

November 11, 2014

Chairperson Bronson & Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors
130 W Congress St.
Tucson, AZ 85701

Honorable Supervisors,

My name is Bob Johnson. I lived in Tucson for 17 years, from 1971 to early 1989. I attended the UofA, where I received my M.S. & Ph.D. from the School of Renewable Natural Resources, worked for the Pima County Planning Department as a Land Use Planner from 1974-79, served on the County Planning Commission from 1981-1984 and served as the Director of Planning and Development Services between 1985-89. **Under my leadership, the Board adopted the Buffer Overlay Zoning Ordinance and nearly all the current County zoning ordinances protecting Pima County's natural environment.**

Since leaving Tucson in 1989, I served as the Director of Planning and Community Development for several public agencies in California, including the County of Riverside and the cities of Irvine and Temecula. I was also responsible for coordinating a successful multi-year campaign that defeated Granite Construction's proposed 5 million ton per year open aggregate pit mine adjacent to the City of Temecula during my tenure there. Additionally, I worked for several years as a paid planning, development and energy consultant, providing guidance and services to City of Santa Monica and Monterey County. I retired two years ago.

During my 40+year career as a land use planner, I always advocated and practiced collaboration with a wide array of impacted stakeholders to ensure that development was compatible with existing neighborhoods and environmental and ecological impacts. I also recognized my staff's obligation to fully inform the public and their elected officials in the decision making process to assure responsible development practices were balanced with the need to sustain a viable, economically robust community.

Because of my role in the creation of Pima County's Buffer Overlay Zoning Ordinance (BOZO) and Minor Resort CUP process, and in consideration of my collaborative approach to land use development, Kelley Matthews and Peter Lasher, i.e. Elcortijo LLC, retained me to verify the purpose, intent and

application of these zoning requirements and evaluate potential modifications to the site plan.

PURPOSE OF THE BUFFER ORDINANCE

Pima County was one of the five fastest growing counties in the United States in the mid 1980's. Large vacant parcels, especially on the flat valley floor of east Tucson, were being rapidly developed as CR-3 subdivisions - development that typically cleared the land and channelized natural drainage ways. As this explosive scrapped-earth track housing migrated towards Saguaro National Monument East, the community was fearful that new housing developments would intrude into the existing low-density, environmentally sensitive neighborhoods bordering the natural parklands. Park managers were concerned that new subdivisions would result in an incursion of domestic pets and invasive non-native plant species into the natural lands, and that the walling off of wildlife corridors in and out of the Monument would rapidly destroy the ecological balance in the Park.

In an effort to protect the natural parks surrounding Tucson from overly intrusive development, the Board of Supervisors passed the Buffer Overlay Zoning Ordinance (BOZO), which applied it to all parcels of 25 acres or larger that existed at the time of the ordinance adoption, in an effort to create an ecologically sound transition between the regional natural preserves and urban development, while at the same time permitting economically reasonable use of the land.

INTENT OF THE BUFFER ORDINANCE:

The BOZO was not written to change the underlying zoning, but rather to place environmental restrictions on specific plans, new rezonings, and new development on land parcels that were twenty-five acres or greater in size. **The Ordinance was crafted to protect wildlife habitat, foster unimpeded movement of wildlife into and out of the natural preserves, as well as create a transition zone from the natural open space in the park lands to more urbanized development within the City of Tucson.**

Twenty-six years later, all new subdivisions within the Buffer Overlay comply with the BOZO. Only one zone change has occurred in the Rincon Buffer since 1988, and that was the approval of the massive Rocking K Ranch specific plan by the Board in the late 1990's. Since its approval, no additional rezoning's have occurred in the Rincon Buffer; and there has not been, nor will there be, a

mass surge of rezoning requests in the Buffer if the Bike Ranch is approved.

The Bike Ranch Is Not a Rezoning

Despite much of the rhetoric of those opposing the Bike Ranch, let's not confuse the issue before you today; the Bike Ranch does not require a rezoning of the 45-acre parcel. Under the rules of the Pima County Zoning Code, Minor Resorts are a conditionally permitted use that is allowed in the Suburban Ranch Zone.

APPLICATION: Minor Resorts Replace Guest Ranch Regulations

Because of explosive growth in the Tucson Metropolitan area in the late 1970's and early 80's, the Board of Supervisors asked staff to update the outdated 1952 zoning code and tighten and upgrade its development standards.

As a member and Chair of the Planning Commission, and subsequently as Director of the Planning Department, I acutely recall the Commission's desire to continue the practice of embedding small guest ranches into low-density residential zones located near or adjacent to natural parklands surrounding Tucson. In an effort to protect adjacent residents, the Commission increased the minimum lot size from 4 acres to 10 acres and limited the number of guest suites to 49. They also agreed that small resorts were appropriate uses in the SR Zone but wanted to expedite the review process. Therefore, they eliminated the Commission review by categorizing Minor Resorts as a Class 2 Conditional Use Permit. And finally, to ensure that a guest ranch would not be a subterfuge for commercial zoning, they restricted commercial uses to 5% of the total square footage of the resort.

Once tightening the development standards for guest ranches, and to avoid confusion, they changed the zoning designation of "Guest Ranch" to "Minor Resort. "

The Board of Supervisors approved the comprehensive Zoning Code update in 1985, which included the newly defined Minor Resort category.

APPLICATION OF THE BUFFER ORDINANCE

The proposed Bike Ranch site plan meets and exceeds the intent & requirements of the Buffer Overlay Zoning Ordinance, which was enacted to:

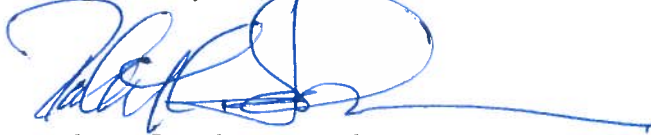
- Ensure an ecologically sound transition between nature preserves and urban development.
- Protect critical and sensitive wildlife habitat.
- Foster the unimpeded movement of wildlife in and out of Saguaro National Park.
- Allow for the economically reasonable use of the land.

The Bike Ranch development plan goes further by:

- Clustering the guest suites and detached single-family homes by dedicating nearly 70% of the 45-acre parcel in natural open space and providing large natural buffers to adjacent residences.
- Protecting all drainage ways that serve as wildlife corridors.
- Respecting the natural desert ambiance by replacing outdated buildings with low to the earth casitas that are designed to flow with the natural contours.
- Designing a complex that replicates traditional guest ranch architecture.
- Creating a building complex that strives to meet a LEED Platinum rating.
- Serving a regional need by creating a comprehensive travel destination for avid bicyclists.
- Creating new jobs.

Clearly, based on my 40+ years in the planning and development field, in addition to the role I played in creation of Pima County's Buffer Overlay Zoning Ordinance, the proposed Bike Ranch Minor Resort development plan represents the best in ecologically and economically sustainable land use planning.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert C. Johnson., Ph.D.