

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

September 10, 2001

The General Development Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on September 10, 2001 at 3:15 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Claudia Walters, Chairman
Jim Davidson
Mike Whalen

COUNCIL PRESENT

Keno Hawker
Bill Jaffa

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson

1. Discuss and consider amendments to Chapters 14 and 15 of the Zoning Ordinance regarding the Design Guidelines.

Planning Director Frank Mizner and Planner II Wahid Alam addressed the Committee relative to this agenda item. Mr. Mizner noted that staff has been working on this issue over the past year and said that a previous draft document that was presented was rejected and that staff was directed to continue work on the development of the design guidelines. The Planning and Zoning Board and Design Review Board decided to appoint a Technical Subcommittee to work with staff. The subcommittee was composed of two current Planning and Zoning members, (Marty Whalen and Dan Brock); three DRB members, (Bob Saemisch, Randy Carter and Ed Corral); and two representatives from the development community, (Tim Nielsen and Darryl McConaghie). Mr. Mizner commended the members of that subcommittee for their contributions to the process and also expressed appreciation to members of staff present at the meeting.

Mr. Mizner stated that input was received from a variety of areas and added that although the group was unable to reach a consensus on every item, the process was a cooperative one. He noted that the proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance Chapters 14 and 15 do not address residential guidelines and explained that they are part of an entirely separate document. The proposal also does not address the development of a detailed infill ordinance for the City of Mesa or specific criteria for big box retailers. Mr. Mizner stated that the Committee felt that good design was important for all new retail development. Mr. Mizner explained that staff is seeking input and recommendations from the members of the Committee and those recommendations/comments will be presented to Council. He said that staff also intends to solicit public and community development input. Mr. Mizner stated that staff wanted to first present this proposal to the Council and various boards and committees to receive their input prior to addressing this with the development community. He emphasized that the

development community will have a voice in the process and their concerns will be made known.

Discussion ensued relative to the process proposed by staff, including Planning and Zoning Board and Design Review Board meetings, and subsequent presentation to the Council for their consideration and input; the fact that the development of the proposed guidelines represents a significant amount of work and effort on the part of numerous individuals as well as the members of the Boards; and the fact that the purpose of the updates is to create a clear idea of what the City of Mesa expects from the development community on non-residential and multiple residence development.

Mr. Mizner stated that Chapter 14, Design Guidelines, pertains to commercial, industrial and multiple-residence properties only. He added that Chapter 15, which was previously known as "Landscaping & Screening Regulations," is now titled "Site Development Design Standards," and pertains to the quantitative aspects of site development design standards regarding setbacks, landscaping, screening and site layout. Mr. Mizner informed the members of the Committee that both Chapters 14 and 15 of the current Zoning Ordinance have been revised substantially to create a more user-friendly document for all parties involved.

Mr. Mizner briefly commented on a number of the proposed design element changes and said that although the Council may hear that the proposal will make it more difficult for development to occur, other cities, such as Chandler, have found that "raising the bar" on standards is an important matter that must be addressed. He said that it is not staff's intent to "stop" development, but rather to ensure that appropriate, high-level development standards are in place that will positively impact the City as a whole.

Chairman Walters thanked Mr. Mizner for his comments.

Committeemember Davidson said he appreciates all of the hard work that has gone into this process and questioned where the consultant was who provided guidance on this matter. Mr. Mizner explained that the consultant, James Able, provided valuable assistance but a lack of funds curtailed his continuing involvement. Mr. Mizner said that the process reached a point where staff believed it would be more productive for them to work directly with the technical subcommittees.

Committeemember Davidson stated the opinion that the consultant's participation was limited and said he had anticipated that the consultant's role would be much more extensive. He added that he is disappointed in the return the City received on that particular contract and said he was grateful that in-house staff possesses the knowledge and expertise to ensure that the process is successful.

In response to a question from Committeemember Davidson relative to non-conforming uses and the anticipated affects of the proposed guidelines on existing properties, Mr. Mizner stated that anytime a community goes through the ongoing process of changing development standards, non-conforming uses will result. Committeemember Davidson also commented on staff's decision to address large box retail by combining it with all development and saying "if the design is good, it doesn't matter whether the buildings are 75,000 square feet or 8,000 square feet." He said that although he agrees with that basic premise, he believes staff's decision

bypasses the issue since design is not the only issue associated with big box retail. Committeemember Davidson stated that land use, transportation, noise, traffic, lighting and other issues also come into play. Mr. Mizner explained that the issue of big box retail and Council Use Permits will be the subject of a Council Study Session in the near future.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that design is extremely subjective; staff's goal to place new projects in the context of its surrounding development; the fact that the Planning and Zoning Board has historically been sensitive to dictating design and has opted instead to develop parameters and overall guidelines to be followed; CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Designs) and the fact that it discourages the development of "enclaves" or "hidden corridors" within multi-housing apartment developments; Staff's opinion that the proposed guidelines adequately address crime prevention development techniques, and the fact that concerns expressed by Mr. Saemisch and Mr. Brock relative to site development design standards have been incorporated into the proposed document.

Committeemember Davidson thanked staff and everyone involved for their efforts on this project.

Committeemember Whalen said that the proposal appears to be a good one from his initial review and based on the fact that his knowledge in this area is not extensive, he will support moving the proposal forward to gain additional input. He thanked staff and all those who participated in the process for their hard work.

It was moved by Committeemember Whalen, seconded by Committeemember Davidson, that staff's recommendations relative to proposed amendments to Chapters 14 and 15 of the Zoning Ordinance, be forwarded to the Council for their review and input prior to soliciting input from various other groups.

Chairman Walters asked Mr. Brock to comment on the process and he stated the opinion that everyone worked well together and a significant amount of compromises were reached. Chairman Walters expressed her appreciation to everyone who participated for their time and efforts in this extremely important process.

Chairman Walters commented of 11-14-2(A), "Proposed Developments: All buildings and uses of land, including churches, private schools and charter schools but excluding single residences and agricultural buildings" and asked whether staff had forwarded this on to the City Attorney for an opinion as to the legality of this statement. She commented that a charter school is a public school by definition and stated the opinion that a potential legal issue may arise as a result of saying "including churches, private schools and charter schools" as if they are different from public schools.

Mr. Mizner agreed with the point raised by Chairman Walters and said that the guidelines do apply to those kinds of things, just as they do to churches, and said that maybe the language should be changed to simply refer to schools. Chairman Walters also expressed the opinion that if the City is not going to apply the rules to Mesa Public Schools, the rules cannot legally be applied to Charter schools either. Chairman Walters requested that staff pursue the legal aspects of this issue.

Chairman Walters also suggested that the words "religious structures" be used rather than "churches" and pointed out that synagogues, temples, hogans and other places of worship would then be included. Mr. Mizner agreed with the recommended change.

Chairman Walters commented that she serves as Chair of a committee that is looking at senior mobility issues and asked staff whether the guidelines were reviewed in terms of senior accessibility. Mr. Mizner said that they were not but added that issues such as those are adequately addressed through Building Codes and applied uniformly to all projects. Mr. Brock also stated that architects are required to design in accordance with Americans With Disabilities (ADA) requirements. He added that attempts to co-mingle ADA requirements with design guidelines would result in a voluminous document and strongly advised against doing so. Mr. Brock also stated that Federal laws are already in place that address these kinds of issues in multi-family facilities.

Chairman Walters also discussed properties that would become extremely difficult to develop as a result of enhanced guidelines/requirements, such as corner parcels, and stated the opinion that when the City's infill policy is being developed, it should contain "trade-offs" that could be negotiated in exchange for variances (i.e. grant a variance but require increased plantings). She added that "trade-offs" such as this would ensure that the appearance of the site remains attractive. Mr. Mizner said that staff will follow up on this suggestion.

Chairman Walters also referred to 11-15-2, Building separation for development on the same lot, and said she believes that last year a multi-family "non-attached" product came before the Council and stated that the product was interesting and allowed for some different kinds of uses. The project had the feel of a single-family development within a multi-family structure. Chairman Walters questioned whether 11-15-2 would allow "non-attached" projects of that type to occur. Mr. Mizner said that the process is a challenging one and new types of projects are continuously being proposed. He said that staff's goal is to set up some basic standards but added that there are products out there that are not the norm. Chairman Walters asked staff to research the project that she is referring to and make sure that uses such as that would be allowed under the proposed guidelines.

Chairman Walters also said that she would like staff to develop a chart that compares the City's current requirements, future proposed requirements, and the requirements that are currently in effect in other communities. She said that the chart should be prepared for review and discussion by the full Council when this issue comes before them for consideration.

Councilmember Jaffa thanked the Committee for allowing him an opportunity to address this issue. He asked when issues such as residential infill, big box development and Desert Uplands guidelines will be addressed by the General Development Committee and the City Council. Mr. Mizner explained that the guidelines that are before the Committee today do address big box retailers in the sense that there are criteria that would apply, such as perimeter walls, buffering, foundations, landscaping and parking lot landscaping. Mr. Mizner added that the issue of Council Use Permits for big box retail should be presented to the Council at their September 20, 2001 Study Session.

Mr. Mizner also stated that staff has expended significant time on the preparation of the General Plan and has not had the time to address issues such as design guidelines. He said that staff

has a package ready to come before the Council that proposes amendments to the Desert Uplands Guidelines that were adopted several years ago and reflects input from property owners. He said staff will bring this issue to a Study Session as soon as possible.

In response to a question from Councilmember Jaffa, Mr. Mizner said that big box retail developments will be addressed in three ways: 1) Design Guidelines; 2) Council Use Permits (if so directed by the Council when they review this issue); and 3) Will be addressed through the General Plan by designating areas of the community for either 'community commercial' or 'regional commercial.'

Mr. Mizner added that guidelines relative to residential infill will also be developed by staff for future presentation to the General Development Committee and the City Council.

Councilmember Jaffa said that adequate setbacks and buffers are critical. In response to a question from Councilmember Jaffa relative to whether staff has given any thought to requiring parking garages, Mr. Mizner stated that they had not and discussed the exorbitant costs associated with the development of structured parking, (\$8 to \$10,000 per space).

Councilmember Jaffa commented that in the future he would like to address ground level parking versus parking garages and added that he would like to know what other communities are doing in this area.

Committeemember Davidson asked whether there is any reference to the Uniform Building Code (UBC) in the proposed guidelines. Mr. Mizner said he does not believe so and Committeemember Davidson asked him to verify this fact and said he does not in any way want the City of Mesa to be locked into the UBC.

Mayor Hawker referred to 15-4 and asked where the definition of arterial streets could be found. Mr. Mizner stated the opinion that arterial streets are currently defined as all one-mile long streets. Mayor Hawker also commented on 15-23, Light Standards, and noted that the width of the spaces would have to be increased to accommodate staff's plans.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Walters thanked everyone for their input at the meeting.

2. Adjournment.

Without objection, the General Development Committee meeting adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the meeting of the General Development Committee of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 10th day of September 2001. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK