



City of Phoenix
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

To: City of Phoenix Planning Commission **Date:** August 6, 2026

From: Joél Carrasco, Special Projects Administrator
Enrique Bojórquez Gaxiola, Planner III

Subject: REQUEST TO CONTINUE AND REMAND THE RIO SALADO DISTRICT
POLICY PLAN AND GENERAL PLAN LAND USE MAP AMENDMENT

This memo is a request to continue General Plan Amendment case (GPA-CC-SM-1-26-7-8) for the Rio Salado District Policy Plan and the accompanying General Plan Land Use Map Amendment case (GPA-CC-SM-2-26-7-8) to the October 1, 2026, Planning Commission hearing and remand both cases to the September 8, 2026 South Mountain Village Planning Committee (VPV) meeting for additional input on potential land use map and/or policy plan changes, and to review additional correspondence received leading up to and following the Central City and South Mountain VPC meetings held on July 13th and 14th of 2026.

The Central City VPC heard these requests on July 13, 2026 and recommended approval of both by a vote of 9-0. The South Mountain VPC heard these request on July 14, 2026 and recommended approval with direction on the policy plan, by a vote of 10-4. The South Mountain VPC provided direction to staff to include actions in the policy plan that addressed the following topics:

- A. Creation of an anti-gentrification task force.
- B. Additional tax incentives.
- C. Business support from city departments with business development programs.
- D. The Planning and Development Department (PDD) along with other city departments to coordinate the task force and other plan goals.

The South Mountain VPC recommended denial of the General Plan Land Use Map amendment case, by a vote of 12-2, citing general concerns with industrial land uses, gentrification, and displacement. Specific concerns with the proposed land use map designation were discussed for the inactive mining pit located between 16th Street and 24th Street, south of the Rio Salado.

Since the VPC meetings, the Planning and Development Department reached out and met with several city departments to discuss the recommendation of the South Mountain VPC and community correspondence received, which related to the VPC recommendation. To date, these discussions are ongoing.

GPA-CC-SM-1-26-7-8 and GPA-CC-SM-5-26-7-8
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Furthermore, since the staff report was published, staff has received a total of three letters; one in support of the policy plan case, one in opposition to the land use map amendment case, and one in opposition to both the policy plan and land use map amendment cases.

Attachment:

A – Additional Correspondence (12 pages)

South Phoenix Community Feedback on the Rio Salado Policy Plan

July 14, 2026

To City of Phoenix leaders, committee members, and planning staff,

We support restoring the Rio Salado, improving public access, and bringing thoughtful investment to the area. After reviewing the existing actions identified by staff, we believe the implementation section would be stronger if several actions were made more direct and a small number of missing actions were added.

The issue is not that affordability, displacement, homelessness, local participation, or neighborhood investment are completely absent. The issue is that the current language often stops at “explore,” “support,” or broad phrases such as “a mix of incomes,” while the plan is more specific about land-use change, rezoning, and development incentives. Community protections should receive the same level of direction.

We ask the City to strengthen the plan around these outcomes:

- **Make affordability explicit.** Create a measurable commitment to produce and preserve long-term affordable housing. A single percentage does not have to be fixed in this plan, but affordability should not be left implied.
- **Tie public support to community benefit.** When City land, public funding, infrastructure, added height, density, or other development incentives are provided, include clear expectations for affordability, public access, and locally serving uses.
- **Protect existing residents and businesses.** Add direct anti-displacement assistance and monitoring so investment does not push out the people and locally owned businesses already in South Phoenix.
- **Address homelessness with housing and services.** Coordinate housing, outreach, and supportive services so public improvements do not simply move or concentrate homelessness elsewhere in South Phoenix.
- **Create a path for local participation.** Support local nonprofit and mission-driven development partners and an ongoing community role in implementation, consistent with applicable law and procurement requirements.
- **Connect investment beyond the riverbanks.** Coordinate comparable infrastructure, housing tools, shade, sidewalks, and small-business support with the South Central corridor and nearby South Phoenix neighborhoods.

The table below contains a working draft of the proposed changes and additions to the actions. We ask the committee to support these outcomes and recommend that staff work with community members and advisors on negotiated language before final City Council action.

Respectfully,

Community members and supporters of South Phoenix

Action Modifications and Additions

Plan Reference	Current Action	Suggested Modification or Addition
PRIORITY ACTION 3 Modify	Rezone catalyst and “reimagined” properties and/or deploy an opt-in zoning to incentivize new development in alignment with the community vision.	Rezone catalyst and “reimagined” properties and/or deploy an opt-in zoning approach to incentivize new development in alignment with the community vision. Where added height, density, City-owned land, public funding, or infrastructure support is provided, include clear and enforceable community benefits, including long-term affordable housing when residential uses are proposed, meaningful public access, and opportunities for locally serving businesses and community uses.
ACTION 14 Modify	Continue citywide programs that promote homeownership and business assistance to support existing residents and businesses in the Rio Salado District.	Continue and, where feasible, expand citywide programs that promote homeownership, housing preservation, renter stability, home repairs, and business assistance to support existing residents and locally owned businesses in the Rio Salado District. Monitor housing costs, business closures, and other displacement indicators as investment occurs, and use the findings to target assistance.
ACTION 23 Modify	Explore adding properties within or near the Rio Salado District to a community land trust and/or leveraging other tools to support long-term affordable housing options.	Identify and pursue properties within or near the Rio Salado District for inclusion in a community land trust and/or use other available tools to create and preserve long-term affordable housing. Establish measurable goals for the homes supported, income levels served, and duration of affordability, with priority for City-owned land, existing affordable housing, and areas at greatest risk of displacement.
ACTION 26 Modify	Explore the feasibility of technical assistance, financial incentives and/or public improvements, as needed, to support new residential development that caters to a mix of incomes or home improvements on existing residences.	Develop and implement technical assistance, financial incentives, zoning incentives, and/or public improvements to support new residential development that includes long-term affordable housing for a range of incomes, and home improvements that help existing residents remain in place. Define measurable goals and appropriate affordability terms through future programs, RFPs, rezonings, and development agreements.

Plan Reference	Current Action	Suggested Modification or Addition
ACTION 41 Modify	Develop new housing models that make it easier for individuals and families experiencing homelessness to find and rent housing.	Develop coordinated housing, outreach, navigation, behavioral health, and supportive-service models that help individuals and families experiencing homelessness obtain and retain housing. Coordinate public-space improvements and outreach so they do not simply relocate or concentrate homelessness elsewhere in South Phoenix.
NEW ACTION Local development partners	No existing government action directly addresses participation by local nonprofit developers or local financing partners in redevelopment of City-owned land.	Encourage and support local nonprofit and mission-driven developers, community development organizations, community land trusts, and local financial institutions to apply for, partner on, or finance redevelopment opportunities on City-owned land. Consistent with applicable law, recognize demonstrated South Phoenix experience, community partnerships, affordable housing experience, and capacity to deliver community benefits.
NEW ACTION Investment beyond the riverbanks	Related actions address infrastructure, shade, economic tools, and business assistance within the Rio Salado District, but no existing action provides a clear commitment to coordinate comparable investment with the South Central corridor and nearby neighborhoods outside the district boundary.	Coordinate Rio Salado implementation with the South Central corridor and adjacent South Phoenix neighborhoods by evaluating and pursuing comparable access to shade, sidewalks, infrastructure, housing programs, small-business assistance, public improvements, and development tools. Identify cross-boundary projects in the infrastructure needs assessment and future funding requests.
NEW ACTION Community implementation and reporting	No existing government action establishes an ongoing community role in implementation or regular public reporting on these community protections.	Establish an ongoing South Phoenix community implementation and accountability process with regular public reporting and opportunities for residents, local businesses, and community organizations to review progress and advise on City-owned land solicitations, major incentives, affordable housing, displacement, homelessness response, public access, and public investment.

Note: Current action wording is quoted from Priority Action 3 and Additional Government Actions 14, 23, 26, and 41 in the Rio Salado District Policy Plan public hearing draft. New-action rows identify gaps rather than quote existing plan language. Related cases: GPA-CC-SM-1-26-7-8 and GPA-CC-SM-2-26-7-8.

Upcoming General Plan Land Use Map Amendment

Dear Fellow SMVPC members,

I am opposed to the General Plan Land Use Map Amendment and specifically how it reduces the prospect for successful future residential development in our village. I invite you to consider joining me in opposition so that we are on record representing the wants and needs of South Mountain.

The main areas of concern involve the areas between 19th Ave and 7th Ave along the Rio Salado; The area between 7th Ave and Central just south and removed from the Rio Salado; and the area between 16th Street and 24th Street immediately adjacent to the Rio Salado. In these areas there is a shift in zoning from Residential to Commerce Business Park and Mixed-Use Commerce Business Park.

South Mountain residents have expressed an interest in seeing improved and better-supported schools, more shopping and recreation options, better access to healthcare, more affordable housing and over-all a better quality of living. Reducing the amount of prospective residential areas does not serve these goals as all of these require a critical mass of local residents to make them feasible. Schools need more children to bring funding to their programs, not transient workers who come to the village and then return to some outside neighborhood at the end of the day. When a healthcare facility or grocery store chain draws a radius to count the households available to support a facility, they do not count commerce parks and other businesses. Environmental needs are not met by adding more heat and pollution-producing big buildings. The proposed changes do not meet the practical community needs communicated by South Mountain residents.

The City of Phoenix's housing website states:

"Providing safe, decent, and affordable housing is critical to our growing, vibrant city."

The Arizona Department of Housing website says:

"Safe, decent, affordable housing and healthy communities are the cornerstone of a vibrant and sustainable housing landscape that stimulates economic growth and provides the stability conducive for Arizonans to pursue their dreams"

The Housing Data Report Required Pursuant to Senate Bill 1162 says that the City of Phoenix did not meet its threshold requirement (p. 56) and said:

"Additional single-family zoned land needed to meet demand."

It is counterproductive to take currently zoned residential land and convert it to more business and commerce parks. The existing zoning is perfect for providing the city with housing options close to downtown attractions, employment, medical campuses, transportation, and the attractions of the Rio Salado, but not if we take it out of contention by shifting its focus to business. Mixed-use is a type of urban zoning. It is not appropriate for the South Mountain Village Character Plan of "...preserving the area's rural character, farmlands, citrus groves, and open canal systems."

Heat mitigation has been a concern of this committee and the City of Phoenix. Phoenix uniquely operates the first standalone Office of Heat Response and Mitigation which "coordinates programs and policies to help lower urban temperatures and protect public health." According to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers:

"Commercial developments generally have a greater warming effect on the microclimate than residential areas. This is due to taller structures, larger expanses of heat-absorbing materials like dark roofing and parking lots, and intense, continuous emissions from massive, roof-mounted HVAC systems. "

It seems this plan amendment is counter to the City's own stated goals of increasing housing and decreasing heat impact.

One of the rationales for the proposed shift is that the areas proposed for change contain a mix of land uses and the existence of brownfields. These are a direct result of decisions made by the City of Phoenix over the last 8 decades when they authorized dirty industry, landfills, freeways, and airports onto the underserved population of South Mountain. There will be a cost to revitalizing these lands but the people of South Mountain should not bear the economic brunt by giving up the land's potential. The potential is not the highest and best economic use, but the highest and best community use - not dollars generated, but community benefits realized. It is the City's responsibility to make amends and not abdicate their part in the problem, and to recognize that federal-, state-, and city-sanctioned historic racist policies played a part in creating the conditions and new policies should play a part in ameliorating them.

These areas have the potential to be highly sought after residential neighborhoods if planned for in the right way. It may be many years down the road, but when the demand for close-in housing and the vision of the Rio Salado coalesce, developers will find a way to overcome the issues. Gilbert and Chandler both have converted land adjacent to old landfills into popular housing developments in the last 20 years (Fincher Farms and Lantana Ranch).

Another rationale given is that the plan has received generally positive feedback. Anecdotally, in any public meeting I have attended over the last three years, I have never heard a comment asking for more warehouses, light manufacturing, or commerce parks. But when an under-served and under-resourced community is offered something that on the surface appears to improve the desolation of the areas they currently see, they will, in general, be happy for the

attention. They will not see that commerce and business parks are extractive industries taking South Mountain assets and giving them to outside influences. These industries/businesses will take land and the monies generated out of the Village and leave the urban heat impact, truck traffic, and reduced health outcomes.

I envision the South Mountain Village returning once again the traditional community just outside the downtown core offering walkable neighborhoods with affordable homes, good schools, cooling parks and greenspaces, and nearby recreation and healthcare. We can have this if we plan for it...but if we plan for business and commerce parks that's what we'll get.

Please join me in opposing the Amendment so that we might provide a different future for the residents of the South Mountain Village.

Sincerely, Mark Beehler
SMVPC Member



July 31, 2026

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Property Owner Comments Regarding the Proposed “Rio Salado District Policy Plan” GPA-CC-SM-1-26-7-8

Dear Mr. Gaxiola:

Please accept this letter as formal request to record our comments and concerns following our review of the proposed *Rio Salado District Policy Plan* and amendment to the City’s *General Plan Land Use Map*.

We appreciate the opportunity to have met with your Planning and Policy team recently. The discussion provided valuable insights into the City’s proposed *Rio Salado District Policy Plan*, while also allowing Cemex to articulate our property strategy and express our concerns regarding the plan as to possible impacts to Cemex’s property and current/future business needs.

As you are aware, Cemex maintains private ownership of an approximately 26-acre property located at 3480 S. 7th Avenue (Exhibit A) (the “Site”). The Site is currently zoned A-2, Section 628 of the City of Phoenix Zoning Ordinance and consists of four (4) parcels, with frontage on 7th Avenue and abutting the Rio Salado. Historically, the Site has been mined for aggregate resources and other construction related activities dating back to the 1950s. With its proximity to the river and frontage along a major arterial roadway, Cemex would agree with the City that the Site is significant to achieving the long term goals presented in the proposed *Rio Salado District Policy Plan*, while also noting this is a critical location for our ongoing business.

During our meeting, Cemex described our primary business, which is building materials production that has supplied necessary construction materials to several critical regional and city projects including TSMC, South Central Light Rail, ADOT Broadway Curve, 67th Avenue Improvement Project, ADRA – Sky Harbor Sky Train and the Maricopa County Elections Buildings.

Cemex reviewed both our short-term and medium-term goals for the Site, which includes the ability to produce ready-mix concrete and construction materials to continue to support the City’s growth in the foreseeable future. Some of these functions are permitted by right in the A-2 zoning district (such as outdoor storage of construction materials), while others, such as concrete mixing plants, may require¹ a Special Permit approval (per Section 647.A.1.i, City of Phoenix Zoning Ordinance).

In the event that Cemex does require further land use entitlements for the Site, including but not limited to a Special Permit request, it is important that the final Rio Salado District Policy Plan not discourage such

¹ To the extent there are any legal nonconforming rights related to the use of the Site, Cemex reserves all rights and nothing herein is intended to waive or otherwise abridge any such rights.

applications and/or land uses in the short to medium time periods as such uses often provide the economic solution to bridging today's condition with future visions.

For example, aggregate mining sites along the Rio Salado that are not currently exhausted of resources may be candidates for the installation of a concrete mixing plant. Such facilities are temporary in nature and encourage the utilization of aggregate resources located on or nearby the facility and support local development. Given that the Rio Salado District Policy Plan is forward looking, the plan should support such scenarios given the end goal of future land uses of such sites that cannot occur until resources are exhausted.

Another consideration is that construction materials provided by Cemex are an important input into establishing the other uses and development proposed by the plan. Nearby access to construction materials can reduce construction costs, making projects more economically viable and therefore more likely to move forward.

In short, City support of Cemex's ability to provide necessary construction materials would be supportive to the City's long-term objectives with the plan.

With that in mind, Cemex would propose that the City incorporate Implementation Actions that would address existing short- and medium-term land use needs that are unique to Cemex's aggregate business.

X. Collaboratively work with aggregate and construction materials related users requiring discretionary approvals to authorize such uses on short- and medium-term basis when combined with post use reuse strategies, such as site compaction and reclamation for future redevelopment.

X. Recognize the essential role of local aggregate supply and concrete mixing plants in supporting current and future Rio Salado & City of Phoenix infrastructure, housing, transportation, commercial, and public works projects. Develop short- and medium-term supportive regulations in partnership with the industry to maintain, expand, or establish such facilities with mitigation, buffers, or other project site enhancements that will harmonize such uses until phase out.

Such a policy would be supportive of necessary requests for land uses that may not align with the long-term plan but can be approved when such requests demonstrate how their inclusion in the Rio Salado area for a period of time will support the larger objectives and lead to eventual land uses that are more compatible over time. See Exhibit B for how proposed text noted above could be included in the Rio Salado District Policy Plan as an Implementation Action under *Part IV: How We Get There*. In light of the reasoning above, we respectfully request that the City include this proposed text into the final plan.

One final comment, the City included detailed conceptual planning of the Site in the plan, identifying it as a "2050 Catalysis Site" (see Exhibit C) and showing concepts involving a possible future mixed-use campus concept land use with significant open space, public facilities and trails. Cemex was not involved in those efforts and for the record would note that the concept provided is not reflective of any current plans of Cemex, as such planning has not occurred and the future at this point is unknown beyond Cemex's current business operations.

While it would be Cemex's preference that the City not show any conceptual land uses for its property, given that intent by the City appears to be to illustrate a creative possible future, and not a prescribed plan, Cemex does not object to the conceptual planning exercise being retained in the final plan, subject to an

understanding that is it for illustrative purposes only and that future land use of this private site is unknown at this time and will likely not be consistent with the illustrative concept shown therein.

That understanding appears to be provided for on Page 86 which notes that “[t]his master plan is intended to guide future land use decisions and inspire future development in the area, and not to intended to depict exactly how the area will be built out over time.”

In summary, Cemex is supportive of the *Rio Reimagined* vision. However, we respectfully request that the City also ensure that the final plan include language that support businesses like Cemex in obtaining permits, operating, and conducting their activities so they can contribute to local and regional growth.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. Layfield". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Nathan Layfield
Vice President/General Manager
8888 East Raintree, Suite 205
Scottsdale, AZ 85260
205-862-7154

CC: Mayor Gallego
Councilmember Hernandez
Adam Miller, Growth & Infrastructure Administrator

Exhibit A – Site Aerial



Exhibit B – Proposal Implementation Action Language

How We Get There 4			
Some of these long-term actions may be able to be conducted earlier as staffing capacity and resources become available by each department.			
NO.	Implementation Actions	Lead Dept.	Key Partners
23	Explore adding properties within or near the Rio Salado District to a community land trust and/or leveraging other tools to support long-term affordable housing options.	HD	-
24	Prioritize small to mid-scale non-residential development types on aviation noise land sites along the northern portion of the Rio Salado District.	AVD, CEDD	PDD
25	Investigate the feasibility of a pilot business program that supports the appearance of commercial properties (including screening and buffering), while helping businesses expand.	NSD	CEDD
26	Explore the feasibility of technical assistance, financial incentives and/or public improvements, as needed, to support new residential development that caters to a mix of incomes or home improvements on existing residences.	HD, NSD	PDD
27	Collaborate with local utility providers on utility corridor planning and to encourage proactive upgrades of utility infrastructure in the Rio Salado District.	CMO	CEDD, PDD
28	Collaboratively work with aggregate and construction materials related users requiring discretionary approvals to authorize such uses on short- and medium-term basis when combined with post use reuse strategies, such as site compaction and reclamation for future redevelopment.	PDD	CEDD
29	Recognize the essential role of local aggregate supply and concrete mixing plants in supporting current and future Rio Salado & City of Phoenix infrastructure, housing, transportation, commercial, and public works projects. Develop short- and medium-term supportive regulations in partnership with the industry to maintain, expand, or establish such facilities with mitigation, buffers, or other project site enhancements that will harmonize such uses until phase out.	PDD	CEDD
BIG IDEA 2 TO ACHIEVE THE VISION: CONNECT RESIDENTS AND VISITORS TO THE RIO SALADO			
30	Partner with community groups to promote local food production, processing (community kitchens), and distribution (farmers markets, mobile markets, ect.) within or near the Rio Salado District.	OEP	CEDD, PDD
31	Promote local exercise, environmental education, health and social programs, smart cities technologies, chilled drinking water access in the district, including along the RSHRA.	PRD	OPH, OEP, NSD, OI
32	Strengthen active transportation connections to and within the Rio Salado District by building PhxCAN projects and supporting biking and shared micromobility as a safe, enjoyable way to access and enjoy the district.	ST	PRD
33	Pursue regional and federal funding (i.e. grants) and local funding (i.e. grants, bonds, capital improvement program) to improve connectivity to the RSHRA and other infrastructure projects.	ST	CMO, PRD, PDD, OEP
34	Work with property owners to acquire easements or right-of-way and pursue funding to improve the 12th Street alignment that connect the RSHRA and Cultural Corridor (north of Interstate 17), also considering Smart Cities technologies and design.	ST	OEP, PRD
35	Develop a creative marketing display or strategy in Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport that promotes the RSHRA and other assets for visitors, to increase tourism to the area.	OAC	AVD, PRD
Office of Homeless Solutions (OHS) Office of Innovation (OI) Office of Public Health (OPH) Office of Sustainability (OS) Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) Public Transit Department (PTD) Public Works Department (PWD) Street Transportation Department (ST) Water Services Department (WSD)			
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Exhibit C – Excerpts from Rio Salado District Plan for Site

Detailed Conceptual Plan Illustration



Source: Multistudio



1 7th Avenue. Perched above the RSHRA, this site is envisioned as a thriving **mixed-use campus** with uses that could include biomedical laboratories, educational institutions, and other employment uses. Multi-family residential uses could complement employment uses here and provide housing units for workers or students. This site presents an opportunity to rediscover and explore the western reach of the RSHRA.

2 Central Avenue. Located adjacent to the most active and visited reach of the RSHRA, this site is uniquely positioned at the junction of a light rail station, RSHRA, and a future pedestrian and bicycle bridge. As a gateway for visitors and a celebrated corner of the RSHRA by residents, this site is envisioned as a vibrant **mixed-use community** with **businesses** and a **multi-purpose community building and plaza**. By cultivating a respectful coexistence of urban densities and life in the ecological corridor, this site presents an opportunity to foster an “arts, culture, and nature” district.