



GENERAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

September 24, 2008

The General and Economic Development Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on September 24, 2008 at 8:00 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Dave Richins, Chairman
Alex Finter
Scott Somers

COMMITTEE ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Kari Kent
Donna Bronski

1. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

2. Hear a presentation, discuss and provide input on the Fiesta District Design Guidelines.

Economic Development Specialist Cathy Ji stated that for the past year and a half, staff has worked with PMC Consulting (PMC) relative to the Fiesta District Design Project. She explained that the purpose of today's presentation is to familiarize the Committee with the project goals, process and products and review the results of last night's Community Workshop. Ms. Ji also noted that staff is seeking the Committee's preliminary input regarding the design guidelines before the item is presented to the full Council. She said that additionally, staff would offer possible options with regard to the implementation of the project and how that would be accomplished through Mesa's Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Ji introduced the members of the project team including Lorelei Cappel, project manager with PMC, Jerome Feurnier, a PMC finance consultant, Doug McCants, of PBS&J, and Drew Sloat, of Sloat Landscape Architects.

Ms. Cappel displayed a PowerPoint presentation (A copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) and reported that the Fiesta District extends from the Tempe Canal to Extension Road and is bounded by Southern Avenue and the U.S. 60. She explained that the consultants were asked to develop a brand for the Fiesta District, identify transportation and pedestrian linkages, and identify the cost of implementation to define "a sense of place" in the District. Ms. Cappel also advised that the project elements include brand development; urban design;

circulation; community involvement in the planning process; and an implementation plan (i.e., financing, phasing, funding).

Ms. Cappel commented that throughout this process, City staff and the consultants have conducted extensive outreach with members of the community (i.e., students, businesses, stakeholders, property owners and residents) to garner not only their assessment of the Mesa Fiesta District, but also their vision for future development. She noted that the individuals were polled on public funding priorities for the District, participated in a “virtual walking tour” of the area, and offered feedback relative to the design guidelines via a web-based visual preference survey.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that key stakeholders, business owners, property owners and other stakeholders offered input with regard to brand development for the Fiesta District; that after significant discussion and deliberation regarding elements such as name changes, colors and branding designs that would reflect pride in the area, it was determined that the original name of Fiesta District would remain; and various concepts, schematics and guidelines that would be implemented to reflect the brand (i.e., signage, landscaping, furnishings and fixtures).

Ms. Cappel further reported that the Fiesta District Design Handbook consists of an outreach plan, brand development, Private Realm Development Guidelines, Public Realm Development Guidelines, and an implementation strategy. She said that staff and the consultants are seeking the Committee’s feedback relative to the Public Realm and Private Realm Design Guidelines.

Ms. Cappel commented that the Private Realm Design Guidelines are composed of buildings, structures and private or quasi-public open spaces. She reviewed the design goals of the Private Realm as follows:

- **To visually connect the District through integration of the District brand and design elements.**
- **To physically connect the District and its users through safe circulation systems that encourage pedestrian traffic.**
- **To encourage a denser, high quality urban development pattern that will encourage smart growth and highly utilized sites.**

Ms. Cappel referred to the PowerPoint presentation and highlighted a variety of design schematics and concepts that demonstrate the above-referenced goals. (Uniform directional signage, landscaping and furnishings that will integrate the District – Goal 1; Signage that will establish a cohesive District, identify and direct movement – Goal 2; Shade and other outdoor seating to create a pleasant pedestrian environment. A network of paseos that will connect the site – Goal 2; All new projects will follow design guidelines, building more densely with varied and quality architectural details – Goal 3.)

Ms. Cappel also reviewed the Public Realm Design Guidelines that would encompass the connectivity in public streets, paseo rights-of-way, public parks, plazas and civic spaces. She highlighted the Public Realm design goals as follows:

- **Provide visual cues and design features to physically and symbolically connect the different uses in the District.**

- **Limit conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles by improving automobile flow.**
- **Create a series of gateways.**
- **Provide amenities that animate and add visual interest to the streetscape.**
- **Provide facilities, plantings and other improvements that make the streetscape comfortable for pedestrians.**
- **Design individual streets to have a distinct design character and identity that reflects the District's land use character and function.**

Ms. Cappel further outlined design schematics/options to address the above-cited goals. (Site furnishings that will incorporate wayfinding and add visual interest – Goal 1; Street improvements and public/private partnership for paseos – Goal 2; Gateway signs that announce the arrival to the District and orient site users – Goal 3; Seating, landscaping and shading to create a pleasant environment – Goal 4; Paseos provided through public/private partnership to create pleasant streets – Goal 5; Street will reflect unique uses in the District, but share a common identity through signage, furnishings and landscape – Goal 6.) She added that the implementation strategy is intended as a “roadmap” to revitalization and would address the following: 1.) Projects, programs and policies; 2.) Exact location; 3.) Priority/phasing; 4.) Funding sources/incentives; 5.) Responsible party; and 6.) Construction/maintenance costs.

Ms. Cappel informed the Committee that last night, the final Fiesta District Design Project Community Workshop was held at Fiesta Mall. She said that the attendees were supportive of the new District brand and logo and enthusiastic about the progress that has been made thus far.

Committeemember Somers commented that the branding, logo and signage that have been identified in the design guidelines are “exciting” visual elements. He stated that in his opinion, it would be appropriate for the City to engage in discussions with the private sector regarding various redevelopment tools that have been mentioned in the Fiesta District Design Handbook. Committeemember Somers cited various options including, but not limited to, a Business Improvement District (BID), which would demonstrate a commitment on the part of the private sector to invest in the area; a Community Facilities District (CFD), which would also assist in funding infrastructure improvements; the availability of Section 108 monies (a source of financing available for economic development); and form-based zoning.

Chairman Richins noted that in reviewing the design guidelines, he was struck by the fact that there are inexpensive, small steps (i.e., changing the color of street signage) that the City could possibly implement in the Fiesta District in the not too distant future.

Committeemember Finter thanked everyone for the presentation and said that he looks forward to future economic development opportunities in the Fiesta District. He also requested that the Committee be provided an example of how the consultants would “visualize” the implementation plan for Fiesta Mall and also the northwest corner of Alma School Road and Southern Avenue.

In response to a question from Chairman Richins, Ms. Cappel clarified that pending completion of the implementation strategy, staff and the consultants would draft a final report for the implementation plan. She stated that Mr. Feurnier has reviewed various financing mechanisms, considered the City's funds as they currently exist, grants that are available today and in the future, and begun to allocate certain expenditures. Ms. Cappel added that the total cost of the

capital improvements for the project is estimated at \$16.5 million, in addition to \$1 million in annual maintenance costs.

Chairman Richins noted that he had the opportunity to participate in the Fiesta District public outreach process during his association with the West Mesa Community Development Corporation and wanted to publicly thank staff and the consultants for their efforts to include all stakeholders in the process.

Mr. Feurnier displayed a document entitled "Mesa, Arizona – Sample Community Facilities District" and provided a brief overview of various public infrastructure improvement costs that could be included in a sample CFD in the Fiesta District. (Note: The document is intended for example purposes only.) (See Attachment 1.) He also responded to a series of technical questions posed by the Committee regarding Municipal Improvement Districts and Community Facilities Districts.

In response to a question from Committeemember Finter, Ms. Ji explained that since the beginning of the Fiesta District Design Project, representatives of Mesa Community College (MCC) have participated in the various outreach workshops. She stated that she is hopeful that MCC would incorporate elements of the design guidelines into its proposed capital improvement projects.

Responding to a series of questions from Chairman Richins, Zoning/Civil Administrator Gordon Sheffield reported that there are a variety of tools available to the City in order to establish and enforce the Fiesta District Design Guidelines. He explained that design guidelines written on a general basis must be applied equally across the entirety of the City and advised that if the Council elected to apply different design guidelines to the Fiesta District, it would necessitate staff developing an overlay district and rezoning the area to apply the overlay district to the specific geographic area.

Mr. Sheffield noted that alternatively, the Council could adopt the design guidelines as policy and said that staff would incorporate such policy into their reviews as cases proceeded through the Design Review Board process. He said that it would be difficult to enforce the policy on a mandatory basis, but indicated that the City would give deference to projects that are in compliance with those guidelines. Mr. Sheffield added that it would also be necessary for staff to coordinate with the City's consultant who is conducting the Zoning Ordinance update to incorporate the Fiesta District Design Guidelines into that process.

Chairman Richins requested that staff proceed with the coordination efforts as outlined by Mr. Sheffield.

Further discussion ensued relative to an additional tool called a Specific Plan (SP); that a Specific Plan would enable the City to not only take a planning document, but also incorporate certain regulatory tools within the document to implement the plan; and that Mesa's Zoning Ordinance does not include a provision to enable Specific Plans to take place, but is an option being considered by staff as part of the Zoning Code update.

Ms. Cappel noted that the Fiesta District Design Guidelines can be used in any number of ways by the City and assured the Committee that she would work with Mr. Sheffield to ensure that the implementation strategy provides the greatest flexibility in that regard.

Mr. Sheffield further advised that pending completion of the Zoning Code update, the City would contract with a consultant to also update the Sign Code. He explained that it would be necessary to make certain changes to the sign ordinance and address various signage prohibitions in the Code that are currently included as part of the Fiesta District Design Guidelines (i.e., signage constructed within public rights-of-way, off-site signage, and redefining what constitutes District signage).

Ms. Cappel concluded her presentation by noting that the Fiesta District Design Project “sends a message” to the private sector that Mesa cares about the Fiesta District and intends to make future investments in the area when funding becomes available. She suggested that the initial steps the City might wish to take in this process would be to include the branding of the District with distinct public signage and also select a pilot project to demonstrate how the design guidelines could be applied.

Deputy City Manager Kari Kent stated that staff and the consultants would finalize the action plan and report and bring back their recommendations to the full Council for their input and direction.

Chairman Richins thanked everyone for the informative presentation.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the General Development Committee meeting adjourned at 9:04 a.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the meeting of the General & Economic Development Committee of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 24th day of September 2008. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

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attachment (1)