



MINUTES

TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE MEETING

February 24, 2009, 8:00 a.m.

San Tan Conference Room

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. At roll call the following people were in attendance:

Committee Members:

Cynthia Buffington
Ryan Desmond
Nancy Diab
Brian Frakes
Jason Gad
Randy Green
Steve Ingram
Marvin Smith, Jr.
Toni Valenzuela
Chris Webb

Monica Munoz arrived at 8:08 a.m.

Town Staff:

Doreen Cott, Economic Development Director
Kim Moyers, Economic Development Mgmt. Asst.
Craig Barnes, Council Member
Gordon Mortensen, Council Member
Wayne Balmer, Planning Manager
Fred Brittingham, Principal Planner
Dick Schaner, Transportation Director
Laura Moats, Community Development Assistant

2. Introductions

Economic Development Director Cott thanked everyone for attending and stated the goal of this Committee is to review the existing Town Center and Redevelopment Area Plans, with the objective of updating both plans and making a recommendation to Town Council in the next 10-12 months. A total of 10 meetings and at least one public involvement meeting is anticipated.

3. **Public Comment:** Members of the public may address the Committee on items not on the printed agenda.

There were no public comments.

4. **Items for Discussion and Possible Action**

- A. Introduction of Town Center Committee Members: members of the Committee and Town Staff introduced themselves.
- B. Discuss team member roles and responsibilities: Ms. Cott stated the Committee is made up of a very diverse group of people who will each have unique perspectives. The group is comprised of local business owners, developers and residents. The main goal is to create a vibrant and healthy Town Center. Eleven members have been appointed to the Committee. A quorum consisting of at least six (6) members will be necessary to conduct each Committee meeting. Town Staff will email agendas and reminders, as well as phone call reminders the day before each meeting. If anyone cannot attend the meeting, they are asked to notify Town Staff.

Ms. Cott further stated that homework/action items will be given at each meeting. The action items will be addressed at the start of each meeting.

Ms. Cott stated a Chairman and Vice-Chairman will be elected and asked that the group consider nominating either themselves or another Committee Member to fill these roles. The election of these officers will take place at the next meeting.

The future meeting schedule was deferred to later in the meeting.

Ms. Valenzuela stated her opinion that Queen Creek is supposed to be unique, and she feels holding to that standard rather than incorporating methods used in surrounding municipalities should be the manner in which this Committee works. It is her hope that the Committee and Town Staff would retain the current location of the Town Center, rather than shifting it north, such as the Queen Creek and Ellsworth roads area. She also emphasized the importance of the original and existing businesses in Town Center. Ms. Cott responded she agrees that Queen Creek should maintain a unique character, and stated the existing Town Center area was always intended to be the economic core of Queen Creek.

C. Presentation on Town Center and Redevelopment Area Plans; progress to date:

Ms. Cott made a Power Point presentation on the Town Center Development Concept, which included the following:

- Town Center Development Concept (the Committee will focus largely on updating this)
 - Northeast and Northwest portions of plan: Large, big box
 - Southwest portion of plan: Pedestrian scale uses;
- Land Use Plan – some land uses have changed since the 2005 Plan was adopted. This will be updated throughout the Committee’s review process;
- Town Center Development Concepts
- Town Center Plan – current plan adopted March 16, 2005;
- Contents of Town Center Plan
 - Economic Element
 - Land Use Element
 - Multimodal Circulation Element – several areas have been developed since the 2005 plan: Ellsworth Loop Road, which is the backbone of the Town Center; and the Ellsworth Loop Road railroad underpass
 - Town Center Character Element – there currently is not a consensus on the planned architectural style of the Town Center
- Enhancements – sidewalks, pedestrian friendly amenities, ramadas, etc.
- Building Design – focus on four-sided architecture, multiple building facades including brick and stone veneers and creative stucco.
- Town Center Amenities – pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian facilities; pocket parks; Town Hall gathering place; southern gateway plaza.
- Implementation – Much progress has been made to date. There is an overlap between the Town Center Plan and the Redevelopment Area Plan; a matrix handout was distributed to Committee members. Ms. Cott stated the Committee will be asked to make recommendations on priorities for staff to implement these plans.
- Maps of Queen Creek Town Center and Redevelopment Area – Ms. Cott outlined the Town Center and Redevelopment Area boundaries.
- Redevelopment Plan – adopted September, 2005;
 - Tool to implement the General Plan and Town Center Plan
 - Provides direction on items to protect and enhance the Town Center
- Town Center Development – Ms. Cott stated the Town Center is comprised of long-time, existing development, which is the core of the Town Center, as well as

new retail developments. Ms. Cott provided a list of new retail development in the Town Center area, including Queen Creek's first apartment complex – Broadstone Apartments, which is 51% occupied and includes 1, 2, and 3-bedroom apartments up to 1,300 square feet; and the Town Center Apartments which are currently under construction directly east of the Municipal Center Complex and wrapping around to the north. Town Center Apartments is a 176-unit complex. New retail development in Town Center includes:

- Shoppes at Indigo Trails
 - Queen Creek Village Center
 - Heritage Square – in site plan review process
 - Queen Creek Crossroads
 - Queen Creek Fiesta
 - Queen Creek Marketplace (Vestar)
 - Cornerstone at Queen Creek (WDP)
 - Library area – proposed mixed use and parking garage surrounding library
- Items for Committee to Consider
 - Expansion of Town Center
 - Development standards and guidelines
 - Economic Development Tools – financing options to help businesses, i.e. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and a possible Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program.
 - Town of Queen Creek General Plan – Ms. Cott illustrated the General Plan Map and explained the 2008 Major General Plan Amendment applications and how they relate to the Town Center.

Discussion followed on Major General Plan Amendment Applications GP08-117 and GP08-118. Council Member Mortensen added that a Major General Plan Amendment approved in 2007 affects the land north of town, known as Queen Creek Station. This will be a mixture of employment, office space, retail and Medium-High Density Residential (MHDR). Ms. Cott stated she will provide graphics of this development at the next meeting. Staff is currently updating the Zoning Ordinance to include the new zoning designations approved with this major General Plan Amendment Application: Mixed Use, Medium-High Density Residential-A (MHDR-A), and Medium-High Density Residential-B (MHDR-B).

Planning Manager Balmer addressed General Plan Amendment cases GP08-117 and GP08-118 from a Planning Division viewpoint. He explained the Town Center is not all commercial, as it is mixed-use. The General Plan Update left the Town Center as it was.

Staff would like to take this Town Center (TC) designation out of the Land Use Plan and replace it with whatever the Committee deems appropriate. Some areas of the Town Center will remain 'as-is' and some areas will contain new uses. He explained that the job of the Town Center Committee will be to decide if the Town Center area should expand, and if so, how should it be expanded and how will the new areas be linked to the existing areas. The Committee should consider if there should be additional office and/or retail space, as well as whether or not there should be additional single-family or multi-family developments.

Additional discussion followed on the 2008 General Plan Amendment proposals, their affect on Town Center and uses allowed in Town Center. Some members of the Committee consider the Town Center designation as very broad, allowing a wide variety of uses, while others on the Committee believe that, contrary to that opinion, the Town Center designation is restrictive. Ms. Cott added that Town Staff will be hiring an Economic Consultant to provide a third-party economic analysis of the Town Center area.

Council Member Mortensen made the following points:

- 1) The General Plan Update was approved by the Town Council and officially adopted by voters in 2008;
- 2) It is important to remember that the Town Center is an advisory committee and will be making a recommendation to the Town Council. Any type of action taken by the Town Center Committee will be a recommendation only.

Ms. Valenzuela asked for clarification on the difference between a Redevelopment Area and an Improvement District. Mr. Schaner explained that an Improvement District is something created for a specific project, where the cost is assessed back to the land owners, based on frontage and who will be benefitting from the improvements. A Redevelopment Area is a more generalized area that may be eligible for funding/financing assistance such as CDBG and may include improvements such as adding sidewalks or enhancing building facades. Ms. Valenzuela questioned the sidewalk in front of M&I Bank, and asked if the Town will continue the sidewalk from where it ends at Heritage Loop Road to Ellsworth/Ocotillo roads. Mr. Schaner responded that Dibble Engineers is under contract for design engineering of Ellsworth/Rittenhouse roads south to Ocotillo Road, which would include sidewalks, landscaping and amenities; however, it is unclear when construction will take place. The design concept is scheduled to be completed by early Fall, 2009. The Town's Budget Committee will meet next week to discuss funding priorities. Mr. Schaner stated this is a top priority project, but it is unclear how much funding will be available to complete the construction.

Council Member Mortensen asked if the Town Center Committee will discuss expanding the Town Center area north to Queen Creek Station. Ms. Cott responded this is something the Committee may consider.

D. Overview of Work Program and Timeline

Ms. Cott distributed the Draft Work Plan, which listed action items for each meeting, Meeting 1 through Meeting 9. She noted the Committee should take formal action to approve this Work Plan at its next meeting.

Council Member Mortensen requested the items be divided according to Key Result Areas (KRAs), rather than *Meeting Date* action items. Ms. Cott responded she will update the Work Plan to reflect KRAs. The updated list will be emailed to the Committee before the next meeting.

Ms. Cott then distributed a matrix of the Town Center and Redevelopment Area Plans showing goals, objectives and actions. The matrix includes items from the **Implementation Matrix** on pages 42-45 of the Town Center Plan. The Committee reviewed the **Level One Implementation items** on pages 43-44 of the Town Center Plan. It was noted which items have already been completed, what is outstanding, and what areas will be reviewed by the Town Center Committee.

Mr. Desmond left the meeting at 9:08 a.m.

The Implementation Matrix includes the following action item: *Research best practices for the development of a Town Center Merchants' Association*. Ms. Valenzuela stated that she is already part of a new group comprised of Town Center Merchants.

Council Member Mortensen noted the Ellsworth Loop Road addresses the north/south bypass through town; however, he wants to make sure the east/west route, known in the Town Center Plan as the "Collector Loop Road" has been adequately addressed and is up-to-date.

Referring to the action item: *Begin a tree planting program based on the landscaping plan so that mature trees will greet new development*, Council Member Barnes requested the tree planting program include non-profit groups.

Discussion took place on revenue diversification for the Town, and the sales tax surcharge which has been implemented. Ms. Cott responded funds collected from the sales tax surcharge may be used for Revolving Loan Funds (RLFs) and

beautification programs, etc. These funds could be used for downtown businesses wishing to do building façade improvements.

Council Member Barnes asked when community business funds would be available. Ms. Cott responded these funds would be available when the policies are adopted.

Council Member Mortensen noted that building permits have gone from an all-time high of 1,200 a few years ago to 150 this year. Even though the Town has been fiscally conservative and has emphasized revenue diversification, anything the Town Center Committee recommends will be only a plan, considering the poor economy. Council Member Mortensen left the meeting at 9:15 a.m.

Ms. Valenzuela called attention to signage for downtown merchants, stating signs are needed to bring attention to the Town Center and downtown businesses. She is worried that the Town Center Committee review of this issue will be too time-consuming, and would like to get signage in place sooner.

Ms. Cott responded that the Town staff has met to begin discussing sign standards for the Town and more specifically for the Town Center. Ms. Cott is researching sign ordinances of surrounding jurisdictions. Ms. Valenzuela reiterated her concern about how long this will take. Ms. Cott emphasized the importance of being aware of issues related to signs, such as proper placement of the signs (right-of-way issues) and having a standard in place first.

E. Establish future meeting schedule: The consensus of the Committee was to meet on the 4th Tuesday of every month at 7:30 a.m.

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, March 24 at 7:30 a.m. in the San Tan Conference Room.

Mr. Balmer reviewed background information and future issues associated with the Transportation Element of the Town Center Plan.

Ms. Cott asked the Committee to complete the following homework items:

- 1) Read, review and be prepared to discuss the ***Town Center Street Concept And Access Management Plan***, which was distributed at today's meeting;
- 2) Review the Multimodal Circulation Element of the Town Center Plan;

- 3) Consider nominations for Chairman and Vice-Chairman, to be elected at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:28 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Moats, Community Development Assistant

Passed and approved this 24th day of March, 2009.

Doreen Cott, Economic Development Director

