



Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection

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August 28, 2023

Arizona Center for Law
in the Public Interest
Arizona Master Naturalist
Association
Arizona Native Plant
Society
Bat Conservation
International
Cascabel Conservation
Association
Center for Biological
Diversity
Center for Environmental
Ethics
Defenders of Wildlife
Desert Watch
Environmental Law
Society
Friends of Cabeza Prieta
Friends of Ironwood Forest
Friends of Madera Canyon
Friends of Saguaro
National Park
Friends of Tortolita
Gates Pass Area
Neighborhood
Association
Genius Loci Foundation
Great Old Broads for
Wilderness – Tucson
Native Seeds / SEARCH
Protect Land and
Neighborhoods
Safford Peak Watershed
Education Team
Save the Scenic Santa Ritas
Sierra Club – Grand
Canyon Chapter
Sierra Club – Rincon Group
Sky Island Alliance
Southwestern Biological
Institute
Tortolita Alliance
Tortolita Homeowners
Association
Tucson Audubon Society
Tucson Herpetological
Society
Tucson Mountains
Association
Wildlands Network

Chair David Hook and Commissioners
Pima County Planning and Zoning Commission
201 N. Stone, 1st Floor
Tucson, AZ 85701

RE: P22SP00002 Thornydale Sumter Specific Plan

Dear Chair Hook and Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed Thornydale Sumter Specific Plan, a concurrent comprehensive plan amendment and rezoning. The Coalition commented previously when this issue was before the Commission on November 30, 2022 after which the applicant withdrew the request. On August 30, the Commission will again consider a similar Specific Plan. We have reviewed the revisions and provide similar comments to you today.

This 18+-acre property consists of two parcels at the northeast corner of Thornydale and Sumter. Importantly, the westernmost of the two parcels was identified as a *High Priority Private Habitat Protection* parcel, which means it is an important property to be protected in perpetuity.

The property owner has committed to full CLS compliance, which will consist of a combination of on-site conservation and off-site mitigation. The staff report states,

“The entire site is located within the Maeveen Marie Behan Conservation Lands System (CLS) designated as Special Species Management Area (SSMA) and there are approximately 16.55 acres within the Multiple Use Management Area (MUMA) and approximately 2.1 acres of Important Riparian Area (IRA). The IRA areas of the site are regulated by the Pima County Regional Flood Control District (RFCD) and CLS compliance will be met through a combination of natural open space set-aside and restoration of the denuded areas of the IRA. The CLS policies will be met through 6.5 acres of on-site natural open space preservation and 39.1 acres of off-site natural open space preservation.”

While the Coalition encourages and would prefer to have as many *High Priority Habitat Protection* parcels as possible be conserved in their entirety, we understand that this property is privately-owned and not for sale. Partial off-site mitigation complies with the Conservation Lands System and Pima Prospers mitigation policies.

We have had multiple meetings with the property owner and his representatives, and appreciate their responsiveness to concerns and recommendations that we have provided on issues of sustainability, including but not limited to, the following Specific Plan commitments:

- Water conservation measures (see Lazarus and Silvyn letter of Nov. 8, 2022), including water harvesting techniques.
- Native plant preservation and/or salvage and replanting on site, including mammillaria, opuntia and hedgehog species and particularly saguaros and ironwoods.
- Fence, wall and channel design especially adjacent to riparian areas/wildlife corridors.
- A con-arch bridge spanning the westernmost riparian area/wildlife corridor.
- Motion activated lighting designed to minimize disturbances to wildlife.
- Installation of EV charging stations,
- Covered parking areas built to harvest and direct rainwater and wired to accommodate solar panels.
- Solar energy to support the business and recreation facilities of the development.
- **And lastly**, the property owner has most recently agreed to additional revisions regarding Section II.C.4.d (Retention Basin) Environmentally-Sensitive Design, and Section II.C.4.d (Retention Basin). [See commitments included regarding the above in the attached Lazarus and Silvyn letter of August 28, 2023.]

The Coalition strongly prefers mitigation to occur on-site as opposed to off-site when a parcel is designated a *Highest Priority Habitat Protection Private Parcel* and is previously undisturbed, as is the westernmost of the two parcels. However, as stated earlier and explained in the staff report, the Conservation Lands System guidelines currently allow a combination of on- and off-site mitigation. Therefore, the Coalition is supportive of this Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Specific Plan rezoning. Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment, and please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Campbell, Executive Director

Attachment: Lazarus and Silvyn letter of August 28, 2023

Cc: Terri Tillman, Principal Planner
Jenny Neeley, Program Manager, Office of Sustainability and Conservation
Chris Poirier, Planning Official

August 28, 2023

Terri Tillman, Principal Planner
Pima County Development Services Department
201 N. Stone Avenue
Tucson, Arizona 85701

Re: Thornydale Sumter Specific Plan (P23SP00001), Revisions Requested by Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection (“Coalition”)

Dear Terri:

Our team has been working with the Coalition to develop environmental mitigation regulations in the Thornydale Sumter Specific Plan (“Specific Plan”) for the resulting development (“Project”). The Coalition recently suggested several minor revisions to the Specific Plan. We are agreeable to these proposed changes, which will be reflected in the revised Specific Plan, submitted after the Planning & Zoning Commission public hearing. The revisions are as follows:

- Add the following new **Section II.C.4.d** (Retention Basin) to the Specific Plan:
The first-flush retention basin located directly south of Building 10 on the Project’s west side (the “West Basin”), shall be reconfigured/designed to avoid inclusion of any saguaros over 12 feet in height. Any saguaros located within the West Basin under 12 feet in height shall be transplanted on the west parcel, as near as possible to their original location, per AzGFD guidelines.
- Revise **Section II.C.6** (Environmentally Sensitive Design Guidelines) to reflect the following redlines:
 - The designated IRA areas of the Project will not be disturbed, other than the limited disturbances needed for the Project’s bridge crossing. The onsite IRA is approximately 2.09 acres. Approximately 0.08 acres (3.8% disturbance) will be disturbed to build the bridge, which includes a ten-foot offset from either side of the bridge to accommodate for grading. ~~A total IRA disturbance of 5% (or 0.11 acres) is permitted.~~
 - Low-profile lighting will be incorporated throughout the Project to ensure adequate visibility for safety while also protecting the dark skies and encouraging wildlife movement. Lighting **shall be downlit, fully shielded and shall not intrude into** ~~will be located away from~~ the NUOS and IRA areas to limit **any** impact on wildlife corridors. No lighting will be installed at the top of the buildings except as required per fire/safety standards **and all such required lighting shall be fully**

shielded and, if possible, be triggered by motion sensors. All pathway lighting shall include motion sensors and be fully shielded so as to limit any ~~the amount of~~ light spillover into the NUOS, functional open space, wildlife corridors and adjacent properties.

- The goal of exterior lighting shall be to provide for onsite safety while reducing artificial light at night (i.e., ALAN) and preventing light spillover beyond the built environment (structures, paths, parking and roadways) into disturbed areas, NUOS, and adjacent properties. Outdoor lighting shall utilize full cutoff, shielded outdoor lighting fixtures.
- Lighting under covered parking structures shall be controlled by motion sensors to ~~limit~~ avoid light spillover beyond the built environment, into disturbed areas, NUOS, ~~into wildlife corridors~~ and adjacent properties.
- Lighting in the pool amenity area shall be controlled by motion sensors during the time period the pool is closed for use by residents.
- Roofs of buildings and covered parking structures will be constructed with a subtle pitch to direct rainwater towards basins to promote rainwater harvesting. This water will be directed toward vegetation in the Project's interior landscaped areas where feasible, and otherwise to the exterior of the Project into the washes.
- Rainwater will be directed from parking paved areas into the washes, where feasible.

If you have any questions about the revisions, do not hesitate to reach out to Rory Juneman or me at (520) 207-4464 or RLarge@LSLawAZ.com.

Sincerely,



Robin M. Large
Senior Land Use Planner

cc: Rory Juneman, Lazarus & Silvyn
Zach Channing, ZDC Properties
Carolyn Campbell, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection
Christina McVie, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection
Karen Cesare, Novak Environmental, Inc.