

TONOPAH AREA COALITION

20 North 350th Avenue, Tonopah AZ 85354

May 16, 2005

Maricopa County Planning Department
411 N. Central, 3rd Floor
Phoenix AZ 85004

RE: DMP 2005004 (Copper Leaf)

Dear Planning Staff;

Copper Leaf is a so-called master planned community that lacks adequate master planning. The current proposal represents little more than an odd shaped assemblage of land that is so void of specifics that this request should be denied.

Even if more specific details are provided this zoning request contradicts significant portions of the Tonopah/Arlington Land Use Plan (T/ALUP) and lacks a credible economic justification for this project. With little to offer other than a remote residential plan it appears this proposal is just an attempt to increase the value of agricultural land via a zoning change. A lack of a realistic economic justification for Copper Leaf, combined with serious questions regarding basic services like fire, police, water, sewer, and transportation all provide added rationale for denial of this remote, high-density project, located far outside the urban parts of Maricopa County.

This sketchy plan proposes to develop a community that will offer the seemingly contradictory lifestyle amenities described as high quality but low cost. Yet no example of a community divided by a heavily traveled interstate freeway that offers high value amenities at low cost is included in the proposal.

Significant development is occurring in north Phoenix, south of Interstate 60 and east towards Florence Junction, and with large master planned communities already approved in the eastern portion of Maricopa County (northern parts of Pinal County) where significant transportation infrastructure already exists, one has to wonder what Copper Leaf would offer to a housing market where infrastructure is in place and jobs exist nearby. With growth occurring in more developed portions of the county, there is nothing to indicate that Copper Leaf's housing product represents an untapped market.

The Copper Leaf proposal represents a remote development where the lack of an employment base for these proposed residents is a serious issue. With an employment core between 30-50 miles east, residents of Copper Leaf will be resigned to lengthy commutes on an ever more clogged two-lane Interstate 10.

Water quantity may not be an issue according to the proposal but water quality issues certainly should be reviewed. Contaminant levels at the nearby Ruth Fisher Elementary School would indicate that both fluoride and nitrates will have to be removed to provide potable water for

Copper Leaf residents. This costly water treatment should be recognized and potential homeowners warned if Copper Leaf's owners intend to deed the homeowners association a costly water treatment facility that would be difficult for an HOA to manage. Is potable water, (nitrate and fluoride removed), delivered to future residents at this scale cost effective to homeowners within this proposed development?

In reviewing the Copper Leaf outline it is clear that it runs counter to and contradicts significant portions of the T/ALUP, Growing Smarter Act provisions, and is outside the Maricopa County GPDA. Copper Leaf would not be compatible with adjacent land uses, lacks adequate employment, would not be well integrated into the transportation system, and nothing indicates it would be particularly sensitive to the natural environment.

The Copper Leaf proposal contradicts all or part of T/ALUP Policy's L1.8, L2.2, L3.1, L3.3, L3.4, L3.6, & E4.1. Public safety has not been adequately addressed and historical elements contained within the boundary of the Copper Leaf proposal have not been identified. This plan also falls short of the land development goals L1, L2, L3, and transportation goal in T1. Within the T/ALUP economic development section this proposed development fails to meet a key goal, "In developments with densities greater than one dwelling unit per acre, create a land use environment that generates a diversified economic base which fosters varied employment". Copper Leaf fails to create any significant employment source but desires a high density per acre ratio. In other words, it will be a bedroom community, and does not represent a master planned community.

The T/ALUP also identifies four existing hubs for residential, commercial, warehousing, and light industrial growth. Copper Leaf suggests a new hub at 395th Avenue that is close to the long established 411th commercial center and contradicts T/ALUD Policy ED1.4 & ED1.5. An exit at 395th runs counter to the existing plan and would be an economic competitor with the existing nearby 411th exit, if and when an exit is built. Without an exit at 395th it appears the existing arterial roadways are inadequate for the capacity of Copper Leaf residents.

Remote developments that lack adequate employment and rely solely on ground water extraction are noted as significant problems associated with growth in southern Arizona by planning experts as diverse as Grady Gammage and Neil Pierce.

Copper Leaf represents the type of proposal that we are supposed to be smart enough to avoid; for the sake of a better form of development and for the sake of future residents that deserve something more than another remote patch of housing that lacks more than it provides.

The Tonopah Area Coalition strongly supports the significant list that details concerns about this development submitted by Tonopah Residents United. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Copper Leaf proposal.

Regards,

Judith Shaw

TAC President