

**Enterprise Zone Focus Group
Meeting Notes
May 15, 2017**

Attendees:

Invitees – Mary Alford, Josh Shatkin, David Sowell, Stephanie Sutton, Jessica Langford, Teresa Callen, Gerry Dedenbach

Staff – Erik A. Bredfeldt, Michael Beard, Forrest Eddleton

Substance of Meeting:

Erik provides status of Enterprise Zone program and back-up materials inclusive of: 1) recent communication to City Commission; 2) maps on Enterprise Zone/CRA boundaries; 3) fiscal impact; and 4) analysis of inclusion of larger E. Gainesville geography.

The EZ program is now providing a 50% reduction in development fees as a local incentive however this does not seem to be substantially impacting prospects for economic development and therefore staff and the City Commission are looking for other alternatives.

One suggestion is to make some of the CRA incentives applicable to a larger geography and subsidize this approach through another source of funds and staff provided an overview of what is currently available in this regard. The issue of assisting with soft costs was mentioned however at this time that those may not be rich enough.

Invitees provided the following preliminary suggestions/comments:

- 1) Take a fresh look at the geography of the EZ (Gerry provided a marked up map) in terms of removing those areas that are not developable and adding areas that have economic development potential;
- 2) Utility issues and costs regarding provision of infrastructure need to be examined (in terms of utility connection fees, upgrades to sewer/water infrastructure, provision of sidewalks); in the context of housing often these costs are not proportional to the actual value of housing;
- 3) Some Code provisions could be providing a disincentive particularly as relates to accessibility and turn arounds required for PW/Fire;
- 4) Ensuring that applicants are receiving comprehensive information regarding available expertise and possibly funding (the affordable housing coalition was mentioned) at the outset of staff interactions with the public in terms of the process;
- 5) The issue of mitigating operating costs to some degree to assist in the long term preservation of business was mentioned (particularly with respect to provision of the Internet);
- 6) Assistance with soft costs involved in project development i.e. planning, design, engineering, etc.
- 7) A mission/charter should be developed to establish the objective of the EZ and likely should stress assistance provided to local and small business;
- 8) Augusta, GA and Florence, SC were provided as alternatives in terms of a pro-active approach in seeking facilitation of urban development opportunities

Next Steps: It was decided that a 2nd meeting would be held with the focus group to review these meeting notes and to refine recommendations to go back to the City Commission General Policy Committee in June. It was requested that GRU staff be present at the next meeting.

**Enterprise Zone Focus Group
Meeting Notes
June 1, 2017**

Attendees:

Invitees – Jay Brown, Stephanie Sutton, Jessica Langford, Teresa Callen, Gerry Dedenbach, Holly White

Staff – Erik A. Bredfeldt, Rachel Meek

Substance of Meeting:

Erik provides draft version of May 15, 2017 notes and asks attendees for comments.

Invitees provided the following preliminary suggestions/comments:

- 1) Attendees had a lengthy conversation about the mission of the Enterprise Zone program and whether it should predominantly assist small and local business or be open to entities across the board.
- 2) Overall costs of provision of infrastructure were emphasized as being a disincentive to development and the proportionality of those costs associated with smaller projects in particular.
- 3) It was mentioned that when a project is identified as a priority by the City then things move quickly and similar treatment is sought for non-City project.
- 4) Issues surrounding existing larger business entities on the East side of town and their on-going operating and capital investment challenges and potential City responses in terms of property tax abatement and rates were concerned.
- 5) Funding mechanisms for Enterprise Zone possibly the utility surcharge fund and then effect on the General Fund transfer.

Next Steps: The Group was informed that the Enterprise Zone agenda item is tentatively scheduled to go to the General Policy Committee on June 22nd and attendees are invited to be present for the discussion. This will represent the final meeting of the Enterprise Zone Focus Group.