

SEASON FOR SHARING A LEGACY OF CARING FOR 20 YEARS



SUBSCRIBE NOW and get 3 months for the price of 1 SUBSCRIBE



search: All azcentral.com

Hi, Sally ▾ Subscriber Central e-Newspaper

News Sports Money Things to do Politics Opinion Watchdog Travel Food & Home Health Traffic Weather Subscribers

Ahwatukee | Chandler | Gilbert | Glendale | Mesa | Peoria | Phoenix | Pinal | Queen Creek | Scottsdale | Southwest Valley | Surprise | Tempe

Community » Mesa » Article

Summit to help form plan for urban Mesa

SHARE URL EMAIL FONT: A A A Recommend 0 Tweet 0 8+1

RELATED INFO

Mesa downtown summit

What: City officials, urban-development experts, developers and financiers discuss prospects for urban redevelopment in west Mesa.

When: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dec. 9.

Where: Mesa Arts Center, 1 E. Main St., Mesa.

Contact: Neighborhood Economic Development Corp., Mesa, 480-258-6927.

By Gary Nelson
The Republic | azcentral.com
Fri Nov 29, 2013 11:38 AM

Back in 2001, when the Fannie Mae Foundation described Mesa as the biggest “boomburb” in the country, the blessing was mixed.

The “boom” part was nice, speaking to decades of growth that had rocketed what was a tiny farming town into the ranks of America’s largest cities.

But the “burb” part stung a little, speaking to Mesa’s perpetual identity crisis as it toiled blandly in Phoenix’s shadow.

Now, like a large but awkward adolescent, Mesa is trying to acquire the graces befitting its physical size.

Another step in that direction is scheduled for Dec. 9, when local officials, developers, financiers and nationally recognized urban-planning experts will gather at the Mesa Arts Center. Their aim: Develop strategies and create opportunities for turning west Mesa into a model of 21st-century urban redevelopment.

The urban-development summit is under the auspices of the Neighborhood Economic Development Corp., a downtown Mesa non-profit that assists small businesses across the state. It recently has been active in helping Mesa businesses cope with light-rail construction through downtown.

It will be the second such summit of Mayor Scott Smith’s tenure.

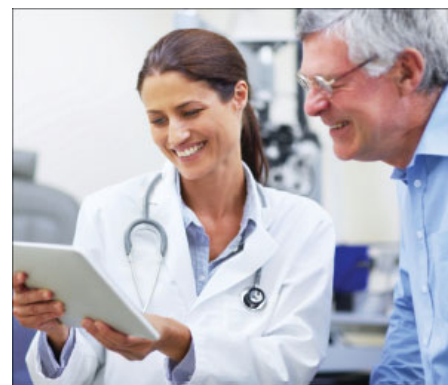
The first, in March 2012, brought 50 developers together for breakfast, video presentations, a bus tour of the square-mile downtown core, and a Cactus League game.

As part of that pitch, city officials touted the more than 40 prime acres the city owned in the downtown area — land Smith has always said Mesa is willing to let go on the cheap if the right development deal comes along.

Some of that land now has been spoken for. One piece went to a housing company that is completing an 81-unit senior complex near the Mesa Arts Center — the first million-dollar-plus private construction project in Mesa’s downtown since the mid-1980s.

Just west of there, another chunk of city land is set aside for the \$30 million Barry and Peggy Goldwater Library and Archives, which chose the Mesa site in October 2012.

Since then, Mesa also has spent more than \$10 million retrofitting two downtown buildings as starter campuses for three of the five private



Learn How Better Information Leads to Better Care



Click here to visit eHealth4AZ.org

Exclusive selections for our subscribers

Service members gain some peace of mind

Feds clear next leg of light rail in Mesa

Cardinals stay quiet after loss to Eagles

10 Cyber Monday deals

Ban on bus-stop gun ad is back in court

colleges and universities the city has recruited over the past two years.

Those accomplishments, Smith said, will allow Mesa to tell an entirely different story at this year's summit.

"The last one was very successful," he said. "This one, we're much farther along. Light rail is under construction. We have the colleges. ... Last time, we were completely talking about what could be. Now, we can certainly talk about what is happening."

Another major difference in this year's meeting is that Mesa has expanded the focus to include the Fiesta District.

The largely commercial area that stretches 2 miles along Southern Avenue east of the Tempe border used to be one of the Valley's premier shopping and entertainment districts. Competition from other cities killed several of the strip malls, and the company that owns the struggling Fiesta Mall recently turned the property over to the lender that financed its purchase in 2004.

A vacant, fenced-off shopping center called Fiesta Village, on the northwest corner of Alma School Road and Southern Avenue, has generated resident complaints and city code-compliance cases for years.

Mesa already has sunk millions of dollars into the Fiesta District, first building a police station there and now tearing up Southern Avenue for a \$10 million reconstruction and landscaping project.

In addition, two of the colleges Mesa recruited in 2012 have set up shop in the Fiesta neighborhood.

Smith has focused on Fiesta for years. In early 2009, he solicited advice from urban-planning experts during a conference in Denver as to what could be done there. Even then, he said Fiesta would never again be a regional retail mecca, suggesting instead that it would be suitable for mixed-use, urban-style development.

As opposed to the mostly local presenters for the March 2012 downtown summit, the Dec. 9 meeting will feature several prominent

urban-development experts from across the country.

They include:

John Norquist, who led redevelopment efforts as Milwaukee's mayor from 1988 to 2004 and is now president and CEO of the Congress for the New Urbanism and a university instructor on urban issues.

Scott Bernstein, president and co-founder of the Center for Neighborhood Technology, a group promoting sustainable urban communities.

Robert Chapman, managing partner, Traditional Neighborhood Development Partners and a national leader in the "new urbanism" movement.

Gary Pivo, senior research fellow at the Homer Hoyt Institute, which studies land-use and urban issues.

There also will be a representative from the Suburban Land Institute, which is a real-estate investment subsidiary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that promotes economic development at the local level.

YOU MAY LIKE

by Taboola



Facebook strangers rally behind kid's new glasses



'Hot Mom' temporarily banned from Facebook



Opinion: No point having Arias penalty phase retrial



Former AZ legislator Ben Miranda passes away

MORE FROM AZCENTRAL

- [Buried surprises stall Mesa Drive construction](#)
- [Mesa police: Woman found dead after reported shooting](#)
- [Mesa business raid leads to 3 ID theft arrests](#)
- [Jennifer Aniston spends Thanksgiving with Ed Sheeran](#)
- [Mesa neighborhood hit with tire slashings for second time this month](#)
- [Christian Bale regrets his rant during 'Terminator'](#)
- [Emma Thompson: Young actresses forced to look thin](#)
- [FBI local boss: Terror, spying among threats in Arizona](#)
- [Meet Ryan Seacrest's rumored new girlfriend](#)
- [Mystery tipper leaves \\$10,000 at bar](#)

Most Popular | Top Videos

- [Feds clear next leg of light rail in Mesa](#)
- [2013 Mesa police mug shots and surveillance photos](#)
- [Motorcyclist injured after sideswiped on U.S. 60](#)
- [Recent Mesa restaurant reviews](#)
- [Jodi Arias fades from view as case veiled in secrecy](#)
- [G-scale garden trains chug along for holidays in Valley](#)
- [Who's buried at Mesa City Cemetery?](#)
- [Mesa teacher Tiffany Thompson among 7 Rodel Exemplary Teachers](#)
- [Check out Mesa's historic homes](#)
- [Mesa neighborhood hit with tire slashings for second time this month](#)

GET AZCENTRAL ANYWHERE

azcentral.com mobile editions

Get azcentral.com on your phones and tablets for the latest news, sports, video, photos and much more from azcentral, The Arizona Republic and 12 News.

- » [Get azcentral.com mobile!](#)
- » [Android](#) | [iPad](#) | [iPhone](#)
- | [iPhone Sports](#) | [AZ](#)

From our sponsor **Banner Children's Total Kid for iPad**
 Download your free copy of Total Kid, an interactive digital parenting magazine filled with trending health topics, videos, tips and activities. Sponsored by Banner Health.

FROM AROUND THE WEB