



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

May 6, 2026

The Economic Development Advisory Board of the City of Mesa met in the Forum, 59 E. 1st Street, on May 6, 2026, at 7:30 a.m.

BOARDMEMBERS PRESENT

Kurt D. Ferstl
Michelle Genereux
Anthony Ruiz
Andrew Schreiner
Susan Stephensen
Frank Sanders

BOARDMEMBERS ABSENT

Steven Beck (excused)

STAFF PRESENT

Jaye O'Donnell
Maribeth Smith
Amanda Elliott
Rob Stirling
Brent Stoddard

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Richard Blake *
Sonny Cave *
Mark Drayna

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Mark Freeman, Mayor
Scott Butler, City Manager (excused)
Sally Harrison (excused)
Natascha Ovando-Karadsheh (excused)

GUESTS

Councilmember
Francisco Heredia *

(*Participated in the meeting via video conference equipment)

1. Call meeting to order.

Chair Michelle Genereux called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

2. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

3. Approval of minutes from the April 7, 2026, Economic Development Advisory Board meeting.

It was moved by Board member Frank Sanders, seconded by Board member Andrew Schreiner, that the April 7, 2026, Economic Development Advisory Board meeting minutes be approved.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES –Ferstl-Genereux-Ruiz-Sanders-Schreiner-Stephensen
NAYS – None
ABSENT – Beck

Chair Genereux declared the motion carried unanimously.

4. Economic Development Director's current events summary, including conferences attended.

Economic Development Director Jaye O'Donnell summarized recent activity, recognitions, upcoming engagements, and ongoing initiatives. She reported that the Mesa Business Builder @ The Studios two-year anniversary celebration was held the prior evening and drew approximately 125 attendees. Mayor Mark Freeman issued a proclamation marking National Economic Development Week and National Small Business Week, and Councilmember Jenn Duff also delivered remarks.

Ms. O'Donnell reported that the refreshed Office of Economic Development website is fully live following a soft launch the prior week. The site reflects a brand refresh and is organized around three decision journeys: business attraction and expansion; small business development; and retail development.

Ms. O'Donnell reported that Boeing and the Office of Economic Development was recognized at the Arizona Association for Economic Development (AAED) Best of Arizona Awards Gala in April. Boeing received an award recognizing the company's extraordinary economic impact and long-standing leadership in the state's aerospace and defense industry, and Ms. O'Donnell was recognized as Economic Development Director of the Year for a Large Community.

Ms. O'Donnell reviewed recent and upcoming development activity, including the Maricopa Community College District groundbreaking of a Workforce Development Corridor at Mesa Community College, a roughly \$39 million on-campus investment in specialized training for welding technology, sustainable horticulture, and veterinary technology. She also noted the recent grand opening of Angry Chickz on South Alma School Road and the upcoming grand opening of Dragon's Lounge, a premium cigar and cocktail lounge on Main Street in the Asian District.

Ms. O'Donnell reported that the Office of Economic Development is partnering with Salt River Project (SRP) to host two developer and broker roundtables on May 12, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. The sessions, led by SRP Economic Development Manager Karla Moran and Grant Smedley, will provide a level-set on generation, distribution, and transmission; the timing of new substations coming online in southeast Mesa over the next 24 months; and how developers and brokers can market sites to advanced manufacturers with significant load requirements. Ms. O'Donnell noted that staff are encouraging prospects to engage electrical engineering expertise early in the load specification process to expedite SRP service responses, and that Mesa's Development Services is working to accelerate permitting and right-of-way coordination.

Ms. O'Donnell reported on recent media coverage, including ABC15 segments on redevelopment and a regional reporter's recent visit to the Asian District, as well as a Channel 12 interview with Deputy Director Amanda Elliott regarding the Mesa Business Builder @ The Studios anniversary event.

Ms. O'Donnell reviewed upcoming trade shows and conferences, including the SelectUSA Investment Summit, which Deputy Director Ben Snow is attending this week; the Urban Land Institute Spring Meeting; ICSC Las Vegas with the Retail Coach; the BIO International Convention in San Diego; Farnborough Air Show in the United Kingdom in late July; and DigiMarCon Southwest in Phoenix in June.

The Office of Economic Development is working with Development Services, which is leading the effort through Planning, to develop a character-area template for the Longbow area. The objective is to articulate a clearer value proposition for property owners, developers, and brokers while protecting Falcon Field Airport as a major employer and economic driver. A recent stakeholder meeting drew approximately 35 participants, including residents, businesses, developers, and property owners, who indicated a preference for a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use district with a downtown feel. Next steps include developing concept alternatives informed by market reality and returning to stakeholders for feedback. Staff noted that the character-area template, once refined, could be applied to other areas of the City, including Superstition Springs and Riverview.

Ms. O'Donnell reported on recent foreign direct investment activity, including hosting an International Downtown Association (IDA) Ireland delegation, attending the Consulate General of Peru reception in Phoenix, and participating in the Arizona Artificial Intelligence and Semiconductor Global Summit hosted by the Arizona Commerce Authority.

Ms. O'Donnell reported on a recent site visit with a Taiwan Ministry of Economic Affairs delegation of approximately 34 individuals. This followed an initial visit in January 2026 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to begin site selection for a Taiwan Science Park, the first such park to be located outside Taiwan. Mayor Mark Freeman, Ms. O'Donnell, and Arizona State University's Grace O'Sullivan presented the ASU Polytechnic campus site, citing the adjacent Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, available industrial inventory, the campus's applied science graduate programs and student base as assets. Following the formal presentation, the delegation requested a same-day site visit; Vice Mayor Scott Somers participated in the on-site briefing. The formal selection timeline has been advanced from the end of the calendar year to July 2026.

Economic Development Director Jaye O'Donnell and ex-officio Board member Sonny Cave reported on the Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC) Executive Mission to Washington, D.C., a biennial mission that convenes regional economic development, elected, and corporate stakeholders to meet with the Arizona congressional delegation, federal agencies, and trade associations. The Mesa delegation included Mayor Mark Freeman, City Manager Scott Butler, Ms. O'Donnell, and Mr. Cave. Group programming on the opening day featured fireside chats with Senator Ruben Gallego, Representative Greg Stanton, the co-founder of Axios, and federal policy representatives focused on the biotechnology sector.

Mr. Cave reported that he moderated a semiconductor panel, which included industry representatives from Amkor, Intel, and other firms. He framed Arizona's trajectory as having moved from a future-facing vision to an established position as a global hub for advanced semiconductor manufacturing. Panel topics included the role of artificial intelligence in advanced manufacturing, the effect of policy and global competition on investment decisions, the requirements for building a complete industry ecosystem, and workforce development. Mr. Cave noted that the design stage of the semiconductor value chain, including electronic design automation and core intellectual property, is not well represented in Arizona and may warrant focused ecosystem development.

Mr. Cave reported on the aerospace and defense track on day two, which included visits to Honeywell's Washington, D.C. office, the Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI), and the National Defense University. He noted that Honeywell is in the process of separating its aerospace business into a standalone publicly traded company and continues to manufacture critical components for advanced air mobility platforms. AUVSI membership has expanded from approximately 50 members two years ago to more than 200 members today, including manufacturers, integrators, and universities, reflecting rapid growth in the uncrewed aviation and advanced air mobility industries. The National Defense University meeting addressed curriculum focused on training military personnel to engage with private industry.

Mr. Cave reported that the day included a meeting with Senator Mark Kelly focused on water and high-technology manufacturing. The Senator was well briefed on the Colorado River Lower Basin allocation process. Snowpack in the Upper Basin is currently measured at approximately 22% of normal, which is expected to reduce flows to the Lower Basin and intensify negotiation pressure on the inter-basin compact. Discussion also addressed Arizona's agricultural production, the impact of curtailments on national food supply, and emerging technologies such as vertical farming, which can substantially reduce land and water requirements. The Senator expressed interest in following up on vertical farming as a complement to desalination as a long-term water strategy.

Ms. O'Donnell observed that, compared with the prior mission two years ago, federal agencies and offices were more responsive and asked more substantive questions about Arizona and how federal partners could support the region. She also noted that municipal-level engagement complementing the GPEC mission, and the participation of locally based companies, including a recent encounter with Cyclic Materials, which recently announced a Mesa location, are contributing to the region's federal visibility.

5. Hear from District 3 Councilmember Francisco Heredia regarding his priorities, including economic development, followed by a discussion.

Councilmember Francisco Heredia, representing District 3, presented via video conference. He provided an overview of recent and emerging economic development activity in West Mesa, with a focus on the Palo District, the Asian District, and the Riverview area.

Councilmember Heredia reported that the City Council has designated the approximately 80-acre former Fiesta Mall site as the Palo District, a self-governing Theme Park District established under State enabling legislation. The district board includes two elected members, Councilmember Heredia and Councilmember Rich Adams, and two public members. The current ownership group is developing a regional entertainment concept that includes hotel, multifamily residential, and complementary retail components, with a sports anchor focused on professional women's soccer, including planning for a 25,000-seat stadium, and continuing discussions regarding a men's professional team. The plan also includes a Healthcare Innovation Center focused on women's sports medicine. Additional updates will be released as the Palo District board formalizes remaining components. (See pages 1-2 of Attachment 1)

Councilmember Heredia reported on continued residential intensification in the Asian District along Main Street, anchored by the Sycamore light rail station. The Pomeroy, a 245-unit multifamily development, is complete. A separate 5-story, 191-unit multifamily project with approximately 9,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial is under construction east of the Safeway site, with completion anticipated by year-end 2026 or early 2027. The added density is intended to support the district's restaurant and retail base, including recent and pending openings. Councilmember Heredia also reported on additional Riverview-area activity, including a 36-unit residential building for Chicago Cubs Spring Training player housing, located on the site of the former Maricopa County animal shelter, and a co-located 103-room Candlewood Suites hotel. He also noted The Arden at Riverview, a 416-unit, 4-story multifamily project, and ongoing discussions with Kimco Realty regarding additional residential density within the Riverview retail complex to support continued business attraction. Additional neighborhood-scale retail activity in West Mesa includes a planned Sprouts Farmers Market at a Southern and Alma School Road location. Councilmember Heredia introduced his new Council Coordinator, Grecia Cervantes, who can be contacted for follow-up information. (See pages 3-5 of Attachment 1)

6. Introduction of new business to be discussed at a future meeting.

Ms. O'Donnell reported that staff continue to evaluate alternative engagement formats for the Board following the discussion at the April 7, 2026 meeting, and will return to the Board in June with options developed in consultation with the Mayor for the upcoming fiscal year. Staff also previewed potential June and August agenda items, including a presentation by the Arizona Museum of Natural History regarding proposed redevelopment and expansion plans and an Economic Development Strategic Plan progress update. Staff also previewed a planned briefing on a Creative Technologies initiative, supported by an FY2027 budget enhancement request for a project manager position to be housed in the Office of Economic Development and focused on the ASU Mix Center, with emphasis on film, music, gaming, and related digital sectors.

7. Board member recognition.

Ms. O'Donnell and the Board recognized Vice Chair Kurt Ferstl for his service on the Economic Development Advisory Board. Mr. Ferstl is concluding his term in connection with an international relocation to Tokyo, Japan, on a three-year assignment as Boeing's Regional Counsel for Northeast Asia. The Board presented Mr. Ferstl with Asian District commemorative items, and Mr. Ferstl expressed appreciation for his time on the Board and continued interest in Mesa's downtown development.

8. Schedule of meetings.

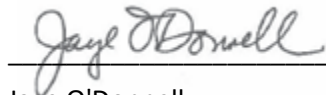
Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, June 2, 2026, at the Office of Economic Development.

9. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Economic Development Advisory Board meeting adjourned at 8:36 a.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Economic Development Advisory Board meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 6th day of May 2026. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jaye O'Donnell", is written over a horizontal line.

Jaye O'Donnell

Economic Development Director

ms

City of Mesa

Councilmember Francisco Heredia
District 3, Mesa AZ

Fiesta Mall (The Palo District)

- 80-acre former Fiesta Mall site into a mixed-use destination
- Create a regional entertainment and neighborhood hub for Mesa
- 25,000 seat stadium
- Women Focused Innovation
- Hotel, housing, restaurants and retail



Asian District

Ovio at Sycamore Station

- Five-story, 191 apartment units
- 9,000 square feet of ground-floor retail and restaurant space
- Strategically placed adjacent to the Sycamore Station light rail stop

The Pomeroy

- 245 units
- Features energy-efficient systems and water conservation measures as part of its LEED v4 alignment



ASIAN DISTRICT



esa Riverview

The Den on Rio Salado

- 3.2 acre, two building lodging campus
- 36-unit residential building for MLB players
- 103 –room Candlewood Suite hotel
- Rescue of former Maricopa County animal shelter

The Arden

- 416-unit, 4 story multifamily development
- Economic growth
- Infrastructure impacts



Questions?

