



Friends of Carefree, On Tuesday evening, July 18th, I attended the

Community meeting on the proposed StageCreek Development. At first it did not appear that there would be any sort of presentation or discussion. There were a collection of poster board displays around an essentially open room. Groups of people gathered around them, looking and asking questions. I'd guess it was about 25-30 minutes past 6PM when the land planning representative moved to the center of the room and began an informal outline of the proposed development.

At several points during the outline, and the question and answer period that followed, the presenter (Alex, sorry I didn't hear his last name) made it clear that he was only involved with the land planning and that the project was at its very early stages. A meeting or meetings did occur with Town representatives, but only preliminary discussions took place. The property sale was a private sale since the State had sold that 40 acre parcel several years ago to a potential developer who planned to build 40 31 homes on that parcel. [\(See that plat\)](#) More at www.CarefreesFutureMatters.com

Following the talk the meeting was opened for questions. Initially the questions were a little slow in coming and tended to be somewhat general in nature but things did begin to warm up when the questions drifted more toward density and lot sizing. One lady asked how much room there would be between homes. The initial response addressed the development's front setback along Cave Creek Road rather than provide an answer to the question. Eventually it came out that the side to side spacing would be cozy (my word) and driveway pads would be tight. Even though there would be smaller lots closer to Cave Creek Road and slightly larger lots near Stagecoach, the bottom line is that this will be a dense community, as currently planned. The smaller lots tend to be 50' x 110' and larger lots 60' x 120'. *[An eventual Zoning and General Plan change request will be for what is known as a RUPD (Residential Unit Plan of Development, a form of zoning overlay which allows a developer to create their own community rules for setbacks etc. which differ from Town Zoning requirements.)]*

The new owner will have to seek UpZoning and General Plan changes from Rural-43 (1 home per acre) to a higher density that could allow up to 7 homes per acre, in order to accommodate the plan for 118 homes. The land planner said the current thinking of 118 homes works out to just under 3 homes per acre. That, of course, assumes that the entire 40 acre parcel is buildable, which it is not. There is a sizable wash that runs across the land and there are Open Space requirements which must be met. One way or another, that wash and other requirements decrease the buildable acreage.

Since I'm not reporting on an official town meeting it is more than reasonable to include my general impressions, which by the way, were shared by many (actually most) others that attended the community meeting. Before I get to those, here are a few more details, provided in response to other questions:

- The preliminary stages of the project are expected to take 6, 7, or even up to 8 months.
- It could be 18 months or longer to actually begin home construction.
- It could take 2.5 to 3 years+ for project completion.

- There is no Builder currently involved.
- Homes are expected to be 2,000sf – 2,500 sf
- The State still owns the additional 40 acres to the west of Windmill.

A few thoughts entered my mind as I listened to the questions and answers. The fact that no ‘builder’ is currently involved certainly can open the door to the land being sold again, for a potentially higher price, once the current owner successfully obtains the UpZoning and General Plan changes. Earlier I had asked if the developer had discussed the UpZoning with town officials. I did so prior to the presentation in a small group, and again during the Q & A session. The response was that it is still early in the process and the land planner was not aware if that subject came up. I said that buying that property seemed like a big financial bet to make without some assurance that zoning changes would be possible. Given the relatively recent changes permitted for the nearby Eastwood development I’ll surmise that the town would look favorably on this new request. It also seems to be consistent with the Town Administrator’s apparent philosophy of how Carefree’s character should change.

The lot sizes displayed on the poster boards are small. In order to get a sense of what the ‘curb appeal’ that a development such as StageCreek would provide in Carefree I took a drive west along Carefree highway toward I-17. New homes have gone up in the area of 60th Street near the Y and PVCC. Further west, close to a large commercial area and I-17, you eventually come upon Tramonto, a development built on the north side of Carefree Highway several years ago. It is dense, with many lot sizes approximately equal in size to current larger lots in the StageCreek plans. A search with Google Maps or Google Earth can give you a good perspective of the area.

[\(See the earth-view map here\)](#)

Tramonto is certainly a great location for those who must make the daily commute down into Phoenix. Further north, here in Carefree and especially on the east end of Carefree, that same need or desire to commute doesn’t seem to exist. Frankly many of us (Carefree residents) are already retired or close to it. Commuting is the last thing on *my* mind. Peace and quiet, along with quaint surroundings and the natural desert beauty that has been an integral component of Carefree’s charm and character for decades, deserves our protection. That protection comes in the form of our zoning, zoning that had been established long ago and is recertified each time a General Plan update has been voted on by Carefree residents. Only residents, and not just a few, should decide Carefree’s future, not outsiders, and not bureaucrats.

Before closing, I’d like to pass along something from Councilman Michael Krahe. He didn’t know if I publish letters or comments from readers (I don’t) but asked “... in hopes you do so please let your readership know I am always available to discuss the ongoing projects for our Carefree with anyone. My cell is 814 881 7020 or I can be reached at mjkrahephd@mac.com. Thanks John. All the best.” There you have it.

In general, you can reach all Council members by email; Council@Carefree.org

Respectfully submitted by John Traynor

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