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# PLANNING COMMISSION

Planning & Development Services Department • 201 N. Stone Ave. • Tucson, AZ 85701

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**DATE:** March 6, 2024

**TO:** Planning Commission

**FROM:** Kristina Swallow, Director, Planning and Development Services  
Executive Secretary

**SUBJECT:** *Rincon/Southeast Subregional Plan (TP-AMD-0523-0003),  
Amendment to Map Detail #4 and #8, for Land Use Changes to Medium  
High/Intensity Urban (E) and Urban Industrial (I) and the addition of  
Special Policy Area 1-05 Rita 10 – State Trust Land  
Public Hearing (Ward 4)*

**Issue** – This is a study session on a proposed amendment to the *Rincon/Southeast Subregional Plan (RSSP)*. This plan amendment request includes changes to *RSSP* Map Detail #4 and #8 land uses as well as the addition of Special Policy Area 1-05, Rita 10 – State Trust Land, with related update to special environmental policies specifically related to State Trust lands. The proposed amendment site is located immediately south of I-10 and east of Wilmot Road (Attachment A). This plan amendment is intended to facilitate development opportunities and establish floodplain and riparian policies for all State Trust Land within RITA 10 to attract large-scale manufacturing, industrial, and logistics users while supporting diverse housing options and commercial uses.

**Applicant's Request:** The application on behalf of Arizona State Land Department was collectively submitted by the applicant team of The Planning Center, Lazarus & Silvyn and PSOMAS with a project narrative (Attachment B).

The plan amendment request is an update to land use changes on:

- Map Detail #4 from Low Intensity Rural (LIR) and Medium Intensity Rural (MIR) to Medium High/Intensity Urban (E) and Urban Industrial (I). (Attachment C)
- Map Detail #8 changing the land use designation from Low Intensity Rural (LIR) and Medium Intensity Rural (MIR) to Medium High/Intensity Urban (E). (Attachment D)

The proposed plan amendment creates a new Special Policy to address broader floodplain constraints and issues for ASLD land within the Southlands area:

- Creating a new Special Policy Area 1-05 (Attachment E) allowing floodplain, riparian vegetation, and Resource Conservation areas to be consolidated.
- Aligning Resource Conservation designation in Map Details #4 and # 8 to incorporate recent data, mapping, and analysis.

**Recommendation** – Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve a motion to forward the proposed plan amendment to Mayor and Council to change Map Detail #4 and #8 to allow (I) Urban Industrial and (E) Medium High Intensity Urban land uses and to create Special Area Policy 1-05.

**Existing Zoning and Land Uses** – The existing zoning immediately east and northwest within amendment site is Rural Homestead – RH. The existing zoning for the majority of the southwest area is RX-1.

The existing land use intensity designation on Map Detail #4 is Low Intensity Rural (LIR) and Medium Intensity Rural (MIR). The existing land use designation on Map Detail #8 is Low Intensity Rural (LIR) and Medium Intensity Rural (MIR).

**Background** - Since the RSSP's adoption in the 1990's, subsequent studies including habitat, riparian, vegetation and hydrology have been conducted, and has resulted in much higher-resolution and readily available aerial imagery. This includes updates and refinement of those initial vegetation and habitat studies. Despite the completion of new studies, no updates have been made to the Resource Conservation areas to date. As a result, these studies are not consistent with one another and are often contradictory. It was always intended that the RSSP would be periodically updated, but a comprehensive update has not occurred at a broader community and environmental scale. Additionally, the recent *Atterbury Trails Planned Community Development (PCD)*, and *H2K Planned Area Development (PAD)* have provided a carefully crafted set of development standards in conjunction with a two-pronged environmental resource strategy that focused on on-site riparian mitigation/wash enhancement and offsite open space preservation, those plan amendments included improvements for channelizing braided washes and flood control parameters with balanced policy direction and implementation. This plan amendment proposes to continue to follow those precedents and comprehensively address consolidation, policy direction for conservation and environmental implementation strategies at a regional scale.

**Southlands Opportunities** - Tucson has over fifty square miles of undeveloped land in an area referred to by *Plan Tucson* as the *Southlands*. The Southlands is generally bounded by Interstate 10 and Tucson International Airport on the north, the Pima Mine Road and Andrada Road Alignments on the south, Houghton Road and Wentworth Road on the east, and Nogales Highway on the west. Also unique to this area is that most of the land is owned by a single entity, the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). This consolidated ownership presents the opportunity for ASLD to collaborate with local governments and end-users to master plan and establish long-standing policies that would not be possible with smaller, fractionalized private ownership interests. The location and environmental character of the Southlands area, combined with the consolidated ASLD ownership, provides an opportunity to entitle the land and establish drainage policies to prepare it for live/work/learn and play uses while enhancing riparian habitat.

The first focal area within the Southlands, known as RITA 10, consists of approximately 8,300 acres of State Trust Land. It is located between Interstate 10 and Wilmot Road, north of Dawn Road and south of Voyager Road. RITA 10's location along I-10, the future Sonoran Corridor, and its proximity to other employment centers, such as the UA Tech Park and Pima County's Southeast Employment and Logistics Center (SELC), makes it the logical place to begin planning and entitling State Trust Land in the Southlands. This planning process first requires amending the *Rincon/Southeast Subregional Plan* to allow for a wider range of land uses, and provide a more nuanced and flexible approach to development accounting for the existing wash and riparian conditions with the Southlands area.

Due to the fact that ASLD manages this large land area, the amendment presents a unique opportunity to improve the overall drainage and habitat throughout RITA 10. This RSSP amendment proposes a channelization network of major washes that prioritizes an organized network of flow corridors, provides wildlife connectivity, protects the areas with the highest value of riparian resources, and provides an opportunity to enhance vegetation in these corridors. The amended RSSP will establish a framework from which future PADs and/or PCDs provide safe and effective conveyance of drainage through RITA 10 and preserve and enhance vegetation and riparian habitat while consolidating tracts of land to respond to interest from prospective employers at a reasonable cost of development.

With major rail lines, an airport, and a spaceport, Rita 10 is one of the premier locations with rail access in the State of Arizona. This plan amendment will enhance the prospects for future development by adding flexibility for proposed developers to locate uses appropriately within the PCD.

As previously stated, the most unique attribute of this area is that the majority of the land within the Southlands is owned by a single entity, the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). This consolidated ownership presents the opportunity to collaborate with local governments and end-users to master plan and establish long-standing policies that would be impossible with smaller, fractionalized private ownership interests. The location and environmental character of the Southlands area, combined with the consolidated ASLD ownership, provides an opportunity to entitle the land and establish drainage policies to prepare it for live/work/learn and play uses while enhancing riparian habitat.

**Special Policy Area** – Special Areas have unique characteristics or qualities and include visually and environmentally sensitive areas, neighborhoods with distinct site design requirements, and areas likely to develop as large-scale planned communities. The designation of Special Areas allows the application of special plan policies necessary to protect the unique qualities or characteristics of an area to provide incentives to promote particular types of development activity. These Special Area Policies supplement the Subregional Policies and correspond numerically with areas designated on the Subregional Land Use Map.

Development of land uses within this Special Area is encouraged to use a Planned Community Development (PCD) Zone which provides the greatest benefit to accommodate large-scale, unified master planned development. This Special Area provides policy direction that requires preliminary analysis of hydrology, hydraulics, transportation, water, wastewater, and vegetation. Wash corridors may be evaluated for potential channelization during the rezoning, if applicable during the secondary planning process in accordance with this Special Area. It should be noted that Special Area identifies that the National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System, which the City of Tucson participates in as administered by the Federal Emergency Management Administration, will be considered during review of any rezoning request.

The RSSP and its Special Area policies recognize the value of corridors and associated vegetation that allows for wildlife movement. Given the nature of low-volume sheet flow and past flood control measures, the vegetation throughout much of the Southlands is stressed, which diminishes the value for wildlife. The Special Area policies aim to maintain protection for native and riparian vegetation while creating a mechanism to enhance wash corridors. Reevaluation of encroachment, consolidation, or channelization of floodplain areas of retained ERZ washes must be accompanied by drainage analysis within the Development Package to ensure any upstream or downstream drainage impacts comply with City Code Chapter 26. If floodplain channelization is implemented development plans shall be required to recreate or enhance existing natural wildlife habitat through a combination of riparian mitigation and flood control measures, which may include excavation. Consolidated floodplains should have a natural aesthetic, recreating the lost functions of the riparian habitat they are replacing.

**Planning and Entitlement Implementation** - ALSLD, and in some cases, prospective buyers, will follow a two-step planning process to entitle larger tracts of State Trust Land for auction and development: Initial land use entitlements are secured through the rezoning, Planned Area Development (PAD), or Planned Community Development (PCD) process. This establishes the regulatory framework for future development of the property(ies), including zoning, land use regulations, and development standards. Due to uncertain market trends, ALSLD does not know who the ultimate end user will be, ALSLD typically seeks flexible zoning known as a “Zoning Bank,” such as that achieved within the *Atterbury Trails PCD*, to ensure that the Trust and the City of Tucson are well-suited to take advantage of changing economic and market conditions. For larger PADs or PCDs, the land typically is broken down into “Development Units,” where each Development Unit may contain a distinct mix of zoning based on location and environmental constraints. Based on market conditions and surrounding growth, ALSLD may limit allowable uses within the Zoning Bank with each parcel disposition.

**Secondary Planning** - The purchaser undertakes secondary planning efforts upon the sale of the property. This secondary planning focuses on details relating to infrastructure master planning within the Development Unit and completes the jurisdictional review and permitting process for the specific use. In tandem with the City of Tucson’s jurisdictional review, ALSLD

acts in a supervisory role to ensure that the development complies with the initial entitlements' vision and is consistent with the future development of adjacent State Trust Land. The Special Area Policy embeds the review of Stormwater Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) within the entitlement process by establishing review criteria and review of findings of floodplain related studies at the secondary planning stage.

**Land Use Policy Direction:** - Policy direction is provided by the *Rincon/Southeast Subregional Plan (RSSP, 1995)* and *Plan Tucson (2013)*. Key policies are summarized below; a complete policy listing is provided below:

**Rincon/Southeast Subregional Plan (1995)** - The purpose of the *RSSP* is to provide land-use policy and development direction for areas that were adjacent to and eventually annexed into the City. As annexations occurred, individual Land Use Map Details were added to the plan document. The Land Use Map depicts Land Use Intensity categories that are recommended as a guide for future development decisions. Planned land use in the subregional plan is designated by a hierarchy of land use intensity categories. Unlike density, which reflects a number of units in an area, land use intensity considers a variety of factors that affect land use, including the type of activity, density, associated vehicle trips and impact on infrastructure and services.

**Plan Tucson (2013)** - *Plan Tucson* includes Land Use, Transportation and Urban Design Policies which support appropriate locations for residential uses, with priority for development and redevelopment within existing urbanized areas. *Plan Tucson* also includes this area as the Greater Southlands HCP Planning Area.

In *Plan Tucson*, the Future Growth Scenario Map designates the area of the amendment site as the "Southlands". Southlands is a long term- growth area, formed predominantly by large tracts of undeveloped land located at the southeastern and southern perimeters of the city. A large portion of this area is administered by the State Land Department. Prior to releasing these lands for development, the State will initiate planning efforts to promote orderly phased development that reflects sustainable and innovative community design.

**Major Streets and Routes Plan (1982)** - The purpose of the Major Street and Routes (*MS&R*) plan is to facilitate special designation as scenic or gateway routes, future street widening, identify main thoroughfares in conjunction with land use decisions. The *MS&R* now identifies the Sonoran Corridor as a 400' public right-of-way. Additionally, the Sonoran Corridor alignment is within the *RSSP* amendment boundary, Pima County jurisdiction and Interstate 10. Additionally, a Tier II study is also underway for the corridor alignment.

**Public Contact** - The applicant held the required neighborhood meeting on Wednesday, April 11, 2023, 5:45 – online via Zoom meeting link. The meeting was hosted by the applicant team which consists of staff from The Planning Center, Lazarus & Silvyn, PSOMAS and Arizona State Land Department. Approximately 25 owners and residents attended the meeting. The applicant team introduced the project, presented the proposed land use changes to the *RSSP*,

and summarized the development process for State Trust Land. It was highlighted that the plan amendment was the first step in the entitlement process and that a future neighborhood meeting would be held to discuss rezoning. The applicant also provided an overview of the plan amendment approval process. ASLD staff detailed the role of the Arizona State Land Department in preparing State Trust Land for future development to support the Trust's beneficiaries. After the presentation, the discussion focused on potential future uses on the property and compatibility with existing development, the future Sonoran Corridor and the potential for a rail extension through the project area. Applicant team explained the corridor runs through State Trust Land, ASLD does not control the design or layout of the transportation project and directed neighbors to the Arizona Department of Transportation for questions concerning the Sonoran Corridor (See attachment G).

**Planning Commission Action** – The Planning Commission held a study session on February 7, 2024 in which a recommendation was voted on (11-0) in favor to set this item for a public hearing on March 6, 2024.

**Discussion** - The proposed amendment to the *Rincon Southeast Subregional Plan* provides a new development approach that aligns with the process prescribed by *Plan Tucson* and the *RSSP* for orderly planning of the Southlands and further aligns with the social, economic, and natural resource goals of these Plans and the City of Tucson. The proposed amendment not only supports economic opportunity while enhancing the environmental systems but acknowledges the environmental and policy constraints of developing within the Southlands.

The proposed Special Area Policy Area 1-05 is aligned with the City's long-term growth strategy to promote innovative and sustainable growth within the Southlands. It encompasses phasing, performance and review criteria for any future development. It provides the necessary flexibility for the assessment of environmental systems with continued oversight through future secondary planning which will establish evaluation methods and flood control parameters.

If the amendment request is successful, the applicant will seek a rezoning of the subject parcels through subsequent submittal of a Planned Community Development (PCD). Through the Planned Community Development zone and secondary planning process, utilizing both the City's Engineer and Stormwater Technical Advisory Committee in the development and review of the PCD standards and regulations which will identify potential floodplain consolidation, potential channelization of braided washes, while still considering impacts to the National Flood Insurance Programs for the City of Tucson. The PCD approach allows for the comprehensive planning of critical community elements, including circulation, drainage, and open space and recreation amenities. Planned communities have long build-out periods (10 or more years) and are an evolving type of land development. As a result, they require flexible and holistic planning approaches.

**Conclusion** - Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve a motion to forward the proposed plan amendment to Mayor and Council to change Map Detail #4 and #8 to allow

(I) Urban Industrial and € Medium High Intensity Urban land uses and to create Special Area Policy 1-05.

**Attachments:**

- A. Location and Aerial Maps
- B. Plan Amendment Narrative
- C. Proposed Amendment RSSP Land Use Map Detail #4
- D. Proposed Amendment RSSP Land Use Map Detail #8 Map
- E. Proposed New Special Policy Area 1-05
- F. Neighborhood Meeting Summary
- G. Existing Land Use Map Detail #4 and text
- H. Existing Land Use Map Detail #8 and text
- I. Redline of RSSP