



Development Services

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Cochise County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Matthew Taylor, AICP, Planning Manager
FOR: Sharon Gilman, County Administrator
THROUGH: Christine McLachlan, AICP, Director
SUBJECT: Docket RZ25-05 (Sunsites Unit #2 – Pearce Road)
DATE: July 22, 2025

Docket RZ25-05 (Sunsites Unit #2 – Pearce Road)

The applicant requests rezoning APN 115-10-323 from NB (Neighborhood Business District) to SR-174 (Single-Household Residential District, one dwelling per 4 acres). The parcel is located at the northwest corner of Pearce and Willcox Roads in Sunsites.

I. DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECT PARCEL AND SURROUNDING USES

Applicant: James Mercer and Pamela Mercer
Location: Sunsites Unit #2
APN: 115-10-323
Parcel Size: 14 acres
Current Zoning: NB
Proposed Zoning: SR-174
Growth Area: D – Rural Areas
Plan Designation: Medium Density Residential
Area Plan: Mid-Sulphur Springs Valley
Existing Use: Undeveloped
Proposed Use: Single Family Residence

Surrounding Zoning and Land Uses:

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

II. PARCEL HISTORY

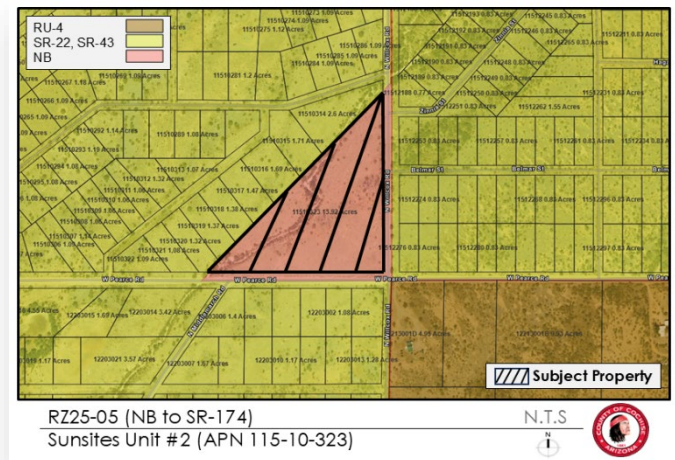
- 1961 – Arizona Sunsites Unit #2 platted in 1961
 - 1975 – Property rezoned from rural to business
 - 2025 – Septic permit (#SEP25-000179)
 - No active code compliance actions
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III. NATURE OF REQUEST

The applicant requests rezoning from NB to SR-174 to construct a residence and out buildings utilizing the county's owner-builder program.

Mandatory Compliance

Section 2.63.080 of the zoning regulations requires zoning district boundaries be in accordance with comprehensive or area plan designations. In this case, the proposed rezone to SR-174 is consistent with Comprehensive Plan designations. The area plan designation is Medium Density Residential.



Compliance with Rezoning Criteria

Section 2.63.080 of the zoning regulations provides fifteen (15) criteria for evaluating rezoning requests:

1. Adequate Land Use/Concept Plan: Complies

The applicant provided a concept plan demonstrating an intent to develop the property with a permanent residence and accessory structures.

2. Compliance with Applicable Site Development Standards: Complies

The property totals about 14 acres and will be subject to site development standards found in Section 2.24 of the zoning regulations if rezoned to SR-174, including setbacks, height, distances between structures, and lot coverage.

3. Adjacent Districts Remain Capable of Development: Complies

The requested downzone does not prevent surrounding properties from being developed in a manner consistent with their zoning district classifications.

4. Limiting Creation of Nonconforming Uses: Complies

Rezoning the property to SR-174 will not result in the creation of nonconforming uses.

5. Compatibility with Existing Development: Complies

The area is generally undeveloped with sporadic single family residences, unimproved roads, and limited infrastructure. The prevailing development pattern within Sunsites is low density residential with a rural character, and the applicants intend to develop the property in this manner. The county has approved multiple requests to downzone properties consisting of four or more acres to RU-4 and SR-174, allowing property owners to build a residence in accordance with the owner-builder program.

With recent Board of Supervisors approval of an amendment to the Zoning Regulations, SR district accessory use standards now offer more flexibility that encourage owner-builder participants to pursue SR-174 in lieu of RU-4. Housing types allowed in SR districts are a better fit with established residences in Sunsites Unit #2. The amendment allows accessory structures to be built prior to the principal structure, i.e., the residence, and for accessory structures to be larger than the residence.

Staff has historically encouraged rezones to SR-174 (site-built and factory-built residences only) due to concerns about manufactured housing by some residents, but the SR zoning district's previous restrictive accessory structure standards encouraged the pursuit of RU-4 for many applicants even if they did not intend to place a manufactured home on their property.

6. Rezoning to More Intense Districts: Not Applicable

A rezone to a more intense zoning district is not proposed. The applicant requests a downzone from NB to SR-174 to allow a less intense residential land use.



7. Adequate Services and Infrastructure: Complies

The property is located within the Sunsites-Pearce Fire District service area, and the future residence will be served by a septic system but otherwise off-grid using on-site water storage and solar. The applicant proposes participating in the county's owner-builder program, which requires a minimum site area of four acres and zoning classification requiring a minimum of four acres. The county adopted the owner-builder amendment to encourage ingenuity by individual home owners in the interest of personal preference, allowing the use of alternate building materials and methods.

8. Traffic Circulation: Complies

The applicant intends to take access from Pearce Road, a county-maintained Rural Local road, and the proposed driveway will require a right-of-way (ROW) permit from the county. Willcox Road is also a county-maintained Rural Local road but the applicant does not propose using Willcox Road for secondary access (this would also require a county ROW permit).

9. Development Along Major Streets: Not Applicable

The parcel does not have frontage along any major streets (the county classifies Pearce and Willcox Roads as rural local roads).

10. Infill Compatibility: Not Applicable

This factor applies to rezoning requests to General Business (GB), Light Industry (LI), or Heavy Industry (HI) zoning districts.

11. Unique Topographic Features: Not Applicable

This factor applies to rezoning requests to more intense business or industrial zoning districts.

12. Water Conservation: Not Applicable

County-wide water conservation requirements identified in Section 2.51.170 of the zoning regulations apply to non-residential uses and properties. This proposed downzone from business to residential does not involve mandatory conservation improvements to reduce anticipated water consumption.

13. Public Input: Complies

Applications to downzone property are not subject to Citizen Review requirements identified in the zoning regulations. Staff posted the property, mailed notification letters, and published legal notice June 13-18, 2025.

14. Hazardous Materials: Not Applicable

The applicant proposes a rural residential land use. The use of hazardous materials is not proposed.

15. Planning Policies: Complies

Downzoning to SR-174 is consistent with Comprehensive Plan designations. The county generally supports downzones to less intense zoning districts that reduce residential densities and impacts to limited infrastructure or services.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The applicant is requesting a downzone from business to residential to build a residence and accessory structures using the owner builder program. This property was rezoned to business in the 1970's and has remained undeveloped like most properties within Sunsites. The county continues to receive requests to downzone properties to SR-174 and RU-4, and supports such requests in areas absent adequate infrastructure. The county adopted the owner-builder amendment to encourage ingenuity by individual home owners in the interest of personal preference, allowing the use of alternate building materials and methods.

Factors in Favor of Approval

1. Complies with all nine applicable factors used to evaluate rezoning requests.
2. Proposed use is compatible with established rural residential growth pattern.
3. Downzone from business to residential zoning district.

Factors Against Approval

None identified.



V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the factors in favor, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval without special conditions (7-0) during their July 9, 2025, regular meeting.

Based on the factors in favor, staff also recommends approval without special conditions.

Sample Motion

I move to approve Docket RZ25-05 without special conditions, rezoning tax parcel 115-10-323 from NB to SR-174, the factors in favor of approval constituting the findings of fact.