
MINUTES

Central Wichita Falls Neighborhood Revitalization Committee

August 20, 2024

PRESENT:

Ann Arnold-Ogden
Wendy Browder
Jose Garcia
Mike Mitchell
Councilor Michael Smith

◆ Member
◆ Vice Chair
◆ Member
◆ Chairman
◆ Member

Fabian Medellin, Planning Manager
Christal Cates, Neighborhood Revitalization Coordinator

◆ City Staff
◆ City Staff

ABSENT:

Larry Fox
Nadia Menchaca
Councilor Larry Nelson
Andrea Robles

◆ Member
◆ WFAAC Liaison
◆ Member
◆ Member

GUEST:

Jacob Harrell, Youth Pastor, Lamar Baptist Church

◆ Guest

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Mitchell, at 4:04 p.m. and introductions of all attendees made. Mrs. Cates advised Mrs. Ann Arnold-Ogden would in and out of the meeting while attending to other work commitments.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Mitchell asked if there were any members of the public that wished to speak. No comments from the public.

VII. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

Chairman Mitchell asked for a motion to approve the minutes from August 6th, 2024. Councilman, Michael made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Vice-Chairwomen, Wendy Browder seconding. The motion passed unanimously with a vote of 4-0.

VIII. REGULAR AGENDA

1. Continued Discussions on the Community Change Grant

Mrs. Cates briefly reviewed what was discussed about the Community Change Grant at the previous meeting and advised the grant application specifically wanted to hear from the Committee on certain matters. Mrs. Cates referred the Committee to page 17 in the meeting packet for specific questions on which feedback would be required from the Committee. Chairman Mitchell requested the questions be emailed to the Committee members so that those not present would be able to provide their feedback later on as well as present members. Staff advised the questions would be emailed to the Committee and went over the questions to be sure all understood what the application questions were referring to. The Committee agreed this would give them more time to present the answers as well as give staff more time in the meeting to discuss other items on the agenda.

2. Introduction to Neighborhood Empowerment Zones (NEZ)

Staff presented an overview on Neighborhood Empowerment Zones (NEZ) giving the definition of the meaning as well as stating, chapter 378 of the Texas local government code, effective May 1999, that authorizes a municipality to create a NEZ for the purpose of:

- Promoting the creation or rehabilitation of affordable housing; and
- Promoting economic development; or
- Improving the quality of social services, education, or public safety for the residents of the NEZ.

Staff advised the first step in creating a NEZ would be to create a zone. A municipality must adopt a resolution that includes:

- A determination that the zone benefits the public
- A description of the zone's boundaries
- A finding that the zone satisfies the requirements of Section 312.202, Tax Code

Mrs. Cates advised the Committee that work had already been done when City Council approved the Central Wichita Falls Neighborhood Revitalization Area.

Staff stated, once a zone was created, municipalities could offer incentives to homeowners, investor-owners, and/or developers who proposed new construction or rehabilitation projects within the NEZ area.

Some of the incentives that could possibly be offered in a NEZ created in the Central Wichita Falls Neighborhood Revitalization Area would be;

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| • Building Permit Fees | • Fire Permit Fees |
| • Demolition Fees | • Zoning Application Fees |
| • Inspection Fees | • City Plat Application Fees |
| • Plan Review Fees | • City Tax Abatements |
| • Right-of-Way Permit Fees | • Release of City Liens |

Staff discussed the incentives with the Committee as well as other possible incentives. Staff also advised the Committee there were other benefits of living and/or owning a business inside of a NEZ area. Some benefits discussed were;

- Tax Credits
- Grants Specifically for NEZ Applicants
- Employee Credits
- Facility Bonds/Low-Cost Loans

Staff also discussed tax abatements with the Committee and advised the City could also enter into agreements abating municipal property taxes on property in the zone for a period not to exceed 10 years, on the condition that the owner of the property make specific improvements or repairs to the property.

Staff advised the City could also set baseline performance standards, such as the Energy Star Program as developed by the Department of Energy, to encourage the use of alternative building materials that address concerns relating to the environment or to the building costs, maintenance, or energy consumption.

Some concerns frequently voiced by other citizens in cities that had implemented NEZ were discussed. Staff advised the incentives would not be automatic and that citizens within the NEZ boundaries would be required to apply before beginning any construction projects. Staff advised the benefits of being inside a NEZ is not mandatory, and the only way to receive the incentives is to participate, however, there would be no penalty for not choosing to participate in the program.

Staff stated the program would not be a way of taking away any property from owners, but rather provide incentives for private investment within the NEZ boundaries. The NEZ is not designed to push anyone out of their personal homes or off their property. Participation would be an individual choice, and there would be no incentive or requirement to sell your property.

The NEZ will not be a free housing program, but designed to reduce the cost of the owner's own property improvements, including rehabilitation and new construction. The NEZ will not change the current zoning of a property and all projects completed within the NEZ would be required to meet the development regulations and guidelines of the existing zoning ordinance.

Staff advised one of the biggest benefits for the community would be that a NEZ would promote home ownership. Staff stated currently the occupancy of homes in the revitalization area were approximately 36% owner occupied and 64% renter occupied. Staff also stated there would be incentives for rehabilitation of existing structures. Property owners who make qualified improvements to enhance the value of their homes could receive incentives based on the taxable value after the improvement.

Continued discussion among staff and the Commission continued with the Commission requesting to see the research done by staff from other comparable cities and to see what incentives were offered as well as how their NEZ was

implemented. Mrs. Cates advised she would email the research as well as the draft NEZ staff had constructed for a potential NEZ for the Central Wichita Falls Neighborhood Revitalization Area.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

Bridwell Park Update

Mrs. Cates gave a brief update on Bridwell Park. Photos were displayed and Mrs. Cates stated delivery of the steel support poles and fencing had been delivered Monday, August 19th, 2024 for the multi-purpose courts.

Staff presented a draft of the survey the Committee requested be designed for reviewing that was previously sent out before the meeting. Chairman Mitchell asked staff to move question #6 to be placed after question #2. Staff advised that change would be made. The Committee stated they had no other revisions for the survey.

Next staff presented the final versions of the fliers and yard signs that had been ordered doubled sided in English and Spanish.

Discussion among staff and Committee regarding contacting potential sponsors for the unveiling event for Bridwell Park.

VII. ADJOURN

Staff advised the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, September 3rd at 4 p.m. to be held at the Arts Alliance conference room. Staff pointed out that the meeting date was the after the Labor Day holiday and asked if the Committee would like to reschedule it or keep the meeting date. Committee advised to keep the meeting date set as is. A reminder for the sub-committee meeting for Bridwell Park unveiling event would be held Tuesday, August 27th at Wichita Tower, 705 8th Street, 6th Floor Planning Conference Room at 4pm.

Chairman Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:08 p.m.



Mike Mitchell, Chairman

9/3/24
Date



Fabian Medellin, AICP, Planning Manager

9-3-24
Date