



CITY OF LAS CRUCES

REALIZE LAS CRUCES AD HOC COMMITTEE COMMISSION

Following are the minutes from the City of Las Cruces Realize Las Cruces Ad Hoc Committee Meeting held Wednesday, September 20, 2023, at 3:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Christopher Brown
Scott Kaiser
John Moscato
George Pearson
Sharon Thomas
Matt Kenney

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Daniel G. Buck
Dan Carter
Arturo Duran
Ken Odenheim
Paul Pompeo
Luis Rios
Dawn Sanchez

STAFF PRESENT:

Sara Gonzales, Senior Planner, Community Development
David Sedillo, Director of Public Works
David Weir, Deputy Director Community Planning
Larry Nichols, Director Community Development
Mark Miller, Planner, Community Development
Cathy Mathews, Landscape Architect, Parks & Rec
Steven Bingham, Director, Parks & Recreation

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order.

II. CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - 08/16/23:

Saved until quorum is present.

IV. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1
2 **1. Chapter 3. Zoning Regulations**
3

4 The Mesquite Overlay will be left as is until later and then public outreach can
5 be done for any changes. On page 108 regarding the airport, the numbers
6 were questioned at the last meeting. On page 106 regarding town centers, the
7 minimum of two stories should not be required. There should be some
8 allowance for one story, for businesses that do not want other activities near
9 them. Elevate dictates the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is 1 to 2+ so the buildings
10 can be single-story as long as the ratio is followed. This would be better than
11 requiring multi-story buildings alone, as it allows flexibility for the developer to
12 find the best way to achieve the required density. Members are curious about
13 how other cities handle this concept, as someone like Homeland Security will
14 want the entire building for themselves but it would be nice for the employees
15 to live nearby. Staff will research, as well as take the question regarding
16 minimum height versus the FAR versus other tools they have seen other
17 communities use.

18
19 Staff has also been looking into where the numbers such as 80% single use
20 comes from in town centers. Members asked how many acres and how many
21 lots in those acres will make up a town center, and if the town center should
22 prohibit having an office building larger than 20,000 square feet. It was
23 discussed that keeping the footprint small will force large companies to build
24 upward for the extra room. Taller buildings will create an urban feel, as though
25 a person is in an "outdoor room." The new town centers will go in around
26 Sonoma Ranch, Country Club, and other locations. There are currently no
27 restriction to single-story buildings along Sonoma Ranch, but there was no
28 market for multi-story buildings. The argument is that there was no code saying
29 that the new buildings should be multi-story and so they were not built that way.
30 Board Members questioned the requirement for at least 50% transparency on
31 the ground floor front facade of buildings. Businesses that need privacy will not
32 want to have that much visibility into their offices. It was suggested to change
33 that to minimum 20%, maximum 60% depending on use. The consultants are
34 researching town centers around the country to see what is successful in other
35 places. There should be enough transparency to allow people to see retail
36 wares, and more eyes on the street will help deter crime. This section will be
37 left alone until the consultants bring their suggestions to the Board.

38
39 The South Mesquite Overlay will be left until later. South Mesquite has a
40 different demolition process. The South Mesquite Historic Preservation
41 Committee takes care of that. Demolition permits across the City are also
42 different for different old buildings. The new Code will create demolition permit
43 processes for all buildings over 50 years old, as well as the more current
44 buildings. Once Realize is adopted the City will reach out to all the different
45 districts to see about opportunities for increasing density, and if are no
46 opportunities for change, the City will simply add them to the current ordinance

1 and remove that as a district by itself. South Mesquite will be the first to get
2 that chance since they went to so much effort in 2013 to set that up. The
3 original townsite and some of the surrounding area have a height restriction of
4 14 feet on the buildings. It was suggested to restrict that to the original townsite
5 only and open the surrounding area up to the new regulations to increase
6 density around the Downtown. Currently the City plans to have public outreach
7 for that entire area and allow the residents to see how Realize works and
8 hopefully join in on their own.
9

10 The Downtown Overlay starts on page 131. There were many variances
11 needed for signs and such, so staff is looking for suggestions in this area.
12 There is a requirement for 60% transparency on the storefronts. Glazing is yet
13 to be decided, as it is difficult to tell how dark it can be and still allow people to
14 see what the shop has. Land uses have changed and cottage industry has
15 been removed. Parking will stay the same. The current parking lots there are
16 considered sufficient. Staff requests comments via e-mail. The Downtown is
17 also a TID and MRA. Staff expects to find tweaks that are needed as time goes
18 along and hopes to incorporate those into ordinance as they come up.
19 Residential units are allowed, both single-family and multifamily. There is not
20 a minimum requirement for residential space per square foot of retail space.
21 Accessory dwelling units are limited to 600 square feet per story, but there is
22 no prohibition against building upward or adding multiple units on the property.
23 The City encourages redevelopment of the parking lots Downtown into mixed-
24 use apartments. The illustrations on page 135 need to have the colors
25 tweaked. Board Members associate grey with parking. The notations are not
26 clear either. A suggestion was made to create another sketch of the entire
27 property so the relationship between the primary and accessory buildings can
28 be seen. These graphics were taken from current Code. Board Members
29 would like to see better and clearer graphics. There are three zones in
30 Downtown and each one has different height requirements or restrictions.
31 Pages 137 and 136 talk about a five-story parking garage. It is something the
32 City has considered in the past. Board Members suggested that it would be a
33 good thing, so the density can be put in the subsequent vacant lots if a garage
34 was built. Board Members suggested that providing alter
35

36 native methods of travel will eliminate the need for cars and a parking garage.
37 Parking Downtown has been controversial in the past. Data shows that making
38 parking more expensive will reduce the number of people driving and increase
39 business. The idea behind the parking garage was more for visitors to have a
40 place to leave their car close by while they walk the Downtown. It also
41 incorporated the multiuse concept with possible first-floor retail and other
42 things. It was reiterated that building more bike lanes and multiuse paths will
43 eliminate the need for parking and a parking garage. In El Paso, there is a
44 parking garage that incorporates a transit terminal in the lower floor for buses,
45 the next floor is limited retail, and the last few stories are for parking and a
46 three-story bike rack. Five stories will likely be needed to make it economically

1 feasible, as this is a very expensive structure. Board Members will read the
2 draft more carefully and e-mail comments to staff. Page 163 starts the zoning
3 requirements and the overlay districts will come after this. This section
4 proposes suburban uses, land uses, and how they should be designed and
5 developed. The entire City will be zoned with a character or traditional zone
6 and the uses will be in it, and then the overlays will talk about the form or what
7 the buildings and things will look like.

8
9 There will be a Mixed Use Overlay and Town Center Overlay. Staff has
10 suggested that the categories named Residential, Neighborhood, and Mixed
11 Use be changed to Neighborhood 1, 2, and 3 to eliminate confusion between
12 the Mixed Use District and Mixed Use Overlay. District Character will be used
13 to determine what uses will fit into the district and the asterisk indicates that the
14 use-based standards apply and those are in the beginning of the document. A
15 suggestion was made to consolidate all the information with an asterisk into its
16 own table or technical manual, as there are so many throughout this section
17 and it is confusing.

18
19 People in residential areas are getting upset about people playing pickleball
20 late at night and keeping people up. This issue also exists for basketball courts
21 and tennis courts. A suggestion was made to move the courts 30 yards back
22 from the homes and then the noise will be quiet enough not to notice. There
23 has been discussion about removing parking minimums and making them just
24 a recommendation. A meeting in the City Manager's Conference Room
25 concluded that the proper recommendation was for infill development areas,
26 urban place type in Elevate, and in town centers and overlays there should be
27 no minimum parking requirement, but required bicycle parking. With the infill
28 development, the infrastructure needs to be examined to determine if parking
29 spaces will be needed. Some of the streets in Las Cruces are too narrow to
30 provide on-street parking for residents. Board Members do not wish to provide
31 more parking in order to discourage people from driving cars. Page 188
32 discusses neighborhood centers. Staff is proposing that this be a Special Use
33 Permit and that it can be located anywhere within the City and adjacent
34 property owners will have an opportunity to be aware of the higher use being
35 proposed. Activity included could be a small retail center or offices with parking
36 in the back and landscaping in the front. Property owners in an existing
37 neighborhood with no retail would submit a Special Use Permit to the
38 Community Development Department and they would be required to show site
39 plans and elevations of their proposal, the Department would review the
40 information and take it to the Planning And Zoning Commission, similar to an
41 infill review. Wording was suggested such as "In a residential district a grocery
42 up to 2,500 square feet is allowed with a Special Use Permit" and then indicate
43 the Development Standards to give specifics. This will change the
44 neighborhood center from a use to a type. The neighborhood center will be
45 placed on intersections of collectors and larger roadways. Neighborhood
46 Centers will resemble something like the corner of Shalem Colony and Picacho

1 in Fairacres, with a market and gas station possibly. It was suggested to
2 specify the types of retail and design criteria for neighborhood centers in order
3 to ensure that people start the right businesses. If the size of the building is
4 reduced from 10,000 square feet then the Special Use Permit may not be
5 needed. A suggestion was made to limit a neighborhood grocery store to 3,000
6 square feet and make it required to have 10% of their merchandise be fresh
7 vegetables and fruits. Staff will watch how the land uses are affected and what
8 works and does not. Staff requested comments specifically on land uses and
9 the land use table. The land use table now is taken directly from current Code.

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11 **V. NEXT MEETING:**

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13 **VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

14
15 **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

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22 _____
Chairperson