Signage Plans, Wayfinding Signage and Streetscape Design Guidelines. With the Entryway Signage, the intent is to identify key locations that act as gateways as you come into the City. Staff has heard through our recent General Plan update there is the sense of Mesa not having a distinct sense of place and blending into other communities. This would be one way to act as an indicator that you are entering into our community and signaling that you have crossed those municipal boundaries. In addition to that, is a Wayfinding system strategy. We want to create a system that is directing people to key destinations within Mesa. The concept with the Streetscape Design Guidelines is that

we developed unique standards for different areas of the City that have unique plant palettes, specimen trees, and site furniture.

Lastly, the City has four Redevelopment Plans which we are evaluating to see how we can better implement some of the tools or action items. In addition to the Revitalization Plans, we also have been working on several projects that look at other strategies such as Adaptive Reuse and Infill Strategies. We want to use these to revitalize other areas, such as deserted malls, vacant shopping centers, and blighted strip malls.

Mrs. Prelog concluded by explaining that there are several text amendments that are in the process. The next amendments that will be presented to the Board and City Council are for Recreational Marijuana and Community Residents. We are also working on updates to our Subdivision Regulations that were last updated in 1989. In the next two to five years, we will be updating the General Plan, Corridor Plans, New Sub-Area Plans, Revitalization Plans and Strategies, and exploring potential zoning overlay districts.

Chair Astle stated he appreciates the presentation and the proactive strategies that staff is looking at. He stated he feels this will help to clean up a lot of the unknown and regulations that are not clear. Boardmember Boyle stated he is glad staff is working on this and it will be a great benefit for the City.

Boardmember Villanueva-Saucedo added kudos for what has been said and is very excited about this body of work. She would like to encourage staff to keep thinking creatively and non-traditionally about some of the items that have been listed. Particularly in terms of planning the streetscape, growing body of evidence around heat islands of disparities in terms of what populations are affected by heat, and climate and geographic disparities within our own City. The corridors, looking at canals and what residents may not traditionally think of as corridors. So again, she encourages staff to be thinking creatively while still being equitable to the different populations we have in Mesa.

4. Planning Director's Updates.

- Decisions of the City Council's March 15, 2021 land use hearings.

Planning Director Nana Appiah informed the Board there was major land use decisions by the City Council on March 15. There was one action item on the agenda for the parking garage and office building at Mesa Riverview. The City Council continued that case to allow for further discussions. Hopefully, I will be able to provide you an update at our next meeting.

5. Adjournment.

Boardmember Villanueva-Saucedo motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:07 pm. The motion was seconded by Boardmember Crockett.


Vote: 7-0 Approved

Upon tabulation of vote, it showed:

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

NAYS – None

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Nana K. Appiah", written over a horizontal line.

Nana K. Appiah, AICP, Secretary
Planning Director

Note: Audio recordings of the Planning & Zoning Board study sessions are available in the Planning Division Office for review. The regular Planning & Zoning Board meeting is “live broadcasted” through the City of Mesa’s website at www.mesaaz.gov.