



Staff Report

TO: City Council
FROM: Joel Belding, Economic Development Manager
Carole Kendrick, Interim Community Development Director
DATE September 17, 2024
SUBJECT: Attachment B - Staff Report - September 17 2024.docx

Description Draft Downtown Revitalization Plan for review and adoption.

Background and Analysis:

On November 1, 2022, the City Council awarded a professional services contract to the consulting firm GHD to assist the City in preparing a Downtown Revitalization Plan (the Plan). The Plan was intended to supplement prior City efforts to foster a thriving business and residential core for the City. This work involved extensive economic and site analysis, as well as broad community outreach to understand the unique nature of the community and the downtown business climate. GHD and staff most recently provided an update to the City Council on the status of the plan at its May 21, 2024, meeting. Subsequent to that meeting, the Plan has been finalized and is ready for final consideration by the City Council.

The Plan includes two main avenues for revitalization efforts: development of opportunity sites to introduce new retail, dining and housing opportunities; and changes to City operations and regulatory frameworks.

Redevelopment Efforts

The Plan's redevelopment activities involve working with private landowners to introduce new retail, dining, and housing opportunities and mobility improvements to modify certain streets to enhance pedestrian circulation and slow traffic and facilitate additional public parking. Retail and dining would be a balance of local serving establishments and destination dining to attract customers from across the city and from beyond its borders. Housing opportunities would reinforce the local population to support the smaller scale existing and planned businesses. Public parking would relieve landowners of the need to provide extensive on-site parking, which can often make new development cost prohibitive and creates gaps in the urban fabric. Nine opportunity sites for new development within the study area are identified in the Plan.

Regulatory Framework and Operational Changes

Zoning Reform – The Plan includes recommended zoning ordinance modifications to update maximum development potential by adjusting allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and densities for commercial, mixed-used, and residential developments. Current zoning standards and development potential may be one critical factor in holding back new development within the Downtown Area.

Establish a Downtown Business Improvement District - The Plan includes a recommendation for the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID). BIDs can assist member businesses with a wide variety of activities including marketing, beautification improvements, improved public safety, events to bring residents to the BID area, street cleaning and possibly even administration of grants and incentive programs. BIDs do require financial contributions from the member businesses, which may not be feasible at this time, but the Plan recommends evaluating the possibility of a BID formulation in 5-10 years following implementation of other Plan measures.

Downtown Marketing and Events- The Plan recommends the City continue and expand its marketing and public awareness campaigns for existing and future downtown businesses, as well as expanding its public events activities. The intent with staging regular events in the downtown area is to connect residents and visitors with the dining and retail businesses in the area and to promote predictable and consistent visitorship to the area.

Downtown Parking – the Plan includes recommendations on data-driven updates to parking requirements for existing and new businesses in recognition of the substantial amount of on-street parking within the area. The Plan also includes recommendations on where new parking should be added to support continued development.

Business Incentives – The Plan supports the continued use of a variety of business expansion and establishment incentives through grants, tax credits, and other mechanisms. There are also recommendations for city process changes to make it as easy as possible for developers to understand and work through the entitlement and building permit process.

Downtown Architectural Guidelines - The Plan includes design guidelines for new construction or building renovations, with recommended architectural styles representing the diverse mix of existing styles within the downtown area.

Downtown Signage Program - The Plan includes recommendations for private signs, as well as city sponsored wayfinding and placemaking sites to help create unifying character elements for this area.

The Plan contains an estimated timeline for each of its recommendations, with efforts estimated to begin in 2025 and continue through 2045. There are elements of the Plan that can be initiated and completed within the next few years, but overall, the Plan requires approximately twenty years of sustained City and private landowner activities to achieve its goals. Initial efforts will focus on completing projects already planned and in progress, such as the Zoning Ordinance update, Stewart Park renovations, relocation of Police Headquarters, and activation of 500 Grace Avenue and 105 West Sixth Street. Longer term efforts may include additional site acquisitions, connecting vacant landowners with developers to facilitate entirely private redevelopment activities, parking improvements, and street beautification efforts.

Continued growth of the City in general will also assist by adding to the local population, with the City and other community partners, such as the Chamber of Commerce, promoting downtown businesses and activities to existing and new residents to increase visitorship to the downtown.

Should the City Council adopt the Plan, staff will begin prioritizing the recommendations for implementation. Staff will also provide regular reports to the City Council on these efforts.

Consistency with Adopted Goals, Plans and Programs:

The Plan builds upon the 2019 Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) recommendations related to promotion and development of local serving businesses within the downtown area, including marketing and events, redevelopment of key sites for mixed use and housing opportunities, placemaking improvements, which are described in detail in Strategy Group Action Items 2, 7, 12, and 13 of the EDSP.

General Plan Consistency:

The Plan also incorporates the recommendations of more than two dozen goals of the General Plan (e.g. LUCD8, LUCD9, LUCD11, LUCD15, LUCD17, LUCD18, LUCD19, M6, M14, M16, M17, EDF4, EDF5, EDF6, EDF21, EDF22, EDF23, EDF24, EDF34, C27, DAP2, DAP4, DAP5, DAP6, and DAP7) related to updates to the zoning ordinance, physical improvements to the downtown area to improve traffic calming, increase public parking supply, pedestrian circulation, improving existing building conditions through incentive programs, adoption of design standards for new development, expanded housing variety and identification of infill opportunities, branding and marketing for the

downtown area, and development of a wayfinding program. The Plan has been designed to be consistent with the General Plan.

Fiscal Impact:

The cost to prepare this report is estimated at \$350.

Recommended Action:

Adopt the Downtown Revitalization Plan as presented.

Attachments:

- A. Downtown Revitalization Plan

Incorporated herein by Reference:

City of Beaumont General Plan

City of Beaumont Zoning Ordinance

Economic Development Strategic Plan

Contents of City of Beaumont Economic Development Department Project File

PLAN2023-0998