

What's your **NEXTMESA?**

# nextmesa

A quarterly newsletter from City of Mesa Development Services Department

## NEW PLANNING DIRECTOR

Following a nine-month national recruitment process, the City of Mesa has selected Mary Kopaskie-Brown as the new Planning Director. Ms. Kopaskie-Brown has 35 years of experience in the public and private sectors. She is currently the Acting Deputy Director and City Planner for Riverside California, overseeing long-range planning and applicant projects.

Before joining Riverside, Ms. Kopaskie-Brown was the Chief of the Advance Planning Division for San Diego County. She oversaw several important projects, including the County's Climate Action Plan, Community Plan updates and regulation/code updates.

Ms. Kopaskie-Brown worked internationally for 12 years in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. She oversaw the update of the Abu Dhabi Plan 2030, Public Art Master Plan and specific area plans. While abroad, she managed the Seychelles Country Comprehensive Plan, including a downtown redevelopment plan for the Capital City of Victoria.



## PROPOSED ZONING CHANGES FOR OUTDOOR DINING, TEMPORARY USE PERMITS AND DRIVE-THRUS

The Planning Division recently held a series of public meetings and gave presentations to City Council on proposed Zoning Code Text Amendments pertaining to outdoor eating areas, temporary use permits, and drive-thru regulations.

### • OUTDOOR EATING AREAS

- o The goals pertaining to outdoor eating areas are to increase opportunities, expand on the success of the Mesa Al Fresco program and enhance aesthetics of outdoor seating areas
- o Recommendations are to allow outdoor eating area by-right where Eating and Drinking Establishments are permitted and to include development standards to guide outdoor eating area design.

### • TEMPORARY USE PERMIT

- o Swap meets and farmers markets are currently the only temporary uses defined by Code. All other uses require a special events license. If those exceed 4 consecutive days or 4 times per calendar year, they require a Special Use Permit
- o Goals are to refine the process, reduce barriers and clearly define specific temporary uses



## GENERAL PLAN UPDATE 2050

What do we want Mesa to look like in 2050? The City is starting the process to update the General Plan for Mesa, which provides a vision concerning desirable future physical development and a strategy for achieving it. The City has issued a notice of intent to hire Logan Simpson as the consultant to create a Citizen Participation Plan for General Plan Update 2050 and help with the process of collecting and analyzing data and write the plan. Extensive public outreach will begin in early 2023.

City Council must adopt the updated General Plan by June 2024 and place the issue on the ballot for voters to ratify in November 2024. State statutes require cities to create general plans and specify topics that must be addressed in the plans. These plans must be updated every 10 years and be approved by voters.

## TEXT TO SCHEDULE INSPECTIONS

Building inspections can now be requested directly from the jobsite or anywhere else just by texting. Confirmation of the inspection is texted back instantly! There is no need to go to the office and use the computer.



To schedule, reschedule or cancel an inspection by text, send a text message to **480-644-2428**. The message should contain the inspection type (S=Schedule; RS=Reschedule, C=Cancel), permit number, three-digit inspection code and inspection date.

More information is available at <https://www.mesaaz.gov/business/development-services/construction-inspections/>. Click on the "Request an Inspection" tab.

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- o Recommendations include expanding the temporary use category for such activities as Christmas tree lots and haunted houses; allowing temporary uses for 90 calendar days with a 1-time 30-day extension and granting 3-year approvals to annual events if all operations remain the same

After a review by the Planning and Zoning Board, the changes pertaining to outdoor dining and temporary use permits are scheduled to be presented to City Council for a vote December 8.

#### • DRIVE-THRU REGULATIONS

- o The goals are to minimize clustering of drive-thrus and preserve the integrity of Mesa neighborhoods. Currently there is no limitation of the number of drive-thru businesses adjacent to each other, and no distinction between drive-thru use and pick-up window use
- o Recommendations include defining pick-up windows and drive-thru facilities differently. Allowing no more than 2 drive-thrus located adjacent to one another; requiring a 3rd drive-thru to be located 750 feet away when located next to 2 adjacent drive-thrus; establishing limits to the number of drive-thru facilities within group commercial, office, and industrial developments based on the size of the development and establishing the Council Use Permit process as a way to request deviations from the above requirements.

City staff continues to get feedback from the development community and residents on the proposed drive-thru regulations.

## PROCESS CHANGES

The City of Mesa Development Services Department began implementing process changes Aug. 1 that will affect the following:

- Application Deadline Calendar
- Pre-Submittal/Pre-Application Process
- Citizen Participation Resource Guide

### **Application Deadline Calendar:**

In order to improve the consistency within the Planning review process, the Planning Division modified the resubmittal deadlines on the various Board calendars. These changes did not affect the set hearing dates or lengthen the overall review timeline for applicants.

Updated calendars are available on the Planning website under “Hot Topics”.

### **Pre-Submittal/Pre-Application:**

In order to improve clarity in the submittal process, the Planning Division consolidated the Pre-Application process with the Pre-Submittal process. Pre-Submittal applications will now be required as the first step for all public hearing applications.

### **Citizen Participation Guidelines:**

The Planning Division updated the City of Mesa’s Citizen Participation Resource Guide and implemented the new processes for applications. With the updates, staff will now provide, as part of the first review of a formal application, a list of property owners, registered neighborhoods, and HOAs to be contacted as a part of the required public notification. Applicants will then deliver stuffed and stamped letters to the Planning Division to mail.

For more information, please refer to the Citizen Participation Guidelines that are available on the Planning website at [www.mesaaz.gov/planning](http://www.mesaaz.gov/planning).



## DEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATES

**ASU MIX CENTER** – The state-of-the-art ASU Media and Immersive eXperience Center (MIX). 50 N. Centennial Way, opened to students in August. Students attending the MIX Center will be making films, designing new virtual worlds and video games and creating other immersive media experiences of all kinds. It will house The Sidney Poitier New American Film School.



**THE STUDIOS AT MESA CITY CENTER** – The Studios at Mesa City Center. 50 E. First St., opened in August and allows the collision of ideas between industry leaders, entrepreneurs, students and the public and provide community event space. The Studios is an adaptive reuse of Mesa's first public library. Exterior renovations include a new entry experience and improved daylighting while respecting the local Historical Landmark Designation.



**PLAZA AT MESA CITY CENTER** – The Plaza, 56 E. Main St., celebrated its grand opening Sept. 28 with an 80's theme party, complete with roller skating. The new public civic space includes an interactive water feature, an iconic shade canopy over an area for the Merry Main Street ice rink and other events and a large lawn space to view movies and videos on an exterior high-resolution screen on the adjacent ASU MIX Center.



**DOBSON RANCH LIBRARY** – Major renovation work began in February at Dobson Ranch Library and is scheduled for completion in late December. The construction project expands the library's footprint by 1600 square feet and adds a THINKspot makerspace for community innovation and networking. The library's façade is being updated, adding greater visibility to the building and more convenience for library users. This is the most significant renovation at Dobson Ranch Library since it opened in 1987.



**MEKONG PLAZA EXPANSION** – Construction began in July for an expansion of more than 35,000 square feet at Mekong Plaza in Mesa's Asian District. The \$10 million expansion project is expected to be completed by July 2023. The existing 100,000-square-foot Mekong Plaza, the keystone of the Asian District, opened in 2008 with fewer than 10 Asian-owned businesses. It is now well known around the state for its eclectic mix of Asian cuisine, groceries, shops and service providers.



**STILLWATER SUPERSTITION** – Demolition of the old K-Mart building has been completed and construction has started on Stillwater Capital's Superstition Springs Class-A apartment complex on Hampton Avenue east of Power Road. The complex will host 373 apartment units and first-class amenities including a luxury clubhouse, several resident lounges and a state-of-the-art fitness facility. The outdoor area will feature a resort-style pool with an infinity-edge, shaded seating, outdoor courtyard with grilling stations, several firepits and outdoor yoga lawns.





## MESA'S CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mayor and Council's Healthy Environment Strategic Initiative demonstrates the City's commitment to proactively and responsibly protect and conserve Mesa's environment and natural resources to reduce heat, carbon and waste for a healthy community for all. Mesa's Climate Action Plan (MCAP) was updated in 2022 based on community engagement and feedback, which identified responsible water management, improvements to air quality and a transition to renewable energy as priorities.

The goals laid out in the plan, such as carbon neutrality by 2050, cannot be achieved without the support of community partners. It will take long-term community planning to achieve these goals and you are a key to that success.

Here are five strategies to consider when planning your next project in the City of Mesa:

- Well-connected streets and shaded routes to schools, parks, and neighborhood services encourage healthy, active transportation (walking, biking). Active transportation, carpooling, public transit and next-generation mobility reduce vehicle miles traveled in single occupancy vehicles, reduce carbon emissions, and improve air quality.
- Green infrastructure in pocket parks and open spaces captures rainfall for use by desert-adapted trees and plants. Green infrastructure also reduces urban heat, maximizes water conservation, improves air quality, reduces stormwater pollution and promotes biodiversity.
- Green building techniques with efficient water use (indoors and out), renewable building materials, net-zero energy systems (efficiency and renewable energy) and thoughtful indoor air quality systems support a healthy environment, net-zero carbon emissions, and zero-waste solutions.
- Infrastructure for zero-emission electric vehicles and alternative fuel vehicles encourages the adoption of these vehicles, reduces carbon emissions and improves air quality.
- Community places that encourage diversity, resilience and sustainability ensure a healthy environment for future generations.

For more information on the MCAP, please visit [www.mesaaz.gov/climateaction](http://www.mesaaz.gov/climateaction).

## CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

Construction of single family homes declined in September but remains slightly ahead of last year's activity in Mesa. There have been 1,523 permits issued for the first nine months of 2022, an increase of one percent from the same time in 2021.



## NEW/PROMOTED EMPLOYEES

### NEW EMPLOYEES

MARY KOPASKIE-BROWN, Planning Director  
 QUENTIN NELSON, Policy Analyst  
 ALEC SANCHEZ, Permit Tech II  
 AMBER GIBSON, Permit Tech II  
 DORA MONTANO, Permit Tech II  
 SERGIO SOLIS, Planner I  
 EMILY JOHNSON, Planner I

### PROMOTIONS

HEATHER OMTA, Management Assistant II  
 DIANA WALRAVEN, Permits Supervisor  
 ELISETTE ALVARADO, Permits Supervisor  
 KATHY CAMPOS, Development Information Specialist  
 LARRY HILL, Senior Building Inspector

## CALENDAR OF MEETINGS/EVENTS

**MON., NOV. 7. CITY COUNCIL.** 5:45pm.  
Upper Level Council Chambers, 57 E. 1st St.

**TUES., NOV. 8. ELECTION DAY.** Polls  
open 6am-7pm

**TUES., NOV. 8. DESIGN REVIEW BOARD.**  
4:30pm. Lower Level Council Chambers, 57 E.  
1st St.

**FRI., NOV. 11. EAST VALLEY VETERANS  
PARADE.** 11am-1pm. Downtown Mesa.

**WED., NOV. 16. PLANNING AND ZONING  
BOARD.** 4pm. Upper Level Council Chambers,  
57 E. 1st St.

**MON., NOV. 21. CITY COUNCIL.** 5:45pm.  
Upper Level Council Chambers, 57 E. 1st St.

**FRI., NOV. 25. MERRY MAIN STREET  
KICKOFF.** 5pm-10pm. Downtown Mesa.

**THUR., DEC. 1. CITY COUNCIL.** 5:45pm.  
Upper Level Council Chambers, 57 E. 1st St.

**TUES., DEC. 6. HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION BOARD.** 6pm. Lower Level  
Council Chambers, 57 E. 1st St.

**WED., DEC. 7. BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT.**  
5:30pm. Lower Level Council Chambers, 57 E.  
1st St.

**THUR., DEC. 8. CITY COUNCIL.** 5:45pm.  
Upper Level Council Chambers, 57 E. 1st St.

**TUES., DEC. 13. DESIGN REVIEW  
BOARD.** 4:30pm. Lower Level Council  
Chambers, 57 E. 1st St.

**WED., DEC. 14. PLANNING AND ZONING  
BOARD.** 4pm. Upper Level Council Chambers,  
57 E. 1st St.