



DATE: July 1, 2024
TO: City Council
THROUGH: Nana Appiah, Development Services Director
Mary Kopaskie-Brown, Planning Director
FROM: Jeffrey McVay, Manager of Downtown Transformation
Anthony Rodriguez, Downtown Transformation Specialist
SUBJECT: Mesa Zoning Ordinance text amendment (**Downtown Events Overlay Ordinance**) - Proposed amendments to Chapters 24 and 87 of Title 11 of the Mesa City Code (the Zoning Ordinance)

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Mesa City Council adopt the Mesa Zoning Ordinance Downtown Events Overlay text amendments.

On June 12, 2024, the Planning and Zoning Board voted to recommend (6-0) that City Council adopt the Mesa Zoning Ordinance Downtown Events Overlay text amendments.

PURPOSE:

As part of the City’s goal to create a vibrant and active downtown that includes continued attractions and events, the Downtown Transformation staff is requesting changes to Chapter 24, Sections 11-24-1, 11-24-2, and 11-24-3, and Chapter 87 of the Zoning Ordinance.

These changes include expanding the boundaries of the Downtown Events Overlay Zoning District and providing an exemption from the four consecutive-day individual event time limits for special events sponsored or supported by the City, such as Merry Main Street and The Yard Off Main. The proposed amendments also add definitions and make minor clean-up changes.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

The City adopted the original Downtown Events Overlay on March 21, 2011, to facilitate and encourage the planning of events in Downtown Mesa, per the Council’s Strategic Initiatives. As downtown continues to redevelop, the activation of downtown has expanded out from the core and the location of where events are occurring, and have the potential to occur, has grown as well.

The types of City-produced events have expanded to ensure a high quality of life in downtown Mesa and throughout the city. The proposed text amendments support the City’s continued goals of evaluating event standards and removing unnecessary hurdles to allow high quality events that engage the community.

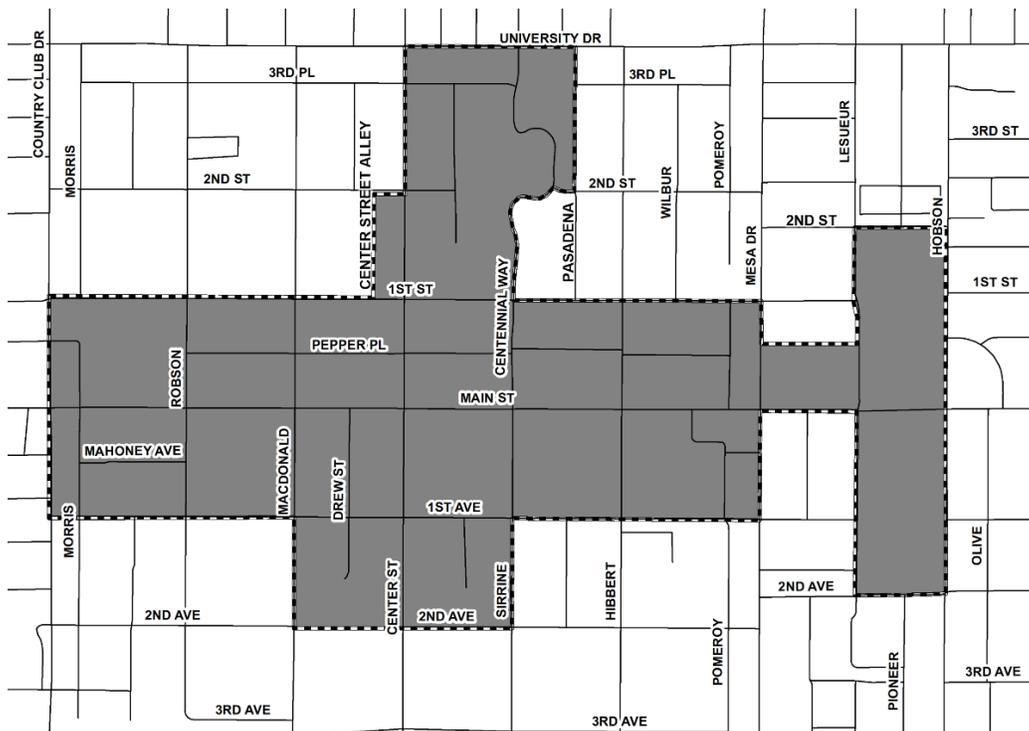
Details of the proposed text amendments are attached in Exhibit 1 (Downtown Events Overlay Ordinance). The specific affected chapters are Chapters 24 and 87 of the Zoning Ordinance. Specifically, the proposed changes, in part: (1) expand the boundary of the Downtown Events Overlay Zoning District; (2) provide an exemption to the maximum number of consecutive days for City sponsored or supported special events; and (3) create definitions for “Special Events, City Sponsored” and “Special Events, City Supported.”

SUMMARY OF THE CHANGES AND EXPLANATION:

1) Expand the Boundaries of the Downtown Events Overlay Zoning District

On March 21, 2011, Council adopted an ordinance that approved the creation of the Downtown Events Overlay which set up a different set of special event requirements for the area within the overlay, namely eliminating the requirement for a Special Use Permit to allow more than four special events held within the area. In addition to ensuring that downtown is a vibrant and active place, the overlay was meant to encourage events produced at the community level by businesses, non-profits, and other organizations by making the event approval process less intimidating and costly.

Since the adoption of the overlay, the downtown area has experienced a high-level of redevelopment, with new businesses, multifamily housing, and the light rail, which has led to increased activity in the area. This has also expanded both the actual and potential boundaries of the active downtown and the area where events commonly take place. Expanding the overlay to select areas ensures that downtown activation continues to grow while continuing to protect the general welfare of the surrounding neighborhoods.



Map 1: Proposed expanded boundaries of the Downtown Events Overlay Zoning District

2) *Provide an Exemption to the Maximum Number of Consecutive Days for City-Sponsored and City-Supported Special Events.*

Some longstanding events sponsored and supported by the City, such as Merry Main Street, exceed the four consecutive day limit and are required to obtain either a Special Use Permit or Temporary Use Permit. With the expansion of longer-term, City-produced or supported events, such as The Yard Off Main, there is a need to streamline the review process to allow these events to occur more easily.

These events are of high civic value and add to the livability and economic vitality of downtown. These events still have to go through the standard Special Event License process, which involves a review by City departments to ensure they are high-quality, safe, and not detrimental to the public. The text amendments therefore propose an exception to the four consecutive day limit for City-Sponsored and City-Supported Special Events.

3) *Create Definitions for “Special Event, City-Sponsored” and “Special Event, City-Supported”*

Because City-Sponsored and City-Supported Special Events are proposed to be exempted from the four consecutive day time limit, it is necessary to define what is meant by “Special Event, City-Sponsored” and “Special Event, City Supported.” Therefore, staff is recommending the following definitions be added to Chapter 87 of the Zoning Ordinance:

SPECIAL EVENT, CITY-SPONSORED: A SPECIAL EVENT PRODUCED AND FUNDED BY THE CITY.

SPECIAL EVENT, CITY-SUPPORTED: A SPECIAL EVENT INITIATED BY AN OUTSIDE OR COMMUNITY GROUP AND SUPPORTED BY THE CITY, IN THE CITY’S SOLE DISCRETION AND BASED ON AVAILABLE CITY RESOURCES.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Staff recommends the Downtown Events Overlay Ordinance become effective 30 days from the date of City Council approval.

EXHIBITS:

- Exhibit 1 – Downtown Events Overlay Ordinance
- Exhibit 2 - Presentation