



General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)

Minutes

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

Date: March 25th, 2024 Time: 4:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ron Williams, Chair
Scott Thomas, Vice-Chair
Ivonne Garcia Rodriguez
Jessica Sarkissian
Jocelyn Skogebo

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Megan Neal

STAFF PRESENT:

Jeff Robbins
Rachel Nettles
Ashley Scott

GUESTS:

1. **Call meeting to order.**

Chairperson Williams called the meeting to order at 4:33 pm.

2. **Approval of minutes from the December 11th, 2023 General Plan Advisory Committee meeting.**

Chair Williams called for the approval of minutes from the December 11, 2023, meeting. Vice-Chair Thomas motioned, and Committee member Skogebo seconded the motion. Upon tabulation of the votes, it showed:

AYES: Thomas, Williams, Garcia Rodriguez, Skogebo

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Sarkissian, Neal

3. **Hear a presentation, discuss, and take committee recommendations regarding public feedback on the draft 2050 General Plan.**

Mr. Robbins welcomed the committee to the meeting and introduced himself and the Assistant Planning Director, Rachel Nettles. He spoke about the process with the comments and public feedback from the 2050 General Plan draft.

Ms. Nettles stated they took all the comments tracked them and then categorize comments based on the topic the comment addressed. Some of the comments were relevant to the General Plan and easy to place and other comments were not relevant to the General Plan and were simply noted, or when possible, forwarded to other departments. Majority of the comments came from the Land Chapter since the Growth Strategy Map and Place Type Map was in this section.

Ms. Nettles summarized the key theme of the public feedback. The People Chapter comments mentioned the appreciation of and desire of more neighborhoods. The community wanted to protect the character of the neighborhoods. The History, Arts and Culture Chapter had a lot of public support for investment in arts and culture. For Public Safety the public comments mentioned concern of increased crime and wanted to see the police and park ranger presence be increased throughout the City. Public feedback mentioned the addressing homelessness issue in the City as well.

Committee member Garcia Rodriguez asked if public comments referenced homelessness and a connection to crime. Ms. Nettles stated that it was a little of both and there was a split with a connotation that homelessness was connected to crime. Also, the public comments said that Public Safety needed to continue working with the homelessness since Public Safety already work so closely with the homeless program.

Committee member Garcia Rodriguez asked if it would be possible to get data from the Police Department to see how many crimes are connected to homelessness in the City. Ms. Nettles stated that staff could check in with the Police Department to see if they could get the information however they are unaware if the Police Department tracks that data.

Chair Williams stated that staff will work with Committee member Garcia Rodriguez to get her the information and Chair Williams mentioned that he has work with the police before. The City actually has Police Representatives too.

Ms. Nettles continued to mention the key theme comments from the General Plan chapters. She stated that were quite a few comments that mentioned less warehouses and data centers and a desire from residents to improve the aesthetic especially in Southeast Mesa.

Ms. Nettles mentioned the public comments from the Circulation and Mobility Section where citizens asked for enhanced bike facilities, especially along the canals. There were comments that supported and disapproved the light rail since this a contentious topic in the City. The Existing Conditions public comments were too specific to be addressed in the General Plan.

Ms. Nettles mentioned the Housing Section public feedback was that the City needs more affordable housing. Also, citizens do not want to see density in all neighborhoods. Chair Williams asked if any language was used in the General Plan that used attainable housing instead of

affordable housing. Staff stated that attainable housing was the term that was written in the General Plan and was the most appropriate term since it was not about the Area Median Income (AMI). The housing section in the General Plan is focused on how to make housing available for everyone. Even though the General Plan used the term attainable housing the public comments were focused on affordable housing.

Mr. Robbins stated that the Balanced Housing Plan will be presented to the City Council and the City used the term attainable housing as well.

Committee member Garcia Rodriguez asked what the difference between affordable housing and attainable housing. Ms. Nettles stated attainable housing is a broad definition that states everyone at all income levels can have the opportunity to get into a house. Since it is an issue ever income earner is having issues getting into the housing market at the moment.

Then Committee member Garcia Rodriguez stated that maybe the City is sending the wrong message with housing and using the incorrect terminology when referring to the residents. She stated that it is hard to understand the General Plan when you are not a government worker and staff has mentioned that before in the past. She encouraged local government to look at the terminology for housing and urged them use common sense with this. She also stated when affordable housing is presented it is with apartment complexes.

Committee member Garcia Rodriguez spoke about the development issue of Mckellips and Gilbert Road on the West side. Vice Chair confirms the development project, and he mentioned it is a small lot that touches a historic neighborhood.

Committee member Garcia Rodriguez stated terminology is the issue since the residents understand one definition while the local government has a different understanding therefore everyone gets confused. Ms. Nettles stated this is why the staff use attainable housing instead of affordable housing since it ensures that everyone with all incomes has the ability to choose different household types and options.

Committee member Sarkissian said the City has used the correct terminology since affordable housing is nationally recognized by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and attainable housing is for people who do not qualify for HUD services and can't afford a house either. She also mentioned that affordable or attainable housing does not mean apartments. The purpose of affordable housing and attainable housing has to deal with the price point of the and demographics.

Committee member Sarkissian said the 2050 General Plan used the correct terminology with attainable housing. However, at the City Council meeting the citizens used the term affordable housing. Residents frequently inquire about housing projects and if the project be affordable

housing or low-income HUD projects. The citizens do not generally have any concerns about attainable housing. The citizens are only concerned about affordable housing since the perspective behind it is low investment or section 8 even though there is no validity behind this.

Committee member Sarkissian said that affordable housing standards are for extremely low income for someone to qualify and now there is a new category called attainable housing where the individual is employed with a regular income, or it can be a two-person income that is typically a low income such as a teacher or police officer, but they still can't afford housing. So, they would not qualify for the HUD assistance and now the term is attainable housing. She clarified that she doesn't want people to associate affordable housing or attainable housing with apartments.

Committee member Garcia Rodriguez stated that they can agree to disagree with their ideas and have different opinions about housing.

4. **Hear a summary and discuss the schedule for adaptation of the General Plan.**

Ms. Nettles mentioned the summary changes that were made to the General Plan. The General Plan Draft had minor edits such as (the, and, commas) were changed throughout the document. Ms. Nettles stated most of the changes happened in the Land chapter since most of the comments came from that section of the General Plan. The citizens left the most comments and public feedback on the Placetype and Growth Strategy Map.

Staff also made a change to the Growth Strategy Map which previously had 4 categories of strategies which were (conserve, sustain, enhance, and grow). Through the process, staff found that it was often difficult to see the difference between enhance and grow strategies and there was confusion. Staff decided to combine the strategies and called them "Evolve".

Staff also decided to incorporate descriptions of the growth strategies within the placetypes to help explain what those look like for the various place types of rural, residential, and etc. Public feedback for the General Plan in the Downtown Mesa people asked for more density. Staff worked with Downtown Transformation about the appropriate places for more density in Downtown Mesa. Finally, one of the big changes made in the General Plan is the Consistency Section of the plan. There used to be a few tables in the Consistency Section and staff found that this was confusing. Staff took the tables out and then added descriptions so people could understand the consistency in the General Plan.

Ms. Nettles showed the updated Growth Strategy Map on the screen and explained that the evolve areas are in the Downtown Mesa, redevelopment areas, Main Street, and the Airport area. Committee member Sarkissian asked about the difference between conserve and sustain on the Growth Strategy Map. Ms. Nettles said the difference is that in the conserve areas, you wouldn't

see any change besides a home renovation compared to a sustain would stay the same but there might be continued growth with infill and more density in the deemed areas.

Mr. Robbins stated the historic districts are in the conserve area to put an extra layer and protect them. Ms. Nettles displayed the Placetype Map and said they received a lot of public comments about the west Mesa area. There was concern from residents about multifamily coming into established neighborhoods in this area, so Staff changed some areas to traditional residential which allows for limited multi-family on the major arterials.

Committee member Sarkissian asked if the Regional Employment Center placetype would still allow an industrial center within the area. Ms. Nettles stated that it allows warehouse and storage as a secondary in those areas since the community voiced that did not want industrial north of the State Route 24.

Mr. Robbins spoke about the schedule for the General Plan Advisory Committee. He stated that he is working with the Planning and Zoning Committee Board to give the same presentation this Wednesday that the General Plan Advisory Committee just heard. Then on Monday, April 15th, the General Plan Advisory Committee Board has a meeting at 4:30 pm and this presentation will be short. Staff will be looking for the committee to take action and recommend whether or not the General Plan should go to the City Council for approval. Mr. Robbins stated that April 4th is the last day that Staff can post the General Plan before the hearings.

Mr. Robbins stated that Staff will provide a General Plan that illustrates the edits changed in the plan so the committee can see the difference between the versions. So, the committee can have the edited General Plan two weeks before the meeting and they have a chance to read through it. Ms. Nettles mentioned that staff used pink text to indicate the changes that have been made to the plan but won't show them what has been removed.

Committee Sarkissian stated that she liked the limited implementation plan that staff did on the General Plan. It gives the City a better direction and gives focus on what to do so staff aren't overwhelmed. Also, Chair Williams stated that he is happy with the City Council participation and feedback in the General Plan.

Chair Williams asked if the City Council shaped the feedback of the strategies being combined or it was it just the public feedback and comments. Ms. Nettles stated that it was a mix of both the City Council feedback and public comments.

Committee member Garcia Rodriguez stated that she wanted to know if the committee could leave a suggestion for the Transportation Department on the issue of undocumented immigrants driving without a driver license. She requested to make this suggestion to Transportation because she wanted people to be safe and really make a change. She asked to put her request on record

in the General Plan so that the streets are safe. Ms. Nettles stated that in the General Plan does address safety and mobility. Ms. Nettles asked Committee member Garcia Rodriguez for clarification on her request. Committee member Garcia Rodriguez stated her comments were intended to apply broadly to motor safety to keep the safety for everyone in the City.

Mr. Robbins stated that providing a driver license is a state function and not a City function. Also, enforcement would be Mesa Police Department. He mentioned that he believed the standard practice when an individual get stops by the police that everyone is asked for their car registration and driver license, but this might be too specific for the General Plan. However, Mr. Robbins stated he can reach out to the Police Department to ask about if law enforcement has an education program to help people get a driver license. Committee member Garcia Rodriguez stated that it is not possible for an illegal immigrant to obtain a driver license legally in Arizona however in other states such as Nevada, New Mexico, California, and Oregon it is possible for an undocumented person to obtain a driver license. She said that she believed there should be something in the General Plan for this since it is continuing and increasing issue in the community. She mentioned that she wants the people to be protected especially those who pay taxes and their insurance for their vehicle.

5. **Presentation of recognitions to the General Plan Advisory Committee for terms of service.**

Mr. Robbins said he appreciates the committee for all their hard work, attending all the meetings, and understands that it is a sacrifice to dedicate time from their busy lives to this committee. He presented a recognition as a thank-you to the committee. The recognition displayed the committee member's name, time of their service, and the City logo.

Mr. Robbins announced that this meeting was Chair Williams last meeting since he has to resign since he is running for City Council in Mesa and Vice Chair Scott will lead the next meeting. Also, Sarah Frechette had to resign from the committee as well. Chair Williams said it has been an honor from the day Mayor Giles reached out to him and offered him the opportunity to serve and stated it has been great getting to know everyone and thanked everyone.

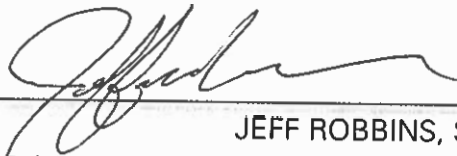
6. **Items from citizens present.**

No citizens present

7. **Adjournment.**

Without objection, the General Plan Advisory Committee adjourned at 5:30 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 25th day of March 2024. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.



JEFF ROBBINS, SENIOR
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT MANAGER