



Planning Commission
December 15, 2021
City of Avondale, Arizona
Meeting Minutes


Christopher Thompson (Mar 10, 2022 17:23 MST)

Chair

CERTIFICATION AND ATTESTATION

I hereby certify that the accompanying document is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the aforementioned meeting. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held, and that the quorum was present.


Barbara Cason (Mar 10, 2022 17:06 MST)

Staff Liaison

January 19, 2022

Date Approved



Wednesday, December 15, 2021
6:00 P.M.

Note from the Clerk: The December 15, 2021 Planning Commission meetings was hosted online using the online Zoom Cloud Meeting platform.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Thompson called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

The following members and representatives were present:

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT IN PERSON/PHONE/VIDEO

Christopher Thompson, Chair
Lisa Osborne, Vice Chair
Alisha Meginnis, Commissioner
Denise Stanfield, Commissioner
Larry White, Commissioner
Blanca Uvari, Commissioner
Alan Agundez Castillo, Alternate

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Linda Warren, Commissioner

CITY STAFF PRESENT

Eric Fitzer, Planning Manager
Mary Grace McNear, Deputy City Attorney
Michelle Simerdla, Senior Planner
Brandon Cartwright, Attorney
Barbara Cason, Administrative Assistant

3. OPENING STATEMENT

Chair Thompson read the Opening Statement.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. November 17, 2021

Vice Chair Osborne moved to approve the November 17, 2021 minutes as presented; Commissioner White seconded the motion.

Upon vote, the motion was carried 6 to 0.

Chair Thompson	Aye
Commissioner Osborne, Vice Chair	Aye
Commissioner Meginnis	Aye
Commissioner Stanfield	Aye
Commissioner White	Aye
Commissioner Uvari	Aye

5. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

a. **FAIRWAY COMMERCE CENTER - MINOR GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT - (APPLICATION PL-21-0113)**

It was noted that Items 5(a) and 5(b) would be presented together.

Michelle Simerdla, Senior Planner, stated that the purpose of items 5(a) and (b) is to review a proposed minor General Plan Amendment (GPA) and rezone for the proposed Fairway Commerce Center Development, conduct separate public items for each item and forward a recommendation to City Council on each item. The site is located approximately 1,026 feet north of the northeast corner of Fairway Drive and Van Buren Street. There will be a future connection to Corporate Drive, which will be built with the project on the south side of the property. The parcel is currently zoned Agricultural (AG). To the north, there are a few homes and agricultural businesses zoned R1-35. To the east is the Avondale 50 Planned Area Development (PAD), with a large commerce park development being constructed. To the southeast corner is the Desert Springs Village Residential Planned Area Development (PAD) as well as an electrical corridor. The River Crossing Mini Storage development is zoned C-2 and the land west is zoned Agricultural (AG). In addition, there are a couple of houses with agricultural businesses. West of Fairway Drive is the Avondale Commerce Center Planned Area Development (PAD).

Ms. Simerdla provided a background of the parcel, which consists of approximately 28.53 gross acres annexed in 1976, remaining undeveloped, except for current farming. The property is zoned Agricultural (AG), which allows for residential agricultural uses and typically serves as a holding zone before properties are developed. The General Plan (GP) land use designation is currently Urban Residential (UR), typically for high density apartments. The property is located within the Freeway Corridor area in the General Plan and is close to the new Fairway Drive and I-10 Freeway Interchange which opened in early 2021.

The applicant proposes an approximately 450,260 square foot distribution and warehouse facility with offices located in each corner. Loading docks will be on the north and south ends of the building. The proposal is for 320 regular parking spaces as well as 110 trailer spaces and a ten-foot masonry screen wall along both truck courts. Driveway locations are still being determined; work with the engineering team is ongoing in this regard. Conceptual building renderings and designs were reviewed.

Ms. Simerdla stated that the first request is to amend the General Plan (GP) land use designation for Urban Residential (UR), which allows for 30 plus dwelling units per acre to Business Park (BP) to facilitate development of a light industrial commerce park development. Business Park (BP) allows for large-scale campus developments that provide for abundant employment opportunities. The land use map is currently Urban Residential (UR). There is also Urban Residential (UR) to the south, with Business Park (BP) to the east and Medium High Density Residential (MHDR). West of Fairway Drive consists of Business Park (BP) and Education. Staff is in support of the General Plan (GP) amendment request, as most Business Park (BP) sites in the City have already been developed or are currently under development. Alternative vacant sites do not have direct frontage on the I-10 and have less sufficient access to the freeway. The project has proximity to the new Fairway Drive/I-10 Interchange. The BLVD Specific Plan area offers more opportunities to replace the approximately 28 acres of Urban Residential (UR) land, as that area is better for apartment-type uses. The project will provide for creation of new jobs, added tax revenues and enhanced appearance from the perspective of the I-10 Freeway. The project furthers several goals in the General Plan (GP), in that it enhances the Avondale business climate and improves the balance between jobs and population.

Ms. Simerdla stated that the second request is to rezone from Agricultural (AG) to Planned Area Development (PAD). Proposed uses include a commerce park with a warehouse and distribution facilities. In terms of development standards, the applicant is requesting a mix of both Commerce Park (CP) and A-1 development standards with some requested modifications. The modifications include reducing setbacks, reducing the landscape buffer to the north from 35 to 25 feet as well as establishing a parking ratio for the project. Staff supports the rezone, as the PAD will be in conformance with the requested Business Park (BP) designation and design manual. It will result in compatible land use relationships. It will provide a buffer of evergreen trees to the residential area to the north and a double row of trees along Corporate Drive. There are other commerce parks in the area. The development offers employee refuge areas and advances several goals in the Freeway Corridor Specific Plan. Adequate public infrastructure to support the proposed development either presently exists or will be constructed by the developer. All required notifications were completed. The neighborhood meeting had no attendees. No comments were submitted to aVOICE and no other comments have been received to date.

Chair Thompson invited comments from the applicant. Andrew Yancy, Bergin, Frakes, Smalley & Oberholtzer, PLLC, thanked staff for their efforts in this project. Property owner, LaPour, has held the property for approximately 15 years. Considering current uses in the area, such as Commerce Park (CP) and logistics-type uses as well as the addition of the freeway interchange on Fairway, it makes sense to bring the property to market at this time. This is an excellent opportunity for an integrated corporate headquarters with office, manufacturing, distribution and warehouse all under one roof. Construction is planned for as soon as next year.

Chair Thompson welcomed questions from Commissioners.

Chair Thompson inquired as to whether Fairway Drive will sufficiently accommodate traffic and semis. Ms. Simerdla stated that staff is currently working on the site plan and design review application. Traffic engineering staff will review the driveway turning movements to ensure accommodation of semis and regular traffic. Mr. Yancey stated that the site plan has been submitted for staff comment and confirmed that Fairway Drive will accommodate the anticipated traffic.

Chair Thompson opened the public hearing and welcomed questions from the public. There were no requests to speak from the public. Chair Thompson closed the public hearing and invited a motion.

Vice Chair Osborne moved to approve Application PL-21-0113; Commissioner Meginnis seconded the motion.

Upon vote, the motion was carried 6 to 0.

Chair Thompson	Aye
Commissioner Osborne, Vice Chair	Aye
Commissioner Meginnis	Aye
Commissioner Stanfield	Aye
Commissioner White	Aye
Commissioner Uvari	Aye

b. FAIRWAY COMMERCE CENTER - REZONE - (APPLICATION PL-21-0112)

Chair Thompson opened the public hearing and welcomed questions from the public. There were no requests to speak from the public. Chair Thompson closed the public hearing and invited a motion.

Vice Chair Osborne moved to approve Application PL-21-0112 subject to six (6) recommend conditions of approval; Commissioner White seconded the motion.

Upon vote, the motion was carried 6 to 0.

Chair Thompson	Aye
Commissioner Osborne, Vice Chair	Aye
Commissioner Meginnis	Aye
Commissioner Stanfield	Aye
Commissioner White	Aye
Commissioner Uvari	Aye

c. THE RESIDENCES AT THE AGUA FRIA - MINOR GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT - (APPLICATION PL-21-0335)

It was noted that Items 5(c) and 5(d) would be presented together.

Ms. Simerdla stated the purpose of these items are to review a proposed minor General Plan Amendment (GPA) and rezone for the proposed Residences at the Agua Fria development, conduct separate public hearings for each item and forward a recommendation to City Council for each item. The overall project consists of 22.3 net acres. The portion subject to the General Plan Amendment (GPA) request is

7.16 acres. The property was annexed in 1976. A 4.11 acre portion of the site is located on County land. A request to annex that portion is scheduled for public hearing on January 24th, 2022 with a vote for adoption by City Council on February 7th. The site is developed with an industrial storage use, mobile home and four vacant parcels. Site issues include blight, environmental impacts, drainage and distance from utilities. These will be addressed through development of the project. The zoning for the overall project is R1-6, County Rural-43 and Diamond Ridge Planned Area Development (PAD).

Ms. Simerdla provided an overview of the site details, which includes an old tank farm building, mobile home and storage. Most of the zoning is R1-6 Urban Residential. There is a sliver, which is an exception parcel to the Diamond Ridge Planned Area Development (PAD). The Diamond Ridge Planned Area Development (PAD) is located to the east as a residential subdivision. In the east corner is the Fiesta Barn Liquor Store zoned C-2. North of Buckeye Road is the Del Rio Ranch Planned Area Development (PAD), golf course and residential subdivision. To the south and to the west is Phase 3 of Del Rio Ranch, which is not yet constructed. The applicant proposes a for-rent, multi-family residential apartment community that includes 266 one-story detached apartment units with some duplex units and 15 carriage units over garages, creating a two-story building. Included units are small one-bedroom, large one-bedroom and two to three bedroom floor plans. The proposed density is 11.95 dwelling units per acre. The conceptual site plan, elevations and amenities were reviewed. There will be two entrances on Buckeye Road. Buckeye Road is a county roadway, so the developer will have to go to the County for permits.

The first request is to amend the General Plan (GP) land use designation from Medium Density Residential (MDR) to High Density Residential (HDR) to facilitate a multi-family development. Medium Density Residential (MDR) is residential land that will contain up to 2.5 to 4 single family dwelling units per acre. High Density Residential (HDR) will contain densities up to 30 dwelling units per acre. The western portion of the site is already designated as High Density Residential (HDR). Staff supports the minor General Plan Amendment (GPA) request, as only 1.47 percent of land in Avondale is designated as High Density Residential (HDR) and most is already developed. This portion of the site has remained vacant since 1976 and will not adversely affect existing land uses. Residents will have direct access to Buckeye Road. The development will be a quality infill housing project that will enhance the area and promote a pedestrian environment. It furthers several goals in the General Plan (GP), including championing development of housing types not currently available in the City to allow for a variety of socioeconomic levels.

The second request is to rezone from R1-6, RR-43 and Diamond Ridge Planned Area Development (PAD) to the Residences at the Agua Fria Planned Area Development (PAD), a multi-family development that offers a single family home lifestyle. The Multi-Family Residential (R-3) is requested as the base zoning with some modifications. This includes reducing minimum building setbacks, open space, garage requirements, landscape setbacks and land use buffer to accommodate this unique development and provide for private backyards. The reason for this request is the City does not have a zoning district that suits this type of development. The development will exceed covered parking requirements. No two-story buildings will be adjacent to single family uses. The developer offers a variety of amenities, including clubhouse, pool, dog park and fitness center. Staff supports the rezone, as the Planned Area Development (PAD) will be in conformance with the requested High Density Residential (HDR) designation and design manual. It will result in compatible land use relationships. The design standards will ensure an interesting and varied streetscape. It provides most residents with a private backyard in addition to other usable

open space areas and amenities. The modifications requested are consistent with similar projects in the City that were approved last year. Through creative planning, the site issues previously mentioned will be addressed. Adequate public infrastructure to support the proposed development either presently exists or will be constructed by the developer.

All required notifications were completed. The neighborhood meeting had two attendees, including one neighbor. Discussion included garage parking data, relationship with future residential uses in Del Rio Ranch, potential wash impacts, vehicular access, setbacks to the east, environmental issues, swap meet parking, and timing of construction, planned to commence in 2022. There were no comments on aVOICE and no other comments were submitted.

Chair Thompson welcomed comments from the applicant. Adam Baugh, Withey Morris PLC, said it was interesting to note that this was the Cashion Tanks Farm property, as a location where tanks were brought for disassembly. For this reason, it has become an eyesore over the years and the City would love to see it cleaned up. The process will not be easy, due to various site impacts. However, with staff's assistance, the completed project will eliminate the longstanding blight.

Chair Thompson invited Commissioner questions.

Commissioner White asked for an overview of the parking requirement changes the applicant is requesting. Ms. Simerdla stated that the City's requirement is 99 total for the site. The proposal is for 66 garages, however the developer will exceed the number of covered canopy spaces.

Commissioner Uvari inquired whether everyone has access to backyard space. Ms. Simerdla stated that most units will have private backyard space. They will also have community access areas, such as pool, fitness center, barbeque areas and other outdoor areas. Commissioner White asked for clarification that the developer wants to count the private backyard space as part of the green space area. Ms. Simerdla confirmed this understanding. Mr. Baugh added that normally, the open space requirement exists because a traditional multi-family community is a vertical building with units stacked above and without private spaces. Instead, they have shared outdoor spaces. Because this is not a vertical development project, the community space will still be provided, however, they go beyond to provide individual private spaces as well.

Chair Thompson referenced the swap meet parking concerns noted at the neighborhood meeting and asked for clarification. Ms. Simerdla stated that one of the issues a neighbor brought up is that on weekends, there is a swap meet at the Fiesta Barn Market. Sometimes, people park in the right-of-way in front of the development. She did not know whether some cars are parking on the property on weekends at this time. The neighbor is concerned that with this area being developed, some people may begin to park in nearby neighborhoods to walk to the swap meet. In speaking with other staff, this issue would be resolved by the police department, which is responsible for parking issues in the right-of-way.

Chair Thompson asked whether the City has formulated or implemented strategies to address parking and communicate solutions to residents. Ms. Simerdla said that the discussion has not progressed to this point as yet. She offered to reach out before the City Council meeting to determine ways to address the issue. Mr. Baugh stated that the swap meet is not involved with property at all. The applicant is currently in escrow to purchase the property and as such, they are not yet the owner. The swap meet has no

correlation to the property. If there are people parking along the right-of-way, that is outside the purview of the property. He was in agreement with staff that this is a public enforcement issue.

Chair Thompson asked how the blight issues are to be addressed. Ms. Simerdla said that this issue will be resolved commensurate with the total redevelopment of the site.

Commissioner White agreed that the swap meet issue is not the developer's problem, but will definitely be a City problem. Just south of Buckeye Road in front of the property, there is a blacktop frontage road that accesses the Cashion Tank and Storage. On the weekends when the swap meet is active, there are hundreds of cars parked on both sides of the frontage road. The frontage road will disappear with this development. The City needs to be aware that once that road is gone, there will be no place to park. The other parking site is on the east side of El Mirage, which will also be developed. The City will have to address the parking issue in the near future in terms of parking and traffic at the swap meet location.

Commissioner Osborne asked for confirmation from the developer that upon completion of the purchase of the land, the swap meet will be eliminated and this parking issue will no longer exist. Commissioner White said this is incorrect, as the swap meet occurs on the corner around the liquor store. The site has a very limited parking space and no overflow parking available to accommodate swap meet shoppers. The overflow parking is on the east side of El Mirage off the road as well as on both sides of the blacktop frontage road between Buckeye Road and the subject property. Chair Thompson suggested that staff explore ways for the City to address the issue.

Chair Thompson opened the public hearing and welcomed questions from the public. There were no requests to speak from the public. Chair Thompson closed the public hearing and invited a motion.

Commissioner White moved to approve Application PL-21-0335; Vice Chair Osborne seconded the motion.

Upon vote, the motion was carried 6 to 0.

Chair Thompson	Aye
Commissioner Osborne, Vice Chair	Aye
Commissioner Meginnis	Aye
Commissioner Stanfield	Aye
Commissioner White	Aye
Commissioner Uvari	Aye

d. THE RESIDENCES AT THE AGUA FRIA - REZONE - (APPLICATION PL-21-0192)

Chair Thompson opened the public hearing and welcomed questions from the public. There were no requests to speak from the public. Chair Thompson closed the public hearing and invited a motion.

Commissioner Uvari moved to approve Application PL-21-0192; subject to five (5) recommend conditions of approval; Vice Chair Osborne seconded the motion.

Upon vote, the motion was carried 6 to 0.

Chair Thompson	Aye
Commissioner Osborne, Vice Chair	Aye
Commissioner Meginnis	Aye
Commissioner Stanfield	Aye
Commissioner White	Aye
Commissioner Uvari	Aye

6. COMMISSION ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no action items discussed.

7. PLANNING DIVISION REPORT

There was no report.

8. CALENDAR

The next meeting is January 19, 2022.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Commission, Vice Chair Osborne moved to adjourn the regular meeting; Commissioner White seconded the motion.

Upon vote, the motion was carried 6 to 0.

Chair Thompson	Aye
Commissioner Osborne, Vice Chair	Aye
Commissioner Meginnis	Aye
Commissioner Stanfield	Aye
Commissioner White	Aye
Commissioner Uvari	Aye

Meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.