



# City of Apache Junction

## Development Services Department



### PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** April 8, 2025

**CASE NUMBER:** P-24-104-CUP "Apache Trail & Plaza"

**OWNER:** Ness Wayne TRS.

**APPLICANT:** Wolf Enterprises III, LLC.

**REPRESENTATIVE:** Paul Gilbert & Andy Jochums, Gilbert Blilie PLLC

**REQUEST:** A proposed Conditional Use Permit ("CUP") for approximately 18.47 acres currently zoned City Center ("B-3") to facilitate a 336-unit three-story leased residential community.

**LOCATION:** The subject site is located generally west of the southwest corner of Idaho Road and Apache Trail (APN 101-11-005A).

**GENERAL PLAN/  
ZONING DESIGNATION:** Downtown Mixed Use / City Center ("B-3")

**SURROUNDING USES:**

- North: City Center ("B-3");
- South: B-3;
- East: B-3;
- West: Recreational Vehicle Park ("RVP") and ("RS-20M").

## **BACKGROUND**

Per historic Pinal County and city zoning records, parcel 101-11-005A has historically been zoned B-1 (General Commercial), or an equivalent county commercial zoning designation, but has never been developed.

## **PROPOSALS**

P-24-104-CUP is a proposed Conditional Use Permit request to authorize a multi-family use within the B-3 zoning district, per the land use requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

The subject area consists of approximately 18-acres, upon which 336-units are proposed, resulting in a density of 18.2 units per acre. The development plan proposes fourteen (14) three-story buildings. The residential units will include (48) 1-Bedroom/1-bath and (288) generously sized 2-Bedroom/2-bath units. Parking will consist of a mix of surface and covered parking stalls.

Access into the community is proposed on N. Apache Trail and Plaza Drive, with the N. Apache Trail entrance being designated the front and primary entrance. On-site amenities consist of a clubhouse, pool, dog park and community open space.

In addition to their CUP request, the applicant is requesting an 8.7% reduction of on-site parking. Per the City of Apache Junction Zoning Ordinance, this project requires a total of 729 parking space, however, the applicant is requesting a reduction of 65 stalls.

## **PLANNING STAFF ANALYSIS**

### *Relationship to General Plan:*

The subject site is designated by the City's General Plan as part of the "Downtown Redevelopment Area", and is categorized for "Downtown Mixed Use," which supports residential, retail and office uses. The proposed multi-family development complies with this General Plan designation and does not require a General Plan Amendment.

*Zoning/Site Context:*

The B-3 zoning district allows a residential density of up to 40 units/acre and multi-family development through the approval of a Conditional Use Permit.

The proposed multi-family use is also consistent and complementary of the surrounding uses, as the subject area is surrounded by both residential and commercial uses.

North of the subject site is Horizon Health, the U.S. Post Office, and the Social Security Administration. East of the subject site is vacantly zoned B-3 land. West of the subject site is the Lost Dutchman RV Resort. South of the subject site are commercial properties zoned B-3, as well as Flatiron Park.

*Infrastructure Improvements:*

The applicant will be required to connect the units to all necessary services, including electricity through SRP, water through the Arizona Water Company, and sewer connections.

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

*Public Input:*

The applicant sent out neighborhood meeting notification letters to all property owners within a 300-foot radius and held the advertised neighborhood meeting at the Multi-Generational Center on Monday, December 9, 2024 at 6 PM. Two (2) individuals, who are nearby business owners, attended in support of the project. A full report of the neighborhood meeting is provided in Exhibit #7 Public Participation Report.

The owner/manager of the Lost Dutchman RV Resort also reached out to both the applicant and Staff. They had questions regarding the development of Plaza Drive and expressed concern with the height of the three-story development.

## **FINDINGS OF FACT FOR CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT**

As required by the Apache Junction Zoning Ordinance, a Conditional Use Permit request may be approved by the Planning Commission after consideration has been given to seven different criteria. The criteria are outlined in the text below:

1. Adequacy of roadways, off-street parking, public facilities and services to accommodate the proposed use;

### **Applicant Response:**

*Recent public improvements and applicant's plans to build upon that progress include:*

- **North Apache Trail Road and Median Improvements** by the City, the Flatiron Community Park, Main Street cross-section with public parking have been completed to date. Applicant will provide a right-turn into the entry off of Apache Trail and provide ROW landscaping and pedestrian sidewalk connections.
  - **Plaza Drive Road Improvements:** As part of Applicant's Plaza Drive half-street improvements, the City's Main Street cross-section will be constructed including public on-street parking, old-style streetlights, public sidewalks, and ROW landscape planting.
  - **Drainage:** the City has invested in the Superstition Basin to retain significant volumes of stormwater to reduce flood run-off into the Downtown area. For the subject property, the applicant will capture and convey flows thru the subject site at approximately 170 CFS at the eastern property line and 27 CFS at the northern property line.
  - **Utilities:** Gas, Power, Water, Sewer and Telecom are all conveniently located in either Apache Trail and/or Plaza Drive. Applicant will need only to connect to these within the public ROW at our property frontage. Apache Junction Sewer and Arizona Water Company have both confirmed capacity to serve this project.
2. Negative impacts arising from the emission of odor, dust, gas, noise, lighting, vibration, smoke, heat or glare;

Applicant Response:

The applicant is committed to being a good neighbor. During the construction and development phase, dust control mitigation will be in place, such as watering down the site, and providing track out material for tires to mitigate any dust leaving the site. Signage will be posted with a construction site contact name and phone number to call with any dust or noise concerns.

Once complete, the site will have a net reduction of dust, as the undeveloped land will be stabilized by replacing vacant dirt lot with hardscape, structures or stabilized landscape material such as granite and grass. Noise will be of a residential neighborhood in nature.

All site lighting will be shielded from neighboring properties and in compliance with Dark Sky ordinances. See also accompanying lighting cutsheets and photometrics.

3. Contribution to the deterioration of the neighborhood or the negative impact on neighborhood property values;

Applicant Response:

The project will be a professionally maintained, single-owner project. New residents will provide economic development opportunities for commercial development within the Apache Junction downtown including in the upcoming Golden Triangle site. The new development will raise surrounding property values with a new modern product and consumers to downtown retail.

4. Compatibility with surrounding uses and structures;

Applicant Response:

The applicant's proposed development of a multi-unit residential development will greatly compliment the City's economic development strategy to target commercial and retail uses in the Golden Triangle site, providing retail customers and potential housing for employees in a revitalized Downtown.

The City is nearly complete on a new Downtown Master Plan with Swaback Partners. During the Public Open House, Apache Junction residents voiced that they wanted "Affordable housing for those

under 55.” The draft October 2024 Downtown Master Plan shows the subject site as Future Residential in all scenarios, confirming this is the best use of the subject property:



5. Conformance with the General Plan and City policies;

Applicant Response:

The Apache Junction General Plan 2020-2050 establishes policy for development within the City. The below city goals are furthered with the approval and development of this application:

**Goal 3.2** "Diversify housing stock and neighborhoods by incorporating a variety of housing types and associated values to allow for a diverse demographic of residents."

The General Plan also notes: "Currently, the city has less multi-family and single-family residential homes per capita than Queen Creek, Chandler, Gilbert or Mesa...As young people grow out of their parent's home it is important to have a diversity of housing types in order to keep new generations within the city. Moreover, the lack of diversity in housing stock also has a direct effect on people being able to move into the city."

Table 1.7 of the General Plan also notes that Multi-Family Housing (5+ units/building) accounts for just 5% of the available Housing Type in Apache Junction.

**Table 1.7**

Apache Junction Housing Type	Units	% of Total
Mobile Home	11,398	50%
Single-Family Detached	6047	27%
Other (e.g. RV's)	2987	13%
Multi-Family (5+ units/bldg)	1203	5%
Plex (2-4 units/bldg)	1146	5%
Total	22,781	100%

This development application will further the goal of housing diversity by increasing supply of the housing product in the shortest supply in the City.

**Goal 3.3** - "Maintain and attract a quality housing stock in condition, design and construction standards."

Community structures will be built with modern architecture and to latest codes and contemporary standards.

**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."

The Wolff Company (Applicant) is a private investment and development firm headquartered in Arizona with a history of developing and maintaining quality residential communities. The Wolff Company actively manages 10,000 units with another 4,000 in the pipeline and all projects focus on high-quality design and experience for residents, guests, and neighbors.

*In this case, private investment by a local developer is expanding the housing diversity, thus workforce pool, which is critical for not only existing employers to be able to maintain their workforce, but also important for prospective employers and commercial developers considering Apache Junction and the Downtown Core.*

**Goal 9.1** - "Increase the city's financial sustainability."

*The City has made a substantial investment in the redevelopment of the downtown, with investment in public infrastructure, consultant master planning, and land acquisition of the Golden Triangle/former Grand Hotel site. The 336 residential units will bring both consumers and workforce, attracting future commercial developers, increasing future tax revenues and land sale prices.*

**Goal 9.3** - "Encourage infill development."

*As a vacant property within the City Center Downtown Core, this property is an infill property. Development of this site will further economic development goals associated with the Downtown Master Plan.*

6. Screening and buffering of uses; and

Applicant Response:

**Western:** *The western property line at Plaza Drive will be screened with a combination of a 6' masonry wall and a 3' wrought iron over 3' masonry wall. There will also be a 10' landscape buffer from the Right of Way ("ROW"). Where a 10' building setback is required, applicant has located buildings to be setback approximately 30' from the property line. The RV resort to the east is additionally buffered by Plaza Drive ROW. The nearest proposed building to the nearest existing RV structure is approximately 145 feet.*

**North:** *The subject site is buffered to the Horizon Wellness Center and US Post Office by a gated private access drive, Virginia Drive. In addition, a drainage channel along the northern property line provides additional buffer. Where a 10' building setback is required, the project as designed has an approximately 32' setback to the northern Property line. A 6' wrought iron fence will provide security between users and keep residents away from the drainage channel.*

**East:** The property to the east is currently undeveloped. Applicant will have an approximately 35-foot drainage channel that will double as a buffer from the future commercial uses. The neighboring property to the east will likewise need to develop a similar channel, creating additional future buffer. A 6' wrought iron fence will provide security between users and keep residents away from the drainage channel. The applicant's designed building location of approximately 36' setback from the property line exceeds the required 20-foot building setback provided by Planning Staff.

**South:** The property is bounded by 3 parcels to the south: the Flatiron Community Park, a vacant land parcel, and the Saguaro Rehabilitation and Aquatic Therapy center. A 6' wrought iron fence will provide security between neighboring properties and on-site residents. The nearest building to the shared property line is setback approximately 112 feet from the property line. Perimeter landscape will be installed as required.

7. Unique nature of the property, use and/or development's physical characteristics.

Applicant Response:

The site has multiple drainage ways conveying storm flows from the north, east, and south, and passing through the site to a drainage outfall. The impact of the drainage conveyance reduces the buildable land area that might be utilized for surface parking. See more context above under the Drainage and Circulation and Parking sections of this narrative.

**PLANNING DIVISION RECOMMENDATION**

As part of their submittal, the Wolff Company is requesting a parking reduction of 8.7%. The Apache Junction Zoning Ordinance allows the Zoning Administrator to allow a reduction of required parking stalls by up to 10% if a project meets the following requirements:

1. Technical evidence that the proposed use(s) generates a parking demand that is at least 10% less than the required parking standard.

*The Wolff Company submitted a Parking Study conducted by EPS Group, which determined that the project would only require a maximum of 512 parking spaces (including guest spaces) during peak demand. This is considerably lower than the 684 parking spaces proposed by the applicant. In total, the applicant is providing a parking ratio of approximately 2 parking stalls per unit. The full Parking Study is included in the Staff Report for your review.*

2. Determination by the Zoning Administrator that a portion of the required parking can be accommodated with existing public parking that is available within 100 feet of the property.

*As part of their off-site improvements, the applicant is providing 45 public parking stalls immediately adjacent to the project along Plaza Drive.*

Based on the findings in the Parking Study and the addition of public parking stalls on Plaza Drive, Staff supports the parking reduction proposed by the applicant. As the parking reduction can be approved administratively, it will be granted once the project is approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

After reviewing the project proposal, the conditions of the site, and its alignment with the General Plan goals and policies, Staff supports the proposed Conditional Use Permit case P-24-104-CUP. Given the project's central location within the downtown area, a multi-family development at this site would contribute to the density necessary to support both current and future commercial uses. Residential density in downtown areas is particularly important as it creates a vibrant, active environment that helps sustain and attract businesses.

Staff respectfully recommends that the Commission include the following conditions in their approval. As always, Commissioners may suggest changes or additional conditions they believe will enhance the proposed project.

### **RECOMMENDED MOTION FOR CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT**

I move that the Planning and Zoning Commission recommend approval of Conditional Use Permit Case P-24-104-CUP, a request by Gilbert Blilie PLLC on behalf of Wolf Enterprises III, LLC for a 336-unit three-story leased residential community, located at the northwest corner of N. Apache Trail and Idaho Road, subject to the following conditions of approval:

- 1) The project shall be developed in accordance with the plans attached and associated with case P-24-104-CUP, associated Design Review Case No. P-24-103-DR, and all the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance and city codes applicable to this case.
- 2) The proposed development will not be age-restricted.
- 3) Landscape, screening and irrigation improvements, planted within a minimum 10-foot deep strip inside the net property line along the west perimeter of the property along N. Plaza Drive shall be provided in compliance with the city's landscape and screening requirements contained in Apache Junction City Code, Volume II, Land Development Code, Chapter 1, Zoning Ordinance, Article 1-8, Landscape Regulations. All required trees shall be 24" box and all required shrubs shall be 5-gallon in size.
- 4) Landscape and irrigation improvements that are located within the Plaza Drive right-of-way must comply with the Apache Junction Public Works requirements including the spacing away from streetlights. Maintenance, replacement, and possible relocation of the landscaping within the adjacent right-of-way shall remain the responsibility of the property owner and their successors per the standards contained in Apache Junction City Code, Volume II, Land Development Code, Chapter 1, Zoning Ordinance, Article 1-8, Landscape Regulations.
- 5) All applicable permits shall be applied for and plans shall be designed to current city codes prior to any lot grading or construction.
- 6) The developer's engineer shall meet the civil engineering improvement plans and document requirements, as outlined in

the previously provided pre-application and review comments and in accordance of the city's approved engineering standards that are in effect at the time of plan submittal.

- 7) All common and amenity areas within the proposed development, including perimeter walls and fences, and interior and exterior common area landscaping, shall be owned and maintained in good condition at all times by the developer or owner of the community or property management company.
  - 8) The developer shall work with the local U.S. Post Office to determine whether the existing chain link fencing located on the northern property line can be removed and replaced with an alternate fencing material, such as wrought iron view fencing.
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*Kelsey Schattnik*

Prepared by Kelsey Schattnik  
Principal Planner

Attachments:

- Exhibit #1 - Draft Resolution No. 25-07
- Exhibit #2 - Project Narrative
- Exhibit #3 - Proposed Site Plan
- Exhibit #4 - Aerial Map
- Exhibit #5 - Proposed Landscape Plan
- Exhibit #6 - Proposed Elevations and Floor Plans
- Exhibit #7 - Final Public Participation Report
- Exhibit #8 - Parking Study
- Exhibit #9 - Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA)