



DRAFT
MINUTES

TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE MEETING

October 27, 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
Toni Valenzuela
Ryan Desmond
Monica Munoz
Marvin Smith, Jr.
Council Member Barnes
Vice Mayor Mortensen
Randy Green arrived at 7:32 a.m.
Nancy Diab arrived at 7:36 a.m.
Steve Ingram arrived at 7:40 a.m.

Town Staff:

Doreen Cott, Economic Dev. Director
Kim Moyers, Management Assistant
Laura Moats, Community Dev. Assistant
Mike Pacelli, Assistant Public Works Dir.
Dave Williams, Senior Planner

Others Present:

Richard Dyer, Independent Newspapers
Jacob Wier cub scout/Queen Creek resident

Absent:

Brian Frakes

2. Introductions

Vice-Mayor Mortensen introduced Jacob Wier, a Queen Creek student and Scout working on his merit badge.

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. Consideration and possible approval of the September 22, 2009 Minutes:

Motion: Jason Gad 2nd: Toni Valenzuela

To approve the September 22, 2009 Meeting Minutes, as presented.

Vote: All ayes. Motion carried unanimously (12-0)

B. Discussion and Possible Action on Street Lighting Options for Town Center

Ms. Cott reviewed discussion and action taken at the Committee's September meeting. During that meeting, the Committee made a formal recommendation to use decorative street lights for the Ellsworth Road project between Ocotillo and Rittenhouse roads. Ms. Cott reminded the Committee there had also been some discussion about expanding the use of decorative street lights to other areas of Town Center. She is bringing this issue forward again in order to clearly define the specific area for which the Committee would like to recommend decorative street lights. She referred to the motion made (page 11 of the September 22, 2009 minutes): "*To recommend approval of decorative roadway lights for 22 lights on the Ellsworth Road project, from Ocotillo north to Rittenhouse Road*; She asked the Committee to consider if it wants to carry the decorative lighting throughout Town Center, and if so, with what boundaries.

Ms. Cott informed the Committee she provided an update to the Town Council at the October 21 meeting on the Town Center Committee's work thus far, and recommendations made by the Committee. The Town Council approved the Committee's recommendation for the installation of decorative street lighting for the Ellsworth Road project, between Ocotillo and Rittenhouse Road, as recommended by the Town Center Committee.

Ms. Cott requested the Committee to clarify the defined area for decorative street lights.

Council Member Barnes stated that he would like to see decorative lighting from Victoria on the west, east to Heritage Loop Road and follow through to Aldecoa, down to Sierra Park Blvd. since these areas are intended to be pedestrian-friendly areas. He stated he feels the areas that carry heavier traffic should not have decorative lights.

Toni Valenzuela stated her agreement with Council Member Barnes.

In response to a question by Jason Gad, Ms. Cott stated Rittenhouse Road on the eastern boundary of Town Center (southeast of Ocotillo) would remain standard SRP poles, similar to what is currently installed along Ellsworth Loop Road.

Council Member Barnes explained he feels decorative street lights should be installed on Victoria at the western boundary of Town Center, and not from Ocotillo and Ellsworth east to Rittenhouse because the traffic on Ocotillo east of Ellsworth Road is heavy traffic and not necessarily a pedestrian-friendly area.

Vice-Mayor Mortensen requested everyone provide their thoughts on this.

Randy Green asked where the street lights would be installed south of Ocotillo Road. Council Member Barnes responded the lights would go from Ocotillo south to Sierra Park Blvd. Ms. Cott added Ocotillo Road will be improved in the future, so there is an opportunity to put the street lights on Ocotillo east just to Heritage Loop Road.

Marvin Smith stated he feels the decorative lighting should be limited to pedestrian-friendly, not high traffic areas.

Monica Munoz stated she would like to see the decorative street lights go from Victoria at the west past Heritage Loop Road, south to Sierra Park Blvd.

Ryan Desmond suggested including some portion of Ocotillo between Ellsworth Loop and Heritage Loop Roads because when making design decisions, the Committee should make sure it is continuing to enforce the core areas of Town Center. If Ocotillo at Ellsworth Loop is not included, then the Committee risks having a decorative lighting pattern that is not

intuitive and not consistent with the sense of place the Committee wants to create. Even though Ocotillo Road between Ellsworth Loop and Heritage Loop is heavier traffic, it will naturally slow down in this area, since this will feel like the middle of Town Center.

Chris Webb stated it may not make sense to carry the decorative lighting all the way east to the Ocotillo/Rittenhouse roads intersection. He suggested going from Ellsworth Road on the west to Heritage Loop Road on the east; however, he is indifferent to this area having the street lights. He agrees the decorative lights should be on the lower-speed roads, such as Victoria. After further discussion, Mr. Webb suggested it may make sense to tie in the decorative street lighting with the developments that comprise Town Center. He then suggested that the street lights could, in fact, go from Victoria on the west all the way out to Rittenhouse and Ocotillo roads on the east in order to be consistent with the theme of Town Center.

As far as installing decorative lighting south of Ocotillo, everyone agreed to go south on Ellsworth from Ocotillo to Sierra Park Blvd.

Jason Gad agreed Chris made a good point and conceded the road network is not a perfect circle; however in trying to standardize the Town Center area, there should be some degree of symmetry. Mr. Gad feels the area near Uncle Bears (Rittenhouse and Ocotillo) is somewhat pedestrian-friendly and thinks the decorative lighting should carry through from Ellsworth east to Rittenhouse Road. This intersection is a higher traffic area, but he frequently sees pedestrian traffic there as well. He feels there should not be any decorative lighting on Ellsworth Loop Road.

Council Member Barnes questioned if the Committee wants to include the purple (mixed use) area north of Rittenhouse Road that the Committee had added to the Town Center boundary. Chairman Buffington responded she did not feel the decorative lighting should extend to the north side of Rittenhouse Road.

Motion: **Nancy Diab**

To include decorative street lights from Victoria on the west to Rittenhouse Road on the east, and Ellsworth Road from Ocotillo south to Sierra Park, and from Ocotillo Road north to Rittenhouse, excluding Ellsworth Loop Road.

Discussion followed on how far north to include decorative street lights. Additional discussion centered on whether or not to include interior streets, and the number of existing SRP poles that would need to be retrofitted depending on where the decorative street lights are recommended to be installed.

Ms. Diab's motion died for lack of a second.

Motion: Nancy Diab 2nd: Monica Munoz

To include decorative street lights on all arterial roads in Town Center, excluding Ellsworth Loop Road, residential subdivisions and the section of Ellsworth Road north of Rittenhouse Road.

Vote: All ayes. Motion carried unanimously (12-0).

C. Discussion and Possible Action on Directional Signage Options

Ms. Cott noted a draft directional signage policy had been distributed to the Committee at the September meeting, and was subsequently e-mailed to the Committee this past week. The policy was drafted by Assistant Public Works Director Mike Pacelli. Ms. Cott stated staff feels this policy is a good compilation of the Committee's discussion, but also takes into consideration a broader town-wide policy.

Vice-Mayor Mortensen stated he wanted discussion on the colors of the signage. Ms. Munoz stated blue is standard for directional signage in most towns and cities.

Chairman Buffington added that the first thing people seek out when trying to find a specific place is the blue directional signage. She asked for clarification on if these signs are for areas outlying Town Center or if they are for the 25 mph zones within Town Center. Ms. Cott responded these are the larger signs in outside areas; this will be a broad policy that will include signage throughout Town.

Ms. Cott added these directional signs are primarily to direct people to Town Center and other destination spots throughout Queen Creek.. The Committee can discuss a different, more decorative design to use inside

Town Center. Once the Town's branding initiative is complete, more decorative elements can be discussed and included.

Motion: **Chris Webb** **2nd:** **Ryan Desmond**

To approve the sign policy, as presented by staff and dated 9/21/2009.

Vote: All ayes. Motion carried unanimously. (12-0)

D. Discussion and Possible Action on Definitions and Revisions for the Land Use Element

Ms. Cott introduced Senior Planner Dave Williams, who was present on behalf of Wayne Balmer. Mr. Williams stated the purpose of this is to refine the current definition of Mixed Use specific for the Town Center as an attempt to get away from size restrictions and compile a more pedestrian-friendly definition.

Ms. Cott stated she had received opposing comments from two Committee members. She stated one comment is to include a quantifiable standard within the Mixed Use category. The other is against setting a quantifiable standard. She stated both are good, well thought out comments, and asked the members who had provided these comments to explain their perspectives so that the Committee can provide its input.

Mr. Williams stated the current Town Center Plan separates Mixed Use Commercial/Office and Mixed Use Commercial/Residential. Staff has discussed redefining this as one definition for the mixed use area shown in light purple on the Town Center land use plan.

Chris Webb explained his perspective for not including a quantifiable standard in the *Mixed Use* definition, stating it would be challenging to come up with a standard percentage of uses. If a quantifiable standard were implemented, there is a risk of restricting potential projects that may locate in Town Center. Mr. Webb stated he doesn't think it's in the Town's best interest to limit the potential of quality development. Secondly, he stated the dynamics may change in the future. What's appropriate now may not be appropriate five years into the future. He feels Council should look at projects on a case-by-case basis.

Ms. Diab questioned how surrounding jurisdictions define their Mixed Use land use category and whether or not they use quantifiable standards. Mr. Williams stated he has not had a chance to review the definition in other areas; however, Staff's point of view is to have PAD ability, rather than hard numbers, because it lends itself to creativity.

Ms. Cott added that the Town of Gilbert's Heritage District zoning classification does not have minimum or maximum standards, but does encourage active uses that will enhance the pedestrian ambience of downtown; so it's on a smaller scale. She clarified the Heritage District is a zoning district, not a land use category. Ms. Cott stated she does not believe Mesa uses a quantifiable standard either.

Ryan Desmond summarized his viewpoint on including a quantifiable standard. If the Town's goal is to foster the pedestrian friendly feeling, the Committee has an opportunity to shape the language. The goal is not to be overly restrictive. Mr. Desmond stated he thinks if a proposed project came in that was just outside the standard percentage boundaries, staff could resolve the issue through the PAD process and accept it if it was agreed to be a good project. His thought having a quantifiable standard will protect against too much of one use versus not enough of another. His suggestion is to try to promote a more even distribution among uses that promotes a pedestrian-friendly environment. He suggests that the Committee limit the commercial to no more than 50%. This allows for a balance between commercial and non-commercial uses. This option is not too restrictive since it would go through the PAD process.

Ms. Diab stated she likes verbiage Gilbert has for their Heritage District and would like the same language included in Queen Creek's *Mixed Use* definition.

Management Assistant Kim Moyers noted if a quantifiable standard were implemented and applied to the small homes on the east side of Ellsworth Road between Ocotillo and Sierra Park Blvd., then only half of the homes could be retail. Mr. Williams responded staff has had some meetings with artists looking to do an artist studio on ground floor and residential above the studio. Staff encourages this. On an individual lot, mixed use in his mind is an office with an apartment/residence above, or combining two or three lots into a small office or small retail with a house behind the commercial

use. He stated staff would consider the site as a whole, and not simply a conversion from one use to the other. There needs to be a balance.

Ms. Valenzuela stated her feeling that Council places a lot of importance on sales tax at the cost of having too many of the same types of businesses in one location. She stated more emphasis should be placed on balancing similar types of establishments, i.e. prohibiting having too many of the same type of fast-food restaurants in the same area. For this reason, she feels a percentage of business versus residential should be incorporated. She feels doing this will give businesses a chance to succeed and stated this is where the Town Center Committee needs to recommend putting a percentage in place.

Mr. Williams responded to the Committee, stating both sides have valid arguments. Staff sees the value in a wide-open PAD as well as the value in placing a limit on uses. He stated percentages can be adjusted through the PAD process.

Ryan Desmond added that a standard percentage gives the Town more leverage. He stated if the right project doesn't exactly conform to land use guidelines, staff can make allowances. Adding this definition to include percentages, in such a small area, would give the Town a little more leverage and a better argument rather than leaving the options wide open.

Ms. Cott suggested implementing a range of percentages to allow flexibility within quantifiable standards.

Chairman Buffington noted the Town currently has a land use percentage plan. She agrees with both Mr. Webb and Mr. Desmond, but is leaning more towards Mr. Desmond's philosophy. She stated if a developer had come forward to change the land use designation, he would have to apply for a PAD. Her concern is any time someone other than a developer comes forward, the guidelines will change. If guidelines are in place in writing, knowing Council has discretion to make changes, then they are just guidelines, but they are good guidelines in order to encourage a smaller scale for Town Center.

Steve Ingram stated if a number is implemented, then the number of quality applicants will improve, i.e, the number of applicants without feasible projects will decrease.

Vice-Mayor Mortensen stated it is a challenge to apply the correct percentages. He suggested descriptive terms such as “balanced” and “pedestrian-friendly” be used in the new definition that encourages, but does not restrict. He cautioned against over-controlling. He addressed Ms. Valenzuela’s concerns about how much importance Council places on sales tax by stating the Council puts importance on beauty, pedestrian-friendly areas, and many other issues when thinking about Town Center. He stated Council knows there are more factors involved in Town Center than just sales tax.

Mr. Desmond suggested a limit of 50% or 60% of a project on commercial and no more than 75% of the project for residential, in an attempt to not be overly restrictive. Implementing these percentages will dissuade projects from coming in and requesting an imbalance of office to residential.

In response to a question by Chairman Buffington, Mr. Williams stated the original intent of the *Mixed Use* land use category was for much larger parcels like that at Meridian and Combs. The definition worked when it was written many years ago; however it doesn’t work as well for the Town Center.

Ms. Cott clarified that staff does not intend to rewrite the General Plan verbiage, but is revising the definition for the Town Center area.

Mr. Gad stated he thinks that the applicants will go through the development process in either case, no matter what the Committee recommends for approval. When looking at the *Mixed Use* definition it reads as commercial. To him, the purpose of the Committee is to understand the goals of what it wants to do with this area and to share the vision and goals with the outside community. This will not necessarily restrict anyone. Intuitively with a new definition, people will understand red is commercial and yellow is pure houses. However, they will be confused when looking at the purple. The Committee needs to have something to describe this, without making it too restrictive. He recommended a *suggested* percentage of uses in this category be implemented.

Randy Green asked if smaller parcels would be excluded from this percentage. Ms. Cott responded it would be intended to provide a broader range of allowable uses within these residential areas, and encourage

adaptive reuses – so it could be a mixture of these uses: Office, commercial or residential.

Council Member Barnes stated this needs to be consistent and can't be changed year to year. Ms. Cott responded the purpose of the Committee is to allow the flexibility of mixed uses so there will not be so many changes in the future once this is approved. Council Member Barnes stated he likes the percentages; however, for smaller parcels, this may not work. Ms. Cott responded this definition allows for a broader range of allowable uses for those smaller lots so they could remain residential or transition to commercial.

Ms. Cott asked if it would help to compile these comments and come back with a new draft of the Mixed Use definition. Cynthia agreed that would be a good idea. She liked the idea of limiting guidelines without being too restrictive.

Chris Webb asked for more than one definition since there are a variety of descriptors.

Steve Ingram requested language be included to address the exclusion of smaller lots in figuring percentages.

Randy asked if the Town Center Committee is straying from the original definition. Mr. Williams responded it is not; the goal is to provide a positive environment for living and working but have a development that has its own synergy, while creating a sense of small community. Mr. Williams elaborated by stating when staff thinks of Mixed Use, they are looking at individual projects, i.e. Cornerstone, which he considers a mixed use project with Wal-Mart and the Broadstone Apartments being located within that center. Staff would like to see more integration into living/working environments.

E. Discussion and Possible Action on Town Center Amenities Option

Ms. Cott distributed this via email, but did not make any suggestions for changes. She stated a lot of what Dibble included in the Design Concept Report includes amenities listed in this Element.

Jason Gad stated he thought the document looked good 'as-is'.

Motion: Nancy Diab 2nd: Chris Webb
To approve the Town Center Amenities Element, as presented.

Vote: **All ayes. Motion carried unanimously (12-0).**

Ms. Cott stated there are updated photos included in Dibble's DCR that she can replace in the Town Center Amenities Element document.

Jason Gad asked about the status of the development of amenities such as pocket parks, an amphitheater, and water features.

Chairman Buffington responded development of these amenities depends upon the budget.

Toni Valenzuela left the meeting at 8:50 a.m.

Discussion took place on types of water amenities (pop jet fountains) for pocket parks. Vice-Mayor Mortensen wanted to make sure there was a strong enough reference in the Amenities Element addressing water features.

F. Plus/Delta Review of the Meeting

Jason Gad noted the time management was good.

Vice-Mayor Mortensen stated today's discussion included good input and a lot of different points of view. This committee does a good job. He complimented Chairman Buffington for the manner in which she ran the meeting.

Announcements

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, November 24 at 7:30 a.m. in the San Tan Conference Room of the Development Services Building, pending the outcome of an email poll on members' availability.

6. Adjournment

Motion: Steve Ingram **2nd:** Chris Webb
To adjourn.
Vote: **All ayes. Motion carried unanimously (12-0).**

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 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 October 27, 2009 Town Center Committee Meeting. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and that a quorum was present.

Dated this 27th day of October, 2009

Passed and Approved this day of , 2009.