



STAFF REPORT
9/9/2020

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Luis Lopez, Development Services Director

SUBJECT: Ordinance No. 1168 Amending Change of Zone No. 18-10 by adding a minimum residential density of 20 units per acre in the RM (General) and RM (Urban) zoning district designators for approximately 72.6 acres of vacant agricultural land generally located south of Avenue 50, west of Tyler Street, approximately ¼ mile north of Avenue 52. City-Initiated.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council introduce for first reading, by title only, Ordinance No. 1168 establishing a minimum residential density of 20 units per acre in the RM (General) and RM (Urban) zoning districts of the Zona Central project located on the south side of Avenue 50, west of Tyler Street, and approximately ¼ mile north of Avenue 52.

BACKGROUND:

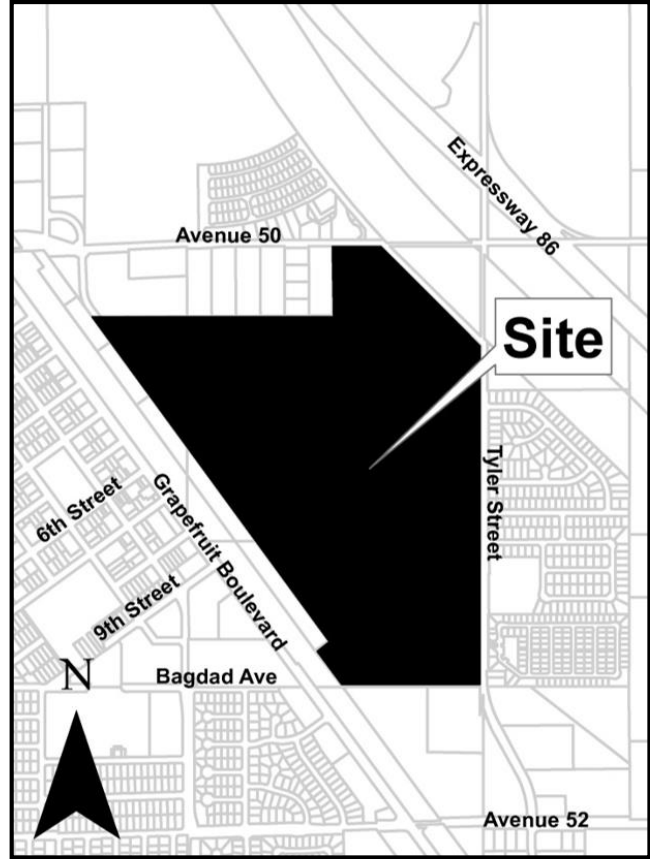
On October 23, 2019 the City Council adopted a Negative Declaration (EA No. 18-04) and approved Ordinance No. 1143 to authorize a Change of Zone (CZ 18-10) that created a conceptual land use plan for the “Zona Central” project, including new streets, open space, and a mixture of residential, neighborhood commercial, and light industrial uses on approximately 206 acres of vacant/agricultural land located on the south side of Avenue 50, west of Tyler Street, and north of Avenue 52. The City Council took final action on the Change of Zone (Ordinance No. 1143) on November 13, 2019.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

The City of Coachella initiated Change of Zone No. 18-10 at the request of the State of California – Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) pursuant to a mandatory re-zoning effort called out in the City’s Housing Element. The change of zone’s main purpose was to create additional “development ready” multifamily residential zoning to accommodate the City’s Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) from the 4th Cycle carryover which was required to be completed as part of the City’s 2013-2021 Housing Element.

The approved “Zona Central” project accommodated a total of 1966 new dwelling units within the RM (Multifamily Residential) zoning districts, comprising approximately 72.6 acres within the overall project.

The “Zona Central” project site is envisioned to create a new urban community on the 206 acres located on the south side of Avenue 50, west of Tyler Street, that would be in full compliance with the General Plan’s “Land The Sub-Area 6 policies of the General Plan allow for a combination of districts that include elements of both urban employment and high-density residential uses. Prior to the approval of this Change of Zone (CZ 18-10), the project site contained only two zoning districts: M-S (Manufacturing Service) and R-S (Single Family Residential). The approved re-zoning project now consists of the following Zoning Districts and respective acreage (see highlighted RM zones which are the subject of this amended ordinance):



- MS-IP; Manufacturing Service – Industrial Park
- C-N; Neighborhood Commercial
- CN-PD; Neighborhood Commercial Planned Development (Mixed Use, Urban Employment Center)
- R-M; Residential, Multi-Family (General Neighborhood)
- R-M; Residential, Multi-Family (Urban Neighborhood)
- O-S; Open Space
- OS-PF; Open Space Public Facilities

Total Project Area	206.2 acres*
MS-IP Zone	35.6 acres*
C-N Zone	13.5 acres*
CN-PD (Mixed Use) Zone	42.6 acres*
R-M (General) Zone	21.2 acres*
R-M (Urban) Zone	51.4 acres*
O-S Zone	8.0 acres*
OS-PF Zone	10.3 acres*
Interior Streets	23.6 acres*

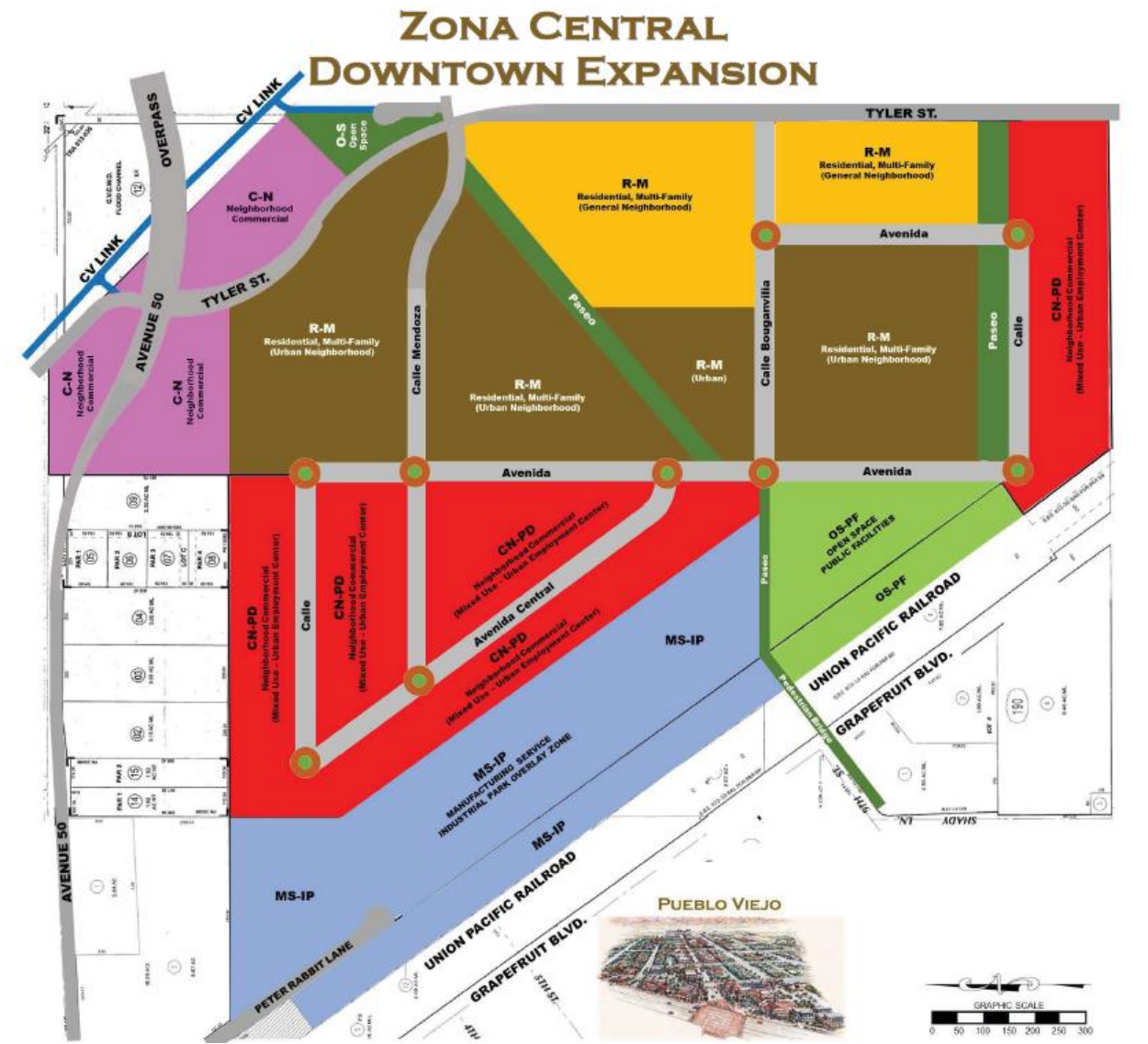
The aerial photograph below shows the “Zona Central” project site.



DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Subsequent to the City Council’s final action on Ordinance No. 1143 which approved the change of zone action, staff was notified by HCD that the RM (Multifamily Residential) zoning districts are required by State law to expressly show that they have a “minimum density” of 20 units per acre, and that no additional discretionary actions can be required in order to build at this density. Accordingly, the original zoning designator did not include a “density range” because it was understood that the General Plan densities would govern. However, based on HCD feedback, staff is proposing to amend the zoning district designators for the RM (Multifamily Residential) zones to call out the density ranges showing that 20 units per acres is a minimum threshold density, as shown below.

Change of Zone Exhibit – “BEFORE” Amending Ordinance No. 1143:



Change of Zone Exhibit – “AFTER” Amending Ordinance No. 1143:

ZONA CENTRAL DOWNTOWN EXPANSION



As shown above, the change of zone exhibit reflection the “after” condition of Ordinance No. 1143 being amended, includes a density range designator as follows:

- RM – Residential Multifamily (General 20-25 dwelling units per acre)
- RM – Residential Multifamily (Urban 25-38 dwelling units per acre)

When staff prepared the Zona Central land use plan, it was assumed that these zoning districts would generate a total of 1,966 new dwelling units on the RM lots (72.6 acres) which represents the maximum buildout density for both RM districts. The applicable State law that required the City to re-zone properties to comply with our 4th Cycle RNHA carry over, specifically requires that a minimum density of “20 units to the acre” be specified in the zoning district. Section 17.20.030(3) of the Coachella Municipal Code states that the allowable RM zoning density is as follows:

“Multiple-family residential developments shall comply with the allowable density ranges (dwelling units per acre) of the general plan land use designators.”

However, it sets maximum densities for lots under 10,000 square feet. Therefore, a developer could propose a subdivision of lots that results in less than the maximum allowable density. By changing the zoning designation to call out the minimum density as being “20 units per acre” (RM General) and “25 units per acre” (RM Urban) we can avoid this inconsistency with State law.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Recommend to City Council approval of Ordinance No. 1168 as recommended by staff.
2. Recommend to City Council approval of Ordinance No. 1168 with modifications.
3. Take no action.
4. Continue this item and provide staff with direction.

RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE(S):

Staff recommends Alternative #1 as noted above.