

Eastridge Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee Meeting

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, January 19, 2021
Time: 5:30 – 6:45 P.M.
Location: Via Zoom

Committee Attendees:	Genie Baca	City of Amarillo:	Emily Koller
	Timothy Ballejo		Andrew Freeman
	Michael Garman		Cris Valverde
	Tommie T Knox Jr		Torie BenShushan
	Russell Pennington		Annemarie Rossato
	Ryan Pennington		
	Maribel Gilliam		
	Tyler Trinh		

Agenda Items

- I. **Welcome and Call to Order.** Emily Koller, Economic Development and Neighborhood Revitalization Manager, City of Amarillo, welcomed everyone to the meeting and went over the main objectives for the evening which included: 1) everyone becoming familiar with one another on the committee; 2) members learn more about the plan process; 3) and discussing community engagement strategies in Eastridge.
- II. **Introductions.** The City of Amarillo Planning and Development Services staff introduced themselves to committee members. Staff members present included Andrew Freeman (*Managing Director of Planning & Development Services*), Cris Valverde (*Assistant Director of Planning & Development Services*), Emily Koller (*Economic Development and Neighborhood Revitalization Manager*), Torie BenShushan (*Neighborhood Planner 1*), and Annemarie Rossato (*Planning Technician*).

The committee members proceeded to introduce themselves. After each introduction, each committee member gave their desired outcomes for the Eastridge neighborhood as a result of the planning process. They also provided input on what community groups they felt they could assist in reaching.

Key themes/desired outcomes:

Better Jobs and Increased Economic Opportunity: Better, higher quality jobs; more opportunity for upward mobility; “better jobs for moms”; residents have skills in farming and small business, but no opportunity other than meatpacking plant; remember companies like Levi Strauss and the jobs they provided

Change the Perception: “Not anyone’s goal who lives in Eastridge, stay in Eastridge”; described as a “ghetto”; Neighborhood no longer affords the same opportunities to refugee families as it did in the past; Condition of housing – slumlords are a problem mixed in with beautiful homes; bulk trash problems

Community-Building: Need for a community center and places to gather; want more access to City government; want more of a voice in Amarillo; Need opportunities so refugee community does not lose

talented youth – they move and leave aging parents; schools are an asset in the neighborhood - younger children do well, can be hard for older children to integrate

Address Infrastructure Needs: Sidewalks needed; curbs needed; overpass at the railroad tracks; water/sewer capacity for new development; need vision/plan for all the vacant land around Eastridge

- III. **Neighborhood Plan Overview.** Emily Koller explained the neighborhood planning initiative. She went through the Eastridge plan website and showed committee members how Social PinPoint works and how it can be used in for outreach including its translation capabilities. She explained the importance of the plan and how its primary purpose is to give the neighborhood a political voice in order for them to receive direct attention and resources to their area. They also become part of a larger network of neighborhoods working on revitalization.
- IV. **Community Engagement in Eastridge Discussion.** Committee members discussed options of the best way to reach the different groups in the neighborhood for the first engagement activity – the neighborhood survey. The survey helps focus the content of the entire plan. Tyler Trinh provided feedback that online activities will be difficult. Ryan Pennington shared how they scheduled workshops with “focus groups” and had success. With COVID, that idea was modified to distributing translated surveys to community leaders and asking for their assistance in getting the surveys completed. Tommie Knox suggested reaching out to the different small businesses. Mike Garman shared how they did a door-to-door survey and said it was very challenging. Maribel suggested a recorded video explaining the survey that is led by the group leader in that specific language. Genie suggested Screencastify, a tool they use in the local school to reach out to the families within the neighborhood with the assistance of translators. Tyler T volunteered to reach out to the Vietnamese community to explain and distribute the survey as well as collect.
- Next steps:** Committee members agreed on a goal of utilizing a “representative sample” from each language group. Staff will have the printed document translated into 6-8 languages that Public Health Dept also used for their materials. Committee members will help get the surveys to the leaders of each group. The survey will also be distributed through the school and hopefully we’ll reach a good cross-section of the community. Hope that residents take ownership this way and continue to want to provide feedback.
- V. **Open Forum.** Not discussed due to time constraints.
- VI. **Next Meeting Date and Other Announcements.** The group collectively decided on February 23rd at 5:30 pm as the next meeting date so that they would have an additional week to work on conducting the survey. Emily then reviewed the agenda items for the meeting which included reviewing the survey summary, confirming the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), and drafting a vision statement for the neighborhood.
- VII. **Adjournment.** The meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.