



City of Apache Junction

Development Services Department



PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING STAFF REPORT

DATE: June 10, 2025 & June 24, 2025

TO: Planning and Zoning Commission

THROUGH: Rudy Esquivias, Development Services
Director
Sidney Urias, Development Services Deputy
Director

FROM: Nicholas Leftwich, Senior Planner

CASE NUMBER: P-25-10-GPA, P-25-11-PZ

OWNER: Horne 1200 LLC
1465 E Motorplex Loop STE 200
Gilbert, AZ 85297-7040

APPLICANT: Sundt Construction
Represented by Brennan Ray of Ray Law Firm

REQUEST: Proposed planned development rezoning of approximately 36.60 gross acres currently zoned General Rural Low Density Single-Family Detached Residential ("RS-GR") and Industrial by Planned Development ("B-5/PD") to Industrial by Planned Development ("B-5/PD") with a new planned development overlay to authorize the development of a construction manufacturing facility.

LOCATION: The subject site is located near the northwest corner of S. Cactus Road & E. Auto Center Drive. (APN 102-20-008C & 102-20-008A)

**GENERAL PLAN/
ZONING DESIGNATION:** Commercial / General Rural Low Density Single-Family Detached Residential "RS-GR"

SURROUNDING USES:

North: US 60 Highway;

South: Western Industrial contractor's office & yard, zoned "B-5", Pinal County Industrial zoned yards;

East: Vacant Parcels, zoned General Commercial "B-1" and the Apache East Estates Manufactured Home Park in Pinal County;

West: Empire Equipment Rental, zoned Industrial by Planned Development "B-5/PD" in the Baseline Industrial Park.

BACKGROUND

Parcels 102-20-008C & 102-20-008A are located at the northwest corner of S. Cactus Road & E. Auto Center Drive, totaling 36.60 acres. Both parcels are currently owned by the Horne Auto-Dealership, located further east on Auto Center Drive & Tomahawk, but no development of the parcels has been planned and they have always been vacant properties.

Sundt Construction, the applicant, is one of the nation's largest general contractors. They have chosen this site in hopes of building a training office and manufacturing facility to support their industrial needs.

PROPOSALS

P-25-10-GPA is a proposed Major General Plan Amendment of the Apache Junction General Plan Land Use Map, requesting a change of the 36.60 acre subject site's designation from Commercial to Light Industrial/ Business Park and Industrial. Because the proposed change is over 10 acres, it is categorized as a major amendment.

P-25-11-PZ is a proposed planned development rezoning of the 36.60 acre subject site currently zoned General Rural Low Density Single-Family Detached Residential ("RS-GR") to Industrial by Planned Development ("B-5/PD") with a new planned development overlay to authorize the development of the manufacturing facility.

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT REQUEST

The applicant requests the use of a planned development (PD) overlay to modify the maximum building height from 35' to 45', noting that the increased height is vital to achieve an interior clear height necessary to their operations.

No deviation to the zoning land uses is requested in this proposal.

PLANNING STAFF ANALYSIS

Relationship to General Plan:

The subject site is designated by the city's General Plan as "Commercial", while bordered by the "Light Industrial/ Business Park and Industrial" land use designation to the west and south, "Commercial" designated land to the east, and the US 60 to the north of the property.

The "Commercial" General Plan land use designation is generally designed for office, restaurant, retail, service industry type land uses, and the construction-focused land uses and manufacturing land uses are more appropriately categorized under the "Light Industrial/ Business Park and Industrial" designation. Due to this, a General Plan Amendment of the Apache Junction General Plan Land Use Map to modify the land use designation of the subject property from "Commercial", to "Light Industrial/ Business Park and Industrial" is required and requested. As the subject site is over 10 acres, the amendment is subject to the requirements of a Major General Plan Amendment, including extended notification requirements to neighboring municipalities and regional planning agencies, and two public hearings with the Planning & Zoning Commission.

In Staff's analysis of this location and the proposal, Staff believes this proposed development plan utilizes a historically vacant property in a manner that complies with the General Plan by meeting the following General Plan Goals & Policies:

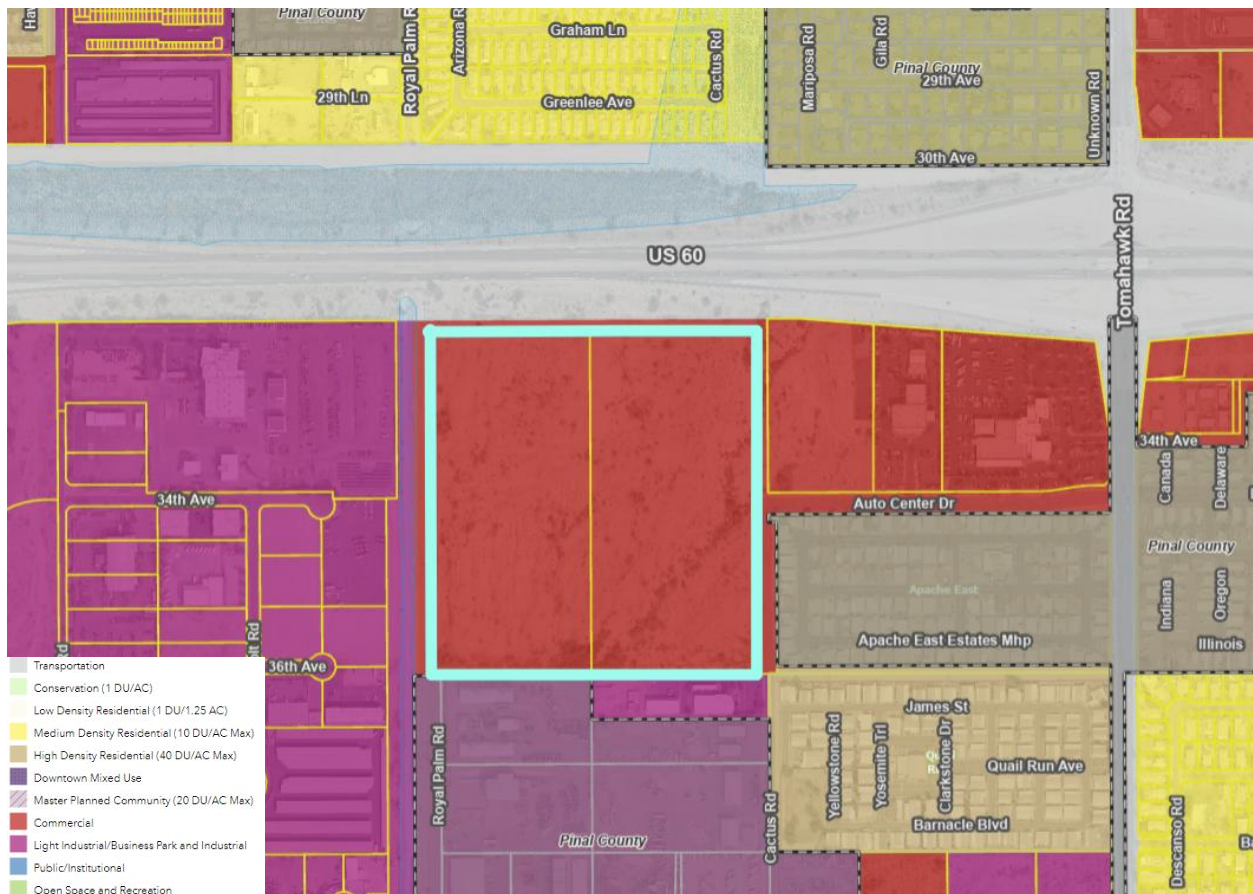
- Policy 5.1.1 - Strategically identify infill opportunity sites that can accommodate office, industrial, entertainment, retail, and housing and mitigate barriers to development.
- Policy 5.1.4: Encourage the protection and expansion of the land designated in the general plan specifically for

Cases P-25-10-GPA, P-25-11-PZ

June 10, 2025 & June 24, 2025 Planning and Zoning Commission Staff Report

employment and ensure they are preserved along transportation corridors or in prime business cluster locations that will maximize the impact and economic potential for those businesses and employment centers. Discourage any uses that bring little or no value to the community (such as RV Parks, RV storage, mini storage lots and seasonal residential units).

- Goal 11.2: Provide a balance of Uses throughout the Community.
- Policy 11.2.3: Attract employment uses to the U.S. 60 corridor.

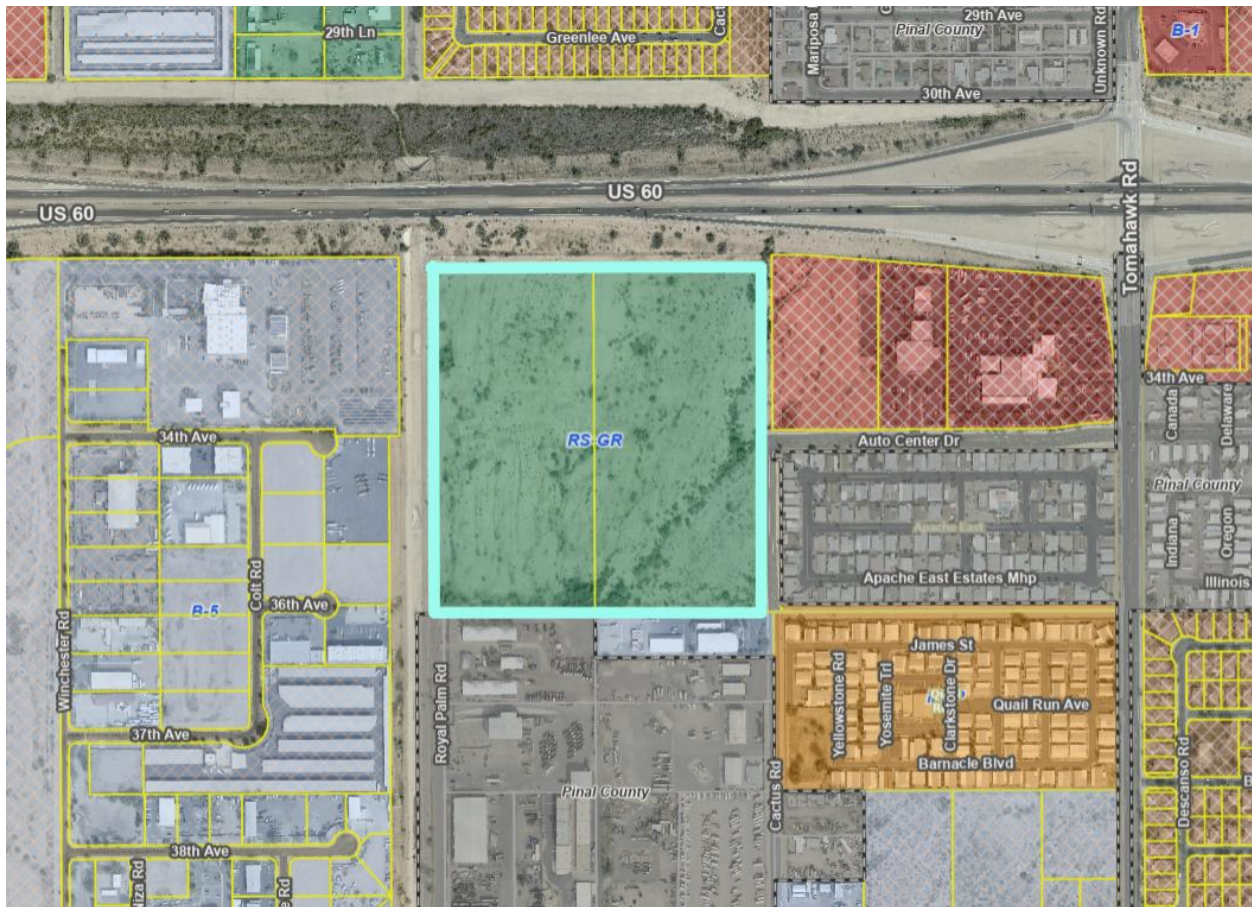


Zoning/Site Context:

The subject property is surrounded by several different uses, as noted:

- To the north of the property is the US 60 Highway.
- To the south of the property is a contractor's office & yard for Western Industrial, zoned "B-5" Industrial, as well as a Pinal County island that is zoned Pinal County's Industrial classifications, CI-1 and CI-2.

- To the east of the property are vacant "B-1/PD" General Commercial by Planned Development parcels that are zoned and approved for an expansion of the existing automobile sales complex, as well as the Apache East Estates Manufactured Home Park located in a Pinal County island.
- To the west of the property, beyond the Weekes Wash drainage structure, is the Baseline Industrial Park, and more specifically Empire Equipment Rental on properties zoned "B-5" Industrial, AND "B-5/PD" Industrial by Planned Development.



The property's existing adjacent uses and position near existing and planned uses have been taken into account in making Staff's recommendation.

Infrastructure & Site Improvements:

The applicant will be required to connect to all necessary services, including electricity through SRP, water through the Apache Junction Water District, and sewer connections. The necessary infrastructure already exists adjacent to the site.

All other necessary and required on-site and off-site improvements, including retention basins, dust-proof surfacing, perimeter walls, and landscape buffers will be built at the time of development.

Public Input:

The applicant sent out neighborhood meeting notification letters to the property owners within a five-hundred (500') radius, per the requirements of an "Industrial" B-5 rezoning, notifying neighbors of the proposed development and providing them contact information to learn more about the project. The advertised neighborhood meeting was held at the Apache Junction High School, 2525 S Ironwood Drive, advertised for Wednesday, March 19, 2025, at 6:00 PM. One neighbor, a neighboring business owner, attended and expressed support for the rezoning and development.

Staff have not received any comments via phone or e-mail regarding the proposed development at the time of this staff report.

FINDINGS OF FACT FOR PLANNED DEVELOPMENT REZONING

As required by the Apache Junction Zoning Ordinance, a Planned Development request may be approved by the City Council after consideration has been given to three different criteria. The criteria is outlined in the text below:

1. That a better design cannot be achieved by applying the strict provisions of the underlying zoning district.

Applicant Response:

The increased clear height of the proposed building is essential to accommodate the operational requirements of the development, including the movement of equipment and the provision of additional racking for efficient storage.

2. That strict adherence to the provisions of the zoning ordinance is not required in order to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the proposed development.

Applicant Response:

The additional building height at this location is both

appropriate and justified, given its proximity to the US-60 and its adjacency to other industrial uses.

3. That strict adherence to the ordinance is not required to ensure that property values of adjacent properties will not be reduced.

Applicant Response:

Due to the Property's proximity to the US-60 and adjacency to other industrial uses, this change is compatible with the surrounding area and will not impact the values of adjacent properties.

FINDINGS OF FACT FOR MINOR GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT

As required by the Apache Junction General Plan, a Minor General Plan request may be approved by the City Council after consideration has been given to specific criteria. The criteria is outlined in the text below:

1. Whether the amendment proposes a land use designation that the Land Use Plan Map does not adequately provide optional sites to accommodate.

Applicant Response:

The proposed Light Industrial/Business Park designation addresses a critical shortage of properly located industrial land within the City. While the current General Plan does provide some industrial sites, they are primarily located in areas that lack the superior transportation access and visibility offered by the US 60 corridor. The Site's location along US 60 makes it uniquely suited for industrial development, offering advantages that cannot be replicated at other designated industrial sites within the city.

2. Whether the amendment constitutes an overall improvement to the General Plan, will not solely benefit a particular landowner or owners at a particular point in time, and is consistent with the overall intent of the 2010 General Plan.

Applicant Response:

The amendment constitutes an overall improvement to the General Plan in several ways:

- *It strengthens the economic development corridor along US 60*

- Creates additional employment opportunities for the broader community.
- Enhances the City's tax base through industrial development
- Supports infrastructure improvements that benefit the surrounding area.

The benefits extend beyond the immediate property owner by:

- Creating jobs accessible to the entire community
- Generating tax revenue that supports citywide services
- Contributing to the overall economic diversification of the City
- Positions the City to capture growing industrial demand in the East Valley
- Creates a visible statement of economic progress along the US 60 gateway.
- Helps establish the corridor as a premier location for employment uses.
- Strengthens the City's competitive position in the regional market.

Additionally, benefit the community by providing job training opportunities for local residents, partnerships with local educational institutions, career advancement pathways, and skill development programs.

3. Whether the proposed amendment is justified by an error in the 2010 General Plan as originally adopted.

Applicant Response:

The amendment is not justified by an error in the 2020-2050 General Plan. Rather, it represents a response to evolving market conditions and community needs that have emerged since the plan's adoption. The current Commercial designation was appropriate at the time of adoption but requires updating to reflect current economic opportunities and development patterns.

4. Whether the proposed change is generally consistent with goals, objectives, and other elements of the 2010 General Plan.

Applicant Response: The proposed Major General Plan Amendment complies with the following:

Goal 5.1 - Attract all quality private investment that will add value and bring diversification to current and future residents of Apache Junction as a great place to live, work and play.

Policy: Consider alternative zoning or overlay districts for idle infill parcels or redevelopment areas that may inspire a higher and better use based in current market realities.

Policy: Encourage the protection and expansion of the land designated in the general plan specifically for employment and ensure they are preserved along transportation corridors or in prime business cluster locations that will maximize the impact and economic potential for those businesses and employment centers. Discourage any uses that bring little or no value to the community (such as RV Parks, RV storage, mini storage lots and seasonal residential units).

The proposed development aligns with Goal 5.1 by transforming underutilized land into a manufacturing facility that creates jobs, diversifies the economy, and enhances Apache Junction as a place to live, work, and play. By rezoning the property to industrial use near US-60, it maximizes economic potential, encourages business clustering, and avoids low-value uses like RV storage. This project protects employment land, supports sustainable growth, and adds meaningful value to the community.

GOAL 9.3: Encourage Infill Development

Policy: Promote the downtown, U.S. 60 Corridor and Old West Highway Corridor for infill projects.

The proposed development supports Goal 9.3: Encourage Infill Development by utilizing a vacant 36.6-acre parcel adjacent to the U.S. 60 Corridor and surrounded by existing industrial and commercial uses. This strategic location aligns with the policy to promote infill projects in key areas, transforming underutilized land into a productive industrial site. The manufacturing facility revitalizes the parcel, complements nearby land uses, and supports broader economic and employment goals for the city, strengthening the area's appeal for future development along the U.S. 60 Corridor.

GOAL 11.2: Provide a balance of Uses throughout the Community.

Policy: Attract employment uses to the U.S. 60 corridor.

The proposed development supports Goal 11.2: Provide a Balance of Uses Throughout the Community by introducing a manufacturing facility to the U.S. 60 Corridor, directly attracting employment uses to this key area. By utilizing a strategically located vacant parcel for light industrial purposes, the project balances the community's mix of residential, commercial, and

industrial uses. This development enhances local job opportunities, promotes economic diversity, and strengthens the corridor's role as a vital employment hub in Apache Junction.

GOAL 11.3: Revitalize older neighborhoods and the Downtown.

Policy: Establish functionally compatible uses (uses that are "good neighbors" to each other).

The proposed development supports Goal 11.3 by introducing a functionally compatible industrial use adjacent to existing industrial and commercial areas near the U.S. 60 Corridor. This ensures harmonious integration with neighboring properties, revitalizing the surrounding area by promoting economic activity and attracting further investment while maintaining compatibility with existing uses.

5. Whether the proposed change is justified by a change in community conditions or neighborhood characteristics since adoption of the Plan.

Applicant Response: The amendment is justified by several changes in community conditions:

- Increased demand for industrial space in the East Valley
- Evolution of the US 60 corridor as an employment center
- Growing need for local employment opportunities
- Shift in market demands from commercial to industrial uses
- Regional growth patterns supporting industrial development

6. Whether the amendment will adversely impact a portion of, or the entire community by:

- a. Significantly altering acceptable existing land use patterns, especially in established neighborhoods.

Applicant Response: The amendment maintains and enhances existing land use patterns through strategic placement and thoughtful transitions. The development continues the established pattern of industrial development to the west and south; creates a cohesive industrial corridor along this section of US 60 by clustering compatible employment uses together; reinforces the area's emerging character as an employment center; and supports efficient goods movement patterns between existing industrial uses. Consistent with good planning principles, Sundt's development also provides a logical transition from industrial uses to the west and south, creates

appropriate buffering to commercial development east of the site, and establishes a gradual intensity transition from US 60 to residential areas.

- b. Significantly reducing the housing to jobs balance in the Planning Area.

Applicant Response: The amendment will positively impact the housing to jobs balance by creating new employment opportunities without removing existing housing stock. The current RS-GR zoning has not resulted in residential development, and the area is better suited for employment uses.

- c. Substantially decreasing existing and future water supplies.

Applicant Response: The proposed industrial development will not substantially decrease existing and future water supplies. Industrial uses typically consume less water than the currently permitted commercial uses, and the development will incorporate water conservation measures.

- d. Replacing employment with residential uses.

Applicant Response: Rather than replacing employment with residential uses, the amendment increases employment opportunities by introducing industrial jobs to the area. This strengthens the City's employment base.

- e. Requiring additional and more expensive improvements to infrastructure systems and/or proximity to municipal facilities and/or services than are needed to support the prevailing land uses and which, therefore, may impact the level of service for existing and proposed developments in other areas.

Applicant Response: The development will utilize existing infrastructure systems and provide improvements that benefit the broader area. The location along US 60 minimizes the need for extensive new infrastructure, and proposed improvements will be sized appropriately for the area's planned development.

- f. Increasing traffic (without mitigation measures) on existing roadways beyond the planned level of service, and that negatively impact existing and planned land uses.

Applicant Response: Traffic impacts will be mitigated through direct access to US 60; implementation of required road improvements, if any; and designing an efficient internal circulation system. The development is not anticipated to negatively impact the level of service on surrounding roadways.

- g. Affecting the existing character (i.e., visual, physical and functional) of the immediate area.

Applicant Response: This development will not affect the existing character of the area because industrial uses have long been established in the area. The development's character will be influenced by quality architectural design, landscaping, screening and buffering, and lighting controls.

- h. Increasing the exposure of residents to aviation generated noise, safety and/or flight operations.

Applicant Response: The property is not located within critical aviation corridors and will not increase exposure to aviation-related impacts.

- i. Materially diminishing the environmental quality of the air, water, land, or cultural resources.

Applicant Response: The development is a low-intensity industrial use with light manufacturing that will not diminish the environmental quality of the air, water, land, or cultural resources.

- j. Significantly altering recreational amenities such as open space, parks, and trails.

Applicant Response: The amendment will not significantly alter recreational amenities. The site does not contain existing parks, trails, or open space features, and the development will provide appropriate landscaping and open space as required by the City.

PLANNING DIVISION RECOMMENDATION

In review of the project proposal, the conditions and context of the subject site, Staff is supportive of the Major General Plan Amendment Case P-25-10-GPA and the proposed Rezoning by Planned Development Case P-25-11-PZ and respectfully recommends to the Commission a favorable recommendation to the City Council, subject to the conditions of approval noted below. As always, Commissioners may recommend changes or additional conditions which they feel will improve the development plan.

RECOMMENDED MOTION FOR MAJOR GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT

I move that the Planning and Zoning Commission recommend to the Apache Junction City Council the approval of Major General Plan Amendment Case P-25-10-GPA, a request by Sundt Construction, represented by Brennan Ray of Ray Law Firm to amend the General Plan Land Use Map for Parcels 102-20-008A & 102-20-008C, located near the northwest corner of Cactus Road & Auto Center Drive, from Commercial to Light Industrial/Business Park and Industrial.

RECOMMENDED MOTION FOR PLANNED DEVELOPMENT REZONING

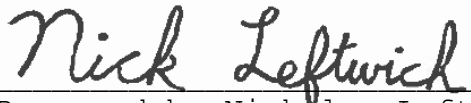
I move that the Planning and Zoning Commission recommend to the Apache Junction City Council the approval of the proposed Rezoning by Planned Development Case P-25-11-PZ, a request by Sundt Construction, represented by Brennan Ray of Ray Law Firm to rezone Parcels 102-20-008A & 102-20-008C, located near the northwest corner of Cactus Road & Auto Center Drive, from General Rural Low Density Single-Family Detached Residential ("RS-GR") to Industrial by Planned Development ("B-5/PD"), subject to the following conditions of approval:

- 1) The development shall reflect substantial compliance and consistency with the city's zoning ordinance and the planned development plans presented in case P-25-11-PZ, incorporated by reference herein, and as otherwise specified through these conditions of approval.
- 2) The maximum building height shall be 45'.
- 3) The building architecture of any future phases or expansion shall be architecturally consistent with the presented conceptual architecture approved in case P-25-11-PZ and the associated site plan & design review case P-25-12-DR.

Cases P-25-10-GPA, P-25-11-PZ

June 10, 2025 & June 24, 2025 Planning and Zoning Commission Staff Report

- 4) The north tree line along the US 60 Right-of-Way shall consist of 36" box trees to provide greater buffering of the site.
- 5) Appropriate dedications of public right-of-way shall be made as required by the City Engineer during the civil review process of construction plans.
- 6) All applicable permits shall be applied for and plans shall be designed to current city codes. Inclusively, all applicable development fees, including public art fees, shall be paid at the time of permit issuance.
- 7) Major deviations or proposed changes from the original plans associated with this case will require a major planned development amendment. The Director or their designee shall interpret the proposed modification to be significant/major if, in the Director or Designee's opinion, the quality of project design is diminished, the types of proposed land uses are significantly altered and/or the overall character of the project is contrary to the intent and spirit of the original City Council PD ordinance approval.



Prepared by Nicholas Leftwich
Senior Planner

Attachments:

- Exhibit #1 - Project Narrative
- Exhibit #2 - Proposed Site Plan
- Exhibit #3 - Aerial Map
- Exhibit #4 - Proposed Landscape Plan
- Exhibit #5 - Proposed Elevations & Floor Plans
- Exhibit #6 - Public Participation Plan & Report