



Salpointe campus redevelopment is first school to test city's zoning PAD

By [Roger Yohem](#), Inside Tucson Business
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Before they could even begin to plan a massive makeover of their 36-acre campus, Salpointe Catholic High School officials faced a challengingly long list of fixes.

Neighbors in the midtown neighborhood wanted traffic congestion eased, especially at start and end of the school day. School administrators wanted to alleviate crowded-space issues for offices, performing arts and athletics. And students wanted their parking concerns addressed.

City of Tucson Development Services made it clear it would not issue building permits on a piecemeal basis to the school on a block bounded by Glenn Street on the north, Mountain Avenue on the west, Copper Street on the south and Cherry Avenue on the east. The makeover includes a mix of new construction and fixes to existing building and landscape flaws to bring them up to code.

Development Services wanted to work from a master plan, similar to what a developer would submit.

The solution was setting up the campus as a Planned Area Development (PAD) under city's building regulations. A PAD is essentially a comprehensive, mini-zoning code for a specific piece of property. They also include both existing and possible future uses.

"Salpointe is the first school to do a redevelopment as a PAD," said Mike Grassinger, principal owner of The Planning Center. "What makes this different is every zoning request before now had a list of conditions attached to it. Under PAD, there are no conditions. They are all written into the plan."

This approach to development has been common for large properties. The city's regulations require that a parcel for a PAD be at least 40 acres. In this case, City Councilwoman Karin Uhlich, whose Ward 3 includes the school, helped secure a waiver from the requirement. The City Council approved Salpointe's PAD late last year.

In the comprehensive plan developed by Grassinger's team and Grenier Engineering, major renovations will reduce traffic issues with a redesigned plan for entry and exit to the campus and improved student drop-off and pick-up areas.

To resolve code concerns, parking lots will be re-configured, landscaped and fenced. The sports practice fields will be used for event parking and a \$2 million parking garage will be built.

A new \$12 million football stadium is being planned that will incorporate a student cafeteria. The softball field will be reoriented, and the gym and fine arts center renovated. Building plans include a new \$10 million performing arts center and a \$1 million chapel.

“Over the years as schools started doing festivals, day care, and football fields with lights and noise, they fell out of code compliance,” said Grassinger. “From the neighbors and the city, traffic and the stadium became the main issues here. The parking plan moves it all off the streets to the interior of the campus.”

Greg Aiken, director of operations for Salpointe, said the \$35 million to \$40 million redevelopment project could take 40 years to complete. Monies will be raised through a fund-raising campaign that’s yet to be launched.

“We took to the city anything we could dream of. As it unfolded, we realized the zoning would have incorporated impossible hoops to jump through,” said Aiken. “City officials were very helpful, they gave us advice on how we might reach this long-term objective.”

Due to the current economy, there is no set timeline for any of the projects in the plan. Aiken said the work will be done “domino by domino.” A priority is fixing the baseball and softball fields and the entryway off Glenn Street “to get our students off the road quicker and safer.”

Grassinger believes PADs are a good first step by the city to become business friendly. Because property owners get zoning “that is ordinances from day one,” it provides long-term certainty.

“There are no conditions attached, that helps the business community. Whatever conditions the city wants are in the document. PAD looks at a lot of different scenarios and writes all those scenarios into the plan,” Grassinger said.

The city’s old system favored conditional uses. Any revisions, however minor, required another public hearing. That extra step has been eliminated and will save future costs for both the city and property owners.

It also will help problem properties that can’t be fixed easily through the standard zoning process. Plus, the city’s Land Use Code Committee is looking at this as a tool for infill districts. In certain areas of the city, the 40-acre size and single ownership requirements could be dropped.

The PAD process could accelerate the local economy’s recovery. It assures property owners and financial lenders that the city can not come back and change the zoning rules after the fact.

“It sets the stage for down the road when you are ready to develop,” Grassinger said. “With a PAD in place, you can take it to the bank the next day and start work on getting a loan for your project. Then, it’s just a matter of timing.”

New Long franchise owner Sky Island Partners, owners of the Long Realty Tubac franchise office, has assumed ownership of Long’s Rio Rico/Nogales franchise. Former owner John Clark remains with the company in his Realtor role and Donna Beedy stays on as branch manager. Steve Marino and Russell Palmer own Sky Island Partners.

Sales & leases • Alan’s Shoes leased 5,070 square feet at the Plaza at Williams Center on the southwest corner of East Broadway and Craycroft Road. Andy Seleznov, Larsen Baker, represented the landlord.

- Southwest Pizza leased 5,000 square feet at 1671 S. Research Loop, Suite 139, from Tin Cup Properties LLC. Ron Zimmerman and David Blanchette, Bourn Partners, represented the landlord and the tenant.

E-mail news items for this column to ryohem@azbiz.com. Real Estate and Construction appears weekly.

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