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Mesa Announces Main Street Prototyping Festival and Request for Proposals
Innovative Project Employs Arts-Based Community Design



Dec. 16, 2016 (Mesa, AZ) – A group of Mesa organizations are collaborating with the City of Mesa to bring the first Main Street Prototyping Festival to Mesa on Nov. 17 and 18, 2017. Mesa is now seeking prototype proposals from artists, architects, designers, engineers, urban planners and others to create temporary projects that activate public space and engage the community toward enhancing connectivity and vibrancy in downtown Mesa. Proposals for prototypes could include, but are not limited to, concepts for gathering places, pathways that increase connectivity, games that invite interaction, performances, interactive artwork and more. The deadline to submit is Jan. 23, 2017.

The City of Mesa, Mesa Arts Center (MAC), Neighborhood Economic Development Corp. (NEDCO), Local Initiatives Support Corporation Phoenix (LISC) and Downtown Mesa Association (DMA) are working together to engage creative minds and the community in testing ideas that respond to dreams, needs and desires of citizens and visitors. “The beauty of this project is that it enables experimentation with a variety of potential enhancements that can impact both community and economic development,” said Cindy Ornstein, Director of Mesa’s Department of Arts and Culture and Executive Director of Mesa Arts Center. “This way, residents and visitors get to explore and respond to ideas in the flesh, and future investments or longer-term testing can be based on knowledge of what worked and the needed adjustments that may make it work better.”

The Main Street Prototyping Festival seeks to augment downtown Mesa’s vitality through arts-based community design and experimentation. Through multiple community listening sessions, the project has and will continue to ask residents to contribute their ideas for creating a welcoming, diverse and connected downtown Mesa. Those submitting prototype proposals are encouraged to use community input to inspire ideas and guide development. At the culminating festival, residents will be invited to provide feedback and vote for their favorite prototypes, and those they feel will provide the most benefits to downtown and its visitors. A total of 20-25 prototype concepts will be selected for implementation at the fall 2017 festival, with each project allocated \$1,000-\$3,000 for design, fabrication and project management.

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“This is a natural next step in the development of downtown Mesa,” Mayor John Giles stated. “There is excellent momentum following on the heels of the extension of light rail and an extensive community visioning process that will help lead us to what’s next for downtown Mesa.”

Jeff McVay, Downtown Transformation Manager, said of the project, “The prototype festival is part of our Downtown Lab (D-Lab) that tests and develops solutions uniquely suited to our very special urban center. Many creative initiatives and events, and a number of other prototype projects have been a part of this process and we look forward to seeing how the community would like to activate downtown Mesa.”

The Festival is funded by a prestigious Our Town grant for \$75,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts. Through Our Town, the National Endowment for the Arts provides grants for arts-based community development projects that contribute toward the livability of communities and help transform them into lively, beautiful, and sustainable places with the arts at their core. Prototyping festivals are a relatively recent tool being employed by forward-thinking cities, and have been held in only a handful of municipalities in the last couple of years, including San Francisco and Denver.

The planning committee seeks proposals of prototype ideas from all types of disciplines and perspectives, and proposals can be submitted by either individuals or teams. To download the Request for Proposals and learn more about the Main Street Prototyping Festival visit www.mesaartscenter.com.

In addition, artist-led residencies will take place with the Boys and Girls Club of Mesa–Grant Woods Branch and CARE Partnership near downtown to create community-generated projects that address neighborhood aspirations, needs and opportunities. The residencies are the first steps in a larger initiative that will seek to strengthen the connections between downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods, and to help these residents develop relationships with organizations and resources available to them in downtown.

Mesa Arts Center is located at One East Main Street in downtown. More information can be found at MesaArtsCenter.com.

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About Mesa Arts Center

The Mesa Arts Center mission is to inspire people through engaging arts experiences that are diverse, accessible, and relevant. Owned and operated by the City of Mesa, Arizona’s largest arts center is recognized as an international award-winning venue. The unique and architecturally stunning facility is home to four theaters, five art galleries, and 14 art studios and an artist cooperative gallery. For more information, visit mesaartscenter.com.

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Main Street Prototyping Festival website:

<https://www.mesaartscenter.com/index.php/engagement/initiatives/main-street-prototyping-festival>.