



## Village Planning Committee Meeting Summary

### PHO-2-25—Z-77-06-4

<b>Date of VPC Meeting</b>	February 2, 2026
<b>Date of Planning Hearing Officer Hearing Request</b>	February 18, 2026
<b>Request</b>	1) Modification of Stipulation 1 regarding general conformance to the site plan date stamped July 29, 2025.
<b>Location</b>	Approximately 150 feet north of the northwest corner of 3rd Street and Catalina Drive
<b>VPC Recommendation</b>	Approval, with an additional stipulation
<b>VPC Vote</b>	6-4

#### **VPC DISCUSSION:**

*One member of the public registered to speak on this item in opposition.*

#### **Staff Presentation**

**John Roanhorse**, staff, provided a review, introduction and overview of the PHO (Planning Hearing Officer) request. Mr. Roanhorse noted that the committee previously heard this case on September 8, 2025 when there was a review and modification of the original approved stipulations. Mr. Roanhorse described details of the current case including the entitlement history, location, general plan designation, existing zoning districts, and the surrounding uses. Mr. Roanhorse displayed maps, the site plan and conceptual information to show the details of the proposed request. Mr. Roanhorse discussed the site location within the Interim Transit-Oriented Zoning Overlay District One Policy Plan area. Mr. Roanhorse presented the project details noting a previous use permit and variances. Mr. Roanhorse displayed the proposed Personal Care Home development and the adjacent parking, traffic flow and pedestrian routes. Mr. Roanhorse discussed the PHO review process.

#### **Applicant Presentation**

**Paul Gilbert**, with Gilbert Billie, PLLC representing the Navajo Nation introduced himself and discussed the Community Residence Center. Mr. Gilbert introduced Ms. Sherylynn Yazzie with the Navajo Nation and Ms. Ellen Wesley with Axiom Care. Mr. Gilbert provided an overview of the project and zoning history and stated the property is zoned C-2 and is operated as a residential care institution, providing care, training, and rehabilitative support services with the primary focus on the treatment and recovery

from drug addiction. Mr. Gilbert stated that the services are not exclusively focused on Indigenous populations.

**Sherylynn Yazzie**, with the Navajo Nation Department of Health introduced herself and stated an acknowledgement for the ancestral land of the Akimel O’Odham and Xaychidom Piipaash Peoples. Ms. Yazzie thanked the committee for hearing this case and stated the project will provide a needed and unique health care resource for Indigenous people in Phoenix. Ms. Yazzie stated that the facility will offer healing and access to traditional treatment and wellness through healing circles and techniques.

Mr. Gilbert stated the proposed project initially came before the committee in 2005, followed by an amendment to stipulations associated with a 2006 zoning case and noted the current request in relation to the modification of the earlier stipulations. Mr. Gilbert said the case was previously presented to the committee during a prior hearing in September 2025, the applicant was seeking to modify one of the 2006 zoning stipulations to replace the originally approved 2006 site plan and building elevations. Mr. Gilbert stated the requested modification would retain the existing three-story office and medical building, which has been on the property since the 1970s. Mr. Gilbert stated that maintaining the existing building was necessary for the Navajo Nation to retain the structure and the vested C-2 zoning. Mr. Gilbert stated that a previous modification allows for an increase in the number of beds within the facility. Mr. Gilbert stated that the request had previously been reviewed by the Planning Commission and was approved by City Council on November 3, 2025. Mr. Gilbert stated that the applicant was appearing before the Village Committee for the second phase of the Navajo Nation’s redevelopment of the property and stated that the request involves a modification to Stipulation No. 1, which addresses site plan and elevation conformance. Mr. Gilbert stated that the current request proposes the addition of a healing grounds component to be located at the southeast corner of the property, replacing an area previously designated for asphalt parking. Mr. Gilbert stated the previously approved site plan provided in the zoning stipulation, depicts the existing three-story building and associated outdoor space used by patients and noted that the overall site layout remains largely unchanged and that the proposed modification is limited in scope. Mr. Gilbert stated the only substantive change being requested is the inclusion of the healing grounds, which would be used to incorporate spiritual healing ceremonies and practices associated with Navajo and other Indigenous traditions. Mr. Gilbert stated the current site plan presented reflects the applicant’s most recent proposal and clearly identifies the location and design of the proposed healing grounds.

Mr. Gilbert displayed additional details of the proposed healing grounds noting the location and purpose which would occupy approximately 3,300 square feet at the southeast corner of the property adjacent to 2nd Street. Mr. Gilbert stated that the healing grounds are intended to support the mission of the Community Residence Center for the Navajo Nation by bringing together modern medical treatment and traditional Navajo healing and similar spiritual and religious practices are shared among other Indigenous people and are central to sacred ceremonies. Mr. Gilbert said that many of these ceremonies involve silence and specific spatial orientation, which influenced the placement of the healing grounds and the area has been positioned to

allow an eastern orientation toward the rising sun, which is an important element of the ceremonies. Mr. Gilbert said that some opposition has expressed concern regarding the location of the healing grounds but there are no alternative areas on the site that would adequately support the functional and ceremonial requirements necessary for the healing grounds to operate as intended. Mr. Gilbert stated that with traditional Indigenous healing practices, the healing grounds would be enclosed by a perimeter wall and would contain three primary structures and described the Hogan which is a traditional earthen structure commonly used by the Navajo people for dwelling and ceremonial purposes and noted that the entrance is traditionally oriented to the east, allowing participants to greet the rising sun. Mr. Gilbert explained that this orientation symbolizes new beginnings and harmony with nature, which are important components of the healing practices proposed for the site. Mr. Gilbert stated that ceremonies and prayers within the Hogan would occur no more than two times per week. Mr. Gilbert stated there would also be a Tipi that represents spiritual balance through the elements of earth, fire, water, and air, and reflects the harmony between the earth. Mr. Gilbert stated the Tipi would be used for overnight ceremonies, which would include guided ceremonial practices such as the erection of the Tipi at the start of the ceremony and its dismantling the following morning, and these ceremonies would be conducted for residents and patients approximately once or twice per month. Mr. Gilbert stated there would be a third structure within the healing grounds, a sweat lodge which is a low-profile, traditionally constructed structure used for purification and spiritual rituals. Mr. Gilbert stated the sweat lodge is typically dome-shaped and constructed from willow branches, which are then covered with tarps or animal hides and heated stones are placed in the center of the lodge and water is poured over them to create steam, transforming the interior into a humid environment intended to support cleansing and purification of the body, mind, and spirit. Mr. Gilbert stated that separate sweat lodge ceremonies would be held for male and female residents, and that these ceremonies are anticipated to occur twice per week and that trained practitioners would assist in facilitating the ceremonies. Mr. Gilbert stated the healing grounds would include a wood-burning furnace used to heat the stones prior to their placement in the sweat lodge and the stones are traditionally heated over open wood fires, the enclosed furnace is more appropriate for this setting and functions similarly to a working fireplace. Mr. Gilbert stated that the site would include changing rooms where participants would prepare for ceremonies and the changing areas would be located along the western edge of the healing grounds and shaded by an overhead structure. Mr. Gilbert emphasized that, within Navajo tradition, the healing grounds are intended to be a quiet, respectful space. Mr. Gilbert stated at the western end of the site a ramada-style shade structure would cover these rooms. Mr. Gilbert stated the healing grounds are intended to be quiet, muted spaces for personal reflection, healing, and the pursuit of health, well-being, and balance. Mr. Gilbert stated that sounds generated by ceremonial elements would not be audible beyond the site boundaries and would remain below ambient noise levels in the surrounding area.

Mr. Gilbert stated the proposed healing grounds would not be unique within the city and similar healing grounds already exist in the Midtown area, including one located at the Phoenix Indian Medical Center near 16th Street north of Indian School Road, and

another at Virginia Avenue between 3rd and 7th Streets and these existing healing grounds have not generated neighborhood complaints or caused issues for surrounding communities. Mr. Gilbert stated there were concerns raised by one neighboring property owner regarding the proposed building elevations however the elevations of the previously approved three-story building remain unchanged from those shown in the prior PHO case. Mr. Gilbert stated the elevations are included solely because the applicant agreed to submit a comprehensive site plan, which required incorporating the already approved three-story structure. No modifications are proposed to existing building. Mr. Gilbert stated the updated drawings illustrate the elevations through the healing grounds.

Mr. Gilbert stated the summer solstice, occurs in June and is a highly significant religious period for the Navajo people as well as other Indigenous communities and while some solstice-related ceremonies involving dancing and celebration they occur elsewhere and such activities would not take place at the proposed healing center.

Mr. Gilbert stated that the presentation was straightforward in scope and the focus of the healing center is on wellness and recovery, including addressing addiction, with primary service to Navajo and other Indigenous communities, while also being accessible to non-tribal participants. Mr. Gilbert stated the healing center is intended to function as a quiet, respectful environment centered on healing and balance.

### **Questions from the Committee**

**Committee Member Sabrina Perez** asked for clarification regarding the proposed 3,300-square-foot healing center, specifically why the perimeter walls are eight feet tall and why portions of the roof remain open with the presence of adjacent residential and high-rise properties. **Mr. Gilbert** responded that, under the applicable zoning ordinances, the proposed structures are not permitted to exceed eight feet and that the existing building will remain within the allowable limits of the C-2 zoning district. Mr. Gilbert responded the open-roof design will be modified to shield views into the changing areas and ceremonial spaces and privacy concerns had been raised by members of the public, particularly regarding individuals changing clothing on site. Mr. Gilbert said protecting participant privacy is a priority and the applicant is committed to ensuring that these areas cannot be viewed from adjacent high-rise buildings or neighboring properties.

**Committee Member Brent Kleinman** asked whether the applicant had engaged in direct conversations with nearby residents and property owners prior to the hearing and if there were meetings to discuss concerns in advance and questioned why the applicant was moving forward at this time rather than continuing neighborhood discussions. **Mr. Gilbert** responded that the applicant is willing to meet with neighboring property owners and a notice was mailed on December 23, 2025, describing the proposal in detail; however, there was an error and a corrected notice was sent on January 9, 2026 to address the error. Mr. Gilbert stated explained he received a call from a representative of an adjacent high-rise building expressing concerns and a

meeting was offered, and the applicant requested that the concerns be provided in writing. Mr. Gilbert stated that the applicant received a written list of concerns and responded with a detailed letter of approximately three to four pages addressing each issue raised. Mr. Gilbert stated that the neighboring representatives indicated they wished to continue discussions. Mr. Gilbert stated that the project timeline is constrained by the desire to have the facility operational prior to the summer solstice and the project has already experienced delays due to the initial notice error, and for that reason the applicant elected to proceed with the hearing while continuing to offer opportunities for dialogue.

**Committee Member Wagner** asked how many individuals would be expected to use the facility at one time. **Ms. Yazzie** responded that use of the facility would be limited and carefully managed and for individual healing sessions, participation could involve one-on-one engagement between a practitioner and a participant, or small family groupings such as a participant accompanied by a spouse or children. Ms. Yazzie stated that talking-circle activities would generally involve up to approximately twelve participants and gatherings do not require fire and would take place in a seated, indoor setting focused on reflection, prayer, and connection within the community. Ms. Yazzie stated that the Tipi would serve a similar purpose for small, quiet gatherings and the sweat lodge would typically involve an average of four to six participants at a time, and in some cases as few as one or two individuals. Ms. Yazzie stated the facility would never be overcrowded and would not create noise or chaotic activity and the area would be quiet, controlled, and respectful in nature. Ms. Yazzie stated that access would be limited to participants who are authorized to attend sessions, and the overall environment would be comparable to other established healing centers, where activities are orderly, subdued, and focused on privacy and wellness.

**Committee Member G.G. George** asked why there was a rush to get in before the summer solstice in 2026, there have been at least 20 previous summer solstices and when did the Navajo Nation acquire the property. **Mr. Andy Jochums** with Gilbert Billie, PLLC responded that the Navajo Nation acquired the property in March 2025. **Mr. Gilbert** stated that the project was behind schedule and the applicant would prefer the facility to be available as soon as possible.

**Committee Member Erik Tedhams** asked for clarification regarding fire use at the site, specifically how would it be managed and what type of fuel would be used. **Mr. Gilbert** responded that all ceremonial fires would be wood-burning and the applicant has established procedures to notify the Fire Department prior to starting fires and again once activities are complete and the use of wood-burning fires would be comparable to a residential fireplace.

**Committee Member Perez** commented that, for a project of this nature, she was concerned about community involvement and clarity regarding how the wellness center would serve the public. Committee Member Perez asked for clarification on whether the center would primarily serve tribal communities or be accessible to other members of the public, and how opposition concerns would be addressed. Committee Member Perez noted that it is important for all stakeholders to understand the purpose,

operations, and intended audience of the healing center. **Mr. Gilbert** responded that the facility is designed primarily to serve the Navajo Nation and other Indigenous communities, but it is also open to non-tribal participants. Mr. Gilbert stated the applicant is committed to meeting with neighbors and addressing their concerns and some requests for meetings were made on short notice and the applicant remains willing to engage with the opposition in advance of the PHO hearing. Mr. Gilbert confirmed that there is ample time between the current date and the upcoming PHO hearing scheduled for February 18, 2025, to meet with concerned parties and respond to questions or requests.

**Committee Member George** asked for clarification regarding the timeline, specifically how long the planning for the healing center had been in development prior to the Navajo Nation's acquisition of the property in March 2025. **Mr. Gilbert** responded that planning activities began shortly after acquisition and that prior approvals related to the property were unrelated to the Navajo Nation's current proposal.

**Committee Member Kleinman** expressed concern that the project timeline appears rushed and asked about the applicant's willingness to engage with neighbors prior to the February 18, 2026 PHO hearing. Committee Member Kleinman stated that while the applicant has provided assurances regarding noise and timing, there are still questions about evening activities during the summer months, when sunsets occur later than indicated in the presentation and from the perspective of residents living across the street, even activity within ambient noise levels may be noticeable, Committee Member Kleinman highlighted the importance of continued communication and transparency with neighbors. Committee Member Kleinman stated that he would like to see further engagement and responses to questions rather than simply moving forward without addressing concerns. **Mr. Gilbert** responded that the applicant has also met with neighbors to the south of the property, who had initially expressed opposition and through discussion and negotiation, those neighbors have resolved their concerns and are no longer in opposition. Mr. Gilbert stated the applicant's ongoing commitment to engage with all interested parties and address any outstanding questions or concerns prior to the PHO hearing.

**Committee Member Wagner** asked for clarification regarding whether any zoning changes would be required for the proposed healing center. **Mr. Gilbert** responded that the property is zoned C-2 and that the proposed use is permitted under that zoning and no change of zoning is necessary for the project to move forward.

**Chair Montaña Searles** noted the spiritual significance of the project and acknowledged the tight timeline and commented that while this was not a formal question, the short schedule could pose challenges for the applicant in completing all necessary procedures. **Mr. Gilbert** responded that the tight timeline is a consideration, as delaying approval could impact project funding and scheduling and emphasized that timely approval is important to maintain the project schedule and associated resources.

**Committee Member Wagner** asked staff to clarify the procedural requirements. **Mr. Roanhorse** stated the committee may provide a recommendation and the case will still

proceed with the scheduled PHO hearing. Mr. Roanhorse stated that continuing the discussion to next month could allow for additional resolution and engagement with the noted concerns, which may improve outcomes and comfort for all parties involved.

**Committee Member Kleinman** commented on the importance of maintaining records of all communications and public comments which had been essential for early discussion on the presented projects. Committee Member Kleinman stated that despite the Village Planning Committee's action projects still proceed to the Planning Commission. **Mr. Roanhorse** responded that minutes and correspondence on a project is provided are to the Planning Hearing Officer and respectively to the Planning Commission which provides details in the review process.

**Committee Member George** commented that she would be more comfortable if the committee granted a continuance to allow the opposition additional time to provide information and engage with the applicant.

### **Public Comment**

**Ric Toris**, with Earl & Curley, representing the property owners from Alloy introduced himself. Mr. Toris stated that there is sufficient time between the current meeting and the upcoming PHO hearing to allow meaningful discussion between the opposition and the applicant and that the committee's role is to review the site plan and elevations and a continuance would allow both parties to collaborate on mutually agreeable solutions before a formal recommendation is made. Mr. Toris stated there are concerns and they have not been provided with enough information to fully assess the project's potential impact and requested that the committee continue the case for one month to allow the opposition to meet with the applicant and consultants, review design elements, and discuss landscaping, buffering, and other stipulations. Mr. Toris stated that the applicant had indicated a willingness to stipulate sound limitations, but the opposition wanted additional clarity regarding city ordinances and other potential stipulations. Mr. Toris stated their concerns, noting that the applicant's proposed wall design consisted of a blank running bond pattern, whereas their own project had incorporated enhanced materials, landscaping along the perimeter, and parking along the wall to improve aesthetics and emphasized that the opposition seeks a similar level of design consideration for the proposed healing center. Mr. Toris stated the subject property has dual frontage on 2nd and 3rd Streets and the current proposal treats portions of the project as though they face the back of the lot, rather than giving proper attention to both street frontages. Mr. Toris stated that this lack of design consideration could negatively impact the surrounding streetscape and neighborhood character. Mr. Toris stated concerns about the open-roof changing structure, noting that nearby apartments and office buildings, some four to five stories in height, could have visibility into these areas and no visibility study had been provided, despite requests for line-of-sight analysis. Mr. Toris said there are potential noise impacts, including ceremonial drumming, song, or other activities and that while the applicant had indicated that noise would not be audible off-site, the opposition requested that any stipulation regarding noise be formally documented to provide clarity and enforceability.

Mr. Toris said that the opposition believes additional design, landscaping, and operational details should be provided to make an informed decision about neighborhood impacts and based on these concerns, the opposition formally requested a one-month continuance to allow for review, discussion with the applicant, and potential development of mutually agreeable stipulations.

### **Applicant Response:**

**Mr. Gilbert** responded by reiterating that the applicant is willing to work with the opposition and that there is sufficient time to address outstanding concerns prior to the PHO hearing in February and if the committee prefers, the applicant is also willing to return to present any agreements or modifications made through these discussions. Mr. Gilbert stated a key distinction between the current application and the opposition's reference to a previous project is the other project required rezoning to the Walkable Urban Code whereas the current proposal is for a property zoned C-2 and does not require any change to zoning and it is an unfair comparison between the two projects. Mr. Gilbert stated that the applicant agrees that the changing areas should not be visible to adjacent properties and confirmed that an adjustment that will be implemented. Mr. Gilbert stated that the applicant will comply with all applicable city ordinances and that activities will not exceed ambient noise levels and any additional stipulations related to noise could be addressed at the PHO hearing if necessary. Mr. Gilbert stated that the applicant will meet all city requirements and that further landscaping requirements could be addressed as part of the city's site plan review process, and the applicant is willing to provide the opposition with a copy of the site plan prior to submission. Mr. Gilbert concluded by stating that there is no substantive reason to continue the case, as the project complies with existing C-2 zoning, and that the outstanding design and operational details can be resolved through ongoing discussions with the opposition and through the site plan review process and stated his willingness to answer any additional questions from the committee.

**Committee Member Procaccini** asked whether any opposition had been received from other nearby properties, specifically Copper Point or any of the adjacent high-rises. **Mr. Gilbert** responded that some properties to the north, including a 12-story office building at Copper Point, had expressed concerns, although the details of their opposition were not provided. Committee Member Procaccini acknowledged the presentations from attorneys and representatives and stated that the key concerns have been discussed.

### **Floor/Public Discussion Closed: Motion, Discussion and Vote:**

**Committee Member Kleinman** stated he would be supportive of a motion for a continuance although this might be impractical and the parties should continue the discussion. Committee Member Kleinman proposed an alternative and stated to approve the application with the condition that the applicant and opposition schedule a meeting prior to the PHO hearing to attempt to reach agreement, and report back to the committee in March. Committee Member Kleinman acknowledged that a continuance

would not change the overall process and confirmed that the applicant would still be required to complete all notifications and noted he would not be supportive of a motion for continuance.

**Committee Member Wagner** commented on the review and planning process, stating that local planning and zoning procedures are currently under scrutiny and facing legislative preemption efforts. Committee Member Wagner stated the importance of maintaining thorough public hearings and a transparent review process, particularly when addressing zoning changes and stipulations. Committee Member Wagner stated from experience with the committee the impacts of the proposed healing center are relatively low, and that the opposition's concerns have been addressed to the extent possible. Committee Member Wagner stated that a continuance was not necessary and expressed support for moving forward with the project, while allowing remaining details to be resolved prior to the PHO hearing.

**Chair Montaña Searles** confirmed that the PHO hearing is scheduled for February 18. Chair Montaña Searles stated that the committee is considering a motion to approve the request with the caveat that the applicant and opposition meet prior to the PHO hearing to discuss and resolve any outstanding issues and asked if the committee wished to include an amendment related to stipulations, such as ambient noise levels.

**Committee Member Wagner** responded that she did not believe it was necessary for the committee to stipulate noise levels at this time, as that is a matter to be addressed by the parties directly and stated the committee's role is to allow the parties to work collaboratively on the remaining details before the PHO hearing.

**Committee Member Procaccini** asked Mr. Gilbert whether a stipulation related to Proposition 207 would be required in addition to the other conditions being discussed. **Mr. Gilbert** responded that that proposal would not be impacted by Proposition 207 requirements.

**Committee Member Perez** commented that it is important for the opposition and the public to have input and the committee has a duty to review proposals, site plans and elevations and this should be a consideration for all items that come before the committee.

**Chair Montaña Searles** thanked the applicant and noted that the committee's role is to provide feedback and conditions related to the site plan and elevations and stated that the committee supports including stipulations where appropriate but emphasized that the parties should have the opportunity to work out remaining details collaboratively. Chair Montaña Searles stated that the committee would move forward with the motion for the proposal with the understanding that outstanding items, including any necessary stipulations, would be addressed by the applicant and opposition prior to the PHO hearing.

**MOTION:**

**Committee Member Wagner** motioned to recommend approval of PHO-2-25--Z-77-06-4 per the staff recommendation with an additional stipulation. **Committee Member Tom Doescher** seconded the motion.

1. The applicant and opposition will meet prior to the PHO Hearing scheduled for February 18, 2026, to resolve any concerns and provide an update to the Encanto Village Planning Committee at the March 2, 2026, meeting.

**Committee Member Kleinman** stated he is not supportive of the motion because there are unresolved issues and postponing the proposal would provide more time for collaborative results.

**Chair Montañó Searles** stated support for the proposal and that this is an important action for the parties and it is very important to be neighborly and the review process in place is necessary. Chair Montañó Searles said that the traditional and seasonal elements of a project as presented are valuable and worthy of the committee's consideration. Chair Montañó Searles stated that he values the integrity and commitment of Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Toris and that they will honorably engage in a positive conversation and provide an update to the Encanto Village Planning Committee in March.

**VOTE:**

**6-4;** motion to recommend approval of PHO-2-25—Z-77-06-4 per the staff recommendation with an additional stipulation passes with Committee Members Doescher, Garcia, Procaccini, Wagner, Picos and Montañó Searles in favor with Committee Members George, Klienman, Perez and Tedhams in opposition.

**VPC Recommended Stipulations:**

1. That development shall be in general conformance with the site plan and elevations date stamped ~~July 29, 2025~~ [DATE], as modified by the following stipulations and approved by the Planning and Development Department.
2. Prior to final site plan approval, the landowner shall execute a Proposition 207 waiver of claims form. The waiver shall be recorded with the Maricopa County Recorder's Office and delivered to the City to be included in the rezoning application file for record.
3. **THE APPLICANT AND OPPOSITION WILL MEET PRIOR TO THE PHO HEARING SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 18, 2026, TO RESOLVE ANY CONCERNS AND PROVIDE AN UPDATE TO THE ENCANTO VILLAGE PLANNING COMMITTEE AT THE MARCH 2, 2026, MEETING.**

**Staff comments regarding VPC Recommendation:**

None.