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**STAFF REPORT**

**CASE NUMBERS: GPA23-02 & PAD22-17**

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council  
Through: Rodolfo Lopez, Development Services, Director  
From: Derek Scheerer, Development Services, Planner II  
Meeting Date: December 5, 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 (LDR), to Medium Density Residential (MDR) 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 AND ACTION.**

**PUBLIC HEARING: Planned Area Development, PAD22-17 Pecan Groves:** A request by CVL Consultants, on behalf of Maricopa 80, LLC, to rezone approximately 80 +/- acres from existing General Industrial (CI-2) to Planned Area Development (PAD) 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 AND ACTION.**

**APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER**

**CVL Consultants**  
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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 (LDR)
Proposed General Plan, Land Uses	Medium Density Residential (MDR), Commercial (C)
Existing Zoning	Industrial (CI-2)

## SURROUNDING ZONING/LAND USE

Direction	General Plan Land Use	Existing Zoning	Existing Use
North	Low Density Residential (LDR), Medium Density Residential (MDR), 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 (MDR)	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 and a companion Rezone request to convert 80 +/- acres of land designated as Low Density Residential (LDR) and zoned as General Industrial (CI-2) to Medium Density Residential (MDR) and Commercial (C) and Planned Area Development (PAD) zoning for a future single-family residential and commercial development. 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 (LDR)**. 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 D – 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.

## **Rezone**

### **Details of the request:**

Pecan Groves is proposed as a two (2) phased single-family and commercial project that seeks to permit a variety of single-family residential products and neighborhood commercial level development. The proposal is an innovative single-family design consisting of three (3) diverse lot mixes with lot sizes varying from 40' x 115' to 45' x 120' and 60' x 125' covering approximately seventy-five (75) acres. The proposal allows for various lot configurations that may include alley loaded or "z" lot designs with integrated and contiguous open space corridors buffering and connecting the various neighborhoods. The conceptual design of the project will interconnect the residential portions with other residential neighborhoods north and west of the site (not a part of this application) and the proposed commercial area of the project. The proposed interconnectivity provides visual appeal along with a pedestrian friendly environment. The proposed commercial component of the project will cover approximately five (5) acres in the southeast portion of the project adjacent to N. Murphy Road. This portion, a separate second phase of the project, will provide interior connections to the residential phase one portion of the site creating a well integrated residential/commercial mix that will serve the needs of residents within the project area.

The application and project are part of the larger development plans for the area, located around the intersection of N. Murphy Road and W. Steen Road in the southeast portion of the city. The overall area surrounding Pecan Groves is planned to be developed with a mix of commercial, employment, and residential uses and Pecan Groves serves to connect previously entitled developments (Cortona PAD, Maricopa 40 PAD, etc.) with current entitlement proposals (Murphy Park PAD). Exhibit A, the PAD Project Narrative and PAD Booklet, and Exhibit C, the Site Context Study, provide thorough descriptions of the proposed connection and integration of the commercial and residential portions of ultimate conceptual development plan.

The applicant is requesting:

1. A Major General Plan Amendment to the Future Land Use Map from Low Density Residential (LDR) to Medium Density Residential (MDR) and Commercial (C).
2. A rezone from Light Industry & Warehouse (CI-1) zoning to Planned Area Development (PAD). This zone change request will allow the applicant to pursue Preliminary/Final Plat and Development Review Permits (DRP) requiring site plan and architectural reviews to comply with the PAD.

Each request builds upon land use and development entitlements to make the proposal possible. Each approval is dependent upon the subsequent approval. The development proposal cannot move ahead without the rezoning, nor can the rezoning move ahead without the approval of the General Plan Land Use change.

### **Major General Plan Amendment:**

Currently, the site falls under the General Plan Future Land Use designation of Low Density Residential (LDR), which does not support the medium density single-family residential or commercial proposals. As such, an amendment to the General Plan designation is required. Amending the General Plan Land Use Map requires consulting the Plan Administration section of the General Plan. Criteria for approval include the following:

- (1) number of acres for land use change and/or
- (2) the capital cost burdens to the city when classifying an amendment as either Major or Minor.

1. Proposed land use changes that exceed the thresholds of a Minor Plan Amendment (as defined in Table 1 – Major Plan Amendment Land Use Criteria within City Limits) are defined as Major. This proposal refers to the line for current designation of Low Density Residential (LDR) to the proposed designations of Medium Density Residential (MDR) and Commercial (C), which set the trigger (or threshold) at 80 acres, whereas this proposal is slightly above the trigger at 80+ acres.
2. Infrastructure Criteria is also listed as an independent consideration to acreage. The context of the site may require expansion of infrastructure that warrants costly capital improvements. Expansion of infrastructure may include installation of various flood control devices/channels that will be coordinated between the applicant and the city at a later date.

In accordance with these criteria, staff classifies the proposed General Plan Land Use Map Amendment as Major. The application was made with a Public Participation Plan that met state statutes and the standards prescribed within the Zoning Code, as outlined later in this report. The remaining public process includes holding two (2) public hearing before the Planning & Zoning Commission, a recommendation by the Commission to the City Council, holding a Public Hearing before the City Council, and a decision by City Council. A recommendation should be made as to whether the amendment achieves, on balance, the goals and objectives as defined within the text of the General Plan Elements. A review of the goals and objectives are listed under the GPA23-02 *Major General Plan Amendment Findings* section of this staff report.

Planned Area Development:

With a favorable recommendation for the General Plan Land Use Map Amendment, the Commission can consider the concurrent Zoning Map Amendment (rezone). Under Section B. Land Use Elements, subsection D. Land Use Plan – Land Use Designations of the City’s General Plan, future land use designations are listed. The Medium Density Residential land use designation states that “the Medium Density Residential category provides for a suburban lifestyle with planned, single-family residential neighborhoods, which include significant open space, recreation and cultural opportunities.” The “Commercial land use category provides for commercial nodes on individual parcels. The intent is to provide neighborhood and community scale shopping, offices, medical facilities”, etc. The Planned Area Development (PAD) zone is defined within the Zoning Code under Chapter 18.60.010 and states that “the specific purpose of the Planned Area Development (PAD) District is to provide opportunities for creative and flexible development approaches that accommodate, encourage, and promote innovatively designed developments involving a mixture of residential and/or nonresidential land uses not prescribed within the zoning districts of the city.” As presented, the proposed GPA Major Amendment and rezone fall within these criteria.

The proposed PAD seeks to use the RS-5 Single-Family Residential zone as a base zone for the residential portion of the project with several variations to the RS-5 zone’s development standards to accomplish the ultimate goals of the development. Within the PAD Narrative and Booklet, rationale for the change of land use and the PAD variations are provided. For brevity, staff has extracted the proposed development standards from the PAD Booklet and provided these for review in Exhibit A, attached to this report.

As noted, the PAD standards proposed by the applicant closely follow the standards of the RS-5 district with several variations that provide a unique PAD zoning district tailored to the proposed development of the site. Per Section 18.60.060 PAD Design Elements of the Zoning Ordinance, PAD applications requesting variations to the standards of the Zoning Ordinance must provide a certain number of required design elements, as listed under Section 18.60.060(C) PAD Design Elements Table, to offset the requested variations. In accordance with the Design Elements Table, the proposed PAD, as presented, must provide a minimum of score of eleven (11) elements. As noted in the PAD Booklet, the proposal provides a total of eleven (11) design elements and meets this requirement.

Density

Under Section 18.60.040.A Residential Unit Densities of the Zoning Code, land use and development regulations for the PAD zone “shall not exceed the maximum number permitted by the general plan density for the total area of the planned area development designated for residential use.” The General Plan does not specify density limitations specifically for PAD zones but restricts density under the Medium Density Residential (MDR) land use designation to 2-6 du/ac. The proposed density of 4.37 du/ac falls within this allowable range.

Building Height

The proposed PAD does not seek to amend the maximum height restrictions of the RS-5 Single-Family Residential or Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zones that the PAD uses as base zones.

Circulation

Access to the site will be from four (4) points along the north, south, east and west portions of the site. Two access points from N. Murphy Road (east) and W. Steen Road (south) will serve as the main accesses for the development while access to the future Cortona development (west) and property of the north will serve as interconnection points between adjacent developments. The main access point from N. Murphy Road will serve as a combination point of access to and between the residential and commercial components of the project. The overall development concept will feature residential buildings clustered in nodes, pedestrian connections through various open space tracts that will include lush landscaping, and a pedestrian scale design to encourage pedestrian use/activity from the residential portion of the development to the commercial area. The conceptual design can be seen in the PAD Narrative and Booklet.

Open Space and Amenities

As part of the design criteria offsets to the proposed deviations from base zone standards, the applicant proposes a robust amenity and design package for the PAD. The amenities proposed, as required in the PAD, will include options to provide a range of amenities as noted in the table below.

In addition to providing a mix of the above noted amenities, the site will provide a total of 20% open space for the enjoyment of all residents and guests. The open space will be divided into several green space areas, as previously noted, to allow for passive and active enjoyment by the development’s residents and guests.

Pecan Groves Amenities Table		
Location	Required	Optional
<b>Primary Entry Monument</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Character Trees</li> <li>• Patterned Planting</li> <li>• Turf</li> <li>• Low Accent Walls</li> <li>• Project Signage</li> </ul>	
<b>Secondary Entry Monument</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor Wall Project Signage</li> <li>• Patterned Planting</li> <li>• Character Trees</li> </ul>	
<b>Main Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built Shade</li> <li>• Tot Lot Play Area (all ages)</li> <li>• Picnic Area</li> <li>• Shade Trees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bench Seating</li> <li>• Outdoor Game Tables</li> <li>• Outdoor Dining/BBQ Grill</li> <li>• Garden Walk</li> <li>• Accent/Specialty Plant Material</li> </ul>
<b>Walking Trail</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shade Trees</li> <li>• Passive Seating</li> <li>• Trash Receptacles</li> <li>• Pet Waste Stations</li> </ul>	
<b>Pocket Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seating Node</li> <li>• Shade Trees</li> <li>• Passive Turf Area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tot Lot (all ages)</li> <li>• Fitness Station</li> <li>• Tree Grove</li> <li>• Outdoor Games/Tables</li> </ul>

Architecture

Although currently in the conceptual design phase, the applicant has provided concepts of the proposed residential buildings on page 19 of the PAD Narrative and Booklet. The concepts help provide context and provide guidance for the overall development theme of the site. The aesthetic sought by the development's design team emphasizes a contemporary motif that will meet the city's Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines.

**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

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Prior to recommending approval of the General Plan Major Amendment and rezone requests, the applicant provided a public participation plan to demonstrate the materials used to inform surrounding property owners of the proposed General Plan Major Amendment and rezone required per the city's Zoning Code. The Public Participation Plan included two (2) neighborhood meetings that were held at the request of anyone who wished to participate, three (3) rounds of notification letters sent to all property owners within 600 feet of the subject area, public notice signs within the subject area, and two (2) legal notices in the Maricopa Monitor and the Casa Grande Dispatch. Three (3) sets of notices went out, advertising the neighborhood meetings, followed by notices advertising the scheduled Planning and Zoning Public Hearings and City Council date. A timeline of the participation event is shown below (refer to Exhibit E – Citizen Participation Report).

- June 28, 2023 - 1<sup>st</sup> Notification letters sent
- July 13, 2023 - 1<sup>st</sup> Neighborhood meeting
- September 8, 2023 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Notification letters sent
- September 9, 2023 - 1<sup>st</sup> Newspaper notice published
- September 11, 2023 - Site sign posted
- September 25, 2023 - 1<sup>st</sup> Planning and Zoning Commission meeting
- October 11, 2023 - Sign posting updated
- October 11, 2023 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Notification letters sent
- October 26, 2023 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Neighborhood meeting
- October 28, 2023 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Newspaper notice published
- November 13, 2023 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Planning and Zoning Commission meeting
- December 5, 2023 - City Council 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 meeting dates 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.

## **GPA23-02 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 D – 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 (MDR) 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 (MDR), and Commercial (C) land uses on the proposed site.

To support the proposed General Plan Amendment, road and drainage improvements on W. Steen Rd. and N. 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 W. 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.

As required by the General Plan, the following goals and objectives are of consideration:

### **Goal B1.4: Minimize conflicts between land uses.**

*Staff Analysis: The proposal will continue to address land use compatibilities and incompatibilities in its ultimate design, character, and construction. As indicated in the narrative, all proposed land uses are compatible with, and will not negatively impact the existing adjacent neighboring uses.*

### **Goal B2.2.: Assure the development of a diverse housing stock in both dwelling type and density.**

*Staff Analysis: The proposed PAD establishes different housing options specific to affordability along with time and market sensitive diversity with the full range of housing opportunities including higher-density residential uses under the integrated flexibility of the companion PAD application.*

### **Objective B1.4.6: Transition all property zoning designations from pre-existing districts to existing zoning districts in a manner that best achieves the goals of this General Plan.**

*Staff Analysis: The companion PAD rezone request evaluates the goals of the General Plan and provides scope and objectives and includes an analysis of how the proposed zoning helps to achieve the goals of the City’s General Plan.*

### **Goal E3.1: Create safe and functional pedestrian ways and bicycle routes as an alternative mode of travel throughout Maricopa.**

*Staff Analysis: The proposal provides enhanced and safe pedestrian interconnections between the proposed residential and the future commercial development west of the project area. As such, the proposal demonstrates compliance with this goal.*

## **PAD22-17 ZONING MAP AMENDMENT REQUIRED FINDINGS**

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As required by Sec. 18.175.040 of the City's Zoning Code, the Planning & Zoning Commission made the following findings in their recommendation to the City Council:

1. The amendment is consistent with the General Plan.

**Staff Analysis:** *The proposed zone change to PAD adheres to the General Plan's future land use designation, pending approval of the Medium Density Residential and Commercial designations.*

2. Any change in District boundaries is necessary to achieve the balance of land uses desired by the city, consistent with the General Plan, and to increase the inventory of land within a given Zoning District; and

**Staff Analysis:** *The zone change amendment will allow for additional single-family residential and commercial development opportunities in the area.*

3. The amendment will promote the growth of the city in an orderly manner and protect the public health, safety, peace, comfort, and general welfare.

**Staff Analysis:** *The zone change will not impact the health, safety and general welfare of the area and will promote growth in an orderly manner.*

## **CONCLUSION**

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On November 13, 2023, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommended **approval** of **case # GPA23-02 Pecan Groves**, subject to the conditions of approval stated in this staff report, and as amended by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

On November 13, 2023, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommended **approval** of **case # PAD22-17 Pecan Groves**, subject to the conditions of approval stated in this staff report, and as amended by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Each case will require an independent motion by the City Council:

1. The applicant shall continue with the development process of submitting a Development Review Permit as prescribed within the City's Zoning Code.
2. Prior to the City Council approval of the PAD22-17, the applicant shall submit to the city a signed waiver pursuant to Proposition 207, as applicable.
3. Prior to issuance of the final Certificate of Occupancy, the developer must provide all offsite improvements recommended by City's staff and a traffic impact analysis prepared to the City's approved guidelines. Offsite improvements include infrastructure such as construction or improvements of roads, sidewalks, curb/gutter, stripping, signs, streetlights, landscaping and new installation or reconfiguration of existing traffic signals impacted by the development.
4. If the development is to be built and occupied by residents in phases, a phasing plan must be submitted to the City for review and approval. Construction of offsite improvements shall be included with first phase of construction unless approved by City Engineer to be built with future phases.

5. Access to the development is subject to review and approval by City Engineer. Interaction with future developments and their accesses must be analyzed by the applicant's traffic engineer and City Staff.
6. Any amendments to the PAD District shall be processed in accordance with Section 18.180.060 of the City's Zoning Code.
7. All zoning and development standards not expressly enumerated within this PAD shall comply with the applicable standards delineated in the City's Zoning Code.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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**Exhibit A:** PAD22-17 Narrative and Booklet

**Exhibit B:** GPA23-02 Narrative and Exhibits

**Exhibit C:** Site Context Study

**Exhibit D:** Land Use Analysis

**Exhibit E:** Citizen Participation Report

**Exhibit F:** Zoning Maps

**Exhibit G:** General Plan Land Use Maps

**Exhibit H:** Legal Description

-- End of staff report --