

## 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:** May 2, 2015    **Time:** 8:30 A.M.

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### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Marco Meraz (excused)  
Steve Chucri (excused)

### **STAFF PRESENT**

Natalie Lewis  
Niel Curley

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#### **1. Call To Order:**

Chair Jo Wilson called the May 2, 2015 Retreat Meeting of the Downtown Vision Committee to order at 8:38 A.M.

#### **2. Approval of Minutes from the March 24, 2015 Downtown Vision Committee meeting:**

Chair Wilson called for a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting of March 24, 2015.

**MOTION:** Rich Marchant made a motion to approve the minutes as presented  
**SECOND:** Debby Elliott  
**DECISION:** Passed unanimously

#### **3. Presentation – Purpose/Mission of the Downtown Vision Committee for discussion and clarification:**

Chair Wilson stated the mission of this Committee is to develop a vision that can be used not only by the City, but other stakeholder groups engaged in the redevelopment of Downtown, such as NEDCO, the Chamber and Downtown Mesa Association. The light rail, soon to come to completion, will be a major factor that will drive the redevelopment of Downtown. The Council asked us to recommend a shared vision and broad goals that set a clear intention and direction for the long-term evolution of downtown Mesa. Today's goal is to start developing a vision and identify the goals and directions needed to reach our vision.

#### **4. Staff to review the process the Committee has undertaken to prepare for creating a Shared Downtown Vision.**

Natalie Lewis provided a review of the process used in working to create a Downtown Vision:

- a. The Committee heard presentations by various stakeholder groups. A dashboard summary was generated of all of their comments and ideas.

- b. The Committee met with the broader community—existing groups and organizations, more non-traditional audiences adjacent to and around downtown, millennial/next generation audiences, faith-based organizations and high school students at THINKspot – ensuring that the broader public also had a meaningful role in this process.
- c. The next task is having all of this come to fruition. The Council asked you to serve to ensure your perspectives and experiences, combined with what you heard and learned from the community, will become the framework in developing a Shared Vision and intention for what we want Downtown Mesa to become.

**5. Review of Visuals and Photographs—Committee to identify what photos depict their vision of elements of great downtowns.**

Chair Wilson noted that although Committee Member Steve Chucri could not be here, he did meet with her and Natalie Lewis this week. In their meeting, Committee Member Chucri pointed out that Mesa is the third largest Arizona city and its downtown needs to reflect that. He said being the third largest city should cast a large shadow of influence in this region. He said that the Mesa Arts Center is an incredible facility and asset and needs to be reflected and protected in our vision. Chair Wilson noted that art is a focal point of Downtown Mesa. Committee Member Huellmantel spoke of the Form-based Code and noted that although we cannot dictate what kind of development comes in, we can bring focus to elements such as upgraded materials, pedestrian walkways and art in public spaces. Chair Wilson stated we should also look at what investors would want to see in Downtown Mesa. Committee Member Huellmantel asked if we could expect to hear from the police department. Natalie Lewis stated she would set up a dialogue with the police. The Committee then selected photos representing their ideas “images and elements of great downtowns.” There was discussion about:

- Open plaza and paving—demonstrates investment and care for an area and can help attract others to invest—example Southern Avenue
- Shade structures—need shading that doesn’t block retail but creates shade for pedestrians
- Housing that engages the street with on-street parking, shade trees, heritage character. Brownstones and brick sidewalks in addition to high-density development that is colorful and eclectic.
- All great downtowns are safe, have buildings and spaces at right scale, are walkable, diverse and feature art/creative environment. Brownstone flavor.
- Large and small events that serve all audiences—ongoing; sense that something is going on downtown all the time.
- Environment that ensures security, peace of mind and comfort—examples police bike patrol, being ready for homeless issue
- Artistic environment very important to great downtowns—architecture, landscape/streetscape, art programs/facilities—love light rail art and colors
- Storefronts need to be open and visible to the street.
- Bold, colorful lighting attracts nightlight; adds to sense of comfort/security and helps downtowns pop and feel exciting at night.
- Scale is a critical component-- Wide sidewalks and narrow streets. Lots of shade. We have the opportunity to fill our spaces to create a walkable and community-focused sense of place.
- Great downtowns expect quality development; development that ensure the structure, architecture and landscape/streetscape add to what we want Downtown Mesa to become. Need to consider making form-based code a requirement for downtown. Form-based codes inspire quality negotiations and development.

- Connections to and from downtown are important. Today, it is not an easy experience to connect from freeways to downtown nor is it particularly an aesthetic experience. Need to connect downtown regionally and make it easy for neighbors to get to and from downtown. Feeders and transitions. Consider use of linear parks and multiuse paths.
- Downtown retail—Mom and Pops/Boutiques; mixed with larger, national chains; and not to forget serving needs of students (24-7 diner, entertainment)
- Intimate spaces—love spaces with great shade, walking, hear nature, water running, paving materials creative. Relaxing.

**6. Round Robin Discussion—Share one of your five ideas related to Mesa Downtown Vision or Key Priorities**

Chair Wilson asked the Committee Members to each share one of their ideas as to their vision of Downtown Mesa:

- Committee Member Elliott stated downtown Mesa should connect on an emotional level with people of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicity and interests. People want to be downtown to experience a city and to have a connection with that city. People need to feel compelled and drawn emotionally to downtown Mesa, i.e. they want to be there; consider downtown one of their regular go-to places because it feels like a comfortable fit.
- Committee Member Perez expressed his vision of downtown Mesa as an eclectic and diverse blend of experiences with old and new, large and small, indoor and outdoor, a balance of residential and commercial and local with some select national retail. He emphasized diversity in scale, type and product. There is a desire for local influence giving that authentic vibe as well as national retailers that bring value and are in alignment with our vision.
- Committee Member Marchant noted the importance of a sense of arrival as well as the destination. As people near downtown something needs to invite them in closer. We need to create public spaces along the edges to draw people in towards Downtown. Until you get to Center, there is almost nothing to draw people as well as development. May need to think about the paths from main hotels to downtown to add aesthetic interest.
- Committee Member Huellmantel stated that the culture and identity of a city is created based on the quality of its downtown. Today young people care about urban environments in a way they have not in 30 years. Mesa's Form-based Code can help new businesses decide how they will interact with our Downtown as far as the design of storefronts, landscape, walkability and the uniqueness they can bring to Mesa. At this time form-based code is an option rather than a requirement. There was discussion on how form-based code will attract quality and creative developers and allow for more flexibility where zoning code or ordinance may not always work.
- Chair Wilson spoke on behalf of Committee Member Chucuri, who advised that MAC is the hub of Downtown and spokes going out from that hub would contain a variety of retail shops including high-end as well as mom and pop and chains, high-end salons and spas, boutique hotels, art shops and retail, a variety of housing (brownstones and cool developments with higher density) and a mix of comfortable and eclectic streetscapes incorporating bold colors, brick sidewalks dynamic lighting and art.

- Chair Wilson expressed that Downtown should be driven by inclusiveness. There needs to be something for everybody, a place for families to bring their children, activities and entertainment for teenagers and college students, diversity for all ages.
- Committee Member Marchant added the need for connected public spaces and a sense of arrival downtown; pedestrian paths and spaces, easily accessible and walkable. Committee Member Perez noted that those linear public spaces can become the infrastructure that developers want to build next to; spur reinvestment and development.
- Committee Member Huellmantel stated we need more people to live downtown. Even at capacity, there would not be enough residents to support the restaurants.
- Committee Member Perez proposed a linear park system as in Santa Barbara or Tucson. There was lots of discussion around this idea and having these linear structures lead to a future city center.
- Committee Member Elliott stated that she agreed with Committee Member Chucris's comments that art and creativity need to be incorporated into all of these elements.
  - a. Once all ideas are presented, Committee to prioritize/categorize ideas.
    - MAC and art as the central foundation
    - Something for everyone—inclusivity and diversity
    - Form-based Code as a major goal
    - Sense of Arrival—journey to downtown
    - Strong residential presence/housing and retail mix
    - Locally and regionally unique
    - Focus beyond Main—Main will take care of itself through light rail
    - Connectivity—linear parks
    - Smaller public spaces—pocket parks
    - Attract development/stimulate investment

## **[15-Minute Break]**

### **7. Committee Discussion related to:**

- a. Are there common themes here? Key words that jump out?

#### Vision Words:

Sense of Arrival	Active
Heritage	Gathering Space
Connectivity	Expectation of Quality
Inclusivity/Diversity	Authentic
Compelling	Historic
Vibrant	Retail Variety
Creative/Artistic	Residential Variety

Intimate Public Spaces	Unique
Strong Sense of Place	Innovative
Vibe/Hip/Weird	Entertainment
Eclectic	Hospitality/Restaurant
Comfortable/Inviting	Dynamic
Walkability	Progressive
Destination	Leisure/Hang Out

Priorities/Goals:

Housing/Residential Variety  
Mix of Retail (high end, mom & pop, national, student oriented)  
Require/Implement Form-based Code  
Bold Lighting  
Police Presence/Bike Patrol—Stay ahead of growth  
Refresh Streetscape (Hardscape and Landscape)  
Artistic Elements—Development and Services  
Shade Structures  
Linear Parks as connections to downtown  
Intimate Public Spaces  
Festivals/Community Events, large and small  
Outdoor Restaurants  
Great Streets and Wide Sidewalks  
Reaffirm and Implement Priorities of Central Main Plan  
Wayfinding/Signage  
Accessible and Safe Parking (Well-lit, connect to Main, easy to find)  
Consider Community Parking District in lieu of parking credits developer

- b. Is there anything missing?  
There was discussion on supporting graphics, Light Rail/Transit and Parking.

- c. Any key tasks/actions in the Central Main Plan that need to be reflected?

Chair Wilson asked if there is anything from the Central Main Plan that must be on our list or that we should prioritize. Light Rail was mentioned as well as parking, which will change substantially and quickly with Light Rail. Emphasis was also placed on security and walkability. In addition to a large 'city center' park/development, it was suggested that the City utilize a linear park system to connect downtown with the surrounding areas. The Committee will prioritize some elements of the Central Main Plan to submit to Council.

- d. Is there anything in the photographs that needs to be reflected?  
These are represented in the Vision Words and Priorities/Goals in section 7.a. above.

**8. Next steps reviewed:**

- a. Committee member(s) volunteer to draft Vision Statement and Priorities?

Committee Members Perez and Huellmantel volunteered to draft a Vision Statement including visuals, which will be provided to Natalie Lewis by May 18th. If any other members have ideas or photos they may send those in to Staff as well. Staff will email

the first draft out to the Committee. Ms. Lewis reminded the Committee of the open meeting law and stressed that there should be no “reply to all” emails. Communications must go through Staff.

- b. Committee comments to Staff only May 18-28.
- c. Next Committee meeting to finalize Vision Statement: **Tuesday, June 9th, 3:00 P.M.** at Mesa Arts Center conference room, 1 E Main St, Mesa, AZ 85201.
- d. Monday, June 15th Council Presentation—Starts at 3:30 or 4:00 P.M. City Council Lower Chambers, 57 E. 1st, Street.
- e. Committee discussion related to recommendations for checks and balances—maintain the momentum and collaboration.

Committee Member Marchant noted in the last meeting there was mention of an advisory committee by Committee Member Meraz to work with the City on the implementation of this plan. Also in earlier discussions that week Committee Member Chucri had also brought up the idea of a resource team or sounding board that may not be such a staff-intensive effort as a more formal committee. Committee Member Huellmantel noted that Council had asked us to be here and we would be willing to come back as a resource; he liked the resource team idea and thought it was in alignment with what Committee Member Meraz had mentioned previously. This resource group could be on a quarterly or as needed basis.

#### **9. Items from Citizens Present**

There were no items from citizens.

#### **10. Adjournment**

Chair Wilson adjourned the meeting at 11:25 A.M.

Submitted By:

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Jo Wilson, Chair

(Prepared by Dana Desing-Transcription Express)