



General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)

Minutes

Location: City of Mesa Lower Level Council Chambers
57 E. 1st Street

Date: October 23rd, 2023 Time: 4:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ron Williams, Chair
Scott Thomas, Vice-Chair
Sarah Frechette
Megan Neal
Ivonne Garcia Rodriguez
Jessica Sarkissian

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jocelyn Skogebo

STAFF PRESENT:

Jeff Robbins
Rachel Nettles
Ashley Scott

GUESTS:

Marilyn Crosby

1. Call meeting to order.

Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 4:31 pm.

2. Hear an introduction and have committee discussion about the 2050 General Plan's public survey qualitative analysis materials.

Mr. Robbins welcomed the committee to the meeting and introduced himself and the Assistant Planning Director, Rachel Nettles. He spoke about the public survey qualitative analysis materials and gave a brief description of each one. The Global Themes document identified public feedback themes by areas of the City. Staff created a word cloud from all three General Plan surveys and Mr. Robbins mentioned how the words are similar to what staff saw in previous surveys and Mr. Robbins indicated this is positive since it appears to reaffirm the previously identified public sentiments.

The next document provided to the committee was a summary all three public surveys. Mr. Robbins explained that the first survey asked what people like about Mesa today, the second survey asked about residents vision and priorities, and the third survey asked residents about land use and mobility. Staff reviewed the qualitative data and ran the data through ChatGPT, and the AI

technology gave a summary of twenty pages which was then vetted carefully by staff. The document shows the main priorities voiced by the public along with 1-3 direct quotes from the surveys supporting each theme.

3. Discuss concepts and themes from public comments.

Chair Williams thanked Jeff and the staff for putting the materials together and asked the committee if anyone had any suggestions for the concepts and themes. Committee member Neal inquired about the global themes in West Mesa. Staff spoke about the global themes in West Mesa, saying that citizens spoke about redevelopment, the need for more affordable housing, and too much multifamily. Committee member Neal believes with multifamily it is hard to establish the neighborhood in West Mesa and voiced a concern about the land use and wanted to know if City Staff would recap in the next meeting. Committee member Neal recommended understanding the land used for the map since it is a global theme.

Committee Member Sarkissian recommended doing something like character areas in the City to help differentiate and protect the unique areas of Mesa. She liked the representation in the map and the word cloud.

Vice Chair Thomas agreed with the global themes and said he felt the map and the public feedback represented Mesa well and how the City functions, especially in the West and Southwest areas of Mesa. It provides sound direction on what is needed in the City districts based on what he has experienced.

Committee member Frechette mentioned it is working for the people who need it to work. The General Plan is going to make people angry, and it can be controversial and is interested to see how the City balance and resolve this.

Committee Member Garcia Rodriguez thanked the Staff for their hard work and agreed with Committee member Frechette. It is hard for her to understand the different customs in government in the United States and she said she believes the City was responsible for providing affordable housing. She wanted to know what the City doing to help citizens get ahead with high interest rates and how they step forward in a way that is better for the citizens. Staff reminded Committee member Garcia Rodriguez the City doesn't have control of the market, and direct provision of housing is outside the purview of the city.

Chair Williams said he appreciated this conversation and it is a great learning experience. Being part of the public process involves a lot of perspectives and information. Ultimately, our role is to try and interpret all the information and public perspectives and bring recommendations to the City.

Committee member Sarkissian said she personally does not have a problem with attainable housing, but her neighborhood finds it unappealing. She thought it may be helpful to find out why there is a fast turnover in multifamily in certain neighborhoods and if there is any policy to help

with this issue. She reiterated to the committee the City is not responsible for housing, but the City can help with policy, incentives, and working with developers.

4. **Discuss and take action on recommendations for themes to include in Action Plan for the 2050 General Plan.**

Committee member Neal expressed some confusion about what staff needed in terms of a recommendation and asked Staff for clarification. Staff stated they provided documentation from the community outreach and today Staff is looking for recommendations from the committee of the key themes that should be represented within the 2050 General Plan public draft. Staff reminded the Committee that the City doesn't have control over private entities and that the plan helps focus the City's efforts over the next ten years. Committee member Sarkissian stated the General Plan is intended to be high-level and that, by way of example, one of the City's roles could be to create new ordinances that address some of the themes in the public feedback.

Committee Member Garcia Rodriguez mentioned retail is empty since the rent is so high, but the citizens would like more retail. Staff spoke about the programs that help businesses with rent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff said the recommendations should be City-focused based on the themes from the citizen feedback, but that the Committee members are members of the community too and its appropriate to suggest issues that are relevant to their neighborhoods and areas of the City.

The Committee recommended that the 2050 General Plan address the following topics:

- Redevelop West Mesa
 - Include non-displacement techniques
 - Focus on older strip center areas
 - Explore creation of an adaptive reuse program for West Mesa, downtown.
 - Some sort of funding for adaptive reuse
- Character area development that could include sub-area development and planning. Create a distinct feel for specific areas of the city
- Housing needs more entry-level options and diversity
 - Consider workforce housing standards. Support creation of more affordable housing, but not necessarily HUD supported housing
- Encourage more employment diversity in type and size of businesses in East Mesa
- Explore how to integrate different land use options around residential in SE Mesa, especially commercial.
 - Staff to explore what options are available given current constraints.
 - Explore PAD incentives to encourage inclusion of some commercial
- Explore what could be prohibiting or making it more difficult for entertainment uses to develop.
 - Example: Elliott/Sossaman– added restaurants inside a development.

- Explore more applications of mixed-use
- Consider expansion of social services
- Explore small business assistance programs for financial assistance
- Transportation
 - Approach transportation by considering specific areas of the city
 - Create a master trails plan
 - New streets in east Mesa should keep up with development
- Structured shade in strategic areas

Committee Member motioned to recommend the themes to include in the Action Plan for the 2050 General Plan. Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion.

Upon tabulation of the votes, it showed:

AYES: Frechette, Neal, Sarkissian, Thomas, Williams

NAYES: Garcia Rodriguez

ABSENT: Skogebo

4. Items from citizens present.

Marilyn Crosby, President of Lehi Community Association, spoke about the importance of character in the neighborhoods in Mesa. Asked the committee to think about what attainable housing is and define it. She stated that it's significant that no one is surprised by the general themes of the City and this suggests that we know what needs to be done to improve Mesa. She also complimented the City Staff on the job they have done so far.

5. Adjournment.

Without objection, the General Plan Advisory Committee adjourned at 5:24 pm.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the General Plan Advisory Committee meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 23rd day of October 2023. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.



 JEFF ROBBINS, SENIOR
 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT MANAGER