

# Council's Phillips wields ax on apartment rezoning

By Edward Gately  
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A south Scottsdale neighborhood is on a mission to stop an apartment complex from being built on the site of a former McDowell Road auto dealership.

At a recent neighborhood meeting, residents gathered to hear City Councilman Bob Littlefield fervently speak in opposition to the project. Chason Development wants to build Las Aguas on the 5-acre parcel that formerly housed Pitre Buick, on the northern side of McDowell, west of 68th Street.

Since 2011, the City Council has approved more than 4,000 apartment units in complexes throughout the city. And through much of it, Guy Phillips continually warned the council not to flood the city with unnecessary and unwanted multifamily housing.

Now that Phillips is on the council, he plans to vote against any rezoning for apartments. And if a legal protest is in place when it comes time to vote on a particular case, he now has the power to stop apartment development.

Phillips also was at last week's neighborhood meeting and told the residents he and Littlefield are the reason Chason has sought and received multiple continuances delaying council consideration.

A legal protest filed by homeowners along Almeria Road, just north of the site, could force a supermajority 6-1 vote for council approval if it remains in place when the council considers the case April 9.

"If Guy weren't on there, this sucker would already have been done, no question," Littlefield said. "Not only from just a voting point of view, but from a personal point of view, it's nice for me to have one ally."

Residents opposed to Las Aguas are counting on Phillips and Littlefield to stop the project.

"I feel like we only have two people on the council," said Ann Holland, who lives two blocks from the site.

In the short time Phillips has been on the council, he has made clear his stance on not just apartment, but multifamily development in the city.

At last week's council meeting, he joined Littlefield in voting against Wood Partners' proposal to replace Rural/Metro's Corp.'s Scottsdale billing and call center, on the northeastern corner of Indian School and Granite Reef roads, with Alta Scottsdale, a four-story, 218-unit apartment complex.

He also joined Littlefield in voting



Scottsdale City Councilmen Bob Littlefield and Guy Phillips could put a stop to a plan to build apartments on the site of the former Pitre Buick dealership on McDowell Road, west of 68th Street. CHARLIE LEIGHT/THE REPUBLIC

against Hewson Investments' proposal to build a taller and denser condominium complex than was originally approved in 2007. The complex will replace The Lodge, an area bar, and adjacent parking near the southwestern corner of Indian Plaza Road and 75th Street.

"Just like the bar district, we now have the highest concentration of bars in one area in the entire county, if not the state," Phillips said. "Do we want to have the highest concentration of apartments, too? Do you approve and approve, and approve until one day you wake up and go 'Oh man, we kind of overdid it, didn't we? Well, it's too late.'"

John Berry, a zoning attorney who represents Chason, Wood Partners and Hewson, said the issue is not whether there are enough or not enough apartments.

"The issue is what is the proper role of government and interfering in the marketplace," he said. "The city and its elect-

ed officials have historically not put themselves in the debate of too many grocery stores, banks or houses. Why then is it necessary for government to determine whether there is enough of any one particular type of land use that makes up the fabric of our great community?"

### Free market

Others on the council do not believe it's the city's role to decide how much is enough apartment development. Councilman Dennis Robbins, who voted for Chason and Hewson's proposals, said "If Councilman Phillips knows the right number, I wish he'd tell us."

"Our role is to make sure they follow our laws and produce a high-quality product, and it's safe," he said. "But what the actual use is, as long as it's appropriate for that zoning district, I don't see how we can decide how there's too many

### MULTIFAMILY PROPOSALS HEADED TO SCOTTSDALE COUNCIL

At its April 9 meeting, the council will consider the following items:

» Gray Development Group is requesting the council either eliminate the stipulation that its Blue Sky apartment project be under substantial construction by April 26, or grant a five-year extension for compliance. The project is east of Scottsdale Fashion Square.

» Chason Development's proposal to build Las Aguas, a 154-unit apartment complex on the five-acre parcel that formerly housed Pitre Buick, on the northern side of McDowell Road, west of 68th Street.

» Crescent Resources and Glimcher's request for amended development standards for the Residences at Scottsdale Quarter, a six-story, mixed-use building with about 22,000 square feet of ground-floor retail and 276 apartment units, at the southwestern corner of Greenway-Hayden Loop and 73rd Street.

of any one product."

Councilwoman Linda Milhaven said apartment vacancies are low and the city hasn't added any new apartments in a "very long time." Also, some older office properties have been targeted for apartment development where there's no longer any demand for office use, "and the other choice is to let the lot sit empty or vacant, and I don't think that's a good decision."

"There's a market for apartments and that's what we're seeing, so some of that is going to be dictated by the market," she said.

Councilwoman Virginia Korte said that while apartment development is a "market-driven issue," she does see value in taking a broader look at the market for apartments both today and in the near future based on credible research.

"I do believe there's value in presenting research and better understanding the market," she said.

### Single-family Scottsdale

Phillips wants to make clear that his opposition to rezoning for apartments

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