

City of Mesa
Downtown Vision Ad-Hoc Committee

57 E. 1st Street
Lower Level Council Chambers
Mesa, AZ 85201

Tuesday, October 28, 2014
4:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jo Wilson, Chair
Debby Elliott
Marco Meraz
Lorenzo Perez
Steve Chucri
Rich Marchant

STAFF PRESENT

Natalie Lewis
Jim Smith
Sara Sorensen
Angelica Guevara
Gail Vangen

ABSENT

Charles Huellmantel

MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The Downtown Vision Ad-Hoc Committee meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chair Jo Wilson.

2. Review and approve minutes from the October 14, 2014 Committee Meeting

Chair Wilson asked for a motion to approve the October 14, 2014 Meeting Minutes of the Downtown Vision Ad-Hoc Committee. Committee Member Steve Chucri motioned to approve the Minutes as written. Committee Member Debby Elliot seconded and the motion unanimously passed.

Chair Wilson explained there would be three presentations provided to help assimilate the vision of the Committee: Benedictine University, Mesa Chamber of Commerce, and Visit Mesa.

3. Hear a presentation by and discuss feedback from Benedictine University of Mesa

Mr. Charles Gregory, Executive Vice President of Benedictine University, discussed why Benedictine was initially attracted to downtown Mesa and how important “community” is to the University. He outlined and compared the size and demographics of the Lisle and Mesa campuses and said Benedictine expects continued and successful growth at the Mesa campus. Mr. Gregory explained the importance of retaining students and what amenities the downtown area and the University required in order to successfully compete with campuses nationwide. Key visions he has for the University and the downtown area include:

- Residence Halls, Entertainment, Recreational Sports, Restaurants, Movie Theaters
- Additional Benedictine buildings
- A build-out of 225 E. Main Street on the top of the building as a place for entertainment, capitalizing on the view, which he is currently fundraising for.
- Student volunteer and involvement opportunities within the City

Mr. Gregory envisions a downtown where due to the activities, restaurants, and culture, people use the Light Rail to *come* downtown rather than leave. Committee Member Chucri asked Mr. Gregory what he felt the City was doing “right”. Mr. Gregory responded that the City continues to pursue its central common vision of maintaining the right “community” culture. Chair Wilson called for questions, and there were none.

4. Hear a presentation by and discuss feedback from the Mesa Chamber of Commerce

Sally Harrison, Mesa Chamber of Commerce President, discussed the Chamber's purpose, role, current membership, initiatives they have undertaken to expand their membership, and outreaches through surveys. She talked about her recent Fireball Run trip during which she visited eight cities in eleven days. She highlighted Frisco, Texas and its 5/8-scale miniature city attraction named Safety Town, an attraction for children with a theme of police and fire safety. Ms. Harrison explained why she believes an attraction such as Safety Town would benefit the downtown area by attracting families and providing a reason to come downtown and stay for the day. She discussed how Safety Town was admission-free and run by volunteers. The Chamber envisions the downtown being "active." Committee Member Meraz stated that it sounded like a great element for a family campaign. Committee Member Marchant commented that there is a need for something to really draw people to the downtown and also to reconnect local residents to the downtown. Chair Wilson asked what the mood of the existing businesses that have hung on during the Light Rail construction is. Ms. Harrison stated that they are excited and optimistic about the possibility of new businesses. When asked what word best describes her vision for downtown, Ms. Harrison said "active." Chair Wilson called for questions, and there were none.

5. Hear a presentation by and discuss feedback from Visit Mesa

Mr. Marc Garcia, Visit Mesa President & CEO, and Kimberly Freer, Visit Mesa Vice President of Sales & Marketing, presented a PowerPoint presentation and discussed their vision of downtown Mesa with the goal of "vibrancy" which included:

- A shuttle service from area hotels to downtown from 10am to 10pm or later
- A visual connection to the Mesa Arts Center through the use of shade sails, similar to those on the MAC, that would replace the existing overhang in front of Main Street businesses – creating a visual downtown identity
- A downtown "water feature"
- Social media engagement by local businesses, aided by the addition of a new Visit Mesa phone application
- A street-side art "haven"; attracting artists from all over the country
- Unique products sold by local businesses – the kind that are hard to find on the internet
- Expanding the convention center to 75,000 – 100,000sf with a 10,000sf ballroom

Chair Wilson asked whether Site 17 would be suitable to build a new convention center. Mr. Garcia stated that he believed it would create consistent visitor activity for 9-10 months. Chair Wilson asked Mr. Garcia to describe in a word or phrase what his vision of downtown Mesa is in 10 years. Ms. Freer responded, "Energized, enlightened." Mr. Garcia, "Limitless." Chair Wilson requested a copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

6. Review an updated downtown Mesa map(s) and provide direction to staff related to the Downtown Mesa boundary to be used for the Committee's work

Natalie Lewis suggested that, given the time, the topic of maps could be postponed until the next meeting. Chair Wilson stated that since the Committee didn't know what it wanted right now in terms of boundaries, they begin with the premise of the original square mile and go from there. Mr. Meraz agreed. The remaining members indicated agreement.

7. Confirm next meeting date: November 18, 2014, 4 p.m.

Discussion took place on presentations and committee member availability. Natalie Lewis stated that she would canvass the members by email to see if there is a better alternative date.

Discuss and provide direction on the primary agenda items next meeting:

- a. Presentation and discussion by Mesa Economic Development

Chair Wilson discussed Economic Development providing a presentation at the next meeting and the Chamber's offer to do a survey of downtown businesses as discussed during Ms. Harrison's presentation. Chair Wilson stated she was in favor of the survey and the Committee agreed. Ms. Harrison said she would develop the survey and work with the Committee on the questions and format.

8. Items from citizens present

Chair Wilson called for items from citizens present. Mesa resident Augie Gastelum stood and stated that he may be the only person present who actually lives in the downtown square mile. He described the restaurants he frequents and that Main Street was better than a mall. He felt that in order to accomplish the vibrancy and growth being discussed, there should be a focus on additional residential units – a part of the City's strategic initiative, 1500 new units. In order to keep businesses open and for longer hours, more housing units are needed. Chair Wilson asked for any other citizen comments. None responded.

9. Adjourn meeting

Chair Wilson called for a motion to adjourn. Committee Member Marco Meraz made a motion to adjourn. Committee Member Steve Chucri seconded and the motion unanimously passed. The meeting adjourned at 5:26 p.m.