



COMO/SUNSET HEIGHTS

NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT ZONE
STRATEGIC PLAN



Como/Sunset Heights
Neighborhood Empowerment Zone (NEZ) Strategic Plan

Prepared by the
City of Fort Worth
Planning and Development Department

For more information, contact
the Planning and Development Department at
817-392-8000

A Resolution

NO. 4847-09-2017

ADOPTING THE COMO/SUNSET HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT ZONE STRATEGIC PLAN AND INCORPORATING THE PLAN BY REFERENCE INTO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHEREAS, on April 25, 2000 (M&C G-12897), the City Council approved a Policy Statement on the Creation of Local Neighborhood Empowerment Zones (NEZ) in accordance with Chapter 378 of the Texas Local Government Code; and

WHEREAS, on October 3, 2000 (M&C G-13030), the City Council approved Fort Worth's NEZ Administrative Procedures, which include criteria to determine eligible areas, the development of a basic incentives package, and elements to include in NEZ Plans in order to promote 1) the creation or rehabilitation of affordable housing, 2) an increase in economic development, and 3) an increase in the quality of social services, education, or public safety provided to residents of designated NEZs; and

WHEREAS, on June 5, 2001 (M&C G-13208R), the City Council approved basic incentives that include municipal property tax abatement, development fee waivers, impact fee waivers, and release of City liens for qualified properties or projects in designated NEZs; and

WHEREAS, on May 16, 2017 (M&C G-19010, Resolution 4782), the City Council approved amendments to the NEZ Tax Abatement Policy and Administrative Procedures for qualified properties or projects in designated NEZs; and

WHEREAS, on April 11, 2017 (Resolution 4769), the City Council approved re-designating and revising the boundary and name of the Ridglea Village/Como NEZ to the Como/Sunset Heights NEZ; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the Texas Property and Redevelopment and Tax Abatement Act, Tax Code, Chapter 312, which enables Fort Worth NEZs to be eligible for residential, commercial, and industrial tax abatement agreements, on April 11, 2017, the City Council approved the re-designated and revised boundary and name (Como/Sunset Heights NEZ) as FWNERZ No. 2 (Ordinance 22671); and

WHEREAS, since late 2014, Como stakeholders have participated in a planning process that included two workshops, seven public meetings, surveys and polling, and 18 advisory committee meetings; and

WHEREAS, a public meeting was held on August 3, 2017 to receive feedback on the updated draft Como/Sunset Heights NEZ Strategic Plan and the plan subsequently was placed on the City's website for public review; and



WHEREAS, the Como/Sunset Heights NEZ Strategic Plan proposes a comprehensive, holistic approach intended to revitalize the Como neighborhood and includes the following information: demographic and economic conditions, commercial and residential real estate data, community unsupported project types, goals and strategies, and design guidelines for residential, commercial, and industrial land uses; and

WHEREAS, the Como/Sunset Heights NEZ Strategic Plan will provide guidance to stakeholders and development project proponents seeking NEZ incentives; and

WHEREAS, the Como/Sunset Heights NEZ Design Guidelines are an appendix to the Como/Sunset Heights NEZ Strategic Plan which will be reviewed with Como stakeholders and presented at a subsequent City Council meeting for an action to adopt the guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the City Plan Commission held a public hearing on August 23, 2017 to receive feedback on the Como/Sunset Heights NEZ Strategic Plan and unanimously recommended that the City Council adopt the Plan by reference into the Comprehensive Plan;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT WORTH, TEXAS:

1. The Como/Sunset Heights Neighborhood Empowerment Zone Strategic Plan, attached as Exhibit "A", is adopted and incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan by reference.

Adopted this 19th day of September, 2017.

ATTEST:

By: _____

Mary J. Kayser, City Secretary



Public Safety

Public safety is an essential component to the revitalization of the Como neighborhood. Crime (real and perceived), illegal dumping and litter are recurring and seemingly intransigent safety issues in the Como neighborhood. These safety issues are impediments to creating a quality livable Como neighborhood.

Crime occurs in practically all neighborhoods at varying levels and degrees. However, when crime activity increases (both recurrence and severity) its impact is widespread and detrimental to a neighborhood's quality of life. Recurring crime negatively impacts a neighborhood's reputation, which influences relocation choices and investment decisions. Additionally, recurrent crime activity can reduce property values in a neighborhood and result in higher homeowner insurance rates.

Illegal dumping and widespread litter is unsightly, unsafe, and a blighting influence on a neighborhood. As with crime, illegal dumping and recurring litter negatively impact a neighborhood's reputation and results in many of the undesired consequences above.

For the Como neighborhood, a comprehensive strategy to address crime, illegal dumping, and litter is recommended. The following best practice information is intended to facilitate a future discussion and development of a comprehensive public safety strategy for the Como neighborhood.

Crime

Comprehensive crime prevention strategies generally focus on Place and People.

Place-focused crime prevention strategies include the following:

- Control physical deterioration and disorder. Controlling the physical deterioration in a neighborhood by limiting graffiti, trash accumulation and other signs of distress in public areas and on private property can influence a potential offender's perception of an area's vulnerability to crime and its residents' fear of crime.
- Target "Hot Spots" by focusing on locations that have higher levels of criminal or nuisance-related behavior.
- Proper design of buildings and the landscape can deter offenders from committing crime. This strategy is known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

People-focused crime prevention strategies focus on strengthening neighborhoods and the residents that live there. Residents that work effectively together can help deter criminal activity.

People-focused crime prevention strategies include:

- Development of social capital within the neighborhood. Social capital is the glue that holds neighborhoods together. Strengthening social capital includes developing positive relationships that build mutual trust that enables residents to work together for the betterment of the community. An example crime prevention initiative is a neighborhood crime watch program to facilitate social cohesion, help residents learn how to identify and resist crime, and maintain the neighborhood's physical environment.

- Strengthen the families and individuals that reside in neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are as strong as the residents who live in them. Assisting families with child care, constructive family dispute resolution, employment, mental health, and substance abuse services builds human infrastructure and is essential to maintaining a strong neighborhood.

The SafeGrowth model is a comprehensive crime prevention approach that could potentially yield positive results in reducing the frequency and degree of crime in the Como neighborhood.

SafeGrowth is an integrated and holistic community planning and capacity building model for administering public safety initiatives in neighborhoods and cities. The SafeGrowth philosophy is based on the premise that crime is best tackled within neighborhoods by harnessing the creative energy of functioning neighborhood groups, by employing the latest crime prevention methods, and by adopting an annual SafeGrowth Plan to control and mitigate crime.

Unlike programs like CPTED, which are typically run by crime prevention practitioners or the police *for* a community, the SafeGrowth method seeks to embed the skills and tactics of CPTED, among others, within the community by working directly with neighborhood associations and civic groups. In many cases the community implements the SafeGrowth initiatives. This approach ensures higher levels of neighborhood social cohesion which in turn helps sustain community-building and crime prevention strategies in the long term. The methods of SafeGrowth include training programs, establishing local non-profits, and enhancements to existing networks between city services like police and neighborhood groups using various social and electronic networking tools.

Neighborhood crime prevention strategies that have proven effective incorporate the best research-based crime prevention strategies coupled with a strong partnership with a community-based organization committed to improving residents' quality of life.

Source: Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, *Preventing Neighborhood Crime: Geography Matters*, by Ronald E. Wilson, Timothy H. Brown, and Beth Schuster, Issue No. 263.

Illegal Dumping and Bulk Waste Piles

Illegal dumping is disposal of waste in an unauthorized area. It is also referred to as “open dumping,” “fly dumping,” and “midnight dumping” because materials are often dumped in open areas, from vehicles along roadsides, and late at night. Material is primarily dumped to avoid either disposal fees or the time and effort required for proper disposal. Illegally dumped material typically includes:

- Construction and demolition waste such as drywall, roofing shingles, lumber, bricks, concrete, and siding
- Abandoned auto parts, scrap tires and even automobiles
- Appliances and furniture
- Yard waste, household trash, medical waste

The health risks associated with illegal dumping are significant. Areas used for illegal dumping may be easily accessible to people, especially children, who are vulnerable to the physical (protruding nails or sharp edges) and chemical (harmful fluids or dust) hazards posed by wastes. Rodents, insects, and other vermin attracted to dump sites pose health risks. Dump sites with scrap tires provide an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes, which can multiply 100 times faster than normal in warm, stagnant water standing in scrap tire casings. Runoff from dump sites containing chemicals have a negative impact on plants and wildlife. If not addressed, illegal dump sites serve as magnets for additional dumping and other criminal activity, and often lower a neighborhood’s property values.

Litter

Like illegal dumping, litter is a blight to a neighborhood and costly to clean up, impacting a neighborhood’s quality of life and economic development potential. Often, litter ends up in stormwater drainage systems and pollutes nearby waterways.

According to national studies, one of the strongest contributors to littering is the prevalence of existing litter. Studies have consistently shown that litter begets litter. These findings strongly support the need for ongoing clean-up and beautification efforts to keep areas free of litter, which can potentially reduce subsequent littering.

National studies also indicate the primary source of litter is people who make the decision to litter. Additionally, younger individuals are more likely to litter than older individuals. Focused messaging to younger persons is a proven strategy along with active involvement of youth in clean-up and beautification activities to reduce litter. Littering behavior can also be reduced through education, enforcement of ordinances, and social or “peer” pressure.

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Illegal Dumping Prevention Guidebook*, EPA 905-B-97-01, 1998.

As presented in the background section, crime, illegal dumping and litter are long-term issues in the Como neighborhood. City resources employed over the years have impacted these issues to some degree. The Como neighborhood, in partnership with the Police and Code Compliance Departments, should continue to implement best practice strategies with proven results to achieve greater gains in combatting crime, illegal dumping, bulk waste piles, and litter.

Key Actions

4.15. Continue to implement best practices strategies to achieve greater gains toward combatting crime, illegal dumping, bulk waste piles, and litter in the Como neighborhood. Undertake appropriate strategies based on potential effectiveness and available resources.

4.16. Develop metrics to track progress in public safety initiatives.

Crime

- Research and employ one or more best practice strategies, e.g., SafeGrowth model, safety audits, CPTED training, etc.
- Recruit more neighborhood volunteers to participate in the existing Como Code Blue and National Night Out crime prevention initiatives.
- Seek grants (federal, state, local, etc.) to undertake crime prevention activities.

Illegal Dumping, Bulk Waste Piles, and Litter

- Develop an illegal dumping/litter prevention plan for the Como neighborhood. Incorporate the plan into school and neighborhood activities and events where students could have a role in supporting the event through recycling and proper waste management.
- Implement a neighborhood education campaign to increase awareness of Solid Waste Services that focus on appropriate bulk waste collections, residential solid waste service guidelines, set-out week and top five rules, benefits of using a Drop Off Station, cost of improper waste disposal (i.e., cost of clean-up from tax dollars, impact on environment, public health impact, lower property values, etc.).
- Promote the “Reverse Litter, Ten on Tuesday” campaign, www.reverselitter.com.
- Implement Neighborhood Safety Teams to watch and report illegal dumping activities to report to the Police.
- Install cameras at sites with high incidence of illegal dumping.
- Use social media for creative strategies, e.g., “flash mob” cleanup for recent small illegal dumps on neighborhood streets and vacant lots.
- Institute an “Adopt-A-Lot” program by the Como neighborhood. Consult with the City to determine legal issues associated with vacant properties in private ownership.
- Develop an inventory of vacant parcels and work with property owners to maintain the properties.
- Convert empty large barrels into trash receptacles for Horne Street. Seek a grant from area businesses (e.g., Lowes, Home Depot, etc.) to acquire paint and other materials to paint the barrels. Utilize youth and neighborhood civic organizations to participate in the event. Additionally, seek partnership/ agreement with the City to pick-up trash from trash bins.
- Publicize and celebrate positive results and success stories related to litter clean-up and eradication of illegal dump sites.

A City Stormwater “no dumping” inlet marker that is located on Horne Street serves as a reminder to not place litter in the storm drain system.

