

Arizona State Land Department

# Scottsdale Development Plan Narrative

November 2014

## **Introduction**

The Arizona State Land Department (“ASLD” or the “Department”) and the City of Scottsdale (“City”) have an extensive history of working together for mutual benefit. ASLD is filing this zoning application as the final step in a collaborative process initiated by the City in 1999 to acquire State Trust land through the Arizona Preserve Initiative (“API”). Through the API process, the City was able to acquire approximately 13,000 acres of State Trust land from ASLD for their McDowell Sonoran Preserve. Completion of this rezoning case will bring the zoning entitlements on approximately 4,020 acres of State Trust land into conformance with the City’s General Plan and provide enhanced value to the remaining State Trust land in the northern part of the City as mandated by state statute and as agreed upon by the City at the time ASLD agreed to designate 13,000 acres of State Trust land as suitable for conservation. The State Trust land that is the subject of this application is generally located in an area bounded by Scottsdale Road (west), the 104<sup>th</sup> Street alignment (east), Stagecoach Pass Road (north), and Happy Valley Road (south) (the “Subject Land” – depicted on the attached Exhibit A: State Trust Land to be Rezoned).

## **Project Overview**

### *The Arizona Preserve Initiative*

The API was enacted by the Arizona State Legislature in 1996 with the intent to encourage the purchase of State Trust land for conservation purposes while maximizing the return to the Trust’s beneficiaries. This program provided a mechanism for land in and around urban areas to be preserved as open space to benefit future generations, while allowing ASLD to fulfill its mission by enhancing value and optimizing economic return for Trust beneficiaries through the planning of adjacent State Trust lands with higher development utility.

During the 1990s the City began exploring options for the preservation of permanent open space within the McDowell Sonoran Preserve Study Boundary. On January 7, 1999, the City submitted a petition to the State Land Commissioner (the “Commissioner”) requesting the

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reclassification of about 16,600 acres of State Trust land as "Suitable for Conservation Purposes" (the "Reclassification") under API.

This action initiated a study, public process, and an application review process and examination by the Commissioner and ASLD staff. Included in this process were the following steps:

- Consultation with the City of Scottsdale;
- Consideration of:
  - recommendations of the ASLD Conservation Advisory Committee;
  - public input including comments received during a 30-day open comment period and at a public hearing attended by over 1,500 people;
  - physical and economic impacts to the local community, and;
  - comments from the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office, the Arizona Department of Game and Fish, and the Arizona Department of Transportation.

#### *Commissioner's Order No. 078-2001/2002*

This process was completed, and on August 30, 2001, the Commissioner issued Order No. 078-2001/2002 (the "Order"). Pursuant to the Order's conclusion, and to justify reclassifying lands and selling them under API, the Commissioner is required to show how the reclassification would benefit the Trust. The Commissioner noted that while land immediately adjacent to open space has enhanced value, land further from the open space should be planned in a manner consistent with the character of the area, ensuring its enhanced value when it is sold or leased.

The Order acknowledged both Scottsdale's desire to obtain all 16,600 acres as open space, and the Commissioner's duty to obtain full value for the land. Based on the information presented during the Reclassification examination, a compromise was suggested wherein ASLD and the City could work together to identify suitable land uses in areas adjacent to and in the vicinity of land approved for Reclassification.

Approximately 13,000 acres were approved for Reclassification while the remaining acreage was identified as potentially developable and denied Reclassification. The Commissioner issued this order based on the City's willingness to work with the Department in accommodating an enhancement in the value of the potentially developable lands.

#### *General Plan Amendment 4-GP-2002*

Following the API Reclassification, the City and ASLD conducted an examination of the area, which culminated in the drafting of Major General Plan Amendment 4-GP-2002 (the "Amendment"). The Amendment was the first step in executing the conditions specified in the Order. In a joint planning effort, the City and the Department undertook an extensive study and public outreach process to revise the General Plan. This effort sought to meet the City and community visions and goals for the area, while enhancing the value of the State Trust land. A

number of open houses, neighborhood meetings, mailed comments and public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council resulted in the drafting and adoption of the Amendment. The Amendment calls for incorporating the open desert and mountain character by including characteristics such as:

- Scenic Corridors along major roads to provide a sense of openness for the community;
- Vista Corridors along washes to provide visual linkages and preserve habitat linkages for indigenous wildlife, and;
- Housing diversity to offer a range of lot sizes.

The Amendment took a holistic approach in considering changes to various elements of the General Plan including updates to the following elements:

- Land Use Element: The 2001 City General Plan estimated a range of between 7,800 and 9,000 units as being appropriate within the 16,000 acres of State Trust land. Among the changes were the removal of a designated golf course, shifting and reduction of planned Commercial uses, reconfiguration of residential master planning areas, and redesignated the API-reclassified land as “Natural Open Space.” Commercial designations at Stagecoach Pass and Pima roads were removed from the plan reducing the gross acreage planned for Commercial from 70 to 40 acres. The plan provided more flexibility to the Department for future uses through consolidating Master Planning Areas with higher potential value within the non-reclassified acreage. The overall changes established through the Land Use Element of 4-GP-2002 resulted in a decrease in the estimated dwelling units by over 20%, from the General Plan estimate to 6,261.
- Open Space and Recreation Element: the open space map was updated to reflect the Natural Open Space to be acquired by the City through the Reclassification, and;
- Public Services and Facilities Element: addressed the potential for a new school within the area in the event of development.

About two square miles of land within the Amendment area also lies within the area covered by the Desert Foothills Character Area Plan, which will be followed when or if the land is developed.

#### *Proposed Rezoning*

To aid in determining appropriate zoning across the Subject Land, nine Master Planning Areas have been identified which contain 32 distinct Parcels (see the attached Exhibit B: Master Planning Areas, and Exhibit C: Master Planning Areas and Parcels). The design closely aligns with the conceptual land use plan for the Subject Land established in 4-GP-2002.

The proposed rezoning incorporates Scenic Corridors on the Subject Land along Pima Road Scottsdale Road and Dynamite Boulevard, and enhances the corridors’ ability to serve as practical and aesthetic buffers to existing neighborhoods through setbacks, right of way

specifications, and a number of design standards to ensure a visually appealing transition zone. In addition, where potential new development abuts existing neighborhoods, each parcel has a lower intensity of use than the existing adjacent development.

This proposed rezoning is a continuation of the joint planning effort between the City and the Department that began in 2001. As such the proposal, aims to match each Master Planning Area identified in 4-GP-2002 with an appropriate zoning category (see the attached Exhibit D: Land Use and Proposed Zoning).

- Rural Neighborhoods have proposed zoning categories ranging from R1-130 to R1-35, with intensity varying based upon a number of factors such as surrounding uses, slope, and drainage.
- Suburban Neighborhoods have proposed zoning categories ranging from R1-43 to R1-7 with intensity varying based upon a number of factors such as surrounding uses, slope, and drainage.
- Commercial land use within Master Planning Area 9 has a proposed zoning of PCC. This designation allows for a large variety of retail goods and personal and professional services for multiple neighborhoods. The siting has been moved since 4-GP-2002, when it was adjacent to the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. It has migrated south from what is now Parcel L-5 along Pima Road, to Master Planning Area 9 on Scottsdale Road.
- Resorts/Tourism land use has been planned on Parcels K-4 and K-9, with approximately half located along Scottsdale Road adjacent to the Commercial Parcel and the other half enclosed in Master Planning Area 4. Each Parcel has a proposed zoning of R4-R, which allows for townhomes within the resort property.
- Natural Open Space is identified in Master Planning Areas 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 9. These open space areas will improve connectivity through the site and aid in the integration into the surrounding desert and mountain landscape.

The reconfiguring of land uses and additional allocation of Open Space within this proposal would reduce the estimated number of dwelling units on the subject land from 6,261, as envisioned in 4-GP-2002 to 5,000 - a reduction of over 20%.

### **Sensitive Design Principles**

The City has established a set of design principles to help sustain the community and its quality of life. This proposal strives to incorporate these ideas and respect the unique character of the area. Through the steps below, this proposal will help to reinforce the quality of design advocated by the Sensitive Design Program. Each design element will be expected to be incorporated into any future developments within the planning area, as the concepts are central to

maintain the feel and character of the area. The principles are listed below in italics followed by a brief description of how these principles have been, or will be, addressed.

1. *The design character of any area should be enhanced and strengthened by new development. The building design should consider the distinctive qualities and character of the surrounding context and, as appropriate, incorporate those qualities in its design. The building design should be sensitive to the evolving context of an area over time.*

The open desert and mountain environment will be strengthened through the integration of Scenic and Vista Corridors, and open space amenities, which have been incorporated into this proposal. The land use and proposed zoning establishes a framework for enhancing the area through the preservation of major riparian corridors providing important habitat connectivity throughout the site (see the attached Exhibit E: Open Space).

2. *Development, through appropriate siting and orientation of buildings, should recognize and preserve established major vistas, as well as protect natural features such as scenic views of the Sonoran desert and mountains and archaeological and historical resource.*

Views of the desert and mountains will be preserved using Scenic and Vista Corridors. Scenic Corridors along Scottsdale Road and Pima Road will preserve existing sightlines and a sense of openness. Vista Corridors along preserved washes will maintain wildlife connectivity, and provide visual links throughout the site. Transition zones have been created along the edges of the parcels to ensure that new development will have a lower intensity than adjacent existing development.

3. *Development should be sensitive to existing topography and landscaping. A design should respond to the unique terrain of the site by blending with the natural shape and texture of the land while minimizing disturbances to the natural environment.*

Environmentally sensitive features on the site have been identified and designated as Open Space. Factors examined include drainage, slope, elevation, soil type and flood zones. This preliminary site analysis was used to inform the proposed zoning and mitigate impact to environmentally sensitive features.

4. *Development should protect the character of the Sonoran desert by preserving and restoring natural habitats and ecological processes.*

Parcels E-2, H-3, H-4, H-5, CC-1A, R-6, W-8, and BB-9, were identified as high-priority washes and are designated as Natural Open Space. These parcels comprise approximately 563 acres, which will be set aside to preserve important natural habitat and trail linkages through the site (see the attached Exhibit F: Trails and Power Lines).

5. *The design of the public realm, including streetscapes, parks, plazas and civic amenities, is an opportunity to provide identity to the community and to convey its design expectations. Streetscapes should provide continuity among adjacent uses through use of cohesive landscaping, decorative paving, street furniture, public art and integrated infrastructure elements.*

The ultimate developer will be responsible for implementation of specific streetscape design.

6. *Developments should integrate alternative modes of transportation, including bicycles and bus access, within the pedestrian network that encourage social contact and interaction within the community.*

A transportation network has been identified to provide connectivity and integrate the site into the fabric of the existing infrastructure. Streets, trails, and a power line corridor provide access to and through the site, strengthening access from surrounding neighborhoods to the McDowell Sonoran Preserve (see the attached Exhibit F: Trails and Power Lines and Exhibit G: Transportation and Access).

7. *Development should show consideration for the pedestrian by providing landscaping and shading elements as well as inviting access connections to adjacent developments. Design elements should be included to reflect a human scale, such as the use of shelter and shade for the pedestrian and a variety of building masses.*

The ultimate developer will be responsible for implementing pedestrian scale design and landscaping elements.

8. *Buildings should be designed with a logical hierarchy of masses to control the visual impact of a building's height and size and to highlight important building volumes and features, such as the building entry.*

Scenic vistas along major thoroughfares ensure appropriate setbacks will be utilized to preserve the natural sightlines and maintain an open feel. A future developer of the property will address building specific design.

9. *The design of the built environment should respond to the desert environment. Interior spaces should be extended into the outdoors both physically and visually when appropriate. Materials with colors and coarse textures associated with this region should be utilized. A variety of textures and natural materials should be used to provide visual interest and richness, particularly at the pedestrian level. Materials should be used honestly and reflect their inherent qualities. Features such as shade structures, deep roof overhangs and recessed windows should be incorporated.*

The ultimate developer will be responsible for implementing physical and visual design elements.

10. *Developments should strive to incorporate sustainable and healthy building practices and products. Design strategies and building techniques, which minimize environmental impact, reduce energy consumption, and endure over time, should be utilized.*

The ultimate developer will be responsible for implementing sustainable and healthy building practices.

11. *Landscape design should respond to the desert environment by utilizing a variety of mature landscape materials indigenous to the arid region. The character of the area should be emphasized through the careful selection of planting materials in terms of scale, density, and arrangement. The landscaping should complement the built environment while relating to the various uses.*

The ultimate developer will be responsible for implementing appropriate landscape design.

12. *Site design should incorporate techniques for efficient water use by providing desert adapted landscaping and preserving native plants. Water, as a landscape element, should be used judiciously. Water features should be placed in locations with high pedestrian activity.*

The ultimate developer will be responsible for implementing appropriate water use techniques.

13. *The extent and quality of lighting should be integrally designed as part of the built environment. A balance should occur between the ambient light levels and designated focal lighting needs. Lighting should be designed to minimize glare and invasive overflow, to conserve energy, and to reflect the character of the area.*

The ultimate developer will be responsible for implementing appropriate lighting.

14. *Signage should consider the distinctive qualities and character of the surrounding context in terms of size, color, location and illumination. Signage should be designed to*

*be complementary to the architecture, landscaping and design theme for the site, with due consideration for visibility and legibility.*

The ultimate developer will be responsible for implementing appropriate context based design techniques.

### **Conclusion**

This zoning application is the final step in completing the collaborative process initiated by the City's API petition and subsequent purchase of approximately 13,000 acres of State Trust land for the McDowell Sonoran Preserve through the API process. As outlined in the State Land Commissioner's Order No. 078-2001/2002, the reclassification of was ordered subject to the City of Scottsdale's willingness to accommodate an enhancement of land values for the remaining State Trust land.

The current zoning on the Subject Land is not representative of the uses and densities approved in the joint planning effort between the City and the Department in 4-GP-2002. The Proposed Zoning in this application seeks to bring entitlements into conformance with the Land Use Element of the General Plan as mandated by state statute. The Department looks forward to working with Scottsdale's residents, City staff, the Planning Commission and the City Council as we move forward together to implement zoning consistent with the Land Use Element of 4-GP-2002 and the adopted General Plan.