ZONING INTERPRETATION RECORD

Subject of Interpretation:
Use of Chain-link fencing for recreation areas;
Mesa Proving Grounds Community Plan, Design Guidelines for Recreational Facilities

Zoning Ordinance Section Number:
Section 11-11-8, Mesa Zoning Ordinance; Sec 8-6-8(A) of Mesa Proving Grounds Community Plan

Title of Section:
Design Guidelines

Cause for Interpretation:
The applicant asked for clarification of a design item listed in Section 8-6-8(A) of a Community Plan for a Mesa Proving Grounds (now known as Eastmark).

Interpretation:

Section 8: Design Guidelines
  8.6 Design Guidelines
    A. Community Quality and Character
      8. Site Walls
        a. Consider the following in wall design:
        • Integrate colors, materials, forms, textures, and design elements with the main building or larger landscape context
        • Permanent chain link fences are not allowed
        • Screen walls are specified in the General Development Standards
        • Walls adjacent to pedestrian areas should be articulated, which may include but are not limited to: offset runs, openings, landscape screening, or variation in material or height, or have architectural details, which may include but are not limited to: columns, gates, caps, lattice work, decorative material patterns, or shapes that echo the architecture into the landscape

The applicant further state that the intent of the general prohibition against the use of chain link fencing in the Community Plan (in bold font, above) was directed towards the use of chain link fencing along the perimeter of a development site, or to fencing when used as a screening device. They also state that this prohibition was not intended to be used to restrict the use of chain link fencing as may be typically found near recreational facilities, such as tennis courts, baseball fields or soccer fields.

In reviewing the Community Plan (CP), and reflecting on the discussions that took place in the development of the CP, the Zoning Administrator (ZA) found the following:

1. A similar prohibition appears in the Mesa Zoning Ordinance (MZO), and is applied directly towards
screening requirements or the installation of perimeter fences. This MZO prohibition against chain link fencing materials does not apply to recreational facility installations. This distinction was an item of discussion during the meetings between DMB and City of Mesa staff that led to the eventual adoption of the CP by City Council, with the focus of that discussion being the prohibition of chain link fencing at the perimeter of a development site, and not a prohibition at recreational facilities.

2. The CP includes descriptions of its parks and open space system in Section 11: Parks and Plaza Guidelines. In Section 11, it describes the basic goal of having a hierarchical system of open and recreational spaces, and connecting paths, starting at small edges and corners of residential areas, through to neighborhood parks, and leading up to the large community-sized Great Park. The photos used in Exhibit 11.9 of Subsection 11.5 are intended to illustrate the intended design character of the Great Park. The photos depict a shaded copse, community buildings, playgrounds, schools, multiple-use floodways, and public gathering plazas. At the bottom center of Exhibit 11.9, it clearly shows a ball field complex, with a short chain link fence used to separate the spectators from the players on the actual playing field. While the photo illustrations are not intended as specific requirements, the photos are intended to provide general guidance regarding the objectives of the CP, and how the CP will be implemented over time to achieve the qualities of a great place.

3. When chain link fencing is used at recreational facilities, it provides a measure of safety at a reasonable cost, and is durable through most of the effects of time and weather. It provides visible openings large enough through which to observe the activity, while these same openings are small enough to provide enough of a secure barrier to protect spectators from wayward balls, bats and other pieces of equipment. It is not intended as a screening device in these situations, but as a safety device. Its use in these recreational circumstances is common, and not thought to convey an industrial character, which is the underlying purpose behind the chain link prohibition mentioned.

Therefore, for the reasons listed above, and those listed by the applicant, the ZA agrees that chain link fencing may be used as part of the installation expected at recreational facilities, such as tennis courts and ball fields. However, this interpretation is limited to the specific recreational facility such as the immediate ball field. This interpretation does not apply to the fencing used to secure the perimeter of an overall park or open space that may contain several individual facilities (for example, a separate basketball court, or ball field, or soccer field that when considered in aggregate, are located at the same park).