

**STATEMENT REGARDING THE DESERT EDGE PROPOSAL FROM
THE MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY**

September 26, 2017

The mission of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy (“Conservancy”) is to champion the sustainability of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve (“Preserve”) for the benefit of this and future generations. As stewards for the Preserve, it is our responsibility to speak for the Preserve and connect the community to the Preserve through education, research, advocacy, partnerships and safe, respectful access.

After examining the Desert EDGE Proposal and listening to stakeholders, the Conservancy has decided to issue this statement as the Desert EDGE Proposal moves forward for consideration by the City Council.

The Conservancy appreciates the considerable time, effort, energy and talent that went into the Desert EDGE Proposal. The Conservancy also believes that the City of Scottsdale, its residents, its visitors and its business community would benefit from the educational and research aspects of the Desert EDGE Proposal. These aspects of the proposal may be in line with the mission of the Conservancy.


However, the Conservancy does not support the Desert EDGE Proposal for a number of reasons as we believe the following:

1. The sustainability of the Preserve is of utmost importance. Use of Preserve tax dollars for the construction of the Desert EDGE will threaten that sustainability as it will have an adverse impact on other needs for the care and maintenance of the Preserve. No Preserve tax dollars should be considered for the Desert EDGE Proposal before all future funds for the expansion, care, maintenance and capital needs of the Preserve are first secured;
2. As owner of the Desert EDGE, the City will ultimately be responsible for the operating shortfall. If the Desert EDGE’s operation becomes a financial burden on the City, that burden may well threaten the sustainability of the Preserve. To minimize that risk, the City must demand a much higher level of financial operating funding and reserves as part of the Desert EDGE’s Proposal;
3. The Preserve is a preserve, not a park. Therefore, most commercial activities are prohibited under the Preserve Ordinance without a municipal use permit and the commercial activities of the Desert EDGE should not be permitted; and
4. The Desert EDGE opens the Preserve for future development within the Preserve boundaries and sets a dangerous precedent for future development within the Preserve boundaries.

The Conservancy further believes that the Desert EDGE will not be successful without widespread community support. Even if all of the above issues are satisfactorily addressed, the Conservancy believes a public vote on the Desert EDGE Proposal would then be needed to demonstrate that widespread community support for the Desert EDGE.

If the City Council decides to move forward with this proposal, the Conservancy looks forward to engaging with all relevant parties and taking an active role in helping to shape a truly sustainable Desert EDGE while maintaining the Conservancy's primary focus on its mission and vision and fulfilling its responsibilities to the City of Scottsdale as stewards of the Preserve.

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy

By: 
Greg Kruzal, Its Chair

By: 
Paul Staker, Its Interim Executive Director