Planning & Zoning Commission 01/25/2022
CASE 21ZO: CONCEPT PLAN AMENDMENT

STAFF CONTACT: Vincent M. Banegas, (575) 528-3085, vbanegas@las-cruces.org
OWNER: Sierra Norte Development Inc.
REPRESENTATIVE: Same
COUNCIL DISTRICT: District #5
SITE LOCATION: Lands within Metro Verde and Metro Verde South Planned Unit Development (PUD) bounded by Dragonfly Boulevard (north), Engler Road/Thurmond Road (south), Jornada Road (east) and city limit boundary (west).
EXISTING ZONING: PUD (Planned Unit Development)
REQUEST: Consolidation and amendment to the Metro Verde and Metro Verde South PUDs thereby making the development and its concept plan known as Metro Verde Planned Unit Development (consolidation and 12-year update).
RELATED APPLICATIONS: N/A
STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval

SUMMARY OF REQUEST CASE 20ZO3000083:
A Concept Plan amendment to consolidate related amendments and update the development objectives originally approved for the Metro Verde and Metro Verde South PUD concept plans. This amendment covers all lands within the Metro Verde and Metro Verde South concept plan boundaries encompassing ±2,123 acres, generally located and bounded by Dragonfly Boulevard (north), Engler Road/Thurmond Road (south), Jornada Road (east) and city limit boundary (west). The zoning of all applicable lands is Planned Unit Development (PUD). The proposed amendment addresses a variety of development related topics which help aid in determining the appropriateness of development in context to area surroundings, approved development regulations, and approved policy pursuant to the Elevate Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan, and companion plan policy. The development is within Council District 5. Submitted by Sierra Norte Development Inc. for Sierra Norte Land Holdings LLC, property owner.
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION:
Staff Recommendation: APPROVAL based on the findings listed below:
1. Several major and minor amendments have taken place over the years related to both PUD areas resulting at times in staff uncertainty as to the applicable provisions that pertain to area development. This consolidation seeks to combine all said amendments into concept plan document making further PUD development proposals easier to address.
2. The proposed concept plan amendment is compliant with Section 38-49.
3. More specifically, the proposed concept plan amendment follows earlier efforts to balance flexibility in development to benefits the community receives (Sections 38-49.A.6. and 38-49.B.4.)
4. The proposed concept plan amendment addresses all relevant development related issues in both a specific and conceptual manner as applicable and as addressed in Section 38-49.C.
5. The proposed concept plan amendment is supported by various goals, objectives and policies found with Elevate Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan and companion planning documents.

PROPOSAL AND LAND USE HISTORY
PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
The PUD area is generally located in an area bounded by Dragonfly Boulevard (north), Engler Road/Thurmond Road (south), Jornada Road (east) and city limit boundary (west). The concept plan amendment area encompasses ± 2,123 acres and contains land that is currently developed with many acres undeveloped. The proposed amendment seeks to combine areas within both the Metro Verde PUD and the Metro Verde South PUD. The amendment allows both staff and developer an opportunity to add, remove, clarify, and update development provisions and strategies as originally outlined in the Metro Verde and Metro Verde South PUDs.

As presented, the consolidated concept plan maintains several strategies that were outlined in the original Metro Verde PUD and its major amendment as well as those found in Metro Verde South PUD and its companion amendments. It also, introduces a few new concepts that were not outlined previously. Some of the key strategies addressed include: mixed land use, compact building design/urban form, range of housing choices/opportunities including missing middle housing, affordable housing targets and phasing, walkable neighborhoods, provisions for passive and active recreational opportunities, multi-modal transportation de-emphasizing the automobile, pedestrian safety through design, neighborhood centers/village or town centers (Neighborhood Mixed-Use Nodes) and tying use and design to Elevate Comprehensive Plan concepts and forthcoming Realize Las Cruces development code implementation, architectural design standards, and finally inclusion of 300 acres of land not previously included in either PUD boundary that will require a future amendment to provide appropriate concept planning prior to development.

In terms of provisions eliminated or de-emphasized beyond what may have already been accomplished through ongoing development, elements include: Neighborhood
Mixed-Use Corridor concepts, hybrid form-based code elements, and green building/development strategies.

**LAND USE HISTORY:**
The area was first annexed in 2006 through two annexation efforts called Sierra Norte Annexation I (± 1964 acres) and II (± 322 acres). Originally, approved through non-PUD provisions, the Sierra Norte annexed areas received approval for the respective master plans seeking development of a premiere golf course to serve as an anchor for a mixed-use development style consistent with and supported by the preceding 1999 Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan. Aside from the development of the golf course as originally conceived, four other major development milestones took place.

Metro Verde became the first PUD approved in the subject area. The Metro Verde PUD was approved in 2008 and contained approximately 187 acres along the northernmost boundary of the proposed amendment area immediately adjacent to the golf course. The PUD introduced elements of “green” development strategies such as water harvesting, and multi-modal transportation that de-emphasized the automobile, mixed-use development, housing variety emphasizing a compact form, and architectural design standards to tie all elements together were promoted.

The second milestone was the approval of the Metro Verde South PUD in 2011. This PUD area contained approximately 892 acres and was generally south of Arroyo Road. This PUD took the concepts of Metro Verde much further incorporating greater emphasis toward walkability, preservation of open space and sensitive environmental areas through design, opportunities for both passive and active recreation, greater emphasis on “green building” strategies, introducing the Neighborhood Mixed-Use Corridor (NMUC) and a hybrid form-based code concept to facilitate development along the corridor.

Originally introduced in late 2001, the Metro Verde PUD amendment #1 became the third milestone and was later approved in 4/2012. This amendment involved approximately 695 acres and included the area addressed in the original Metro Verde PUD adding the golf course and lands immediately south of the golf course. With exception to the NMCU concept and the level of specificity that Metro Verde South PUD talked to, the concepts outlined by this amendment were the same.

Finally, the Metro Verde South PUD, Amendment #5 culminates the significant changes to the Metro Verde PUD properties. This amendment was approved in 2019 and involved approximately 323 acres of land generally located on either side of Sonoma Ranch Boulevard, south of Peachtree Hills Road and north of lands located immediately south of Engler Road. The amendment brought forward clarification of design standards (cul de sac use, road cross sections, etc.), increased affordable housing goals, cleaned up administrative concerns, and introduced additional mixed-use centers that were to use the hybrid form-based code model once established.

As the numbering sequence implies, other amendments (minor) were processed along the timeline identified but did not rise to the level of significance as those
presented. Development in the Metro Verde area continues relatively fast paced to date and has implemented in part some of the strategies outlined in the various PUD documents.

**ZONING DECISION CRITERIA AND POLICIES**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY</th>
<th>DOES IT COMPLY?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Character and Compatibility</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Elevate Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thoroughfare Plans</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Criteria for PUD: Section 38-49 D.(d)(1) b</td>
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**NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AND COMPATIBILITY:**

Much of the area surrounding the proposed Metro Verde consolidation amendment boundary is vacant. Most of the development within Metro Verde has occurred in the southernmost section and it is here where adjacent development outside the boundary exists. From a compatibility perspective however, what is being proposed continues to follow what generally was approved and thus, remain consistent with applicable approved concept plan and adjacent development.

**COMPLIANCE WITH ELEVATE LAS CRUCES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:**

The property is located on in the Suburban Neighborhood Place Type as shown on the Future Development Map in the Elevate Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan. The comprehensive plan has numerous goals, policies and actions that support the proposed amendment and concept plan elements. For the sake of brevity however, the following is a list of some of the key supporting goals and policies only.

Goal CE-3: Community Environment - Support community growth through concentrated development at activity centers and along key corridors.
- Policy CE-3.1 – Promote the development of mixed-use centers to support surrounding neighborhoods and serve as focal points for community life.
- Policy CE-3.2 – Allow for a mix of development type and intensity along major thoroughfares that reflects surrounding urban, suburban, and rural contexts.

Goal CE-4: Complete Neighborhoods – Develop mixed-use neighborhoods that incorporate a wide range of recreational, commercial, employment, and civic uses.
- Policy CE-4.1 – Encourage a variety of housing types into new and redeveloping neighborhoods to provide options for all ages and incomes throughout the city.
- Policy CE-4.2 – Incorporate employment and shopping nodes into new and redeveloping neighborhoods to provide residents with convenient access to services. Encourage a variety of housing types into new and redeveloping
neighborhoods to provide options for all ages and incomes throughout the city.
  o  Policy CE-4.3 – Develop street networks that provide connectivity within and between residential areas and supporting centers of activity.
  o  Policy CE-4.4 – Integrate parks, schools, and other civic space into neighborhoods.

Goal CE-5: Building and Site Design - Establish standards to integrate new development with surrounding built and natural features while mitigating long-term natural resource and climate impacts.
  o  Policy CE-5.1: Promote building form and scale that complements surrounding neighborhoods and creates strong linkages between the development site, the street, and other public grounds.
  o  Policy CE 5.2: Utilize building materials that accentuate the city’s cultural and historic heritage and natural surroundings.
  o  Policy CE-5.3: Ensure that development concepts provide an interconnected network of pedestrian facilities linking streets, buildings, parking, and public gathering space.
  o  Policy CE-5.4: Provide motor vehicle access and parking options that preserve thoroughfare function and the comfort of pedestrians and bicycles.
  o  Policy CE-5.5: Incorporate landscaping techniques into new development that are aesthetically pleasing while mitigating environmental impacts.

Goal CE-6: Context Sensitive Street Design – Design streets to support varying levels of pedestrian activity based on the intended built context of surrounding development.
  o  Policy CE-6.2 – Design and construct city streets that support vehicular, truck, bus, pedestrian, and bicycle travel within the same right-of-way.

Goal CP-7: Attainable housing – Provide affordable, clean, and safe housing options for all residents regardless of income.
  o  Policy CP-7.1 – Coordinate with local community organizations to provide education and implement attainable housing.
  o  Policy CP-7.2 – Disperse affordable housing units to promote the development of mixed-income neighborhoods.

Goal CP-9: Housing Diversity – Provide a diverse range of housing options to accommodate residents at all stages in life.
  o  Policy CP-9.1 – Encourage the use of alternative housing types, styles, and living arrangements as a means to provide additional housing opportunities.
  o  Policy CP-9.2 – Promote denser housing options in the urban neighborhood, downtown, town centers, neighborhood centers, and mixed-use corridors identified in the future development map.

Goal CL-3: Accessible Parkland – Provide convenient access to a variety of park and open space lands.
  o  Policy CL-3.2 – Build a community wide network of multi-use trails to support the fitness, recreational, and transportation needs of residents.

Goal CL-7: Transportation -Land Use Connection – Develop an accessible and efficient transportation systems that provides seamless connectivity to surrounding land uses and complements various development patterns.
- Policy CL-7.2 – Promote street interconnectivity within and between neighborhoods, between commercial developments, and within town centers and neighborhood centers.

Goal CL-8: Multi-modal System – Develop an equitable, multi-modal transportation system that presents feasible travel options for residents.
- Policy CL-8.1 – Design new and retrofit existing streets in a manner that balance the needs of all modes and users.
- Policy CL-8.4 – Require the inclusion of safe and connected bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure with all new roadways or roadway reconstruction.

Goal CL-9: Transportation Safety – Incorporate public health and safety enhancements into transportation system investments and policies.
- Policy CL-9.1 – Promote measures to calm traffic, particularly within residential areas.

As shown above, Elevate Las Cruces provides ample support for the Metro Verde consolidated pud concept planning effort. Said support has remained consistent with all the original concept planning and subsequent amendments to date.

**COMPLIANCE WITH THOROUGHFARE PLAN:**
Arterials and one collector roadway as defined by Elevate Las Cruces and the Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MVMPO) makeup the significant roadways within the Metro Verde PUD boundaries. Sonoma Ranch, Arroyo Road, and Engler/Thurmond Road serve as the prominent directional roadways within the PUD boundaries. They are major arterials designed with a 120-foot right-of-way cross sections when said roadways fall entirely within the boundaries of the PUD. When adjacent, the developer as per code, is only responsible for their pro-rata share of the roadway and thus, right-of-way widths and anticipated build-out may differ. Other development constraints may also alter design of the roadway at appropriate intersection transitions. Peachtree Hills Road is designated as a minor arterial and is designed with a 100’ right-of-way cross section. Lisa Lane is the sole collector roadway having only a 68-foot right-of-way width which deviates from the typical 85-foot design standard width. Peachtree 100s one thoroughfare as classified by the MPO associated with the proposed final site plan. Sonoma Ranch Blvd. is a minor arterial that is being constructed through the Voluntary Assessment District (VAD). All other roadways are designated as local roadways that vary between 42, 46, 60, and 90 feet in width.

**OBJECTIVES OF PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT:**
The purpose of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) is to:
1. Comply with growth management policy as established in the land use element, other applicable elements, and all companion documents to the comprehensive plan;
2. Produce more flexibility in development than would result from a strict application of this Code;
3. Permit design flexibility that will encourage a more creative approach to the development of land and that will result in more efficient and aesthetically desirable alternatives to the housing and other development needs of the community;
(4) Permit flexibility in land use, density, placement of buildings, arrangement of open space, circulation facilities, and off-street parking areas, and maximize the potential of individual sites under development;
(5) Promote the infill of vacant land; and
(6) Create developments that balance the benefits to the community with the developer's interests.

Approval of a PUD concept plan (major amendment) must receive a recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Commission to the Las Cruces City Council. City Council is the final authority on the request. Concept Plan recommendations and decisions are based on findings and as presented, the findings show strong support for the pending request.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS
SITE COMPLIANCE FOR CURRENT USE:
The subject property within the PUD boundary is roughly 25% developed with the majority of land undeveloped. All applicable properties except for the 300 acres referenced in the report that are being included through this amendment effort are zoned PUD (1,823 acres) and under an approved Concept Plan. Given this fact, the current use is acceptable whether left unchanged or amended as proposed. The 300 acres located directly north of Arroyo Road In relation to all land uses, transportation network and other development elements associated with the PUD.

SITE SUITABILITY FOR PROPOSED USE:
In that the current PUD exists, amending the PUD as proposed with inclusion of the 300 acres makes perfect sense. Many of the proposed concept plan elements proposed are in line with previous concept plan approvals. The 300 acre portion directly north of Arroyo Road and presently under consideration for inclusion has multiple zoning designations of split C-3 (Commercial High Intensity)/R-1a (Single-Family Medium Density), R-1b (Single-Family High Density), M-1 (Industrial Standard), R-4 (Multi-Dwelling High Density and Limited Retail and Office), and C-3. Merging this acreage into the Metro Verde proposal will help achieve a consistent development pattern in the area.

ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES:
City water, sewer and gas serves the Metro Verde development as it exists to date. The concept plan does reflect a public benefit of having Metro Verde established as a zero-carbon development with no new natural gas infrastructure provided for new residential developments with subdivision construction beginning this year. Any applicable utility extension and/or upgrade of service will follow development and be made available as need dictates. Capacity to serve should not be an issue with the proposed built out. All roadways within the development will be constructed by the developer to meet the design standards either already approved by the city and/or proposed via the PUD concept plan.

FLOOD PLAIN: A vast majority of property is not located in a designated flood zone. A relatively small area located near the intersection of Sonoma Ranch Boulevard and Central Avenue has a FEMA designation of A which is indicative of a yearly 1% chance of inundation.
STAFF AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND INPUT:
Notice of a Public Hearing was mailed to all property owners within 500 feet of the subject property and all property owners within the proposed boundaries. As of this report’s writing, staff has not received any input on the proposal.

STAFF COMMENTS:
No reviewing departments had any negative technical comments on the proposed concept plan amendment. On January 12, 2022, the DRC reviewed the proposed concept plan amendment and recommended unanimous approval to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

ATTACHMENTS:
1. Zoning Map
2. Aerial Map
3. Proposed Metro Verde Planned Unit Development Concept Plan Consolidated 12-Year Amendment
4. Department Comments
ATTACHMENT 2

Aerial Map
ATTACHMENT 4
Department Review Comments

Department: Planning
Status: YES

Department: Traffic Engineering
Status: YES

Department: Engineering
Status: YES

Department: Parks and Recreation
Status: YES

Department: Utility Engineering
STATUS: YES

Department: Fire
Status: YES

Department: City MPO
Status: YES

Department: CLC Flood Administration
Status: YES