

LA JUNTA URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

CALL TO ORDER: The La Junta Urban Renewal Authority Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Thursday, April 8, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. via virtual meeting. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Bennett.

Board Members Present

Absent

Nancy Bennett

Trevor Herasingh

Christine Coffield – joined 4:07 p.m.

Rebecca Goodwin

T.J. Martinez

Justin Miller

Jeffri Pruyn – joined 4:11 p.m.

Also present:

Cynthia Nieb, Economic/Urban Renewal Director

Melanie Scofield, City Clerk

Ben Levenger, Downtown Redevelopment Svc.

Bette McFarren, Rocky Ford Gazette

PRESENTATION: Ben Levenger, Downtown Redevelopment Services spoke about the La Junta Vacant Property Transition Plan:

Purpose: The vacant property transition plan is a process to help prepare plans and strategies for creating more vibrant or utilized structures within the downtown core area. Through this process the City will be able to work hand-in-hand with the property owners to identify strategies for revitalization, including necessary goals or resources to facilitate catalyst change.

Process: The process of the VPTP is that of cooperation, working with the property owners and municipality to identify a solidified future for each underutilized parcel in the community. The proposed process is as follows:

1. Document vacant properties (from property & business inventory recently underway)
2. Create an application and property plan template
3. Create strategies and incentives for participation
4. Set up online and in-person education events to inform the public of the coming forms
5. Educate about highest/best use & scenario creation
6. Send to property owners via preferred communication methods
7. Conduct virtual & in-person form Q/A sessions
8. Coordinate one-on-one form assistance
9. Document the community participation
10. Assist community with necessary implementation strategies as funding becomes available

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This process is currently in a draft format and can be altered to meet the needs of the La Junta URA or Main Street program. Specific details and work processes can be finalized during a project kick-off or planning call.

What Will The Community Witness: As part of this process, the community will witness a series of expectation setting and leveling exercises. This will help each property owner understand what resources are available and what the highest/best use for each property are.

What Are The Benefits: The benefits of a vacant property transition plan are:

- Vested and excited property owners
- Improved local understanding about the local market
- Detailed lists of property owners and potential uses (scenarios)
- Reduced vacancy rates
- Improved square footage utilization figures

Where Do You Turn For Questions: Does your community have questions? How about residents or business owners? GREAT. We love to hear from resident. They can reach our offices at the contact information below:

Project Manager:

Ben Levensger

Ben@DTRedevelopment.com

801.410.0685

Lead Planner:

Stan Levensger

Stan@DTRedevelopment.com

330.687.1816

Feel free to reach out with any questions or clarification requests!

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

There was no citizen participation.

MINUTES: February 11, 2021

Chairperson Bennett asked if there were any corrections or additions to be made to the February 11, 2021 minutes. Hearing none, a motion was made by Rebecca Goodwin, seconded by T.J. Martinez that the minutes for February 11, 2021 be approved as published. The motion carried unanimously.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS: March 2021

The March 2021 financial statements were provided for the Board's review.

BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS

- Total cash at the end of March was \$162,549.27.
- Notes receivable was \$17,725.81.
- There is one investment for \$109,963.83.
- Total assets are \$300,480.70 for the month ending March 2021.

LIABILITIES

- There were no outstanding bills at the end of March.

STATEMENT OF REVENUE/EXPENDITURES

BUDGET TO ACTUAL

Bank interest in the amount of \$3.27 was received. \$48,103.59 was received for February from Otero County for the Tax Increment. Southeast Colorado Power was paid \$37.37 for the welcome sing. SECCP was paid \$7,226.19 for the Plaza Building. The City of La Junta was paid \$3,100.00 for the director quarterly draw. The 2021 budget is \$182,400.00 less \$49,652.52 in expenses and \$44,096.20 in encumbrances leaving a budget remaining of \$88,651.67.

T.J. Martinez: There is one correction to point out. The total cash at the end of March should be \$172,791.06. Other than that, everything looks great.

Chairperson Bennett asked if there were any questions or corrections regarding the March financial statements. Hearing no further corrections, a motion was made by Rebecca Goodwin, seconded by Justin Miller, that the financial statements for March 2021 be approved with the change of total cash on hand at the end of March. The motion carried unanimously.

PROJECT UPDATES:

A. SECCP

Rebecca Goodwin: The final walk through is complete. Phase III is done. I've just sent out a number of emails, Jessica and Jane are trying to get the last stuff together for the final report that's due this month on the El Pomar grant. We were given an extension because of the COVID delay. There were a few things with the roof project that Derrick was not quite happy with. These things will be fixed before the retainage is paid. That will be the last payment which will close out everything with Urban Renewal. The construction documents are being finalized for the interior. I'm pulling together a list of potential grants.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Cynthia Nieb: March 2021 La Junta Urban Renewal/Certified Local Government Work Session General Outline and Notes. We will need to prioritize these items.

BLIGHT

- Blight Study from 2007/2008 discussed
 - Original targeted area was 1st block of Santa Fe
 - Focused Project Prioritization, Phased Projects
- Cynthia brought up that we could apply for CDBG funds, but the building owners must dedicate their own money to the project. The goal is to activate all floors of all buildings to increase downtown activities, sales tax, TIF, and property tax, per recommendations by Joe Minicozzi and Ben Levenger, town planners, who are recognized for their work in rural towns.

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- The two main entrances to the town were suggested as starting points. In addition, it was suggested that the 200 block of Colorado Avenue be a target, Santa Fe 3rd to 5th, and 3rd Street in general. Option might be to cast a wide net.
- “When landowners see others do something, they might do something as well.”
- Getting an outside assessment, an opinion, was recommended. Paul Benedetti provided this list of firms who produce great products:
 - Matrix Design Group, 1601 Blake Street, Suite 200, Denver, CO, 80202, 303-572-0200
 - SEH, 934 Main Street, Unit C, Durango, CO 81301, 970-459-1165; Nancy Dossdall (cell:970-769-8331) and Andy Arnold (cell: 856-625-6564)
 - Ricker Cunningham, 8200 S Quebec Street, Suite A3-104, Centennial, CO 80112, 303-458-5800 (Slow but does good work)
- Frustration was expressed that people in authority of are not dealing with blight on their own properties.

SIGNAGE

- For any physical work by CLG/URA, there should be a sign with a logo created
- Historic signage is a good thing. We might have interpretive signage/vinyl in downtown windows.
- Phase I of historic signage will require that the buildings be listed in the local historic register.

GRANTS

- There should be a commercial downtown building survey first followed by guidelines, criteria, and instructions on how to apply
- Using our annual budget as a guideline, it was generally well received that we dedicate \$30,000 a year to two \$15,000 grants to improve the exteriors of buildings, including windows, masonry, roofs, siding, and doors
 - Work should be accomplished through contractors, not done by the applicant. Applicants are not always the best judge of the quality of their own work.
 - We need to determine our priorities by discerning the differences between a GOOD, BETTER, and BEST project.
 - Our decisions must be consistent.
 - We’d like the City to work with us in determining how they rehabilitate their buildings so that we are consistent in our message. We need DESIGN GUIDELINES to make consistent decisions.

INFRASTRUCTURE REHABILITATION AND CITY PROJECTS

- Some concern about money being used for infrastructure instead of creating additional TIF money. There is a limit to how much money can be paid. One suggestion was that no monies be given to any building that does not generate TIF.
- It was pointed out that URA money is typically used to create infrastructure safety, which is one of our main statutory objectives.
- The majority of the commissioners do not like making quick decisions. They like to see the entire project picture with a SOW, timeline, budget, and depreciation planned for.
- Cynthia suggested that after the Hampton Inn is paid off, we dedicate the monies to the City of La Junta. However, the City would need to present the PLANNED project to the

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URA and to limit their request to the \$35,000 amount. URA would need to vote on the project. No additional annual money would be provided to the City.

- A request was made to better understand how utilities work.
- One suggestion was to have some large ticket money returned to Urban Renewal. The only large ticket items were the Plaza Building roof and the CORE Building elevator. NOTE: those were both grants, not loans.
- We need a deep dive analysis of our funding and to set a policy on how much funding can go to non-profits and non-TIF producing properties. We need to set up a formula.

NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION TASK FORCE SURVEY

- Please distribute and complete the survey immediately. It might affect our funding.

URBAN RENEWAL LOTS/HOUSING

- Mobile homes can be attractive, but they are not permanent housing. URA housing must be permanent housing with a foundation.
- URA would consider gifting property to a developer if they developed quality permanent housing.
 - We would need to offer the lots to more than one developer and consider the plans.
 - The developer would be required to install all utilities, landscaping and improve the neighborhood.

EDUCATION PROJECTS

- We would like to educate people
 - On the Plaza Building masonry and Heritage Windows
 - Heather Maes might be able to place a display board in the library
 - Adobe workshops
 - Youtube videos
- Tax Payers need to be educated about urban renewal
 - A video with a small town take
 - A video on how to make the town better
 - Pat McGee would love to discuss CLG/URA on TTO
 - La Junta Public notices

LANDSCAPING

- No, we don't do landscaping

BOARD MEMBERS

- We need two additional board members. Melanie will advertise, and we will spread the word
- We will review a portion of the URA Board Book with each meeting

CURRENT OPEN URA LOANS & BUDGET REPORTS

- A few people are delinquent on payment. We need to check with the Finance Director to make certain she is sending out late notices every month. We would like consistency.
- We are not receiving updates on our CLG budget and would like that included in our finance packets.

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Chairperson Bennett: I will be willing to prioritize these items knowing that it will be up for further discussion amongst us.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Urban Renewal Director: I feel it's important to review the 2007 La Junta Urban Renewal plan a little bit at each of our meetings. A discussion/education was done on the following portion of the 2007 plan:

II. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Plan is to implement those provisions of the Comprehensive Plan and the Supplemental Plans that apply to the Urban Renewal Area. The Supplemental Plans are: The Zoning Code adopted in 1999 and the Subdivision Code adopted in 1999.

This Urban Renewal Plan has been proposed for the City Council of the City pursuant to the provisions of the Act. The administration of the Project and the implementation of the Plan shall be the responsibility of the Authority.

III. URBAN RENEWAL AREA BOUNDARIES

The location and boundaries of the Urban Renewal area within the City are shown in Exhibit A. The Urban Renewal area contains approximately 610 acres and is described in Exhibit B.

The Urban Renewal area for La Junta includes the properties located from the West end of the City limits to the East end City limit. Included are all commercial properties that are located next to Highway 50 North and South of the Highway 50 East to West and to include down town areas from Dalton to 3rd Street, East to Highway 109, and the old district Anderson South to 34d, West to Bellevue, South to 4th, East to San Juan, South to 6th Street, East to Raton, North to 4th Street, East to Lewis and including old Santa Fe hospital property, and North to Highway 50 at Lewis. As the boundaries are depicted on Exhibit A and described in Exhibit B. In case of a conflict, the provisions of Exhibit A controls.

IV. SUMMARY OF STATUTORY CRITERIA

The Authority contracted with M. Torgerson Architects, P.C., to survey and document whether conditions that constitute a "blighted area", as defined in the Act, exist in the Area. The result of the survey is included in a document entitled "Conditions Survey" dated May 21, 2007, consisting of 84 pages, related exhibits, a description of existing conditions, and numerous photographs. The Conditions Survey is incorporated herein by reference.

The Conditions Survey shows that the following factors listed in the Act are present in the Area and that these conditions qualify the Area as a "blighted area" as defined in the Act:

- *Slum, deteriorated, or deteriorating structures;*

- *Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout;*
- *Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;*
- *Unsanitary or unsafe conditions;*
- *Deterioration of site or other improvements;*
- *Inadequate public improvements or utilities;*
- *Buildings that are unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work in because of building code violations, dilapidation, deterioration, defective design, physical constructions, or faulty or inadequate facilities.*

V. DESCRIPTION OF URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT

This Plan will be implemented as part of a comprehensive program to eliminate and prevent blight in the Urban Renewal Area. The Authority and the City, with the cooperation of private enterprise and other public bodies, will undertake a program to eliminate the conditions of blight indentified in the Conditions Survey while implementing the Comprehensive Plan and the Supplemental Plans.

A. Urban Renewal Plan Goals and the Plan's relationship to Local and Regional objectives

- 1. Goals of the Plan. This Plan has been adopted to achieve the following goals in the Area:*
 - a. The Plan will implement the following provisions of the Comprehensive Plan: Urban mixed use – urban mixed consists of a mixture of office, retail, higher density residential and public uses that tend to spur redevelopment of underutilized commercial and office buildings as well as industrial sites.*
 - b. The Plan will provide connection to and complement redevelopment of the La Junta Urban Renewal Area as adopted in 1981 and expanded in 1984.*
 - c. The Plan will promote a balance of complementary land uses in the Area.*
 - d. Implementation of the Plan will eliminate and prevent conditions of blight in the Urban Renewal Area.*
 - e. Through the maximum possible participation of private enterprise and the cooperative efforts of the public sector, implementation of the Plan will eliminate and prevent economic deterioration in the Urban Renewal Area and the community at large. The Plan will promote creation of value in the Area.*
 - f. The Plan will upgrade public facilities and infrastructure, access, traffic, pedestrian and bicycle circulation, public utilities, public amenities, recreation and drainage in the Urban Renewal Area.*
 - g. The Plan will help attract capital improvement and new retail businesses, retention and development of a competitive regional retail market, thereby providing employment and strengthening the City's economic base.*
 - h. The Plan will expand retail opportunities for the citizens of La Junta and the surrounding area and create a stable sales tax base for the City.*

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- i. The Plan will improve conditions and correct problems in the Area related to vehicular access and circulation, public utilities, drainage, environmental contamination, public safety, and public amenities.*
- 2. Relationship to Local and Regional Objectives. The Plan conforms with and is designed to implement the Comprehensive Plan, the Supplemental Plans, and regional objectives in the Area.*
 - a. Providing a balance of land uses sensitive to the distribution of jobs and housing;*
 - b. Encouraging cooperation among governments and government agencies in the Area.*
 - c. Implementing the La Junta Comprehensive Plan and associated plans to facilitate orderly growth in the City and the region;*
 - d. Providing a variety of mixed, high-quality land uses, supported by existing and proposed regional transportation networks, to maximize economic opportunities throughout the Area and region.*

Cynthia Nieb: I hope this was helpful. If so, we will continue to review a small portion of the Urban Renewal Plan.

B. Governing Body Comments:

1. Rebecca Goodwin: I hope that everybody was able to do the CLG survey.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

Nancy Bennett, Chairperson

APPROVED AT THE MAY 13, 2021 MEETING