



AGENDA ITEM: 7.
DATE: 11/13/23

STAFF REPORT

**GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 23-001
ZONE CHANGE NO. 23-001
TENTATIVE TRACT MAP NO. 23-003 (TTM 84221)**

DATE: November 13, 2023

TO: Lancaster Planning Commission

FROM: Jocelyn Swain, Senior Planner
Community Development Department
Planning and Permitting Division

APPLICANT: Maison’s Sierra Phase 1, LP/Kevin Harbison

LOCATION: ±45 gross acres on the west side of Sierra Highway between Avenue H and Avenue H-8
(Assessor Parcel Numbers [APNs] 3135-001-903 thru 3135-001-918)

REQUEST: General Plan Amendment to change the general plan designation from MR1 (Multi-Residential) and O (Open Space) to MR1, a Zone Change from MDR (Moderate Density Residential) and PK (Park) to MDR, and a Tentative Tract Map to subdivide ±45 acres into 109 lots (98 residential lots, 10 common lots, and one remainder lot).

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution No. 23-36 recommending approval to the City Council for General Plan Amendment (GPA) No. 23-001 to change the general plan designation to MR1 and Zone Change (ZC) No. 23-001 to change the zoning to MDR, approving Tentative Tract Map (TTM) No. 23-003 (TTM 84221) for the subdivision of approximately 45 gross acres into 109 lots located on the west side of Sierra Highway between Avenue H and Avenue H-8 (APNs: 3135-001-903 thru 3135-001-918), adopting the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH# 2023100288), approving the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program and authorizing staff to execute the Notice of Determination.

BACKGROUND

On January 17, 2007, the Planning Commission approved the Northeast Gateway Corridors Plan for approximately 500 acres generally bounded by Avenue H, Avenue I, 10th Street West and Challenger Way. This plan considered development within three planning areas including the Whit Carter Park Area, Fairgrounds Reuse Area, and Residential/Commercial Area. As part of the plan approval, a Final Environmental Impact Report (State Clearinghouse [SCH] No. 2006061101) was certified.

Subsequent to the approval of the plan, the City's General Plan 2030 was adopted by the City Council on July 14, 2009 which designated the property in question as a mix of Open Space (O) and MR1 (Multi-Residential).

The City of Lancaster Housing Authority owns several parcels of land between Whit Carter Park and Avenue H and south of Avenue H-8 between Sierra Highway and Cedar Avenue, including the subject property. On May 9, 2023, the City of Lancaster City Council declared this property as exempt surplus land and approved a Disposition and Development Agreement (DDA) with Ravello Holdings, Inc. for the subject property. This DDA governs the Developer's right to develop the subject property with affordable housing and obligations with respect to acquisition of the land, closing, schedule of performance, and default.

No project specific land use approvals for the subject property have been previously granted by the Planning Commission or City Council.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Table 1 summarizes the general information concerning this project.

Table 1: General Information

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
APNS	3135-001-903 thru 3135-001-918
LOCATION	±45 gross acres on the west side of Sierra Highway between Avenue H and Avenue H-8
ZONING AND LAND USE	The subject property is zoned a mix of Moderate Density Residential (MDR) and Park (PK) and is currently vacant.

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING	<p>North: Single family residences, Avenue H, and industrial development; R-7,000 (single family residential, minimum lot size 7,000 square feet) and Heavy Industrial (HI)</p> <p>South: Whit Carter Park/vacant; PK</p> <p>East: Sierra Highway, vacant land, Union Pacific Railroad; (HI)</p> <p>West: Single family residences, Mariposa Elementary School and Mariposa Park; R-7,000 and School (S)</p>
CURRENT DEVELOPMENT	The project site is currently vacant.
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW	<p>An initial study/mitigated negative declaration (SCH #2023100288) was prepared for the proposed project and circulated for a 30-day public review period in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The public review period started on October 10, 2023 and ended on November 9, 2023.</p> <p>Effective January 1, 1991, applicants whose projects have the potential to result in the loss of fish, wildlife or habitat through urbanization and/or land use conversion are required to pay filing fees as set forth under Section 711.4 of the Fish and Game Code. Pursuant to Section 21089(b) of the Public Resources Code, the approval of a project is not valid, and no development right is vested, until such fees are paid.</p>

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The applicant (Maison's Sierra Phase I, LP) proposes to construct and operate a 2-phase, 100% affordable, private, gated housing development. All units within the development would be rental units.

Phase I

Phase I consists of a 196-unit housing development on individual lots. Each lot within Phase I would contain a primary residence and an accessory dwelling unit with off street parking. Each primary residence would have a garage with two parking spaces while the ADUs would have an uncovered, off-street parking space. Additional on-street parking would be provided throughout the development with a small parking area for the community building. A 40-space parking facility would be provided at the western edge of the property to provide additional parking for the

adjacent Mariposa Park. Recreational amenities would be provided for the residents including private open space, paseos, three open space/park areas and a community center/recreational area with a pool. Pedestrian access gates from the development to the adjacent Whit Carter Park would also be provided. Primary access to the development would be from two driveways along Sierra Highway with an additional access point from Avenue H-4.

The residences within the development would be a mix of one, two, and three bedrooms ranging in size from 687 square feet to 1,296 square feet. In accordance with ADA requirements, a percentage of the units would be accessible and would also provide accessible parking.

Phase II

Phase II would be developed after Phase I and includes up to 303 affordable units for seniors with similar amenities as Phase I. These units are anticipated to be small, bungalow type cottages and the development would contain similar amenities to those provided in Phase I.

Affordability

The affordability of the proposed development would range from 30% to 80% of the area median income (AMI). This is based on the area median income for Los Angeles County which in 2023 was \$98,200. Table 2 shows the income limits for the proposed project based on the number of people in the household. In addition, the developer has requested concessions and waivers from development standards in accordance with State law including a reduction in the front yard setback and a reduction of the width of the corner lots from 80 feet to 65 feet. These requests have been reflected in the design of the project.

Table 2
2023 Affordability Income Limits

Persons in Household	Income Limits for Project
1	\$26,500 – \$70,650
2	\$30,300 - \$80,750
3	\$34,100 - \$90,850
4	\$37,850 - \$100,900

Site Plan Review No. 23-009 (Phase I) is a staff level approval; however, the overall project (Phase I and II) requires the approval of a general plan amendment, zone change, and tentative tract map. These are discussed below. A second site plan review will be submitted for Phase II after construction of Phase I commences.

General Plan Amendment

The current general plan designations for the subject property are a mix of MR1 (multi-residential, 6.6 to 15 dwelling units per acre) and O (Open Space). The proposed project includes a general plan amendment (GPA No. 23-001) to change the designations of the subject property so that the entire 45 acres is designated as MR1. The MR1 designation is required in order to develop an affordable housing project across the site as the Open Space designation does not permit housing.

Zone Change

The current zoning for the subject property is a mix of MDR (Moderate Density Residential, 6.6 to 15 units/acre) and PK (Park). The proposed project includes a zone change request (ZC No. 23-001) to change the zoning of the subject property so that the entire 45 acres is designated as MDR. This zoning would be consistent with the requested General Plan designation. The goal of the MDR zone is to provide for medium density multi-family dwellings in an urban environment with full urban services.

Tentative Tract Map

The proposed tentative tract map would subdivide the subject property into a total of 109 lots in accordance with the standards of the MDR zone. There would be a total of 98 residential lots; 10 common use lots for streets, open space, paseos, and the community center/recreational area; and one remainder lot for the future Phase II development. The remainder lot would be approximately 20 acres. All lots within the MDR zone are required to be a minimum of 6,000 square feet and the proposed development meets this standard. The 98 residential lots would each be a minimum of 6,100 square feet with a maximum lot size of 8,264 square feet.

All lots meet the minimum depth and width with the exception of some of the corners which have a width of less than 80 feet. As this is an affordable housing development, the applicant has requested a concession from this development standard in accordance with State law. All corner lots would have a minimum width of 65 feet with Lot 15 having a width of 76 feet.

The entire development would be fenced and gated with two access driveways from Sierra Highway and a secondary access point from Avenue H-4. All streets, open space, and recreational areas within the development would be private.

ANALYSIS:

General Plan Consistency

In order to grant a General Plan Amendment, Section 17.24.140 of the Lancaster Municipal Code states that the Planning Commission must show that such amendment is necessary to implement

the General Plan and/or that public convenience, the general welfare, or good zoning practice justifies such action.

The proposed project is consistent with the following policies contained within the City of Lancaster 2030 General Plan:

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| Policy 3.2.1: | Promote the use of water conservation measures in the landscape plans of new developments. |
| Policy 3.2.2: | Consider the potential impact of new development projects on the existing water supply. |
| Policy 3.2.5: | Promote the use of water conservation measures in the design of new developments. |
| Policy 3.3.1: | Minimize the amount of vehicular miles traveled. |
| Policy 3.3.2: | Facilitate the development and use of public transportation and travel modes such as bicycle riding and walking. |
| Policy 3.3.3: | Minimize air pollutant emissions generated by new and existing development. |
| Policy 3.4.4: | Ensure that development proposals, including City sponsored projects, are analyzed for short- and long-term impacts to biological resources and that appropriate mitigation measures are implemented. |
| Policy 3.5.1: | Minimize erosion problems resulting from development activities. |
| Policy 3.6.1: | Reduce energy consumption by establishing land use patterns which would decrease automobile travel and increase the use of energy efficient modes of transportation. |
| Policy 3.6.2: | Encourage innovative building, site design, and orientation techniques which minimize energy use. |
| Policy 3.6.3: | Encourage the incorporation of energy conservation measures in existing and new structures. |
| Policy 4.3.1: | Ensure that noise sensitive land uses and noise generators are located and designed in such a manner that City noise objectives will be achieved. |

- Policy 4.7.2:** Ensure that the design of new development minimizes the potential for fire.
- Policy 10.1.1:** Provide opportunities for a wide variety of recreational activities and park experiences, including active recreation and passive open space enjoyment within a coordinated system of local, regional, and special use park lands areas.
- Policy 15.1.2:** Cooperate with local water agencies to provide an adequate water supply system to meet the standards for domestic and emergency needs.
- Policy 15.1.5:** Ensure sufficient infrastructure is built and maintained to handle and treat wastewater discharge.
- Policy 16.3.1** Promote development patterns which will minimize the costs of infrastructure development, public facilities development and municipal service cost delivery.
- Policy 16.6.1:** Require new development to construct and/or pay for new on-site capital improvements necessitated by their project, consistent with performance criteria identified in Objective 15.1.
- Goal 17:** To establish a variety of land uses, which serve to develop Lancaster into a balanced and complete community in which people live, work, shop and play.
- Policy 18.1.4:** Encourage the long-term maintenance of new residential development.
- Policy 18.2.2:** Encourage appropriate development to locate so that municipal services can be efficiently provided.

There are no goals, objectives, policies, or specific actions of the General Plan that would conflict with the proposed amendment. The proposed amendment would allow for development of the project site in accordance with goals of the City and provide needed housing for a variety of income levels. The proposed amendment would not adversely affect the economic health of the City, as the development of the project would not require a major investment to provide access or public infrastructure to the site. Access already exists from Sierra Highway and Avenue H-4 and public utilities including water, sewer, and electricity exist in the vicinity of the project site. The proposed development is consistent with the other residential, school/park, and industrial uses in the general vicinity of the site and the amendment would be compatible with the existing

partial designation of the site as MR1.

No environmental impacts were identified in the initial study that cannot be reduced with the implementation of the identified mitigation measures.

Housing Element Consistency

The proposed project supports the goals and objectives of the City of Lancaster's 2022 Housing Element (revised 2023). Specifically, the Housing Element identifies objectives and policies to provide a variety of housing types and affordability levels to the residents of Lancaster. The proposed project would provide up to 499 residential units over two phases as described above. This development would support the following policies from the City's Housing Element and would help the City meet its current Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) overall numbers and numbers for low-income housing.

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| Policy H-1.2: | Encourage a mix of housing types are provided, including single- and multi-family housing within a variety of price ranges to provide a range of housing options for Lancaster residents. |
| Policy H-1.3: | Promote infill housing development within areas presently approved for urban density residential development, as well as areas which have been committed to urban development. |
| Policy H-2.2: | Facilitate housing for extremely low-, very low-, low-, and moderate-income households to be distributed at locations through the urban portions of the City. |
| Policy H-2.3: | Facilitate the construction of affordable housing developments for very low-, low-, and moderate-income households. |
| Policy H-2.4: | Promote the development and rehabilitation of housing specifically designed for the elderly, providing a variety of living environments. |
| Policy H-3.7: | Encourage energy conservation and sustainable living building measures in new and existing homes and the addition of energy conservation devices/practices in existing developments. |

Compliance with the Lancaster Municipal Code (LMC)

The proposed project complies with the development standards for residential uses in the MDR zone as identified in Sections 17.08.060 and 17.08.070 of the LMC. The applicant has requested concessions from some of the development standards in accordance with State law. Specifically, the applicant has requested concessions for a reduced front yard setback (from 8 feet to 6 feet)

, reduced side yard setbacks, and a reduction in the corner lot widths. These concessions have been reflected in the design of the project.

Compliance with the City of Lancaster Design Guidelines

The proposed project complies with the intent of the Design Guidelines with respect to site design and layout for residential developments. Pedestrian connectivity is provided within the project site and along the project frontage. The elevations and floor plans for the proposed development would be reviewed and approved for compliance with the Design Guidelines prior to the issuance of construction permits. This would ensure quality design with 360-degree architecture which enhances the community's image and quality of life.

ZONE CHANGE FINDINGS

In order to grant a Zone Change (ZC), Section 17.24.120 of the Lancaster Municipal Code states that the Planning Commission must make all of the following findings:

- a. That modified conditions warrant a revision in the zoning plan as it pertains to the area or district under consideration.**

Modified conditions warrant a revision in the zoning plan in order to allow for the permitting of the proposed project. A portion of the project site is already zoned for multi-family residential development and the zone change would allow for a consistent zoning across the project site. Existing single family residential uses are located immediately to the west along with Mariposa School and Park. Whit Carter Park exists to the south and the remaining property to the north and east is zoned for industrial uses. The MDR zoning across the entire project site would not be a substantial change from the MDR/PK zoning that exists on the site now and would be compatible with the surrounding zoning.

- b. That a need for the proposed zone classification exists within such area or district.**

A need for the proposed MDR zoning across the entire site exists in order to allow for a greater variety of housing choices for all income levels. The proposed zoning would allow for slightly smaller lots than the R-7,000 zoning located to the west and would facilitate the development of an affordable rental community of traditional style homes. This development is needed in order to help provide housing to all residents of the City.

- c. That the particular property under consideration is a proper location for said zone classification within such area or district.**

The particular property under consideration is a suitable location for the MDR zone as a portion of the subject property is already zoned as such. The property to the west is zoned R-7,000 and the lots are of similar size to the lots being proposed with this development.

Additionally, access to the project site would be obtained directly from a major arterial and would not require the construction of additional roadways to access the site.

- d. That placement of the proposed zone at such location will be in the interest of public health, safety, and general welfare and in conformity with good zoning practice.**

Placement of the proposed zone at this location will be in the interest of public health, safety and general welfare and is in conformity with good zoning practice. The proposed zone change would provide consistent zoning across the entirety of the project site and would be compatible with the surrounding zoning and existing developments.

TENTATIVE TRACT MAP FINDINGS

In order to grant a tentative tract map, Section 16.08.110 of the Lancaster Municipal Code states that the Planning Commission must make all of the following findings:

- a. The proposed subdivision is consistent with the general plan, any applicable specific plan, and is compatible with the general plan land uses, goals, objectives, policies, and specific actions specified in such plan.**

The proposed project is a residential subdivision consistent with the general plan land use designation of MR1 (Multi-Residential) and with the policies, goals, objectives, and specific actions of the General Plan. The proposed project is not located within the boundaries of a Specific Plan.

- b. The design and improvement of the proposed subdivision is consistent with the general plan, any applicable specific plan, Title 17, and this title.**

The design and improvements of the proposed subdivision are consistent with the General Plan and use designation of MR1 and the development standards identified in Sections 17.08.060 and 17.080.070 of the LMC when considered with the requested concessions for corner lot width, and side and front yard setbacks. The project site is not located within the boundaries of a specific plan.

- c. The site is physically suitable for the type and density of the development proposed.**

The project site is physically suitable for the type and density of the proposed development. Adequate roadway capacity and infrastructure exists in the vicinity of the project or can be provided to support the development.

- d. The design of the subdivision or the proposed improvements are not likely to cause substantial environmental damage or substantially and avoidably injure fish or wildlife or their habitat.**

The design of the subdivision and the proposed improvements are not likely to cause substantial environmental damage or substantially and avoidably injure fish or wildlife or their habitat. An initial study was prepared for the proposed development to assess potential impacts to twenty-one (21) resource areas including biological resources. No sensitive status plant or animal species were identified during the surveys and mitigation measures have been provided to ensure that any potential impacts remain less than significant. Mitigation measures have also been provided for other resource areas such as air quality, cultural resources, geology and soils, and noise.

- e. The design of the subdivision or the type of improvements will not cause serious public health problems.**

The design of the subdivision and the associated improvements are not likely to cause serious public health problems as adequate sewer and water systems will be provided to the proposed development. Additionally, all residences within the subdivision are required to have trash collection services in accordance with the City of Lancaster's Waste Management franchise agreement.

- f. The design or the types of improvements of the subdivision will not conflict with easements acquired by the public at large, for access through, or use of, property within the subdivision. The city may approve the map if alternate easements will be provided in accordance with Section 66474(g) of the Subdivision Map Act.**

There is a 10' trunk sewer easement that runs in a north/south direction through the eastern portion of the project site. This easement will remain and no structures will be built on top of the easements. The site been designed so that the easement is located within the paseos and open space areas. There is no public access easement across the site; therefore, the design of the subdivision will not conflict with public access. Any other utility can be accommodated within the design of the proposed project.

- g. The City's action will not have an adverse effect on the housing needs of the region and the city has balanced these needs against the public service needs of its residents and available fiscal and environmental resources, in accordance with Section 66412.3 of the Subdivision Map Act.**

The proposed project would have a beneficial effect on the housing needs of the region because an additional 196 dwelling units would be provided in Phase I of the proposed project and up to 499 units would be provided at full build out. These units would all be affordable and provide housing to residents with an AMI of 30% to 80%. The proposed project would not adversely affect the economic health of the City as the infrastructure to support the proposed project, such as roadways and utility lines, currently existing in the vicinity of the project site and the maintenance of this infrastructure is already

occurring. Additionally, all roadways, sewer, and water lines within the subdivision would be private and maintained by the Homeowners/Property Owner's Association.

h. The design of the subdivision provides, to the extent feasible, for future passive or natural heating or cooling opportunities.

The proposed project is not expected to have any significant impact on any future passive or natural heating or cooling opportunities. The proposed project has been designed to take advantage of heating and cooling opportunities to the extent feasible. Additionally, the proposed project is required to comply with Title 24, which includes requirements for solar energy.

LEGAL NOTICE

A notice of Public Hearing was mailed to all property owners within a 500-foot radius of the project, posted in three places, posted on the subject property, and noticed in Antelope Valley Press on November 3, 2023.

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt Resolution No. 23-36 recommending approval to the City Council for General Plan Amendment (GPA) No. 23-001 to change the general plan designation to MR1 and Zone Change (ZC) No. 23-001 to change the zoning to MDR, approving Tentative Tract Map (TTM) No. 23-003 (TTM 84221) for the subdivision of approximately 45 gross acres into 109 located on the west side of Sierra Highway between Avenue H and Avenue H-8 (APNs: 3135-001-903 thru 3135-001-918), adopting the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH# 2023100288), approving the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program and authorizing staff to execute the Notice of Determination.

Attachments:

- A. Resolution No. 23-36
- B. Draft Ordinance
- C. Tentative Tract Map No. 23-003 (TTM 84221)
- D. Initial Study