



Village Planning Committee Meeting Summary

Z-TA-5-18-2

Date of VPC Meeting	March 10, 2022
Request	Amend Section 653 of the Phoenix Zoning Ordinance to modify the Desert Character Overlay District (DCOD) boundaries
Proposed Use	Single-family residential
Location	South of Sonoran Desert Drive between the 16th and 32nd Street alignments
VPC Recommendation	Approval, per the staff recommendation to amend the applicability area and associated text for the Desert Maintenance Overlay of the Desert Character Overlay Districts as shown in Exhibit A of the staff report
VPC Vote	4-1

VPC DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDED STIPULATIONS:

This item was heard concurrently with Item #5 – Z-75-18-2, Item #6 – GPA-DSTV-18-2, and Item #7 – Z-62-18-2.

10 persons indicated that they wished to speak.

Julianna Pierre provided information regarding Z-TA-5-18-2, a text amendment to revise the applicability area and associated text for the Desert Maintenance Overlay District (DMOD) of the Desert Character Overlay District (DCOD). She explained the permitted uses and standards for the two sub-districts in the DMOD, Sub-District A and Sub-District B. She explained that the southern boundary of the DMOD aligns with the Northeast Outerloop Freeway alignment outlined in the Peripheral Areas C and D Plan.

Julianna Pierre explained that applicant's proposed modifications would remove Sub-District A standards from the property south of Sonoran Desert Drive and west of Cave Creek Wash. Additionally, the land south of Sonoran Desert Drive and east of Cave Creek Wash, currently in Sub-District A, would become part of Sub-District B. She stated that staff's recommendation is to only remove Sub-District A standards from an approximately 155.06-acre portion of the original request. She added that the text amendment also includes changes to the Zoning Ordinance and the staff recommendation is for approval of Z-TA-5-18-2 to amend the applicability area and associated text for the DMOD of the DCOD as shown in Exhibit A of the staff report.

Julianna Pierre explained that Z-75-18-2 is the rezoning case associated with the aforementioned text amendment and would remove the DCOD designation from the zoning districts. She explained that the applicant proposed and staff recommended areas were identical to those in Z-TA-5-18-2, but the staff recommendation for Z-75-18-2 is denial as filed, approval of the staff recommended area.

Julianna Pierre explained that GPA-DSTV-1-18-2 was a request from Preserves / Residential 0 to 1 dwelling units per acre / Residential 1 to 2 dwelling units per acre, Preserves / Residential 2 to 3.5 dwelling units per acre / Residential 3.5 to 5 dwelling units per acre, and Preserves / Floodplain to Residential 2 to 3.5 dwelling units per acre / Residential 3.5 to 5 dwelling units per acre and Preserves / Floodplain, with removal of the Infrastructure Phasing Overlay (IPO). She explained that the IPO acted as a timing element to ensure growth was concentrated within the Infrastructure Limit Line (ILL), a guide to where the City would extend water and sewer infrastructure to support development. She stated that significant investment and development has occurred within the boundaries of the ILL and there are opportunities to revisit the overlay and reassess development beyond the ILL. She added that staff is recommending approval of GPA-DSTV-1-18-2.

Julianna Pierre stated that Z-62-18-2 is a rezoning request of 488.63 acres at the southwest corner of the 24th Street alignment and Sonoran Desert Drive from S-1 DCOD, S-1, and RE-35 DCOD to PUD DCOD (pending PUD) and PUD. She added that the proposed PUD will allow single-family residential development.

Julianna Pierre stated that the development is proposing a master-planned residential community with a maximum 1,420 units at a density of 3.0 dwelling units per acre. There will be a collection of single-family neighborhoods with various amenities, open spaces, and a pedestrian network. She also discussed the permitted uses, connectivity to the adjacent Sonoran Preserve, open space, and amenities.

Julianna Pierre reviewed the community input received since 2018, which included 82 letters in opposition and 6 letters in support. She stated that the letters in opposition expressed concerns regarding: road infrastructure, increased traffic, decreased resident safety, preserve areas not maintained for outdoor activities, negative impacts on the area's natural flora and fauna, maintaining the requirements for the DCOD, density, number of units, water resources, Sonoran Desert Drive remaining a scenic corridor, the proposed development not matching the character of the area, strain on the school district, and lack of amenities to support the development.

Julianna Pierre reviewed the staff finding and stipulations for Z-62-18-2, noting that Stipulation No. 1 had corrections to the PUD name and date stamped date. She added that staff recommended approval, subject to stipulations.

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 and will have only single-family homes with a maximum of 3 homes per acre. She discussed the history of applicable plans that apply to the site, such as the DMCO, Peripheral Areas C and D Plan, and Phoenix General Plan. She explained that the Verdin property was always intended to develop as residential. She also discussed the eventual build out of Sonoran Desert Drive and the infrastructure

improvements that Verdin developers will build along Sonoran Desert Drive. She also noted that developers are working with the Deer Valley Unified School District.

Alex Steadman, representative with RVi, stated that the Verdin development will have a unique vision and design approach. He discussed the partnership with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), noting the certified wildlife habitat open space, monarch pledge, early childhood health outdoors nature playscape, habitat management plans, and homeowner habitat gardens. He discussed the certified habitat open space areas, specifically the preserved habitat, re-established habitat, and maintained open space. He stated that the playscapes will include nature trails with education nodes, parks, trailheads, informative signage, and community amenities. He also provided an example of the NWF landscape palette.

Alex Steadman also discussed the pedestrian circulation and edge openness plans. He stated that the development will have an open trailhead for the public, which includes public parking, community gathering spaces, and access to water. He added that there will be a variable edge adjacent to the Sonoran Preserve and Mesquite Wash. He also noted that the Verdin PUD provides parallels to the DCOD.

Vice Chair Shannon Simon appreciated the thoughtful design of the development and stated that the project was high quality.

Gary Kirkilas, a member of Save Our Sonoran Preserve, provided a presentation and discussed the importance of the DCOD. He stated that the DCOD was intended to maintain the fragile undisturbed areas of the wildlife corridor along the Cave Creek Wash, a major floodway and floodplain. He added that the Zoning Ordinance discusses how development in the DCOD should blend with the undisturbed desert environment rather than dominate it. He added the DCOD states that the Dynamite Boulevard alignment acts as the southern boundary, and makes no reference to Sonoran Desert Drive. He added that moving the DCOD boundary further north eliminates the purpose of the overlay.

Patrick McMullen, President of the Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council, appreciated the applicant linking the development to the Sonoran Preserve, but still had concerns regarding removal of the DCOD, especially when the DCOD would dictate the number of units permitted on the site. He also expressed concerns regarding the width of the trail along the Mesquite Wash.

Susanne Rothwell, a member of the Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council, stated that the Sonoran Collaborative assisted with writing the DCOD chapter of the Zoning Ordinance and there was an enormous amount of research regarding the fragile corridors in the area. She requested lower density and single-story residences. She added that DCOD should remain in place.

Ann Wilde, a member of the public, stated that development should not affect the desert character. She stated that development should occur with the DCOD in place.

Cynthia Weiss, a resident of Sonoran Gate, the closest residential development to Verdin, appreciated Verdin's thoughtful development.

Kara Nicholls, a member of the public who lives adjacent to the Sonoran Preserve, stated that she was excited about Verdin providing a connection to the northern and southern portions of the Preserve. She appreciated the NWF collaboration and stated this development will aid in home ownership since homes on an acre are unobtainable for many.

Rob Nash-Boulden, a member of the public, asked the Village Planning Committee to reconsider and deny the request to remove the DCOD from the site. He stated that the DCOD should be retained. He also expressed concern that the development will be built with no close connections to services.

Robert Thompson, a member of the public, disagreed with the change in zoning.

Jennifer Ruby, a member of the public, stated that Verdin will be a vibrant place for people to live. She noted that the project is low density and thoughtful with accessible housing.

Keeli Keeler, a member of the public, stated that the DCOD should remain in place and that the proposed number of units will change the desert character.

Susan Demmitt stated that standards outlined in the DCOD have been taken into account and worked into the Verdin project. She added that the land adjacent to Sonoran Desert Drive is expected to develop in the future and Verdin will act as a precedent for what's to come.

MOTION: Committee member **Michelle Ricart** made a motion to approve Z-TA-5-18-2, per the staff recommendation to amend the applicability area and associated text for the Desert Maintenance Overlay of the Desert Character Overlay Districts as shown in Exhibit A of the staff report. The motion was seconded by **Vice Chair Shannon Simon**.

VOTE: 4-1 with Committee members Simon, Kreiger, Ricart, and Tome in favor and Chair Stokes in opposition.

STAFF COMMENTS REGARDING VPC RECOMMENDATION & STIPULATIONS:

None.