Memorandum

Date: April 4, 2016

To: Sustainability and Transportation Committee

Through: Kari Kent, Assistant City Manager

From: Christine Zielonka, Development Services Director

John D. Wesley, AICP, Planning Director

Subject: Definition of High Quality Development

At the October 5, 2015 meeting of the Council Sustainability and Transportation (SAT) Committee staff was asked to develop a definition of quality development. Concern was expressed that right now the determination of quality seems to be done on a subjective basis by one or two individuals. The Councilmembers want a more objective standard that can be applied by anyone and allows applicants to have a greater degree of certainty as to what will or will not be approved. Because we are talking about design issues, it is difficult to totally eliminate subjectivity from the review of projects to determine if they are providing the high quality development desired in Mesa, but a definition and some guidelines will help to remove much of that subjectivity.

Based on the direction from SAT, staff began working on the definition. The first step was to review existing documents, primarily the General Plan for current policy statements regarding quality development. Attached as Exhibit A is a list of the statements in the General Plan that help define the level of quality expected in Mesa. Based on the review of the existing statements and through discussion with staff, the following definition has been drafted:

Definition: Quality Development

"Quality development" is development of structures, buildings, sites, subdivisions, and neighborhoods in a manner that results in a built environment that will endure as an asset to the community for future generations. High quality development is achieved through:

- use of a variety of landscape materials and durable, high-quality building materials that work together to provide visual interest through a compatible variety of colors, materials and textures;
- use of architectural and site design that is appropriate in scale, massing and articulation to the setting and purpose of the development;
- creating places that are safe, attractive, interesting and inviting, and fit within the context of the surrounding neighborhood;
- developing in a way that is appropriate for our climate, utilizes low impact development techniques, and utilizes options for water and energy conservation and,
- an integrated pattern of development that facilitates connectivity, multi-modal transportation options, and mixed-use development.

The cumulative effect of using the above definition is to create holistic designs where the individual parts work together to create an interesting, attractive, sustainable whole.

Because the goal at this point is to develop one over-arching definition of quality regardless of the type or scale of development, the definition has to be very broad. To help move this broad definition into something more usable on a regular basis by staff and applicants, staff has taken the elements of the definition and prepared a “Quality Development Framework” spreadsheet. A copy of the spreadsheet is attached for further review. This spreadsheet takes the concepts in the definition and provides design principles and expectations associated with each one for the design of individual buildings, for sites, and for subdivisions or neighborhoods.

Because we are still dealing with a wide range of possible building types the design principles and expectations are still somewhat broad and general. In order to have design guidelines and expectations more specific we will need to develop guidelines for specific development types. Updating existing design guidelines and adding additional guidelines will be the next step in this process.

Next Step

If the SAT Committee is satisfied with the draft definition and spreadsheet, staff will take this information out to our developers, the Planning and Zoning Board, and Design Review Board for further evaluation and comment. If they agree with little to no comments we will then be ready to go to Council for full discussion and approval. If they make significant modifications we will return to SAT with an update before going to Council.

Element 1 – Use a Variety of Landscape Materials

Design Principles	Expectations		
	Subdivision/Neighborhood Context	*Site*	*Building*
Use landscape materials to create sense of place and arrival	• Provide interest through a variety of shapes, materials, colors and textures during all seasons • Establish a neighborhood character through themed landscape palette and hardscape elements • Utilize desert tolerant plant materials	• Provide interest through a variety of shapes, materials, colors and textures during all seasons • Establish a site character through themed landscape palette and hardscape elements • Use landscape design to help with wayfinding on the site	• Use landscape palette and planting design to accent entry locations • Use landscape materials to frame views of the building • Provide effective and attractive screening where appropriate/ required
Use landscape materials to tie into larger context	• Incorporate landscape materials predominant in the surrounding environment • Use materials appropriate for the location in Mesa	• Incorporate landscape materials predominant in the surrounding environment • Use materials appropriate for the location in Mesa	• Landscaping used as a unifying element where building types or styles are different due to the nature of the use and activities on the site.
Building and landscape design work together	• Smart location considerations	• Use materials that provide appropriate visibility into the site and to signage, frame views, and provide focal points	• Use softscape and hardscape to create attractive design • Landscape materials shall complement the building architecture and design
Use landscape materials and shade structures to provide shade on and around the buildings, pedestrian corridors and parking areas	• Protect key landscape features that exist, and if necessary relocate the landscape feature within the subdivision.	• Minimize urban heat island effect • Use of trees that will establish canopy upon maturity • Use of trees and shade structures to provide cover for pedestrian ways	• Shading for buildings
Use landscape materials and areas as a transition between incompatible activities	• Preserve natural washes and other land features as transition features.	• Use materials and planting patterns appropriate for the location and context • Utilize wide landscape areas or densely planted landscape areas as necessary to provide buffers	• Foundation base landscaping used to provide relief where needed, but should not interfere with street view from windows and outdoor patio areas.
Maintain soft edges to streetscape through site landscape features	• Use site natural features as defining elements for subdivision layout to establish a unique identity for the overall project.	• Provide effective and attractive screening where appropriate/ required • Shading for pedestrian areas and parking areas	

Element 2 – Use High Quality, Durable and Lasting Building Materials

Design Principles	*Expectations*		
	Subdivision/Neighborhood Context	***Site***	***Building***
Provide attraction and interest through a mix of materials with a variety of compatible colors and textures	• Establish a neighborhood character through consistent use of materials • Use of consistent materials in identify/branding of area	• Materials used for site walls, parking areas, light fixtures, signs, trash enclosures, etc. must complement the building(s) • Materials used for site development incorporate a variety of materials, colors and textures	• Utilize materials to provide interest in the buildings and identify primary focus areas such as entries • Use materials, color and/or texture changes to establish a base for the building • Primary building walls should use a solid material such as masonry to emulate traditional load bearing walls • Express uses and functions with materials and forms
Use materials that are durable and easily maintained in our desert climate	• Materials appropriate to extreme heat, cold, sun exposure and water penetration	• Materials used in site development must be durable and low maintenance	• Use materials that are durable and high quality • Avoid colors that quickly fade • Avoid mirror glass and limit glass curtain walls to accent areas
Use finer grained materials in pedestrian areas, larger masses on bigger buildings and locations away from people	• Appearance of perimeter surfaces • Attention to detailing of buildings, monuments and features at intersections	• Use real materials in areas visible to the public, rather than imitation materials such as stucco or EIFS	• Use real materials in areas visible to the public, rather than imitation materials such as stucco or EIFS

Quality Development Framework

Element 3: Architectural and Site Design

Design Principles	Expectations		
	Subdivision/Neighborhood Context	***Site***	***Building***
Provide architectural interest and detailing consistent with the context of the area, use of the property and building(s)	• Architectural design and detailing should be consistent with the context of the area • Use consistent architectural details to create a sense of place and neighborhood identity	• All aspects of the site design (theme walls, light fixtures, paving patterns, building architecture, etc.) work together to create a unified whole • Utilize design features to help with site wayfinding	• Avoid long, flat walls • Provide breaks in plain both vertically and horizontally • Utilize building design and architecture to highlight important areas of buildings • Provide base/middle/cap hierarchy • Maintain openness/ permeability at the ground level to contribute to the human scale • Middle repeats an architectural theme or pattern • Top features special elements derived from the building's geometry, use or surroundings
Provide architectural connections to adjacent uses and development	• Provide multi-modal connections between adjacent uses • Site residential entries on street, discourage courtyard entries • Densities and intensities appropriate for location	• Wrap intersection corners with active retail uses. • Building scaled to meet the sidewalk and entry reflects the character of the building use	• Design buildings to relate to the location and context of the site • Provide design connections to streets and public access areas
Provide an intuitive street network	• Establish regular block lengths • Multiple points of access • Street network at the human scale • Define view corridors to make destinations seem close	• Height of the street wall proportional to the width of the street and the sidewalk. • Perimeter is appropriately scaled and oriented to surrounding area • Buildings located on corner sites or at the terminus of views should have embellished architecture. • Discrete boundaries and edges (not strip-commercial)	• Base scaled and detailed to pedestrian view to anchor building to ground • Transition scale larger buildings to mimic smaller building styles
Utilize Complete Streets design concepts	• Provide infrastructure for biking • Provide sidewalks and enticing, pedestrian-oriented streetscapes	• Locate the primary entries on major pedestrian streets. • Locate service and parking entries on secondary streets or alleys.	• Relate to the traditional or appropriate building front widths and façade heights at the front.
Provide focal points and gathering places	• Encourage outdoor dining and other uses in the public realm • Locate streets, sidewalks, trails, etc. to create intersections that bring people together	• Acknowledge viewsheds and incorporate into site layout	• Cap terminates the building with architectural elements • Articulated tower elements • Corner sites should have enhanced architecture.

Quality Development Framework

Element 4: Creating Safe Places

Design Principles	Expectations		
	Subdivision/Neighborhood Context	***Site***	***Building***
Maintain/ reinforce grid pattern	• Shorten pedestrian distances • Max. 400 ft. block lengths • Allow choice of multiple routes • Incorporate public safety access considerations • Minimize dead ends	• Break up large sites into smaller units to resemble small parcel size of urban development. • Provide internal public streets or driveways designed to resemble public streets with intuitive connections to multiple destinations.	• Buildings to reflect small parcel size even where large parcels are assembled
Minimize impact of automobile	• Use on-street parking where appropriate to buffer pedestrians and outdoor uses • Screen parking lots/garages with active uses • Minimize curb cuts • Minimize use of service roads • Reduce land used for parking, encourage shared parking	• Create connections between spaces and places within the surrounding area; existing connections should be enhances not hindered by new development • Appropriate site lighting and visibility of spaces	• Location buildings close to the street • Locate entries on public streets • Provide lighting and visibility to promote public safety
Concentrate active uses along street frontages and ground floors	• Define the public realm • Service and parking to the rear • Activate the sidewalk • Retail uses shall be the principle ground floor use on major pedestrian streets • Form the street wall for the entire block	• Parking areas do not inhibit pedestrian-building interaction • Reduce pedestrian exposure to surface parking lots and active driveways. • Provide amenities such as street trees and benches to provide respite for pedestrians. • Consider context and function of streets to promote walking streets and locate servicing, deliveries to appropriate service drives or alleyways.	• Ground level public uses – retail and display areas with visual interest • Windows overlooking the street (‘eyes on the street’) • Appropriate vertical proportions for windows • Wrap corners with active uses, min. 50 feet •

Element 5: Climate Appropriate

Design Principles	Expectations		
	Subdivision/Neighborhood Context	*Site*	*Building*
Site designed to minimize solar heat gain	• Create grid pattern that provides for optimal solar orientation with appropriate block lengths, off-sets and lot configuration • Provide street/driveway orientations to allow buildings to be designed for optimal solar orientation	• Layout of buildings on site, with consideration of solar heat gain • Plant materials to shade parking areas and pedestrian areas • Minimize urban heat island effect with plantings and alternative hardscape surfaces	• Solar orientation
Manageable energy costs for future owners and tenants	• Incorporation of solar, wind, greywater • Utilize low water plant materials	• Prune plantings to promote tree height and canopy to create shade in the future • Use LID, greywater or rainwater capture for landscape irrigation	• Insulation • Window glazing • Incorporate photovoltaic solar systems into building design • Low water using features
Acknowledge the desert landscape	• Preserve unique desert features on-site • Utilize Low Impact Development • Mimic or enhance existing hydrology • Utilize native plant material to create sense of place for the subdivision/neighborhood	• Minimize use of turfgrass • Use drought tolerant plant materials with varying size and scale to site context • Utilize Low Impact Development techniques • Mimic or enhance existing hydrology	• Orient and design buildings and associated landscaping using desert materials
Use building forms and materials appropriate for this climate	•	•	• Use of balconies and canopies over doors and windows, or solar shades as needed • Recessed windows • Exterior hanging gardens through trellises or planter boxes with overhanging vines • Use of durable materials that withstand the sun and heat

Quality Development Framework

Element 6: Integrated Pattern of Development

Design Principles	Expectations		
	Subdivision/Neighborhood Context	*Site*	*Building*
Provide an integrated transportation system	• Complete streets for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit uses • Implement bike sharing program • Streets designed to be safe and comfortable for pedestrians	• Design that supports multi-modal transportation options • Appropriate building siting with reduced setbacks and unified wayfinding signage • Shaded pedestrian connections from streets, parking, and bus shelters	• Design that supports non-vehicular travel through use of massing, façade articulation and entries and design visible, • Incorporate enticing staircases to encourage everyday use • Bicycle parking near front entries
Provide connectivity	• Grid system of shorter blocks and multiple intersections • Establish cut-through paths for bicyclists and pedestrians in long blocks	• Layout that facilitates parking once and then circulate through the site as a pedestrian • Provide for transit and bicycle parking, minimize over-parking a site	• Provide facilities that support bicycle travel such as bicycle storage rooms and showers • Buildings fronts and main entries face streets and/or pedestrian paths and connect with adjacent uses
Incorporate a mix of uses	• Combination of land uses that allow access to goods and services	• Combination of related and compatible land uses supporting internal capture • Connectivity between sites to allow easy access to related or adjacent uses	• Building floor plates support change of uses over time • Avoid franchise corporate standard
Establish open space amenities	• Not leftover land as open space. • Public spaces designed for physical activity within ½ mile or 10 minute walk of residences and places of employment. • Spaces should be appropriate for multiple generations (“8/80” paradigm)	• Civic space programmed with uses, as appropriate • Appropriate transitions with surrounding open space amenities (Riverview example) • Design space outside of buildings to be attractive and interesting, provide places for informal meeting/gathering	• Access to open spaces and recreation facilities with amenities • Allow for perception of an expansive sky canopy • Provide views to open spaces, landscape areas, and distant views
Design with green infrastructure	• Conservation subdivision design • Consider reduced street widths • LID features and natural areas that provide benefits for people and natural habitats	• Clustering of development • Reduced driveway widths and reduced parking • Green streets, rain gardens, bioswale, pervious pavement or other features	• Green roof, rain garden