



City of Grand Prairie

City Hall
317 College Street
Grand Prairie, Texas

Minutes - Final

City Council

Wednesday, November 1, 2017

5:00 PM

City Hall - Briefing Room
317 College Street

Call to Order

Mayor Jensen called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Staff Presentations

1

Discussion of Development and Re-Development

Marty Wieder, Economic Development Director, stated that the Retail/Commercial Task Force started with three corridors: Pioneer from 161 to Carrier; Great Southwest Parkway from Pioneer to Cottonwood Creek; and Pioneer from Carrier to Beltline. The focus was on Man's Best Friend; Forum Bowl; and Planet Fitness. Mr. Wieder went on to suggest changes that could make a significant impact for each of these facilities.

Steve Norwood, Planning Director, explained Carrollton's Retail Shopping Incentive Program. He said they started with \$2 million and added funds each year. Carrollton has completed twelve projects ranging from \$5,000 to \$750,000. Mr. Norwood showed some of the "before and after" pictures of these projects. Some benefits of this investment is in increased lease rates and adjacent businesses making improvements. Mr. Wieder mentioned New Markets Tax Credits which are Federal tax credits and low interest loans which could be promoted to business owners.

Andrew Fortune, Assistant to the City Manager, explained the World Class Audit which encourages business owners and tenants to get engaged in this process. He went through the audit timeline: initial meeting; audit; results and strategy; implementation; and follow-up. Mr. Fortune said staff would conduct the audit as well. He went through some low cost incentives for minor changes such as replacing window coverings; signage; landscaping, etc.

Council Member Shotwell asked Mr. Wieder what criteria was used to select the "poster child" properties. Mr. Wieder said the task force went out on the basis of location, how they look, and what could be done affordably and quickly to show other businesses. Council Member Shotwell said staff may need to look at the ownership and history of the owners. He was doubtful of doing something in one place and getting adjacent owners to do something on their own.

Mayor Jensen stated that the Sports Corp has spent money on new buildings, but perhaps could be convinced to spend money on these types of incentives. City Manager Tom Hart gave an example of a pharmacy he visited that appeared to be closed because there was paper on the windows. He added that some improvements need not cost a lot of money.

Council Member Del Bosque suggested approaching the Kroger on Pioneer Parkway

because they need some assistance. Council Member Giessner said renovations have started in the Pioneer Parkway Corridor with the Emergency Care Center.

Police Chief Steve Dye went over the Home Improvement Incentive Programs to revitalize neighborhoods; demonstrate a strong commitment by the city to reinvest in residential properties; capitalize on geographic location in housing market; and encourage heightened homeowner investment. Chief Dye said this would assist homeowners to make improvements to their homes; increase property values; attract quality residents to the city; increase consumer spending; and support, enhance, and help sustain commercial economic development. He went over three recommendations: implement the city incentive-based home improvement program; both interior and exterior improvements would qualify; expenditures must total 10% or more of appraised market value; completed in three months of starting after notice to proceed; must result in a livable unit; repairs to condominium not covered by the property owner association; landscaping is eligible only per plan approved by the city. Ineligible projects would include pools, hot tubs, spas and water features; landscaping not native or naturalized; or irrigation system lacking digital controllers; repair or replacement of sprinkler systems lacking digital controllers;

Chief Dye said rebates would be limited to \$5,000 per property per year; 25% rebate on exterior improvements; 10% rebate on interior improvements; all must be completed once agreement is signed – no partial rebates. The pilot program would take place in International Estates and New Castle Neighborhoods – can become Nottingham like neighborhoods.

A Fence Repair/Replacement Program would provide a 50% match; residents may apply for a maximum \$1,000 matching grant regardless of household income. a matching grant up to \$3,000 if replacing or repairing a private retaining wall; PIDs or neighborhood associations may apply for a maximum \$10,000 matching grant. Projected benefits include increased property values; catalyst for enhanced community engagement; educate citizens on other available resources; complement commercial economic development; quality of assimilation program; and view as an investment not a cost.

Council Member Del Bosque suggested getting the Housing and Community Improvement Commission involved. Chief Dye responded that could absolutely be done and the more inclusive the better. Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Copeland asked how staff would verify the amount of the construction being done. Chief Dye said staff would evaluate and rebate off of what staff determines is eligible. The Housing, Planning and Code departments could include this verification in their duties. Mayor Jensen said there was the same issue on Main Street but we worked through that.

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Copeland said many residents would need their residences cleaned up, painted, etc. but may not have the matching funds. Chief Dye said millennials would move into the city but the city has to make some improvements first. He said it has been contagious in other cities. Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Copeland said if we improve homes to a value of \$300K, millennials could not afford these homes. He said he wanted to ensure that we are not showing any favoritism such as the Commercial incentives. Chief Dye said staff would request feedback from Council Members on their districts as far as neighborhood projects.

Council Member Shotwell said he did not think the target neighborhoods would get the return on investment. He said he would want to bring up older neighborhoods rather than brick houses. Chief Dye said if we lose a neighborhood to crime, it is difficult to

get them back, but staff looked at the focus areas as "tipping points." He added staff could open up the rebate program as far and wide as requested by Council. Council Member Shotwell said we need to help rental properties. Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Copeland said if we could find a landlord that owned ten properties in one neighborhood and we improve those, it could make a difference. Bill Hills, Housing and Neighborhood Services Director, said for people over 60 and lower income there are grant programs available to them. This program would allow the city to help others on fixed incomes.

Council Member Clemson said residential is very important to the city and the Carrier Parkway and Pioneer intersection is a very important intersection and improvements here would improve the city's image.

Esther Coleman, Housing and Neighborhood Services Manager, and member of the Apartment/Hotel/Motel Task Force, said the city has been a forerunner in this program. Ms. Coleman stated the Housing Department has a partnership with the Police Department with a mission to ensure minimum requirements for the protection and welfare of the general public, as well as the owners and occupants of hotel and multi-family properties. She went over the requirements for units for annual inspection including the Tier Rating System which is based on calls for service. The Grand Prairie Police Department Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program was implemented in conjunction with the Housing and Neighborhood Services Department. Chief Scesney stated that medical calls for service are not included in the tier rating system.

Ms. Coleman said the Hotel/Motel Program requires them to submit an application annually for occupancy to allow getting information on the owner if there is a need to send citations or need to contact the owner. She said there is also a tier rating system for hotels/motels.

As an enhancement to the Hotel/Motel and Apartments programs, which have proven to be very successful, the Police Department and Housing and Neighborhood Services Departments are exploring the possibilities of further amendments to Chapter 28 of the Code of Ordinances to provide for abatement procedures and surcharges as incentives to properties with significant issues to foster greater cooperation. Discussion took place on extended stay hotels and high fees to discourage them.

Mr. Hills went over the requirements for the Tax Credit Rehabilitation Program for rehabilitation or acquisition/rehabilitation of existing multi-family properties in the City of Grand Prairie utilizing tax credits.

Ms. Coleman went over the Multi-Family Recycling Plan. She stated that the city cannot require multi-family developments to have a recycling program but could give an incentive by giving them bonus points for the SGR rating program.

Council Member Shotwell said he had met with some developers and he was okay with tax credit for rehabs but not for new housing, but we might want to be open to new development depending on location (i.e. distressed neighborhoods). Council Member Swafford said we need to be careful how a distressed neighborhood is defined.

Rita Heep, Economic Development Retention Manager, introduced members of the Downtown Task Force. Savannah Ware, City Planner, went over goals to identify high impact actions; catalyze local investment; and build momentum and excitement. She stated the city had already made a big investment in the downtown area. Ms. Ware showed the vision for a future downtown with a strong identity and sense of place.

Mr. Fortune stated there has been a movement away from traditional bars. The new 21st Century bars have a bright, clean concept and many have patio elements; stages for live music; many are themed; and food sales are limited to food trucks or are non-existent. Great ideas for public spaces for downtown areas include programming; public art and murals; civic center and plaza; gathering places; crosswalk art adds color and texture to a street; murals and public art.

Ms. Ware spoke about active streetscape for walkability; sit-able; pedestrian scaled; interesting window displays; and outdoor cafes. She showed examples of walkable streetscapes. Mr. Fortune said that little public investment has spurred private investment in places such as Bishop Arts where there has been an influx of unique independent restaurants and businesses. Mr. Hart added that they have implemented a central valet for the entire area.

Ms. Ware stated that tactical urbanism uses short-term low-cost and scalable interventions to catalyze long-term change. It is used to test new ideas and observe and measure results; adjust as conditions change, and engages stakeholders. She said the task force members did a walking tour and identified several opportunities to utilize this downtown including curb bulb outs; high-visibility crosswalks; and median that calms traffic and plantings to improve aesthetics. The task force also looked at ideas for the civic plaza to test out ideas to get people excited about things to come and to collect feedback to gather ideas for the permanent plaza. A third project outlined by the task force would be traffic calming (ie. curb extensions, chicanes and on-street parking) along NW 2nd Street.

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Copeland said staff had outlined what we want and how we get there, but what happens if we do nothing. Ms. Ware said this process takes time. Council Member Giessner said we would continue to decline if we do nothing. He added we need to go after older neighborhoods and downtown and perhaps we do need to move things back off Main Street to create walkability. Council Member Shotwell said the biggest hindrance is Main Street (SH80) because of eighteen wheelers driving through. Mr. Fortune said staff would work with TXDOT upfront to start the dialogue now. He asked if Council wanted substantial changes, were they willing to take over the maintenance of the portion we want to change. Council Member Shotwell said we need to get residents in the downtown area and this might be an area for tax credits. He added that moving some of the activity north of Main Street is where we have land that can be redeveloped.

Mr. Hart thanked Mr. Hills for chairing the presentation and thanked the individual committee members. He said the committees were made up of multiple departments and they will be ongoing. He said he was hearing some new things from Council such as tax credits and said there was a possibility of funding from leftover cash at the end of the year. Mayor Jensen said the Sports Corporation could discuss funding opportunities for redevelopment.

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Copeland said the programs need to be on a first come first served basis and the programs for residential and fences needs to be city-wide. Council Member Shotwell stated that he agreed and would like to look at rebate amounts based on income.

Executive Session

There was no executive session.

Adjournment

Mayor Jensen adjourned the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

The foregoing minutes were approved at the November 21, 2017 meeting.

Catherine E. DiMaggio, City Secretary