

Eastridge Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee Meeting

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

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

Committee Attendees: Timothy Ballejo
Tommie T Knox Jr
Russell Pennington
Ryan Pennington
Tyler Trinh

City of Amarillo: Emily Koller
Torie BenShushan
Annemarie Rossato
Council Member Elaine Hays

Potter County: Commissioner Alphonso Vaughn

Agenda Items

- I. **Welcome, Call to Order and Introductions.** Emily Koller, Economic Development and Neighborhood Revitalization Manager, City of Amarillo, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Potter County Commissioner Alphonso Vaughn as well as Council Member Elaine Hays were in attendance and spoke to committee members about their excitement to work on Eastridge and showed their support for the project. Emily then went over the main objectives for the evening which included: 1) updating the committee on the survey process 2) updates on the SWOT draft, 3) Vision Statement review and 4) small business and economic development outreach.
- II. **Neighborhood Survey Update.** Neighborhood Planners Torie BenShushan and Annemarie Rossato updated members on the survey process and provide short summaries of each language group. Most of the surveys are coming back in and are either translated or in process. Annemarie started with the Swahili, Somali, Lao and English Surveys with Torie following with the Spanish, Burmese and Vietnamese surveys. Torie reviewed the combined survey results which included the reoccurring themes that residents would like to see more security in their neighborhood as they do not feel safe, they want to participate in cleaning up the neighborhood and work to get rid of illegal dumping, and they also would like to see a solution for the train that blocks the road to get in and out of Eastridge on NE 24th St.

After the planners summarized the surveys, questions were posed to the Committee. The first question asked was about the issues of crime. Since there isn't much data collected from APD, why is it noted consistently in the surveys? Dr. Ryan Pennington said that people don't want to report crime since they are fearful of retaliation and it's across the board in all communities. Several of the crime includes breaking into vehicles, fights at the park, vandalism. There's a concern with the older group of people in Eastridge that the youth are troubled, and they don't want that to hinder the growth of Eastridge. Another question to the committee was about the mixed opinion on the schools in Eastridge. Dr. Ryan suggested that there might be a miscommunication in how some of the communities perceive the education system in general

rather than the quality of the school itself. Tyler mentioned that while there is a large support for the different cultures, there could also be better programs. They are good schools, but they are not comparable to other schools which offer more opportunities. Committee members agreed speeding is a concern and Tommie T. Knox responded to that trains stopping on the tracks for long periods of time is an issue because it becomes unsafe with children crossing the tracks as well as inconvenient for those traveling in and out of Eastridge.

- III. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Draft.** Since the review of the survey process took longer than expected, Emily Koller proceeded quickly with reviewing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Draft with the committee. She explained that more themes were being added into each section as we receive more surveys since the neighborhood's opinion is highly valued in the planning process. Since this is a draft, she did make the committee aware that changes and suggestions are welcome as the drafting process continues.
- IV. Neighborhood Profile / Existing Conditions Draft.** A draft was sent in advance of the meeting and committee members are welcome to send any questions, comments or additional requests for information.
- V. Vision Statement Activity.** Emily Koller followed up with the committee about the Vision Statement survey and which themes that were currently ranked as most important. Those themes included being Family Friendly, Quality Housing that is Convenient to Good Jobs and Hub of Amarillo's Refugee Community. Since there were few responses to the survey so far, Emily suggested giving people some more time to complete the survey in order to have clear answers. Dr. Ryan mentioned that multiculturalism might need more input since it may be what Amarillo wants Eastridge to be more so than what the residents of Eastridge would like it to be. There would need to be more input from the community as far as what the correct vision statement would be regarding multiculturalism. Pastor Pennington suggested that the final statement include all the elements with an introductory/summary statement at the beginning.
- VI. Small Business and Economic Development.** Emily explained that Annemarie had reviewed all the data that Dr. Ryan sent and staff concluded that we would likely not learn anything new by trying to reach more Eastridge residents that previously were small business owners but are working in the meatpacking industry here. Outreach efforts will focus on reaching existing business owners in the Eastridge Plan area. Annemarie presented a business inventory map and reviewed the types of businesses. Emily asked for any assistance in making connections with the business owners. Timothy said he knew several people and would be glad to assist. Russ Pennington also said he could put us in contact with several different Thai Restaurants. Tyler mentioned including real estate investors (multiple property owners) as "businesses" for outreach. Staff will set up a call with Timothy to discuss next steps.
- VII. Next Meeting Date and Other Announcements.** The next meeting date will be on Tuesday, April 27th at 5:30 pm. Emily reviewed the agenda for next meeting which included reviewing the final surveys and small business/economic development feedback, confirming SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), the neighborhood profile, and vision statement and then have a discussion on focus areas and goals.
- VIII. Adjournment.** The meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.