

Historic Preservation Board



Minutes

Virtual Platform
57 E 1st St

Date: May 3, 2022 Time: 6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brandon Benzing, Chair
Jim Babos, Vice-Chair
Barbara Bingham
Bruce Nelson
Jocelyn Skogebo
BJ Parsons

STAFF PRESENT:

Dr. Nana Appiah
Charlotte McDermott
Jeff McVay
Michelle Dahlke
Maura Jackson

MEMBERS ABSENT:

GUESTS:

Vic Linoff
Juliana Martinez
Neil Calfee
Vanessa MacDonald
Benjamin Ayers

(*Board members and staff participated in the meeting through the use of telephonic and audio conference equipment.)

1. Call meeting to order.

Chair Benzing

Good evening, everybody. We're going to call the May Historic Preservation Board meeting to order at 6:03 pm on May 3rd.

2. Approval of the minutes from the April 5, 2021 Historic Preservation Board meeting.

Chair Benzing

The first order of business is the approval of the minutes from the April 5 Preservation Board meeting. If there are no comments, do I have a motion to approve?

Vice-Chair Babos

I make a motion to approve the minutes of the April meeting.

Boardmember Parsons

I second.

AYES: Benzing-Babos-Bingham-Nelson-Skogebo-Parsons

NAYES: None

ABSENT: None

3. Items from citizens present.*

Chair Benzing

The next order of business is items from citizens present. Do we have any comment cards? So, Mr. Linoff please announce your name and your address for the record.

Vic Linoff

Vic Linoff, 628 North Center Street, Mesa. Just wanted to give you just a brief update on where we are with neon. I'm sure you'll have a lot of questions, and maybe we can talk in detail next month about it. We did meet with City Manager, Chris Brady last week. It turned out to be a very positive meeting. That has now given us the impetus to move forward. I think it's safe to say where we are looking at now is on MacDonald, between First Street and First Avenue, by the time would all be built out. We don't have enough signs at this point to span that whole distance. Then the center point of the display will be at the federal building now known as The Post. There may be signs attached to it, or on the interior, those are all the things that we've got to work out. We are working on some 3D renderings that we can provide to give a better sense of what this is going to look like. It's long term, it would start with maybe one or two signs and as they're restored then we would be installing them over time. That's it.

Chair Benzing

All right. Thank you for the update.

Juliana Martinez

Ms. Martinez reached out to the Board with a non-historic preservation related issue. Staff directed her to the appropriate resource(s) for assistance.

4. Historic Preservation Officer's Updates.

(The items in the Historic Preservation Officer's updates are not for Board discussion and no Board action will be taken on the updated items.)

Chair Benzing

The next item on the agenda is the HPO updates.

Michelle Dahlke

Mr. Chairman and Board members, so I am very happy to introduce our new Historic Preservation Advisor/Planner, Maura Jackson. This is her third week with us. We're very excited to have her here. She comes from the city of Phoenix where she worked in the Historic Preservation Office. Maura has a master's degree in the field. She also had some great internships that she did overseas and some really interesting background. She brings a lot to the table. We're really excited to have her join us.

Chair Benzing

Very great. That is excellent news this month.

Michelle Dahlke

It is. That is all that I have under that item Mr. Chairman.

Chair Benzing

Thank you. Have you met everybody before? If not, we can mingle after so you can meet everybody.

- 5. Hear a presentation, discuss, and provide direction for a proposed development on approximately 27 acres, located generally at the southwest corner of University Drive and Mesa Drive. This site was previously known as "Site 17" or "Transform 17".**

Chair Benzing

If the project team would like to approach and state your names, your firms, and then present your proposal.

Neil Calfee

My name is Neil Calfee. I represent Mira Vista Holdings. We are the project developer for Site 17 or Nexus as it's known now.

Benjamin Ayers

Ben Ayers, I'm an architect with Gensler and working on the project with the development team as well.

Neil Calfee

On the screen is the site. It's affectionately known as Site 17 or Transform 17. It was originally a single-family neighborhood that was acquired over a number of years by the City of Mesa in the 80s. Then subsequently cleared. The residents were relocated, and the site was cleared, and it essentially sat vacant for decades. There's been several attempts to develop, but there's also been several issues that have come forward so none of them have come to fruition. In 2016 and 2017, the city initiated another planning process and really felt like it was time to take another look at Site 17. With all the positive and great things that were happening in the downtown it was the time to start looking at this again and take another run at it. In that case, you know there was a lot of new planning that was done, as well as a lot of public outreach. The idea being, what can we do here, what is really the right thing to do. I think that the consensus was there wasn't one. There were a few issues that came out of that. But by and large, there really wasn't a set direction, that came out saying we want x, y, or z to be developed on the site. The city proceeded with a mixed-use concept. It was essentially a guide for what the development could be, a moderate density, mixed use concept, including office residential, and some retail. That was then the genesis for moving forward with an RFP. We went through the process and were selected. We've have spent about the last year and a half doing due diligence as well as planning process that brings us to today. Where we've ended up is we were under an MOU with the city. We're currently working through the last of a Development Agreement discussion with the city. We've undertaken a raft of studies and other front end due diligence items. Looking to make sure that we don't have any fatal flaws with the development. We didn't expect any.

For this group, you might have seen the article about potential archaeological issues out there. We did do a record study and archaeological study out there. The permission that came back was that there could be the presence of a canal. A prehistoric canal that was on the site. They did not indicate any, at least in the record search or any of the ideas that are out there, that there could be settlements, or anything that would necessitate more immediate study. But we believe in concert with our consultants that when we are out digging, we will provide all the needed monitoring, and we'll remediate as needed, if anything is found. But obviously, we want to be sensitive to that. We want to document as necessary, and then take whatever steps if something beyond just the canal is found, then go through and do right by that in terms of the regulations. We were cognizant of that and feel like, we don't have any substantial worries about that going forward.

Benjamin Ayers

That's just kind of what we've done to date.

Neil Calfee

So basically, there's a lot that's gone on. There are a lot of utilities on this site that run throughout the site. This is one that when you look at Second Street and Hibbert, there is a tremendous amount of underground utilities that are there that we're not going to be moving. That was something that we spent a lot of time looking at in terms of what do we have there, what can move, what can't move, and what makes sense? Even Pomeroy on the east end of the site, all the utilities for everything that fronts Mesa Drive, is in Pomeroy. We have, sort of the street grid that is out there and it's something we want to maintain. But it's also something that makes sense in terms of the various and sundry utilities that are underground. When we talk about Site 17 and the public process, these were the principles that came out of that process and really what came through, like I said, in terms of a consensus. Wow. Oh, Jeff McVay is here.

Jeff McVay

I apologize for my tardiness. The responsibilities of a Downtown Transformation Manager have no boundaries.

Neil Calfee

Okay, we're just talking about the guiding principles. If I can, let me keep going. What I've said, basically, is that there has not been any clear consensus on development for Site 17. There's a lot of different ideas. We basically arrived at sort of a moderate mid density, horizontally mixed-use site. But what did come out of that, and we believe that there is an agreement on are these guiding principles. That's really been the touchstone for our planning. As we go out to the community, as we're going forward, we look at these. So, vibrant, and active, good neighbor, varied district. How can we create something that isn't just a monolith out there? That strengthens downtown. That and the complementary piece of this is important in that we are part of downtown. We're also part of the neighborhood. What we're trying to do is not create something here that's going to compete with downtown. We want to be able to augment downtown. We're not looking to create destination retail or another Main Street experience in this site. It's really a matter of how can we be able to

strengthen and work with what's already here and not take away from the work that's already been done. Then publicly accessible. We want a site that is permeable. We want something that will have the ability for the neighbors, for everybody, to feel like it's part of a fabric. That's going back to the streetscape and the pieces that are in place with the streets and keeping those open. We will enhance that with shade trees, sidewalks, all the things so that we, at the end of the day have something that is integrated into the neighborhood. And actually, start to have this area look a little bit more like the rest of downtown. You can see a stark contrast between this side of the downtown housing historically developed and that on the west side. We hope that we can maybe bring up some of that on this side of downtown and bring some of the medians and some of the landscaping that was a hallmark of these other parts of downtown into this area.

Where we're at right now is we have made a formal Zoning submittal to Planning and the stakeholder engagement. Just in terms of the submittal, we are sticking with the existing zoning. The Downtown zoning is staying in place. We're putting a PAD on top of that. We had a lot of back and forth and working with the city on what made sense in terms of that. But with the existing zoning and what's in place there, providing a PAD with development standards made the most sense rather than opting into the Form Based Code.

We have been through a fairly comprehensive public engagement process to date. We've had our two public meetings that are mandated by Planning. But we've had just a lot of an extra meetings. Meeting with stakeholders. Meeting with neighbors. Meeting with various groups like the DMA. Really wanting to get feedback and get the plans out there and see what everybody says, thinks, likes, doesn't like and be able to hear that from a variety of the stakeholders and constituents within the downtown and the surrounding community.

Benjamin Ayers

For the Master Plan concept, as Neil said, we're pretty early in the process. But we did have some very simplified conceptual graphics that were presented as part of the plan. These were to build on all of those things that we just talked about on the previous slides. That was the foundation. Then we started to work through that and provide something that built on those. What you're seeing here is the master plan concept in built form. Let me start off by saying first, this is not architecture, this is basically a prettied-up massing diagram. Really just to show the densities, heights, and things like that. The strategy was to look at it and not really think of it as a phased project. It was more of a development block approach. Which means that as we look through, we prepared each one of these blocks to be self-sustained. It was a very specific strategy in working with the city. We have a strong initial phase but from that point on the city and the developer have the flexibility to pull down and break it off as needed dependent upon market conditions, how the successful things were, or what's going on with any number of things that might influence that.

Neil Calfee

And it's probably worth noting, it is not as if we're going to take down all the property at once. It will be a phase take down. The city will retain ownership and control of the balance of the property that's undeveloped. That's why the block approach made sense. There are some concerns if the city just gives up control, they would be stuck with whatever happens. This way they control the

property. They control what happens to it. If they don't like what we're proposing. If we come in there and change something that's on the plan that is not to the city's liking. They don't have to sell the property to us.

Benjamin Ayers

So, this is very strategic. It was a way to partner with the city and to give a lot of control for them throughout the process. But also, to be reactive to whatever conditions or what is going on at that time in the market.

As you get into the 3D this starts to show a little bit of the massing and how it lays out. It's colored by certain uses that we have. As we talked about, the idea was for this to be a true mixed-use project. Primarily we knew through working with City Council, the Mayor, others, and staff that there was a significant need for residential. We know that we want to bring people downtown. We want to activate it and get this to be a 24-hour area where there's a lot of people there throughout the day. So that turquoise color is where you're seeing primarily residential uses. With that we wanted to provide several typologies of residential. Meaning types of residential that you would see whether it's apartment, walk up, townhouse, tower, multifamily. Those are all incorporated in this as well.

To the back you see a purple building. That is what we're showing as an office use at this time. What I will say is important this was something that was never intended to be a speculative product. The idea and I know that the team has had several conversations of bringing people in this, this will be something that is built to suit to a certain group or a certain client that would move into that building.

The dark blue, you see as parking that will be supporting that at the full build out. Again, the parking strategies are phased to build up towards that. But it is wrapped by certain residential live work units.

Then the pink, which you see, is retail. We're calling that community oriented commercial. The idea here is there are several things we've heard over and over again, for example, everyone wants to see a grocer or some type of a market in downtown Mesa. That would be great. Again, going back to the development block approach, if that's something that comes online, there's flexibility with the city and the developer to be able to make that happen. And that is thought through as you move through this.

One other thing, just from a design and specifically for this Board, I do want to bring up as we are currently working through with the city in the Development Agreement, there are going to be robust design standards as part of this. With that, we recognize that this development is significant with its connections to the historic neighborhoods that surround it. As well as the contextual response of what's going on in downtown Mesa. This influenced the design aesthetics of all of these buildings. That is something that we've put a lot of attention into and talked about quite a bit that these will be supportive. Again, as Neil talked about, we want to build on what's already happened here. The design will do the same thing. We will make sure that the materials of the buildings, the design

aesthetics, the styles will all be incorporated and will again be something that is complementary to downtown and build upon what's already been here.

This slide really focuses in and shows you exactly what that initial build out phase will be. You're going to see on that far left-hand side, a residential product, that will be a couple of different typologies. As well as a row of townhouses along the southern edge. You'll see along the bottom as well, there is a significant distance from the historic neighborhood that is to the south of the site. That was very intentional for a couple of reasons. One, we're dealing with a lot of underground utilities in that area. But also, we want to make sure that the transition from the neighborhood up into this development, which will be a little bit more of a density increase, obviously, that it is built up in a way that makes sense and is connected to those neighborhoods. So, there's enough of a connection and this linear park that would be along the southern edge of the site here would be something that is utilized for both of those neighborhoods moving forward. The other part of this was all of the historic right of ways are a significant part of this project as well. I think everybody on this Board is probably very familiar we have some very wide right of ways in Mesa that are historically something that is important and that it plays a role. We want to build on that. There are ways that we're looking at traffic control, parking, landscape, hardscape, how those things are all designed to make these wonderful, appropriate desert streetscapes for us to be able to go and walk every day, for example.

There are a couple of things of note. Wilbur, as you saw originally, we are going to be abandoning that from Second to First. And really that was important. It wasn't a really utilized right of way.

Neil Calfee

It's closed now.

Benjamin Ayers

But we are officially going to abandon that to give a lot more development room in the middle of the site. To be able to utilize and create something of substance in the middle. The other right of way, that's going to potentially change is Pasadena, again from Second to First. These are all within the development itself. Both of these are underutilized. There's literally nothing that connects to the east or west off of Pasadena. And it is again underutilized. It allows for a little bit more development space. And so those are things that I know that we so far have support from the city staff. Other than that, the historic right of ways are going to stay in place. However, the design standards will show that we're going to make those much more walkable, livable, usable streetscapes. So, then next steps.

Neil Calfee

I'd probably be remiss if I don't discuss one of the requirements and one of the early issues that the city brought to our attention. The age of this area brings to it some opportunities that were built in there, for example, the WPA stamps are on sidewalks. We have looked at that, the city has provided us a map, and each of those WPA stamps will be removed and preserved. We're determining right now what is the best way to display them, put them into an art project or something. We feel like we have a lot of great raw material to work with. That's part of what we're

doing is understanding what might make the most sense to display those and figure out the best way to show that they're there. That history will be preserved as well.

In terms of next steps, right now we're working through the process. We're doing this. We're talking. We're listening. We're working through. We're looking at adjustments to the plan. We're with staff. We're understanding all of these different things so it's a bit of a sausage factory right now. We are planning to hopefully go through and be within our public hearings with Planning and Zoning, potentially, in August. With also the potential to be through and working with the City Council to get their approvals in August as well. That's our goal. We'll see whether we get there or not. But in the meantime, we're going to be working through all of these various details, going through the push and the pull that happens through an approval process such as this. And at the same time, get our Development Agreement buttoned up and bring that all at once. This was basically a very deliberate plan, collectively, that we would do the entitlement package and the DA at once. What we didn't want to do is submit the DA first. Everyone gets all kind of like, what are we going to do here, and what's going to happen? Then you're going through a whole other public process and a whole other series of meetings, to try to figure out then what the entitlements were. What we wanted is to do all that at once, so that we don't create more meeting fatigue. People's time is precious. The site has been agonized over for decades. In this case, we want to put everything out there, run through it all at once with a DA and a planning process. Hopefully we'll get to the end of that and have them both approved together. Anything else?

Jeff McVay

We're happy to answer any questions.

Chair Benzing

Thanks, guys, for the update. I sat in on a bunch of the original planning community meetings back now, three years ago, and it was a mixed bag of what the density for that is, what was appropriate. But I took away three things from all those meetings. How it interacted with historic neighborhoods especially there on the south edge. Which you guys more than addressed. I think the second item was the traffic through the neighborhood. By closing down Wilbur and creating a stronger townhouse presence, you've addressed that. Then also putting the first foot forward by doing the townhouses and the scaling issue. That's the first development part, I think will bode well with historic neighborhoods there, instead of seeing the medium density that's going behind it. Then all your discussions about the archaeological assessment plans you have in place and retaining the WPA stamps, that's terrific to hear.

Boardmember Nelson

I guess I better get started. I'm going to ask you the first question, then I'll have a list of things. That site has gone through a lot of challenges. What makes you think you you're going to be successful, whereas others have failed completely?

Neil Calfee

Wow.

Jeff McVay

That's a darn good question.

Neil Calfee

We have experienced in doing difficult things. My partner and I like projects that are difficult. We spent a bunch of our time working with the City of Tempe and Phoenix, and liked the challenge of difficult projects. Probably the most high profile one we did was Tempe Marketplace. Which was a 200-acre brown field, former county island, that was a hazardous mess. Got it cleaned up, got to remediated, got it put together and developed. Way back in my history, I worked for the city of Tempe and spent a lot of time on Apache Boulevard, assembled property, worked through redevelopment issues. I spent countless hours working with the community and understand in some respects, the sensitivities and understand that kind of development and what it takes to get projects like this off the ground. And so, what I can say is, our focus right now is to do the master plan and create something that hopefully, the community can get behind and feel okay about. I'm not going to say everybody's going to love it. But we think we want to find something that does find a happy medium. Then really focus on a very strong first phase. Because if we can get that right, then the site can develop. Then you started to create some opportunities around it. I think part of it, I don't want to drone on too much, but through some of our community meetings, so many people came out and said, we just want to see something happen out here. We haven't invested in our property because that's sitting there. We feel like we can create something that is a strong first phase. We can not only propel Site 17, but I think we can give the surrounding community a reason to make investment because that's really what it's about. Can you invest time, money, and energy in a site? And if we can do that with Site 17, we can give everybody else a reason to do that as well.

Jeff McVay

If I may add, there is a city perspective to this as well. My history with city is only 16 or 17 years. I wasn't here during the really challenging times behind Site 17. But I've been involved pretty intimately for the last 10 to 12 years with what's happening downtown. I can say, with the clarity of hindsight, the reason the city went in and acquired Site 17 and the development that they required it for wasn't appropriate. I think it bore itself out by the fact that it didn't happen. From that point forward, everything that the city went through and tried to do never really went through any type of process to see what the actual community wants. We're still sitting here telling you that there was very little consensus. I think that's always going to be the case. But there wasn't even an effort for consensus before. It was always an effort to put something big there, a waterpark, a resort, a teaching hospital, a spring training facility. None of those things were ever actually appropriate in the context of this site. I personally believe and professionally believe that this site has a history that has informed us all the way along. Finally, something is coming forward which actually has viability and has actually been thought out. It is appropriate to the downtown and the neighborhood versus trying to land a spaceship down here. I think that is one of the reasons why we probably in general feel that this has more potential for success than any of the other things that we have ever explored for the site since the mid-90s.

Boardmember Nelson

Thank you for that. I appreciate that. I go way back to that community just so you know. What were some of the common things you heard? You talked about a grocer. What were some other concerns the community said that they thought should be in that spot over there? What were some of the other things that you heard more than one time?

Jeff McVay

We heard a lot of things more than one time. There's a lot. But I'll weigh in, because these guys came in after we went through the city's Master Planning Process where we held a lot of outreach in advance of the outreach they have since done. The things that I heard is consensus were what formed those guiding principles. It's creating a good buffer to Wilbur. Respecting Wilbur and the neighbor to the south. Trees. I heard creating an environment in which people actually want to exist and walk around. Grocery store. That's the only one that I think everybody agreed on. Now, those are the ones where I think there was general consensus. Other things that we heard regularly was respecting the history of the site, understand how it came to be the way it is today. Affordable housing comes up often. At the same time, nothing but market rate housing comes up just as often. So, there's a lot of things I would say we've heard several times that have been considered along the way. There may be some others that you are aware, that you have heard and would like to share with us. But I think generally it's about creating something that is respectful to the neighborhood to the south and also to the neighborhood to the north. Because a lot of the folks in the neighborhoods in the north were the families that lived there at the time that the city acquired it.

Boardmember Nelson

Yeah, they were. I remember that time. The city went in, and they moved all those people out and they left it vacant. Some people died as a result of that, because it got moved out of there. So yeah, it has a real history with the Washington-Escobedo neighborhood. People have been looking at that and it wasn't always considered downtown just so you know that. That was part of the segregated community. So, it never got a lot of play. Also, that's where the park was. The pool was there. The baseball park was there. The circus used to come to town, and they had animals that would run around there. For that community people would cross, once it got integrated, to go to Franklin school and that was a real challenge. I remember kids crossing that street to go to Franklin from Washington. There were black families living there and it was a real challenge. I know you talked about reaching out to Washington-Escobedo. Some of the members have been to your meetings in the past. I know the last time you said you're going to do a meeting to talk to them, that would be great. So, the goal is for you to own the property. Will there ever be opportunity for people to buy a piece of there, once they're there? How long would that take?

Neil Calfee

We are planning the townhome component that could be for sale. One of the things quite honestly, we've been discussing, and it's been an interesting discussion in that in creating a for sale opportunity also means that you don't know what happens once they're sold. In many cases, you end up with Airbnb or rental opportunities. With ASU coming in, could you end up with default student housing? It's part of where we're going to plat them and we're going to individually meter them. I think we want to have a conversation about whether it makes sense to sell these units

individually, or to hold them for rental. Because you actually have a better measure of, albeit control, for the activities that take place in something if it's centrally managed rental versus for sale. But again, they will certainly be platted, metered and could be sold.

Boardmember Nelson

That's great. Also, over in that area we talked about the history. You probably don't know, the newscaster Bruce Cooper used to live over there. That's where his family was from. The black servicemen, I talked to some of the elders, and they said back in the late 30s, early 40s, people put up like little stands for food and stuff because they were not welcome to shop in downtown Mesa. Right on that spot. There was never anything official. What are you going to do to sort of remember that history of that neighborhood connected to Washington? What are you planning for that? Do you have any idea what you want to do? If you reached out to anybody? Have you talked to the historic museum yet?

Neil Calfee

We're in the process of doing that. One of the debates we're having is, do you create a physical thing? What might that look like? But one of the things that we're pursuing right now is working with the ASU film school. Can we create, I don't want to say movie, but a multimedia experience? Something that's actually an oral history and photo documentation to create a living thing that can be a history of this neighborhood. That can be more than just a monument. That can be more than just a plaque. Now, if it turns out that a plaque and a monument is really what makes sense for the community, absolutely. But we'd like to see if we're bringing in this film school, and we're bringing in this opportunity, can we take it to another place that might be even more meaningful then, again, just a plaque? So that's what we're looking at.

Boardmember Nelson

That's great. I like you mentioned the WPA. In Washington Park there is a WPA building there. Most people don't know, I didn't know too recently. It's still there. It was part of Bethel AME Church. It was the Parson's house and it's still there. They refinished the front of the surface, but it was a WPA building. I didn't know that and I'm, like, pretty savvy on my community. I look forward to what you got to say. I seem like I'm the only one asking questions. So, I'm going to stop. I always get into trouble they tell me. But those things are my concerns. Because I'm from that community.

Neil Calfee

Absolutely.

Boardmember Nelson

Thank you for being here. I'm glad you looked at the archaeological history with that. We haven't heard that very often when developers come in. That's good to hear and to know that you've looked that far back. Thank you for that. Thank you for doing your presentation. That's all I have.

Vice-Chair Babos

I have a couple comments. It's a very nice presentation. I'm glad to see something going there. I've lived in Mesa for 30 years and driven by that blank site forever. Couple of comments I really congratulate you on the townhouses at the southern end. Phase one, the southwest corner it looks like it's a little bit bigger of a building and that's still single family residential across the street. Somehow if you could continue the townhomes in that area, it would totally front on all the single-family homes. The street that's the main north south what street is that?

Neil Calfee

Hibbert.

Vice-Chair Babos

I think personally I would rather have Pasadena. You made a comment about not competing with the downtown, you want to integrate with it. I think the site is kind of far for people to walk or to be complementary. I'd rather see it be more of a destination. Somewhere on one of the four sides have a gateway into the site. Somewhere in the middle, a park, something that's a destination. You can have markets there that are representative of what historically happened. But it looks like a spectacular development but the preliminary massing there's no center to it. It's just a series of buildings. So, just food for thought and if you can think about that.

Neil Calfee

Thank you.

Jeff McVay

One thing to note, related to Hibbert, and one of the reasons why the city will always want to maintain Hibbert is there is massive infrastructure under the surface of Hibbert. To the size and degree that no development or city will want to take on the cost of relocating a 30-inch water line.

Benjamin Ayers

A 30-inch sewer line and an 8-inch water line.

Jeff McVay

So Hibbert is kind of a corridor of necessity at this point. For downtown in general, actually. Our best option with Hibbert is to figure out how do we make it more of a neighborhood street instead of a landing strip.

Vice-Chair Babos

It almost divides the site into two.

Neil Calfee

I think that's where we're going to try to make the best of it. When you see other streets in downtown, that are this wide, but the landscaping and the parking and the way it's treated, it really does bring it down. You can land a plane on that thing today. So that's really what we want to be able to do. To the extent we have those constraints, let's work with what we can, let's create a great design, and it'd be walkable. It's going to be what it's going to be but that really becomes the central spine for the project.

Jeff McVay

Another note, that you won't see in this presentation, and you probably won't see in the zoning documents or the development agreement, is that the city staff has been essentially directed by our Council to look beyond the boundaries of this site. Into how we actually do a better job of connecting it to downtown. Because our streets right now that would connect it to the Main Street aren't persuading people to take a walk. Hibbert and Centennial they're not persuasive. They aren't. They aren't encouraging. They are detracting from the ability of people. So, we have as staff and directed to look at capital improvement projects beyond the boundaries of this site that would help tie this site better to downtown.

Boardmember Nelson

Just a note. North of there was a grocery store, Lucky's.

Benjamin Ayers

The Lucky's is still there. Obviously, it's not utilized as a grocery store anymore. But for example, this leads to looking along the boundaries of this as well. We're really hoping that this sparks new opportunities. Say Lucky's wants to come back one day. Again, we need the people. Right. I think a lot of this is we're hoping that it'll move to the north. It'll move west and what's going on the other side of this block that also needs some help from a city perspective. We really see that as something hopeful.

I wanted to get back to one comment, hopefully I'm good to say this, but I think when you're talking about the connections beyond as well, there are other options that are being looked at. That are coming out of that initial study. Like a shuttle for example that would be a connector through this. There are other options that are trying to connect this further to downtown. To be a little bit more equitable. I think the most important thing for us is looking at this, we want it to be multimodal. We personally as a group have walked from Main Street through there. As you see now, the connection, almost that string of pearls. You have the new ASU building, you have Mesa Studios, you have the library. This connection as you go along Centennial, these are being thought through. That linear park is something that we're seeing as a jumping off point that will start to basically bridge those connections. I know we're talking about a centered big outdoor amenity. When you're trying to bring in a lot of residential, things like that sometimes don't work really well. Are there ways to create moments along this? We have talked about this as well from the design perspective. These kinds of buildings are aligning Hibbert for example. Are there opportunities for other uses from a mixed-use quote unquote, perspective that will encourage people to be able to be walking along that and stop and get a frozen yogurt or whatever it might be? Those are still absolutely things that are being considered and talked about.

Boardmember Skogebo

The massing I understand. Of course, I want to know what it looks like as far as the treatment of the exterior. I'd love if you could speak to that, but also how the parking is going to happen here.

Benjamin Ayers

It's not designed as of yet. But as I said, I think one of the things that we want to do is we want to make sure that we're complementary and understanding of the historic nature of the neighborhood to the south, of what's going on and downtown. The best illustration of this, as we've talked about, is, for example, you see a lot of brick in downtown Mesa. It's a very common material that you see in a lot of the buildings. Is there a way for us to bring that into this development in certain aspects, right? But then also upgrade things a little bit. A perfect example is, if you see in the Mesa Studios project, just next door. It was trying to build and utilize what's there from a historic nature, right? We took into account this beautiful M breeze block that's on the building. Instead of tearing that off, what do you do with the building? In that case, it was tearing down the inside walls and bringing it floor to ceiling glass. It actually makes it alive. There's a way to take these things and incorporate them. As we move into it, I can't talk to specific design yet, I don't know. But I will say that these are things that we are considering are very important for us.

As far as the parking, each one of these development blocks the idea is for them to be self-parked. As a good example, let me jump up to the plan here. When you're looking at this development here, you've got these three buildings that are right along Hibbert. Those are pushed to be right along Hibbert for obviously creating a streetscape presence. They are sitting at the ground. Behind that is a podium project that has parking below and residential above. That's all going to be within itself, providing its own parking. Each one of these is set up in the exact same way. The townhouses, for example, they are garaged. They have their own parking incorporated within the design of each unit. The office building again, because it's multiple phases, but at the full build out, you have a full office building here, there is a single story of parking planned for below the building at this point. Very, very early. First phase would be a surface parking lot. But then as the full build out comes there will be a parking garage for 200,000 square feet of office. So again, the goal and the strategy as we move forward is to park each one by itself. Within the early design concept right now, all of the street parking is just frankly gravy at this point. The idea is to have that there as a need, but also because of the streetscapes and we understand, to quote Nana, we want a parking problem in downtown Mesa. This is something that we've tried to incorporate and make sure that we have it self-parked throughout the development itself.

Jeff McVay

And besides what anybody said, we still don't have one today. Even though you may have to look a little bit harder for a parking space today. It's not a problem yet.

Chair Benzing

Well, I think it's very nice. It's good that we're moving forward with something. As the city, too much of the discussion and contention on the site is based on the eminent domain. That overshadows the history of the actual area. Hopefully this project tends to heal some of those, and we can actually talk about the history of what that neighborhood used to be and honor it in a way.

As far as the aesthetics of what's going on, I love the idea of you guys bringing in materials that talk to the history of everything around it. I assume we're still talking about something contemporary that doesn't compete or try to mimic everything. So, there's a clear dividing line

between the historic neighborhood to the south. You're honoring it, but in a way, that's like you said, it's of its time and not 70-year-old re-creation.

Benjamin Ayers

I think it's important to have and I think we can successfully blend those in some ways. For example, in the townhouses, and I know this is super early, but you price on the massing, a little bit of like mid-century feel to some aspects with the form. I think that's a way to bring in a historic form, but again, using more contemporary materials on the building. The forms speak to the history, but the materials maybe are a little bit more contemporary, and I think there's ways to blend that can be very successful.

Chair Benzing

Very nice. Does anybody have any additional comments or questions?

Neil Calfee

Bruce, we're going to come meet with you.

Benjamin Ayers

There's going to be future opportunities.

Chair Benzing

All right. Well, thank you.

Jeff McVay

I will say the intent behind this presentation is not just to answer questions, but it is also to have this Board's input. It's discussion and direction, right? So, Bruce, you may have more questions, but you may also have some ideas that you'd like to share. This is a great forum. Meeting with them is a great forum. And I say that to the entire Board we're doing this genuinely wanting to hear.

Boardmember Nelson

I'm good. I'll get back to you. I'm learning the process. I always get in trouble. So, I'm learning the process. I think those we'll stop there. At the meeting when I'm a private citizen, you'll have some stuff to hear. Thank you.

Neil Calfee

Sounds great.

Benjamin Ayers

Alright. Thank you.

Chair Benzing

Thank you, guys.

Jeff McVay

I will say, it's not an agenda but Ben brought it up, the Studio's as an example of context. We've completed that project, first phase. At a future Board meeting would you like to schedule some time to take a quick tour of the Studios? I mean, it's right next door. I can show up and bring the key and we can just quickly walk you through and then come back and do your meeting.

Chair Benzing

Michelle will put it as a future agenda item at the end.

6. Review and discuss the entries received and select the winners of the 2022 Historical Fiction Essay and Video contest.

After the essay and video contest entries were discussed Chair Benzing called for a motion.

Chair Benzing

We all vote number 1 as the winner for the video entry. Now let's start a new motion for the essay contest winners.

Vice-Chair Babos

Mr. Chairman, I make a motion that number 11 is first, number 14 is second, and a three-way tie for third with numbers 5, 8, and 12.

Boardmember Bingham

I second that.

AYES: Benzing-Babos-Bingham-Nelson-Skogebo-Parsons

NAYES: None

ABSENT: None

Dr. Nana Appiah

Chair, Board members, one of things that we're looking into with the Mayor and the City Council is to see if we can get this on City Council agenda this month. Because this is also Historic Preservation month. So, it will be good if we can put this on an agenda and get the declaration out to declare the month as Historic Preservation month. In addition, we think it will be good to also invite all the participants this year to come to the Council meeting. Because in the past, what we've done is invited only the winners. I think it's good for all those that participated to be recognized by the City Council. So that's what we're working on right now. We will contact the winners and the participants tomorrow to see if they can attend that Council meeting. Then we'll be able to have it declared as Historic Preservation month with all of them there.

Chair Benzing

That would be terrific. Thank you.

7. Discussion and provide direction for ways the Historic Preservation Board can promote and encourage activities associated with the Juneteenth holiday.

Chair Benzing

I know we're coming up on that fast. Did anybody have any ideas of what we could do as far as planning to do anything for that event? I didn't look into what the city had planned, but I don't think there's anything this year. I couldn't find anything on the website.

Boardmember Nelson

The city officially isn't planning anything that I know of. I know the Zen Nights does a presentation downtown. They got the proclamation last year. So, they're doing that. I have scheduled at the library, the Matriarchs Exhibit and screening the North Town. Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Juneteenth is on the 19th this year. The city, I don't think has had any official things that they do. Last year they had an online presentation of black history. I know because they asked me for the stuff, so I gave it to them. I don't think they have done anything official like with Cinco de Mayo, or Day of the Dead, or MLK. There's never been anything that the city, that I know of, officially adopted to recognize it. I brought this up as it seems like something we should be able to do. Something to recognize that somehow. I don't know what that would be. Like, I'm always doing things as a story maker myself, but the city should do something to recognize it. Maybe banners?

Chair Benzing

I know we're up against a time crunch this year. Is there something that we can do to promote the events that are going on? Through the historic preservation website, just a banner? And say, these are the events. Have them listed and pop that up first? I know, its low traffic, but at least it's starting to get it out there. That'd be a first step. I think this is something like if we want to start doing something more for certain events, or certain months, let's discuss it at our when we have our retreat.

Boardmember Nelson

Yeah, you have to plan for the next time.

Chair Benzing

I definitely think that's something that we've talked about adding to the agenda for the retreat when we finalize when we're going to do that. That's looking like, it's probably going to be in the fall. That's probably the best time to have it at this point.

Boardmember Skogebo

When you said banners, do you mean like down Center Street, type of banners?

Boardmember Nelson

Like they do with Cinco de Mayo, yes.

Jeff McVay

Chair, whenever I come to HPB, I always find myself interacting with more than my agenda item. So, forgive me. I'm sure there's going to be a social media campaign. I hope there's going to be. I think it would be appropriate if the Board wanted to make a formal recommendation to the City Council and to the city that we consider our own campaign to celebrate Juneteenth. Also, the banners Boardmember Nelson talked about, the street banners, we have a contract with the Downtown Mesa Association, who is responsible for making sure the banners go up. All we have to do is provide them with designs for the banners. They are not that expensive. And we do want to rotate banners out because we want to be reflective of what's going on at that time of the year. So again, if you were to make that formal recommendation to the city, I can then go talk to my folks with DMA and see whether or not there's something we can work on.

Chair Benzing

Is the process just us recommending that at this meeting?

Michelle Dahlke

Yes sir.

Boardmember Nelson

Yeah, because they did a great thing for the actor that just won the Academy Award. That went up really quickly. That was great for Mesa. That was really cool. Put's us on a map. An actor from here won an Oscar that makes us feel like we're better than everybody else in Arizona. You know?

Chair Benzing

Going back to the essays, I was a little bit surprised that some of these celebrity essays didn't reference him to be honest.

Boardmember Parsons

Well, since I'm fairly new to this Board, does the Chamber of Commerce I mean, do you overlap some of the events and things like that? Because they're out there. I get all kinds of publications once a week with whatever is happening. Then of course, there's all sorts of other things, too. If you went on their website, you could download it.

Chair Benzing

We don't have any overlap right now, but we could. It'd be great to reach out to them.

Boardmember Nelson

So, we need to make a request? Is that what we need to do to get banners up? Is that how it works?

Chair Benzing

Yeah, I think we should. It would have to carry as a motion for the Board. A motion to request banners for Juneteenth.

Boardmember Nelson

Okay so I make a motion we should create some kind of banners to honor Juneteenth in Mesa because we did make a proclamation last year. It just seems appropriate that we do that. So, I'll make a motion that happens, and I'll be more than happy to help you out with that.

Chair Benzing

Can I amend that motion and say, add the social media outreach in June for the event?

Boardmember Nelson

Absolutely.

Vice-Chair Babos

I second.

Michelle Dahlke

Mr. Chairman, Board members. Charlotte, would they have to direct it to the City Council? What would you recommend?

Charlotte McDermott

Yeah, that's what the question that I have. Jeff, if you want to come up here and share your knowledge.

Dr. Nana Appiah

I think once you've made the recommendation staff will find a way to make that happen.

Jeff McVay

I would say that you are an advisory Board to the City Council. So, your recommendation is obviously going to go the City Council. But we're hearing it and we're going to help make that action as well.

Chair Benzing

So, we have the motion. Did we have a second?

Vice-Chair Babos

I seconded.

AYES: Benzing-Babos-Bingham-Nelson-Skogebo-Parsons

NAYES: None

ABSENT: None

8. Hear reports from Board Members on museums, exhibits, committees and/or events related to Historic Preservation.

Boardmember Nelson

I'm happy to report that the Military Honor banners go up the end of May. I'm also happy to announce they reached out to me. I had a veteran's exhibit, and they said, hey, Bruce, just send us five people, and we will put them on the banners. They were all approved. That's probably the most folks of color we've seen there since it happened. Which is great. Manuel Mendoza was one of them, which I think was amazing. If you don't know about him, he was a Recipient of Honor. He was amazing. If there was like a real-life Rambo, he was it. I'm hoping to have his wife and his daughter there when they open it up. I'm going to reach out to them and say, can you make sure you're there? Then I submitted some other folks. Buffalo Soldiers that used to live the neighborhood, World War I and World War II. So that's going to be happening pretty soon. They do it twice a year. They do it coming up, and then they do it again for Veterans Day. Then they give the banners to the family.

Also, I will be presenting, this Saturday, at the Alston House, the Matriarchs of Washington Park. This is an unveiling of the portraits honoring African American women who went through segregation, racism, misogynist from that community. This is just the beginning of it. In June we'll be doing it at the library. A bigger exhibit along with showing the documentary North Town, about the neighborhood. So that's happening as well. Then over at the Mesa Historical Museum the Diversity exhibit still is there. If you haven't made your way over there you should try to attend.

Chair Benzing

Great.

Vice-Chair Babos

Now I'll also mentioned based on last month's discussion, I drove down Martin Luther King Way. I didn't even know it was there. It was a quick trip, but it's there and a very clean street.

Boardmember Nelson

We were the first. It's small. But that's monumental. We were the first city in Arizona to do it. That's all I have right now. But here in Mesa Zen Nights is doing Juneteenth, which is coming up.

Chair Benzing

Anyone else have anything thing to add? Moving onto to item 9.

9. Future agenda items.**

Chair Benzing

I would like to agendize going to see the Studios. That'd be terrific. If we could do that. We'll work with your schedule for next month. If that doesn't work, we can push it off to July.

Vice-Chair Babos

And can we also follow up with this social media for the Juneteenth or whatever?

Chair Benzing

Yes. Does anybody else have any future agenda items they would like to add at this time? Moving onto item 10.

10. Adjournment.

Chair Benzing

Do I have a motion?

Vice-Chair Babos

I'll make a motion to adjourn the meeting of the Historic Preservation Board.

Boardmember Skogebo

I second the motion.

AYES: Benzing-Babos-Bingham-Nelson-Skogebo-Parsons

NAYES: None

ABSENT: None

Chair Benzing

The meeting is closed at 7:28 pm. Thank you

**A recording of the meeting is available upon request. Please contact the Planning Department with questions, 480-644-2385.

Full List of Essay & Video Contest Entries Discussed at the May 3, 2022
Historic Preservation Board Meeting
(Related to Item 6)

- #1. Celebrities Long Ago in Mesa, AZ (Essay)
- #2. Mesa's Neighborhood History
- #3. Long Time Ago in Mesa, Arizona
- #4. Historical Houses in Mesa, Arizona
- #5. Little Houses of Big Purpose
- #6. Mesa, Arizona's Historic Districts
- #7. Historic Neighborhoods in Mesa, Arizona
- #8. The History of Mesa's Celebrities
- #9. The History of Old Mesa, Arizona Towns
- #10. History of Mesa, AZ
- #11. Mesa, Arizona History is Famous
- #12. Something Old in a Place so Very New
- #13. The History of Celebrities in Mesa, Arizona

#14. Dear Diary

#15. Untitled

#16. A Rose for Dad

#17. Video: The Oral History of Elaine Rowley Baker