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# Economic *Reporter*

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THE CITY OF MESA OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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## Mesa Light Rail Expansion Plans Moving Forward

Most people know the initial 20-mile track of Light-Rail, stretching from Mesa to Phoenix, is currently operational but few people realize just how popular the light rail station in Mesa has been since it opened in December. Roughly eleven percent of the total ridership boards the trains at the Sycamore Transit Center, which is located at Main Street and Sycamore. This translates into, on average, about 30,000 people per month at the Mesa station. The Sycamore Transit Center is the highest performing station on the alignment.

In May, Mesa City Council voted 7-0 to extend Light-Rail down Main Street from the Sycamore Transit Center to the Mesa Drive vicinity. With the route decided, planning and anticipation for Light-Rail has officially begun. Currently, there are several outreach and planning efforts underway to facilitate the planned extension. Mesa's Transportation Department has started accepting applications for the Central Mesa Stakeholders Advisory Group. The stakeholder group will be asked to provide input and recommendations on the design aspects of extending Light-Rail. Please contact Jodi Sorrell at 480-644-5541 for more information about the stakeholder advisory group.

The Mesa Planning Department is looking to secure funding to undertake a neighborhood area plan in anticipation of Light-Rail. Throughout the nation, investments in light-rail have significantly impacted development patterns near its tracks. In anticipation of more intense land-uses and pedestrian friendly development near light-rail, the Mesa Planning Department will be studying the area around the planned extension. The Central Main Street Neighborhood Area Plan will look to identify areas where Transit Oriented Development is most appropriate and identify ways to ensure the anticipated development work well with existing neighborhoods.

In the Phoenix-Mesa metro area, development near the existing 20 miles of light rail is already evident. Since Proposition 400 was passed in 2004, investment in the light rail system itself has been \$1.4 billion. Non-rail investment near the light rail route has reached \$7.4 billion, most of which has been private (\$5.9 billion private, \$1.5 billion public). The Mesa Economic Development Department is currently working with its partners to establish a toolbox to help existing businesses leverage the benefits of light-rail while also encouraging new investment along the extension.

Lastly, the Downtown Mesa Association (DMA) is facilitating a visioning exercise for downtown Mesa. Still in its preliminary stages, the downtown Mesa vision addresses downtown's future, serving as a guide for growth and improvement in the coming decades. The plan identifies five Vision Elements and 10 Transformative Projects/Programs aimed at achieving a more vibrant downtown square mile. Light-rail is a major component of the discussion and the hope is that the result of this exercise will set the tone for future development and planning in the downtown area. For more information contact Tom Verploegen at 480-890-2613.

Although light-rail isn't expected to be operational in downtown Mesa until 2016, there are plenty of efforts currently underway to prepare for its impacts.



## Economic Development Advisory Board

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### Staff

**William Jabjiniak**

Economic Development

Department Director

The Economic Development Advisory Board meets the first Tuesday of every month at 7:30 am in the Lower Level Council Chambers (57 East First Street). All meetings are open to the public.



## The Quick Job *With Bill Jabjiniak*

Working from home is not always possible for some types of businesses. When that is the case, what can a community do to enable the talent that exists to compete successfully?

Many communities are answering that question by looking at business incubators, which provide comprehensive support to businesses in their start-up stages. One thing to remember about new companies is that, along with the fact that many do not survive the early years, many more stagnate. They just cannot seem to grow beyond a certain size. This stagnation most often occurs because the new business owners need assistance but do not get it. They especially need help in determining how to deal effectively with marketing problems and financial challenges.

Business incubators help entrepreneurs achieve their dreams and help communities develop more vibrant economies. The incubation process begins with an analysis of what a company needs and ends with a company graduating to become solid and independent. In between, the company receives tailor-made services which point the business towards a successful future. These services may include legal and fiscal advice, provide access to financing, flexible space in which to grow, and seminars on other business services.

If your community's economic development strategy includes business incubators, the following should be in the action plan:

- A mission to provide business assistance to start-up companies.
- Staff who can deliver and coordinate business assistance services.
- The ability to lead companies to become self-sufficient.

Business incubators can be successful in both urban and rural communities. They are especially valuable as a strategy in communities with a military base closing or large factory loss. Incubators provide a means of diversifying the base on which a community can build its economy.

The most common incubators are called mixed-use incubators. They accept many types of businesses and are the most common form of incubator. Multi-use incubators offer below-market rates, eliminate building maintenance responsibilities, and provide shared services of support staff and conference facilities. There may be an effort to link the tenants together even though their businesses are so varied. In addition, the incubator will often assist the entrepreneur with business plan development and marketing.

Technology incubators or accelerators are one of the fastest growing sectors of the industry, which covers everything from software to heart surgery. The needs of potential tenants for such accelerators are often specialized. They are therefore more likely to be located in urban areas or near universities or laboratories which can provide appropriate labs and a pool of qualified candidates. Communities that pursue this type of strategy should have a good idea of their labor supply and types of businesses which may succeed in their area.

If you can develop a way to capitalize on the drive and brain power of even a modest percentage of the entrepreneurs who are going to start new businesses in your area, and if you help them keep going, this part of the program will more than pay for itself.

## City of Mesa Partners with Sol Focus to go Green!

A park in Mesa is on the drawing board to turn a lot greener at the same time that we create/retain jobs. We are able to accomplish this through a City initiative to install solar panel arrays through a partnership with Sol Focus, a Mesa Company. “Mesa is an example of a town poised to become the living and breathing paradigm of a vibrant green economy,” said Jason Ells-



worth, vice president and general manager of the SolFocus Glassworks facility. “In addition to providing green collar jobs in the factory, Mesa is positioned to create additional long-term, high-

skilled jobs, through the deployment, operation and maintenance of solar installations, which is expected to create approximately 80-90 working man-years for each megawatt of solar energy put into operation.”

The SolFocus mission is to enable solar energy generation at a Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE) competitive with traditional fossil fuel sources. To achieve this goal, SolFocus has developed leading concentrator photovoltaic (CPV) technology which combines high efficiency solar cells (approaching 40 percent) and advanced optics to provide solar energy solutions which are scalable, dependable and capable of delivering on the promise of clean, low-cost, renewable energy. SolFocus is headquartered in Mountain View, Calif., with European operations headquartered in Madrid, Spain, and manufacturing in Mesa, Ariz., as well as manufacturing partners in India and China.

In 2008, the City partnered with Sol Focus research and development efforts, by allowing the installation of two Concentrating Photovoltaic (CPV) arrays near the perimeter of Mesa’s CAP Water Treatment Plant and two more “next generation” arrays are scheduled for installation in 2009. To enhance our exploration of renewable resources and solar energy, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued in April 2009 seeking proposals for



the sale and installation of solar electric generation equipment capable of providing between 80 and 100 kW (AC) of electric power.



The Economic Development Office was involved in the development of the RFP, and the review of the responses. In addition to the technical requirements, the RFP required respondents to outline the economic benefits to the City of Mesa including jobs (and associated wages) of jobs retained or created that could be directly attributable to Mesa’s purchase of the equipment.

Sol Focus, a Mesa company, was awarded the contract for the purchase of the eleven solar panels. Some of the economic benefits of this purchase are that it retains 156 jobs, and creates a few more jobs in the City of Mesa. Thirty of these jobs average over \$80,000 a year, and 126 of these jobs have an average salary of \$40,000.

We plan to apply for and receive Economic Stimulus program funds under the Community Block Grant portion of the ARRA to purchase the solar electric generation equipment sought in this solicitation.

### Staff profile: Sue Cason



Sue Cason is an Administrative Support Assistant II for Economic Development Department. She is involved in the day-to-day economic development administrative activities. Sue is the glue that keeps us together. Sue is also the

department’s representative for Community Spirit, and the City Edge Project (new financial system for the City).

Due to her work ethic and expertise, in the nine years that Sue has been with the City she has gone through the ranks from our Receptionist to an Administrative Support Assistant II.

Sue was born and raised in central New York, and moved to Arizona from California over twenty years ago. Sue is married, and has five children, five step-children, only twenty-three grandchildren, and one dog. They do not all live with her now, just her husband Dave and dog Ginger. When not at work, Sue enjoys antiquing, decorating, traveling, camping, hiking, and fishing.

**Sue Cason can be reached at 480.644.6949 or [Suzanne.Cason@mesaaz.gov](mailto:Suzanne.Cason@mesaaz.gov)**

## New Restaurants in Downtown Mesa

We are pleased to welcome two new restaurants that have located in Downtown Mesa. These restaurants are Nunthaporn's Thai Cuisine, and Il Vineaio Beer and Wine Bar. "We are very pleased that they have decided to open their restaurants in Downtown Mesa" says William Jabjiniak, Economic Development Director.

Nunthaporn's Thai Cuisine located at 17 W. Main Street is open Monday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., and Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. With a seven-page menu this Thai restaurant has become an instant success story for our Downtown.



*Photo of the interior of Nunthaporn's Thai Cuisine*

If you seek a restaurant with outstanding food served in an elegant yet casual atmosphere, visit downtown's new wine merchant – Il Vineaio. Il Vineaio located at 270 W. Main Street is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Their hours of operation are Tuesday through Sunday 6 a.m. to 3 p.m., Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 5 to 9 p.m., and Friday and Saturday from 5 to 11 p.m. The beer and wine bar is open 4 p.m. to closing.



*Photo of the interior of Il Vineaio*

### City of Mesa Office of Economic Development

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#### DID YOU KNOW...

You can sign up to receive instant text message updates from Mesa's Office of Economic Development? Visit [www.twitter.com/MesaEconDev](http://www.twitter.com/MesaEconDev) to sign up for instant updates...

With six months left in 2009, Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport has serviced almost 300,000 passengers this year.

## EVENTS

### Doing Business in Mesa" Event August 13, 2009



"Doing Business in Mesa" Event to take place on August 13, 2009 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Mesa Arts Center.

Come learn and ask questions of how to do business in Mesa.

Mesa Arts Center  
1 East Main Street

For more information, call 480-844-2069 or e-mail [steven.wright@mesaaz.gov](mailto:steven.wright@mesaaz.gov)

## Pro's Ranch Market Opens in Mesa

Pro's Ranch Market has opened doors to its new Mesa location at 1118 E. Southern Ave. The supermarket, totaling 61,000 square feet, brings a unique experience to your grocery shopping.

In addition to your customary grocery products, the store will also include daily made Aguas Frescas, a fresh fruit bar, ice cream station, tortilleria, cremeria, bakery with freshly made Mexican bread, large produce and fish departments, and taqueria, torta, and seafood taco stations.



Mike R. Paredes, Project Manager with the City of Mesa says, "the economic development office is ecstatic about Pro's Ranch Market and its hiring of 400 new employees in these difficult economic times, and will definitely make a positive economic impact and service the surrounding community." "It brings to the community a quality store with a quality product, which will only enhance and embrace the community"