

**SPECIAL CALLED WORKSHOP MEETING**  
**June 28, 2021 at 9:30 a.m.**

**CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ABILENE, TEXAS**  
**DENISON CITY HALL**

The City Council of the City of Abilene, Texas met in a Special Workshop Session on June 28, 2021, at 9:30 a.m. at Denison City Hall, 300 W Main Street, Denison, Texas, 75020. Mayor Pro-tem Kyle McAlister was present and presiding with Councilmembers Shane Price, Lynn Beard, Donna Albus and Weldon Hurt. Mayor Anthony Williams and Deputy Mayor Pro-tem Travis Craver were absent. Also present were City Manager Robert Hanna, City Attorney Stanley Smith, and City Secretary Shawna Atkinson.

**AGENDA ITEMS**

**1. Welcome and Introductions by Denison Mayor Janet Gott & Interim City Manager Bobby Atteberry**

Denison Mayor Janet Gott welcomed everyone, gave a brief introduction to Denison's staff, spoke about Denison's Mission, Vision Statement and Values, and how those play into their infill development programs.

Interim Denison City Manager Bobby Atteberry gave an overview of their infill development program and how it came about, their five TIRZ zones, and how their staff plays into the program.

**2. Setting the Stage for Reinvestment: Affordable Housing Program**

Betty Floyd, Denison Chief Building Official, spoke about how this process got started with their Affordable Housing Program. They had a surplus of lots available so they gave them to builders with stipulations, and they were able to develop these properties and receive tax rebates in the process. These homes have to be owner occupied, and not rented out. They do not have to have garages or sidewalks. Ms. Floyd went over the growth of the program over the 7 years since its implementation, starting with 11 homes in 2014 and up to 171 homes in 2020.

Ms. Floyd then discussed their Builder Incentive Program. This is an incentive program for builders to build outside of the infill district. There is a minimum square footage per house, and garages or carports are required. Builders receive the same incentives as the Affordable Housing Program, but they also get tax rebates paid over three years after completion of the home.

Lastly, Ms. Floyd covered their Remodel Incentive Program. This program helps older homes that people wanted to invest in, instead of demoing. This program has the same incentives as the others and they get checks for rebates that are paid out one time, instead of over three years like the others. This program started in October of 2017 and is still going today. Remodelers must show on their building permit that they will be increasing the value by over \$40,000, and actually spend that amount.

Ms. Floyd showed before and after photos of houses in the program and others in the infill area.

Some areas that Council questioned and Ms. Floyd elaborated on: CDBG funds are not used for any of these projects. In hindsight, they would have made garages and carports mandatory and are working on changing that going forward. The original lots were given away on a first come first served basis, but builders had only 12 months to build or they would lose the lot. Their program was structured to meet state requirements for affordable housing, so they didn't really face any challenges on giving the lots away. The demographics in these neighborhoods did change – they are more a mixture of races in each

neighborhood. They did not face a lot of opposition to this program at all, even from those who had lots for sale at the same time. Ms. Floyd also said they still would have done this program even if they didn't have the surplus of lots available.

### 3. Neighborhood Redevelopment & Enhancement

Robert Lay, Neighborhood Services Manager, presented this segment. Mr. Lay spoke about the challenges that Denison faced before they started implementing these programs. The median age of housing in their city was from 1965, a high percentage of their residents were over 65, and they had a large number of rental properties and LMI areas. They came up with their Minimum Property Standards ordinance in 2012 that protects the health, safety, morals and welfare of the citizens of Denison, by establishing minimum standards applicable to the use, occupancy and maintenance of all structures, buildings and properties in the city. They have targeted strategic locations in high visibility areas, and do proactive MPS work to bring homes up to standard.

Mr. Lay highlighted the success of this program and showed before and after photos of the homes that have been demolished and rebuilt, and remodeled under it. 407 homes were demolished since 2011. They have builders buying old houses and asking the city to demo them so they can rebuild under the incentive programs. Mr. Lay highlighted their code compliance activity from 2012 to 2021 and discussed their idea of creating a database of community volunteer partners to help with those who are unable to participate.

Council questioned if their demo work is done by staff or contracted out and Mr. Lay stated that they currently have an in-house demolition team, but will look at reevaluating that in the future. He also clarified that they do not file demolition liens at all.

### 4. Building Better Moving Forward

John Webb, Denison Director of Planning & Community Development, spoke about some of the issues that have arisen in their infill development process. Lack of sidewalks, a variety of elevations, and no street access are all issues they have had to work around. They have also experienced a lot of growth from the metroplex and have a high demand for quality multi-family housing. They have a few master planned communities in the works and have issued 109 housing permits this year. Duplexes are allowed by right in their current ordinance, so they are also looking to change that. One other issues they have seen after these programs have been implemented, is that people are trying to build anywhere they can and they would like to preserve a little greenspace here and there.

### 5. Question and Answer Session

Council asked what Denison would do differently knowing what they know now. They stated that definitely requiring garages or carports and making sure to have street access. They are revising their ordinance right now and encouraged Council to take a look at it once it's approved.

Denison staff also recommended including something about commercial corridors in anything we implement. They are also looking to implement a program to revitalize commercial signs and potentially something for converting vacant commercial properties to residential and recommends to look into those.

Council questioned if there was any recourse for those developers who started a project under one of their programs and not finished. Denison staff said they have never had that happen, and usually the house is sold before the developer has finished it.

6. Tour of Relevant Sites

Council split into separate cars with Abilene and Denison Staff, and toured multiple neighborhoods in Denison to see houses that have been built and remodeled under their various programs.

7. Lunch with Denison City Council

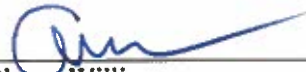
Denison provided lunch for Council and Staff at Denison City Hall.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.



Shawna Atkinson  
City Secretary



Anthony Williams  
Mayor

Minutes approved on: July 8, 2021

