

January 15, 2016

Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors
130 West Congress Street, 11th Floor
Tucson, Arizona 85701



*Leaders in conservation
and education since 1949*

Re: P15RZ00005, Pacific Properties International, LLP – Cortaro & North Thornydale Road Rezoning

Main Office
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Tucson AZ 85705
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Dear Chair Bronson and Supervisors,

Tucson Audubon's Mason Center
3835 W Hardy Road
Tucson AZ 85742

The Tucson Audubon Society supports the comments of staff and the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection regarding the rezoning Conditions for parcels 225-33-032A and -032D under consideration in P15RZ00005.

Karen Fogas
Executive Director
TEL 520.209.1801

kfogas@tucsonaudubon.org

These two parcels are located within a Species Special Management Area (SSMA) of the Maeveen Marie Behan Conservation Lands System.

For over twenty years the Tucson Audubon Society has worked to conserve and protect the natural open space directly adjacent to, and south of, the Mason Audubon Center for Ironwood Preservation and Education. Previously, all the parcels between Hardy Road and Cortaro Farms Road were owned by members of the same family – Mrs. Orpha Snyder Mason and her brother, Olin Snyder.

Orpha Snyder was born in Witt, Illinois April 16, 1893. She graduated from Northwestern University with a degree in Library Science and moved to Tucson for her health between 1930 and 1935. Orpha would relate how she spent her first few nights in Tucson sleeping in the courtyard of the Historic YWCA due to the heat of summer. She obtained a Master's degree in Education from the University of Arizona and founded libraries for the Tucson Unified School District, including Blenman School. On June 3, 1939, Orpha married William Skinner Mason, who worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad. They had no children.

The Masons built the brick house and garage on the twenty acres at the southwest corner of Hardy and North Thornydale Roads, now the Mason Audubon Center. Orpha's sister, Orvilla Snyder, lived with the Masons for a time and Orpha's brother, Olin Snyder, purchased the parcels south of the Masons. Mr. Mason died in 1976. When Olin died in 1986, Mrs. Mason did not have the funds to acquire the parcels and his children sold them to fund the education of his grandchildren.

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Before Orpha moved back to Illinois in 1997 to live with her niece, she and her attorney, Lowell Rothschild, prepared her will. In it, she donated her property to the Tucson Audubon Society, specifying that the undisturbed portion of the parcel remain natural open space to preserve her beloved ironwood trees and saguaros and to make the site available for educational outreach. Mrs. Mason died a month before her 106th birthday, in 1999. Her great nieces and nephews visit the Mason Center whenever they are in Arizona.

In addition to support of county staff and Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection recommendations, Tucson Audubon would be honored to continue the legacy of the Snyder/Mason family and accept the responsibility of reuniting the parcels and managing them for the benefit of current and future generations.

Tucson Audubon supports the implementation of the Maeveen Marie Behan Comprehensive Lands System guidelines and the expansion of the northwest Preserve System created by Pima County's Arthur Pack Park and our Mason Center.

Thank you for consideration of our comments. We are available to assist in any way we can.

Sincerely,



Karen Fogas
Executive Director
Tucson Audubon Society



Les Corey
Board President
Tucson Audubon Society