

MEETING MINUTES

City of Mesa Downtown Vision Ad-Hoc Committee Retreat Meeting

Mesa Arts Center—3rd Floor South Conference Room
1 E Main St, Mesa, AZ 85201

Date: June 9, 2015 Time: 3:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

STAFF PRESENT

Natalie Lewis
Sara Sorensen
Jeff McVay

GUESTS PRESENT

Mayor John Giles
Councilmember Chris Glover
Jim Smith, City Attorney's office
Ian Linssen, Mayor's Office
David Crummey, Citizen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Rich Marchant
Steve Chucri

1. Call To Order

Chair Jo Wilson called the June 9, 2015 meeting of the Downtown Vision Ad-Hoc Committee to order at 3:10 P.M.

2. Comments from Mayor John Giles and Councilmember Chris Glover

Councilmember Glover met last week with the Mayor, Chair Wilson and Natalie Lewis. He recognized that the task assigned to this Committee was not an easy one. The strategies that this Committee has outlined for downtown gives us the ability to prioritize. With the Light Rail we have many opportunities we can take advantage of to make sure we as a community do what is right to move downtown Mesa forward and take it to the next level. Your proposal defines what our priorities are for downtown. This will allow us to make downtown Mesa the place to be in the Valley. Councilmember Glover thanked the Committee for all they have done.

Mayor Giles expressed his appreciation to the Committee and stated he is thrilled with the work product. He thanked Lorenzo Perez for his wordsmithing as it echoed the Mayor's feelings about downtown. He appreciated that the proposal is on one sheet of paper, it is concise and gives us some very tangible goals to work towards. The Mayor noted these are great guiding principles we can boil down into a to do list, which also reflect Central Main Plan recommendations.

Councilmember Glover noted safety and security were big issues. That is being addressed with Mesa PD to have the bike patrol. Another recommendation from this Committee that really helps is the Form-Based Code and pushing that for developers who want to come into downtown Mesa. The Form-Based Code allows the flexibility to design a building that will fit into the neighborhood, be aesthetically pleasing and bring downtown to the next level. He suggested that the Committee recommend that we

push for Form-Based Code in the downtown square mile. Chair Wilson advised that the Committee had changed the wording to make that point stronger and added language concerning legal options.

Charles Huellmantel had a great experience working with the City (Jeff McVay in particular) on Encore and felt the Form-Based Code made it noticeably better both for the residents and non-residents. The streetscape and plaza will start setting the cultural tone. His fear is that not everyone will utilize Form-Based Code and the lowest common denominator that comes in will destroy that culture. Switching to Form-Based Code will force everyone to go through that process. Mayor Giles stated property owners like having the flexibility. The building code sets the minimum, not what we aspire to. His concern is how hard of a push back we will get if Form-Based Code is a requirement instead of being optional. Charles Huellmantel recognized that there may be some fear about forcing people through a different process, however in the downtown area every site is critical. Mesa has great bones downtown with shade trees, wide sidewalks, the art center and other cultural amenities. One thing Mesa can do to encourage people to live downtown is to continue to invest in the infrastructure. He feels it is more important to spend money on those public areas that connect downtown to other spaces. Currently it is not a scenic trip to get to downtown mesa. We can direct some of the future public improvements to enhance the connectivity and sense of arrival.

Councilmember Glover advised that there will be a streetscaping project on 1st Avenue from Country Club to the Temple. There are also plans to finish Mesa Drive to 1st Street, beginning the end of this year with a targeted completion by 2017. Councilmember Glover stated both he and the Mayor liked that this plan is community focused and involves community partners to accomplish these goals. Chair Wilson stated that it was clear from the Council's direction and early meetings she participated in that the Committee's charge was to ensure that the various businesses, stakeholders and agencies that work within downtown be involved so that collectively we have come to one, shared vision—and a shared vision that everyone understands their part in implementing.

Debby Elliott stated prior to working on this Committee she had no idea what Form-Based Code was. She now understands that form-based codes are not as much what goes on inside a building but rather how it looks on the outside. Form-Based Code does not tell property owners what to do with their business, but focuses on how it functions and integrates. Mayor Giles noted if a developer brings something exciting to the city, we will make it work. There is some flexibility built into the Form-Based Code. Jeff McVay advised that the Form-Based Code is an extremely prescriptive code as far as the box that you build within. It is very flexible when it comes to use and architecture. The current zoning in downtown requires a public hearing process before you even know what parameters you are working with. With the Form-Based Code you know from day one what is allowed and you can build to that. Currently people have to opt in to the Form-Based Code. Natalie Lewis suggested rewording it to say that Form-Based Code creates clarity and parameters to help developers take a step forward. Charles Huellmantel stated the problem is that people coming in will not elect to use Form-Based Code if it is optional. Mayor Giles does not want to see people demanding a building permit as they feel they are entitled to one based on the non-Form-Based Code.

Chair Wilson asked the Mayor his opinion on the Committee's wording on making Form-Based Code the standard expectation for downtown Mesa. Mayor Giles also preferred the Committee's original language on the Form-Based Code related to setting form-based code as the expectation or standard.

Lorenzo Perez viewed the entire process as enlightening and was excited to hear how aligned the various stakeholders were. Mesa is uniquely positioned with its walkability, grid and alley network, which can be leveraged as pedestrian paseos like Santa Barbara and would not require much of a major investment. Mesa also has a train running down a main street.

Chair Wilson thanked Mayor Giles and Councilmember Glover for taking the time to be here and for the opportunity. It has been a challenging and exciting project. Mayor Giles thanked the Committee and stated they have exceeded his expectations.

3. Review and Take Action to Approve the Minutes from the May 2, 2015 Downtown Vision Committee Meeting

Chair Jo Wilson called for a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting of May 2, 2015.

MOTION: Debby Elliott made a Motion to approve the minutes as presented
SECOND: Lorenzo Perez
DECISION: Passed unanimously

4. Chair to Present Updated Downtown Mesa Vision and Key Priorities

Chair Wilson commented that she was very pleased with the meeting with the Mayor and Councilmember the other day. They were very receptive and pleased with the draft that the Committee prepared. At the meeting they went through each of the key priorities. She noted these are not listed in order of priority although they did discuss prioritizing this list. Chair Wilson took the liberty of labeling Light Rail as the first priority as it was a catalyst for bringing this Committee together. Her second priority, given the Committee's charge, was to make sure everyone downtown had a shared vision and continued to partner in the future to carry out that vision.

5. Committee Discussion to Finalize the Downtown Mesa Vision and Key Priorities

Chair Wilson asked the Committee for any feedback, changes in priorities or wordsmithing needed in the Vision document. Charles Huellmantel stated if the Mayor and Councilmember are happy with it, I'm happy." Chair Wilson stated we do want to update the Form-Based Code language, as discussed. Marco Meraz asked if wording on back alleys was included under public infrastructure. Lorenzo Perez requested to add language to the effect of activating alleys with pedestrian concepts. Natalie Lewis asked for further defining of 'pedestrian concepts.' Lorenzo Perez explained that to him it is turning alleyways into pedestrian thoroughfares, with lighting, seating areas, alley cafes, fun activities for example. Staff will add that language in.

Chair Wilson asked Natalie to go over some of the changes and upgrades that will be done before the Light Rail opens downtown. Natalie Lewis commented that the core of downtown has been under construction for several years. We have a great opportunity in partnership with NEDCO along with the Downtown Mesa Association (DMA) and our Energy Resources Department. There was a contract with NEDCO for business assistance during the last three years to help business to thrive during Light Rail construction. As part of that agreement, the City was able to provide some temporary financial relief via summer season energy rebates to those most directly impacted during construction. The total amount appropriated for this multi-year effort was not totally spent. We are talking about going to Council to request the City re-appropriate that money to help cleanup and make some quick improvements downtown—examples such as cleaning bus stops, removing old blue stake marks, repainting streetlights and street furniture, adding flowers and re-plantings, new paint on the colonnades, piloting some fun art or alley activation projects. The DMA is working with an architect to look at color schemes for painting the Colonnades. We are working with the Mesa Arts Center to install some dinosaur footprints from the center station to the Historic Museum and family footprints from the Country Club station to the Idea Museum with some in between to cross promote. These will be done by August 22 to coincide with Light Rail opening ceremony. Chair Wilson commented those will be very visual items people will see along with the Light Rail. Natalie also noted the DMA may possibly put more money into the pot as well.

Chair Wilson mentioned some items that are being proposed in December that will bring activity and attention to the downtown area. She noted the number of people that come to view the Holiday lights at the Temple every year. They come and they leave. The city and the Downtown Mesa Association are proposing a variety of things from putting an ice skating rink in to food trucks, other family activities and perhaps work Polar Express train. Natalie Lewis noted the timing is perfect to make our presentation to Council right after the Light Rail opens. Debby Elliot inquired about the cost to wrap a train with advertising. Natalie stated Valley Metro already has a program to do that and there are at least a couple train wraps planned for downtown Mesa and Mesa arts and culture.

With no further changes or recommendations, Chair Wilson called for a Motion to accept the Downtown Mesa Vision and Key Priorities, as adjusted today.

MOTION: Charles Huellmantel made a Motion to accept the Downtown Mesa Vision and Key Priorities, as adjusted
SECOND: Lorenzo Perez
DECISION: Passed unanimously

6. Final Homework Assignment: Send staff photos depicting what you believe are great representations of the Downtown Vision and each of the Key Priorities. Photos to be sent to staff by August 3, 2015.

Chair Wilson stated we would like to incorporate pictures for a strong visual impact with our presentation to Council. She asked each Committee member to select a picture representing each of the key priorities. Natalie Lewis will make the changes to the Vision document and send it out to the Committee so they will have the updated version to work from. Chair Wilson, as she traveled across Europe, saw many places she wanted Mesa to look like and took many pictures. Natalie requested the Committee to send photos to her by August 3rd. The Chair requested all of the Committee members to attend the Council meeting on August 27, 2015.

Natalie Lewis asked the Committee, since we will not meet again, to give the Chair final say on what photos are selected for the presentation. Chair Wilson noted we can send out an email for anyone available to come join us. Jeff McVay mentioned he can build an online survey. Natalie stated we cannot do that according to open meeting rules. She will work with Chair Wilson to finalize the Vision Statement and will then send it out to the Committee for any feedback or changes. The Committee was in agreement.

Natalie Lewis also asked the Committee to agree that the Chair can approve the final minutes of today's meeting. The minutes will be sent out to the Committee beforehand for review. Attorney Jim Smith stated that traditionally the ad-hoc committee members authorize the Chair to approve the final minutes, either by Motion or direction.

MOTION: Charles Huellmantel made a Motion to authorize the Chair to approve the final Minutes of the Ad-Hoc Committee meeting of today, June 10, 2015
SECOND: Debby Elliott
DECISION: Passed unanimously

Natalie Lewis clarified that this Committee is still in effect until the final presentation to Council.

7. Next Steps Reviewed

Thursday, August 27, 2015 City Council Presentation 7:30 A.M.

City Council Lower Chambers, 57 E. 1st Street

8. Items from Citizens Present

There were no items from citizens.

9. Statement from Chair Jo Wilson

Chair Jo Wilson expressed her sincere thanks to the Committee members. It was a pleasure to work with all of you and I hope our paths cross many times as we see our downtown come alive. She comes away from the Committee feeling very strongly that we represented what we heard from the community. Tremendous thanks to the City and especially to Natalie who has absolutely been a right hand person.

10. Adjournment

Chair Wilson entertained a Motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:56 P.M.

MOTION:	Charles Huellmantel made a Motion to adjourn the meeting
SECOND:	Lorenzo Perez
DECISION:	Passed unanimously

Submitted By:

Jo Wilson, Chair

(Prepared by Dana Desing, TE:14082507)