



COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

City of Mesa
Downtown Vision Committee
57 E. 1st Street
Lower Level Council Chambers
Mesa, AZ 85201

Date: January 27, 2015 **Time:** 3:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Steve Chucri

STAFF PRESENT

Natalie Lewis
Sara Sorensen
Jeff McVay
Jim Smith

GUESTS

Cindy Ornstein, Arts and Culture Director
Jodi Sorrell, Transit Services Director

1. Call To Order

Chair Jo Wilson called the January 27, 2015 meeting of the Downtown Vision Committee to order at 3:02 P.M.

2. Approval of Minutes from the December 9, 2014 and December 16, 2014 Meetings

Chair Jo Wilson called for a motion to approve the minutes from the meetings held on December 9, 2014 and December 16, 2014.

Debby Elliott noted a correction needed on the December 9th Minutes, Agenda Item 4. Regarding the Consolari Project, section i) Cost stated as \$250,000 needs to be corrected to "\$250 million as compared with \$500-\$650 million in Phoenix or Scottsdale."

MOTION: Debby Elliott made a motion to approve the minutes, as amended

SECOND: Rich Marchant seconded

DECISION: Passed unanimously

3. Presentation - Arts, Culture and Innovation Ideas in and for Downtown Mesa

Cindy Ornstein, Director, Department of Arts and Culture and Director of Mesa Arts Center stated the Department's slogan is "Inspiring Creativity and Discovery" and they are envisioning Downtown Mesa as a nationally acclaimed destination known for its innovations and quality in arts and culture. Its mission is to strengthen the creative, social and economic fabric of our community through inspiring and transformational cultural experiences.

They have been working hard to respond to the needs & opportunities of the community and to strengthen the urban center with outdoor activities and events:

- The i.d.e.a. Museum (previously the Arizona Museum for Youth) has had enormous attendance increases from the prior year with a 50 percent increase in participation.
- The Arizona Museum of Natural History has experienced great growth: the Art and Artifacts of the Early Americas has had major gifts and they have opened Cultures of the Ancient Americas.
- Mesa Arts Center is busy all the time offering programs to fulfill the needs of our community for enrichment and quality of life.
- Jazz from A to Z uses music to teach American history and helps Jazz ensembles develop to participate in national competitions.
- Studio Classes: We offer over almost 1,000 studio classes each year with over 5,000 participants.
- Performing Live has grown to 50 to 70 shows a year serving 65,000 people.
- Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum is expanding its educational programs
- Creative Aging brings programs to senior facilities and residence locations as well as on campus
- Literacy through the Arts is using the arts to teach literacy, supporting the 3rd grade literacy requirement
- Classical Music Inside Out is a new program this year that breaks down barriers for people to enjoy and understand classical music
- Spark! Festival of Creativity making a mark for mesa demonstrating the creativity of artists as well as the creativity within all of us
- Dia de Los Muertos Festival: The largest this past year with 16,000 in attendance. Working with MAHC to host the Latino Town Hall at the same time and partnering with the Mexican Consulate
- FreeFall Fridays this past fall 10 weeks of Friday night free concerts

There have been many collaborations to activate Downtown. Mesa Up @ Nite is one of the partnerships with NEDCO (Neighborhood Economic Development Corporation) to have late night Downtown events hoping to get merchants to stay open later during event nights. We are looking to partner with organizations across the valley to be seen as part of a network of cultural activities and events. This season we teamed up with the Tempe Arts Festival and the Phoenix Festival of the Arts for a shared Light Rail wrap on the connector cars. Some of our collaborators include Southwest Shakespeare Company, Arizona State University, Benedictine University, Epic Dance, Phonetic Spit, Downtown Mesa Association, and The Store--a new boutique and artist cooperative gallery.

Upcoming events and projects include the Southwest Maker Fest, the 2nd annual event on March 28. Mesa Arts Center projects include a new shade sculpture designed by internationally known architect Cecil Balmond to create a new gathering place with seating. We are working with Daily Tous Les Jours of Montreal on an interactive sound sculpture to be installed in March for Spark to get public feedback, and plan to build and install by the end of this year. We are growing the Under 40 audiences with partner Phonetic Spit poetry slams and Epic Dance workshops and performances. A program, known as Creative Catalysts, received a \$100,000 grant from Flinn Foundation for a core team of Under 40s to create engaging programs.

Looking ahead we are working on MAC strategic planning. In the fall we will be launching the MAC 10th Anniversary Celebration with season long events and activities. We are working with Artspace Development to develop the block and a half west of the Arts Center as an arts and culture district. The Arizona Museum of Natural History will install a dinosaur on its façade breaking out of the building, as well as the Early America's Gallery. They will also be installing a new Dinosaur Mountain. The i.d.e.a. Museum will continue to build its audience and add improvements.

My vision for Downtown Mesa:

- Perceive it as a welcoming and authentic sense of place, where fun and unusual experiences are plentiful
- Environment is inviting and vibrant visual aesthetic
- Community members of all ages enjoy multiple gathering places, cultural venues.
- Creativity and art infuse the environment and event calendar.
- The vibe and activities form a place where innovation is attracted and flourishes.
- Opportunities for active engagement and increased civic and volunteer engagement.
- Strong partnerships create linkages and opportunities with people and organizations, especially those connected by the Light Rail.

Questions and Comments from Committee:

Chair Jo Wilson stated Cindy you almost wrote our vision for Downtown! She asked if you could do one thing right now to jump start this what would it be? Cindy stated that interactive works of art in Downtown will get people involved and create an environment that is a place to come and hang out even when there is not a festival or event going on. Also, restaurants and nightlife are critical components. We have dark spots along Main with no activation to the public. It is important that we increase activation enough that make it interesting to walk along Main. In regards to the aesthetics in Downtown, Cindy would like to infuse more color and art that engages you even when not taking part in a larger activity.

Committee Member Huellmantel asked what do you think Downtown is geographically now and what will it be in 10 years? Ms. Ornstein responded she typically that Downtown is the historic square mile, although most people would define it as Main Street and First Avenue to First Street. A phased approach would focus efforts first on the two block stretch from First Street to First Avenue and Country Club to Mesa Drive, then naturally expand from there. The large area formerly known as Site 17 also provides a development opportunity. Committee Member Huellmantel also asked how will the stations that are near downtown intertwine with Downtown over time? Ms. Ornstein noted with Light Rail stations at Mesa Drive and Alma

School, the development will happen, but it will not be overnight. We want to see beatification of the stretches around Mesa Drive and beyond to Alma School. The Light Rail would bring in new activity that will provide development opportunities.

Committee Member Huellmantel mentioned the building at city hall, the one-story outcropping and asked how would you activate that building? Ms. Ornstein stated an outdoor patio and bar going into the evenings with a night club would serve as a link between the Arts Center and Downtown. Another design for the plaza had an open archway through which to enter the plaza and expanded to create public space and community rooms.

Committee Member Elliott clarified the fact that it is hard to plan festivals and activities every day; it cannot be done. It is important for Downtown to have spaces where people just want to come and meet friends and it needs to be inviting to non-rail riders as well. Ms. Ornstein noted we don't have to wait for a giant plaza, we can create all kinds of smaller gathering places. For example, the Flash Park Fridays events have create mini parks to bring/gather people. Also 2nd Friday Night Out at the lot west of Robson brings 200-300 people with kids offering a movie, popcorn and actually created a living room on the sidewalk. People stay a long time when they have a comfortable environment to be in with friends or family.

Committee Member Lorenzo Perez asked if there is a concentration in Downtown Mesa of counterculture artist conglomerations like we see in Phoenix. Ms. Ornstein replied that things are bubbling up with events such as the one last Friday at Mesa Urban Garden--there was an art show with music. Also 2nd Friday Night Out has its own personality where young people come out in costume and we see zombies walking around. Lulubell Toy Bodega has a gallery with a great number of artists associated with it. Gotham City Comics & Coffee has comic book artists that come out and there are a couple of new gallery spaces. Lorenzo noted there were no concentration of artists' working galleries or studios spaces where artists are living and working. Ms. Ornstein stated not yet, although we hope Artspace would be a catalyst. Also the First Avenue, Second Ave corridor has a lot of affordable bungalows and housing. Ms. Ornstein noted that despite being a historic neighborhood, the north side also has affordable housing perfect for first time buyers.

4. Presentation on Outreach Approach – Local Groups and Agencies (Agenda order changed)

Chair Jo Wilson stated that we are down to one more presentation after today. Now we are moving outward and listening to constituents and various groups. We have already attended several functions:

- a. RAIL (Retail, Arts, Innovation and Livability). Met with a small group of RAIL members to hear from them as individuals as to what they saw as their vision, what is working and what is missing.
- b. DMA (Downtown Mesa Association). Attended the DMA Board presentation on the Downtown Merchants Association to get feedback from the Board.
- c. West Mesa CDC (West Mesa Community Development Corporation). Although they are removed from square mile downtown, they are still very much a part of downtown dealing with west side and their vision

- d. Mayor's Youth Group. Natalie and Debby will attend tonight to hear their visions of Downtown.

Having been through these presentations and now visiting the groups, the messages are fairly consistent; however each group has its focus. Ms. Ornstein summarized it quite well in her vision of Downtown and that vibrancy is what everyone is looking for. Now we are looking to get feedback from a variety of groups and that's what our activity will be for the next couple of months.

5. Timeline of Community and Committee Meetings through May 2015:

Committee Meetings:

February 24, 2015 (Tuesday) 3:00-4:30 P.M., Lower Council Chambers, 57 E. 1st Street. Mesa Preservation Foundation presentation, Review DRAFT Community Input Dashboard, Sharing perspectives and starting to identify common themes

March 10, 2015 (Tuesday) 3:00-5:00 P.M., Visit Mesa, 120 N. Center Street. Review of FINAL Community Input Dashboard, Electronic Brainstorming exercise

March 24, 2015 (Tuesday) 3:00-4:30 P.M., Lower Council Chambers, 57 E. 1st Street. Review Electronic Brainstorming results, Draft outline for vision document/deliverable

April 14, 2015 (Tuesday) 3:00-4:30 P.M., Visit Mesa, 120 N. Center Street. Review Community feedback and finalize report and recommendations

April 28, 2015 (Tuesday) 3:00-4:30 P.M., Lower Council Chambers, 57 E. 1st Street. Only if needed

May 7, 2015 (Thursday) 7:30 A.M., Lower Council Chambers, 57 E. 1st Street Council Study Session

Community Outreach Meetings:

Existing Groups:

February 11, 2015 (Wednesday) 9:00 A.M. Queens Pizzeria, 125 West Main Street. Joint Downtown Merchants/Restaurants/Property Owners Committee. (DElliott)

February 12, 2015 (Thursday) 6:00 P.M., Queens Pizzeria, 125 West Main Street. RAIL #2 meeting. (LPerez and CHuellmantel, SSorensen)

February 18, 2015 (Wednesday) 7:00 A.M., Alston House, 453 N. Pima Street. Mesa Association of Hispanic Citizens. (MMeraz, JWilson--possible)

Targeted Audiences:

February 3, 2015 (Tuesday) 6:00 P.M., DMA Offices, 100 N. Center Street.
Under 40, Combination MAC Creative Catalysts and Southwest Maker Fest. (DElliott)

February 10, 2015 (Tuesday) 5:30-6:30 P.M., Holy Temple Church of God, 400 N. Pima.
Washington Escobedo

February 2 (Monday), **4** (Wednesday), **9** (Monday) **OR 25** (Wednesday) 10:00-11:00
A.M., Eisenhower Elementary, 848 North Mesa Drive. Latino Families (MMeraz is
reviewing his calendar and will advise)

February 10 (Tuesday) **OR February 12** (Thursday) 10:30-11:30, Lincoln Elementary,
930 S. Sirrine. Latino Families (MMeraz is reviewing his calendar and will advise)

February 19 (Thursday) 5:30-6:30 P.M. First Presbyterian Church 161 N. Mesa Dr.
Spanish-speaking individual is needed, if possible.

Downtown Students: February date, time and location to be determined to meet with
Downtown Students from Benedictine, NAU and MCC. (JWilson)

Broader Community Meetings:

February 26, 2015 (Thursday) 5:30-7:30 P.M., Community Open House, Benedictine
University, 225 E. Main Street.

April 15 (Wednesday) **OR April 16** (Thursday) – Final Open House OR web-based link
distributed to share results and gain final feedback on committee's recommendations prior
to taking to Council.

Community Open House:

Jeff McVay provided his input on some of the community outreach activities done recently and
how the Open House could be tailored to work for this Committee. The idea is to have an
open house with different stations, each having a specific goal to accomplish.

Station Ideas for Open House:

- Provide background data on downtown demographics, history, and timeline of city
historical events showing what elements in history drew the most attention.
- Light Rail--help people understand what Light Rail is going to mean for us, showing
Light Rail alignment by year. Information about transit-oriented development.
- Driving questions, each on a poster board, for people to provide their answers.
- Downtown-related initiatives underway or being discussed. Examples: City Center
Design, Downtown Restaurants, 2015 DT Holiday ideas, 10th Anniversary of Mesa Arts
Center.
- The last station would be where the Committee itself would interact with the public,
having 4 or 5 tables set up with laptops. The idea would be to collect feedback
electronically, if possible.

Questions and Comments from Committee:

Committee Member Elliott asked how long would the process take—one public meeting with all those speakers and stations, what is the timeline? Mr. McVay noted that efficiency is very important and that start to finish would be no more than 1.5-2 hours. Committee Member Elliott also asked would these different groups be at tables just repeating their story over and over. Mr. McVay said no, there would be stand up elements/boards describing their activity and people can interact freely. Then at the tables there would be an opportunity to go more in depth. Natalie Lewis added that people can use the Open House as they want, only visiting the stations that interest them. The Committee would be there for the entire 2 hours. Ms. Lewis asked if the Committee is in agreement on the Open House idea, what night would be better for everyone. Benedictine has offered to host the event for us.

After discussion, it was decided to hold the Open House on Thursday, February 26, 2015 from 5:30 to 7:30 P.M. Committee member Lorenzo Perez mentioned he may not be able to attend.

6. City Transit Director Presentation – Light Rail

Jodi Sorrell, Transit Director, presented information on Light Rail ridership demographics, rider surveys and community comments.

- When Light Rail opened 2008 we had a mile. The Sycamore station carries about 10 percent of the average. Valley Metro carries 45,000 or 47,000 average weekday riders so we are carrying about 4,500 to 4,700 people through the Sycamore Light Rail station today.
- 802 Spot Park and Ride – majority are walking or use bus connection to get to Light Rail.
- Currently three miles under construction to open on November 15, 2015.
- Planning two mile extension to Gilbert Road, hope to award contract later this year to open by 2019.

Demographics:

- Valley Metro does an origin destination study every 3 years, one currently underway for 2015.
- In 2007 it was strictly busses.
- In 2011 numbers increased for those making over \$50,000 annually.
- In 2007, transit users were bus riders who were transit dependent, did not own a car.
- The number of households having a car available after Light Rail increased, number of students riding Light Rail increased, age demographic under 25 year old increased.
- 50/50 split between male and female riders.
- Age range increased for the under 54 and under 34, which reaches the under 40 target
- Most riders fall in Caucasian or Hispanic Latino categories.
- Most riders are employed whereas in the 2007 study most had a part-time job.
- Tempe number one destination, followed by Phoenix.
- Most are students going to ASU, others take Light Rail for entertainment

Ms. Sorrell stated Mesa has great bones. If you add Light Rail it will develop, not immediately, but with the right direction it can evolve into something special.

Questions and comments from Committee:

Chair Jo Wilson mentioned as we visited with these last three groups it is evident that Mesa has great bones. Light Rail is always mentioned in these presentations. One of the challenges is not leading to the decision that Light Rail is the answer because it is not the answer, it is a tool.

Committee Member Rich Marchant noted that for anything to work it has to be commercially viable. The Light Rail is a component, but will not make Downtown viable for the businesses. We have to focus on all other responsibilities to get people in.

Committee Member Charles Huellmantel asked whether the snapshot of what is happening today is truly reflective of what will happen in 10 years. Tempe is where most of the class A office space is moving. Younger people will have a more dominant place in the economy and they have significantly different values. Top employers in Arizona are moving to Tempe because that's where their employee base wants to be. People in their 20s and 30s now will look at things entirely differently.

Committee Member Huellmantel also asked Ms. Sorrell if she envisioned any other rail in Downtown Mesa. Ms. Sorrell would like to see Tempe building streetcar and extending it down Rio Salado to Dobson and then up Dobson to connect and create a U in that area. She would like to see more neighborhood circulators feeding into the Downtown areas. ADOT's Passenger Rail Corridor Study is up for review shortly. It has an alignment connecting into Downtown, providing different transit options to move people in and around Downtown. Charles noted if passenger rail comes to the Valley it is a very important opportunity for Mesa.

Committee Member Elliott noted once Downtown Rail goes to Mesa Drive, the number of people that utilize the bus system will increase. People need a way to get from their homes to the Light Rail. It was noted that while Light Rail is great, it would not exist without the strong bus backbone. We would not get Federal funding to build Light Rail unless we are feeding the ridership. If Mesa wants to continue east of Gilbert Road, we need a strong bus network in order to get there.

Committee Member Lorenzo Perez asked if there were any thoughts to bicycle as well as the bike share program which is kicking off in central Phoenix. Natalie Lewis was recognized as the bike share expert. Ms. Lewis stated Mesa is continuing to pursue a regional approach with the "GRID" bike share system that was introduced in Phoenix. The goal is that Mesa's bike share could be introduced in close alignment with the opening of light rail, or fall/winter 2015.

Committee Member Elliot asked does Light Rail take into account large entertainment events and introduce more trains. Ms. Sorrell stated they have an agreement with US Airways that your event ticket is your pass on Light Rail. They work to identify the bigger events and add 3-car trains for events and ASU games.

7. Discussion, Direction to Staff, Committee Assignments: Regarding: a. Parking and way finding; b. Unique and creative development opportunities; c. Restaurant/Bar opportunities;

d. Categories for discussion at future meetings.

This agenda item was tabled to the February 24, 2015 meeting.

8. Confirm Next Committee Meeting Date: February 24, 2015, 3:00 P.M.

Confirmed.

9. Primary Agenda Items next meeting

- a. Mesa Preservation Foundation presentation
- b. March 10th "Electronic Brainstorming Session"

10. Items from Citizens Present

There were no items from citizens.

11. Adjournment

Chair Jo Wilson called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 4:32 P.M.

Submitted By:

Jo Wilson, Chair

(Prepared by Dana Desing-Transcription Express)