

**REVISED**

Village Planning Committee Meeting Summary

GPA-SM-1-23-8

Date of VPC Meeting	August 8, 2023
Request From	Residential 10 to 15 dwelling units per acre and Residential 15+ dwelling units per acre
Request To	Commerce/Business Park
Proposal	Office, industrial, and warehouse uses
Location	Northeast corner of 12th Street and Jones Avenue
VPC Recommendation	Denial
VPC Vote	8-1-1

VPC DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDED STIPULATIONS:

Nine members of the public registered to speak on this item, five in favor and four opposed.

STAFF PRESENTATION

Mr. Rogers presented the proposals, the site location, the surrounding land uses, the site plan, renderings, staff recommendation, staff findings, and concluded with the stipulations.

Committee Member Shepard asked why the project was stipulated to a max height of 42 feet, but the proposal showed a 40-foot-tall building. **Mr. Rogers** stated that the extra height is to allow a little bit of flexibility for the developer.

Committee Member Holmerud asked why EV bike parking was not stipulated. **Mr. Rogers** explained that requiring EV bike parking had become a more common stipulation in recent months and was not as common when the stipulations for this project were drafted in March.

APPLICANT PRESENTATION

Mr. Morris, representing the applicant with Withey Morris Baugh, PLC, explained the history of the site, described the developer, the site location, the surrounding uses, the site as a buffer use between industrial and residential uses, and a similar project in Gilbert. Mr. Morris presented the project details, the renderings, the site plan, the traffic

generation, the economic benefits, commerce park users, community benefits, environmental benefits, community support, and concluded by summarizing the overall project benefits.

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE

Committee Member Shepard asked how big the pocket park is proposed to be. **Mr. Morris** stated that the park is proposed to be about an acre.

Committee Member Brownell described the history of the San Francisco Canal, spoke about a previous project where the attorney had proposed several small buildings, but one large building ended up being built, stated he likes this project, but it should go somewhere else, and stated he has a hard time rezoning from a multifamily residence district in the midst of a housing crisis.

Committee Member Marchuk stated he recently drove around the area and sees the logic in the argument for transitional zoning but noticed a multifamily development adjacent to a salvage yard. Committee Member Marchuk stated he has a hard time with the argument that residential will not develop adjacent to a salvage yard. **Chair Daniels** stated the development Committee Member Marchuk referenced is the Salt River Flats.

Committee Member Roque stated that she read the letters of support from the community, stated that the letters were primarily all form letters from businesses, and asked if any of the businesses in support are interested in occupying the site. **Mr. Morris** stated that those that submitted letters of support are current owners and tenants of sites in the area, so they are not potential tenants.

Chair Daniels stated that the City is pushing for affordable housing, stated that it is hard to get community residents behind rezoning to multifamily, stated that this site could be used for affordable housing, stated that it feels disrespectful to say "who would want to live next to a salvage yard", and asked why the developer is not using a site already zoned for this use.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mark Cardenas stated he is with Ironworkers Local 75, explained the Ironworkers Local 75 is made up of 641 members and has a 50% Native American membership. Mr. Cardenas stated that the Ironworkers Local 75 is in support of this project.

Randall Singh stated he grew up in this community, raised cattle on the site, asked if the industrial sites across the river all have tenants, and asked how many times the City had built a park at the Rio Salado and knocked it down. **Committee Member Busching** asked if Mr. Randall Singh is in opposition to the development. Mr. Randal Singh stated he would like the committee to take his emotions and what he is saying.

Mousa Salahi stated he owns seven acres south of this property where he is planning on building multifamily, explained he does not want to see a 40 foot wall next to his development, stated that if this project goes forward he may change his plans to build, and stated he is opposed to the rezoning.

Greg Best stated he has lived in the area since 1995, stated he owns several properties in the area, stated the Salt River Flats was his project, and stated he is doing several multifamily developments in the surrounding area. Mr. Best stated that the property has not been developed due to a legal battle within the family that owns the site, stated he uses the San Francisco Canal for irrigation, stated that he rides his bike to Tempe every night, and stated that the AZ Fresh site was supposed to be a park. Mr. Best stated that the site should remain residential because there is so much industrial in the area.

Roderick Singh Sr. stated that he grew up on the subject site, stated there is a ton of history in the San Francisco Canal, stated he used to walk to school through this area, and stated this site had the last standing Indian-Asian owned farmhouse before it was knocked down during the pandemic. **Committee Member Busching** asked about the existing home on the site. Mr. Roderick Singh Sr. stated that the existing home was built by his father and is occupied by his mother, spoke about the history of the site, stated the site has not been developed because it was not for sale, stated he had hopes to start a farm there again, and stated he did not know how the property had come to be zoned for multifamily residential. **Committee Member Shepard** asked if his family still owned the land. Mr. Roderick Singh Sr. stated that his mother owns the land and lives in the existing house, stated that his grandfather had left the land in undivided interest before to his family before his parents separated and his mom took everything, and stated that there is an elderly abuse case on file with the state of Arizona due to his nephew who took a \$500,000 loan against the property. Committee Member Busching clarified that Trammel Crow has the site in escrow contingent on the rezoning. Mr. Roderick Singh Sr. confirmed that Trammel Crow has the site in escrow, stated that he does not know how the historic farmhouse was allowed to be demolished, and stated that he is opposed to the development. **Committee Member Marchuk** asked if Mr. Roderick Singh Sr. is against development on the site in general or opposed to the commerce park use specifically. Mr. Roderick Singh Sr. stated that he is in support of residential development of the site.

Roderick Singh Jr. stated that he uses the San Francisco Canal for irrigation, stated he has found Native American artifacts in the canal, stated that he does not think this is the right place for the proposed development, stated that there is a need for affordable housing in the area, stated he is against the development, explained that the pocket park is proposed because the park location is not usable for the development, and stated that many people would be happy to live next to a salvage yard if it is a place they can call their own.

APPLICANT RESPONSE

Mr. Morris apologized for mischaracterizing the property, stated he grew up in the area, stated that while someone may be willing to live next to salvage yard, it is much more difficult to find someone who is willing to pay to build there, and agreed that the pocket park is an unusable piece of land but stated that most developers would landscape the area and leave it alone, while Trammel Crow is willing to provide a neighborhood amenity. Mr. Morris stated that R-4 allows for tall buildings with less open space, stated that this property was passed on for multifamily, and stated that a commerce park buffer will help catalyze multifamily development in the area.

FLOOR/PUBLIC DISCUSSION CLOSED: MOTION, DISCUSSION, AND VOTE

Committee Member Brooks stated that in the past there was a process to encourage people to sit down and talk about their concerns. **Chair Daniels** asked how many meetings had been held. **Mr. Morris** stated that there had been four individual and community meetings.

Committee Member Marchuk stated that hearing that the Salt Flats development is low-income makes him think the site is not likely to be developed as multifamily, stated that the proposal offers an appropriate transition from the industrial uses, and stated he does not want to see more commerce park zoning extend to the south.

Chair Daniels stated that the City is pushing affordable housing, stated that an apartment had just been built on 7th Avenue next to an electrical substation and industrial uses, stated that text amendments had just been approved to address housing, stated that timing is everything for the development of multifamily housing, and stated that the beautification of a canal can cause adjacent properties to be considered premium lots.

Committee Member Marchuk stated he is hearing many vocal members of the community, but there are many letters of support.

Committee Member Busching stated that she printed out a screenshot from My Community Map that shows a cohesive area of R-4 zoned properties and stated the committee should not recommend approval.

MOTION

Committee Member Busching made a motion to recommend denial of GPA-SM-1-23-8, **Committee Member Holmerud** seconded the motion.

VOTE

8-1-1, motion to recommend denial of GPA-SM-1-23-8 passed with Committee Members Aldama, Brooks, Brownell, Busching, F. Daniels, Holmerud, Roque, and T. Daniels in favor, Committee Member Marchuk opposed, and Committee Member Shepard abstained.

STAFF COMMENTS REGARDING VPC RECOMMENDATION:

None.