

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
February 7, 2008 8:30 a.m.

CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ABILENE, TEXAS

The City Council of the City of Abilene, Texas, met in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 555 Walnut Street for a Workshop on February 7, 2008, at 8:30 a.m. Mayor Archibald was present and presiding with Councilmen Anthony Williams, Sam Chase, Joe Spano, Stormy Higgins and Councilwoman Laura Moore. Absent Councilwoman Celia Davis. Also present were City Manager Larry Gilley, City Attorney Dan Santee, City Secretary Danette Dunlap, and various members of the City staff.

1. Mayor Archibald called the meeting to order.
2. Councilwoman Moore gave the invocation.
3. Mayor Archibald led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flags of the United States of America and the State of Texas.
4. Mike Hall Director of Community Services introduced Jim Carrillo with the consulting firm of Halff Associates of Austin, TX. who then briefed the City Council on the Parks Master Plan.

Parks Master Plan Presentation

The Parks Master Plan creates a snapshot of where the City's Park system is now and it also creates a forum for citizens to tell what type of parks, trails and other facilities they want. The Plan enables the City to set goals for the Parks, Trails and Open Space System and the Plan establishes the priorities for the next 5 to 10 years, it also serves as a guide for future development and acquisition opportunities. The Plan enables the City to apply for Texas Parks and Wildlife grants for indoor and outdoor park facilities, without the approved master plan, Texas Parks and Wildlife grant applications may not score high enough to effectively compete. Grants are as high as \$500,000 for outdoor parks and \$750,000 for indoor facilities.

STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS INCLUDED:

- Review of City's Demographics
- An Inventory of Existing Parks
- Request & Receive Public Input
- Identify Key Issues
- Prioritize Needs & Projects
- Draft the Master Plan Document that is based on all of the above

COMPONENTS OF THE MASTER PLAN

- Inventory of Existing Parks
- Goals
- Public Input Responses & Summaries
- Needs Assessment
- Recommendations to meet Needs
- Implementation Strategies & Funding Requirements

Mr. Carrillo reviewed locations of the current parks and where new parks would need to be placed to enhance the development of the City of Abilene in the areas where the growth is occurring.

Mr. Carrillo reviewed some of the goals of the Master Plan and those goals are for the purpose of the Plan and the accomplishments the city wishes to see. Plus setting Standards for Parks, Facilities and Programs.

TYPES OF STANDARDS

- Spatial Distribution (Acres of Parks)
- Facility Standards (Numbers of different types of facilities)
- Development Standards (general criteria for parks)

12 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ABILENE

- 1) Aim to establish Abilene's park system as one of the premier park systems in the western half of Texas.
- 2) Focus on addressing indoor as well as outdoor recreation needs over the next five to ten years.
- 3) Ensure that the park system will be accessible.
- 4) The system will be well funded and will actively pursue partnership opportunities.
- 5) The system will identify and focus first on "core" services.
- 6) Parks in Abilene will be extraordinary and timeless
- 7) Parks will be community focal points
- 8) The city will focus on connectivity and linkage.
- 9) The city will continue to value and preserve open space.
- 10) Detention and drainage will be used as a green opportunity.
- 11) The system will focus on sustainability.
- 12) The system will continue to focus on reducing maintenance.

Citywide telephone survey results

What do you like most about the parks?

Trails	16%
Close proximity/location	12%
Variety of activities	8%
Playgrounds	7%
Spacious/big layouts	7%
Zoo	6%
Clean/good maintenance	6%
Scenery/trees/nature	6%

Most favorite recreational activity?

Walking/jogging/running	27%
Swimming/water sports	12%
Fishing	11%
Softball/baseball	8%

Golf 7%

Most important facility to construct?

Children's water spray park 18%
Jogging/biking trails 15%
Marina at Lake Fort Phantom 10%
Renovate recreation centers 8%
Park restrooms 7%
Natural habitat/nature areas 7%

What facilities are lacking in your part of Abilene?

Pool 17%
Trails 13%
Water Park 12%
Recreation/Community Center 12%
Parks 9%
Sports fields/athletic complex 6%

STUDENT SURVEY

When you visit a park, what do you normally do?

Play on playground 65%
Meet with friends 64%
Participate in sports 49%
Walk on trails 45%
Play basketball/volleyball 41%
Family activities such as picnic 39%
Go swimming 35%
Enjoy nature 32%

What one facility would you consider to be the most important for Abilene to have?

Outdoor water spray ground 20%
Facility geared toward teens 12%
Swimming Pool 9%
Horseback riding 9%

ACTION PLAN 2008-2018 AND BEYOND

Estimated cost Range

Projects	Low Cost	High Cost
3 – High Priority Sites		
1- Medium Priority Site		

Estimated Total Indoor Recreation And Senior Facilities	<u>\$24,250,000</u>	<u>\$30,000,000</u>
4 – High Priority Sites		
2 – Medium Priority Sites		
Estimated Total Aquatic Facilities	<u>\$5,550,000</u>	<u>\$7,800,000</u>
4 – High Priority Sites		
5 – Medium Priority Sites		
3 – Long Term		
Estimated Total Trails & Linear Parks	<u>\$12,600,000</u>	<u>\$21,900,000</u>
11- High Priority		
Estimated Park Facilities	<u>\$7,800,000</u>	<u>\$17,250,000</u>

Implementation Strategies & Funding Requirements – Next Steps

- Plan Adoption
- Funding Decisions
- Ordinance Creation
- Implementation
- Periodic Review

Council and staff discussion included: 1) expands our thinking toward the future; 2) a sense from the surveys that the citizens are willing to invest in this area; 3) can be an Economic boost to our community; 4) consider as new neighborhoods develop and build that they plan for a park in this new development; and 5) consider moving the park shown on the east side of Fort Phantom lake to the Westside near the veterans cemetery.

No action needed at this time. Council took a 5 minute break.
Mayor Archibald reconvened the city council meeting.

Presentation of Infill Development Strategies and Policies under the City's Comprehensive Plan

Jon James, Director of Planning & Development Services, gave the presentation on Infill Strategies and Policies.

Infill Development Strategies

- ☐ The guiding principles of the Comprehensive Plan encourage the promotion of infill and redevelopment projects that are targeted to underutilized or vacant areas of the city.

Definition of "Infill"

- ☐ Infill is the use of land within a built-up area for further construction or development...
- ☐ ...especially as part of community [redevelopment](#) or as part of [smart growth](#) program.
- ☐ It focuses on the reuse and repositioning of obsolete or underutilized buildings and sites.

- ☐ This type of development is essential to renewing blighted neighborhoods and knitting them back together with more prosperous communities.

Source: Infill Philadelphia

Infill Area?

- ☐ One of the most critical components is to define the area where infill incentives will apply.
- ☐ Two options:
 - Geographic
 - Criteria-based (how old, available infrastructure, etc.)

Infill Criteria?

- ☐ Any of the following strategies can be used to encourage development in the designated infill area.
- ☐ The “infill program” could also have additional criteria to qualify, in order to meet other city objectives, in addition to the property simply being in the designated area.

Current Strategies

- ☐ “Existing Building Code” adopted
- ☐ Focus CIP funds in already developed areas
- ☐ Applying city standards in the ETJ
- ☐ Enhanced code enforcement

Revised Fees

- ☐ Revise pro-rata fees for water/sewer improvements
 - Recognizes the cost efficiencies to the City of development where infrastructure already exists
- ☐ Provide for reduced planning and building fees.
 - *Rezoning, building permits, platting, etc.*

Tax exemptions/abatements

- ☐ Provide tax exemptions or abatements on investment in infill areas.
- ☐ Chapter 380 agreement
 - Allows for grants or loans equivalent to a sales tax rebate to stimulate business or commercial activity

Zoning Incentives

- ☐ Overlay zones or other zoning mechanisms to provide relaxed development standards for setbacks, parking, etc.
 - Examples: Butternut and Pine Street corridors

Direct Public Investment

- ☐ City can promote infill development by direct investment through CIP and bond projects, general fund, or other sources.
 - Existing \$180,000 available
- ☐ Need to develop criteria to expend limited funding:
 - Project competitions, point systems, first come, etc.
 - What are the priorities?

Special Assessments/PIDs

- ☐ City installs infrastructure improvements, which are repaid by the adjacent property owners over time through special assessments.
 - This is an option for a sidewalk construction program in already-developed areas of the City.
 - Advantages:
 - ☐ allows property owners to avoid upfront cost
 - ☐ City recovers upfront cost
 - Disadvantages:
 - ☐ Administratively cumbersome
 - ☐ Can be difficult to collect (need substantial support from affected properties)

Sidewalk Program

- ☐ Petition/application by property owners
 - New construction and repair?
 - Whole block or individual properties?
 - Homes and businesses?
- ☐ Funding options:
 - Partial or full City assistance (bridges, alleys, low income neighborhoods, etc.)?
 - PID/Special Assessment
 - Bonds, CIP program, Grant programs (SRTS, etc.)
- ☐ Prioritization criteria to address limited capacity
 - Street classification, available ROW, land use, infill area, connectivity, proximity to schools, bus routes, parks, etc.

Other Strategies

- ☐ TIF District:
 - Creation of a new Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) or Zones
- ☐ Traffic Impact Analysis:
 - Code Consultants have already recommended this for the new Land Development Code
 - Benefits infill development, since adequate transportation infrastructure is typically already in place for infill and redevelopment projects.

ABILENE LAND BANK PROGRAM

What is a Land Bank?

- ☐ Entity used to acquire and hold property for the purpose of encouraging redevelopment.
- ☐ Two classifications of property eligible for land bank

- Property acquired under Urban Land Bank Program
- Property bought by or donated to Land bank outside of Urban Land Bank Program

Urban Land Bank Program

- ☐ Land bank program authorized by the Local Government Code.
- ☐ Properties **must** be used for affordable housing.
- ☐ Buyer must be a “qualified developer” or a “qualified” Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) to participate.
- ☐ Properties are acquired at low cost through foreclosure of a tax lien.
- ☐ Taxing units agree to waive back taxes.

What developers can participate?

- ☐ Urban Land Bank Program
 - Any developer who has developed three or more housing units within the past three years and has a development plan approved by the City.
 - Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) certified by the City of Abilene that meet the “qualified organization” requirements of the Local Government Code.
 - ☐ Habitat for Humanity
 - ☐ Connecting Caring Communities
- ☐ Purchased or Donated
 - Any developer subject to rules developed by the City.

What qualifies a CHDO under the Urban Land Bank Program?

- ☐ CHDO that contains within geographical boundaries of operation a portion of property available for purchase under Urban Land Bank Program; and
- ☐ CHDO has built at least three single family homes or duplexes or one four unit multifamily dwelling within preceding two year period; and
- ☐ Within preceding three-year period CHDO has rehabilitated or developed units within a two mile radius of the property for sale.

What properties are available?

- ☐ Urban Land Bank Program
 - Foreclosed property in which the amount due under the judgment is more than the market value of the property.
 - Property must have delinquent taxes for a total of 5 years.
 - Property can not be improved with a building or buildings.
- ☐ Purchased or donated
 - Any properties may be purchased by or donated to the land bank in accordance with rules developed by the City.

- Purchases of City property by the land bank must comply with any applicable statutory provisions related to the sale of property.

Sale of Properties

- ☐ Urban Land Bank Program
 - Deed of sold properties must contain a reverter clause which returns the property to the land bank if the property is not developed for low income housing or within the allowed time frame.
 - Properties shall have deed restrictions requiring the development and sale of rental of property to low income households.
 - Qualified CHDO's have right of first refusal.
- ☐ Purchased or Donated
 - Sale of property must comply with any rules developed by the City of Abilene.

What can land be used for?

- ☐ Urban Land Bank Program
 - Affordable housing for sale or rent to low income households.
- ☐ Purchased or Donated
 - Any purpose subject to rules developed by the City.

What is affordable housing under Urban Land Bank Program?

- ☐ Monthly mortgage or monthly rent cannot exceed 30% of applicable median family income for that unit size.
 - For example, the maximum rent for a two bedroom apartment in Abilene is \$600.

What is a low income family under Urban Land Bank Program?

- ☐ Low income means gross income less than 80% of area median family income, adjusted for household size.
 - For example, in Abilene a family of four must make less than \$38,000.
- ☐ At least 25% of properties sold must be deed restricted for sale to low income households making no more than 60% of median family income adjusted for household size.
 - For example, in Abilene a family of four must make less than \$28,500
- ☐ Rental properties have stricter low income occupancy requirements.

How long can land be held?

- ☐ Urban Land Bank Program
 - Property must be sold within 3 years following acquisition by land bank.
 - If not sold, property will revert to taxing units who were a party to the foreclosure.
 - Once sold, the developer has two years to get building permits and close on development financing or property will revert to land bank.

- ☐ Purchased or donated
 - No limit on how long property can be held.

Considerations

- ☐ Urban Land Bank Program properties, Purchased or Donated properties, or both?
- ☐ How aggressive will we be in acquiring properties?
- ☐ What entity will function as land bank?
- ☐ What funds will be used to fund the land bank?
- ☐ What environmental assessments will be done on prospective properties?

Council and staff discussion included: 1) who is going to manage the Land Bank Board, this could be a partnership the city already has with a non-profit board; 2) to be flexible and utilize both the Urban Land Bank Program and the Purchased or Donated properties; 3) go forward with sidewalk incentives new or repaired; 4) all options that will allow the most flexibility built into the policy; and 5) infill area discussed, what would allow the most flexibility.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Danette Dunlap
City Secretary

Norm Archibald
Mayor

