

# General & Economic Development Committee Report

**Date:** May 12, 2009  
**To:** General & Economic Development Committee  
**From:** Natalie Lewis, Assistant to the City Manager  
Shelly Allen, Assistant Economic Development Director  
**Subject:** Preliminary staff-generated suggestions and thoughts for Downtown Vision, goals and priorities.

## PURPOSE

To present, discuss and collect feedback from the General & Economic Development Committee on the preliminary "City as Stakeholder" ideas for a Downtown vision and broad goals. Eventually, staff's objective is to submit these early ideas to the Downtown Mesa Association for further consideration within their stakeholder involvement and visioning process this summer/fall.

## BACKGROUND

The Downtown Mesa Association (DMA) is leading a broad, comprehensive stakeholder involvement process to create a new Downtown vision, goals and priorities. Their outreach process is scheduled to begin in May and to continue through the fall. As a major stakeholder in downtown, the City has prepared some preliminary feedback (see attached) we would propose submitting to the DMA. This feedback is not meant to supersede/replace what DMA has already drafted, nor is it meant to be the final City of Mesa feedback. Rather, this is to provide some early ideas created by a cross-section of staff and Council for DMA's further review and reflection within the context of other stakeholder feedback.

Here's how this preliminary feedback has been drafted, reviewed and refined thus far:

- In February, a cross-section of staff met to informally brainstorm images, words and other descriptors that we believed described successful and thriving downtowns. Staff representatives from the Library, Arts & Culture, City Manager, Real Estate, City Attorney, Diversity, Transportation, Neighborhood Services, Parks & Recreation, Development & Sustainability, Economic Development and Business Services participated in the discussion.
- Based on that team discussion as well as on Council feedback during recent study sessions and the Council workshop last fall, a subcommittee of the staff team drafted a vision statement along with broad goals and key priorities.
- Staff reviewed the draft with Vice Mayor Kyle Jones and Councilmember Richins, as Council's key downtown representatives. Their comments have been incorporated.

Today's discussion is an opportunity for the General & Economic Development Committee to provide feedback on these preliminary ideas before they are submitted to DMA. Your comments will also help us ensure this early feedback is "owned" by staff as well as members of the Council.



## ATTACHMENT

PRELIMINARY (4-12-09)

### Suggestions, thoughts for Downtown Visioning and Goals City of Mesa, AZ

#### Vision:

Downtown Mesa is the soul of our community, where our heritage and future have come together to form a unique and thriving urban environment. Its distinctive history and high potential for sustainability encourages all types of economic and social activities. Its setting as a destination district connects residents and visitors with dynamic opportunities for shopping, dining, working, learning, entertaining and living.

#### Broad Goals:

- **Thriving Urban Environment** (arts and culture; downtown historic neighborhoods; diverse and cross-generational attractions; clean and safe; outstanding entertainment via signature and special events, restaurants and nightclubs)
- **Diverse Economy** (right balance of jobs, residential living & services, specialty retail)
- **Connectivity and Accessibility** (Accessible options to downtown and seamless experiences to walk, ride the rail, bicycle, bus, drive/park within downtown and easier freeway accessibility)
- **Progressive Stakeholder Leadership** (stakeholder ownership, pride and involvement; public-private partnerships, code/policy updates, environmentally sustainable development)
- **Regional Destination and Visibility** (proactive marketing, creating community-sponsored attractions that draw regional crowds)

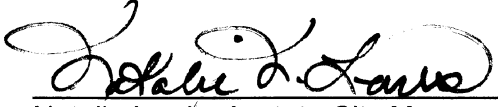
#### Priority (or transformative) Projects:

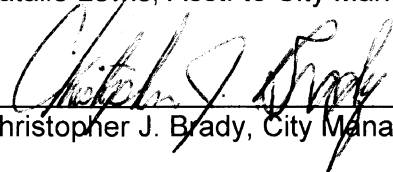
1. Nurture the experience economy through outstanding and well coordinated arts and provide additional focus/staffing to coordinate downtown signature/special events and to draw Spring Training crowds into downtown.
2. Create distinctive living opportunities, downtown historic neighborhoods and related neighborhood services. Celebrate/link urban and historical neighborhoods.
3. Pursue higher learning, healthcare, high-tech (clean) industry, commerce and additional boutique retail opportunities (consider vacant City property as an investment opportunity to attract right industry with high-wage jobs rather than a traditional real estate transaction)
4. Ensure seamless connectivity, north-south side downtown linkages and accessibility via a variety of transit/transportation modes and expand pedestrian friendly linkages.
5. Complete the transit-oriented overlay and create downtown as an urban form.
6. Formulate new or update existing codes, policies to facilitate downtown development, revitalization and reinvestment. Consider subdividing buildings, simplifying processes, consolidating City buildings.
7. Develop a proactive marketing plan for Downtown—create activity, excitement in downtown day and night.

Once the Committee's comments are incorporated, staff will submit these early suggestions to DMA. DMA is planning for the City to be an active stakeholder in their broader visioning process and discussions. As such, staff and Council will have additional opportunities to provide feedback on the Downtown vision, goals and priorities, as appropriate.

**COORDINATED WITH**

This report has been prepared by the City Manager's Office in coordination with Economic Development Department.

  
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Natalie Lewis, Asst. to City Manager

  
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Christopher J. Brady, City Manager

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A: Preliminary Suggestions, thoughts for Downtown Vision and Goals
- B: DMA's draft "Vision for Downtown Mesa's Square Mile"