



City of Apache Junction

Development Services Department



PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 12, 2021

CASE NUMBERS: PZ-10-20/SD-2-20 "Ironwood Station"

OWNERS: Bela Flor Enterprises, LLC

APPLICANT: Reese Anderson and Jon Gillespie, Pew and Lake, PLC

REQUEST: Proposed rezoning of approximately 7.01 acres from B-1 (General Commercial) and RS-20M ("Medium Density Single-Family Detached Residential") to RM-2/PD (High Density Multiple-Family Detached Residential by Planned Development); and concurrent preliminary plat for a 96 lot residential subdivision.

LOCATION: The property is generally located near the Southeast corner of Superstition Boulevard and Ironwood Drive.

**GENERAL PLAN/
ZONING DESIGNATION:** Medium Density Residential ("MDR") and Commercial ("COMM"); currently zoned B-1 and RS-20M.

SURROUNDING USES: North: B-1/PD and RS-20M;
South: RS-20M;
East: B-1, B-1/PD, and RS-20M;
West: RS-20M.

BACKGROUND

The property has historically been vacant, no development history is available. This property has a long history of code compliance issues, such as illegal dumping and homeless encampments.

Most recently Bela Flor Enterprises has formally expressed interest in the 7 acre property for a 96-lot residential community.

PROPOSALS

PZ-10-20 is a proposed rezoning of approximately 7.01 net acre property generally located near the Southeast corner of Superstition Blvd. and Ironwood Dr. from General Commercial ("B-1") and Medium Density Single-Family Detached Residential ("RS-20M") to High Density Multiple-Family Residential by Planned Development ("RM-2/PD") to develop 96-lot residential community.

The Planned Development rezoning proposes typical lot sizes of approximately 1,980 square feet; typical homes sizes will vary from approximately 1,583 square feet to 1,850 square feet. The homes along Superstition Blvd. and Gold Dr. will face the street to allow a more connected and open concept development. The community will not be age-restricted, and will include amenities such as a pool and jacuzzi, dog parks, fire pit, lounge areas, pool cabanas, and a tot lot. The primary community entrance is proposed to be located along Ironwood Drive.

SD-2-20 is the companion preliminary plat for the proposed project. It establishes the layout for the proposed 96-lot residential subdivision.

PLANNING STAFF ANALYSIS

Relationship to General Plan:

The subject site is designated by the city's General Plan as both "Medium Density Residential" and "Commercial." The proposed density of 13.7 du/acre constitutes a minor General Plan amendment.

Zoning/Site Context:

The 7 acres is a privately-owned piece of land surrounded by residential properties on the East and South sides of the property, and a mix of commercial and residential properties on the North and West sides.

Planned Development Zoning:

There are four (4) Zoning Ordinance deviations as a part of this proposed planned development rezoning:

Minimum Lot Width: The applicant is asking for a decrease in minimum lot width from 60 feet to 22 feet.

Setbacks (Front, Sides and Rear): The RM-2 zoning district normally requires setbacks of 20 feet front, 20 feet rear, 10 feet sides and 10 feet street side on a corner lot.

The PD plan proposes:

- Front Setback:
 - o 15 feet to the main house for interior lots
 - o 13 feet to the main house along Ironwood Drive
 - o 8.3 feet from front patio to property line along Superstition Blvd.
 - o 7.8 feet from front patio to property line along Gold Drive
- Side Setback of 0 feet
- Street Side Setback of 5 feet on a corner lot
- Rear Setback of 14.5 feet

Private Street Width: The applicant is asking for a decreased private street width from 28 feet to 26 feet for private streets and 24 feet for private alleyways. Per the Superstition Fire and Medical District, this deviation will require "No Parking" signage to be posted in most areas of the development.

Landscaping Buffer: The applicant is asking for a decreased landscape buffer from 10 feet to 8 feet along Ironwood Drive, Superstition Boulevard and Gold Drive.

Proposed Deviations Table:

Table 2 - Development Standards

	RM-2 Development Standards	Proposed Development Standards
Minimum Lot Area (sf.)	1,980	1,980
Maximum Density (dwelling units per acre)	22	13.7
Minimum Lot Width (ft.)	60	22
Minimum Building Setback (Ironwood Drive) (ft.)	10	13
Minimum Building Setback (Superstition Boulevard) (ft.)	20	15
Minimum Building Setback (Gold Drive) (ft.)	20	15
Minimum Interior Front Setback (main structure) (ft.)	20	15

	RM-2 Development Standards	Proposed Development Standards
Minimum Interior Side Setback (main structure) (ft.)	10	0
Minimum Interior Street Side Setback (all structures) (ft.)	10	5
Minimum. Interior Rear Setback (ft.)	20	14.5
Minimum Setback from front patio to property line (Superstition Boulevard) (ft.)	20	8.3
Minimum Setback from front patio to property line (Gold Drive) (ft.)	20	7.8
Planting Strip width along ROW (ft.)	10	8
Maximum Lot Coverage	50%	50%
Building Height (ft.)	40	40
Parking Spaces	138	231
Private Street Width (ft.)	28	26
Private Alley Width (ft.)	28	24

As trade-offs, Bela Flor Communities will offer two (2) dog parks, a community pool, ramadas, and tot lot. Other community features include architecturally enhanced monument signs, walls and building elevations.

Staff has also reviewed the proposed elevations and floor plans. All proposed elevations appear to meet the four-sided architecture requirement as noted in the Zoning Ordinance (see attached plans). Elevations include multiple materials such as brick veneer, painted siding, painted stucco and articulation along the façades and rooflines.

Infrastructure Improvements:

Road dedication and necessary utility infrastructure improvements are already in place. The applicant is continuing to analyze the available services and connections, but its preliminary assessment reveals there will be adequate capacity to service the proposed uses on site.

Furthermore, all other necessary on-site and off-site improvements, such as community amenities, retention basins, accessible routes, and landscape buffers, will be built at the time of development.

Public Input:

34 Neighborhood meeting notification letters were sent from the applicant to all property owners within a 300-foot radius. On December 15, 2020 a neighborhood meeting took place via zoom and a total of 2 people attended the meeting. Please see final participation report (attached).

Staff received one (1) call regarding the rezoning/PD and preliminary plat request. The resident seemed overall in support of the development, but had questions regarding water runoff. They were referred to the project engineer for further information.

FINDINGS OF FACT

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: As detailed in this narrative and the associated plans, Ironwood Station is a high quality, unique development in Apache Junction, which provides ownership-based, multi-family, type housing. We are unaware of other similar projects of similar quality in the area. The requested changes to the bulk development standards will result in a superior design which allows a carefully crafted interaction between the buildings and the adjacent streets, whereas conventional zoning would typically have a perimeter wall which lessens the pedestrian interaction and creates less visual interest. Locating front patios closer to internal streets will accomplish a desirable townhome building design which accomplishes the overall intent of delivering a high-quality urban product to the City of Apache Junction.

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: Strict adherence to the development standards in the zoning ordinance is not required to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the proposed development. As detailed in this Narrative and the associated

plans, Ironwood Station is a high-quality development that meets or exceeds the key development standards such as open space, amenities and quality design. The internal private drive aisle widths are thoughtfully coordinated with the guest parking spaces, waste management program and fire safety standards to meet the intent of the Apache Junction code while facilitating the overall project development.

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

Applicant Response: The project site is bounded on three (3) sides by streets, two of which are major arterials. To the south of this site, is an older mobile home park which is being redeveloped. In fact, the owner of the southern property has provided to us a support letter, a copy of which we have provided to the City. We are of the firm opinion that this project will increase property values in the area and be a source of pride for both the future and current residents. In short, strict adherence to the development standards in the zoning ordinance is not required to ensure that property values of adjacent properties will not be reduced.

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 current land use map does not provide other optional sites that are of the same quality and quantity. This site, at the corner of two prominent roads, will allow the development of a high-quality housing project that is unique to Apache Junction. To achieve these type of high-quality housing projects, the proposed land use designation needs to be changed.

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 2020-2050 General Plan.

Applicant Response: This amendment provides a direct benefit to the City of Apache Junction because it adds a high-quality housing project to the City and complements the available housing diversity. We further believe that this project will spur additional similar development within the City limits. The proposed change will not solely benefit this owner and is a well balanced approach to land use planning. Please see the discussion above related to how the proposal is consistent with important goals cited in the General Plan.

3. Whether the proposed amendment is justified by an error in the 2020-2050 General Plan as originally adopted.

Applicant Response: The applicant is not sure whether the general plan map maintains errors for the subject parcel. However, it is obvious that the general plan land use designations at this location were largely established by ownership at the time. Now that these properties have been assembled together, a fair adjustment to the General Plan map is warranted. Stated differently, the proposed amendment will unify these parcels under one designation and establish the appropriate designation for the site.

4. Whether the proposed change is generally consistent with goals, objectives, and other elements of the 2020-2050 General Plan.

Applicant Response: Please refer to the above discussion which cites the specific goals, objectives, and elements which the proposal meets. Additionally, we propose that the change is consistent with the General Plan and does not conflict with any goals of the General Plan.

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

Applicant Response: The subject property has remained vacant as the City of Apache Junction has developed. The demand for commercial or larger lot development at this intersection has not materialized and likely never will. Demand for this type of housing product has increased in the area. We note that the existing general plan designation for portions of the subject site are closely aligned with the proposal with the existing medium density 10 du/acre designation.

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: Development of a medium density townhome product with 13.7 du/ac density is an acceptable land use in an area that maintains high density manufactured home developments and various other residential developments. Ironwood Station also serves as an appropriate transition to the major arterial streets. This land use actually has a lower traffic impact than a typical commercial / retail development

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

Applicant Response: The placement of high-quality housing in this area will increase the supply of capable workers in Apache Junction and increase the demand for other jobs and services. No significant commercial or office operations have been viable for this site and are not foreseen.

- c. Substantially decreasing existing and future water supplies.

Applicant Response: The existing facilities are adequate to serve the proposed development. The City of Apache Junction engineering department and related utility companies have confirmed that the proposed development will not decrease existing or future water supplies.

- d. Replacing employment with residential uses.

Applicant Response: Portions of the site are currently zoned for general commercial uses. The site has not proven viable to develop with commercial uses and demand in this part of the City would likely not yield high-paying employment opportunities.

- 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: As stated above, the City of Apache Junction engineering department has reviewed this request and confirmed

that the existing infrastructure can handle the additions. Additional defraying of the developments impact will be accounted for with the payment of required development impact fees.

- 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: Ironwood Drive and Superstition Boulevard are major arterials which are the City's primary roadways to handle traffic impacts from development such as this. The City engineer has not raised any concerns with the proposed use increasing the planned level of service on surrounding roads.

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

Applicant Response: While the development will place buildings on currently vacant land, the character of the area will be improved because of the attractive housing product and thoughtful placement of landscaping and open space.

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

Applicant Response: Not applicable.

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

Applicant Response: A residential development of this size is not generally expected to materially 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 land is currently privately owned and not utilized as a park or within a trail system. Therefore, it will not significantly alter any existing recreational amenities.

PLANNING DIVISION RECOMMENDATION

Staff acknowledges the proposed planned development deviations requested for this subdivision. As such, and within the context of trade-offs for the requested zoning deviations, staff is supportive of the proposed project due to the enhanced features such as the building elevations, community amenities and overall site design, and respectfully recommends to the Commission that they include the following conditions of approval as part of a favorable recommendation to the City Council. As always, Commissioners may recommend changes or additional conditions which they feel will improve the development plan.

RECOMMENDED MOTION FOR PLANNED DEVELOPMENT REZONING

I move that the Planning and Zoning Commission recommend to the Apache Junction City Council the (APPROVAL/DENIAL) of planned development rezoning case PZ-10-20, a request by Bela Flor Communities LLC (owner), represented by Reese Anderson and Jon Gillespie of Pew and Lake, PLC (applicant), for a 96 lot residential subdivision tentatively to be named Ironwood Station, located approximately at the Southeast corner of Superstition Boulevard and Ironwood Drive, from B-1 (General Commercial) and RS-20M (Medium Density Single-Family Detached Residential) to RM-2/PD (High Density Multiple-Family Detached Residential by Planned Development), subject to the following conditions of approval:

- 1) The project shall be developed in accordance with the plans and elevations attached and associated to this case and all the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance applicable to this case.
- 2) The preliminary and final plats shall reflect substantial compliance and consistency with the Planned Development presented with case PZ-10-20, incorporated by reference herein, and as otherwise specified through these conditions of approval, to include general layout, lot sizes, setbacks (13' front to home along Ironwood Dr., 15' front to home along Superstition Blvd. and Gold Dr., 14.5' rear, 0' sides, 5' street sides), public and private rights-of-ways, easements and tracts, amenities, perimeter and interior lot separation walls, model types, landscaping and other improvements.
- 3) The proposed development will not be age-restricted.

- 4) Street improvements include but not necessarily limited to, extension of pavement and the provision of sidewalk, curb, gutter, streetlights, underground utilities, fire hydrants, landscaping shall be required as part of this planned development project, and subject to review and approval by the City Engineer.
- 5) Landscape, screening and irrigation improvements, planted within a minimum 8-feet deep strip inside the net property line (but outside of required walls) along the perimeters of the property, 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 and a decorative 6-foot-tall fence shall be constructed.
- 6) All elevations shall include a uniform application of materials on all buildings. Different color palettes shall be used to differentiate and vary building elevations. Allocation of materials shall be consistent throughout the site.
- 7) All applicable permits shall be applied for and plans shall be designed to current City codes prior to any lot grading or construction on the lots. Inclusively, all applicable development fees shall be paid at the time of permits issuance on a four or six unit basis.
- 8) All common areas, amenity areas, and tracts within and immediately adjacent to 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 owners or homeowners association of the proposed subdivision.
- 9) 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.
- 10) The existing 20 foot utility easement that runs north to south through the center of the property shall be extinguished.

- 11) Any deviation or proposed changes from the original plans associated with this case will require a major PD amendment.
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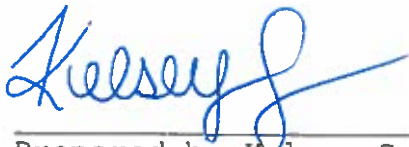
RECOMMENDED MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY PLAT

I move that the Planning and Zoning Commission recommend to the Apache Junction City Council the (APPROVAL/DENIAL) of Preliminary Plat, case SD-2-20, a request by Bela Flor Communities LLC (owner), represented by Reese Anderson and Jon Gillespie of Pew and Lake, PLC (applicant) for a 96-lot residential subdivision tentatively to be named Ironwood Station, located approximately at the Southeast corner of Superstition Boulevard and Ironwood Drive, subject to the following conditions of approval:

- 1) The project shall be developed in accordance with the plans attached and associated to this case and all the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance applicable to this case.
- 2) All conditions of approval for the RM-2/PD-zoned property as approved pursuant to planned development rezoning case PZ-10-20 shall govern the design and subsequent improvements of the Final Subdivision Plat.
- 3) Within one year of Preliminary Subdivision Plat approval, the developer shall submit for formal review, the Final Subdivision Plat and improvement plans for the proposed subdivision. Said final plat and improvement plans shall reflect substantial compliance with the preliminary plat insofar as general layout, number of lots, location of natural and man-made amenity features and areas, and internal and external streets and connectivity.
- 4) The Conditions, Covenants and Restrictions for Ironwood Station shall also include provisions to address the following: establishing a uniform system for garbage pick-up and mail-delivery; and specifying that the homeowners association is perpetually responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of all common areas and facilities, fencing and landscape improvements both internal and along the outside perimeter of the subdivision.
- 5) The developer shall work with and coordinate separately with all known utility companies which serve Apache Junction, to provide necessary services to the site and to

relinquish and/or relocate utility easements as needed, prior to or upon final plat approval.

- 6) The co-mingling of onsite and offsite flows into a single retention basin will be allowed for the Ironwood Station project, with the condition that the hydrology/hydraulic analysis provided in the Improvement Plans and the Final Drainage Report will demonstrate a non-adverse impact to upstream or downstream properties.
- 7) The existing 20 foot utility easement that runs north to south through the center of the property shall be extinguished.
- 8) 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.



Prepared by Kelsey Schattnik
Planner

Attachments:

Email from Resident Regarding the Rezoning Request
Exhibit #1 - PZ-10-20 and SD-2-20 Applications
Exhibit #2 - Project Narrative
Exhibit #3 - Public Participation Final Report
Exhibit #4 - Preliminary Plat for Ironwood Station
Exhibit #5 - Preliminary Landscape and Wall Plan for Ironwood Station
Exhibit #6 - Elevations and Floor Plans

Kelsey Schattnik

From: Sidney Urias
Sent: Wednesday, January 06, 2021 4:04 PM
To: Kelsey Schattnik
Cc: jenniferkesner1@yahoo.com; Larry Kirch; Rudy Esquivias
Subject: FW: [External] Proposed Rezoning at Superstition Blvd. & Ironwood Dr.

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Kelsey,

Please include Jennifer's email below as part of the Staff Report to the Planning Commission.

Thanks,

From: Jennifer Kesner [mailto:jenniferkesner1@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 6, 2021 4:01 PM
To: Sidney Urias <surias@apachejunctionaz.gov>
Subject: [External] Proposed Rezoning at Superstition Blvd. & Ironwood Dr.

Dear Mr. Urias,

We are writing to you regarding the proposed rezoning and further development of the southeast corner of Superstition Blvd. & Ironwood Dr.

My husband, Andy Liberty, and myself own and reside at 624 N. Ironwood Dr. We have several concerns regarding this proposed development.

1. The proposed development is for 96 new townhomes. At an average of 2 cars per household, this will dramatically increase the traffic on Ironwood Dr., as well as at/near the intersection by adding approximately 200 cars. This high density housing is found nowhere in the area.

Also, the traffic signals at both Superstition Blvd. and Apache Trail are not timed sufficiently for current traffic, let alone the proposed increase in traffic. Will both traffic lights be modified for the increase?

2. Another issue with the increase in traffic is the subject of a dedicated turn lane into/out of the proposed site on Ironwood Dr. Will this be added? If so, will the street be widened, or will the turn lane be within the proposed site?

3. With the addition of 96 homes, how will the city handle the additional water use and waste? During the phone call with the developer, we were told the street would be torn up to provide the additional services. Since we live directly across Ironwood Dr. from the proposed site, where exactly would the street be torn up? We have 2 driveways onto our property and require daily use of both. How will this be handled and scheduled?

4. Regarding dust and construction noise, what will be the requirements for the developer? How will the dust be controlled/mitigated? What hours exactly will the developer be permitted for construction?

5. Lastly, the proposal is for two-story townhome construction. We adamantly oppose any two-story construction, as it will eradicate our view of the Superstition mountains. We feel our mountain view increases our property value dramatically, and removal of the view would subsequently decrease our property value significantly.

Both my husband and I will be attending the public hearings of the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council. We look forward to having the above issues addressed at the hearings.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,