



MEMO

TO: Town Council
FROM: Gilbert Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors
DATE: **January 22, 2015**

RE: Land Development Code Amendments – Hospitals (Z13-11)

The Chamber's Public Policy committee has been meeting regularly with Jordan Feld from the Planning Department to discuss the various LDC amendments being proposed for Town Council approval. We have also been represented at the various stakeholders meetings regarding this amendment.

The Chamber's chief concern surrounding this amendment deals with the economic impact these changes may have on future hospital locations and/or current Gilbert hospitals' expansion plans within our community. BioMed is a top economic priority for our community and we believe the strict restrictions being recommended by the Planning Commission could impede future economic opportunities as well as community partnerships between hospitals and our education communities.

After much discussion the Gilbert Chamber opposes changing the Land Development Code (LDC) in regards to hospitals (Z13-11):

- The ever-changing national and local healthcare environment will dictate new acute in-patient business models in the future which could result in smaller facilities that may fit nicely outside of our current growth areas.
- Restricting locations within the LDC could stifle the growth of this very important economic driver for our community.
- While we understand the Council's desire to address residents' concerns about the safety of neighborhoods within a certain distance of a behavioral hospital, the restrictions outlined within the Planning Commission's recommendations appear to unintentionally reach beyond the limited intent of the original concern. This overreach imposes additional regulation and creates an economic disincentive for future acute care hospital development.
- Behavioral Hospitals are currently required to operate under strict mandated-security constraints and are designed for those underserved populations that need significant assistance. Improving the ability to serve these populations in appropriate and secure settings actually lowers the need for emergency room care, also provided within our community, reduces crime rates and assists distraught families who otherwise have to travel downtown Phoenix to get the critical care all our residents deserve.

We understand this is a very sensitive issue for some within our community; but we caution against creating the unintentional consequences of not being open to business – especially within our all-important key industry sectors. We encourage you to vote against the changes to the LDC regarding hospitals. We look forward to a resolution that provides comfort to our neighborhoods while maintaining a focus on the economic development and diversity required to keep Gilbert a safe, sustainable community.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. Please contact Kathy Tilque at 480-892-1103 for more information.