

# Planning and Zoning Board

## *Meeting Minutes*

Held by Virtual Platform

Date: November 9, 2020 Time: 4:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

\*Chair Dane Astle  
\*Vice Chair Jessica Sarkissian  
\*Tim Boyle  
\* Jeffrey Crockett  
\* Ben Ayers

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Shelly Allen  
Deanna Villanueva-Saucedo

(\*Boardmembers participated in the meeting through the use of video conference equipment)

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Nana Appiah  
Lesley Davis  
\*Rachel Prelog  
Charlotte McDermott  
Rebecca Gorton

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

None

Call Meeting to Order.

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

**Items Not on the Consent Agenda**

2. Discuss, receive public comment, and take action on the following resolution:
  - 2-a Minor General Plan amendment repealing and replacing the existing Chapter 7: Community Character and the existing Chapter 16: Plan Implementation and Amendment in their entirety and replacing them with the exhibits attached to case no: ZON20-00735. These amendments include but are not limited to, clarifying permitted zoning districts and land uses for each character type, adding minimum primary land use and zoning districts within the community character areas, revising the definition for major and minor character area map amendments, and adding approval criteria for character area map amendments. **(Citywide)**

**Planner: Rachel Prelog**

**Staff Recommendation: Adoption**

## MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 9, 2020 PLANNING & ZONING SPECIAL MEETING

Chair Astle welcomed everyone to our November 9, Planning and Zoning Board Meeting and stated the City is grateful for all those who can participate in the meeting today. This is a special meeting, and we have one item on the agenda that required this meeting. So, we wanted to make sure we have it for the public to hear and give them the opportunity to review and speak on the item today. Let's go ahead and do a roll call. We have board member Allen and board member Villanueva-Saucedo absent today. But we have quorum, and we will go ahead and move forward with the item.

Chair Astle said today's meeting does not include a consent agenda so we will begin with item 2-a which is a Minor General Plan Amendment to Chapters 7 and 16 of the General Plan. We can go right on ahead and turn the time over to staff to open up this case and begin the discussion.

Planning Director Nana Appiah stated: As you recollect, we have been having discussions with the board about certain ambiguities in the General Plan and challenges with implementing the General Plan. We had an extensive discussion back in February with City Council and with the Planning and Zoning Board as part of the requirement for us to do a three year review of the General Plan and also a yearly requirement to complete an evaluation of the plan. So, we are here today to make final recommendation of certain proposed changes to the plan, and with that, I will pass it on to Rachel Prelog.

Rachel Prelog: Good afternoon Chair, members of the board. As Nana was introducing, we are finally here with our recommendations for the General Plan Amendments. This is the first of the two required hearings that we need to have for Planning and Zoning before we go to City Council and this is to make sure that we have sufficient public participation. We are having hearings on two different dates, and locations for the P&Z.

Ms. Prelog stated she heard a question earlier about the chapters that were sent out. They are actually the final chapters with all the changes included in them. They are not substantially different from what you have seen previously, there is maybe a word or two that has changed in the last couple of months since we sent those with track changes around for review.

To begin, we are going to talk about the purpose of the General Plan and go over that comprehensive review that Nana had mentioned we presented back in February, and then present our recommendations. So, as we have been discussing the last several months, the General Plan is really the official policy document in the city that guides development. This plan also provides continuity over time. As staff members, board members and City Council members change, you still have that continuity and decision making. It is also a fulfillment of the city charter and as required by state statute as well. So, the comprehensive plan review is required as part of implementation of the General Plan. It is not a requirement in the state statute, but it is something that was written into our General Plan in Chapter 16 and we are required every three years to conduct a comprehensive review. What this does is it gives us an opportunity to look at the challenges and the successes of how we have been implementing the plan and it also provides us an opportunity to make recommendations for amendments to the plan.

When we did this comprehensive evaluation, we identified two areas that could benefit from improvement. Those form the basis of our recommendation which is amendments to Chapter 7, Community Character; and Chapter 16, Plan Implementation and Amendments. Chapter 7 is

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the future land use guiding chapter and does not look at the City and parcels specifically per se. But it really focuses on the Character of Areas instead. So one of the main focus of the General Plan was really trying to create this sense of place in the City and get away from Mesa just being a bedroom community that does not have any sense of identity. With this, the plan adopted a future land use guidance creating these different districts that really focuses on different characters with combine concepts of land use zoning, built form and intensity.

Ms. Prelog explained the different Character Areas throughout the City. Some of those are specific to neighborhood character area that are mostly for residential developments. But several of those Character Areas do focus on this concept of mixed-use development. So even when we have certain Character Areas, such as the employment districts where it may seem like it is very specific to employment type uses, the plan is very cognizant in trying to allow for secondary uses to provide additional services that are needed to support different uses and the employment district is just one use. But of course, as you can see, the mixed-use activity district or mixed-use community is at the heart of what is really creating that type of center that provides a great sense of place. So here, just kind of adding on to that the intent is to create a sense of place. This really allows for many different uses and for a more efficient use of space and encourages alternative modes of transportation.

Some of the challenges that we have seen in implementing the Plan is that the General Plan was not very specific on how it outlines how these character areas should be developed. Within Chapter 7, there is a list of primary and secondary zoning that is supposed to be used by each of those character areas. So, before the recommendations, there was also a list of just typical land uses that are envisioned to be within those character areas. What we saw as a result is that we had a lot of challenges from the Development Community because of the lack of clarity of primary and secondary zoning districts within the character areas.

Ms. Prelog showed data from the Maricopa Association of Governments and stated the graph was a little confusing to Planning and Zoning Board the last time we showed it, because it did not have the context with it. What it is, is our current Land Use within the City with data from 2017 and 2019. The purpose of showing this to you is it shows our mixture of land uses within the City and shows that we have a pretty good distribution. When we presented this to Council, we expressed some concern to City Council about how we are seeing this trend of more residential being pulled from some of our mixed-use character areas. So, as you can see, over the past few years, there has been a real increase in residential development which is mostly coming from the vacant land, which make sense as new development comes in.

What we were seeing anecdotally was really supported by the Maricopa Association of Government data as well. So, when you looked at in comparison to the current Land Use to our future land use designations, you can see how it has changed. That increase in residential development has really come from those mixed-use areas and saw the support of that in the data. What we are recommending is some text amendments to Chapter 7 to better describe the intent of those character areas.

And then along with that, we are recommending that there be minimum percentages for the primary zoning and the land uses that are specified for those character areas. On the screen, you are seeing the minimum percentages of the zoning districts that would be required. Within the Neighborhood Village we are suggesting 80% needs to be the primary zoning district; and

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Mixed-Use Activity we are suggesting 70% be employment. We also have several different subtypes that each has a unique characteristic. As an example, with a business park versus an employment core, the Business Park is more of a suburban kind of commercial center as opposed to employment core, which is more of a downtown environment. And then lastly, for mixed-use community, that is more of your Eastmark and Cadence development. Those are very unique character areas, and they are only one zoning district that you can be used to establish that character area (i.e. Planned Community Zoning District). That is a very tailored zoning where the developer comes in and proposes what is going to be the allowed land uses in there, with their development standards, and they are creating their own specific zoning regulations within that district. What we hear from Council is that there really needs to be an emphasis on providing that commercial use within those districts. And so, when we were last visiting with Council to present our recommendations to them, they asked that we include a minimum percentage for commercial uses within those Planned Community Districts. From our recommendation, a minimum of 40% would have to be dedicated to a Commercial Use within those areas.

Moving on to the second part of our recommendation is Chapter 16, which is Plan Implementation and Amendment. This chapter talks about all the different implementation tools that the General Plan has. For example, the Zoning Ordinance, Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and the Sub-area Plans. This also gives you all the goals and strategies that were outlined in the previous chapters. It dictates the process for reviewing and updating the plan and also provides the process for plan amendments. When we evaluated this chapter, one thing that has been very apparent to us over the years is that there has been a lot of vagueness in the language around the plan amendments and what constitutes a major versus a minor plan amendment. We also recognize that it did not really consider the context of an area when we talk about the built environment and the difference between downtown, which is a very developed fine grained density versus eastern section of the city, which is mostly undeveloped and really ripe for any development.

What we are recommending here is to refine that text to better describe the process, create context specific amendment requirements, and then to write additional approval criteria. When we talk about some benchmarks for amendment criteria, we are talking about that cutoff of what constitutes a major versus a minor plan amendment. For the City of Mesa currently, if you are proposing a development that is not in compliance with whatever that character area is and it is greater than 320 acres, it makes it a major amendment. Major amendments can be heard only once a year and requires a little bit more of a detailed process. So, all the Major amendments are heard at one time a year.

In the presentation you can see that we looked at what process other communities and jurisdictions within the region were using. And by far we were the largest as far as that criteria which we really wanted to keep in context when we were suggesting some revisions. What we came up with is to first address the context specific issue is to create a different designation for what is the major amendment in the Downtown and Transit District specifically. What we are recommending is that anything that has over 10 acres in the Downtown or the Transit Districts be considered a major amendment which is equal to an average city block in downtown. So, as we see it, if you were to take a city block in downtown and try to change it out of that character area, that would be a major impact to the City. Whereas, if you were going to do that in the eastern section of the city somewhere, changing a 10-acre parcel would not be as impactful.

Our recommendation is that we lower the criteria for the major amendments down to 160 acres

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just to be more in line with the rest of the cities in the valley which is still quite a substantial area of land , and as part of this we had been doing outreach throughout the year. As we discussed back in February, we went to City Council to discuss the recommendations, met with the Developers Advisory Committee a couple times, we had our special projects webpage and had special project open houses as well. After we have these two hearings with the Planning and Zoning Board, we will be going to City Council for their consideration on December 8. That concludes my presentation, I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have about these proposals.

Chair Astle stated he appreciate the comments. It's very important and he noticed over the years that we've had so many meetings where these clarifications have been needed. Mr. Astle asked if there were any comments or questions from the board.

Vice Chair Sarkissian asked for some clarification on the first section, Chapter 7. Ms. Sarkissian stated she knows what the intent is. But for instance, in Mixed-use Community and Business Park, like for Neighborhood Villages, that is such a big portion of Mesa's Land Uses, how will it be affected when you say minimum percentage of primary zoning and land uses. I think you want part of it as Mixed-use community.

Ms. Prelog responded there is kind of two scenarios under which they can meet these criteria. The first would be that the maximum percentage of the Neighborhood Character or the Neighborhood Village area has already been developed for one of the primary uses. So, let's just say in General Commercial 80% of it has already been developed as commercial. In that case, if someone came in with a residential proposal, they would be able to go ahead and apply for that rezoning and would be supported by staff because it is meeting those minimum percentages.

The second scenario would be if it was a completely undeveloped character area, at that point, the minimum use of the zoning and land use has not been established yet, the applicant themselves would have to either come in with a full 100% of the primary zoning and land use, or they would have to bring us a development that has the 80% minimum within and then 20% secondary.

Ms. Sarkissian asked how that will work when you do not have these larger properties. For example, a one-acre parcel at a corner. And would such requirements trigger various Minor General Plan Amendment.

Dr. Appiah stated the main intent here is basically, how do we achieve the goals for the Character Area Designation. Right now, the way the General Plan is written, we are totally moving away from achieving the intent of those Character Area Designation, because it is so vague, and the challenges that we are having are the proposals coming in, especially for residential where there is no defined percentage for primary uses. If we look at the intent of those criteria, the designation is the primary that is going to establish the Character Designation where the secondary uses will be an ancillary.

So back to the question as to if somebody comes in, and they are not able to meet those percentages, Dr. Appiah stated as you go through the rezoning process anyway, the Council has the authority to make adjustments. And the process should not add any additional time to the rezoning process. So there is an opening valve to be able to review that, but at least what

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we are proposing will provide clarity whenever we get a proposal to be able to convey to the Development Community the intent of the Character Designation, as well as the primary and secondary zoning and uses required.

Vice Chair Sarkissian stated it's more policy related versus Ordinance, so staff and Council has the ability to measure things back and forth. Dr. Appiah responded yes, and that the recommendation is more of a General Plan policy guidance.

There were no other comments or discussion from the Board or staff.

**3. Adjournment.**

Boardmember Crockett motioned to adjourn the meeting at 3:26 pm. The motion was seconded by Boardmember Boyle.

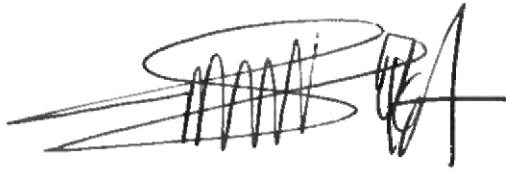
Vote: 5-0 Approved (Boardmember Allen and Villanueva-Saucedo, absent)

Upon tabulation of vote, it showed:

AYES – Astle, Sarkissian, Boyle, Crockett and Ayers

NAYS – None

Respectfully submitted,



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Nana K. Appiah, AICP, Secretary  
Planning Director

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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](http://www.mesaaz.gov)**