



## Development Services

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### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Cochise County Planning and Zoning Commission  
**FROM:** Matthew Taylor, AICP, Planner II  
**FOR:** Christine McLachlan, AICP, Planning Division Manager  
**SUBJECT:** SU24-20 (Cochise Stronghold Road Guest Lodging)  
**DATE:** December 11, 2024

### Docket SU24-20 (Cochise Stronghold Guest Lodging)

A Special Use Authorization request for guest lodging. Five guest units are proposed with amenities including nature trails, picnic area, hot tub site, and elevated night sky viewing platform. An accessory structure providing bathrooms, lounge, and outdoor kitchen is also proposed.

### I. DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECT PARCEL AND SURROUNDING USES

Applicant: Kathy Hunger-Gregory  
Location: 1155 N. Cochise Stronghold Road  
APN: 119-09-004  
Parcel Size: 40 acres (22 acre project area)  
Zoning: RU-4 (Rural District, one dwelling per 4 acres)  
Plan Designation: Agriculture/Rural and/or Green Space (Mid-Sulphur Springs Valley Area Plan)  
Growth Area: D – Rural Areas  
Existing Use: Residential  
Proposed Use: Residential with Guest Lodging

### Surrounding Zoning and Uses

North	RU-4	Single Family Residential, Agriculture
South	RU-4	Single Family Residential, Undeveloped
East	SR-43	Single Family Residential, Undeveloped
West	RU-4	Single Family Residential, Undeveloped

### II. SITE HISTORY

- 2017-2018: Opt-out permit for single family residence and storage building, septic permit, floodplain use permit, temporary use permit
- 2024: Minor land division application (#MLD24-54)
- No active code compliance actions

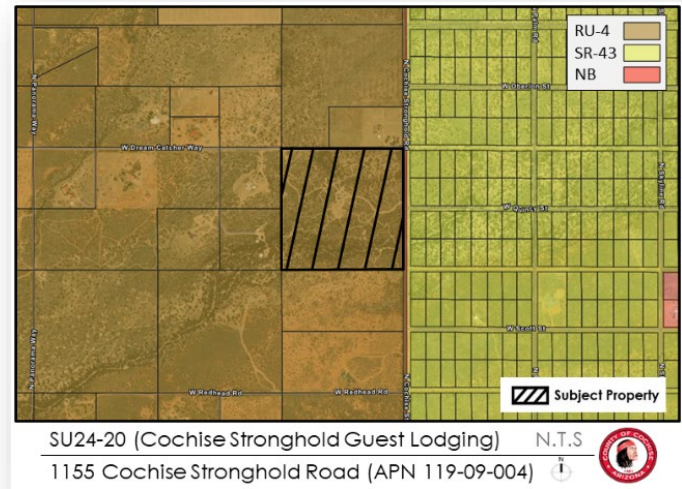
### III. SPECIAL USE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST

The applicant requests special use approval for guest lodging with three new units on elevated platforms (tents or cabins) and two units in existing recreational vehicle (RV) hookup locations. RV hookup improvements were installed by a previous property owner. A barn structure with lounge area, bathrooms, and outdoor kitchen is

proposed for family members and visiting guests. Site access is from Cochise Stronghold Road.

#### **IV. ANALYSIS OF IMPACTS – COMPLIANCE WITH SPECIAL USE FACTORS**

Section 2.48.160 of the Zoning Regulations identifies ten (10) factors to evaluate Special Use applications. These factors determine the suitability of a special use request, whether to recommend approval, and to determine if conditions and/or modifications are needed to mitigate potentially negative impacts on surrounding properties. With the information provided, eight (8) factors apply to this special use request with all applicable factors complying:



##### **1. Compliance with Duly Adopted Plans: Complies**

The subject property is designated “Agriculture/Rural and/or Green Space” by the Mid-Sulphur Springs Valley Area Plan. The applicant is not requesting a rezone or Comprehensive Plan amendment, preserving existing land use designation and zoning category. Specifically, the area plan encourages downzones of properties with this land use designation and consideration of special uses that “provide support services for agriculture and recreation on public lands.” The area is characterized by low density residential development on parcels of 4 to 40 acres.

##### **2. Compliance with the Zoning District Purpose: Complies**

Rural districts allow non-residential activities that provide services provided they serve local needs, provide recreation support services, or are compatible with rural living. These zoning districts, which range in site area from 2 acres to 36 acres, allow residential and non-residential uses compatible with an area’s rural character. Guest lodging is authorized in rural district with special use authorization approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

The subject property was developed for single family residential use utilizing the county’s owner-builder program in 2017-2018. If the special use is approved, up to five guest lodging units will be allowed on the 40 acre parcel within a 22-acre project area identified on the site plan. The applicant has submitted a minor land division application with the county proposing to retain the 22-acre configuration of the one parcel and creating four new 4-acre parcels for single family residential use.

##### **3. Development Along Major Streets: Not Applicable**

The intent of this factor is to consider limiting the number of access points on major thoroughfares, arterials, or collectors by using frontage roads, shared access, and no access easements. Incorporating such measures promotes fewer road cuts to avoid potentially unsafe traffic conflicts, hazardous traffic congestion, and roadway obstruction caused by traffic.

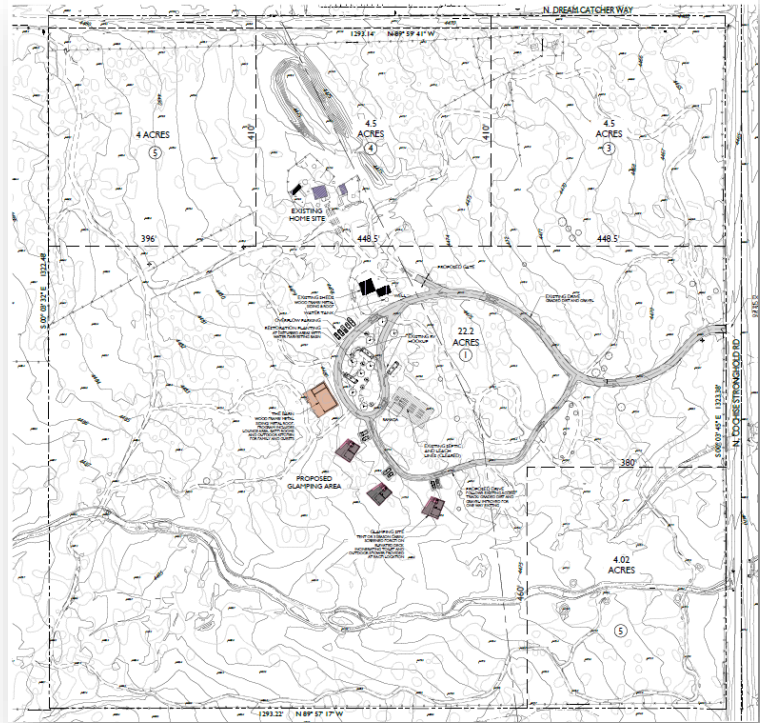
The property has direct access from Cochise Stronghold Road, a Rural Local Road maintained by the county, and Dream Catcher Way, an unimproved private road along the north property frontage. Per the applicant’s concept plan, visitor will access the guest lodging site via Cochise Stronghold Road. Public

accessibility creates a commercial venture component and a Right-of-Way permit will be required by the county, requiring a commercial-type driveway. Internal roadways are not required to be improved but an apron will be required along Cochise Stronghold that meets or exceeds the roadway surface.

#### 4. Traffic Circulation: Complies

This Special Use Authorization factor stipulates:

1. The request is consistent with the preservation of the functions of surrounding streets as defined in the County Comprehensive Plan.
2. The request does not result in the use of any residential street for non-residential traffic.
3. Consideration of future circulation needs in the surrounding area has been considered through right-of-way dedication and off-site improvements if warranted.



At five guest units, the proposed special use will not create traffic loads that require reclassification of Cochise Stronghold Road (rural local road), and visitor traffic will not utilize Dream Catcher Way (private road) to access the lodging site. Additionally, ROW dedication is not required. Should the applicant wish to increase the number of guest units a special use modification may be required with staff and/or Commission review – further analysis of site access and circulation will be considered at that time.

#### 5. Adequate Services and Infrastructure: Complies

The property is served by a private well and two septic systems and falls within the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) service area. Sunsites/Pearce Fire District service area ends at the eastern boundary of Cochise Stronghold and the nearest fire station is located on Havasu Way about four miles northeast of the property. An expansion of existing services or infrastructure is not necessary if the special use is approved by the Commission.

#### 6. Significant Site Development Standards: Complies

Applicable development standards identified in Section 2.15 (*RU Districts*) apply to this property, including building setbacks, structure height, and site coverage as well as floodplain and stormwater mitigation standards. Current property improvements include a single family residence, RV hookups, and multiple accessory structures. New improvements supporting the special use are limited to elevated platforms with tents or three-season cabins and a multi-purpose building with bathrooms, kitchen, and gathering

area. New structures are centrally located on the property and approximately 400'-500' within property lines.

#### 7. Public Input: Complies

Section 2.48.160 of the Zoning Regulations states, "If public concerns have been raised, it is fair to ask if the applicant has made a reasonable effort to address these concerns through the Citizen Review Process." The applicant sent letters to property owners within 900' on October 21, 2024, receiving no response. Staff has received written responses from nearby property owners in favor and in opposition.



#### 8. Hazardous Materials: Not Applicable

Hazardous or dangerous materials are not proposed for this special use.

#### 9. Off-Site Impacts: Complies with Conditions

This factor is intended to ensure adequate measures have been taken to mitigate off-site impacts such as dust, smoke, noise, odors, outdoor lighting, and traffic. See also Section 6 (Significant Site Development Standards):

- **Parking:** Two parking spaces are required for each guest unit. The property is located in Growth Area D which does not require internal driveway improvements.
- **Noise:** Outdoor activities generating significant noise are not proposed by the application. However, Staff recommends quiet hours (10pm to 6am) to preserve rural character and to limit possible noise impacts on nearby residents.
- **Lighting and Signs:** Outdoor lighting is regulated by Section 2.45 of the zoning regulations which governs overall brightness and requires shielded fixtures. These standards apply to both residential and non-residential properties. New signs are subject to Section 2.54 of the zoning regulations (maximum size 32 square feet, maximum height 6 feet).
- **Landscaping:** Landscaping is not required for properties located in Growth Area D. The property consists of about 40 acres and is heavily vegetated. Current and proposed improvements to the property remain residential in nature and have limited visibility beyond the property lines.
- **Odors:** Although odors creating significant offsite impacts are unlikely, staff is recommending a condition to limit odors or potential nuisances caused by odors.
- **Traffic:** The applicant's site plan demonstrates visitor traffic accessing guest lodging facilities from Cochise Stronghold Road. Though few properties would be impacted by access to and from the property using Dream Catcher Way, staff recommends a condition that lodging traffic be restricted to Cochise Stronghold. The proposed three new 4-acre parcels along Dream Catcher Way would have direct access to that road, but through-traffic to the lodging site would be prohibited.

**10. Water Conservation: Complies**

County water conservation requirements apply to non-residential uses and properties, potentially including this project. The property has an existing well and rain harvesting gutters/water storage tanks are proposed to reduce potential water use. Section 2.51.170 of the zoning regulations requires water saving strategies and applicable water conservation regulations and policies identified in the zoning regulations and comprehensive plan will be identified at permitting.

**V. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Staff published legal notice, mailed notification letters to property owners within 900', and posted the property 14-20 November 2024. Staff has received written responses in favor and opposition.

**VI. WAIVERS**

None.

**VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The applicant requests special use authorization approval for guest lodging on a 40-acre parcel along Cochise Stronghold Road immediately east of Arizona Sunsites Unit #1. Up to five guest units are proposed consisting of tents or cabins with amenities. Properties to the east and south are undeveloped while parcels to the north are characterized by agricultural uses and parcels to the west are between 4 and 40 acres, many with existing single family residences. Public access establishes a commercial venture, but the low number and centralized location of guest units on the property along with established, mature vegetation throughout the site, preserves the rural character of the property and limits potential off-site impacts on adjacent properties.

**Factors in Favor of Approval**

1. Complies with eight (8) of eight (8) applicable factors.

**Factors Against Approval**

2. Opposition from nearby property owners.

**VIII. RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the factors in favor of approval, staff recommends approval of Docket SU24-20 to allow guest lodging subject to the following conditions:

1. Guest lodging visitors shall access the site via Cochise Stronghold Road.
2. Quiet hours shall be observed from 10pm to 6am seven days per week.
3. Guest areas shall be kept in sanitary condition. Temporary refuse and animal waste receptacles shall be appropriately sized and designed so as not to create an attractive nuisance for wildlife or pests.

*\*Standard conditions related to condition acceptance, permitting timeframes, and special use modifications apply and have not been modified by this request.*

**Sample Motion**

Madam Chair, I move to approve Docket SU24-20 to allow guest lodging with conditions recommended by staff, the factors in favor of approval constituting the findings of fact.