

Requesting Department:
Development Services



TO: PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

FROM: CHRIS ANARADIAN, DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTOR

RE: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON MAJOR GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT GP13-027 “Meridian Crossings”, a request by Mario Mangiamele on behalf of Wescor/Queen Creek LLC Company to amend the General Plan Land Use Map for 466 acres at the south side of Riggs Road, west of the Union Pacific Railroad from Regional Commercial to Medium Density Residential (up to 3 dwellings per acre).

DATE: JANURARY 22, 2014

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that GP13-027 “Meridian Crossings” be continued until the March 12, 2014 Planning Commission Meeting.

Please see the UPDATED information described in italicized text below.

PROPOSED MOTION

Move to continue GP13-027 “Meridian Crossing” to the March 12, 2014 Planning Commission meeting.

RELEVANT GENERAL PLAN AND COUNCIL GOALS

General Plan Land Use Element Goals and Policies:

- **Goal 1: Maintain the Town’s unique community character**
 - Policy 1a: Protect and promote the Town’s history, location, amenities and development potential to develop a unique, attractive, desirable and economically sustainable community.

- **Goal 2: Effectively manage the Town’s growth**
 - Policy 2a: Focus the Town’s efforts to promote new development and economic development in the areas identified in the Growth Areas Element, the Town Center and the State land east of Meridian Road and the area adjacent to the City of Mesa.
 - Policy 2b: Coordinate the Town’s efforts with the private sector to provide the additional infrastructure when and where needed to accommodate new development.

- **Goal 3: Develop superior neighborhoods**
 - Policy 3b: Provide a diversity of housing opportunities within the Town ranging from lower density residential areas in the desert foothills and equestrian neighborhoods, to higher density housing in master planned communities in the Town Center and near future shopping and employment areas.
 - Policy 3d: Ensure compatibility between new projects and existing neighborhoods by providing appropriate transitional treatments when:
 - a. New residential subdivisions are adjacent to existing residential areas; and,
 - b. New development contains lots adjacent to an open space, a non-residential land use or an arterial street.

- **Goal 4: Ensure long-term employment and economic stability**
 - Policy 4a: Develop a diverse and robust economic development base to ensure the Town’s long term economic stability.
 - Policy 4e: Partner with the private sector to actively promote development of employment related uses in the Town’s growth areas and adjacent to the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport.

General Plan Growth Areas Element Goals and Policies:

- **Goal 1: Identify and establish Queen Creek growth areas to direct new higher intensity development**
 - Policy 1a: Direct new higher intensity commercial, office and employment uses to the five major Growth Areas identified in the Growth Areas map:
 - a. The Town Center
 - b. The Meridian Road Corridor
 - c. The Regional Commercial Center
 - d. The Germann/Queen Creek Road Corridor; and,
 - e. The Superstition Vistas (State owned property within the Queen Creek Planning Area).

- **Goal 2: Coordinate the timing of construction for new private development with the provision of public services needed to serve such development**

- Policy 2c: The Town Capital Improvement Program will be used to provide direction on the location, timing and types of new public infrastructure for coordination with the private sector requests.
- **Goal 4: Ensure long-term employment and economic stability**
 - Policy 4a: Develop a diversified and robust economic development base to ensure the Town’s long term financial stability.

Economic Development Element Goals and Policies

- **Goal 1: Enhance the economic wealth of the community**
 - Policy 1d: Grow the retail and service base of the Town, including unique retailers, to enhance the Town’s retail image and expand the sales tax base to reduce sales tax “leakage” to other communities.
- **Goal 2: Cultivate the Town’s Economic Development centers and assets**
 - Policy 2d: Direct major commercial growth and service projects to the Town’s Meridian Road, Riggs Road, Germann Road transportation corridors and the 802 Freeway.
 - Policy 2e: Promote development of the proposed Regional Commercial Center as well as the areas surrounding the Center, as a major retail and service destination for both the Town and northern Pinal County.
- **Goal 4: Promote development of the employment sector identified in the Town’s Economic Development Strategic Plan**
 - Policy 4d: Develop a job to population ration for the Town at build-out greater than the Maricopa County average – currently 0.4 jobs per capita.

Cost of Development Goals and Policies

- **Goal 1: Ensure the Town is financially self sustainable at build-out.**
 - Policy 1a: Designate areas and land uses in the General Plan which are appropriate in size and location for future revenue or employment-generating uses.
 - Policy 1b: Minimize land use changes which would reduce the size of areas designated for future revenue or employment-generating land uses.

Queen Creek Town Council 2013-18 Corporate Strategic Plan

- **KRA 5: Financial Management/Internal Services And Sustainability**
 - Goal 1: Maintain long-term financial sustainability for local government operations.

- Continue with policies and implementation practices that evaluate use and sources of revenues, in particular recurring versus one-time sources of revenue.

SUMMARY

In 2006 the Town Council approved the original plan for Meridian Crossing. At that time, the plan reflected a combination of land uses including a regional mall, a hospital, a retail power center and combination of single family and multi-family housing. A new land use classification of Regional Commercial was developed for the project and all the proposed uses were given this designation. When the current General Plan was completed in 2008 the Regional Commercial designation was included in the new plan. Since then no further activity development activity has taken place on the property.

In addition to the economic downturn in recent years and development of other properties in the area, development interest in this area (including this property) has been slowed by the need to construct Riggs Road and reconstruct the intersection on the northeast corner of this site where Riggs, Combs, Rittenhouse, Meridian and Gary Roads will meet in the future.

The initial design of the intersection has been completed (shown on the attached Alternative D), but final design and funding for the project is still years away. The design and eventual construction of both Riggs and the intersection are complicated the multiple agencies involved in the design and eventual construction of the project.

The subject property is currently under the jurisdiction of Maricopa County, but will need to be annexed in order to obtain access to the Town’s water and wastewater systems prior to development of the property.

HISTORY

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| September 2, 2008: | Current General Plan was adopted which included the Regional Commercial designation approved for this property in 2006. |
| August 28, 2013: | Staff conducted an Open House to receive public comments on the proposed Major General Plan amendments for 2013. |
| September 23, 2013: | The applicant conducted their neighborhood meeting to discuss this General Plan amendment |
| September 25, 2013: | Staff conducted a second Open House to receive public comments on the proposed Major General Plan amendments for 2013. |
| October 15, 2013 | Planning and Zoning Commission conducts the first Public Hearing on the 2013 proposed Major General Plan amendments. |

December 5, 2013

Planning and Zoning Commission conducts the second Public Hearing on the 2013 proposed Major General Plan amendments. The commission voted 6-0 to continue the case for further consideration at a special meeting to be held on January 22, 2014.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Planning staff conducted community wide Open Houses on August 28th and September 25th to present the request to the public. Survey forms were distributed at each meeting to solicit comments from those present.

Information on the request has also been posted on the Town of Queen Creek website. Public hearing signs were posted on the property, letters sent to property owners within 1,200 feet of the site, an insert was placed in the Town's November 2013 Utility Bill, and a public hearing notice was advertised in the Gilbert Edition of the Arizona Republic. A summary of the comments received to date is attached.

In addition to the Town's outreach efforts, the applicant also conducted a neighborhood meeting on September 23, 2013. Copies of the minutes are attached.

On October 15, 2013 the Planning and Zoning Commission conducted the first Public Hearing for the Major General Plan amendments proposed for 2013, which included this case. On December 5, 2013 the Commission also held a second Public Hearing, the minutes of which are attached.

DISCUSSION

When this project was approved in 2006 it was seen as being the catalyst for the development of a commercial and service center that would serve both the eastern side of the community and northern Pinal County. Additional commercial and mixed-use designations were also approved on adjacent properties to provide space for additional "spin-off" development for the hospital, etc.

In addition to the economy, development of this area has been slowed by the need to construct Riggs Road and reconstruct the Riggs and Meridian intersection. A design concept has been developed and approved, but funding is still years away. When this roadway project is complete, it should significantly increase the development potential of the surrounding properties.

According to the applicant, the underlying justification proposed for all four changes is that the town has an excessive amount of area designated for employment use, and development of the property will take years (if ever) to occur. In contrast, the applicants state development of the

property for single family homes could occur quickly (3-5 years). The applicant also states that development of the property for residential use would be beneficial to the town in that it would generate near term revenues as a result of new construction and long term revenue from sales taxes paid by the residents. Once development is complete, however, the revenues generated by the project may not match the revenues required by the Town to provide public services to the new residents over the long term.

The long term financial sustainability of the town was a key issue in the development of the current General Plan, as reflected by the number of goals and policies in the plan related to this issue. This concern is accentuated by a study completed by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) in 2001 which determined residential uses generate approximately 80% of the revenues needed to provide the public services they require. The balance is derived from employment related uses, particularly offices (132%) and retail uses (923%). As a result, the conversion of employment areas to residential uses could create a significant future financial concern for the Town. It was for this reason the Town commissioned TischlerBise to study the fiscal sustainability issue as part of the General Plan process.

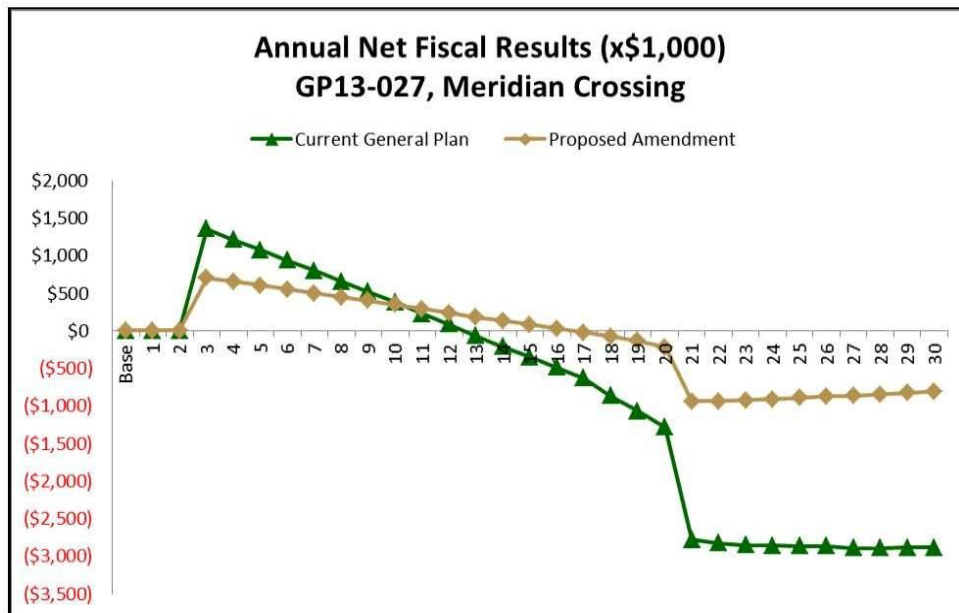
- The economic impact study submitted by the applicant states the project (based on 1,243 homes) would generate \$5.5 million in tax revenue during initial project construction and over \$2.4 million in annual tax related revenues as a result of the additional homes and population once the project was complete. No cost estimate is given for the cost of the public services needed to support the project and serve the new residents once the project is complete.

UPDATE:

The long term financial sustainability of the town was a key issue in the development of the current General Plan, and it remains so today. The balance of future employment areas and residential uses is a significant future concern for the Town, from both a financial and livability standpoint. It was for this reason the Town commissioned TischlerBise to study the fiscal sustainability issue as part of this General Plan Amendment review and future update process.

As it pertains to this subject property and request to amend the General Plan land use designation to Medium Density Residential (up to 3 dwellings per acre), the key findings in the TischlerBise study are as follows:

Figure 6: Annual Net Results – Development Scenario: GP13-027, Meridian Crossing



- *The Town’s Draft Fiscal Impact Analysis of General Plan Amendment Applications (dated November 22, 2013), prepared by TischlerBise indicates the project would generate positive initial revenues to the Town due to construction related sales taxes and development impact fees. Both development scenarios generate net deficits on an annual basis after construction is complete. Net deficits for the Current General Plan land use designation are more than the proposed amendment. By year 30, net deficits are generated at approximately \$2.9 million for the Current General Plan and \$810,000 for the proposed amendment.*
- *The Current General Plan assumes over 3,000 multi-family units, which do not generate sufficient revenues to offset their cost. This has an aggregating effect and leads to deeper deficits. In addition, office development generates minimal ongoing revenues to the Town other than property taxes.*

Since the Commission’s decision to continue this case to the January 22, 2014 meeting, additional information has been provided from TischlerBise. In addition, MAG (Maricopa County Association of Governments) recently released an updated Fiscal Balance Report (October, 2013 prepared by Applied Economics).

The TischlerBise Part 2 study highlights a major consideration(s) that requires additional staff analysis and communication with the applicant. Staff is considering the implications of land use recommendations as a result of these initial findings that were received from TischlerBise on January 14, 2014. The TischlerBise study identifies the amount of land that should be preserved for “net new” retail, office, and industrial projects as follows:

Figure 1: Summary of Projected 40-Year Market Demand: Square Footage and Estimated Land Area

Land Use	Net New Square Feet*	FAR Range			Net New Land Area Range (Sq. Ft.)			Net New Acres		
		Lower	Mid	Higher	SF at Lower FAR	SF at Mid FAR	SF at Higher FAR	Ac. at Lower FAR	Ac. at Mid FAR	Ac. at Higher FAR
Retail	1,370,000	0.20	0.30	0.40	6,850,000	4,566,667	3,425,000	157	105	79
Office	1,400,000	0.20	0.30	0.40	7,000,000	4,666,667	3,500,000	161	107	80
Industrial	2,380,000	0.10	0.15	0.20	23,800,000	15,866,667	11,900,000	546	364	273
Total	5,150,000				37,650,000	25,100,000	18,825,000	864	576	432

*Source: The Chesapeake Group; TischlerBise

These acreages identified in the study represent the “net new acres” that should be available to bring projects to fruition between now and the Town’s next 40 years. These acreages confirm the findings of previous studies that were conducted prior to the economic downturn by Elliot Pollack (Elliott D. Pollack & Company, “Employment Land Supply/Demand Analysis, Town of Queen Creek, Arizona, November 2004”).

The Town’s Economic Development team is assisting Development Services staff in the process of comparing these proposed “net new” acreages and the existing inventory of retail, office and industrial properties to neighboring communities regarded as having a good mix of land uses, financial sustainability, and a good quality of life in our region. Encouraging commercial and industrial development at the subject property was the goal of the land use designation in our General Plan despite the underlying zoning of the property as RU-43 (Rural Zoning District/Maricopa County).

ANALYSIS

Although the property is within the Town’s planning area, the property has yet to be annexed and is still under the jurisdiction of Maricopa and Pinal Counties. The site is currently in agricultural use. The property is zoned R1-43 in Maricopa County.

A summary of the surrounding area is provided below.

Surrounding Zoning and Land Uses	
North:	Schnepf Farm – designated Mixed-Use and Commercial, zoned R1-18, and I-1 in Queen Creek and R1-43 in Maricopa County.
South:	Designated Mixed-Use and zoned R1-43 in Maricopa County and CR-3 and PAD in Pinal County.
East:	Designated Mixed Use and Medium Density Residential, and zoned CR-3 and CR-3 PAD in Pinal County
West:	Designated Mixed Use and zoned R1-43 in Maricopa County.

The preliminary development plan submitted for this request for the area west of Meridian Road shows a total of 1,117 homes at an overall density of 3.45 du/ac (which exceeds the density allowed in the Medium Density Residential land use classification). A recent change to the project has been the inclusion of a 20 acre parcel for commercial use on the corner of Riggs and Gary Roads. No plans have been submitted for the portion of the property east of Gary Road.

Staff has reviewed the traffic, drainage, utility and economic impact studies submitted by the applicant and have concluded:

- The Town’s water and wastewater systems will be adequate to accommodate the anticipated demand from the proposed project, once the appropriate line extensions are completed.
- The applicant’s traffic study indicates the project would generate 127,515 trips per day. The study is silent, however, on when and how Riggs Road, Gary Road and the other arterial streets needed to accommodate this traffic would be developed or how it would be funded.

A central element to the development of this property is the construction of Riggs Road and the reconstruction of the Riggs/Meridian Road intersection. Due to the complexity of the design of this project and the multi-jurisdictional nature of the project a Design Concept Report was developed showing 10 possible alternatives for the redesign of the intersection. Alternative D has now been selected, and further design of the project will be needed to formalize the concept. The estimated construction cost for the intersection and adjacent streets is estimated to be \$27.7 million due to the complications involved. Without these street improvements it will not be possible to provide access to this property or accommodate the traffic to be generated. Unfortunately, no funding has yet been obtained for the future construction of the improvements.

Without a precise design, it would not be possible to establish a future right of way line for the street or to determine what proportion of the improvements would be attributed to this project. Further, it may not be possible to provide utility service to this property until the street right of way has been acquired and the design completed.

GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT FINDING OF FACT

General Plan Amendment Finding of Fact Analysis:

By State law and the Town’s zoning requirements, an applicant is required to demonstrate a “finding of fact” that their proposed project meets certain “tests” to be considered for approval.

Nine factors, or findings of fact, established in the Zoning Ordinance, are to be used in evaluating a General Plan amendment request.

Of these nine criteria, the applicant for a General Plan amendment is asked to provide a written response to the first four. The applicant's proposed findings of fact are contained in the project narrative and shown below, along with the staff's comments on each item.

1. Whether the development pattern contained in the future land use plan provides appropriate optional sites for the uses proposed in the amendment.

Applicant Response - The Town's General Plan Land Use Plan may contain other sites for the residential densities proposed; however, the impetus of this request is to re-purpose the property for a viable and sustainable land use through establishment of a compatible use and appropriate intensity of use for the area.

Although location of the existing Regional Commercial Center (RCC) land use designation for the property is consistent with the established vision of the Queen Creek General Plan, a multitude of influences such as shifting population growth areas, financial lending practices under the new economy, lack of regional infrastructure within close proximity to the site and modifications to land use patterns, contribute to the unrealistic regional commercial use of the property.

The Medium-Density Residential (MDR) (up to 3 dwelling units per acre) land use designation provides for an appropriate land use to meet the community's needs with significant consideration given to compatibility with prevailing land use patterns within this geographical area. While the surrounding properties are largely classified as Mixed-Use, existing and proposed projects to the east of the property exhibits residential densities in the range of approximately 3.5 dwelling units per acre. It is also understood that a large portion of the properties adjacent to the west and south project boundaries were reclassified by the Town in response to a need to provide compatible land uses with, and appropriate land use transitioning from, the existing RCC classification of this site. Prior General Plan Land Use Plan classification for those properties to the south and west was residential.

Staff Comment – The General Plan has designated over 7,000 acres within the planning area for Medium Density Residential use. At present there are over 6,300 vacant residential lots approved for development within the Town (approximately a 9+ year supply if 700 homes are constructed per year), mostly in areas designated MDR. This property was designated Regional Commercial as part of a regional employment and service center as part of the Town's economic development strategy.

2. That the amendment constitutes an overall improvement to the Town of Queen Creek General Plan and not solely for the good or benefit of a particular landowner or owners at a particular point in time.

Applicant Response - The proposed amendment does not exclusively benefit a particular landowner at a particular point in time, but conversely constitutes an overall improvement to the Queen Creek General Plan as it will incorporate additional locations for Medium-Density Residential (MDR) (up to 3 dwelling units per acre) land uses for the geographical area; and provide an improved balance of viable and sustainable land uses for the Town. Additionally, the proposed Land Use Plan amendment, when implemented, will facilitate private capital investment for roadway and other infrastructure improvements that will significantly benefit the area as a whole.

The requested amendment is in fact a detriment to the existing ownership group as a result of the significant deviation between regional commercial land values to those values for residential land. The current ownership group is not overly pleased with the fact that the enthusiastically shared vision with the Town for a regional commercial center will not occur at this location; however, maintaining the RCC land use classification on this property does not benefit the Queen Creek community or geographical area.

Staff comment – Staff can appreciate that the applicant is interested in pursuing development of their property while the market for single family housing is strong and seen as a viable development option at this time. One of the basic concepts of the General Plan, however, is that the Town remains economically viable over the long term and that to do so will require areas to be developed for non-single family residential land uses. It is also recognized that all possible development options do not occur at the same time. Some appear early in the development cycle, such as single family homes, while others like commercial, specialty and employment uses occur later in the process.

UPDATE: The consideration of the proper balance of Town-wide “net new” retail, office and industrial land uses is currently under review based on the new studies received from TischlerBise and MAG.

3. The degree to which the amendment will impact the community as a whole or a portion of the community by:

a. Significantly altering acceptable existing land use patterns.

Applicant Response - The proposed Land Use Plan amendment will not adversely affect the community as a whole by significantly altering land use patterns. The proposed amendment adheres to the goals and policies specified in the Queen Creek General Plan by: providing compatible land use relationships with the surrounding area; protecting residential neighborhoods from intrusion of more intensive land uses through appropriate buffering; incorporating transition of land uses within both the Queen Creek planning area and adjacent lands to ensure compatibility; providing a diversity of housing opportunities within the Town; and encouraging master planned

communities that provide a mixture of housing types, lot sizes, and open space and trails.

Staff Comment – The General Plan reflects over 7,300 acres being designated for Medium Density Residential (up to 3 du/ac) – but only one location designated for Regional Commercial – this property. Conversion of this property from Regional Commercial to single family residential would comprise a departure from the economic development goals of the General Plan.

- b. Requiring larger and more expensive improvements to roads, sewer, or water systems that are needed to support the prevailing land uses in which, therefore, may negatively impact development of other lands. The Commission and/or Town Council may also consider the degree to which the need for such improvements will be mitigated pursuant to binding commitments by the applicant, public agency, or other sources when the impacts of the uses permitted pursuant to the General Plan amendment will be felt.**

Applicant Response - The proposed amendment will not have an adverse impact on the Town's infrastructure; conversely, it will facilitate the dedication and improvement of Riggs and Meridian Roads, and it will provide necessary water and sewer infrastructure in the immediate area to serve as a catalyst for development of other, adjacent properties. As the project develops, necessary and required dedications and infrastructure improvements will benefit the Town as a whole. The net effects to the Town are lower direct costs, dramatically improved services, and increased tax revenues.

Staff Comment – Staff agrees that the proposed use of the property would assist in the extension of both road and utility systems into the area. Staff also agrees that these systems will be needed in the future as development occurs in the area. The area of concern, however, is that the development of this property for single family residential use would preclude the discussion of alternative land uses that could both make more efficient use of the property and maintain the employment center concept reflected in the General Plan. This is particularly true given the total public and private cost required to provide the needed infrastructure needed to facilitate development of properties in this area of the Town.

- c. Adversely impacting existing uses due to increased traffic on existing systems.**

Applicant Response - The proposed amendment will not have an adverse impact on the Town's existing land uses, as development of the site will facilitate adjacent roadway dedications and improvements resulting in improved vehicular circulation for the area. As identified in the corresponding Trip Generation Memorandum, Riggs and Meridian Roads are the primary, adjacent streets serving Meridian Crossing. The current land use for the

project area is anticipated to generate approximately 127,515 vehicles per weekday, based on development of the site at its highest intensity of use; whereas the proposed land use is anticipated to generate approximately 13,595 vehicles per weekday at the highest intensity of use.

The proposed land use amendment will ultimately assist in alleviating vehicular traffic congestion in other parts of the Town and region by facilitating private improvements to adjacent roadways, which will enable more efficient transportation corridors for use by all residents of the community and surrounding areas. The planned arterial level street system will serve adequate to accommodate the projected traffic volumes.

Staff Comment – Staff agrees that development of this property would also result in the development of partial street improvement to Gary and Riggs Roads. The traffic volume generated by the proposed project would be less than that which would be created by the currently approved Regional Commercial uses, but in this case that may not be a desirable outcome. Once the reconstruction of the Riggs/Meridian intersection has been completed and Riggs and Gary Roads constructed, the street system serving this area would be able to accommodate substantially more traffic than is present today. Riggs Road, being is being developed as a six-lane “route of regional significance” in Maricopa County, and will be the only road serving Queen Creek that will extend from the I-10 freeway on the west to the CAP Canal in Pinal County to the east. Similarly, the Town has a plan to extend Meridian Road north from Gary Road to intersect the SR 24 Freeway at Signal Butte Road to provide the only through route in this area. As a result, it is expected both roads will carry a significant volume of traffic in the future, which would make this property very attractive for alternative employment related or higher density uses desiring a location with far reaching access in all directions. Given these planned transportation improvements, commitment of the property to single-family residential use now may complicate completion of the projects and result in the underutilization of the system in the future, particularly when compared to the cost of completing the roadway improvements.

In addition, early development of segments of Riggs and Gary Roads may require the Town to also commit Capital Improvement Funding to complete needed improvements which would not be done by the developer. This, in turn would affect our ability to provide other needed improvements in the community.

d. Affecting the livability of the area or the health and safety of the residents.

Applicant Response - The proposed residential use of the property will not adversely affect the livability of the area or affect the health or safety of the residents. Conversely, provision of residential development in this area, including its associated trails, parks, and open space areas, will provide the means to help promote healthy

lifestyles for the residents of the development, as well as maintain a healthy sustainable community. Provision of the Medium Density Residential land use within close proximity to existing and anticipated commercial and service areas will also serve to substantially increase the livability of the area for Queen Creek residents by possibly reducing automobile emissions due to shorter travel distances. Livability of the area will further be increased through, at a minimum, development of the site in compliance with the Town's livability test of aesthetics and low light impact guidelines.

Staff Comment – In order to provide for the health and safety of future residents more than streets and private amenities are needed. At present Fire Station 1 located at Founder's Park serves this area and without Riggs Road being constructed, response times to this property are less than desirable. The Town's emergency services plan calls for construction of an additional fire station to serve the southeastern portion of the community, however, a site has not been selected and funding is not available for construction. This project, like other needed facilities will likely be incorporated into a future bond election. Until then, however, the area will continue to be served from Fire Station 1.

UPDATE: The consideration of the proper balance of Town-wide "net new" retail, office and industrial land uses is currently under review based on the new studies received from TischlerBise and MAG.

4. That the amendment is consistent with the overall intent of the General Plan.

Applicant Response - The proposed General Plan amendment to the Queen Creek Land Use Plan is consistent with the vision and fosters the overall intent, goals and policies of the General Plan as it: provides a greater balance of land uses in appropriate locations to assist in diversifying and creating a more sustainable economy for the Town and resultant increase in tax base; provides compatible land use relationships with the surrounding area; provides opportunities for attainable housing for certain sectors of the market; provides opportunities for connections to parks, trails, and open spaces; and, will not be detrimental to public health, safety, and general welfare of persons living or working in the surrounding area or to the general welfare of the Town as a whole.

Staff Comment – The proposed amendment is not consistent with the goals and vision of the General Plan. The goal and intent of the General Plan is for development of employment related and higher intensity uses on this and surrounding properties to promoted development of a "regional center" to help develop a sustainable economic base for the community. The proposed reconstruction of the Riggs/Meridian intersection and the construction of Riggs Road will substantially change the character of this portion of the community and make the area more conducive for development than it has been in the past.

With the continued growth in Pinal County and the continuing need to be able to accommodate future employment and non-single family residential uses, locations at the entry to the community, like this one, would appear to have the potential for uses other than single family homes in the future. One option that has been discussed is the development of an "agritainment" zoning district to encourage these types of distinctive uses to locate in the community.

The remaining five criteria are evaluated by the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Council when the application is considered:

5. **Whether there was an error in the original General Plan adopted that the Council failed to take into account then existing facts, projects or trends that were reasonably foreseeable to exist in the future.**
6. **Whether events subsequent to the General Plan adoption have invalidated the Council's original premises and finding made upon plan adoption.**
7. **Whether any or all of the Council's original premises and findings regarding the General Plan adoption were mistaken.**
8. **Whether events subsequent to the General Plan adoption have changed the character or condition of the area so as to make the application acceptable.**
9. **The extent to which the benefits of the Plan amendment outweigh any of the impacts identified in Subsections One (1) through Eight (8) hereto.**

STAFF CONCLUSION

When the General Plan was approved in 2008 this property was designated for future employment use given its location and development potential for non-residential use. This position was stated and reinforced by the General Plan goals and policies described above.

Staff does not believe the applicant has met the Finding of Fact requirement demonstrating this proposed change is consistent with the intent of the General Plan, nor sufficiently demonstrated that the proposed change is in the best interest of the community.

UPDATE:

Our current focus is working with our inter-department staff and consultant team(s) to determine the adequate supply of land for Queen Creek in the area of retail, office, and industrial "net new" development.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Existing General Plan Map
2. Existing classification and proposed change
3. Concept Plan
4. Project Narrative
5. Fiscal Impact Analysis
6. Traffic study
7. Alternative D
8. Prior development concept
9. Applicant's Neighborhood Meeting Minutes and public comments
10. Comments received at the Town's Open Houses and other Public Comments
11. Applicant October 15 presentation
12. Special Session Planning & Zoning Commission Minutes December 5, 2013