



MINUTES

TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE MEETING

January 26, 2010 7:30 a.m.

San Tan Conference Room

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Buffington at 7:37 a.m. At roll call the following people were in attendance:

Committee Members:

Cynthia Buffington
Chris Webb
Jason Gad
Steve Ingram
Toni Valenzuela
Nancy Diab
Monica Munoz

Town Staff:

Doreen Cott, Economic Dev. Director
Kim Moyers, Management Assistant
Laura Moats, Community Dev. Assistant
Wayne Balmer, Planning Manager

Others Present:

Richard Dyer, Independent Newspapers
Shawn Valdez from Rhino Caffe

Absent:

Ryan Desmond
Brian Frakes
Randy Green
Marvin Smith, Jr.
Council Member Barnes
Council Member Mortensen

2. **Introductions**

Chairman Buffington introduced Shawn Valdez from Rhino Caffe, and Richard Dyer from Independent Newspapers.

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 November 24, 2009 Minutes:

**Motion: Jason Gad 2nd: Steve Ingram
To approve the November 24, 2009 Meeting Minutes, as presented.**

Vote: All ayes. Motion carried unanimously (7-0)

B. Discussion and Possible Action on Updates to the Redevelopment Plan

Ms. Cott stated the Committee has progressed to the point of review of the Redevelopment Plan. She noted much of the existing information in this plan will remain unchanged due to statutory requirements, which are a necessary component of a Redevelopment Plan.

The goal moving forward is to look at the *Redevelopment Program* portion of the plan. Ms. Cott provided some background on this document, noting how it is related to the Town Center Plan, as a tool for building upon the Town Center Plan, while allowing the use of certain Economic Development tools needed to assist private development or investment in this area. Ms. Cott noted similar economic development tools were utilized for the bigger retail projects in Queen Creek, as well as for much needed infrastructure that went along with these projects. Existing graphics are in the process of being updated by Town GIS personnel. A new transportation graphic will be added. In addition, obvious text changes will be updated to note completion of several projects, such as the new library, the post office and the addition of the DSB to the Town Hall complex.

Chairman Buffington asked that the Abel-Moody power line be included in the new graphics. Ms. Cott stated she will ask staff to update this.

Ms. Cott reviewed the broad-based goals, as follow:

- Enhance the overall appearance of the Town Center Redevelopment Area.
- Promote reinvestment and attract new development.
- Strengthen pedestrian, equestrian, bicycle, transit and vehicular linkages between Town Center activity areas.
- Create a sense of Town Center neighborhood.

Jason Gad asked if safety (lighting, pedestrian traffic, vehicle flows) should be added to the goals/update. Nancy Diab agreed it should. Toni Valenzuela stated it may already be included in the Neighborhood Streetscape. Ms. Cott responded intuitively this would fall into that category; however, a separate item can be added to be more specific.

SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Each of the Goals, Objectives and Potential Action Items was reviewed for possible updates and/or changes.

Goal: Enhance Overall District Appearance

Objective: Improve Landscape – there were no comments changes made to this objective or its accompanying “Potential Action” items.

Objective: Enhance Urban Design of Area – there were no comments or changes made to this objective or its “Potential Action” items.

Objective: Enhance Maintenance and Appearance of Public Spaces to Shape an area identity

Potential Action: Create a Town Center logo through (a community design contest) that can be used on street signs, banners, area promotional materials, newsletters, etc.

The Committee concurred that a Town Center logo is a good idea. Ms. Cott noted this could be reviewed by the ongoing Committee (after Town Center Plan adoption) after the Town’s branding campaign is completed.

Objective: Improve the quality of building and site conditions within the area to preserve the value of properties within and adjacent to the redevelopment area.

Concerning this objective, Chris Webb asked if people who want to update or improve their building facades could be granted a waiver or something similar. Mr. Webb added he feels this objective is different from the objective on page 27, “Streamline the development process within the Redevelopment Area”. He asked that a reduction or waiver in a ‘permit fee’ be called out with this objective, explaining when it was originally written, the economy was

much different. There is now an economic hurdle to existing businesses and Mr. Webb feels more incentives should be offered. Nancy Diab suggested a reduced permit fee.

Kim Moyers suggested a potential action item could be reviewing specific programs, rather than streamlining the development process. The Committee liked this idea.

Potential Action: Increase the attractiveness of existing parking lots and areas by paving unimproved lots, improving landscaping, increasing lighting, restriping pavement, and regularly sweeping and maintaining the lots and Area.

Discussion on the above action item took place. Chairman Buffington questioned whose responsibility it is to clean and maintain lots. Ms. Cott responded if the lot is Town-owned, the Town will maintain it. She added LTAF funds may be available for a potential Town *park-n-ride* in Town Center, as well as a lot for additional business/retail shopping.

Mr. Gad asked if there is anything that would enable the Town to purchase the vacant lots, or should something stronger be called out to encourage the Town to buy vacant lots. Ms. Cott pointed out the Plan does call out this item in certain areas. Mr. Gad stated his concern for having vacant/empty lots in Town and would like to accelerate and encourage, where possible, the Town to explore options for purchasing these lots. Ms. Cott noted Mr. Gad's concern, and pointed out this item is addressed in the Town Center and Redevelopment Plan.

Brief discussion took place on the following *potential action item*.

Potential Action: Encourage, through voluntary means and code enforcement actions, the elimination of unsightly, substandard, and obsolete uses, which detract from the aesthetic appearance and economic welfare of the Area.

Goal: Strengthen the economic vitality of the area

Objective: Provide a hospitable and secure environment for private investment.

Potential Action: Work with surrounding community to identify needed goods and services businesses to support existing residents. Update the Economic Development Strategic Plan. Conduct a marketing study to determine an appropriate business strategy in order to attract the additional needed goods and services to accommodate additional residential development. Encourage office uses, additional large-scale retail uses, and non-retail uses to provide more of the identified goods and services desired in this Area.

Ms. Cott noted the Economic Development Strategic Plan has been completed. She feels it is consistent with the Town Center Plan update. She suggested a future study be done to find out what types of businesses are needed in this area, and where reinvestment is not occurring.

The following action item was discussed briefly. Ms. Cott suggested this wording be revised as follows:

Potential Action: ~~Create~~ Maintain a ~~property development~~ Town Center committee involving representatives from the businesses in the Area which would focus entirely on property development issues, and cooperatively work to attract identified needed services and uses in the Area.

Objective: Attract people (consumers) from the surrounding cities to the Area.

Potential Action: Establish joint marketing and promotional strategies among Area businesses and the Town on radio, television and newspapers.

Regarding the above action item, Ms. Cott noted the “Shop Queen Creek” program has been working well. She stated this can be ramped up to a regional level, noting the East Valley Partnership has published a new magazine, “Gateway to the East Valley”, which is a good way for Queen Creek to participate in order to get a regional draw on economic development. The Town is on track with this action item.

Discussion on the following *potential action item* took place.

Potential Action: Coordinate annual, semi-annual, more frequent and ongoing special events among Area businesses, such as a “parking lot sale”, or “sidewalk sale”, that would include all commercial enterprises in the Area, in a festive and fun atmosphere and would bring the surrounding community to the Area.

Monica Munoz suggested verbiage be added to address adjusting fees for this Area of Town for special events, since the Town’s special event permit fee discourages businesses from holding special events.

Discussion took place on the potential for a “sidewalk sale” or “Parking lot sale” to be a Town-sponsored event. Ms. Cott and Mr. Balmer responded the wording in this portion refers to Town-sponsored events such as the Hometown Christmas and Farmers’ Market. Mr. Balmer stated it may be possible to have a Town-sponsored event in one of the Town parking lots, such as Town Hall or the Library. Mr. Webb stated special events for area businesses should not be discouraged by placing a fee on it. Ms. Valenzuela stated the Hometown Christmas brought in a lot of people to Ellsworth Road. Members of the Committee asked that events should be conducted on Ellsworth Road to draw more people in since most traffic is now on Ellsworth Loop Road, rather than Ellsworth Road.

Shawn Valdez of Rhino Caffe stated more exposure is needed for Ellsworth Road businesses, stating it has been pulled away onto Ellsworth Loop Road. He continued if the point is to retain existing businesses, they need more exposure. He suggested a ‘vendor fair’ so businesses can gain exposure.

Mr. Webb suggested an action item that includes language to say these types of events will be coordinated for both Ellsworth Road, and the larger retail areas on Ellsworth Loop Road, in order to cover both areas.

Ms. Cott suggested adding an item to encourage individual businesses to promote their business and facilitate special events. It is possible some special events could be Town-facilitated in order to assist the business.

Potential Action: ~~Publish~~ CONTINUE PUBLICATION OF “TOWN CENTER CONNECTION”; a periodic newsletter that will report on current activities, happenings, and accomplishments associated with the Area.

Include information concerning zoning, building codes, property maintenance enforcement, neighborhood clean-ups, rehabilitation programs, Town services, and other public and private resources available to the Area.

For the above listed potential action item, Ms. Cott noted the Economic Development Department publishes a newsletter called "Town Center Connection". This had been a quarterly publication, but due to budget cuts, was changed to an electronic newsletter. The Town Center Connection does highlight local businesses, new businesses and special events. In addition, the Town posts events, neighborhood clean-ups, etc. on its Web site, Channel 11, Twitter and Facebook. Chairman Buffington informed the Committee that businesses interested in being highlighted in Town Center Connection need to contact Town staff or the Chamber.

Potential Action: Enhance access for all persons to information concerning zoning, building codes, property maintenance enforcement, neighborhood clean-ups, rehabilitation programs, Town services, Town facilities, and other public and private resources available to the community.

On the above action item, Ms. Cott noted overall the Town does an excellent job of getting information out to the public via the cable channel, Web site, water bill inserts, and social media. No comments or changes were made on this item.

Mr. Gad asked if something needs to be included to prioritize these goals and objectives. Mr. Balmer responded the availability of land, scale and available resources decide the prioritization of goals and objectives. Ms. Cott added the *Implementation Plan* for Town Center did prioritize items on a 'high to low' basis. She noted something could be added next to each item to denote them as 'high' or 'low' items based on budget. She stated when the Work Plan for the Committee (smaller; ongoing) is developed; these items will become clearer as far as priorities for each fiscal year.

Mr. Gad noted his concern about the south 'gateway' (Ellsworth Road). He feels the Committee should focus on this so the entire Town Center area gets developed, not just the northern portion.

Objective: Streamline the development process within the Redevelopment Area.

The first potential action item will be removed, since it was written prior to having an Economic Development staff.

On the second potential action item, the Committee concurred that the word “application” should be removed:

Potential Action: Consider development ~~application~~ fee waivers or reductions for projects that support the Redevelopment Plan.

Goal: Encourage new residential uses and improve existing housing stock.

Objective: Strengthen the Residential Land Use Component of the Area.

In the second action item, the Committee agreed to remove the word “application” from “development application fee waivers”. The Committee discussed the third and fourth potential action items:

Potential Action: Continue homeowner rehabilitation efforts in areas or streets where deficient conditions are most prevalent.

Potential Action: Partner with non-profit housing organizations to leverage Town investment in rehabilitation or new construction.

Ms. Cott noted the Town’s Parks and Recreation Division administers the Home Program in order to encourage residential rehabilitation.

Ms. Cott noted stated non-profit housing organizations would be similar to *Habitat for Humanity*.

Potential Action: Consider increased residential densities, where appropriate, to help create a greater diversity of housing types and lifestyles.

Ms. Cott noted the above action item has been addressed with the development of the two apartment complexes in Town Center: Broadstone and Town Center Apartments.

Potential Action: Create “gateways’ into neighborhoods.

Ms. Cott stated the Economic Development Commission has a sub-committee: Arts, Culture and Entertainment. This committee is looking at each residential area, such as Sossaman Estates, and the potential for making these areas residential ‘gateways’.

Goal: Create an Efficient Circulation System

Objective: Enhance and improve auto and pedestrian access into the Area.

Ms. Cott noted the following potential action item would be reworded to include updated information for the recently completed infrastructure on Ellsworth Loop Road and the Ellsworth Road improvements. Ellsworth/Ocotillo road improvements would be retained.

The Committee asked about whether or not this objective will include an item to address drainage, as the new library parking lot floods with each rain. Ms. Cott responded she will check with the CIP Project Manager.

Potential Action: Target the Area as an important location for local area public transit. Additionally, consider a local shuttle system to provide transit between area centers (ASU East and Williams Gateway Airport) and Queen Creek Town Center.

On the above action item, the Committee asked that Williams Gateway be updated to Phoenix Mesa Gateway.

Goal: Public Development Framework

Objective: Improve Public Safety in the Area.

Potential Action: Augment the existing community based policing strategies.

Ms. Cott noted the Town has increased the number of MCSO beats/patrols.

The last two potential action items under this objective will be left as is.

Objective: Target Public Investment within the Redevelopment Area.

Ms. Cott noted the first action item under this objective will be removed, since it is included in the broad-based goals.

The second action item will be updated, since the Library and Post Office have been completed.

Chris Webb referred to the "Improving Public Safety" objective, noting this is included in the broad-based goals, as well as associated action items.

The committee agreed this public safety item was already covered as a broad-based goal.

Doreen illustrated the Redevelopment Area graphic, noting the newly proposed Town Center boundary goes west of the redevelopment area boundary; and the Victoria parcel is bifurcated by the redevelopment area boundary. She noted staff has asked the Town Attorney to review the question of whether or not the owner of this parcel could use Redevelopment Area funds, to improve their property, or would only half of the property be eligible for redevelopment. The Town Attorney's is researching this.

Jason Gad stated the Committee had previously discussed the northern portion of the Town Center boundary to include a 'gateway' entrance. He asked if in fact this portion of the road is being developed, should the Committee consider a northern 'gateway'.

Chairman Buffington responded the Redevelopment District is for business/residents already in the boundaries to utilize redevelopment dollars. She added that changing the boundaries of the Redevelopment Plan is a very comprehensive, legal process. Ms. Cott reminded the Committee the Redevelopment Plan is a legal document with statutory requirements on changing or updating, whereas the Town Center Plan is a planning document; a specific area plan.

Chris Webb asked if the Committee could recommend the boundaries be changed. Ms. Cott responded the Committee can make a recommendation. She added for clarification that the Redevelopment Plan is not just for existing development, but is also used to attract new business development on vacant or redevelopment parcels. She stated for reinvestment purposes, the purpose is to retain core businesses and encourage them to possibly make façade or interior improvements.

Nancy Diab asked when Redevelopment Funds will be available. Ms. Cott stated the funds are currently available since the plan was originally adopted in 2005. The Parks and Recreation Department administers the Cornerstone and Marketplace CDBG program.

Ms. Cott stated the two main shopping centers (Westcor and Vestar) are paying an extra quarter percent sales tax to go into a municipal fund for the Town Center area. The Town has looked at establishing a RLF or grant program to attract new

development or reinvest in existing development; however, this specific program has not yet been developed. Ms. Cott stated she would like to make a recommendation to Council to keep a form of the Town Center Committee intact after this document is complete. As projects come into Town Center, this committee would review and help staff develop some of the funding programs.

REDEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION

Ms. Cott stated the Town's General Plan, Town Center Plan, and the Town's existing codes apply in the Redevelopment Area. She feels the Committee's updates to the Town Center Plan have achieved integration with the Redevelopment Plan. The goals and objectives of both documents are in line. The Committee concurred.

Ms. Cott noted Staff will make the appropriate changes to the Redevelopment Plan as discussed today and the update will be sent to the Committee. Ms. Cott will get the Town Attorney's response regarding the bifurcated parcel (Victoria).

C. Discussion on the timeline for completing and presenting the Committee's work on the Town Center and Redevelopment Area Plans

Ms. Cott noted the *Update* meetings are nearing completion. She distributed a timeline for presenting the update to the Planning & Zoning Commission and Town Council. Notices for the Feb. 8 Open house have been mailed. The Open House will showcase the recommendations made thus far and gather public comments. This has been advertised on Twitter, Facebook, Ch. 11, and the Web site.

Ms. Cott invited the Town Center Committee to attend the open house to assist in answering questions from the public. Chairman Buffington noted a regular Committee meeting in March was not included in the timeline. Ms. Cott responded if a meeting is needed, the Committee can meet on the regular date in March (March 23).

Ms. Cott then distributed a chronology of all Town Center Committee meetings, which lists action taken/recommendations made by the Town Center Committee.

D. Plus/Delta Review of the Meeting

There were no comments.

5. **Announcements**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 23, 2010 at 7:30 a.m. in the San Tan Conference Room of the Development Services Building.

6. **Adjournment**

Motion: **Steve Ingram** 2nd: **Toni Valenzuela**

To adjourn.

Vote: **All ayes. Motion carried unanimously (7-0).**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 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 January 26, 2010 Town Center Committee Meeting. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and that a quorum was present.

Dated this day of 27th day of January, 2010

Passed and Approved this 23rd day of March, 2010.