mesa·az
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

COUNCIL MINUTES

August 28, 2014

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Study Session at the Mesa Convention Center, 201 North Center Street, on August 28, 2014 at 7:30 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT	COUNCIL ABSENT	OFFICERS PRESENT
Alex Finter	Scott Somers	Christopher Brady
Christopher Glover		Debbie Spinner
Terry Benelli		Dee Ann Mickelsen
Dennis Kavanaugh		
David Luna		
Dave Richins		

Mayor Finter excused Councilmember Somers from the entire meeting.

(Mayor Finter excused Councilmember Richins from the beginning of the meeting; he arrived at 7:40 a.m.)

1-a. Hear a presentation and discuss a design option for City Center by the Colwell Shelor Team.

Development and Sustainability Project Manager Jeff McVay announced that a Request for Quotes (RFQ) was solicited to prepare design options for the Mesa City Center. He explained that each design team would take approximately 20 minutes to present their design concept proposal, followed by an opportunity for questions and answers.

Michele Shelor, Registered Landscape Architect (RLA) Principal-in-Charge from Colwell Shelor, introduced Allison Colwell, RLA Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Accredited Professional (AP) Project Manager from Colwell Shelor, Jaime Maslyn, Principal, Co-Designer from West 8, David Zielnicki, Design Project Manager from West 8, and Philip Weddle, Financial Advisory and Intermediary Service (FAIS), LEED AP, Architect from Weddle Gilmore.

Ms. Shelor stated that both Colwell Shelor and Weddle Gilmore are based in the Valley and that West 8 is based out of New York and the Netherlands and said that both companies understand how to create dynamic urban spaces that transform cities throughout the world.

Ms. Colwell reported that their team identified two critical aspects to the community input process: obtain feedback to shape the design, and build consensus. She explained that the public input process captured many diverse perspectives from City leadership, staff, downtown

business owners and citizens. She stated that six activities were performed (consisting of approximately 100 participants over a two-day time frame) utilizing game cards to prioritize what the participants imagined for the Mesa City Center. She added that the data consisted of hundreds of comments, notes, interviews, and videos.

Ms. Colwell pointed out that a “leisure promenade” was the highest rated desired community activity. She explained that in order to build consensus, a project website was created utilizing several platforms where citizens could express their ideas via Facebook and Twitter. She emphasized that the platforms would continue to be used, allowing for consistent dialogue in building community support.

Ms. Maslyn stated that 40 percent of their design plan is devoted to parking. She explained that the focus was to remove all parking from the site and utilize the surrounding streets to include a re-design of parking around the perimeter of the project for convenience.

Ms. Maslyn noted that removing a portion of the existing City Hall building and opening the space would allow for access from downtown into the heart of the site. She indicated that the remaining buildings would be retained and reused.

Ms. Maslyn stated that food and beverage was one of the top requests from the community and that integration and adaptive building reuse would allow this part of the design concept to move forward rapidly. She commented that by opening up the ground floor of 55 North Center Street, a beer garden could be developed. She added that the design would connect all of the surrounding assets, such as light rail and mass transit, thereby enabling a seamless walking experience to all downtown destinations.

Ms. Maslyn reported that their team conducted research, which determined that a successful walking area included comfortable seating and shade. She noted that the “Wind Dancer”, a shade structure three quarters of an acre in length/size, would be integrated into the center of the project. She reported that the structure would be equipped with an evaporative cooling tower to cool the plaza by up to 15 degrees. She added that a large plaza area would be located underneath the canopy, which could be used for events such as movies and festivals.

Mr. Weddle acknowledged that this was an ambitious project and indicated that it was crucial to proceed in a cost effective manner. He said that the ground floor of City Hall would be energy efficient, present a civic character, and allow for additional public engagement.

Mr. Weddle stated that the sky terrace would be located on the roof of City Hall, and that converting the ground level of 55 North Center Street to a restaurant terrace would allow for timely activation of the space.

Mr. Weddle concluded the presentation by displaying a video outlining the proposed design concepts.

Mayor Finter thanked the Colwell Shelor team for their presentation. He commented that he was pleased that the design concept incorporated many areas of activity for visitors of all age groups to enjoy. He expressed his appreciation on the team’s practical and reasonable approach to cost.

In response to a question from Mayor Finter, Mr. Weddle stated that the ground level of 55 North Center Street would be converted to a public space to include a high impact restaurant and shopping area. He also noted that the upper level would remain office space.

Mr. McVay commented that he is pleased with all of the designs and recommended that Mayor Finter and all Councilmembers not only take the time to evaluate each of the designs, but to also evaluate each of the teams.

Responding to a question from Councilmember Luna, Ms. Colwell explained that their team integrated shade and water on a seven-mile long project in Madrid. She added that the weather in Madrid is somewhat comparable to Mesa, but has slightly cooler winters. She added that the evaporative cooling tower depicted in the design would be specific to Mesa.

Councilmember Richins complimented the team on their presentation and expressed support for the various shade elements. He added that the integration of an interactive water feature was important.

Councilmember Kavanaugh voiced appreciation for the design concept which incorporates summer and winter year-round activities.

In response to a question from Councilmember Kavanaugh, Ms. Shelor explained that the water feature is designed to be more interactive when a large number of visitors are present, and less interactive with fewer visitors.

Responding to a question from Vice Mayor Glover, Ms. Maslyn clarified that West 8 is the designer of the “Wind Dancer” concept and said that the design would incorporate the movement of shade.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Glover, Mr. Weddle stated that the estimated cost of the City Center project is $50 million.

Councilmember Benelli expressed appreciation for the design concept, which would allow the space to be utilized throughout the year.

Ms. Shelor commented that a calendar would note a schedule of activities and events taking place every day.

1-b. Hear a presentation and discuss a design option for City Center by the Woods-Bagot Team.

Riki Nishimura, American Institute of Architects (AIA), Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Accredited Professional (AP) Building Design and Construction (BD+C) Project Manager/Urban Design, introduced Terry Merck, Architect Management Principal at Woods-Bagot, James Lord, Landscape Architect at Surfacedesign, Tim Kirby, Senior Landscape Designer at Surfacedesign, Inc., and Kristin Darr, Facilitator/Stakeholder and Public Outreach from Central Creative.

Mr. Nishimura displayed a video, which featured Mesa’s history and culture, the team’s design concepts and an overview of the plan areas. He remarked that Mesa Central is the heart of Mesa and said that the project would be a catalyst for downtown revitalization.

Mr. Nishimura also commented that Mesa Central extends beyond the square of the park; that land and uses around the park focus on the neighborhoods; and that the extension of Pepper Promenade would offer a multitude of areas to recreate in all year long. He stated that parking would be located to the north, with underground parking adjacent to City Hall. He added that the all-weather space allows for flexibility that can be tailored to meet the community's needs.

Mr. Lord discussed Mesa Central, which is composed of landscape designs that include the wash, bluffs, and foothills. He indicated that a children's garden area, local shopping and space for families to gather, will be incorporated into the site.

Mr. Lord reiterated the design concepts earlier mentioned by Mr. Nishimura. His comments, included, but were not limited to, the following: that the Main Street Suite would include hydro rooms, which allow for the sight and sound of rain; would accommodate approximately 20,000 visitors; and that the bluffs would include a series of gardens and ADA-accessible paths. He stated that the civic "hangar" would be open, with a theater situated at the rear and a sky room at the top of the facility. He added that the hangar is comprised of a cloud which allows for outdoor exhibitions such as car shows and athletic events.

Mr. Lord commented that the team selected an underground parking structure, which would sit adjacent to City Hall. He stated that the team determined that parking in the middle of the site would activate the center of the project and accommodate all areas of space, activities and events.

Mr. Lord suggested that the Council and City staff view this project in terms of the public and private sector, and engage a conservancy agency for Mesa Central, which would allow for assistance with the operation, programming, and funding of the project. He added that it is advantageous to engage an agency to assist in making certain that functions run smoothly.

Mr. Merck remarked that Mesa Central would be the "Park for the People," and that the Main Street zone would be energized.

Vice Mayor Glover expressed appreciation for the wash concept and incorporating the environment into the design.

In response to a series of questions from Vice Mayor Glover, Mr. Merck responded that the cost for their design concept is $49 million which includes a 25% contingency. He noted that $11 million of the cost is dedicated to parking, of which approximately 376 spaces would be underground and 100 spaces for surface parking.

In response to a question from Councilmember Kavanaugh, Mr. Nishimura clarified that the location of the proposed new Council Chambers building would remain where it currently exists. He explained that by modifying a building of significance, the ground floor could be opened up to integrate with the open space.

Councilmember Benelli commented that she appreciated the design concept regarding design of the walkways running east and west, which would connect to the museums.

In response to a series of questions from Councilmember Benelli, Mr. Merck explained that a public services area would be located along the edge of the bluffs, including a courtyard where

retail shops could occupy space. He noted that with regard to the north/south connection over Center Street, Pepper Promenade would be repaved, which would not only provide connectivity to the museums, but also to the parking and infill projects.

Councilmember Luna commented that he liked the hangar concept due to its multi-use options.

In response to a question from Councilmember Luna, Mr. Lord cited examples of park conservancies, such as the Central Park Conservancy and the Golden Gate National Park Conservancy. He added that by partnering with a conservancy, the generation of revenue, along with coordinating and overseeing the projects, would be advantageous.

Councilmember Richins voiced support for the Pepper Street connections which, in his opinion, is a key design element.

Mayor Finter also expressed appreciation for many of the proposed design concepts.

Mayor Finter thanked the team for their presentation.

1-c. Hear a presentation and discuss a design option for City Center by the Otak Team.

(At 9:00 a.m., Mayor Finter excused Councilmember Richins from the remainder of the meeting.)

Brad Bielenberg, Otak Professional Landscape Architect (PLA)/Project Manager, introduced Martin Glastra van Loon, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Associate/Urban Planning, and Carol Mayer-Reed, Landscape Architect from Otak.

Mr. Bielenberg played a video, which highlighted the transition of downtown Mesa.

Mr. Glastra van Loon spoke regarding the team's implementation and phasing of the Mesa City Center Project. He explained that the proposal delivers an attractive and appropriate sized design, as well as meeting the criteria that the City of Mesa has requested.

Mr. Glastra van Loon stressed the importance of creating a vibrant urban district, which is centered in the "living room" plaza concept. He stated that the design elements would include courtyards, passageways, a narrow Pepper Street and active streets surrounding the area.

Mr. Glastra van Loon displayed a series of photos illustrating development parcels that the City of Mesa owns, which could potentially attract up to $250 million of private investment and generate $2.5 million in annual tax revenue. He added that the team's proposal consists of investing in such infrastructure and leveraging the real estate that the City of Mesa owns. He noted that there are opportunities at the southwest and northeast quadrants of the site. He said that the Council Chambers building could be moved closer to City Hall on the living room plaza in order to create a modern, dated feel.

Ms. Mayor-Reed discussed the concept of a "living room plaza" that would be built over time. She stated that the public wants authenticity that is true to Mesa. She noted that the term "messy vitality," refers to an abundance of people doing activities that are customized.

Ms. Mayor-Reed displayed a slide illustrating the plaza at night, and explained that the team's concept was to capture a 24 hour, 7 day per week community.

Ms. Mayor-Reed pointed out that the plaza would contain a shaded path with a lighted canopy, additional trees and foliage. She noted that a water wall would be an effective and interactive feature. She described a mirrored pond as a cool threshold inspired by very large existing trees. She commented that the transformed Council Chambers building could include restrooms, a visitor center, or a small café, and would be the backdrop for a digital light bar.

Mr. Bielenberg acknowledged that the plans are ambitious and stated that the implementation process of organizing the space is strategic and flexible. He said the entire site can be programmed as one unit or in pieces. He explained that Pepper Street could accommodate over 25,000 people for large events, and parking for 800 vehicles which would be distributed between structured and surface parking. He added that phasing is flexible and noted that phase one would consist of the implementation of the signature plaza and the buildings south of the central lawn, including the Council Chambers building.

In response to a question from Councilmember Luna, Ms. Mayor-Reed explained that with regard to the electronic wall, the events area would be located below the space where the crowd would stand.

Responding to a question from Councilmember Benelli, Mr. Bielenberg explained that Pepper Street would be viewed as a raised plaza street to accommodate people. He noted however, that vehicles would also be allowed to pass through at a low speed.

Mr. Bielenberg noted that it is critical that visitors have access to the plaza on a daily basis which would allow access to coffee shops and bars.

Mayor Finter commented that he admired components from each of the teams' designs. He stated that a key factor in the success of such a project is how the private sector can be factored into the design in order to develop sustainability. He added that he is excited about the future and the possibilities of this project.

Mayor Finter thanked each of the teams and presenters for their designs and hard work.

2. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

_____
ALEX FINTER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

_____
DEE ANN MICKELSEN, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Study Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 28th day of August, 2014. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

_____
DEE ANN MICKELSEN, CITY CLERK

vf