

planning division

SCIP Project Guidelines

Mesa Zoning Ordinance Section 11-13-2(S), Substantial Conformance Improvement Permit



Introduction

The Mesa City Council has adopted a new mechanism for reviewing projects that add floor area to existing development or significantly change the land use of a project. The City Council created this new process to address concerns that the adopted revisions to the Design Guidelines and Site Development Standards (Chapters 14 and 15 of the Zoning Ordinance) would create non-conforming site conditions for most non-single residence properties in the City. The Site Development Standards, in particular, substantially increased the dimensions for such items as building setbacks, perimeter landscape areas and building separations. Under Sections 11-1-3 and 11-13-2 of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance, projects that fall under this category may be reviewed for a Substantial Conformance Improvement Permit, or SCIP. SCIP applicants are required to show the end condition of the new project will result in an overall development that “substantially complies” with the revised development standards

Purpose and Intent of a SCIP

The intent of the SCIP process is to encourage improvements and reinvestment into existing developed sites without requiring the demolition of buildings or the loss of required parking spaces and circulation aisles, nor the diminution of storm-water retention. Satisfying SCIP criteria generally means the proposed improvements reflect the greatest possible degree of compliance for each specific requirement prescribed in the Zoning Ordinance.

Limitations

Modifications to development requirements authorized by a SCIP are limited to building setbacks, landscaping design, on-site parking, building height, right-of-way dedication, and other site development provisions contained in Chapter 15 of the Zoning Ordinance. A SCIP application CANNOT modify items related to Engineering standards (items such as retention basin size, driveway access), Uniform Fire Code requirements (emergency vehicle access, fire hydrant location, sprinkler requirements), or requirements of the Uniform Building Code (buildings separations, fire ratings, exiting standards).

Definition

As defined by the Mesa Zoning Ordinance: Substantial conformance occurs when physical improvements to the existing development site are completed which constitute the greatest degree of compliance with current development provisions, WITHOUT causing or creating any of the following conditions:

- 1) The demolition or reconstruction of existing buildings or other significant structures (except signs).
- 2) The cessation of the existing conforming use, or the preclusion of any other lawful, permitted use.
- 3) The creation of new nonconformities such as a decrease in the number of on-site parking spaces below the required minimum, diminution of the water retention areas to less than the minimum required, constriction in the required vehicular access or fire lanes, or reduction of handicapped accessibility.

Public Hearing Required

A SCIP is reviewed and decided at a public hearing by the Zoning Administrator and/or Board of Adjustment (a decision of the Zoning Administrator may be appealed to the Board of Adjustment). Planning Division staff will analyze the request before the hearing date and develop a recommended action. The recommendation may include conditions that could modify the final design if the case is approved.

How These Guidelines Will Be Used

A list of suggested design guidelines is on the back of this sheet. Planning Division staff will use these guidelines to review and develop their recommendations for SCIP applications. These recommendations are then forwarded to the Zoning Administrator or Board of Adjustment at the public hearing phase of the SCIP process. Copies of any written recommendations will be made available to the applicant and general public prior to the public hearing.

Fees

SCIP application fees are less in comparison with normal variance fees. If the proposal requires a modification of a City Council approved site plan, the fee for the site plan modification request will include the SCIP fee. See fee schedule.

SCIP – Design Guidelines

The proposed project should comply where possible with the intent of the revised Design Guidelines and Site Development Standards (Chapters 14 and 15 of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance). Existing conditions of surrounding properties are taken into account to provide a context setting for the project, but may not necessarily set a precedent for setback requirements. The Planning Division staff recommendations are based on how well the project works within the following parameters (each given equal weight):

- 1) Fitting within the context of the existing development;
- 2) Fitting within the context of surrounding development;
- 3) Maintenance or development of new buffering mechanisms between dissimilar uses; and
- 4) How well the project works to achieve the intent of the revised standards.

Creative solutions that achieve these goals are encouraged. Designs that include combined requirements may be considered if the resulting design meets the intent of both standards (example: side yard landscaping requirements and parking lot landscape islands). Remodeled elevations or the design of new buildings should show compliance with all design related standards found in Chapter 14, Design Guidelines.

Each case will differ because of the existing site improvements and the nature of the new construction and/or building addition being requested. For this reason, each project will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

- ◆ **Foundation Base** - Sec.11-15-3(C)
New construction should show compliance with intent to separate the building and outdoor seating areas from parking spaces and circulation drives, as well as provide a pleasant pedestrian entry to the building, as well as an attractive landscaped setting.. Existing construction should provide a landscaped pedestrian landing area in front of the primary entry. New Construction should comply with foundation base requirements.
- ◆ **Maintenance of Existing Landscaping** - Sec. 11-15-3(F)
Inventory existing landscaping. Replace dead or unhealthy plants. Bring the plant counts up to the number required at the time the original project was developed. In some cases, supplementing the original plant count will be recommended.
- ◆ **Pedestrian Connections** - Sec. 11-15-5(A)
Provide pedestrian walkways between the street and the building entry, and to adjacent buildings. If applicable, connect walkways from building entries to bus stops.

- ◆ **Parking Lot Landscape Islands** - Sec.11-15-3(B)
Install parking islands in new parking fields at the specified ratio. Large additions may require the installation of landscape islands within the existing parking field.
- ◆ **Perimeter Landscaping Adjacent to Residence District(s)** - Sec. 11-15-3(A)
All new construction should meet the specified landscape area widths and plant ratios. Existing landscaping will be reviewed for impacts on the number of required parking spaces and storm-water retention basins, and the effectiveness of the screening.
- ◆ **Perimeter Screening Standards** - Sec. 11-15-4
(Including parking lots and outdoor display area) Provide screening where required, especially for instances regarding outdoor display or outdoor storage. Install landscaping in required areas when the number of parking spaces exceeds 150% of the minimum required by the Zoning Ordinance
- ◆ **Parking Lot Layout Standards** – Sec. 11-15-5(B)
Existing parking fields may be maintained at present size. New development, which requires the addition of 200 or more parking spaces, should comply with the specified standards.
- ◆ **Building Separations** – Sec. 11-15-2(C)
Existing building separations may be maintained. New construction should comply with present requirements.
- ◆ **Retention Basin Design** – Sec 11-15-3(D)
Existing retention basin design may be maintained. Landscaping within and around the retention basin should comply with ordinance standards. New basins will comply with current standards.
- ◆ **Open Space Requirements** – Secs. 11-5-6(A) & 11-15-3(E)
Open space for existing development may be maintained at the current size. Open space for new development should be provided at the ordinance specified standard. Multiple residence projects should consider private open space for individual units as well as common open space.
- ◆ **Parking Lot Light Standards** – Sec. 11-15-3(F)15
New light poles should meet requirements. Existing light poles may be maintained at existing height.
- ◆ **Perimeter Landscaping (All Sides)** - Section 11-15-3(A)
New construction should meet all of the required setbacks, except in circumstances where maintaining or extending existing circulation lanes would unnecessarily tighten turns, or create unaligned lanes that cross a primary entrance aisle. Small encroachments of parking spaces into landscape areas may be allowed in exchange for increasing the frequency of parking landscape islands. Additional small encroachments into street-side landscape areas MAY be considered for projects that do not over-build a site. Comparisons will be based on building floor areas that are consistent with similar developments on similar sized parcels, and on the development context of the site.