

## MEETING MINUTES

**City of Mesa**  
Downtown Vision Committee Interactive Session  
Lower Level Council Chambers  
57 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street,  
Mesa, AZ 85201

**Date:** March 24, 2015 **Time:** 3:00 P.M.

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### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Jo Wilson, Chair  
Marco Meraz  
Charles Huellmantel  
Debby Elliott  
Lorenzo Perez  
Rich Marchant

### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Steve Chucri

### **STAFF PRESENT**

Natalie Lewis  
Jeff McVay  
Jim Smith  
Lori Gary

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#### **1. Chair's Call to Order:**

Chair Wilson called the March 24, 2015 meeting of the Downtown Vision Committee to order at 3:10 P.M. at the Mesa Lower Council Chambers, 57 E. First Street, Mesa, AZ 85201.

#### **2. Approval of Minutes from the March 10, 2015 Committee Meeting Minutes:**

Chair Wilson called for a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held on March 10, 2015

**MOTION:** Charles Huellmantel made a motion to approve the minutes.

**SECOND:** Marco Meraz

**DECISION:** Passed unanimously

#### **3. Committee review, sharing of ideas and dialogue regarding: What does the Committee want the end product of our work to be and include?**

Chair Wilson asked each committee member to express in their own mind what they think this committee's finished product should look like when it is sent to the City Council. Chair Wilson would like to go forward in the direction to the end product all together with the same language and goals.

After the round table discussion the overall consensus from each member is that the City's Central Main Plan is comprehensive relative to specific tasks; no need to duplicate. Committee members also discussed need to clarify and define some commonly used terms, such as branding, urban or transit-oriented development. More specific feedback and thoughts by each committee member follows:

- Committee Member Marchant—Consider identifying a review mechanism to ensure the Central Main Plan is implemented. Identify guidelines that need to be priorities based on what the Vision Committee has heard and what Committee member's own experiences suggest, such as connections and gateways to and from downtown. Need some suggestion and guidance on downtown branding. Identify core things that must be part of a future downtown.
- Committee Member Huellmantel-- Focus on identifying priorities and actions on projects the City can have most impact on—publicly-owned land and spaces. Create action plans and lists of what Committee believes to be important.

- Committee Member Elliott-- Need simple, concise document that helps community understand a shared vision for downtown. Central Main Plan is comprehensive—but too detailed for the layperson. Helping ensure progress and action makes sense. If the committee is going to recommend a brand for downtown, need to recommend that the ultimate brand doesn't create unnecessary boundaries or limits on what downtown is and can be to everyone.
- Committee Member Perez –This vision to be created by the Committee needs to speak to a very broad audience. There is beauty and power in simplicity. Action plans also important. Using visuals could be good tools to show vision. Committee could summarize key actions and priorities—show what they look like through visuals—and then compliment with some simple and bold articulation. Vision is about the essence of a promise, about those catalysts that ignite people, emotion and development for downtown. Visuals evoke an emotional response.
- Committee Member Meraz-- Interviewed other downtown partners to ask them—what do they believe is needed? All agree that we need to set up an advisory committee of some kind to monitor ongoing implementation. This advisory committee should include about 20 people and city staff who want to see downtown move forward and believe in its future. Vision Committee recommendations should include a combination of vision, priorities from Central Main Plan, and advisory committee to review and advocate for implementation.
- Chair Wilson—Overall agreement not to reinvent Central Main Plan. Agree that while the Central Main Plan is good, Vision Committee needs something in layman and simple terms, an elevator speech to quickly describe vision for the average person. Also described key challenge for purpose of Vision Committee is that Downtown has many groups implementing projects their own vision that is not comprehensive or owned by the community. Vision Committee outcome should have a global statement like "activating people and space," with corresponding actions that come from the Central Main Plan and that Vision Committee believes to be priorities. Need to recommend that implementation roles and responsibilities be clarified. Agree that some kind of accountability tool also needed.
- Committee Member Huellmantel -- Important to remember that what's going to happen for next two years is already underway. Visioning should be more focused on what we need to five years from now and long-term priorities that will make a big difference downtown and that will create a regional identity. May need to consider a broader definition of downtown beyond square mile, i.e. the market surrounding and people close enough to bike and walk and access downtown. The political capital is here. The Vision Committee needs to help the City know how and what to invest that political capital on. Recommendations should focus on City assets and spaces.

Upon request by Committee, Natalie Lewis provided a broad review of the meeting that took place with the Downtown City Center economic development consultants last week. Chair Wilson and Committee Member Elliott also attended this session. Key messages: build on existing strengths at core of downtown, need for more housing, great parks can help increase redevelopment opportunities/raise values, start with a small central area (Main and Center is the right focus) and then grow outward. Look at the space not only a park but that also includes development opportunities to help pay for the ongoing operations and maintenance of the park.

Chair Wilson asked the committee to identify four, five or six things that they think are catalyst that would be critical to see change happen in downtown, and ignite downtown Mesa. As a starting point, what would they be?

- GATEWAYS and CONNECTIONS. Needs to be comfortable and attractive things for people to get to and from downtown. Pedestrians and vehicles tools and solutions. Pedestrian ways. Green linear parks.
  - ALLEYS AS PASEOS. Linear paths. Activated alleys can become active paseos. Need shade in the alleys. Deliver the unexpected. Clean them up. Activate them with food service.
  - IDENTITY. Human scale, vintage, eclectic mix of uses. Historic character. Concentrated return on investment. Culture. Color. Keep doing the little things that begin to ignite excitement.
  - SAFETY, ACCESSIBILITY AND PARKING. Need parking that is findable, safe, and accessible. Today, it is hard to find. When you get there, feels unsafe. Change perceptions. Light rail will bring more homelessness. City needs to be prepared. Focus more on back alleys. Spruce them up.
  - GATHERING PLACES. Both programmed and informal parks, public gathering spaces.
  - ART and INNOVATION. Build on Downtown Mesa's strength and the creative community downtown. More or continued opportunities for murals, events/festivals.
4. **Review and discuss Committee homework assignments to be completed before the next meeting. Provide direction to staff on any additional information needed for next meeting.**

In conclusion to the discussions the committee felt this dialog and conversation was productive and appreciated. Chair Wilson asked for each committee member to think about the catalyst items and bring ideas, visions and images for the next meetings discussion.

Natalie Lewis asked to forward the identified catalyst list to each committee member for reference as soon as possible. Staff will also bring possible visuals/images to the next meeting to help with further discussions and progress.

5. **Confirm next meeting date, April 14, 2015, 3:00 P.M., Visit Mesa, 120 N. Center.**

6. **Items from citizens present**

No items presented from citizens present.

7. **Adjourn meeting**

Chair Wilson made a **Motion** to adjourn the meeting at 5:20 P.M., seconded by Charles Huellmantel, all carried unanimously.

Submitted By:

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Jo Wilson, Chair  
(Prepared by Beth Ann Moore)