



MINUTES

TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE MEETING

August 25, 2009 7:30 a.m.

San Tan Conference Room

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. At roll call the following people were in attendance:

Committee Members:

Cynthia Buffington
Chris Webb
Jason Gad
Monica Munoz
Marvin Smith, Jr.
Toni Valenzuela
Steve Ingram
Council Member Barnes
Vice Mayor Mortensen

Town Staff:

Wayne Balmer, Planning Manager
Janet Kawczynski, Sr. Admin. Assistant
Laura Moats, Community Dev. Assistant

Others Present:

Richard Dyer, Independent Newspapers

Absent:

Ryan Desmond
Brian Frakes
Randy Green
Doreen Cott

2. Introductions

Chairman Buffington introduced Sr. Administrative Assistant Janet Kawczynski.

the Town Center Plan. The second policy is a restatement of the goals in the General Plan that relate to the Town Center Plan. He stated there is an overlap on policy 2g, which is similar to another goal, so the two were merged. Goal 1e is merged with goal 2g. The goals have not been eliminated, but have been reorganized to make them more consistent with the General Plan.

Jason Gad noted that policy 1a and 1j seem to overlap and suggested combining them. He stated 1a promotes commercial uses for daytime and 1j promotes evening activities. Chairman Buffington agreed these two items could be combined.

Council Member Barnes commented 1a talks about bringing in offices and commercial uses for jobs and 1j relates to entertainment. He feels 1a and 1j are distinctive from each other, since 1a would related to businesses such as insurance and offices, while 1j is intended to bring in something else that will promote those uses as destination locations (i.e. fun activities). Chris Webb stated he agrees they should be listed as two separate policies. Council Member Barnes stated if businesses are being promoted, the public is not coming into offices to have a good time. Chairman Buffington suggested eliminating the word "business" in 1j where it says, "business day". Chris Webb suggested deleting the word "daytime" in 1a, where it says "regular daytime activity".

Kim Moyers clarified the concept of "daytime activity" is to make sure there are enough employees in the Town Center to frequent restaurants, etc. Chairman Buffington stated she feels this is redundant since this item is addressed in goal 1j. She recommended removing the word "business" in 1j.

The committee concurred to remove the word "business" in 1j.

Goal 2: copied from General Plan. Jason Gad questioned item 2g, asking if the intention is still to promote a boutique hotel concept. Chairman Buffington responded yes, stating the boutique hotel concept is also part of the General Plan.

Council Member Barnes added that the Economic Development Commission has also brought this item to the Town Council.

Chris Webb asked if a study has been done on the viability of a hotel. Ms. Moyers responded a study is currently underway to determine the viability of a hotel in downtown as well as other parts of the community. She asked Mr. Balmer if the General Plan specifically mentions boutique. Mr. Balmer stated the idea is to promote a small specialty type hotel, such as an agri-tainment hotel near Schnepf Farms or a hotel in the desert foothills that has an equestrian theme for enjoying horse activities in the foothills. He stated the Town has discussed the benefit of including this use in the Town Center. Chairman Buffington stated it is also included in item 3g of the General Plan, page 44.

Chairman Buffington asked if there were any further questions. There were none.

Motion: Chris Webb 2nd: Nancy Diab

To approved the changes to the Town Center Economics Element as presented by staff, with the deletion of the word "business" in Poilicy 1j.

Vote: All ayes. Motion carried unanimously. (9-0)

C. Discussion and Possible Action on the Town Center Plan Character Element

Management Assistant Moyers presented slides of photos from surrounding communities to illustrate downtown and Town Center themes.

The photos included directional signs for the following downtown areas:

- Catlin Court – Glendale
- Old Town Scottsdale
- The Arts District in Scottsdale
- Downtown Gilbert
- Downtown Mesa – City Plaza, Arts Center, AZ Museum of Natural History

Ms. Moyers pointed out that several of the pictures show signs that talk about shops, such as "To More Shops", rather than identifying specific streets. She stated she likes this because it gives people an idea of where to go without being too specific. The signs at Catlin Court in Glendale use signs with hand arrows, instead of a basic arrow.

Brief discussion took place on directories/map signs. Ms. Moyers illustrated the downtown Mesa directory, which she said is similar to the map at Horseshoe Park Equestrian Centre. This directory shows the downtown shops and restaurants at a glance, below which is an index of all the businesses, restaurants, and shops.

Council Member Barnes questioned how often the directory/map would have to be changed with as fast as Queen Creek is growing. Ms. Moyers responded the frame/holder would be permanent; however, the actual map and/or directory could easily be updated at a minimal cost by the Town's Communication and Marketing Division. Planning Manager Balmer added this sign holder can also be used to advertise/change out signs for special events.

Vice Mayor Mortensen asked where the signs would be located. Mr. Balmer responded the specific locations could be talked about later in the agenda.

The Civic Center in Scottsdale uses one sign with several major destination locations listed.

Brief discussion took place on banner signs erected over the streets for special events throughout the year. Chairman Buffington noted the Town of Queen Creek discontinued using these last year. Council Member Barnes responded this was done because of streetlights. The banners used in Mesa are erected with a pulley system. Mr. Balmer stated Mesa has two of these in their downtown, and this space can actually be rented.

Ms. Moyers illustrated Catlin Court in Glendale, which is a series of small houses very similar to what exists in Town Center on Ellsworth Road. She pointed out each building is extremely different, yet has a cohesive look to it. Council Member Barnes asked if these were businesses or houses. Ms. Moyers responded these are houses adapted to business uses. All have a different look and feel to them, yet they work together as a whole and create a nice walking path, with a cottage feel. Many of the shops and restaurants have outside seating. Pictures of downtown Gilbert with outdoor seating were also shown. Ms. Moyers stated outdoor seating promotes the feel of a community that Queen Creek is looking for.

Ms. Moyers illustrated pictures of downtown Mesa in which character elements are used in the Town Center with the use of art sculptures. Council Member Mortensen pointed out one of the pictures that show two buildings standing across from each other, stating they had been remodeled. He asked what type of funding or opportunities are available for Queen Creek businesses that want to update their buildings. Ms. Moyers responded that the Economic Development Department is exploring funding option such as the Façade Improvement Grants for such projects. Mr. Balmer added Mesa has used a lot of federal funding to do their downtown artwork.

Nancy Diab noted the two very different looks between Old Town Scottsdale and the Scottsdale Arts district, which are located directly across the street from one another. Chairman Buffington stated Scottsdale Road as a whole maintains consistency of streetlights and the theme only changes once you get into the Arts district.

Ms. Moyers pointed out the consistencies, yet the creativity of each business in the use of signs and streetscapes.

Vice Mayor Mortensen spoke about the value of using statues, and stated if Queen Creek wanted to follow this practice, perhaps a statue of a tractor or child feeding a calf could be considered in order to emphasize a rural, ranch, cowboy feel.

Ms. Diab pointed out that the statues in Mesa are changed on a regular basis.

Since no specific transit stop in the Town Center Crossroads area had been acted upon, a question was raised regarding the second sentence of the second paragraph on page 2: "*Trails will connect the Town Center Crossroads Area to the proposed transit stop to the east...*" The Committee concurred in changing the sentence to say, "*future neighborhood schools and transit stops*" so there is no specificity.

Chairman Buffington questioned if trails are still being considered in every subdivision. Vice Mayor Mortensen responded the Trails plan is not changing.

Planning Manager Balmer suggested referencing the Dibble Engineers study pertaining to landscaping in this Element of the Town Center Plan. He stated he will work with Economic Development staff to find a good spot to include this.

The Committee discussed rewording the second paragraph on page 2 under Building Design . Some members felt the Committee did reach a consensus on color schemes and that this paragraph could be revised to be more specific.

It was pointed out that the more specific information is included in the last paragraph of this section. Referring to the text under B. *Building Design, Materials, Rooflines*, Mr. Webb asked if the Committee had come to specifics on rooflines, as this language makes it sound like the Committee had decided on a recommendation for specific rooflines. Chairman Buffington responded the Committee wanted to have varied rooflines in order to get a variety of elevations.

Chairman Buffington asked why the word "unique" was removed from second paragraph. Ms. Moyers responded this was done to alleviate redundancy since "unique" is used in the third paragraph.

Chairman Buffington questioned wording that had been added under **Family Neighborhood Character** Area, that states: "*Higher density residential (The Town Center Apartments) has developed to the east of this neighborhood and*

has provided landscaping and a pedestrian pathway.” Ms. Moyers responded it may have been added as an example.

Discussion took place on the deletion of the word ‘library’ under **Community Activities Character Area**. Members responded this paragraph refers to facilities in the *southern* portion of Town Center, and the new library is not located in this area. Council Members Barnes and Mortensen suggested deleting the words “southern portion”, rather than deleting the word “library”. The Committee agreed to delete all words up to “The”, making the sentence read, *“The Town center area will be the Town’s governmental hub with administrative, parks and recreation, library, convention facilities, and public safety facilities.”*

Ms. Moyers stated the changes will be made and brought back to the Committee for a formal vote in September.

Vice Mayor Mortensen stated he would like the public to see the thoughts and actions of the TCC before it goes to Council. Ms. Moyers responded there will be an open house when the TCC finishes its discussions/update on the TC Plan.

D. Discussion and Possible Action on Directional Signage Options

Planning Manager Balmer gave a presentation on directional signage, showing options for text and locations of signs in the Town Center. He noted Town Staff has been working with the Streets Division to come up with a signage concept, including proposed locations for directional signs. Wayne illustrated the map showing corresponding numbers where directional signs could be located.

Council Member Barnes indicated that on the corner of Ellsworth Road and Rittenhouse both he and Toni Valenzuela agreed that there should be a sign on this corner. If a sign is not installed here, the public will miss the center of town. Mr. Balmer said these can be added . This is only an illustrating concept at this point, and to show total number of signs being added and discuss which signs would be most helpful to the public. Also wanting to

show sign panels and what would be on the panels. This concept plan for directional signage will also be shown to Council.

Steve Ingram stated that there is no signage westbound on Ocotillo.

Chris Webb stated if driving east, the public gets past Vestar before they see a sign.

Kim Moyers stated that coming from Power to Ocotillo visitors have a difficult time knowing how to delineate Ellsworth Loop Road from Ellsworth Road. Wayne Balmer said that the committee can come up with recommendations for adding to this concept map or deleting from it. In addition to these, staff is looking at three signs for Horseshoe Park Equestrian Centre: two signs for northbound and southbound traffic each, and another further north.

Chairman Buffington asked, conceptually speaking if the Schnepf Farms sign is being changed to the universal sign for town, will the existing Schnepf Farm direction signs be removed. Wayne Balmer answered yes. Chairman Buffington clarified that Schnepf Farms is listed as a State Treasure and that is why there is a sign for them.

Wayne Balmer illustrated specific directional signs for each numbered location on the conceptual map. Chairman Buffington asked about the sign shown at number 9 and asked what type of sign is on the corner. Wayne Balmer responded at Ellsworth Loop and Ocotillo, the sign shows where to turn. Chairman Buffington asked if 9 and 6 can be combined. Wayne Balmer stated no, number 9 is for southbound traffic only.

Marvin Smith asked, "When you say *Town Center Shopping*, where are you trying to get people to go?" He worries that people coming down Ellsworth Loop Road will see Target and the large shopping area and not know that there is a Town Center area on (old) Ellsworth Road. He thinks there should be two separate designations for these two areas.

Wayne Balmer responded it is Town Center and it is "Shopping". Do you want to add these two or be more focused on Ellsworth Road shopping as opposed to shopping in Marketplace area?

Chairman Buffington stated that the Target area does not need more advertising. Steve Ingram said that they also have more sign space. Marvin Smith stated that the signs should just say Town Center – delete "shopping". Chairman Buffington emphasized that no restaurants, food, beverage, or eating has been mentioned. The Library has not been mentioned either.

Wayne Balmer noted the sizes of the sign panels, so need to decide how many panels and how big to make the panels of the main signs. Look at number 7 and 8 and decide if they should be smaller in scale since you're already in the Town Center area. Chairman Buffington would like to see all of Ellsworth Road become quaint, more historic shopping area. It should be its own district within a district. These signs should be more specialized. She stated there should be a sign at Rittenhouse and Ellsworth roads. To summarize, include numbers 5,8,7 and one to be added . The one at Rittenhouse and Ellsworth needs to be bigger since people are coming towards this sign at high speeds.

Council Member Barnes said that looking at number 2 (location #2) maybe the Library sign should go here.

Wayne Balmer stated that the panels are interchangeable. The idea is to show how the sign would look and to point out blue is an international, universal color for location signs. Some members of the Committee felt that smaller, pedestrian size signs should be located in the Town Center area along Ellsworth Road.

Steve Ingram stated he feels there is too much empty blue space on these signs.

Jason Gad – what is objective of the location signs? What is not being fulfilled today? Is objective to highlight historic shopping that people are forgetting about?

Council Member Barnes stated that many people do not know where Town Hall is located. A lot of people think stores on Ellsworth closed down when Queen Creek Marketplace opened. People are thinking there's nothing in Town Center. Jason Gad stated the need for a sign that shows "Historic" shopping that is potentially brown instead of blue. Concerned too many blue signs that are generic will be overkill.

Council Member Barnes stated as Johnson Ranch and Pinal County residents drive through town now, they bypass Ellsworth Road and do not see the shops and restaurants located on this road. They see the big box users on Ellsworth Loop Road.

Chairman Buffington said that seeing conceptual locations of signs is good. Verbiage needs tweaking, needs to state/delineate what the center district is whether it's "historic", "downtown", "heritage", or whatever to delineate from the larger big box area on Ellsworth Loop Road. Need to emphasize the special area on Ellsworth Road.

Nancy Diab said before we can look at signage and types of signs, we need to do branding. Nancy spoke about branding process at the High School level with logos, colors, etc. Chairman Buffington stated Town staff is currently working on the branding issue. The original proposed timeframe was 23 months; Council has asked them to do it in 6 months.

Chairman Buffington asked Toni Valenzuela about Merchant's Association. Toni responded yes, she is on the Merchant's Association. Chairman Buffington stated those businesses need to come up with a thought process for how this district should be emphasized, including homeowners in this area.

Wayne Balmer said that signage presented conceptually today is something the Town can do within its budget. This is a trial. These signs may be modified to go with street lights decided on later.

Chairman Buffington asked Wayne Balmer when this sign presentation will be given to Town Council. Wayne indicated that he wanted to show to the Town Center Committee first. We can look at changing letter sizes, font, etc.

Then look at specific type of font to use. Staff will have this at next meeting. The plan is to take to Council to let them know what the Town Center Committee is working on and ask Council for feedback to provide to Town Center Committee.

Chairman Buffington said that for the moment, its not a bad idea to use the word 'downtown' on the signs, but staff needs to show a few more signs. Kim Moyers commented in looking at other community signs, there were no major signs that said "shopping"; this speaks to Marvin's point of just "town center". The smaller signs can be more specific. Wayne Balmer pointed out that the directional arrows can be put at different spots on the panels, as shown on his examples. (i.e. left or right side of panels). Chris Webb stated the 'blue' color definitely is standard enough to be recognizable by fast-traveling motorists.

Council Member Barnes asked if the Town Center Committee should put symbols on signs for each location (i.e. HPEC, "I" for information, etc.) Committee did not agree to this, citing it would be too busy.

Chairman Buffington would like any additional thoughts on this signage early so Wayne Balmer has time to compile additional comments for September's meeting.

No action was taken on the Character Element of the Plan today, as additional information will be presented and discussed in September.

E. Plus/Delta Review of Meeting

Steve Ingram stated the Committee stayed on track well today. Chairman Buffington thanked Kim Moyers for her presentation and the downtown pictures. There were no negative comments.

5. Announcements

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, September 22nd at 7:30 a.m. in the San Tan Conference Room of the Development Services Building.

6. Adjournment

Motion: Toni Valenzuela 2nd: Chris Webb
To adjourn.
Vote: All ayes. Motion carried unanimously (9-0)

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Moats, Community Development Assistant

Cynthia Buffington, Chairperson

I, Laura Moats, do hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the foregoing Minutes are a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the August 25, 2009 Town Center Committee Meeting. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and that a quorum was present.

Dated this 26th day of August, 2009

Passed and Approved this 22nd day of September, 2009.