

Meeting Minutes

City Council Work Session

February 23, 2026 | 4:00 p.m.
Council Chambers Conference Room
88 E. Chicago St., Chandler, AZ



Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Kevin Hartke at 4:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Council Attendance

Mayor Kevin Hartke
Vice Mayor Angel Encinas
*Councilmember Christine Ellis
Councilmember Jane Poston
Councilmember Matt Orlando
Councilmember OD Harris
Councilmember Jennifer Hawkins

Appointee Attendance

John Pombier, City Manager
Kelly Schwab, City Attorney
Jennifer Ekblad, City Clerk

*Councilmember Ellis attended virtually

Staff in Attendance

Tadd Wille, Assistant City Manager
Dawn Lang, Deputy City Manager / Chief Financial Officer
Ryan Peters, Deputy City Manager
Leah Powell, Deputy City Manager
Tawn Kao, Deputy City Attorney
Thomas Allen, Assistant City Attorney
David de la Torre, Planning & Urban Design Senior Manager
Lauren Schumann, Principal Planner
Kevin Mayo, Acting Development Services Director
Matt Burdick, Communications & Public Affairs Director
John Sefton, Community Services Director

Discussion

1. Discussion of the "Chandler 2026 General Plan: evolving the Chandler way" - An Update to the City's General Plan which Guides Future Development within the City of Chandler

MAYOR HARTKE called for a staff presentation.

JOHN POMBIER, City Manager, introduced the discussion item.

LAUREN SCHUMANN, Principal Planner, presented the following presentation.

- PLH25-0010 Chandler General Plan Update
- What's Different?
 - Minor Housekeeping Changes
 - Changed the plan structure
 - Updated policies
 - Updated demographics
 - Updated historic timeline
 - Updated reference plans
 - Updated glossary
 - Updated graphics/photos
 - Summarized public participation
 - Vision Statement
 - More Significant Changes
 - Future Land Use Map
 - Growth Area revisions
 - Illustration of Area Plans
 - Category mapping revisions
 - Future Land Use Categories
 - Revisions and refinements
 - Implementation Action Table
- Future Land Use Map (FLUM)
- Concerns Heard
 - South Price Corridor Growth Area-New residential policy
 - Use of the word "Urban"
 - Addressing Architecture
- Architecture
 - Hierarchy of Plans
 - General Plan = Broad Policy
 - Area Plans/Master Plans = Detailed Specific Policy

MAYOR HARTKE expressed concern about the legislature's growing "one-size-fits-all" approach to cities, especially on housing policy. He noted statewide efforts toward higher-density development

and affordable housing that might override local priorities, such as architectural quality and durability. He asked if any pending laws could supersede the city's General Plan, housing policies, or standards, even if locally approved.

MS. SCHUMANN said she isn't aware of any draft bills that could affect the General Plan update. She noted the new objective design standards created to give clear, measurable criteria for developers reducing subjectivity and setting requirements for building articulation, height variation, and materials. She stressed that the General Plan is a broad policy document and doesn't specify detailed architectural design.

MAYOR HARTKE expressed concern about upcoming legislation and the need to stay informed about proposals impacting local architecture.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO inquired about proactive measures to protect traditional neighborhoods and vulnerable areas.

KELLY SCHWAB, City Attorney, said protections can be added via design guidelines and zoning code, but warned state laws might preempt local control depending on their wording. She isn't aware of draft bills needing action, but noted responses often follow legislation.

KEVIN MAYO, Acting Development Services Director, explained that staff reviews proposed legislation early and provides input through strategic monitoring, ensuring the city remains engaged regardless of varying outcomes. He noted that current protections include the zoning code, recently adopted objective design standards, and existing PADs and PDPs in the southeast, though these measures could ultimately be preempted by the state.

MS. SCHUMANN continued the presentation.

- Urban Residential
 - 2016
 - The predominant land use in this category is residential, however: a variety of other uses are allowed based on location and other compatibility criteria described below. The following residential densities and non-residential land use are allowed in the Neighborhood category subject to the following criteria:
 - High-density residential (12-18 dwelling units per acre)...
 - Urban residential (densities exceeding 18 dwelling units per acre)...
 - 2026
 - The predominant land use in this category is residential: however, a variety of other uses are allowed based on location and other compatibility criteria described below. The following residential densities and non-residential land use are allowed in the Neighborhoods category, subject to the following criterial:
 - High-density residential (13-35 dwelling units per acre)...
 - Urban residential (26+ dwelling units per acre)...

- Urban Residential
 - 1st used 2008 General Plan
 - Used for densities exceeding 18 units per acre
 - Limited to areas within the downtown region, designated high-capacity transit corridor growth areas, and as an incentive to redevelop underutilized commercial properties within the Infill Incentive District

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO requested clarification on the definition of “underutilized commercial properties,” asking what criteria apply beyond their location within high-capacity corridors.

MS. SCHUMANN noted that while commercial development on North Arizona Avenue near Elliott Road is strong, properties on arterial roads might be underused and could be redeveloped.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO acknowledged the possibility but voiced concerns about neighboring areas. He questioned whether 18 units per acre was too intense, especially on larger parcels at prominent corners.

MS. SCHUMANN explained that higher-density projects should include buffers to prevent four-story buildings from abutting single-family homes, aiming for a transition from higher to lower density.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO compared this approach to the development at Mariposa, where residents from Clemente Ranch expressed concern. In that case, homes were built adjacent to existing backyards, with building height increasing gradually toward the corner.

MS. SCHUMANN confirmed that this was a good example of transitional design. She added that the city’s General Plan already includes language requiring sensitivity to such transitions, particularly where commercial or multifamily development abuts single-family neighborhoods.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO then asked whether the General Plan language would prevent a developer from claiming the right to build 18 units per acre on any eligible property without regard for the surrounding context.

MS. SCHUMANN stated that higher intensity uses must always be designed to step down appropriately toward single-family areas, reinforcing that the city maintains safeguards to ensure compatibility.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO noted that infill projects are challenging because longtime residents, who have lived there for 30 or 40 years, often feel uneasy about nearby new developments. He appreciated that the city has tools to require developers to consider existing conditions.

MAYOR HARTKE added that redevelopment often applies to aging commercial or office properties. He referenced an example along Chandler Boulevard where a lower-grade office building was converted into a dense apartment complex after a full public process with neighbors.

MS. SCHUMANN explained that while the example focused on multifamily uses, a clearer illustration is the 2007 Chandler Farms rezoning at Arizona Avenue and Queen Creek Road. Initially zoned for office, hotel, and retail, it later became multifamily with commercial at the corner. The city required setbacks and used an amenity area along the western boundary to buffer adjacent single-family homes.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS raised concerns about the long-term land-use effects of school closures, highlighting their economic and community impacts and questioning their inclusion in the General Plan.

MS. SCHUMANN noted most schools are in neighborhood zones, and redevelopments would likely involve lower- to medium-density residential areas adjacent to single-family subdivisions.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS raised concerns about limitations under state law and questioned whether the city is restricted in how former school properties can be repurposed.

MS. SCHUMANN responded that any zoning change that Council votes must be consistent with the General Plan, schools are permitted land use within the neighborhoods category.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS mentioned that recent developments in school closures could lead to changing trends in school usage in the neighborhoods land use. He said that the General Plan should allow for flexibility in this area to anticipate any future changes.

MAYOR HARTKE clarified that redevelopment of former school sites must align with surrounding land uses and the General Plan. While residential redevelopment might be compatible in many cases, other uses could be considered. He emphasized that incompatible uses would not be permitted.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO commented that the density of the area would affect future land use.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS asked if any schools that closed could be converted to a residential land use or another type of educational facility.

MAYOR HARTKE commented that he thought these types of land uses were allowable under the current General Plan.

MR. POMBIER said the city would coordinate with affected school districts and the community on potential school site changes. The location and needs of the community and the wishes of the school board and district would be considered before implementing any change to site use.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS asked if Chandler has discussed facility and site usage with local school districts.

MR. POMBIER said the city has had conversations with the Kyrene, Mesa, and Chandler school districts. He stressed coordination to prepare for changes and allow time to address community impacts. The city will also gather public input and assess opportunities based on location, community needs, and district goals.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS expressed that the 2016 General Plan did not fully incorporate forward-looking considerations of this nature. He suggested that the updated document should include footnotes identifying current trends and emerging issues, such as the evolving role of technology and its impact on land use. He emphasized the importance of thinking ahead to what Chandler may look like in ten years and ensuring that school-related considerations are acknowledged within the plan, even if only as guidance for future councils.

MAYOR HARTKE responded that planning decisions are based on the best available information at the time. He noted that circumstances have changed significantly over the past decade, particularly with shifts in education policy, and will likely continue to evolve. He stated that while future conditions may differ, the city is applying its best analysis today to plan responsibly for tomorrow.

MS. SCHUMANN thanked the group for considering future implications. She noted they discussed only part of the process; a full presentation would come at the public hearing. She clarified that

the yellow designation is not just for residential use but also includes commercial, institutional, church, and hospital uses, as listed in the document. She stressed that the yellow area should not be seen as solely residential.

MS. SCHUMANN continued the presentation.

- Future Land Use Map (FLUM)
- South Price Road Corridor Growth Area
- South Price Road Corridor Growth Area
 - 1985-Identified as Employment Corridor
 - 1998-Introduced campus-like settings
 - 2001-Promote & protect corridor for “large high-tech corporations in a single-use, campus-like environment”; 15 acre minimum
 - 2016-Eliminated 15-acre minimum

MAYOR HARTKE asked if Chandler could attract developments like Axon in Scottsdale, considering whether a company like Axon might have chosen Chandler if a similar model was available.

MS. SCHUMANN confirmed this was correct, explaining that the city’s General Plan currently prohibits residential use in these areas, which were reserved for employment-based development. The proposed policy would allow residential if approved by City Council in certain cases. She cited the Wells Fargo site, noting it still owns 16 acres south of its property, where current entitlements permit two nine-story office buildings. The new policy would also consider building housing with shared amenities in a campus-like setting, not a standalone multifamily complex, but a connected campus with walkways, drives, and shared amenities in a vertical mixed-use development.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON asked if the General Plan would tie residential use to employee housing. She questioned if the city could legally require housing be reserved for employees, expressing concern that a company might build standard apartments for profit, meeting design standards like walkways and connectivity.

MS. SCHUMANN deferred the legal question to the City Attorney, stating that she did not believe the city could legally require that housing be limited strictly to employees.

MS. SCHWAB noted the city can’t legally mandate housing solely for employees, but any residential project must go through zoning and approval. Conditions could be set to make housing more attractive to employees, though the city can’t guarantee exclusive service. All proposals would require Council review and approval.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON expressed concern not about Wells Fargo building housing for employees, but about the risk if the company later sold the property, allowing another organization to take over and run the buildings differently.

MS. SCHWAB agreed that the concern was valid and stated that the city would need to carefully consider the conditions that could be imposed on such developments.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON reiterated that she wanted to avoid a scenario in which a major employment corridor could eventually be filled with apartment complexes.

MAYOR HARTKE responded that developments of this type would still be governed through the Planned Area Development (PAD) process and potentially through development agreements. He noted that city staff are typically very thorough in ensuring the long-term viability of projects and that the Council would retain significant control through those agreements and conditions.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked whether a PAD would be required for these types of projects.

MS. SCHWAB noted most properties already have PAD zoning, and staff typically won't bring projects to Council without it. A development agreement, which can impose additional restrictions via negotiated terms that run with the land, could also be used.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO then asked whether all the properties currently under discussion are zoned PAD.

MS. SCHUMANN explained that the yellow-highlighted vacant properties are zoned PAD, yet some have remained undeveloped for 10-20 years despite approvals. Not all will develop residential tied to employment. Some parcels are small, but assembling multiple parcels could enable larger campus-style developments, like the Axon campus model.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON then asked whether the city's Economic Development Division had heard from developers that this type of mixed-use flexibility was becoming a trend or if there was real development opportunity tied to it. She said she was not completely opposed to the idea but was concerned about unintended consequences. She asked whether the current limitations were discouraging potential investment, aside from one company she had heard about previously.

MR. POMBIER responded that developers have emphasized the need for flexibility to create walkable, campus-style environments where housing and workplaces are close together. He noted that many younger workers prefer walkability and that the lack of nearby housing is viewed as a limitation.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON stated that she believed the "Next 20" report the city received previously also highlighted the importance of walkability. She recalled that the report indicated

that large businesses increasingly prefer environments resembling downtown districts rather than traditional isolated office campuses. While she remained open to the proposal, she reiterated her concerns.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS inquired about the policy's application to existing buildings not highlighted in yellow, asking if a company could retrofit part of an office building, such as converting upper floors into employee housing.

MS. SCHUMANN said the city could consider such proposals if they remain true to a mixed-use development. Parking challenges are likely, especially since office and residential uses have different requirements, and the city hasn't waived these. Some sites, like the PayPal building, may lack space for the needed parking. Any proposal would need City Council review to determine the best use of the property. She noted that, under the current General Plan, such proposals can't be considered without a policy update.

COUNCILMEMBER HAWKINS asked about infrastructure concerns if the city were to allow this type of development. Since the area was originally planned for employment use, she wondered whether adding residential density might create infrastructure challenges.

MS. SCHUMANN responded that the infrastructure along the Price Road corridor is relatively new. While she did not want to speak on behalf of other departments not present at the meeting, she indicated that infrastructure impacts would still be evaluated as part of the review process.

COUNCILMEMBER HAWKINS clarified that her question was whether the higher density associated with residential uses could create issues compared with what the area was originally designed to support.

MS. SCHUMANN acknowledged that in other parts of the city, such as North Arizona Avenue, infrastructure upgrades might be needed to support higher-density development. However, she noted that the Price Road area is relatively new compared to those older corridors.

MS. SCHUMANN continued the presentation.

- Map
- Map
- South Price Road Corridor Growth Area
 - New Policy: Enhance the campus-like environment by supporting development that includes true vertical mixed uses, allowing for employee and residential uses centered on a common design theme. Urban residential (26+ dwelling units per acre) with vertically integrated uses may be considered when ground floor uses include non-residential uses that directly support residents and employees (e.g., retail, restaurants, coworking space, or business services) and it is part of a larger employment campus that offers shared amenities and enhanced pedestrian connections.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO expressed concern that property owners might convert existing buildings into condominiums if office demand drops. He asked if the language could be revised to emphasize new development or prevent conversions mainly to residential use. While not wanting to block redevelopment, he worried the current wording might unintentionally promote residential conversions.

MS. SCHUMANN responded that because the item was scheduled for action that evening, Council could still direct staff to add clarifying language if desired, such as specifying new development.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO reiterated that his concern was that someone might take advantage of the policy by converting existing buildings rather than creating true mixed-use employment campuses.

MAYOR HARTKE noted that these developments would still require approval through the Planned Area Development (PAD) process and potentially a development agreement. He emphasized that the Council would retain discretion to approve or deny such proposals and ensure they support economic development.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO acknowledged that point but said he remained concerned about potential legal challenges if property owners argued the city was preventing reasonable use of their property.

MS. SCHWAB explained that all the properties are currently zoned PAD and do not allow residential uses. Any change would require a formal application, public hearings, and City Council approval. She emphasized that rezoning is a discretionary decision, meaning property owners are not automatically entitled to new uses

MR. MAYO suggested clarifying the language to state that residential and retail uses must be ancillary to the primary employment use, reinforcing that housing would support the campus rather than become the main land use.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said such language would make him more comfortable, noting he wanted to avoid a situation where residential development became the primary use.

MR. MAYO added that the policy could allow employee and ancillary residential uses subordinate to a primary employment use centered on a common campus design.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS agreed that additional guardrails in the language would help prevent the policy from being interpreted too broadly elsewhere.

MAYOR HARTKE reiterated that the PAD process already provides significant safeguards because proposals must return to Council for approval, but he supported strengthening the language if it provided additional clarity.

MS. SCHWAB noted that because the item was scheduled for action that evening, failing to act would delay it until the general election due to ballot deadlines.

MR. POMBIER concluded that staff could work quickly to refine language that would clarify the intent while preserving flexibility. He emphasized that vertical mixed-use design and Council discretion would remain key safeguards in ensuring the policy supports the City's goals.

MR. SCHUMANN continued the presentation.

- 2026 Neighborhood Category
 - 2016
 - The predominant land use in this category is residential, however; a variety of other uses are allowed based on location and other compatibility criteria described below. The following residential densities and non-residential land use are allowed in the Neighborhoods category subject to the following criteria:
 - High-density residential (12-18 dwelling units per acre) ...
 - Urban residential (densities exceeding 18 dwelling units per acre) ...
 - 2026
 - The predominant land use in this category is residential; however, a variety of other uses are allowed based on location and other compatibility criteria described below. The following residential densities and non-residential land use are allowed in the Neighborhoods category, subject to the following criteria:
 - High-density residential (13-25 dwelling units per acre) ...
 - Urban residential (26+ dwelling units per acre) ...

MAYOR HARTKE asked whether these definitions align with those used in other cities or if each city defines them differently.

MS. SCHUMANN explained that each city is unique. She noted Chandler has historically used four broad categories with supporting text, unlike some neighbors that use up to 20 map designations for densities. She added Chandler's approach offers more flexibility and that the proposed language reflects current development trends.

MR. MAYO added that, broadly speaking, the approach is fairly consistent nationwide and that Chandler's policy is not outside typical market practices.

MS. SCHUMANN continued the presentation.

- 2026 Regional Commercial Category
 - 2016
 - This category includes major regional commercial developments such as malls, power centers, large single-use retail, and other major commercial centers. Regional commercial locations are shown on the Future Land Use Plan Map and

are also eligible for consideration of urban-style mixed-use developments, large office users, and a compatible mix of residential densities.

- 2026
 - This category includes major regional commercial developments such as malls, power centers, large single-use retail, and other major commercial centers. Regional commercial locations are shown on the FLUM and are also eligible for consideration of urban residential and large office users.
 - The maximum allowable density for urban residential (26+ dwelling units per acre) will be determined at the time of development plan approval by the city and based on such considerations as existing and planned capacities for water and sewer infrastructure, adequate transportation facilities, compatibility with adjoining land uses, ability to transition to adjacent existing lower-density residential if applicable, and other factors.
- 2026 Employment Category
 - 2016
 - The Future Land Use Plan Map focuses attention on strengthening the community's economic base by expanding the growth areas and identifying a variety of employment areas for future growth. Major employers, knowledge-based industries, and industrial/business parks are allowed within Employment. A compatible mix of industrial support uses and residential densities as an integral component may be considered.
 - Light industrial business parks may be considered in campus-like settings containing knowledge-based employers, corporate offices, manufacturing, and warehouse and distribution. A compatible mix of industrial support uses and residential densities may also be considered as an integral component of a planned mixed-use development.
 - 2026
 - The FLUM focuses attention on strengthening the community's economic base by identifying a variety of employment areas for future growth. As Chandler approaches build-out, most of the available land is designated for employment; therefore, it is imperative to target key industries for healthy growth of the city. For more than 50 years, Chandler has welcomed high-tech manufacturing, pioneering research, and emerging technologies that have shaped our community. We will continue to prioritize employment uses of advanced manufacturing, knowledge-based industries, advanced business services, next-generation software engineering, and healthcare services.
 - Light industrial business parks are also permitted, prioritizing manufacturing, research and development, and emerging technologies. Corporate and large office developments are allowed uses within employment designation.
 - Residential can be considered with employment if designed as part of an integral component to the campus, see growth area polices and area plans for additional criteria. The maximum allowable density for urban residential (26+ dwelling units

per acre) will be determined at the time of development plan approval by the city and based on such considerations as existing and planned capacities for water and sewer infrastructure, adequate transportation facilities, compatibility with adjoining land uses, ability to transition to adjacent existing lower-density residential if applicable, and other factors.

- Implementation Action Plan
 - CHAPTER 5 – CHANDLER HONORS
 - The purpose of this chapter is to honor the community’s vision for Chandler by articulating a systematic action plan. The 73 actions below are organized by chapter theme and topic areas and are meant to be implemented within short- (1–5 years), mid- (5–10 years), or long- (10 or more years) term timeframes and on an ongoing basis. These actions and timeframes will assist the city in complying with the statutory general plan reporting requirements detailed in ARS §9-461.07. More importantly, these actions are a guide and roadmap forward to help the city realize the community’s vision; however, they remain flexible and subject to staffing and financial resources.

MAYOR HARTKE asked how the timeframes for short-, mid-, and long-term were defined.

MS. SCHUMANN responded that short-term refers to one to five years, mid-term refers to five to ten years, and long-term refers to anything beyond ten years.

Continued the presentation.

- Questions?
 - Next Steps:
 - City Council February 23, 2026 – Public Hearing
 - Primary Ballot for Ratification July 21, 2026

MAYOR HARTKE asked staff to explain why it was important to place the item on the primary election ballot rather than the general election ballot.

MR. POMBIER explained that, while the General Plan is vital to Chandler, a November election ballot is lengthy and crowded. Placing the item on the primary ballot would increase visibility and attention, helping voters better understand its importance rather than risk it being overlooked among many November issues.

Public Comment

JACK SELLERS, Vice Chair of the General Plan Resident Advisory Committee, spoke and expressed his views. He commended the Council and the committee they assembled, noting that he was a member. He highlighted that the group included a former mayor, two former vice mayors, a CEO of the Chamber of Commerce, zoning attorneys, and highly informed citizens. He mentioned that nearly all topics discussed this evening had been covered in those meetings, which were lengthy.

Additionally, he advised that if there was anything in the general plan update that residents did not like within the next month, it could be changed through the proper process. He pointed out that the last update, done ten years ago, has never been modified. From a high-level perspective, the general plan provides a vision for the city's development. He praised the committee for their excellent work, emphasizing the importance of maintaining flexibility for the Council's future decisions, especially given the limited space remaining for development.

MR. MAYO noted that staff will plan to present a revised version of the policy language that evening during the public hearing. He read the proposed amended policy, explaining that it would enhance the campus-like environment by supporting development that includes true vertical mixed use. The policy would allow employee and ancillary residential uses that are subordinate to the primary employment use and centered around a common design theme. Urban residential uses of 26 or more dwelling units per acre may be considered when ground-floor uses include nonresidential uses that directly support employees and residents, such as retail, restaurants, coworking spaces, or business services. He added that these uses must remain ancillary to and a subordinate part of a larger employment campus offering shared amenities and enhanced pedestrian connections.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

ATTEST: *Jennifer Ehlbaal*
City Clerk

Kevin Harthe
Mayor

Approval Date of Minutes: March 23, 2026

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Work Session of the City Council of Chandler, Arizona, held on the 23rd day of February 2026. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

DATED this 23rd day of March, 2026.

Jennifer Ehlbaal
City Clerk

