

Avondale plans to erect buildings 10 stories or taller

New policy allows mid-rises in 2 corridors

David Madrid

The Arizona Republic

Jan. 2, 2008 12:00 AM

Not long ago, Avondale was a small town near the edge of the Valley, but now the growing community is taking on some big-city issues as it embarks on plans to erect buildings 10 stories or taller.

Since 1986, Avondale's population has climbed to about 70,000 from fewer than 11,000, placing it among the fastest-growing cities in the nation.

With an anticipated population peak of 170,000, the southwest Valley city wants to go beyond four-story buildings to provide more space for offices, commercial [business](#) and retailers in hopes of attracting employers.

Last month, Avondale leaders approved mid-rise growth in two key areas: the 99th Avenue and Interstate 10 corridors.

But some residents aren't happy with the city's decision, dreading to see tall buildings looking down into their homes.

At an earlier public meeting, about 35 residents, mostly from the Glenarm Farms community in northeast Avondale, opposed tall buildings near their neighborhood.

The consensus was that 10-story buildings along I-10 are fine.

But they overwhelmingly prefer four- to six-story buildings along the 99th Avenue corridor.

They were especially critical of the City Council's approval of Entorno, a development at 99th Avenue and Indian School Road that calls for an eight-story building.

Karen Joseph, who lives near the proposed site, doesn't want the building there.

"It is our city's responsibility to mitigate the high-rises that are going to occur between 99th and the freeway," Joseph said. "Our city's responsibility is to buffer that. Six (stories) and down is OK. That's a buffer."

Claudia Whitehead, Avondale's economic development director, said 99th Avenue and I-10 are the city's

main employment corridors.

"Those (corridors) are vital to the long-term sustainability of the community, and (taller buildings) allow us to be able to attract employers into the area to create quality development for the city," Whitehead said.

The ability to build tall buildings also is important to attract hotels, which provide employment and tax revenue, she said.

The proposed Summit at Avondale, at I-10 and Avondale Boulevard, will include an eight-story hotel with about 250 rooms and 40,000 square feet of conference space.

There are also two Hyatt Hotels planned for 107th Avenue and McDowell Road. One will be four stories and the other six stories.

Councilman Ken Weise said growth occurring along Loop 101 is making the land there more valuable, so the natural progression for the landlocked city is to grow upward.

"I think we have to go taller. We have to maximize our land use," Weise said. "We have to make sure that the land we have is used to its utmost potential. That's important.

"I would like to see some more tall buildings, but I don't think we will see a huge boom of tall buildings," he said.