



## Planning and Zoning Board

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### *Study Session Minutes*

Held in the City of Mesa Council Chambers, Lower Level – 57 East 1<sup>st</sup> Street

Date: April 15, 2014 Time: 7:30 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Randy Carter, Chair  
Beth Coons, Vice-Chair  
Suzanne Johnson  
Michael Clement

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Lisa Hudson  
Brad Arnett  
Vince DiBella

**STAFF PRESENT:**

John Wesley  
Gordon Sheffield  
Lesley Davis  
Angelica Guevara  
Wahid Alam  
Kim Steadman  
Margaret Robertson  
Michael Gildenstern

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Chair Carter declared a quorum present and the meeting was called to order at 7:34 a.m.

1. Review items on the agenda for the April 16, 2014 Planning & Zoning hearing:

Planning Director John Wesley gave a brief presentation on GPMajor14-001-Longbow and GPMajor14-002-Mesa 38. Boardmember Beth Coons was concerned that GPMajor14-001-Longbow would allow residential uses too close to the Falcon Field runway. Ms. Coons and Chair Randy Carter also wanted clarification of density and more details about the project.

Planning Director Wesley reminded the Board of the three public hearings for the Mesa 2040 General Plan Update, the first one being on April 16<sup>th</sup> and the second will be held on April 30<sup>th</sup> at Red Mountain Library with the final recommendation at the May 21, 2014 hearing.

2. Review and Discuss Cluster Home Development Guidelines:

Planning Director Wesley gave a brief presentation on cluster home guidelines. Staff member Angelica Guevara explained that cities within Arizona as well as KB Home were contacted by staff to inquire about their cluster development guidelines. Ms. Guevara explained that developers, which have recently completed projects in Mesa, have requested to rezone to RSL with a PAD overlay, requiring more conditions to guide development. Ms. Guevara also added that Phoenix, Chandler, and Gilbert all have cluster development standards. Staff member Lesley Davis added that Phoenix has just recently implemented similar standards and nothing has been built using the new guidelines.

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Boardmember Coons suggested that the development community should have access to cluster standards so all the requirements would be known from the beginning to ensure less confusion and less of a need to put conditions on development.

Staff member Wahid Alam expressed concern about generic developments being created when standard setbacks are used for a project because developers just flip the orientation of the building to manipulate setback distances. Mr. Alam went on to suggest that RSL Zoning should not allow PADs because increased density is already provided through the base RSL zoning. Chairperson Carter agreed that he does not want further reductions in lot sizes.

Zoning Administrator Gordon Sheffield explained that when developers ask for deviations in the ordinance, staff must determine if the deviations are acceptable or if the property needs to be conditioned back to the ordinance. Mr. Sheffield went on to explain that the RSL zoning was initially set up for an alley-loaded product, but the requirements are different for courtyard or cluster projects. Mr. Sheffield asked the Board to consider approaching City Council to determine if Mesa should continue to offer PADs with an RSL.

Mr. Wesley added that PADs are used primarily to create deviations from things like lot coverage maximums and setbacks, and to allow private drives, adding that the RSL district was created, in theory that it would not be necessary to use a PAD.

Mr. Sheffield informed the Board about a new zoning designation, tentatively named RSL-C; (Courtyard). The new zoning district requirements would be crafted using guidelines from better courtyard projects that have been presented to the Department. Mr. Sheffield stated that there have been award-winning projects in other cities that have been classified as infill, giving the courtyard product more flexibility in its design.

Planning Director Wesley asked the Board if they had any thoughts on setting a maximum distance for parking and trash enclosures from units, and if they had ideas on ways to promote character in design and addressing long term maintenance concerns.

Chairperson Carter expressed that since these projects are so condensed, they really should be deemed as multi-family and be made to go through the Design Review Board (DRB) process. He added that since they are already given so much density and lot coverage, they should have to include something special or more interesting in the product to get a PAD designation. Boardmember Coons added that she is concerned about the large number of small lots approved around Eastmark and Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport.

Zoning Administrator Sheffield informed the Board that per Ordinance 11-71-2, multi-residential projects require Design Review anytime they are over RM-2 zoning. He stated that there must be more than 15 units an acre, however the requirement can be lowered through an ordinance amendment if there is cause for concern. He explained that the ordinance could be modified to be set at 2.5 or 3.0 for a Cluster, or RSL-C if created, it could become a requirement to get review from DRB before going to City Council.

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Mr. Sheffield supplemented Chairperson Carter's suggestion for placing more requirements on the small lot projects. Mr. Sheffield stated that through proposing more substance in architectural design, promoting four-sided architecture, and proper screening so the housing product ages gracefully and attracts people for reinvestment we could achieve these goals. Zoning Administrator Sheffield acknowledged the desire to limit an overabundance of concrete and asphalt on cluster developments by potentially imposing paver and stamped concrete requirements on projects.

Boardmember Johnson inquired on the 2.8 parking space requirement, and if it was achievable. Zoning Administrator Sheffield spoke of a previous homebuilder that built twin homes with only one covered parking space, with the assumption that one car would park on the driveway. Mr. Sheffield continued to say that when guests visit, they would park in spaces that were less than adequate in length along the street. When it comes to cluster parking, the questions that arise are: Are they going to use the spaces if too far apart? Will they be convenient? Is it usable space?

Staff member Alam proposed a mixing of zoning within cluster projects, suggesting that different densities created a more diverse and attractive product. Planning Director Wesley agreed and added that he does not like to see one-sized housing product on 80 acres. Boardmember Coons responded that from a developer's standpoint, it is very difficult to sell small and large lots together within the same project.

Boardmember Johnson proposed different cluster requirements based on acreage thresholds. Planning Director Wesley stated that, according to some developers, placing diverse lot sizes on a 30 acre parcel was not feasible. Mr. Wesley suggested that maybe a 50-60 acre project would make it economically feasible for varying densities.

Staff member Angelica Guevara asked the Board to consider setback requirements, specifically visualizing 5 foot setbacks, meaning that two story homes could be within 10 feet of each other. Ms. Guevara expressed concern that this could create a canyon effect. She also proposed a requirement to allow only a specific massing and only a certain portion of the second story of the unit to be at that 5 foot setback. Ms. Guevara went on to ask the Board for comments on the recent projects at Higley and Brown Roads and Power and Guadalupe Roads, clarifying that the setbacks were 5 feet on one side, 10 feet on the other. She added that she has seen 8 feet and 10 feet requirements in other communities.

Chairman Carter stated that the development at Lindsay and 24<sup>th</sup> Street is too dense of a project, and that he would like the City to keep to a stronger vision. Mr. Carter explained that he hasn't felt strong direction from the Mayor or Council, and is concerned that the City is running out of land and needs to have more stringent development guidelines for future projects.

Boardmember Coons stated that a balance between livable and affordable is the goal. Ms. Coons expressed that when amenities are required, people cannot afford to live there. Mr. Wesley stated that people want a variety of lot sizes, but quality is the most important component so the neighborhood does not deteriorate. He also added that the Lindsay Park Townhomes at 24<sup>th</sup> Street and Lindsay lack sufficient parking and quality of design, and is a mistake that Mesa does not want to repeat again.

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Zoning Administrator Sheffield suggested that a draft for the RSL-C district could be drawn up if the Board wanted guidelines for cluster developments. Mr. Sheffield stated that the Planning & Zoning Board is entrusted with decision making by City Council and if the Board sees a need for something, they are encouraged to draft policy.

Chairman Carter proposed taking away PAD privileges on small lot subdivisions, so that lot size can't be reduced on an already smaller lot development. He also proposed increasing aesthetics standards, in addition to sending all cluster development projects to the Design Review Board for assessment. Mr. Carter acknowledged that parking and proximity concerns are legitimate issues, but long term viability is more important in cluster developments. Boardmember Coons added that she doesn't like planning and designing a project and then being informed that more parking is needed after the project has significantly progressed.

3. Draft Mesa 2040 General Plan:

Planning Director John Wesley gave a presentation on Chapter 6 of the draft of the Mesa 2040 General Draft Document explaining the importance of public space. Mr. Wesley spoke of an AARP endorsement, explaining to Chairperson Carter that senior citizens do not drive as much or as well as they are appreciative of well-planned public spaces. Mr. Wesley also added that a well-designed public environment is also a good tool for attracting and retaining highly-skilled employees.

Boardmember Coons inquired the section in the General Plan Draft that addresses supporting and encouraging artists. Boardmember Coons and Chairperson Carter were concerned about the language in the General Plan Draft as to what artists are potentially entitled to when their craft is being supported and encouraged by the City. Planning Director Wesley explained that according to the Museum and Art Center, it is important to look for ways to support the arts in helping to create an arts culture to attract and sustain talent within the City. Mr. Wesley explained that Cindy Ornstein, the Arts and Culture Director, may be better suited to answer specific questions. He stated that the General Plan Draft states that fostering growth is integral in the mission of groups like the Art Center as they move forward with promoting the arts in the community.

Zoning Administrator Sheffield explained that he has met with a group that is interested in doing redevelopment work on the Dana Park project. Mr. Sheffield stated that the developers had already acquired a partnership with the Mesa Arts Center to enhance the local community. The group was doing it voluntarily and proposing artistic amenities within the project to enhance the totality of the community. Mr. Sheffield said that supporting the arts and addressing it as a goal or an objective reflects the type of community you want to be a part of.

Boardmember Coons commented that she felt there are not enough libraries in Mesa. Chairperson Carter suggested that libraries could lease space in vacant commercial space within shopping plazas. Mr. Carter stated that he was still confused on what 'defining efforts to promote the arts' actually meant. Mr. Carter stated that people were not going to walk anywhere in the extreme heat of the summer.

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4. Planning Director's Updates:

Mr. Wesley spoke briefly about the case at 56<sup>th</sup> and Albany, reporting that it is to be introduced May 5<sup>th</sup>, and it's going to Council on May 19th. Mr. Wesley also spoke of the rezoning at 6350 East Main Street for medical marijuana that has sparked a legal protest because a church is within 300 feet of the site. However, the church does not have a Certification of Occupancy, so it has created a conundrum. Mr. Wesley also addressed Chairperson Carter's inquiry about the Higley and Brown Subdivision explaining that the industrial buffer on the north line may not be substantial enough. In addition, McLellan Road may not be sufficiently designed for additional traffic flow and may have to be adjusted to discourage traffic.

5. Minutes – submit any corrections, additions, deletions.

None.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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John Wesley, Secretary  
Planning Director

***NOTE: Audio recordings of the Planning & Zoning Study Sessions are available in the Planning Division Office for review.***