

Village Planning Committee Meeting Summary

Z-75-18-2

INFORMATION ONLY

Date of VPC Meeting	December 7, 2021
Request From	RE-35 DCOD (Single-Family Residence District, Desert Character Overlay District) and S-1 DCOD (Ranch or Farm Residence, Desert Character Overlay District)
Request To	RE-35 (Single-Family Residence District), RE-35 DCOD (Single-Family Residence District, Desert Character Overlay District) and S-1 (Ranch or Farm Residence)
Proposed Use	Modify the Desert Character Overlay District (DCOD) boundaries to modify a portion from Sub-District A to Sub-District B and to remove a portion of property from Sub-District A to allow for single-family residential
Location	South of Sonoran Desert Drive between the 16th and 32nd Street alignments

VPC DISCUSSION:

This item was heard concurrently with Item #3 – Information Only – GPA-DSTV-1-18-2, Item #4 – Information Only – Z-62-18-2, and Item #5 – Information Only – Z-TA-5-18-2.

Committee member Reginal Younger arrived to the meeting and Committee member Jason Israel left the meeting during this item, bringing the quorum to 11 members.

10 persons indicated that they wished to speak.

Susan Demmitt, representative with Gammage & Burnham, provided information about the proposed development, noting the site is a privately owned parcel adjacent to the Sonoran Preserve, will have only single-family homes with a maximum of 3 homes per acre, and will have 7 miles of trails and community paths. She discussed the application requests to rezone to PUD, amend the General Plan, and amend the Desert Character Overlay District. She also discussed the extension and build out of Sonoran Desert Drive.

Susan Demmitt also discussed the developer's partnership with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). She discussed the certified wildlife habitat open space, monarch pledge, early childhood health outdoors nature playscape, habitat management plans, and homeowner habitat gardens. She noted the NWF landscape palette, pedestrian circulation, and open edge plan.

Vice Chair Louis Lagrave asked about the cost of the extension of Sonoran Desert Drive. **Susan Demmitt** stated that Verdin's contribution will only be for a portion of the extension. She stated that as other developers build along Sonoran Desert Drive they will have their own contribution requirements.

Vice Chair Louis Lagrave stated that the North Land Use Plan should be considered in addition to the General Plan. He stated that the developer should consider building less than 1000 units. He added that the development will generate traffic and overload schools. **Susan Demmitt** stated that the development will have a maximum of 3 units per acre, which is consistent with developments adjacent to the preserve. She stated that they are in discussion with the Deer Valley School District and the development is within the boundary for Desert Mountain schools, which have capacity. She stated that Cave Creek schools also have capacity.

Committee member Rick Nowell asked about traffic lights on Sonoran Desert Drive. **Susan Demmitt** stated that a traffic study is being completed and that there will most likely be a traffic signal at the main entrance of the development in the future.

Committee member Rick Nowell stated that he had concerns that the project has returned after a couple years, but not decreased the density.

Committee member Rick Powell asked about the cost of the extension of Sonoran Desert Drive. **Susan Demmitt** stated that the cost estimate for the full extension of Sonoran Desert Drive is approximately \$120 million. She stated that the build out will take place when the traffic demand exists and the funding is available. **Committee member Rick Powell** stated that the development is not in line with the character of the area.

Committee member Reginald Younger asked how close homes will be to Sonoran Desert Drive. **Susan Demmitt** stated the development's property line is adjacent to Sonoran Desert Drive, but the site will have landscape buffers. **Committee member Reginald Younger** stated that he is hoping for less density on site.

Vice Chair Louis Lagrave stated that the Desert View Character Plan should also be take into account and to meet the character of the area, density should be decreased or the development proposal be moved closer to the core. He added that Desert Mountain and Cave Creek schools are too far from the development.

Committee member Jill Hankins asked if a flood analysis had been completed for the site. **Susan Demmitt** stated that the site is not proposing development in the established flood corridor or flood zone. **Nguyen Lam**, representative with Hilgart Wilson, stated that the drainage corridors have mapped floodplains and are subject to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). He added that the developer will work with the City to appropriately address the flood zones. **Committee member Jill Hankins** stated that she had concerns with additional hardscape in the area.

Committee member Michelle Santoro stated that she appreciates the design, open space, and connectivity proposed by the development.

Daniel Centilli, a member of Save Our Sonoran Preserve and various trail running groups, stated that developers see the area as a transportation corridor, but residents see it as a recreation corridor. He added that the development will reduce quality of life. He stated that other residential projects in the area have increased trash and traffic.

Gary Kirkilas, a member of Save Our Sonoran Preserve, stated that he appreciated the partnership with the NWF and proposed trails and access. He added that the Desert Character Overlay is tied to the preserve and should be retained.

Sue Pierce, a resident of Desert Enclave, stated that the area is exploding with development, especially with the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), but residential development will lead to increased traffic. She stated that traffic issues are already complicated in the area and there is no plan from the development about how to alleviate the issue. She added that major transportation will lead to additional noise pollution. She stated that there is an opportunity to preserve the area as a tranquil space in the Sonoran Preserve.

Susanne Rothwell, a member of the Phoenix Mountain Preservation Council, expressed concerns regarding amending the Desert Character Overlay. She added that the developer should keep 50% of the land as native and homes should be low scale. She also expressed concerns with the lack of parking if a trailhead is provided on site.

James Gaston, a resident of Tuscana at Tatum Ranch, questioned how the development will deal with increases in water and sewer usage.

Bob Thompson, a member of the public, stated that he was opposed to the development and instead wanted to preserve the area as natural preserve. He also expressed concerns with traffic and density.

Scott Coll, a member of the public, expressed concerns with traffic. He added that there is a need to preserve the preserve area.

Crystal Lehman, a member of the public, stated that Sonoran Desert Drive is a pleasant driving experience as is and expanding the roadway and increasing homes takes away from the beauty of the desert.

Rebecca Rodriguez, a local hiker, trail runner, and mountain biker, stated that she enjoys the beautiful views and wildlife in the area. She expressed concerns with increased noise from the roadway.

Paul Grayczyk, president of the Sonoran Gate Home Owner's Association, stated the he understands the area will develop eventually, but expressed concerns with density and traffic. He added that the development should be set back further from Sonoran Desert Drive.

Susan Demmitt stated that she had no additional comments or responses at this time, but will continue dialogue with the community going forward.

Vice Chair Louis Lagrave stated that Sonoran Desert Drive will increase to 6 lanes, but that does not mean that the preserve area cannot be preserved. **Committee member Jill Hankins** also expressed the need to retain open spaces in the City.

Committee member Rick Powell stated that he believes development should be slower and the area kept more natural.

Committee member Reginald Younger stated that he likes the look of Sonoran Desert Drive as is and hopes that development will allow that to be retained. He also expressed concerns with increased density.

Village Planning Committee Meeting Summary
Z-75-18-2
INFORMATION ONLY

Date of VPC Meeting	April 2, 2019
Request	Modify the Desert Character Overlay District for approximately 638 acres to modify a portion from Sub-District A to Sub-District B and to remove a portion of property from Sub-District A
Proposed Use	Single-family residential
Location	South of Sonoran Desert Drive between the 16th and 32nd Street alignments

VPC DISCUSSION:

Susan Demmitt, applicant, gave a presentation of the case up to this point in time. She stated that they started this process back in August. Ms. Demmitt went through the General Plan history of the area, along with the Desert Character Overlay District establishment. She summarized the infrastructure improvements that would be required for the subdivision to be built. Ms. Demmitt went on to describe the comments the developer is receiving from members of the public. The first comment was that the property should stay S-1. Ms. Demmitt stated that staying S-1 would be one home per acre. Having a subdivision with multiple sized lots/homes would be more affordable for residents to live in proximity to the preserve.

The next comment from the public that was addressed is the condition of Sonoran Desert Drive. Ms. Demmitt stated they are working with the City and the State Land Department to evaluate. She went on to present pages from the 2002 council report that indicated that at full capacity, Sonoran Desert Drive will be able to handle 50,000 cars a day. The road was intended to be a major thoroughfare.

The next concern Ms. Demmitt addressed was the acquisition of Sonoran Preserve Land. She went on to state that the MacEwen property has been privately held since the 1950's. Taylor Morrison is agreeable to put a public trail through the center of the property, adjacent to the wash corridor, to connect the preserve north and south of Sonoran Desert Drive. She stated they will comply with the Sonoran Edge Treatment Guidelines. Ms. Demmitt stated the City's Park and Recreation Department is currently looking at acquiring the land to the east of the MacEwen parcel for preserve.

Lou Lagrave stated that he understands that Sonoran Desert Drive is intended to be a six-lane arterial and the General Plan on the southern two-thirds of the property has the land use designation that supports the proposed density but that he still has concerns. Mr. Lagrave stated that he is concerned about the traffic on Sonoran Desert Drive, how the kids will get to school and the proposed lot sizes.

Susan Demmitt addressed Mr. Lagrave and stated that they are looking into what they can do to alleviate some of the concerns regarding Sonoran Desert Drive but the construction of the southern leg is 47 million dollars. She stated that the kids that live in this development will have the option of attending either Deer Valley Schools or Cave Creek Schools. She stated that both school districts will be providing bus service into the neighborhood.

Jill Hankins asked if the Mesquite Wash is a 404 wash. Susan Demmitt referred to Nguyen Lam on her development team. Mr. Lam stated they are disturbing less than an acre and it is not within the 404-protected area. Ms. Hankins asked if there have been any studies done regarding cultural items or protected species. Mr. Lam stated the studies have been done and nothing was found.

Doug Dickson stated that the committee has received many emails opposition and not one in support. Doug Dickson stated that they should talk to State Land about swapping this parcel for a better suited piece of land. He asked if the applicant had explored this option. Ms. Demmitt stated that the City hasn't identified this piece of land as preserve land, but they have not discussed a swap with State Land.

Steve Bowser stated that the committee has letters in front of them in opposition from the Sierra Club and PMPC.

Steve Bowser read the cards in opposition that didn't wish to speak.

The floor was opened for public comment.

Debra Sedillo Dugan, resident, stated she has concerns about the traffic and views. She said the signs were posted where no one could see them until the applicant recently moved them.

John Furniss, resident, stated he is the Chair of the Phoenix Mountain Preserve Committee for the Parks and Recreation Department. He said there should be a letter from their committee to deny this project. He stated that they aren't opposed to growth, but this will set precedence and that we need to protect what he have.

Stacie Beute, resident, stated she is opposed to the request. She has been a longtime friend to the Phoenix Mountain Preserve and advises on committees. She said that Taylor Morrison will be selling the homes with the added amenity of the proximity to the preserve, but they are developing on the preserve. She stated she is concerned about the impacts on the environment.

Amanda Farr, resident, stated that Sonoran Desert Drive is currently a safe place to cycle and run. If this development is approved, it will no longer be safe.

Gary Kirkilas, resident, stated that he is a Park Steward for the Phoenix Mountain Preserve. He stated that he started the Save Our Sonoran Preserve group as an advocacy group in response to the request. He stated that the proposal isn't consistent with the North Land Use Plan and the Desert View Character Plan. Mr. Kirkilas urged the committee that if it doesn't make sense, say no to the proposal.

Daniel Centilli, resident, stated that he is a Desert Ridge homeowner. He said the current DCOD overlay prevents something like this proposal from happening. He stated that the applicant is asking for exceptions to the law. He went on to state the preserve is our legacy.

Patrick Havley, resident, thanked the committee. He stated he is concerned for the safety of cyclists on Sonoran Desert Drive. He also stated this project won't contribute to the overall good of the City.

Gannon Burleigh, resident, said that he is opposed and has concerns about traffic, schools and the impact on the preserve. He said that the project is irresponsible development and that the removal of the overlay district that protects the preserve is ridiculous.

Laura Jones, resident, stated she has concerns about the traffic on Sonoran Desert Drive. She stated the development should be one acre lots to preserve the wildlife.

Patrick McMullen, resident, states that he is the President of the PMPC. He stated that the Phoenix Mountain Preserve Council has been around since the 1970's to preserve the desert. He stated that PMPC is opposed to the request.

Mandy Fellows, resident, passed out a study from an ASU professor concerning the ecological impact and flooding concerns in the area. She stated that this area is downstream from three dams, with the closest dam being 1.5 miles away.

John Trojan, resident, stated he is opposed to the request with concerns about traffic, pedestrian safety and allowing the developer to craft their own zoning standards.

Lainy Porter, resident, stated she moved to Arizona for pain management. She stated that she trains for triathlons on Sonoran Desert Drive and is concerned about the increase in traffic.

Claudia Wagner, resident, stated she is a trail runner and has concerns about the danger the increased traffic will cause on Sonoran Desert Drive. She is also concerned about the potential for flooding.

Heather Larson, resident, stated she is concerned about the increase in traffic and pedestrian safety.

Tim Holt, resident, said that he moved to Phoenix from Seattle. He said this proposal is just setting precedence and the next development will be even more dense. Mr. Holt went on to state this project is about money and greed.

Brett Scholar, resident, stated that he uses Sonoran Desert Drive to run and cycle. He questioned the benefit the applicant will bring to the area. He stated that the property should stay as it is currently zoned.

Lindsey Tillman, resident, stated she is opposed to the request. She said that the City needs to protect the Sonoran Preserve.

Susan Beccian, resident, stated that she is one of the only people that have received letters about this case but didn't receive one concerning the meeting tonight. She said she is concerned that Gammage and Burnham isn't being upfront with the community.

Cassandra Leone, resident, thanked her neighbors for coming out to oppose the zoning request. She said she is concerned about pedestrian safety and the traffic on Sonoran Desert Drive. She said she has read the PUD and has concerns about the sustainability section.

Michelle Kelley, resident, stated that she is opposed to the request. She commented that just because a plan is 30 years old doesn't mean it's not a good plan. It means the community and the planning department were visioning long term. This request doesn't comply with the Desert View Character Plan. Ms. Kelley went on to state that the school is over capacity and there is no real plan from the applicant to resolve that issue. She closed by stating the area should be preserved and the plans should not be changed.

Sue Pierce, resident, stated that she is opposed to the request. Ms. Pierce went on to state that this project is going to be a financial burden on taxpayers. Even though the applicant must pay to extend infrastructure, the taxpayers pay to maintain this infrastructure that is being extended to only serve this subdivision.

Christine Severance, resident, stated that the signs for the hearing were posted far from the road so they couldn't be read. She stated the applicant purchased the property with the current zoning and that it shouldn't be changed.

Karen Severance, resident, stated that the preserve means a lot to her. She urged the committee to think about the ecosystem when they vote on this case at a later date.

Jennifer Severance, resident, stated that nature needs to have space. The edges of the preserve are important.

Karl Mar, resident, stated that he is opposed to the request. He said that the infrastructure can't handle a development of this size.

Patty Killinger, resident, stated that she has been in the area since the 1970's. She said that the parcel's adjacency to the Sonoran Preserve is important.

Anna Lewandowski, resident, stated she just found out about the project about two weeks ago and came to the meeting to learn more about it. She said from listening to the applicant's presentation and the testimony of the public, it sounds like this development is 10 years too soon. The current infrastructure and school systems can't handle the residents this development will generate.

Mike Rooney, resident, stated this project is political. This development is not consistent with the Desert View Character Plan.

Patricia Story, resident, stated that she is concerned for public safety in the areas. She said the area already has an emergency response time issue.



Village Planning Committee Meeting Summary

Z-75-18-2

INFORMATION ONLY

Date of VPC Meeting	November 6, 2018
Request	Modify the Desert Character Overlay District for approximately 638 acres to modify a portion from Sub-District A to Sub-District B and to remove a portion of property from Sub-District A
Proposed Use	Single-family residential
Location	South of Sonoran Desert Drive between the 16th and 32nd Street alignments

VPC DISCUSSION:

Susan Demmitt, applicant, presented the information to the Village regarding MacEwen 480. She addressed the history of the site and the current requests to ultimately build 1,420 homes. She addressed that a portion of the 480 acres is within the Desert Character Overlay District and the North Land Use Plan.

Lou Lagrave had questions regarding the alignment of Sonoran Desert Drive. He stated it is a nice development in the wrong location and that there is no justification for the density. He stated that according to the North Land Use Plan that this area is intended to be 2 dwelling units per acre or less.

Rick Nowell clarified that the applicant would only be adding one lane in front of their own development, not the entire length of Sonoran Desert Drive. He stated it is a nice project in the wrong place. He stated that Sanctuary at Desert Ridge is unsightly and he doesn't want to see that in this location.

Rick Powell asked which school district in which the property is located. Ms. Demmitt said Deer Valley.

Steve Bowser asked how long the land has been privately held. Ms. Demmitt stated since the 1950's.

Ryan Schaefer asked if the developer was contributing to the Sonoran Desert Drive alignment. Ms. Demmitt said the subdivision will be contributing to impact fees.

Jill Hankins expressed concern about the safety of the cyclists on Sonoran Desert Drive. She stated there needs to be an underpass and islands for the bikers.

Steve Bowser opened the meeting to public comment.

Richard Puleri, resident, stated he has concerns about the current traffic congestion on Sonoran Desert Drive and inquired on when Sonoran Desert Drive will be expanded and connected.

Michael Kaciemba, resident, stated he lives in Sonoran Foothills and that he has concerns about the current traffic congestion. He stated that this project shouldn't be improved until the streets are expanded. He also addressed the school doesn't have capacity.

Public comment closed.

Reginald Younger said that Taylor Morrison expanded the roads with Sky Crossing.

Rick Powell states he has concerns about the school capacity.

Deanna Chew asked if residents would have a City of Phoenix address. Ms. Demmitt stated she believes they will.

Rick Nowell asked if a traffic study has been done. Ms. Demmitt says it was recently completed but has not been submitted to the City yet.

There was a brief committee discussion concerning the possibility of age restriction subdivisions within the development.

Louis Lagrave stated he believes in land rights but this needs to come back with R1-10 zoning. Louis Lagrave also requested staff send out the Sonoran Preserve Master Plan.