

**City Council
Agenda Memo**



**City Council
Meeting Date: 2/13/2014**

TO: Larry D. Gilley, City Manager
FROM: Jon James, AICP
Director of Planning and Development Services
SUBJECT: First reading and public hearing on an Ordinance adopting the Cobb Park Area Revitalization Plan.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The City of Abilene's Comprehensive Plan promotes infill development and redevelopment in areas of the community that are vacant or underutilized. The Cobb Park Super Neighborhood Area is in the core of the City within an area that is in need of redevelopment. Key community facilities within this neighborhood are the Abilene High School, Martinez Elementary, and Cobb Park. The plan is intended to expand upon the general goals and strategies of the citywide Comprehensive Plan, not to supersede the recommendations of that Plan.

This plan identifies goals for future development and redevelopment, makes findings about the need for reinvestment and revitalization, identifies recent and planned investment in the area, and encourages implementation through joint efforts by the City, other public stakeholders, organizations, and the private sector.

The City will join with residents, neighborhood organizations, nonprofits, private developers, and/or other stakeholders to work to achieve the goals of this Plan. City support, programs, and incentives may be combined with state, federal, and private investment through the development of market rate and affordable single-family and multifamily housing, residential and commercial property development and renovation, and infrastructure improvements. In addition, community development projects, transportation improvements for motorized vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians, and/or other activities that will contribute to the development and long-term benefit of the area will be pursued.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval as requested.

BOARD OR COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval at their February 3rd meeting by a vote of 4 in favor (Famble, Glenn, McClarty, Todd) and none opposed.

ATTACHMENTS

Ordinance
Cobb Park Area Revitalization Plan

Prepared by:

Name: Jon James

Title: Planning Director

February 4, 2014

Item No. _____

Disposition by City Council

- ☐ Approved Ord/Res# _____
☐ Denied
☐ Other

City Secretary

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADOPTING AND INCORPORATING THE COBB PARK AREA REVITALIZATION PLAN AS A DEVELOPMENT PLAN ATTACHMENT; PROVIDING A SEVERABILITY CLAUSE; DECLARING A PENALTY AND CALLING A PUBLIC HEARING.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ABILENE, TEXAS:

PART 1: That the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Abilene is hereby amended adding the Cobb Park Area Revitalization Plan as shown on Exhibit "A" as an addendum to the Plan and made a part of this ordinance for all purposes.

PART 2: That if any provision or any section of this ordinance shall be held to be void or unconstitutional, such holding shall in no way affect the validity of the remaining provisions or sections of this ordinance, which shall remain in full force and effect.

PART 3: That any person, firm or corporation violating any of the provisions of this chapter shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine of not more than Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00). Each day such violation shall continue or be permitted to continue, shall be deemed a separate offense.

PASSED ON FIRST READING this 13th day of February A.D. 2014.

A notice of the time and place, where and when said ordinance would be given a public hearing and considered for final passage, was published in the Abilene Reporter-News, a daily newspaper of general circulation in the City of Abilene, said publication being on the 17th day of January, 2014, the same being more than fifteen (15) days prior to a public hearing to be held in the Council Chamber of the City Hall in Abilene, Texas, at 8:30 a.m., on the 13th day of February, 2014, to permit the public to be heard prior to final consideration of this ordinance. Said ordinance, being a penal ordinance, becomes effective ten (10) days after its publication in the newspaper, as provided by Section 19 of the Charter of the City of Abilene.

PASSED ON SECOND AND FINAL READING THIS 27th day of February, A.D. 2014.

ATTEST:

CITY SECRETARY

MAYOR

APPROVED:

CITY ATTORNEY

City of Abilene

Cobb Park Area Revitalization Plan

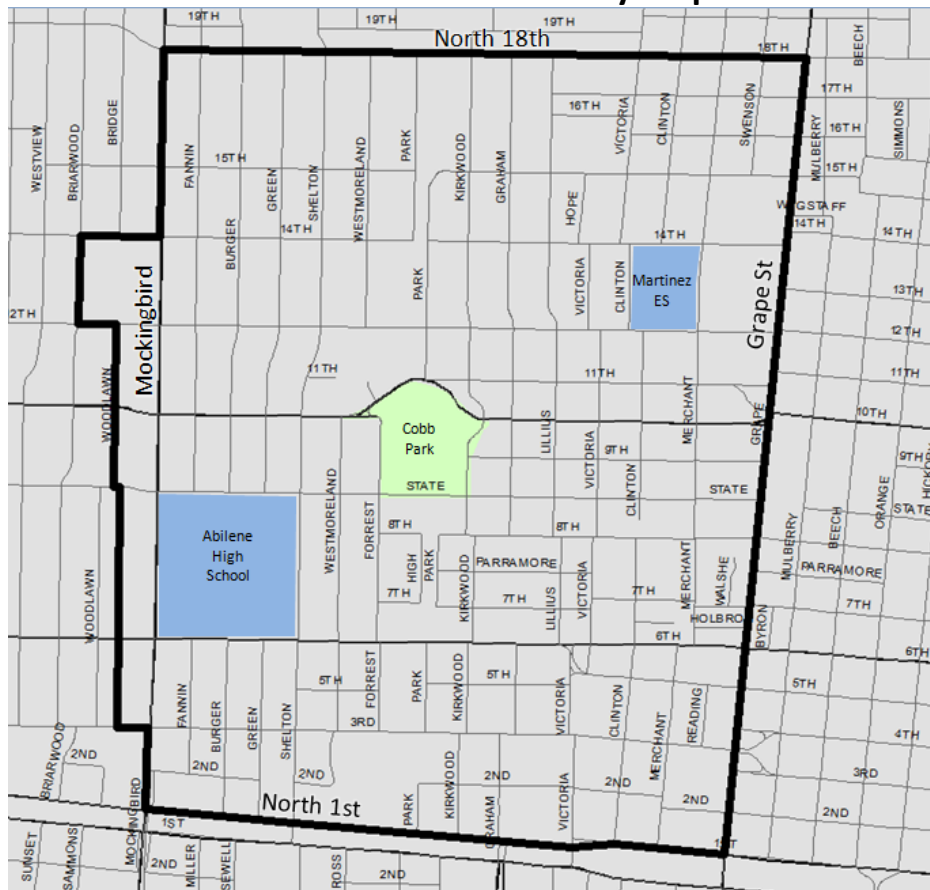
A. Summary

The City of Abilene's Comprehensive Plan promotes infill development and redevelopment in areas of the community that are vacant or underutilized. The Cobb Park Super Neighborhood Area is in the core of the City within an area that is in need of redevelopment. Key community facilities within this neighborhood are the Abilene High School, Martinez Elementary, and Cobb Park. The plan is not intended to be static but recognizes the need for periodic revision and is intended to expand upon the general goals and strategies of the citywide Comprehensive Plan, not to supersede the recommendations of that Plan.

B. Boundaries

The boundaries of the Cobb Park Area for this Revitalization Plan include the area generally bounded by North 1st Street on the south, Grape Street on the east, North 18th Street on the north, and Mockingbird Street on the west. Given the development patterns, transportation connections, and land use relationships to the neighborhood, the commercial and multi-family development along the west side of Mockingbird are also included within this Plan boundary.

Cobb Park Area Boundary Map



C. Goals

The goals of the *Plan* are as follows:

1. Encourage redevelopment that maximizes the efficient use of existing resources, such as water, roads, and public services.
2. Encourage development of higher-density mixed use nodes including residential, retail, service, and employment uses that provide convenient vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle access.
3. Encourage the development of mixed income diverse housing including market rate and affordable housing.
4. Encourage public and private financial investment in the area.
5. Ensure the long-term economic viability of a vital retail and service hub serving this sector of the community.
6. Encourage a highly connected and walkable street system throughout the entire neighborhood through well-designed and attractive street corridors.
7. Provide convenient pedestrian connections throughout the neighborhood and particularly to parks, schools, and retail areas from the surrounding neighborhood.
8. Encourage urban, rather than suburban, style development at higher intensities and with reduced front setbacks to allow buildings closer to the street.
9. Ensure that the community appearance standards of the City's Comprehensive Plan are met in new development.
10. Encourage higher intensity development in areas where transit service is available (currently on North 6th, North 12th, North 18th, Mockingbird, and Grape Streets).
11. Encourage appropriate development in environmentally sensitive areas, such as flood zones, that preserve and protect both these natural resources and the community.
12. Support the redevelopment of aging or distressed commercial centers as mixed use neighborhood activity centers.
13. Encourage commercial development and redevelopment at nodes at major intersections and avoid excessive linear strips of commercial development along major roads.
14. Encourage reinvestment in existing homes and properties within the neighborhood and pursue code enforcement to address nuisances and reinforce neighborhood stability.
15. Encourage the creation of a neighborhood association or associations and facilitate community partnerships.

It is recognized that development and redevelopment activities can spur the creation of jobs and the creation or relocation of businesses and services to the area.

D. Findings

The City of Abilene recognizes that this area is in need of reinvestment and revitalization. As such there are barriers to development in the area, including:

1. Adverse environmental conditions. Over half of the neighborhood area is within either the floodway or 100 year floodplain of Catclaw Creek. This presents issues for existing development within the area and is a barrier to redevelopment.
2. Presence of blight. While this area is largely a stable neighborhood, there are pockets of blighted buildings, vacant tracts, and underutilized commercial areas that, if not addressed, could cause disinvestment in the area.
3. Presence of inadequate transportation or infrastructure. This area is adequately served by public transit service and the automobile system includes a well-functioning grid of streets. However, this area has an extremely inadequate system for pedestrians. Given the presence of an elementary school, high school, and large city park, this shortcoming needs to be addressed for this neighborhood to reach its potential.
4. Lack of employment opportunities. As major new development has occurred at the periphery of the community, the core of the city is at risk of losing nearby employment opportunities. As many of the households within the neighborhood are dependent on walking and/or public transit, it is important to continue to encourage job opportunities in and near the neighborhood.
5. Need to promote diversity. As an aging area, reinvestment in the area will be critical to ensuring that this neighborhood remains vital and stable over the long term. Disinvestment in the area will put the neighborhood at risk for decline, while the City's goal is to ensure revitalization by promoting both public and private investment and renewal.

E. Targeted Development Areas

The target areas for redevelopment include the entirety of the neighborhood. Priorities include redevelopment of distressed retail areas and other underutilized properties. This neighborhood will benefit from redevelopment activities in order to encourage the long-term growth and stability of the area.

F. Coordination

This Plan encourages development and redevelopment that will provide benefits to existing and future residents by utilizing existing capacities and programs as well as the coordination of public and private initiatives and investment. Activities should contribute to the long-term function of the existing area and address the findings identified in Section D, above. Public officials, neighborhood organizations, nonprofits, private developers, and other stakeholders will need to join forces for effective community development and redevelopment to occur.

G. Implementation

The City will join with residents, neighborhood organizations, nonprofits, private developers, and/or other stakeholders to work to achieve the goals of this Plan. City support, programs, and incentives may be combined with state, federal, and private investment through the development of market rate and affordable single-family and multifamily housing, residential and commercial property development and renovation, and infrastructure improvements. In addition, community development projects, transportation improvements for motorized vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians, and/or other activities that will contribute to the development and long-term benefit of the area will be pursued.

H. Recent Investment in the Area

The City of Abilene and community partners have made significant investments in this area in recent years, and within the past 4 years public investments have totaled more than \$8.2 million with an additional \$1.45 million in major private investment. Below are some examples of the investments and improvements that have occurred:

1. The City of Abilene remodeled a storefront within an existing shopping center on Mockingbird to open the North Branch Library to serve this area with an investment of \$240,000, which was completed in December 2008.
2. The Abilene Independent School District built and opened a new elementary school within the neighborhood, Martinez Elementary at 1250 Merchant Street. This represents an investment of \$7 million in the neighborhood and provides a new, modern school for neighborhood children, which was completed in June 2012.
3. Recent private development in the area includes a new Sonic Drive-in Restaurant (\$450,000), a new Goodwill facility (\$400,000), and a new Family Dollar store (\$600,000). Also, there are plans for a new grocery store on Mockingbird adjacent to the branch library.
4. The City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) details capital projects throughout the city. The following are recently completed CIP projects within the plan boundaries:
 - a. Cobb Park ballfield lighting upgrade, 2007 (~\$100,000)
 - b. Cobb Park playground modernization, 2011 (\$65,000)
5. Other recent City infrastructure projects in the area:
 - a. Merchant Street pedestrian improvements near Martinez Elementary School, 2013 (\$5,450)
 - b. Resurfaced 22 lane miles of streets within this area. (\$599,955)
 - c. Reconstruction of Victoria Street between North 5th and North 6th. (\$34,804)
 - d. Sidewalk construction along North 6th Street (\$10,800)
 - e. Water line replacement on North 6th from Briarwood to Shelton, including associated road repairs. (\$127,200 for water project + \$46,471 for road)
 - f. Water line replacement, east alley of Westmoreland from North 6th to State Street. (\$48,900)

I. Planned Investment in the Area

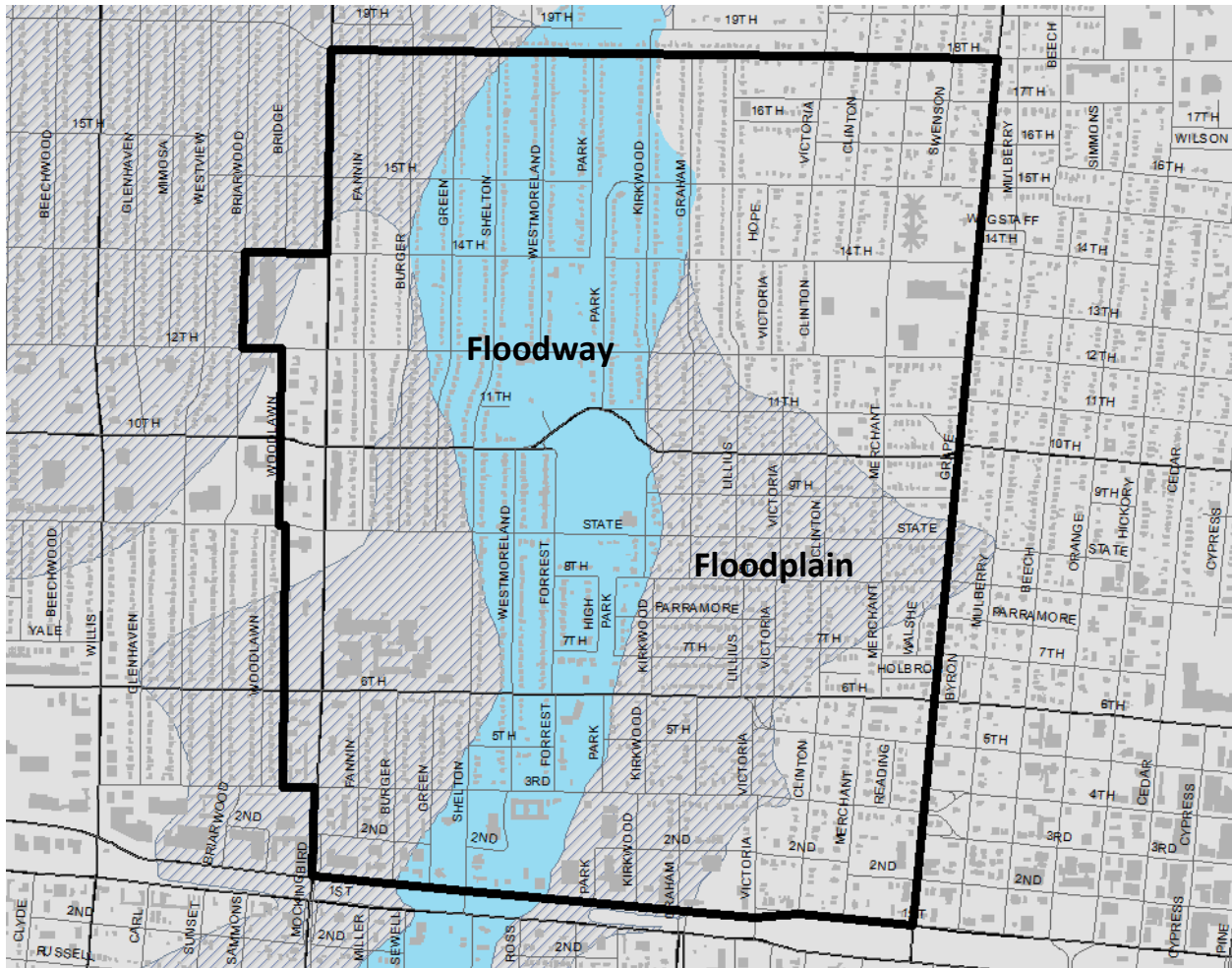
The City of Abilene and community partners have plans to continue improvement within the neighborhood. The following are investments and improvements planned in the coming years:

1. The following are planned projects within the 2013 CIP that fall within the plan boundaries:
 - a. Paving improvements to the Cobb Park Recreation Center, beyond 2017 (\$35,000)
 - b. Cobb Park ballfield concession upgrade, beyond 2018 (~\$300,000)
2. Other proposed projects in the area:
 - a. New City Health Clinic at the vacated Boys and Girls Club building on the campus of the old Fannin Elementary School site. *While not within the plan area, this site is immediately across N. 18th Street, the northern plan boundary, and will provide health services to this neighborhood.* (\$350,000)
 - b. There are currently 45 bus stops serving this neighborhood. CityLink transit has plans to install approximately 20 bus benches and 4 bus shelters within this neighborhood in the coming years. (\$44,000)
 - c. Water and sewer improvements to support proposed multifamily housing projects. (\$813,900)
3. In addition to these planned improvements in the area, within this designated Infill Area, the City is open to opportunities for partnerships with developers for infrastructure improvements to help assist and incentivize redevelopment in this area. Such partnerships will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis evaluating the costs of City participation vs. the public benefits being created.

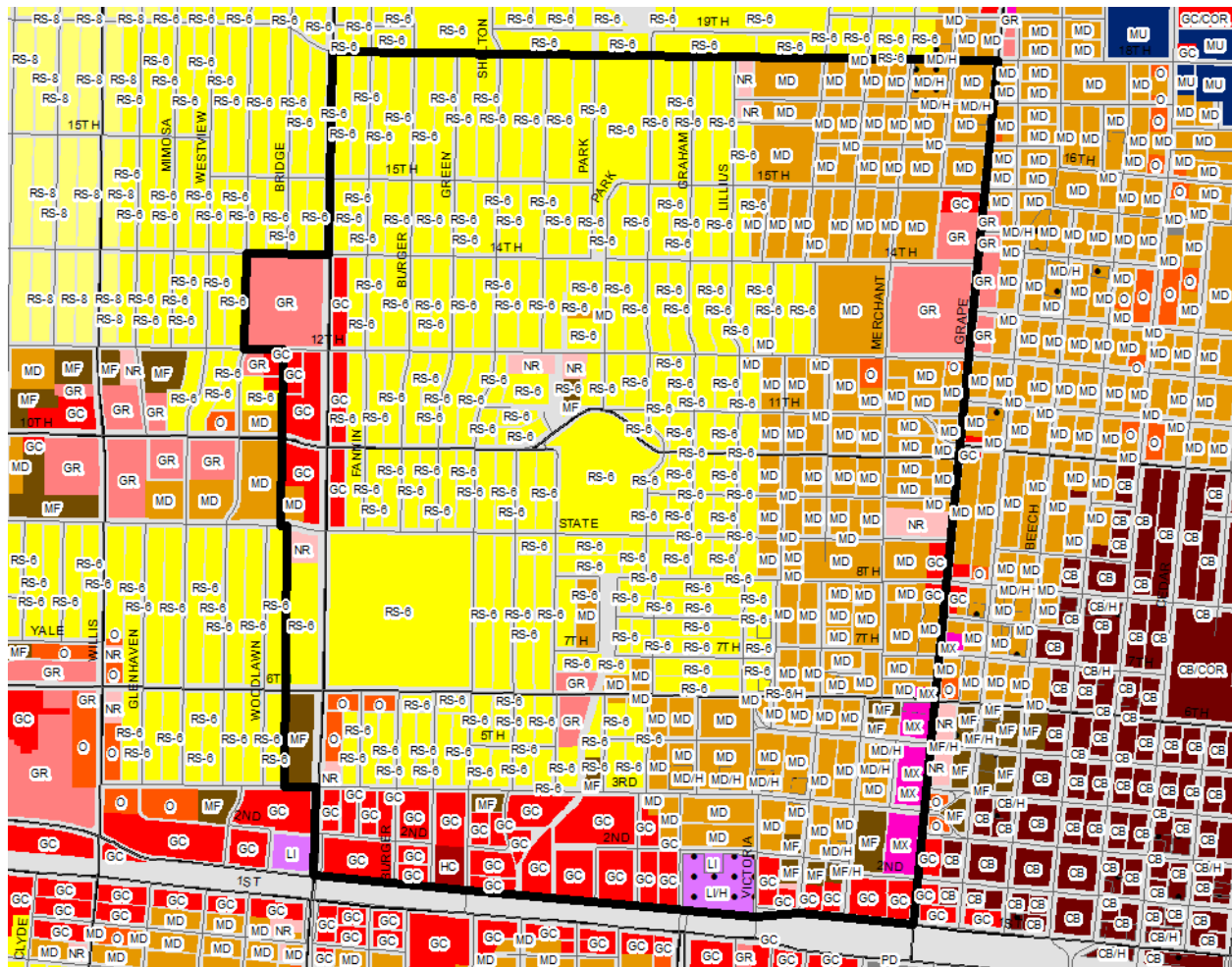
J. Conclusion

The City of Abilene has identified the Cobb Park Area as a specific target area for community redevelopment. Support for programs, funding, and redevelopment in this area will contribute to the growth and vitality of the area for many years to come.

Cobb Park Area Floodplain Map



Cobb Park Area Zoning Map



Cobb Park Area Revitalization Plan Map

