



# LAND REUSE STRATEGY

Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport  
Land Reuse Strategy (LRS)  
Central Area Roundtable/Community Meeting  
December 8, 2016, 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM  
Wesley Community Center  
Meeting Summary

A combined Roundtable and Community Meeting was held on December 8 as part of the PHX Land Reuse Strategy. This was the third round of committee and community meetings. The meeting consisted of a presentation of the recently completed Working Paper #2 by members of the Land Reuse Strategy project team, with a Question & Answer session following for meeting attendees. Detailed displays of Frameworks A, B, and C were also available at the meeting for attendees to look at and ask questions about.

## **Presentation**

---

### **Welcome & Opening Comments**

*Jordan Feld, City of Phoenix Aviation Department (AVN Rep. Feld)* welcomed attendees and thanked them for their input in developing the draft plans which would be presented during the meeting. He also noted that a concept put forth by Juan and Patricia Gurule had not been properly documented in the draft plans, but the project team would be sure to include the concept in the document. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that developing a plan for this project area was both challenging and exciting as there were so many different components, including cultural elements as well as multiple different uses for the project area. He stated that this planning area is rich in resources, both cultural and in its proximity to downtown and the transportation hub of the City.

### **Process to Date**

*AVN Rep. Feld* stated that the project had started with goal setting. The main goals that were heard repeated throughout the planning process were:

- Preserve neighborhoods – enhance, sustain and preserve what is already there, as well as bringing back housing into the area.
- Preserve and integrate history – use the various cultures to develop a Cultural Corridor and help tie the area together. Brand the area as a destination to draw people to the area.
- Don't wait to implement these plans and take action – develop plans with contingencies built in to ensure plans on paper can be put into action. Get rid of vacant parcels while keeping the community involved in the process.

## **Benchmarking**

*AVN Rep. Feld* stated that this process is unlike any other planning process that has taken place in the past. In other airport planning processes throughout the country, there was not a strong drive to develop the properties that airports had acquired. The various land uses and community driven planning process for this project was unique from any other. Phoenix has the opportunity to be an example to the rest of the country on how to deal with these community issues and be a model for community-driven planning. One commonality of the different plans was figuring out how to navigate the guidelines and restrictions set forth by the FAA and ensuring that the plans are still able to meet the goals of the communities.

## **Inventory**

The significant cultural and historical resources are great foundations for this planning process. The inventory in the Central Area of the study area showed good natural marketing attributes providing, including a good street network, and a close proximity to key drivers, both downtown and the airport. The North Area has multiple planning efforts that have already taken place, providing a great development framework. These previous planning efforts can also serve as the model for what can be done in the Central Area as well.

## **Market Study**

The Market Study showed that the market demand for the area is not extremely high. This is because of the many projects that are currently planned or underway which, in turn, absorbs the market demand for the near-term. For development to occur, 1 ½ - 5 acre parcels are the desired footprint for development to take place on. In the planning area, there are no airport-owned parcels that match that criteria so parcel assembly will be an issue that will be focused on.

## **Stakeholder Charrette**

In July, community meetings were held consisting of community-led discussions and brainstorming sessions. Those discussions showed that all of the suggestions and ideas written down by the meeting participants were in line with the goals set forth by the project. This showed a consistent trajectory for the project and confirmed that the goals were on the right track for developing a community-driven plan.

## **Working Paper #2**

*AVN Rep. Feld* stated that all of this previous work has now led to Working Paper #2 and the draft plans being presented. Working Paper #2 takes a look at the different frameworks for the project area, potential recommendations, and the specific policies that would need to be put into place to be able to implement those plans. The project

team also put together case studies which show examples of similar neighborhoods in cities across the country and what has been successfully developed there.

*AVN Rep. Feld* went on to state that a lot of the terminology that had been used in the general plan was not conducive to this planning area. In order to properly communicate the different plan frameworks and ideas, consistent terminology needs to be used to ensure that everyone has the same understanding of all the proposed concepts. Those terms and definitions are outlined in the working paper and he encouraged people to take a close look at those terms to ensure they adequately explained the different kinds of land uses that had been described by the community. *AVN Rep. Feld* also outlined a few of them with examples including Mixed Use Residential, which was recommended in the North Area. Transition Development Zone is a term that really describes this planning area as it is made up of that “patchwork” of parcels and has small pockets of properties in the midst of many different kinds of uses. It will be important to include overlay zones on the Airport parcels to ensure that the minimum design elements are met to have compatible development take place. He also talked about Small Business Zone and how that will be important in these areas with smaller sites and needing to be compatible with what is already there.

### **Framework A**

*AVN Rep. Feld* began outlining the frameworks and how they differ from one another. Framework A is essentially taking what the general plan and market trajectory would be without engaging in a community-driven planning process. Lighter industrial use starts to cover most of the Central area and industrial use covers all of the South area south of the interstate. He also explained that to correctly label the different frameworks, they needed to see what the noise contours of the area are today. From a planning perspective, the current noise contours are very beneficial as they do not interfere with areas where there is a strong desire for more housing. However, he reminded everyone that the FAA has never approved housing to come back.

*A meeting attendee* asked what could be done to allow residents and property owners to become shareholders of the project, allowing them to benefit from the area’s development. He was concerned that the plan would only benefit the Airport and he would eventually be pushed out of his current home. *AVN Rep. Feld* responded that *the meeting attendee* was correct that the plan would not be successful if current residents did not also benefit in their quality of life in the area. He stated that he wanted to finish explaining the different frameworks and the plans for the area to be able to adequately answer the question, as there was a slide that addresses the issue of benefiting back to the community.

*A meeting attendee* asked if the FAA decisions were ever influenced by the individual FAA members or if their decision-making was pretty consistent across the board. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that that could impact some decisions, however, no one from the FAA has ever agreed to put residential housing back into an area.

## Framework B

*AVN Rep. Feld* stated that each of these frameworks comes with a detailed list of cultural resource plans, a transportation network plan, and how to prep for certain infrastructure development within the area. Framework B incorporates a lot more of the community goals and aspirations. It was expressed that industrial use go in more along the freeway corridor, and that if any new development would have any effect on housing that is currently there, it would be an issue. There is still a strong interest in looking for opportunities to setup up a new residential area which would now be outside of the 65 DNL contours. The goal would be to attract growth and development in these areas which would then provide the possibility of developing residential out from the area. This could then lead to developing a new residential core concept where new residential could be introduced.

*Juan Gurule (Roundtable Rep. Gurule)* asked how private homeowners would be dealt with that remained in the planning area and were inside the 65 DNL noise contours. Would they still be unaffected by the new zoning that will most likely put in place inside the 65 DNL contour? *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that a concept that would hopefully come out of this plan would be one that would make it easier for the people outside of the DNL 65 to increase the residential density and housing market. He stated that there are a lot of obstacles in the way now that obstruct housing from being developed in the area. For instance, some areas may have good zoning, but the overlay districts that are also in place aren't conducive to housing development. So while most of the focus is on the Airport parcels throughout this process, it is also recognized that there are other policies that need to be changed throughout the entire project area to help in reaching the final vision for the reuse plan.

*A meeting attendee* asked if it was true that an existing resident, who lives in an older home within the 65 DNL contour, could make a trade to move into a newer home, in a more densely populated neighborhood with more amenities. *Roundtable Rep. Gurule* commented that he thought there would be economic considerations with that scenario, where a resident would be moving into a home that is more expensive than the one they were leaving. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that yes, a trade would be possible, but as nothing like this had ever been done before, the concerns that *Roundtable Rep. Gurule* pointed out would also have to be addressed.

*AVN Rep. Feld* stated that there were a few catalyst sites being looked at to start to bring out these proposed concepts. One of the sites looks at trying to redevelop Barrios Unidos as a Regional Sports Park/Commerce Center. This plan would present a regional draw to bring people into the area. *AVN Rep. Feld* added that he believed PHX Elementary School District shared similar goals in creating some type of recreational facility. The second catalyst site is located on the northeast corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Buckeye, where there is a lot of airport land, as well as being close to downtown and many cultural resources.

*AVN Rep. Feld* added that Framework B begins to add in more Mixed Use development into the plan, where Framework A had been more Light Industrial zoning.

### **Framework C**

Framework C also carries forward the community desires in terms of land uses. Changes in Framework C include a little bit less of a residential area, and keeping any new residential farther away from the 65 DNL boundary. In the North, you see the entire corridor designated for mixed use/residential opportunities. Towards the south, instead of limiting the regional industrial development to just the I-17 corridor, that development can be seen expanding out a bit. This also condenses the residential area to just the Sacred Heart and Herrera neighborhoods.

The Working Paper #2 provides many different evaluation criteria, including comparing implementation feasibility, policy acceptability and desirability of outcomes. When looking at the frameworks with the project team, it looks like somewhere between B and C is what delivers most of the criteria set forth by the community. *AVN Rep. Feld* encouraged community members to review the evaluation criteria to see if they agreed with the evaluation findings of the project team.

*AVN Rep. Feld* stated that while looking at the different areas on the map which have been designated with multi-colored zones, it does not mean that any zoning is changing for existing residents and property owners. Throughout the planning process, the community made it clear that any development that happens needs to harmonize with what is there today.

*A meeting attendee* stated again that they wanted the opportunity to become shareholders of the area to where they can benefit from the development that takes place. He stated that the Airport has taken control of a lot of the area along Buckeye Road from 16<sup>th</sup> Street years ago, but they still have yet to see any progress take place. Instead, the number of vacant lots has increased and the neighborhoods are gone. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that that was the reason they were there holding these meetings. They have heard the concerns about the area and how bad it has become and this plan is now being developed to turn the area around and encourage development to take place. *The meeting attendee* stated that he did not believe this plan would help, but only push him, as an existing resident, out once development begins to take place.

*AVN Rep. Feld* replied to the concern about being pushed out of the area by showing examples of what could possibly happen if there was a block with only one or two remaining residential properties, surrounded by Airport-owned properties. He then also showed an example of a block that had remained mostly residential and had only one or two Airport parcels in the midst of it. In the case of a remaining residential property in mostly Airport-owned parcels, a home owner can choose to stay and have development compatible with their residence take place around them. Both of these cases are outlined in Working Paper #2.

A meeting attendee stated that once that development takes place around a single remaining property on a block, no matter the kind of development, the property values would go up, which would then increase taxes making it unaffordable to him.

Abe Arvizu (*Roundtable Rep. Arvizu*) commented that it seemed there were some new attendees at the meeting and it would be important for them to know that community meetings had been held almost a year discussing these issues. The plans being presented now are the result of those discussions and offer the option of moving to a more developed neighborhood. *The meeting attendee* stated that the remaining community members didn't want to move and only wanted the chance to benefit off of the new development that would take place. *AVN Rep. Feld* replied to *the meeting attendee* and stated that this was the first time in the process that they had heard the idea of residents pooling money into the project as shareholders. Because he was just hearing it, he did not have a plan or answer for how to accomplish that. However, after the mapping and planning process, the implementation phase would start where a team would come in to lay out options for a plan detailing how residents would be able to invest in the area and directly benefit back to them.

*AVN Rep. Feld* continued explaining options for privately owned lots surrounded by Airport-owned properties by stating that if they did not want the development to occur, they could also offer adjacent small lots to the private land owners with the option to lease the Airport-owned lot. *The meeting attendee* stated he had no interest in leasing from the Airport.

*Sheila Gauff (Community Rep. Gauff)* commented that it might be better to explain why it is not possible for community members to buy the lots with leasing as the only option. *AVN Rep. Feld* explained that in most cases, selling the lots would not be an option.

*Carlos Avila (Roundtable Rep. Avila)* stated that many good concerns had been brought up. The Airport now only allowing the option of leasing would have many domino effects on all parties involved. He stated that offering people the option to lease, where they would then have to pay the taxes on the Airport-owned lot, was not a fair deal to the community. He also stated that he had concerns about the claim that areas would not be subject to rezoning. He stated that rezoning requires a public hearing, and if people at these meetings were opposed to this action, an attempt to rezone some of these areas in a way that might not be beneficial to remaining residents, the zoning would never pass a public hearing.

*Roundtable Rep. Avila* continued by saying that while the project pushed the goal of wanting what was best for the community, in the Central area, he did not believe this was what was best for the community. He went on to state that almost 500 of the parcels acquired through the VARS program did not receive sound mitigation prior to the acquisition program. This poses the question of whether those individuals were voluntarily forced out when offered such a higher quality of life in a different area. He stated that City officials had also said that sound mitigation funds that were not used

were to be reallocated to relocation efforts, which he had not heard addressed from any City official throughout this process. He commented on the fact that the City had removed trees, saying that it wasn't in the budget to be able to keep them, which shows they were doing what was best for the City, not what was best for the community. He also questioned why housing could not be put back in.

*Roundtable Rep. Arvizu* commented that the FAA had never allowed housing to be put back in. To continue focusing on putting housing back would be a waste of their time and effort since they knew what the FAA is most likely going to say. However, in the areas outside of the 65 DNL contour, the plans were showing zoning for mixed use/residential, so housing would be put in the plans in the appropriate areas.

*AVN Rep. Feld* recapped that they want more housing and they want people to be able to invest. *A meeting attendee* stated that he wanted this program to be in the best interest of the community. As a shareholder, community members would be willing to invest money to ensure that they would be able to update their properties as the community around them was updated.

*Roundtable Rep. Gurule* asked why no one from the FAA had been approached about this topic before now. He asked if there was any way to get some kind of answer from the FAA so that throughout the planning process, more concrete plans could be put on paper to present to the FAA that the community knew for sure would be able to be carried out. He also commented that he believed the shareholder idea was something that would be very interesting to look into and see if any other community in the country had done something like that.

*A meeting attendee* stated that she owned a business north of Buckeye and at previous meetings she had heard that the Airport would be able to release the properties. She asked why they were now saying leasing was the only option. *AVN Rep. Feld* replied that the FAA would almost always prefer a 100-year lease over a sale of the property. *The meeting attendee* asked why any business would want to move in and build and start a business on leased land. *AVN Rep. Feld* replied that a business can get a 50-year lease, which would take care of the loan and satisfy the bank, and it would be less capital up front. There is also more opportunity for the Airport to make the lease attractive to potential businesses. *The meeting attendee* asked again if businesses would be able to buy adjacent vacant lots. *AVN Rep. Feld* responded no.

*Community Rep. Gauff* stated that the FAA was treating residents like a business. She voiced her concerns about why a resident would not be able to buy a residential lot next to them, that was no longer within the 65 DNL contours. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that while the FAA has historically never allowed housing to go back in after it has been taken out, selling adjacent lots to homeowners, as opposed to leasing, could be something that was formally included in the proposed plans to the FAA. *Community Rep. Gauff* also stated that the Working Paper stated that the FAA would sell lots for fair market value, but they were determining the value of the parcels, which was not fair.

*AVN Rep. Feld* stated that that was a very good point and the FAA would need to be upfront on how it was determining value.

*A meeting attendee* commented that from the Working Paper, it seemed that the FAA did not have any problems with selling the properties with deed restrictions in place. He asked if it was the Airport who did not want to sell the properties. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that that was not the case.

*AVN Rep. Feld* then addressed the previous question about why there hadn't been any review with the FAA about the housing issue. He stated that the FAA doesn't do formal check-ins regarding planning processes. Until the FAA has a formal document, they won't issue a formal ruling or decision. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that they have checked in informally and the FAA has responded that they could understand mixed use residential in the North area, but still not giving any kind of approval for single-family residential. However, the FAA does not have the full document and argument for those uses. *Roundtable Rep. Gurule* stated he would still like for the FAA to comment on the plan in its draft form to let people know if parts of the plan are even likely to be approved.

*A meeting attendee* asked why no one from the FAA had ever been to any of the meetings. Going through the whole process and making a detailed development plan, to then have the FAA say it's not approved, does not seem like an efficient process. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that because this process was putting forth an innovative plan, all the details needed to be worked out before being presented to the FAA, otherwise they would not have a full understanding of it and just say no. *The meeting attendee* stated that she still had concerns about how the process would be handled as she felt that the community had been mistreated through past City projects.

*AVN Rep. Feld* stated that the way to prevent people's fears with the project from happening is to go through this planning process. People may be apprehensive about rezoning, but new zoning will only put more restrictions on those Airport properties, ensuring that they don't encroach on the existing communities in ways that are not beneficial to those communities.

*Community Rep. Gauff* stated that the community would simply like to invite the FAA to a meeting so they could ask questions, and develop a relationship with them and the FAA would see that it is people they are dealing with, not just plots of land. *AVN Rep. Feld* replied that he had been having informal conversations with the FAA throughout the process, relaying what had been happening at the meetings to the FAA. He had asked if the FAA would like to participate in the meetings, and the stated that they would rather just react to the draft plan.

*AVN Rep. Feld* concluded that there are many ways in urban design to get to compatible development of the area, including the scenarios where existing residents want to stay in that area. He recapped the different topics that were discussed during the presentation. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that the project team would like to begin the FAA approval process as quickly as possible as it can take up to six months for their

review. If public comments on Working Paper #2 were received by December 30, they would then be able to submit the document to the FAA in March.

*A meeting attendee* stated that the community may not want to submit by March, but have longer to review the Working Paper. *AVN Rep. Feld* replied that they could definitely extend the comment period and wait a little longer to submit to the FAA.

*A meeting attendee* stated that he had suggested FAA attendance at the last meeting and he would once again like to reiterate that point. He also commented on the deadline stating that it was not enough time for people to review the full document. He stated that he also knew of a lot of community members that did not want to attend the meetings so he asked if it would be available for review at locations around the community. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that copies of the document would be available in both English and Spanish at locations throughout the community. He also stated that the project team would not push forward if people expressed that they needed more time to review.

*Roundtable Rep. Gurule* stated that because the document was not yet available in Spanish, and because the project team was going to research the new idea of finding a way for residents to become shareholders in the community, he would like to make a formal request to extend the deadline for public review and comment. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that they could extend the deadline, but he also wanted to manage expectations about the FAA rulings on some of the issues.

*A meeting attendee* asked if a lot of it was rulings from the FAA, or if it was controlled by the City of Phoenix. She believed it was the City that was now saying they wanted to lease all the properties. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that it was the FAA. He explained that once the Airport buys land, that land then becomes obligated to the Federal government. So while the Airport makes the day-to-day decisions, it all has to go back to the FAA for approval.

*Advisory Rep. Olivas* stated that Federal money was used to acquire the properties. Now they were going to lease the properties. She asked if the money made from leasing the properties could be reinvested in the communities. *AVN Rep. Feld* replied yes, on the plans there was green space and parks, and markers for the historical locations. *Advisory Rep. Olivas* stated that those were things for people coming in. What were they going to do to invest in the people who had stayed in the communities? How was the City going to invest in the homes of the people who still lived there through the deterioration of the neighborhoods? *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that the FAA did not allow the funds to be used in that way.

*A meeting attendee* asked if the properties had been bought with City of Phoenix money. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that all of the properties had been acquired with some sort of federal funding. *The meeting attendee* then asked if that meant that none of those parcels could ever be sold under the current conditions. *AVN Rep. Feld* replied that the FAA does allow the land to be sold in some cases, it is just not the preference. *The meeting attendee* asked if the money could be refunded to the FAA so that the City

would be the owner of the properties. *AVN Rep. Feld* replied that it would not make a difference because once a parcel is part of an Airport plan, no matter the payback of funding, the land is obligated to the FAA.

*A meeting attendee* asked if it was possible for the FAA to come in later and enforce eminent domain, even though the City has assured them that they can stay in their current residence. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that that would absolutely not happen. Eminent domain also becomes a state issue and is now illegal in cases of economic development.

*A meeting attendee* asked who was defined as a stakeholder and what was their role. *AVN Rep. Feld* replied that right now, as a stakeholder, because the project is still in the conceptual planning stage, stakeholders should react to the plans and provide feedback.

*A meeting attendee* asked if a house-for-house option could be added into the plans, where someone who might want to move out of the area could relocate to another neighborhood. He added that maybe there could be a grandfather clause added in to where the resident would not have to pay the higher property tax on the new home. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that there might be ways to achieve this and others had brought up the same point throughout the process.

*A meeting attendee* asked if there could be some sort of community land trust to build affordable housing to ensure that community members were still able to afford to live in the area and weren't forced out through the new development. *AVN Rep. Feld* stated that that had been done in other communities. He stated that it was more of a topic to look at in the implementation phase of the project to really get into the details of how to make it happen.

## **Closing**

---

*AVN Rep. Feld* ended the formal presentation portion of the meeting to leave time for people to review the displays and talk to project team members. He stated that the project team members were more than happy to meet with people at their homes, at community meetings, and other locations to talk about the strategy if a community member had specific issues to talk about. He thanked everyone for providing all the different ideas and feedback and the meeting ended.