

City of Mesa
Downtown Vision Ad-Hoc Committee
Meeting Minutes

Visit Mesa Conference Room
120 N. Center Street
Wednesday, December 3, 2014
4:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jo Wilson, Chair
Debby Elliott
Lorenzo Perez
Steve Chucri

STAFF PRESENT

Natalie Lewis
Jim Smith
Gail Vangen
Jaye O'Donnell
Jeff McVay
John Wesley

MEMBERS ABSENT

Charles Huellmantel
Marco Meraz
Rich Marchant

MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The Downtown Vision Ad-Hoc Committee meeting was called to order at 4:24 p.m. by Chair Jo Wilson. Meeting started late to ensure a quorum was present.

2. Review and approve minutes from the October 28, 2014 Committee Meeting

Chair Wilson asked for a motion to approve the October 28, 2014 Meeting Minutes of the Downtown Vision Ad-Hoc Committee. Committee Member Steve Chucri motioned to approve the Minutes as written. Committee Member Debby Elliot seconded and the motion unanimously passed.

Chair Wilson explained there would be three presentations provided to help assimilate the vision of the Committee from: The Historic Preservation Board, Downtown Mesa Association, and Sustainable Communities Collaborative.

3. Jim Taylor, Chair of the City of Mesa Historic Preservation Board (HPB) and Wendy Mack-Allred, Vice Chair of the Historic Preservation Board discussed:

- a. Seven member advisory board's experience and qualifications, stating that all have community service experience.
- b. The role of the Historic Preservation Board is to make recommendations to the Downtown Development Committee, Planning and Zoning Board, the Board of Adjustments, Zoning Administrator and City Council.
- c. Responsible for hearing citizen comments and making recommendations on historic preservation zoning overlays, as well as requests for demolition, new development within established historic districts, hear and decide appeals regarding proposed development, renovation, alterations, or additions to buildings or structures designated as historic.
- d. Future work includes:
 - Historic District – 2nd avenue Pasadena neighborhood
 - Historic District overlay for all of downtown Mesa
 - Monitor developments with Bass property
 - Purchase and install four historic signs for US Highways 60, 70, 80, and 89

- Develop a home for orphan neon signs for public display
- Continue to monitor federal building as future home of Historic Museum
- See new tenants to occupy the Citrus Growers Building

In conclusion, Mr. Taylor stated that saving historic buildings is worthwhile and economically advantageous and he hopes the DVC will consider the benefits associated with historic preservation. Mr. Taylor added that he would like to work with all groups for mutual benefit, including any current or future discussions to modify existing historic buildings in downtown Mesa. Chair Wilson called for questions. There were none. Ms. Mack-Allred added that her vision is to see old and new put together so that they work together in an artistic fashion; restore buildings that are worth saving and build new buildings designed to work well with the old – mix the old with the new. Mr. Taylor commented that the home for neon signs would be a first in the valley – nothing else like it. Many neon signs no longer conform to ordinances due to size issues, but they are historic and need a home.

4. Shannon Scutari, Co-Founder and Director of Sustainable Communities Collaborative (SCC), provided a presentation on her organization.
 - a. SCC attracted a combined \$20 million of private investment to start the Sustainable Communities Fund.
 - b. Policy Focus:
 - Housing – fund, support, and promote mixed-income housing (market, affordable, workforce) connected to transit
 - Public Health – Promote fresh and healthy food connected to transit-oriented communities and holistic communities and holistic community planning that leads to pedestrian and bicycle friendly urban environments
 - Community Development – Create vibrant urban environments and transit-oriented communities that have it all – schools, healthcare, shade and streetscape improvements, open space, culture, entertainment, grocery stores, child care, etc.
 - Financial Tools – creative ways to create transit-oriented community outcomes and attract additional investment into the region for quality, community-centered development for all income levels
 - c. Transportation – Promote and facilitate the development of a Total Transit Network with rail, transit, bicycle paths, pedestrian plazas, and complete streets to reduce the reliance on single occupancy vehicle trips and overall vehicle miles traveled.

Ms. Scutari suggested the Committee not forget who came before them and use the work that’s already been done – what’s already on the shelf; West Main Street Area Plan, Central Area Main Street Plan, Area Plan, Mesa 2025 General Plan, Form-Based Code, Historic District Overlay, Historic Landmark Overlay. She stated that many national folks came here to visit Mesa during the Development Summit and said to “make sure your form-based code is not opt-in.” Ms. Scutari believes in connectivity and that trains force connections. Mesa is ripe and ready with a lot of ground work already done. The key to implementing a vision is to look at what’s being done well that can be built upon – good bones. Ms. Scutari concluded by saying that Mesa has a very unique opportunity of indoor/outdoor because of the weather – it’s a differentiator.

5. Mr. David Short, Executive Director, Downtown Mesa Association (DMA), provided a presentation on the purpose and function of DMA.
 - a. Manages the “square mile” for business and property owners; Mesa Drive to University Drive, Country Club to Broadway
 - b. Publicizes information about business – promotions, new services/products, and awards, events through the use of Social Networking, Brochures, Press Releases, and Newsletters
 - c. Event Facilitation – provides technical and operational advice and support, as well as generating publicity and exposure for downtown businesses, community activities and sculpture displays

- d. Business Development – DMA provides information for potential downtown business and property owners through a listing of downtown businesses, downtown property availability and trade area analysis research
- e. Other services – direct mail services, business security liaison and crime prevention services, public space management services, zoning, design review and building code liaison – provides private sector expertise perspective and liaison advice in coordinating with the City of Mesa’s Planning and Economic Development staff on planning, zoning, sign code, design review and building code matters

Mr. Short stated that residents and businesses want to see a vibrant downtown – overall a self-sustaining 24/7 downtown to live, work, play and learn in, primarily supported by its own residents, employees, students and surrounding neighborhoods, and supported secondly by tourists and snowbirds. He stated that restaurants are a challenge. Currently there are 14 existing restaurants (15 including Jimmy Johns). An additional challenge is that many of the buildings do not have (fire) sprinkler systems. He said that there are currently 26 restaurant locations that are sitting empty – all privately owned. Mr. Short discussed the percentage of families living below the poverty level as displayed on the Disposable Income Map and that the City of Mesa had recently applied for a Promise Zone designation. When restaurants are considering whether to locate in Mesa, they base their decision on income levels. To turn this around is a process; adding new projects, fixing up run-down homes, replacing the transitional living facilities (half-way houses) in the area – currently 20 or so, plus about 5 that don’t have to report. Mr. Short concluded that he would like to see the downtown area become more active and busy on Friday and Saturday nights and DMA is working to use events to help keep restaurants and businesses open longer hours.

6. Confirm next meeting dates:

Tuesday, December 9, 2014 and Tuesday, December 16, 2014, Visit Mesa Conference Room
Discussion took place on committee member availability and changing the meeting start time from 4:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. It was agreed that starting at 3:00 p.m. would be more convenient.
Natalie Lewis stated that she will advise those not in attendance of meeting dates and start time change.

7. Review and provide direction on Chamber of Commerce business survey questions.

Chair Wilson stated that she had met with Sally Harrison, Mesa Chamber of Commerce President/CEO to discuss the survey. Chair Wilson distributed a list of five (5) questions developed by the Chamber entitled *Business Leaders Discussion – Downtown Region* and asked if there was anything the Committee Members would like to add or change. Natalie Lewis called for a motion to approve the questions. Steve Chucuri made a motion to approve the questions as presented, Lorenzo Perez seconded and the motion unanimously passed. Committee Member Chucuri suggested that the questions could evolve over time as new things are learned. Ms. Lewis stated that the list presented was most likely what will be used, however, there are a few weeks before the survey will be distributed if there is something the Committee wants to add.

8. Discuss and provide direction on the primary agenda items next meeting (December 9, 2014):

- a. **Presentation and discussion by Neighborhood Economic Development Corporation (NEDCO), Retail-Arts Innovation-Livability (RAILmesa), and Mesa Arts and Culture Department.**

Discussion took place on upcoming presentations. The City of Mesa, Office of Economic Development will provide a presentation on December 16.

9. Items from citizens present

None

10. Adjourn meeting

Chair Wilson called for a motion to adjourn. Committee Member Steve Chucuri made a motion to adjourn. Committee Member Debby Elliott seconded and the motion unanimously passed. The meeting adjourned at 5:41 p.m.