



STAFF REPORT
10/16/2019

TO: Planning Commission Chair and Commissioners

FROM: Luis Lopez, Development Services Director

SUBJECT: Policy Discussion on Coachella 380 Project located at the Northeast Corner of Avenue 49 and Van Buren Street.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the attached exhibits and provide staff with direction regarding the proposed project.

BACKGROUND:

The Rancho Las Flores community located on the north side of Avenue 49, east of Van Buren Street, had a second phase of construction that was never completed. It is located on the 30 acres at the northeast corner of Avenue 49 and Van Buren Street. This property was foreclosed upon by the noteholder, Glenroy Coachella, LLC who is the developer of the Glenroy Resort and who in 2007 sold the City the 29 acres of land where the existing Rancho Las Flores Park is located.

On May 10, 2012 the City Council approved General Plan Amendment 10-01 and Change of Zone 10-02 to allow for a 380-unit multifamily residential apartments project on 30 acres of vacant land located at the northeast corner of Avenue 49 and Van Buren Street. The developer was Glenroy Coachella, LLC and they had attempted to get public funding for an affordable housing development. However, the developer was unable to secure funding for the project.

On October 8, 2014, the City Council approved Tentative Tract Map No.36757 which approved a 124-lot single family residential subdivision on the project site, similar in design to the original community. At that time, the City Council had concerns with the current RM (Multifamily Residential) zoning because of the potential impacts on utility infrastructure, and impacts to the public school enrollments. Glenroy sold the land to a new entity who has been unable to secure a builder for the single family residential project, and the tentative map will expire as of this week.

Additionally, on April 22, 2015 the City Council adopted the General Plan 2035 Comprehensive Update and designated the site as “Urban Neighborhood” which calls for very-high density residential ranging from 20 to 38 dwelling units per acre, with an average of 30 units per acre for new projects.

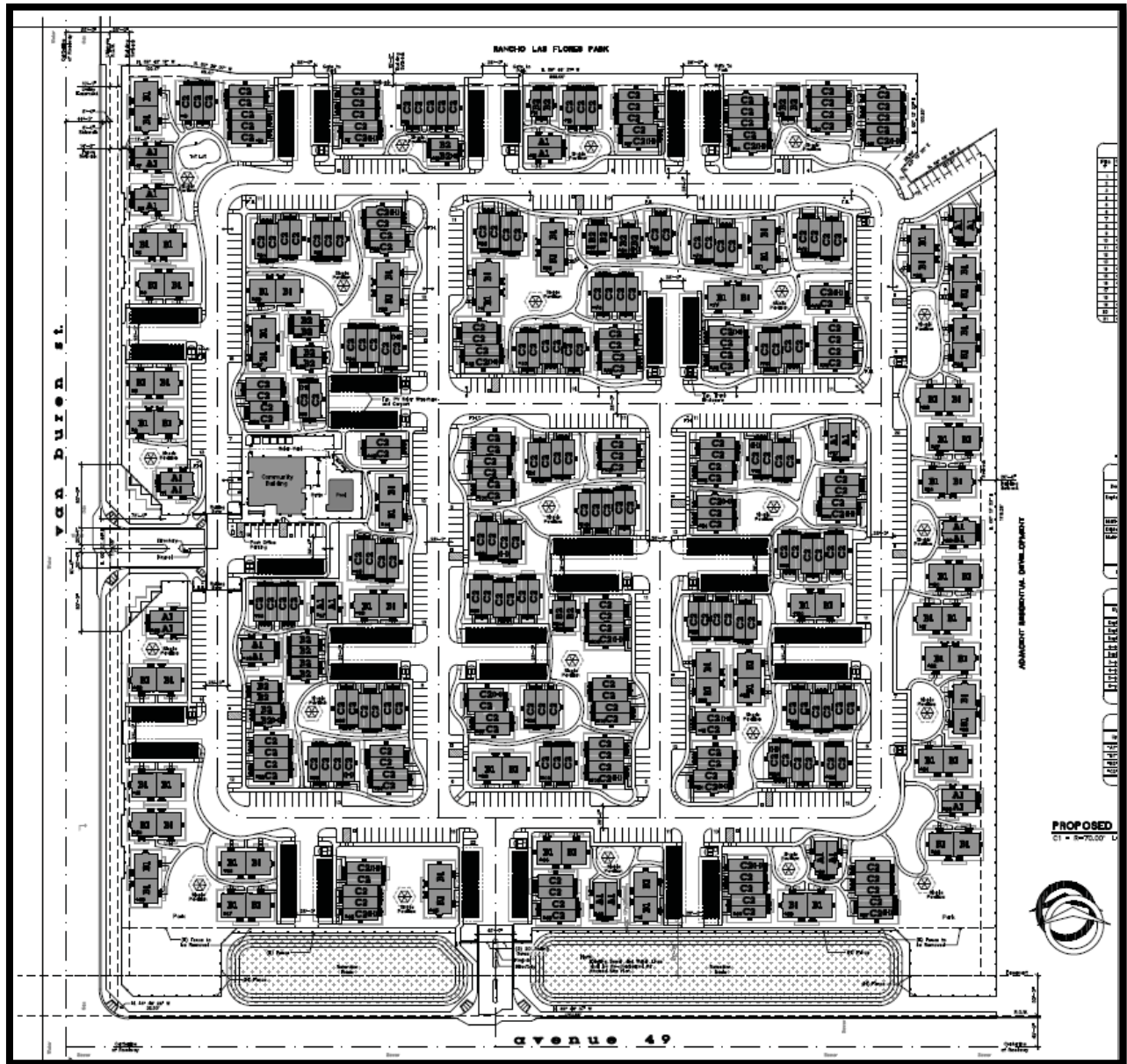
DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

On August 29, 2019 the applicant and engineer-of-record, Kurt Saxon, met with City staff and the developer to discuss the Coachella 380 Project on the subject site. This is a reactivation of the 2012 multifamily residential project which has a density of 12.6 dwelling units per acre. This density falls short of the General Plan’s intended “average density” of 30 units per acre for new developments in this land use category. Staff needs direction from the Planning Commission on whether the density and/or the current street configurations are in substantial compliance with the vision set forth in the General Plan for this vicinity.

Site Planning:

The subject site was previously graded for streets, rough pads, and retention basin including the installation of curb and gutter, perimeter fencing and sewer lines. Accordingly, the Coachella 380 project will use the existing street configuration of the original project, as shown on the aerial photograph and site plan below.





The site plan above was presented during Pre-Application Review maintains the existing street grading configuration, but would add a new community entrance on Avenue 49 as encouraged by the General Plan mobility element. This is substantially similar to the 2012 multifamily residential project, which proposed to convert the streets into private drives with 90-degree parking and carports along the street edges. The dwelling units in 2012 were “modular” buildings” and this project proposes wood/frame and metal roof, with stucco exterior walls construction. The units would be subdivided as “condominiums” and offered as market-rate

owner-occupied dwelling units for sale. The housing types consist of one and two-story dwellings in a “townhouse” style wherein there are no stacked units. Additionally, staff recommended a re-design of the main entry on Van Buren Street, due to the short queue space for vehicles and to improve the public/private access areas on this busy street. Because the 2012 project had a comprehensive Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared, staff believes the current project could proceed to Architectural Review in a streamlined manner, provided the Commission believes that the project design and density is substantially in compliance with the General Plan 2035 policies.

Economic Development Considerations:

The City’s Economic Development Manager who works in the City Manager’s office has indicated support for the project, due to the permitting and impact fee considerations of a new development. Similarly, the developer has indicated they are interested in pursuing an economic incentive package to defer fees for the project, and defer off-site improvements in exchange for the benefits of the development.

The development would enhance the City’s property tax base, and would increase the available workforce and resort housing opportunities for the current and future residents of the City of Coachella. There are some challenges associated with removal and replacement of existing infrastructure that was previously installed, in that removing the perimeter fencing or the existing street configuration would result in a significant financial burden for the project. These are some of the justifications for the requested economic incentive agreement being contemplated by the developer.

Architectural Theming:

The Coachella 380 Project would be subject to Architectural Review by the Planning Commission, and City Council would review the project as part of the Tentative Tract Map request for condominium purposes. The exhibits below are preliminary artistic renderings of the housing unit types including a one-story unit and two-story units. Additionally, the applicant has shown two renderings of the proposed Clubhouse and public parking areas.







The developer has indicated that they want to use a standing-seam metal roof to mimic the Glenroy Resort architecture. Staff has recommended a different color scheme with earth-tone or gray roof and trim colors to be in keeping with the surroundings. The units all provide private

open space patios and front entry/porch elements. Similarly, the exterior architecture blends a variety of building materials including textured stucco, stone veneer, and metal cladding for a contemporary craftsman inspiration.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY:

As part of the Pre-Application Review of the Coachella 380 project, staff noted that the proposed project is designated as Urban Neighborhood under the City's General Plan 2035 Land Use and Community Character Element. The "Urban Neighborhood" allows a high-intensity, walkable, transit-ready neighborhood with a variety of types of housing, but predominantly intended for multi-family of various types to be located in close proximity to high quantities of commercial, civic, and recreational uses. The larger vicinity of the site includes the Glenroy Resort and Rancho Las Flores Park to the north, the Coachella Village Apartments to the northwest, and Neighborhood Center (mixed use) designations on the west side of Van Buren Street. Therefore, the City's long-range vision for the buildout of this area includes high-density residential with neighborhood commercial uses. Van Buren Street is a transit corridor and is expected to grow its employment opportunities in the coming years.

If the Commission believes that the project as proposed requires a General Plan Amendment to reduce the density to 13 dwelling units per acre, this has implications for the City's Housing Element. During the City's Update to the Housing Element, which included 5th cycle Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) this property was identified as an opportunity site for very high density residential. Therefore, staff believes that the expired Single Family Residential tract map did not comply with the City's goals and policies. The Coachella 380 project is a reasonable attempt to create the envisioned community character, while utilizing the existing infrastructure that was left in place from over 20 years ago, but falls short of the 30 dwelling units per acre density. Therefore, staff would prepare to update the Housing Element in the upcoming 6th Cycle which commences in 2022 to make up the difference in zoning capacity left from this project, in order to build very high-density residential developments.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The change from 124 single family residential units to 380 townhouse units is a step in the right direction, but is not wholly consistent with the density range for the Urban Neighborhood land use classification. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission consider the information contained herein and the testimony at the public hearing, to make a finding of substantial conformity with the General Plan land use and community character element in light of the project's history and unique circumstances, and direct staff to update the Housing Element in the 6th Cycle update to reconcile the potential loss in density zoning capacity to accommodate the proposed project due to its economic and secondary benefits for the City of Coachella.