



**Gates Pass Area**  
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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May 13, 2024

The Board of Supervisors, Pima County, AZ  
Chris Poirier, Deputy Director, Pima County Development Services Department

**Re: Case # P23RZ00006 Yarbrough Trust for Meeting May 21, 2024**

Dear Honorable Supervisors:

Since 1988, Gates Pass Area Neighborhood Association has had a history of land conservation and stewardship of the Sonoran Desert. We encourage a semi-rural, scenic, suburban ranch environment and oppose inappropriate residential density, commercial over-development, and zoning violations in our area. Our membership of 247 current members is drawn largely from the area roughly bounded by the summit of Gates Pass Road to the west, Painted Hills Road to the east, Ironwood Hill Drive to the north and the trailhead of the David Yetman Trail to the south.

The Leland and Velma Yarbrough Family Trust's request for a change of zoning for 4375 Ironwood Hill Drive falls within the sphere of concern of our members, and we oppose this request for the following reasons.

**Some background information:** The parcel in question is 4.7 acres large and is zoned SR, requiring one house per 3.31 acres. It abuts three other lots of similar size and shape also zoned SR, forming a rectangle of four 4+ acre parcels. To the north across Ironwood Hill, homes are also zoned SR. It is solely to Yarbrough's west, that there is residential development of houses on 1-2 acres each.

Historically, all of those properties were once part of the vast Yarbrough Ranch, according to the oral testimony of Steve Yarbrough at the March 27 Zoning Hearing. At some point in the not too distant past, like all savvy ranchers, when the land became more valuable to build on than to run cattle, they sold off property. They elected at the time to retain at least one of the four SR lots in the middle. Now the Yarbrough Trust wishes to split their 4.7 acre SR lot into two. Neither one would conform to current SR zoning.

The Yarbroughs originally requested 3 new parcels from their current 4.7 acres. Rather than deny the request outright, County staff counseled them to seek only two new parcels. At the time of initial subdivision, the Yarbroughs passed up the chance to declare their current parcel as SR-2. Now, years later, they believe they should be allowed to do that. However, that zoning change way back when did not contain a clause extending the offer in perpetuity to develop at higher density whenever they wanted, and we believe the Yarbroughs and their Family Trust should now be denied.

**Zoning:** At the Development Services Zoning Hearing on March 27, County staff argued in favor of the Yarbrough Trust request by stating that the proposed split meets the Pima Prospers Plan. But

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actually the Land Use Designations in Pima Prospers are completely separate from established Zonings, and Land Use Designations do not automatically supersede existing Zoning.

In most instances, requests for residential rezoning are brought before the County for specific, legitimate reasons: topography constraints, utility efficiency, undue hardship, or other limiting circumstances. But none of those pertain to this case, and an owner's whim is not a valid reason to seek rezoning in Pima County.

The Yarbrough Trust simply wishes to do something now that perhaps they should have done years ago when the ranch was subdivided. Therefore, denying their request would in no way constitute a "taking" of their land now.

**Impact:** Their property is contained within the Pima Prospers Plan Special Area of Tucson Mountains North. In addition, it's located in the Buffer Zone, within one mile of a Federal, State, or County Park, and as such should receive even greater protection from this type of up-zoning. In fact, it is less than one mile from two County Parks: Tucson Mountain Park and Feliz Paseos. Just because it's adjacent on one side to SR-2 homes and a few more down the street is no rationale for permitting higher density on this SR property in these special areas.

**Conclusion:** GPANA does not wish to see increases in residential density anywhere in the Tucson Mountains Special Area. And neither do you, judging by the number of times our Supervisors have stated they're committed to conserving the Sonoran Desert and in favor of preserving desert lands. Here we have before the Board a clear case of a property owner's wish vs the public good, and all we ask is that you vote to maintain the existing SR zoning, one house per 3.31 acres minimum.

Please don't let this case set a terrible precedent which, if repeated, would amount to creeping up-zoning, unnecessary higher density, and the erosion of the uncrowded, open space for people and wildlife that make the Tucson Mountains Special Area so very special. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
2024 Board of Directors, Gates Pass Area Neighborhood Association

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