CITY COUNCIL
BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MINUTES

December 4, 2014

The City Council Business and Community Affairs Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 5:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room located at 201 West Gray on the 4th day of December, 2014, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT:	Councilmembers Castleberry, Lang, Quinn, and Chairman Heiple
ABSENT:	None
OTHERS PRESENT:	Mayor Cindy Rosenthal Ms. Tessa Breder, Norman Chamber of Commerce
STAFF PRESENT:	Mr. Bob Christian, Permit Manager Ms. Susan Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development Mr. Terry Floyd Development Coordinator Ms. Sara Kaplan, Retail Marketing Coordinator Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works Ms. Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE NORMAN RETAIL/RESTAURANT MARKET AND PROPOSED FUTURE EXPANSION AND RECRUITMENT INITIATIVES TO ENHANCE RETAIL/RESTAURANT RECRUITMENT AND INFORMATIONAL EFFORTS.

Mr. Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator, introduced Ms. Sara Kaplan, Retail Marketing Coordinator, to the Committee. Ms. Kaplan explained the purpose of her position and highlighted her goals. She said the Retail Marketing Coordinator assists in the recruitment, retention, and development of retail, restaurant, and entertainment venues to effectively help the growth of the sales tax base and improve the quality of life in Norman. She serves as a point-of-contact for existing and prospective businesses, commercial property owners, real estate brokers, etc. She assists in site location and market analysis for businesses looking to start, relocate, or expand within the city limits and works closely with the Development Coordinator and Staff to help businesses navigate the municipal process from site selection through the construction process to opening day. She actively promotes Norman's commercial districts through varied marketing efforts at local, regional, and national levels.

Ms. Kaplan outlined her Retail Strategic Plan as follow:

- Improve existing retail mix, increase retail sales tax revenue and attract new retailers to Norman without compromising existing retail;
- Recognize and capitalize on existing consumer opportunities and identify retail gaps;
- Acknowledge that retail is not only a revenue source for the City, but is also an important amenity in the broader context of place-making, specifically for mixed use and historic districts;
- Establish a budget for recruitment and development efforts;

Retail Strategic Plan, continued:

- Define submarkets;
  - Review the market strength and conditions of existing retail areas,
  - Identify existing gaps in the market by retail category and center type,
  - Identify creation,
  - Branding and marketing plans for each district, and
  - SWOT Analysis of each district (S=strength, W=weaknesses, O=opportunities, T=threats),
- Establish inventory of available buildings and properties (update frequently);
- Create retail and restaurant database and map (update frequently);
- Create shopping center map;
- Determine appropriate tools for data;
  - Free tools from greater Oklahoma City (OKC) partnership,
  - ArcGIS Business Analysis Online, and
  - Buxton Company,
- Create website for Norman retail scene (modeled after Denver, Colorado's website).

Ms. Kaplan said submarkets include University North Park; Sooner Mall; Ed Noble Parkway/I-35 Frontage; Robinson Street; Main Street; Lindsey Street; Historic Campus Corner; Historic Downtown; Highway 77; Core Areas; North Norman; and Highway 9.

Ms. Kaplan said ArcGIS Business Analysis software will cost approximately $500 and can be added to the current Geographical Information System (GIS) software. She said on the far extreme of ArcGIS, is obtaining information from the Buxton Company, which would cost $50,000 annually.

Councilmember Castleberry asked what kind of information the City could obtain for $50,000 per year and Ms. Kaplan said it allows access to over 250,000 databases with very specific data.

Ms. Kaplan said there is an interactive store in the University of Oklahoma's (OU) Student Union that allows consumers to try out new technology. She said the store has eight 3-D printers the public can use free of charge if they set an appointment and the printers are booked weeks in advance. She said the store also sells Apple products and is open to the public although many people are under the impression the store is strictly for students or faculty members.

Ms. Kaplan highlighted future projects as:

- Downtown Norman: explore possibility of Business Improvement District (BID) and follow-up on the Center City Vision;
- West Lindsey: create a construction marketing campaign;
- Promote food trucks and pop-up retail; and
- Work with CART on a lunch shuttle from Research Campus to Campus Corner/Downtown eateries.

Ms. Kaplan walked the Committee through a rough draft of the retail section she is currently building on the City's website, which will have some history on Norman, population, growth, etc. The website will be very detailed and display the many retail trade areas in Norman including a brief history; demographics; location map; drive time; traffic counts, etc. The website will include business success stories; feature business owners/employees; ribbon cuttings and grand openings; guest writers; and encourage suggestions from the public. The website will have contact information of City departments including the Retail Marketing Coordinator, Development Coordinator, Chamber of Commerce, Norman Convention and Visitors Bureau (NCVB), Oklahoma Tax Commission, and other pertinent entities. She said her goal is to have as much detail and integrated web links as possible so people do not have to navigate different websites for the information.

Item 1, continued:

Chairman Heiple asked if Staff planned to personally reach out to Lindsey Street businesses to let them know the City understands the impact to their businesses when construction on the Lindsey Street Widening and Bridge Project begins in 2016 and that the City will help alleviate any problems in any way possible. Mr. Floyd said Staff recently finalized the Lindsey Street directional signage, which is similar to signage that was done for the Main Street Interchange Project. He said the Public Works Department plans to have "boots on the ground" talking to businesses about the City's plans and what can be done to reduce the impact to businesses. He will be a point of contact and is working with the Chamber of Commerce and NCVB preparing a handbook of tips on surviving construction, which will be distributed in a few months. He said information will also be available on the website, Facebook, Twitter, Blackboard Connect, and other social media areas.

Chairman Heiple said all of the above efforts are awesome, but he cannot emphasize enough how important it is for the City to listen to the businesses, whether there is anything the City can do or not. Councilmember Castleberry said his business is client driven and while it is important for existing clients to be able to have access, it is extremely important for new clients to be able to maneuver around the construction for access. Chairman Heiple asked how many businesses will be affected and Mr. Floyd said 79 to 80 properties. Chairman Heiple said two or three phone calls a week just to touch base will go a long way in assuring those property owners the City is doing everything in its power to make this process as streamlined as possible.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated November 26, 2014, from Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator, and Sara Kaplan, Retail Marketing Coordinator, through Steve Lewis, City Manager, to Council Business and Community Affairs Committee
2. Retail Marketing Coordinator webpage profile
3. Retail Strategic Plan Outline

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Item 2, being:

PRESENTATION OF THE 2013/2014 DEVELOPMENT SERVICES CUSTOMER SATISFACTION YEAR-END REPORT.

Mr. Floyd said in November 2013, the City began a process of surveying non-residential building permit applicants in an effort to collect input and enhance customer service for customers utilizing the Development Services Division. Each month, individual contacts listed on commercial building permits for a project receiving a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) were emailed a link to a 32-question survey which gathered both demographic data and input/ratings related to building permitting, individual inspections, and overall experience with the building process in Norman. The survey also gathered customer comparisons of Norman's processes versus other communities.

Mr. Floyd said over 230 individual surveys were sent with 37 responses received, which is equal to a 15.9% response rate. He said response rates over 12% are above average compared to similar surveys submitted in other communities. He said the survey responses were generally positive with the largest number of responses coming from general contractors and approximately 68% of those had worked in Norman a minimum of ten years.

Mr. Floyd said the highest ratings in the survey came in the areas of helpfulness and professionalism of the front counter permit technicians, helpfulness and professionalism of the plans examiners, and professional demeanor of inspectors. The lowest ratings in the survey came from the areas of speed of the application review process, timeliness of inspectors, and overall experience with electrical inspections.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. Floyd said survey respondents also ranked Norman "About the Same as Other Cities" in the areas of cost of building review fees, length of permitting and inspection process, permitting and inspection process requirements, and consistency in building code interpretation. Norman ranked "Better than Most Cities" in the category of professionalism of the entire staff.

Mr. Floyd said three categories that ranked as top priorities from survey respondents for continuing quality of the building inspection process included consistent interpretation of codes, willingness of the inspector to consider alternatives, and definite times when requested inspections will take place.

Mr. Floyd said all respondents were anonymous; however, they have the option to request contact to discuss issues or other items related to their permitting process and he called all respondents that requested contact. Any information and/or issues were related to the appropriate Management Team member for resolution.

Mr. Floyd said this is the City's first survey report, which will become the baseline and, to his knowledge, Norman is the only City in the metro area doing this type survey and one of the few in the State.

Ms. Tessa Breder, Norman Chamber of Commerce, thanked Staff for doing the survey as it promotes accountability and shows the City's interest in improving their permitting process. In the future, she would like to see a comparison of contractors that have worked in Norman three or four years to those who have worked in Norman 20 plus years. Mr. Floyd said that could be possible in the future as the number of respondents grow. Ms. Breder said it is encouraging that Norman is doing better than most other cities and she would like to see that number grow especially among sub-contractors. Mr. Floyd said sub-contractors usually do not answer surveys more than once so any sub-contractors that do answer the survey will likely only do it for one project and no more. He said Staff can focus on strategies to get sub-contractors more engaged.

Councilmember Castleberry asked if there are any take away points or plan of action from the survey results and Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager, said Staff has been working on improving the predictability of the building permit process through brown bag lunches with local builders. Ms. Susan Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development, said Staff began having quarterly brown bag lunches two years ago with the Builders Association of South Central Oklahoma (BASCO). She said BASCO sets the agenda to discuss things builders believe are important to discuss as well as ideas builders want to discuss with City inspectors in order to work through issues. She said Staff is always willing to have one-on-one meetings with any contractor that requests one to work through issues or answer questions about their project. She said in the last 44 days Inspectors have completed over 100 inspections daily and are busy trying to keep up with inspections so projects can move forward.

Councilmember Castleberry asked if the City has enough inspectors and Mr. Lewis said the problem is the commercial plan reviewing process as Mr. Bob Christian, Permit Manager, is the only employee that currently reviews the plans. Ms. Connors agreed and said Mr. Christian gets behind in reviewing plans because he has other duties as well that process has only gotten slower due to the volume of applications.

Chairman Heiple said the brown bag lunches were a game changer for Norman and he has received many positive comments regarding the effectiveness of the lunches.

Mr. Floyd said about a month before a developer is scheduled to obtain a CO, Development Staff sends out a letter listing items that need to be completed before the CO can be issued. He said this has been incredibly helpful with commercial applicants who are trying to meet a timeline.

Councilmember Lang said the survey results are very informative and as the City goes forward, Staff should be looking at the lowest rating percentages to improve in those areas especially now that the City has a baseline for comparison.

Item 2, continued:

Mayor Rosenthal said it is important to communicate to the front counter permit employees, plans examiners, and inspectors that they are doing a great job.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated November 26, 2014, from Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator, and Sara Kaplan, Retail Marketing Coordinator, through Steve Lewis, City Manager, to Council Business and Community Affairs Committee
2. Customer Satisfaction Survey Development Services 2013-2014 Annual Report dated November 26, 2014

Item 3, being:

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLIC COMMENTS.

None

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The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

ATTEST:

Brenda Hall
City Clerk

Cindy Rosenthal
Mayor

CITY OF NORMAN CORPORATE SEAL OKLAHOMA