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## RETAIL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED ON FORMER MOSQUE SITE

Jun 19th, 2016 · by Cecilia Chan

A 3-acre parcel in north Peoria once proposed for a mosque could give way to a retail shopping center.

The land is one of three parcels totaling 9 acres at the southeast corner of 83rd Avenue and Happy Valley Road that MDC Land Development wants to develop with up to 80,000 square feet of retail, restaurants and other low-intensity commercial uses.

Planning and Zoning Commission last week agreed to recommend the City Council approve a rezone and land use change to allow for the project dubbed 83 Marketplace.

"I've followed the progress of this project," said Daniel Ferranti who lives south of the site. "In general I express my personal support and most of my neighbors at The Meadows are positively in support."

A number of residents who attended two community meetings about the project earlier this year voiced support. They proposed a number of tenants for the commercial development, including restaurants, a hair salon, a Trader's Joe and a dry cleaners.

"I support this project as a family-friendly resource for the neighborhood," noted Mitch Erickson in a comment card submitted at the Feb. 9 community meeting.

Crystal Dykes echoed the sentiment.

"We've been in desperate need of more specialty shops and restaurants within walking, biking distance for a very long time," she wrote on her comment card.

Six people, however, opposed the project.



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Angela Parker, who lives in Calle Lejos estates and whose backyard faces the proposed project, in a letter to the city stated that 83 Marketplace would “negatively impact” the value of her home, a prime lot with mountain views. Commercial zoning also brings criminal activity to our quiet neighborhood,” she wrote. “Our noise pollution will increase with the additional traffic.”

A few others in their support of the project, mentioned the mosque. “Love this retail center!” wrote Jennifer Ferranti on her comment card.

“No mosque! So make this retail center happen! Oh, did I mention, no mosque!”

The Islamic Center of Peoria originally planned to build a mosque on the site but ended up selling the land this year to MDC. Residents near the site caught wind of the proposed mosque, which prompted calls of concerns to the city.

The project aims to be a neighborhood retail place designed to be pedestrian friendly, allowing shoppers to visit multiple stores without driving across the parking lots, according to senior planner Aaron Frank.

The buildings would be restricted to 30 feet in height and walls are to be a maximum of 8 feet high, Mr. Frank said. Drive-thrus also are restricted to three for the site with restrictions on lighting and right out-only at 83 Marketplace’s three accesses.

Applicant Mark Reddie of LVA Urban Design Studios in Tempe said the community’s active participation resulted in a better project.

“We really did work hard to address concerns of neighbors,” he said. “We tried our best to minimize the impacts.”

He said an anchor store would be 20,000 square feet to 25,000 square feet in size located in the center of the site. It has not been determined how many shops would be at 83 Marketplace, he said, adding that negotiations are now in process with potential tenants.

According to a commissioned market analysis by Elliott D. Pollack and Co., the proposed location is an excellent location given its high traffic volumes and would be extremely convenient for residents of Westwing.

“The 83rd Avenue and Happy Valley Road site is furthermore a strategically advantageous location as a shopping center site in the city of Peoria,” the report stated, adding that the dispersion of shopping center space in the area currently results in retail leakage to Phoenix and Glendale.