



Village Planning Committee Meeting Summary

GPA-NG-1-25-2

Date of VPC Meeting	September 11, 2025
Request From	Parks/Open Space / Residential 3.5 to 5 dwelling units per acre, Preserves / Residential 2 to 3.5 dwelling units per acre / Residential 3.5 to 5 dwelling units per acre, Preserves / Floodplain, Commercial / Residential 15+ dwelling units per acre, and Preserves / Mixed Use / Commercial / Residential 5 to 15 dwelling units per acre
Request To	Commercial
Proposal	Commercial, retail, and hospitality uses; and an update to the City Trails System Map removing multi-use trails along Sonoran Desert Drive and Dove Valley Road, and adding an east-west shared-use path between the I-17 freeway and Skunk Creek Wash
Location	Northeast corner of Interstate 17 and Sonoran Desert Drive
VPC Recommendation	Approval, per the staff recommendation
VPC Vote	6-0

VPC DISCUSSION:

Agenda Item 3 (GPA-NG-1-25-2) and Agenda Item 4 (Z-24-25-2) are companion cases and were heard concurrently.

Committee Member Paul Li declared a conflict of interest and recused himself from this item, bringing the quorum to six members.

No members of the public registered to speak on this item.

Staff Presentation:

Adrian Zambrano, staff, provided an overview of General Plan Amendment case GPA-NG-1-25-2, including the location of the request, the General Plan Land Use Map designation, and surrounding General Plan Land Use Map designations. Mr. Zambrano shared the proposal and noted that the request also includes an update to the City Trails Network Map. Mr. Zambrano displayed the existing and proposed trails map. Mr.

Zambrano stated that the proposal has not received any letters of opposition or support. Mr. Zambrano shared the staff findings and stated that staff recommends approval. Mr. Zambrano then provided an overview of rezoning case Z-24-25-2, including the location of the request and surrounding zoning and land uses. Mr. Zambrano shared background information on the site regarding the North Black Canyon Major Employment Corridor, the North Gateway Village Core Plan, and the North Black Canyon Corridor Plan. Mr. Zambrano noted that the Parks and Recreation Department confirmed that the 110-acre district park envisioned for the subject site within the North Gateway Village Core Plan is now planned for another location. Mr. Zambrano displayed the site plan, elevations, and rendering for the proposed project and stated that as noted in the staff report, the proposal supports the goals, policies, and recommendations of several adopted plans, policies, and initiatives. Mr. Zambrano stated that the proposal has not received any letters of support or opposition. Mr. Zambrano shared the staff findings and stated that staff recommends approval subject to stipulations. Mr. Zambrano shared the recommended stipulations and next steps for public hearings.

Applicant Presentation:

Manjula Vaz, with Gammage & Burnham, PLC, introduced herself and her team. Ms. Vaz stated that they have been working with City staff for over a year. Ms. Vaz stated that they have tried to take into account all of the policy plans in the area. Ms. Vaz stated that the height waiver request is for four-story hotels as they come in, which is consistent with other approved height waivers in the area.

David Larcher, with Vestar, introduced himself and shared other shopping centers that Vestar has developed within the Phoenix metropolitan area. Mr. Larcher stated that this would be a high-quality development, similar to the other shopping centers that Vestar has developed. Mr. Larcher stated that Vestar is a long-term holder of their developments.

Kean Thomas, with Vestar, displayed and discussed the proposed site plan and surrounding developments. Mr. Thomas summarized off-site improvements that Vestar will be building and shared ultimate street cross-sections. Mr. Thomas discussed the proposed trail connectivity. Mr. Thomas discussed the conceptual design, noting that it would comply with the North Black Canyon Overlay District. Mr. Thomas discussed the amenities that would be included. Mr. Thomas discussed the proposed amendment to the City Trails Network Map. Mr. Thomas displayed and discussed the 32nd Avenue cross-section and multi-use trail. Mr. Thomas concluded that the proposed development conforms with adopted policy plans for the village and noted that Vestar looks forward to contributing to the North Gateway Village through thoughtful placemaking and design.

Questions from Committee:

Committee Member Aaron Stein asked how many points of ingress and egress would be located off of the Interstate 17 freeway. **Ms. Vaz** responded that there would be seven points of ingress and egress.

Mr. Thomas clarified that the ingress and egress off of the Interstate 17 freeway would be off of a frontage road with deceleration lanes, noting that it would be a normal street condition, including a sidewalk and landscaping.

Chair Julie Read stated that she met with Vestar to get some questions answered and to provide some input regarding items that were important to the community. Chair Read stated that there was a lot of time spent on the design. Chair Read stated that because the North Gateway Village Core did not develop how it was originally envisioned as, the North Gateway Village lacked a vision for future development within the village. Chair Read stated that in other parts of the city, people know where they are because of how it is designed, such as the Biltmore Fashion Park, Midtown Phoenix, Roosevelt Row, or the Melrose District. Chair Read stated that the North Gateway Village lacks this type of placemaking that other places throughout the city have. Chair Read stated that the North Gateway Village has the largest amount of State Trust Land within the City of Phoenix, noting that the village will continue to grow and develop. Chair Read stated that part of the job of being a committee member is to be really thoughtful of new development and ensure it aligns with how the community wants the village to develop. Chair Read stated that this would be the first retail development for the North Gateway Village, and it will set the tone for all future development in the village. Chair Read stated that she wants to make sure that while the community has a say, that the community really likes the way it is going to look, and that it ties into the Sonoran Desert and Sonoran Preserve. Chair Read stated that the applicant has done a great job of being really thoughtful on the design. Chair Read stated that the proposed site plan is not final, and it may change, but noted that it is a good start and a good representation of what is to come. Chair Read stated that she requested that Vestar ensure that the trail stations be cleaned and that the trash bins be emptied regularly, noting that Vestar as the property management company will be in charge of this maintenance. Chair Read added that she requested that pet waste stations be provided throughout the site and that they be maintained. Chair Read stated that she wants to ensure that the amenities are clean and safe for the community members that will be using it. Chair Read stated that Vestar has agreed to these items. Chair Read stated that she also asked that Vestar ensure that the open spaces within both Vestar projects are exciting and activating for the community. Chair Read stated that the village has a lot of young families and there are not a lot of places to go within the village for families to spend time together. Chair Read referenced the water features at Desert Ridge Marketplace and Scottsdale Quarter, and how families could spend a good part of the day there. Chair Read stated that having community gathering spots is very important to this community. Chair Read stated that there should be less asphalt and pavement and more places to connect with neighbors and families. Chair Read added that arts and culture plays a big role in developing communities. Chair Read stated that the City of Phoenix has great arts and culture pieces, but none are within the North Gateway Village. Chair Read stated that she has challenged Vestar to think creatively and has asked Vestar to work with local artists to bring arts and culture into the North Gateway Village. Chair Read stated that the Thompson Thrift project included a stipulation for inclusion of a mural that the Committee voted on. Chair Read stated that she hoped to see this type of art moving forward for the Vestar property. Chair Read stated that Dove Valley Road is currently

scalloped and is dangerous to drive on with how development has occurred along the roadway. Chair Read stated that Vestar has agreed that the construction of Dove Valley Road will be completed as one of their first improvements. Chair Read stated that she has also asked Vestar to include improvements around the APS substation at North Valley Parkway and Carefree Highway. Chair Read asked Mr. Thomas to explain the relationship with APS.

Mr. Thomas stated that APS has control over their property and Vestar cannot touch their easements or their property. Mr. Thomas stated that Vestar does have enough room on their property to program buildings and landscaping around the APS substation in order to shield it. Mr. Thomas stated that Vestar cannot touch the east side of the substation, but there is a lot to be done on the north and west side of it to make it look more attractive with buildings and landscaping, depending on what APS will allow close to their easements.

Chair Read stated that she hopes to facilitate some conversations between Vestar and APS about what those improvements might look like. Chair Read stated that there is an APS substation at the southwest corner of 7th Street and Roosevelt Street which is hidden behind artistic walls and buildings. Chair Read stated that she hopes that there could be a similar creative solution to screen the APS substation that will add value and bring arts and culture and community activation to the area. Chair Read stated that there is a big sign across the street for the Melrose District and when crossing under it, people know that they are in the Melrose District. Chair Read stated that the North Gateway Village has its name because it is the north gateway into the City of Phoenix. Chair Read stated that she has asked Vestar to be creative for some sort of monument sign, similar to the sign for the Desert Ridge Marketplace. Chair Read also requested that no cacti or pointy plants be planted adjacent to areas where kids may be playing.

Public Comments:

None.

Applicant Response:

None.

MOTION – GPA-NG-1-25-2:

Committee Member Andrea Crouch motioned to recommend approval of GPA-NG-1-25-2, per the staff recommendation. **Committee Member Kylie Kennelley** seconded the motion.

VOTE – GPA-NG-1-25-2:

6-0; the motion to recommend approval of GPA-NG-1-25-2 per the staff recommendation passed with Committee members Crouch, Kennelly, Manion, Salow, Stein, and Read in favor.

STAFF COMMENTS REGARDING VPC RECOMMENDATION:

None.