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## STAFF REPORT

CASE # GPA23-02

To: Planning and Zoning Commission  
 Through: Rick Williams, Development Services, Planning Manager  
 From: Derek Scheerer, Development Services, Planner II  
 Meeting Date: September 25, 2023

## REQUEST SUMMARY

**PUBLIC HEARING: Major General Plan Amendment, GPA23-02 Pecan Groves:** A request by CVL Consultants on behalf of Maricopa 80, LLC, to amend the General Plan Future Land Use Map for approximately 80 +/- acres from existing Low Density Residential (L), to Medium Density Residential (M) and Commercial (C) for the future development of a single-family residential community and commercial area, generally located at the northwest corner of W. Steen Rd. and N. Murphy Rd. **DISCUSSION ONLY.**

*As required by Arizona Statute for Major General Plan Amendments, the Commission will conduct two separate public hearings at different locations within the municipality to promote citizen participation. The first public hearing, at the Maricopa Library and Cultural Center, is an opportunity for the public to comment; no action will be taken by the Commission as that will occur at the second public hearing scheduled for October 23, 2023, at City Hall. The second public hearing will be an additional opportunity for the public to comment along with action by the Commission.*

## APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER

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**Maricopa 80, LLC**  
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## COUNCIL PRIORITIES CONSIDERED

- Quality of Life
- Economic Sustainability
- Managing the Future

## PROJECT DATA

Site Gross Acres	80 +/- gross acres
Site Addresses	Unassigned
Existing Site Uses	Agricultural
Proposed Site Uses	Single-Family Residential, Commercial
Existing General Plan, Land Use	Low Density Residential (L)
Proposed General Plan, Land Uses	Medium Density Residential (M), Commercial (C)
Existing Zoning	Industrial (CI-2)

## SURROUNDING ZONING/LAND USE

Direction	General Plan Land Use	Existing Zoning	Existing Use
North	Low Density Residential (L), Medium Density Residential (M), Commercial (C)	Industrial (CI-2), Maricopa 40 Planned Area Development (PAD)	Agricultural/Single-Family Residence
East	Master Planned Community (MPC)	Murphy and Farrell Planned Area Development (PAD)	Agricultural
South	Medium Density Residential (M)	Eagle Shadows Planned Area Development (PAD)	Agricultural
West	Master Planned Community (MPC)	Cortona Planned Area Development (PAD)	Agricultural

## ANALYSIS

The city's General Plan is intended to provide a framework for all of the interrelated functions of the City of Maricopa. The General Plan is an expression of the preferences of residents and property owners; a statement of City policy designed to achieve the citizen's vision; a framework for future decision making; and a means of enhancing the quality of life of the citizens. The General Plan is not a tool to promote special interests; not a rigid document that is inflexible; not a detailed policy or ordinance for specific properties or areas; not a Capital Improvement Plan; and is not a zoning map. Refer to [Planning Maricopa \(General Plan\)](#) for further information.

The applicant is requesting a Major General Plan Amendment to the Future Land Use Map to convert 80 +/- acres of land designated as Low Density Residential (L) to Medium Density Residential (M) and Commercial (C) for a future single-family residential and commercial development. A separate Planned Area Development (rezone) application will be presented to the Commission in the near future for review and possible approval. The subject property is located at the northwest corner of W. Steen Rd. and N. Murphy Rd.

Under the City of Maricopa adopted General Plan, the site is designated as **Low Density Residential (L)**. The City of Maricopa General Plan states that the purpose of this designation is as follows:

- **Low Density Residential** land use designation accommodates semi-rural large lot development with generous distances to streets and between residential dwelling units and a viable semi-rural character setting. Limited livestock privileges may be a part of this character for areas where lot sizes are a minimum of one acre. Areas in this category are generally larger lots with accessory structures that may be used for animals. The maximum density for this land use category is 2.0 dwelling units per acre (du/ac).

The proposed request would change 80 +/- acres from **Low Density Residential**, to 75 +/- acres **Medium Density Residential** and 5 +/- acres **Commercial**. See descriptions of the **Medium Density Residential** and **Commercial** designations below.

- **Medium Density Residential** provides for a suburban lifestyle with planned, single-family residential neighborhoods, which include significant open space, recreation and cultural opportunities, including schools, churches and neighborhood facilities. Medium density residential developments are expected to contribute to off-site infrastructure needs for which they create a demand including roadways, bridges and grade separated crossings. Medium density residential areas comprise the majority of residential land in the City. The density of this land use category is between 2.0 to 6.0 du/ac.

- **Commercial** land use category provides for commercial nodes on individual parcels. The intent is to provide neighborhood and community scale shopping, offices, medical facilities, and subordinate multi-family residential uses which incorporate pedestrian and neighborhood needs through site planning, architecture, access, lighting and parking design. Single-family residential uses are not supported. For larger parcels, over 40 acres, regional retail development is anticipated in this designation.

The considerations for the General Plan Land Use Map Amendment considers the Plan Administration section of the General Plan itself. Criteria include the following:

- **Land Use Criteria**

**Staff Analysis:** Per the General Plan's Land Use Criteria, any land use change that moves from a Low Density Residential to more intense residential or commercial category for 80 acres or more shall result in a Major Amendment to the city's General Plan. As presented, the proposed change of approx. 80 +/- ac. from Low Density Residential to the more intense Medium Density Residential and Commercial designations trigger the requirement for a Major Amendment.

Per the applicant's narrative, the proposal for Medium Density Residential and Commercial designations are based on a continuation of the Master Planned Community residential development patterns in the area while providing supportive commercial services for the future residences. Per the General Plan, residential growth is encouraged for areas of Maricopa east of White and Parker Rd., which includes the subject property. A variety of housing types are needed to support projected residential growth rates and current market conditions. As the site is not located within or immediately adjacent to a planned Village Center, as designated by the General Plan Future Land Use Map, higher density residential or larger more intense commercial and mixed-use development would not be appropriate for the site. The applicant has justified the following for the requested land-use changes (See Exhibit A – Land Use Analysis):

- The proposed Pecan Groves community will provide additional new housing within the City of Maricopa, adjacent to planned future development. Current market analysis has revealed that there is a lack of housing units on smaller lots which would be well-suited for families, single individuals, young people and/or seniors. A land use modification to Medium Density Residential for the subject property will assist with bringing additional housing to the southeast area of Maricopa, complimenting the current and planned housing options in this area of the City.
- Residential use in the subject location will provide a natural transition between the commercial and adjacent single-family residential areas while providing more housing options for a mixture of economic classes.
- The location precludes large industrial uses, which is what the site is currently zoned for, since heavy truck traffic would pose a safety hazard and certain industrial uses may also pose an environmental hazard for nearby students at the new Maricopa High School No. 2. Both federal and state school and transportation agencies and the EPA discourage heavy industrial development near schools due to these safety concerns.

### **MAJOR GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT FINDINGS:**

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As required by the General Plan, its goals and objectives are of consideration for the proposed request. Refer to Exhibit B – Land Use Analysis, for responses from the applicant regarding the listed elements applicable to this request. Through staff review of the project many aspects of this amendment were analyzed. These aspects included surrounding land uses, circulation, as well as impacts on the surrounding areas and region. Staff found that the proposed major amendment would have no adverse

impact and will meet and fulfill the various goals and objectives stated in the city’s adopted General Plan. Further, the Medium Density Residential (M) and Commercial (C) designations, as demonstrated in this report, would enhance the surrounding areas, complement the surrounding residential land uses and carry forth Maricopa’s Vision stated within the General Plan. After reviewing the application and the request for a Major Amendment it is staff’s opinion that the City of Maricopa General Plan Future Land Use Map be amended to reflect Medium Density Residential (M) and Commercial (C) land uses on the proposed site.

To support the proposed General Plan Amendment, road and drainage improvements on Steen Rd. and Murphy Rd. will be constructed. Drainage improvements should align with other drainage channels that will be built by developments to the east and west of the property along Steen Rd and the proposed regional CLOMR. Roads cross sections and alignments will be determined during pre-plat stage by City Staff and the developer’s consultants.

**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:**

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Before recommending the General Plan Amendment's approval, the applicant provided a public participation plan to demonstrate the materials used to inform surrounding property owners of the proposed General Plan Major Amendment required per the city's Zoning Code. The Public Participation Plan included a neighborhood meeting which was held at the request of anyone who wished to participate, notification letters to all property owners within 600 feet of the subject area, public notice signs within the subject area, and legal notices in the Maricopa Monitor and the Casa Grande Dispatch. Two sets of notices went out, first advertising the neighborhood meeting followed by a second notice advertising the scheduled Planning and Zoning Public Hearings and City Council date. A timeline of the participation event is shown below (refer to Exhibit D – Citizen Participation Report).

- June 28, 2023 - 1<sup>st</sup> Notification letters sent
- July 13, 2023 - Neighborhood meeting
- September 8, 2023 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Notification letters sent
- September 9, 2023 - Newspaper notice published
- September 11, 2023 - Site sign posted
- September 25, 2023 - 1<sup>st</sup> Planning and Zoning Commission meeting

Furthermore, the Major General Plan Amendment has state statutes that further enhance the outreach to include neighboring jurisdictions and state agencies. This notification was completed by staff on July 12, 2023, and the City’s website has provided up-to-date information, attachments, and public meetings regarding the proposal.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

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At the time of writing this report staff has not received any comment for the request.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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No action at this time. Staff will present a formal recommendation at the next scheduled Planning and Commission meeting.

Exhibit B – Land Use Analysis

Exhibit C – Site Context Study

Exhibit D – Citizen Participation Report

-- End of staff report --