



CHAPTER 23

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Fort Worth offers a variety of incentives and programs to help stimulate development and redevelopment. Many have been discussed in previous chapters, especially in the programs listed in the Economic Development, Housing, and Historic Preservation chapters.

In addition to City of Fort Worth incentives and programs, this chapter includes some economic development programs that are offered through other agencies.

BACKGROUND

Many economic development experts believe that public incentives help encourage and leverage private investment, enhance the local business environment, strengthen the economy, and increase local employment. The City of Fort Worth uses incentive strategies as an integral part of its economic and community development programs in an attempt to influence decision-makers considering relocating, starting, or expanding an existing commercial, industrial and/or residential asset and to encourage the growth of Fort Worth in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. Financial incentives are also available to certain property owners and/or nonprofit organizations to promote restoration, rehabilitation, or repair of existing housing structures. These incentives promote the creation of new jobs and lead to positive economic growth and neighborhood stabilization.

Incentives are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and are based on the merits of individual projects. The City of Fort Worth monitors incentive performance to ensure that commitments are met and incentives are proportionate to the economic benefit to the City.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The City uses the following guiding principles in evaluating projects seeking financial assistance:

- Promote development that conforms to the community's vision as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan, Economic Development Strategic Plan, and other widely accepted community plans.
- Significantly advance City Council goals such as job creation, retention of Fort Worth residents, utilization of Fort Worth-based companies (including certified Fort Worth M/WBE companies), provision of affordable housing, historic preservation, and balanced and fiscally responsible growth.
- Provide preference for projects in targeted areas (e.g., growth centers, urban villages, neighborhood empowerment zones, Transit-Oriented Developments, Community Development Block Grant eligible areas, etc.).
- Avoid negative financial impacts to the funding of general government operations and effectively leverage private dollars.
- Provide assistance for eligible projects that have verifiable financing gaps at a level not to exceed incremental dollars generated by the planned investment.
- Create opportunities for the utilization of minority-owned businesses and woman-owned businesses.
- Capitalize on near or mid-term market opportunities.
- Provide financial assistance for the minimum possible length of time.

PROJECT PREFERENCE AREAS

The City acknowledges that different geographic areas face varying degrees of challenges in attracting private sector capital for quality business and housing development. Fort Worth's central city, in particular, has demonstrated a range of challenges related to retrofitting the existing urban fabric — challenges which typically do not exist in “greenfield” development outside the city's built environment. The City has specifically targeted its incentives to provide greater assistance to catalyst projects in areas of Fort Worth where market support has lagged behind community needs and goals.

PROJECT PREFERENCE AREAS

The following are the City's project preference areas:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Brownfields | 6. Enterprise Zones |
| 2. Central City | 7. Neighborhood Empowerment Zones (NEZ) |
| 3. Commercial Corridors | 8. Opportunity Zones |
| 4. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Eligible Areas | 9. Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) |
| 5. Designated Investment Zones (DIZ) | 10. Urban Villages |

BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM

The Brownfields Program aims to decrease blight, remove environmental contamination, and reinvigorate redevelopment in the community. By definition, a brownfield is an abandoned or underused structure or vacant land that has real or perceived environmental contamination that constrains redevelopment. Since 1995, the Environmental Protection Agency has awarded millions of dollars to local governments to enhance local brownfields programs throughout the country. This program helps developers clean up and redevelop contaminated properties to support reuse. Using grants and low-interest loans, the Fort Worth Brownfields Program may be able to assist clients with technical guidance and resources to offset costs for brownfields cleanup activities.

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POTENTIAL
BROWNFIELDS
IDENTIFIED IN 2020

\$1:\$2.5

PUBLIC
INVESTMENT:
PRIVATE
INVESTMENT RATIO
IN BROWNFIELDS

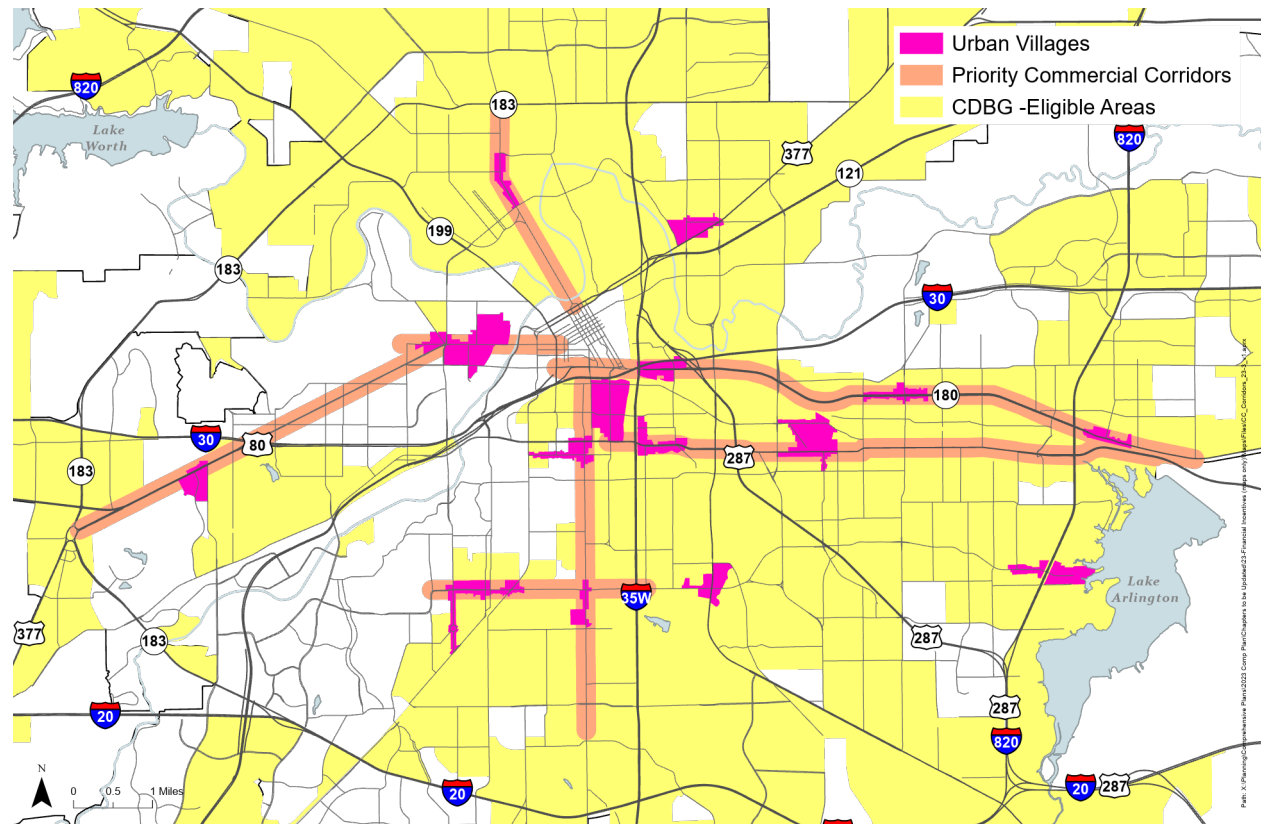
COMMON EXAMPLES OF BROWNFIELD SITES

1. Gas Station
2. Dry Cleaners/
Laundry
3. Warehouses
4. Storefronts

CENTRAL CITY & COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

The City Council designated the area located within Interstate Highway Loop 820 that contains all CDBG-eligible Census block groups, all state-designated enterprise zones, and all Census block groups that are contiguous by 75 percent or more of their perimeter to CDBG-eligible block groups or enterprise zones as the Central City. The Central City areas have a high concentration of poverty and unemployment compared to Fort Worth as a whole. Higher-income areas within Loop 820 are excluded from the Central City designation.

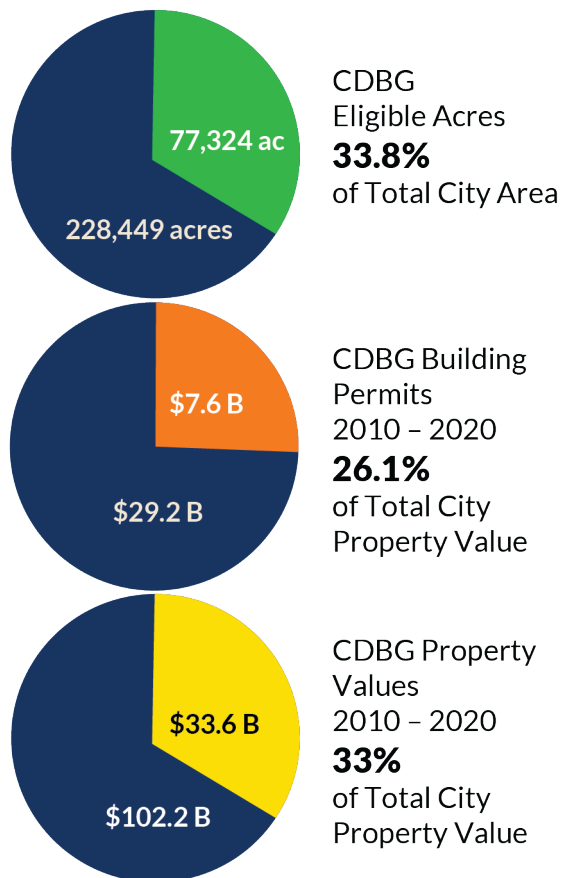
Revitalization of older commercial districts in the Central City is an important component of the City's economic development efforts. The City has identified 31 commercial corridors in need of revitalization. The following seven corridors are high priority: Berry Street, North Main Street, East Rosedale Street, Downtown and East Lancaster Avenue, Hemphill Street, Camp Bowie Boulevard, and West 7th Street.



Source: City of Fort Worth, Economic Development Department, 2021.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) ELIGIBLE AREAS

CDBG funds must be used for eligible projects and meet one of the Broad National Objectives: Low-to-Moderate Income; Slum/Blight; and Urgent Need. CDBG funds are used to benefit low-income person(s) and revitalize lower-income neighborhoods by expanding affordable housing, generating economic opportunities, and improving community facilities and services.



DESIGNATED INVESTMENT ZONES

Designated Investment Zones (DIZs) are a locally designated incentive area within Fort Worth. They are defined as Census tracts that are eligible for community development block grants (CDBG) as designated by US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD determines tracts' eligibility by identifying tracts where 51% or more of the residents have low-to-moderate incomes or those with a poverty rate of 20% or higher.

ENTERPRISE ZONE PROGRAM

This designation is reserved for areas of high poverty and unemployment targeted for business redevelopment, including creation of jobs and economic revitalization. Amendments to the state enterprise zone program allow for Census block groups with a poverty rate of at least 20 percent to automatically become enterprise zones.

44	\$5.5M	2,733
PROJECTS APPROVED IN 2020	COMBINED TOTAL INVESTMENTS	NEW JOBS PRODUCED IN 2020

NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT ZONES

A Neighborhood Empowerment Zone (NEZ) is an area created to promote:

1. The development and 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 the zone.

Neighborhood Empowerment Zones (NEZ) exist to promote housing, economic development, and quality services within the central city. Developers who build within these zones can access property tax abatements, fee waivers, and release of city liens.

Source: City of Fort Worth, Economic Development Department, 2021.

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Defined as “economically-distressed communities where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment,” Opportunity Zones are a federal tax benefit program that the City of Fort Worth seeks to amplify through the addition of local incentives. Investors in these areas can expect a deferral or reduction of federal capital gains taxes when they commit that capital to an Opportunity Fund to be used for qualified projects in the zones.

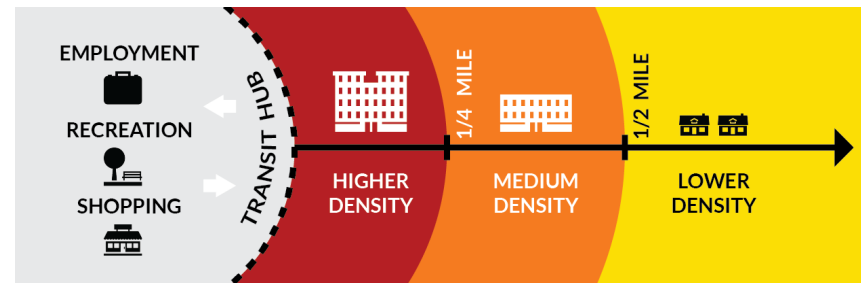
Each state may designate up to 25 percent of its eligible low-income Census tracts as Opportunity Zones. After an extensive analysis of Texas’ eligible tracts, and using a multi-step process to identify eligible areas of particular need due to chronic unemployment, lower population density, and significant economic disruptors such as natural disasters within the past two years, Texas designated 628 Census tracts in 145 counties as Opportunity Zones.

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OPPORTUNITY ZONES IN FORT WORTH

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)

TODs are dense urban development areas located within 1/4 to 1/2 mile of regional commuter rail stations, modern streetcar stops, and similar fixed-route transit stations. Successful TODs contain a mix of uses, including higher density residential, and are carefully designed to be pedestrian-friendly and specifically oriented to the transit station or stop. TODs accommodate growth more efficiently than low-density subdivisions, while supporting increased use of transit and its associated traffic congestion reduction and air quality benefits.



Preferred Distances from Public Transit.

URBAN VILLAGES

The City promotes the development of urban villages, which are strategically selected commercial districts designated along commercial corridors within the Central City. The premise behind the selection of villages is that concentrating resources in these prime areas will have a positive economic ripple effect along the corridors where they are located, as well as in the surrounding residential neighborhoods.



Pedestrian comfort is an important factor in streetscape design.

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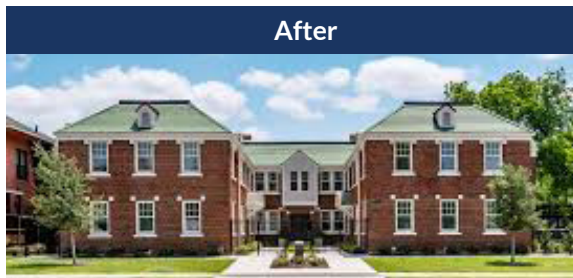
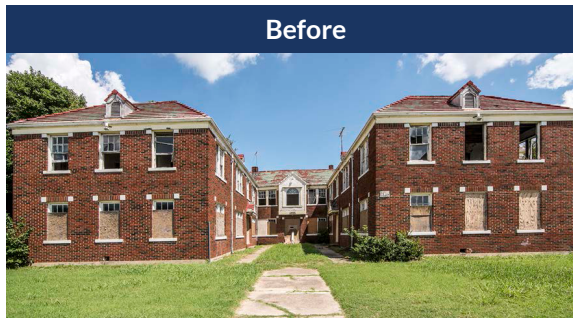
URBAN VILLAGES
THROUGHOUT
FORT WORTH

\$4.1B

INVESTMENT IN
ALL URBAN VILLAGES
SINCE DESIGNATION

HISTORIC SITE TAX EXEMPTION

The City freezes the assessed value of Historic and Cultural Landmark designated property for 10 years for owners who spend an amount equal to 30 percent or more of the pre-renovation assessed value of the improvement or rehabilitation. Owners of Highly Significant Endangered designated property who similarly rehabilitate their property qualify for exemption from City taxes on the improvement and a freeze of the land value for 10 years.



The Hamilton Apartments (2837 Hemphill Street) - This property has a Highly Significant/Endangered designation and leveraged the HSTE to help make the rehabilitation project financially feasible.

Source: City of Fort Worth, Development Services Department, 2021.

MEDIA PRODUCTION ZONE

Media Production zones allow for the use of sales and use tax exemption for the construction, maintenance, expansion, improvement, or renovation of a media production facility for qualified production locations. This could include anything from animation/CGI studios to post-production facilities to video game development offices. Currently, the city's Media Production Zone is located in the Near Southside neighborhood, but there remains the possibility of future zone designations.

\$6,080

TOTAL EXEMPTION ON SALES TAX

\$1.7M

TOTAL PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN BUILDING RENOVATIONS DURING FY2020

\$122k

TOTAL INCENTIVES REIMBURSED FOR CONSTRUCTION BETWEEN 2 COMPANIES SINCE 2019

Source: City of Fort Worth, Economic Development Department, 2021.

TAX ABATEMENT PROGRAM

Texas law permits a city to grant property tax abatements to projects located within a reinvestment zone for up to 10 years if the project meets the economic goals and objectives as outlined in the City's Tax Abatement Policy.

\$2.65M

TOTAL TAXES ABATED FY2020

\$17.4M

CUMULATIVE CONSTRUCTION WITH FORT WORTH BUSINESSES IN FY2020

\$1.88M

CUMULATIVE CONSTRUCTION WITH MINORITY/ WOMEN BUSINESS ENTERPRISES (M/WBE) IN FY2020

1,508

TOTAL JOBS CREATED/RETAINED IN FY2020

INDUSTRIAL REVENUE BONDS

The State of Texas Industrial Revenue Bond Program is designed to provide taxable and tax-exempt bond financing for land and depreciable property for industrial or manufacturing projects. Industrial revenue bonds are administered by the Economic Development and Tourism division of the Governor's Office.

PRIVATE ACTIVITY BONDS

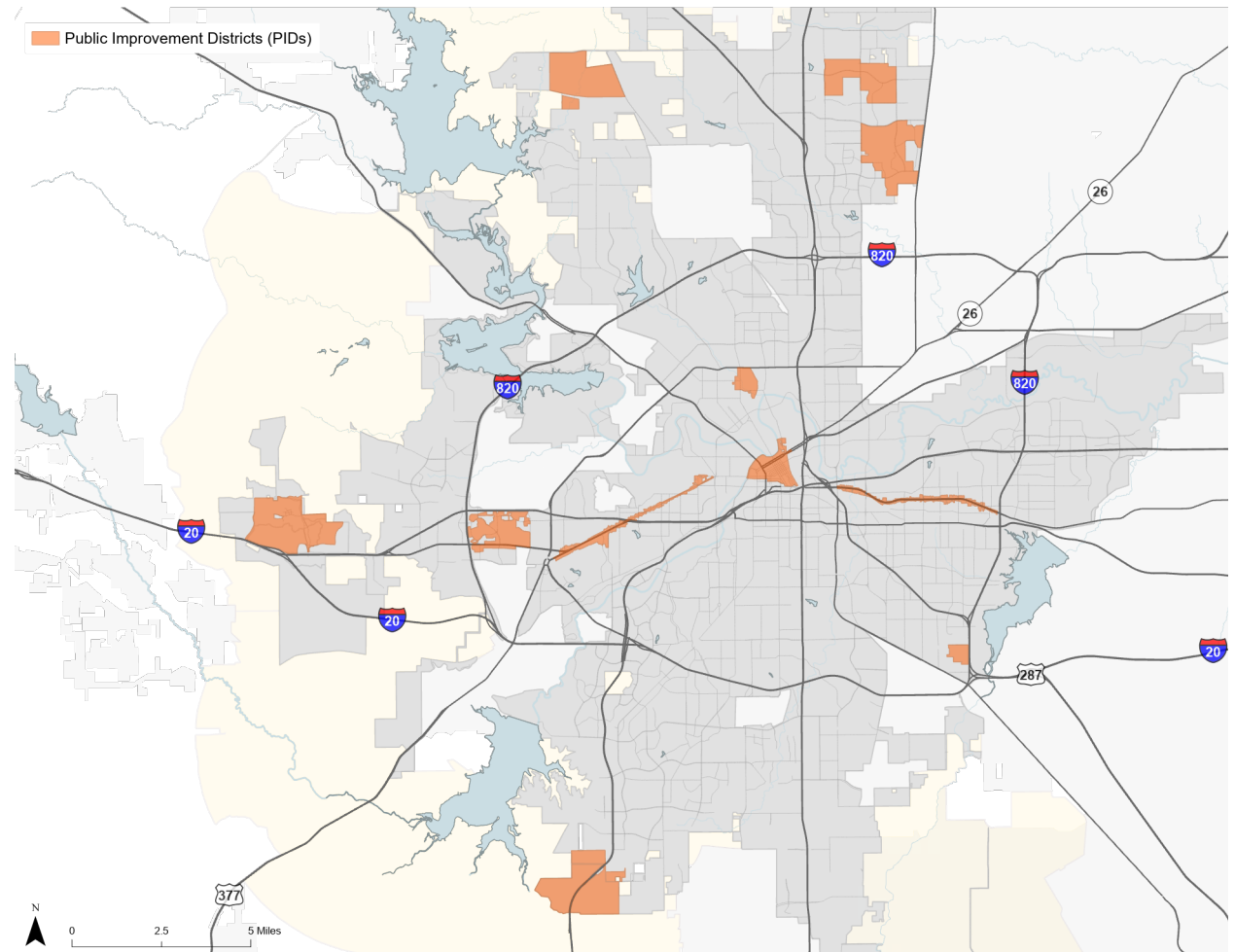
The State of Texas Private Activity Bond Program is designed to provide taxable and tax-exempt low-interest and long-term bond financing for eligible projects that include multifamily or economic development projects. Private activity bonds are administered by the Texas Bond Review Board.

TOURISM IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (PID 18)

The Tourism Improvement District (PID 18) is a specially designated PID established in 2017 for a 10-year term in order to spur growth in the city's vibrant and unique tourism sector. The funds of this PID are dedicated to the enhancement of infrastructure that supports the city's competitiveness in attracting conventions, leisure travel, and sports tourism.

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (PIDS)

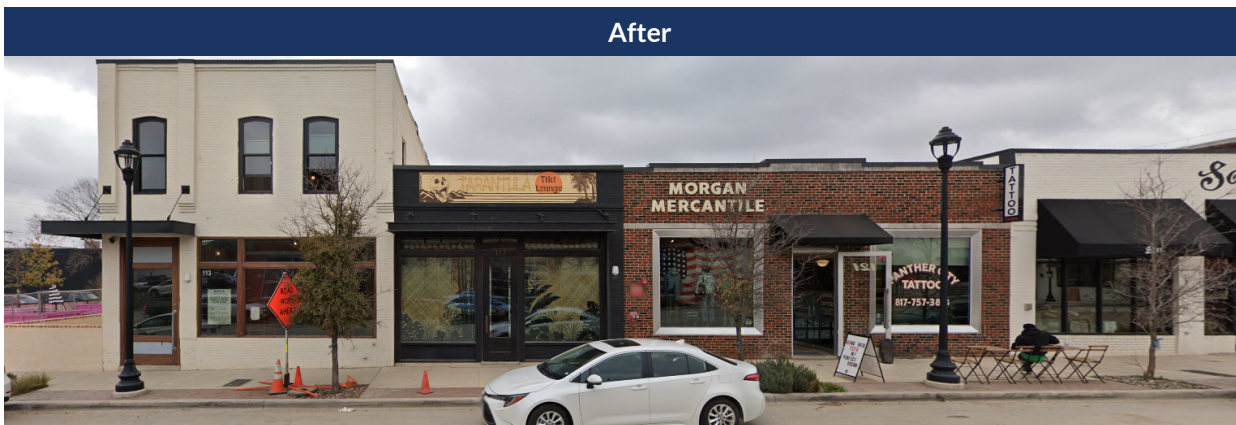
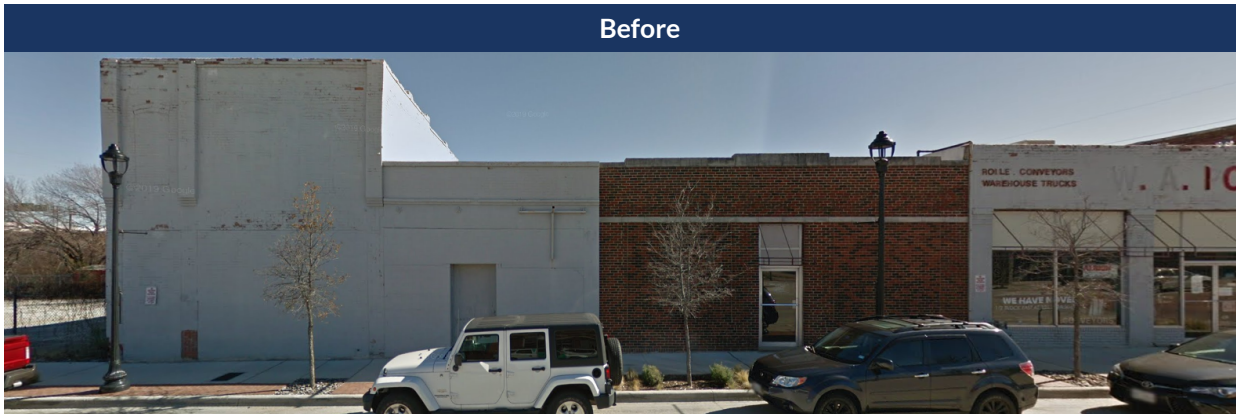
Public Improvement Districts (PIDs) are special districts and special purpose units of local government created to provide a service or services to a specific group of constituents. Authorized by Chapter 372 of the Local Government Code, public improvement districts allow a City to levy and collect special assessments on property to fund a variety of enhanced services within the PID boundary.



Source: City of Fort Worth, Economic Development Department, 2021.

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Neighborhood Services Department seeks to assist local businesses in eligible areas to improve their curb appeal through façade improvement grants. This program spurs revitalization and economic development within the 10 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Urban Villages. Guidelines and standards vary between the different villages by amplifying architectural style and design elements that are unique to each area.



Location: 113-125 South Main Street.

Source: City of Fort Worth, Neighborhood Services Department, 2021.

FEDERAL & STATE GRANTS

If awarded, the City will provide this type of support to projects to leverage significant private investment. Grant funding can generally be used for infrastructure improvements, environmental remediation, pedestrian and streetscape enhancements in the public right-of-way, and other costs as appropriate to the funding source. The City or private sector may provide any required local matching funds.

LOCAL GRANTS

Chapter 380 Economic Development Program grants are made in accordance with Texas Local Government Code 380 and the City's policy as outlined in Resolution 3716-03-2009. The purpose of Chapter 380 grants is to reimburse private developers for the range of expenses which may contribute to a financing gap yielding otherwise desirable projects financially infeasible.

LOW INTEREST LOANS

The purpose of this incentive is to provide development funds to developers at a lower interest rate compared to conventional loans. Loans can be used to support commercial, residential or mixed-use real estate development projects, for both rehabilitation and new construction related expenses. The types of loans available include predevelopment, interim financing, and bridge.

DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL ASSISTANCE

The Development Services Department provides a single staff contact to work with other departments as necessary, in order to facilitate a streamlined process for projects in pre-development on issues related to construction, platting, zoning, and permitting. This service is for projects currently receiving economic or housing development incentives.

As of January 2019, the city offers an additional expedited plan review service for building permit reviews. The “X-team” allows customers to schedule a meeting with a plan review team that includes senior plans examiners from all relevant city departments that can answer questions and identify issues on the spot, thus reducing the need for multiple rounds of submissions. This service is subject to additional fees beyond general building permit application fees.

ENHANCED COMMUNITY FACILITY AGREEMENT (ECFA)

The City will consider paying for a greater percentage of project-related public infrastructure costs than what is currently called for in the existing CFA Policy if certain economic development objectives are met.

LAND TRANSACTIONS

The land transactions incentive is intended to assist developers with land acquisition and assemblage for meritorious projects in targeted infill areas. The City maintains an inventory of properties that fall within two distinct categories: tax-foreclosed properties and surplus properties. The City continues to review how to better utilize these properties to promote strategic housing and economic development goals.

MIXED-USE ZONING ASSISTANCE

The purpose of this incentive is to assist individual property owners and interested community groups in rezoning to mixed-use in designated mixed-use growth centers, urban villages, and transit-oriented development areas. In using a petition process or Council-initiated process, the City initiates the rezoning at no cost to the property owners.

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URBAN VILLAGES THROUGHOUT FORT WORTH

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MIXED-USE GROWTH CENTERS IN FORT WORTH

RELOCATION INCENTIVES POLICY

On December 16, 2008, the City Council adopted a Relocation Incentives Policy to provide greater assistance to businesses that are required to relocate as a result of a Major Public Infrastructure Project. As outlined in the Policy, the City Council must specifically designate all projects that are deemed Major Public Infrastructure Projects in order for displaced businesses to qualify for incentives. All tax abatements to be provided to impacted businesses require approval of the City Council.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)

TIF is a financing tool that uses revenues from tax increments to pay for public improvements that stimulate future development or redevelopment in designated reinvestment zones. The total value of taxable real property located within the zone is calculated for the year the zone is created to obtain the tax increment base. The amount by which future total value exceeds the tax increment base is the captured appraised value, from which tax increment revenues are generated for improvement projects. Thirteen TIFs have been designated by the City Council.

\$1.3B

BASE VALUE OF ALL TIF DISTRICTS

\$6.6B

CURRENT TAXABLE VALUE OF ALL TIF DISTRICTS

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD)

The City of Fort Worth has used the following HUD programs:

- **Brownfield Economic Development Initiative (BEDI) funds** — This HUD grant provides funds and loan guarantees to clean up and redevelop environmentally contaminated industrial and commercial sites, commonly known as brownfields. Grantees must use at least 70 percent of funds for projects that benefit low- or moderate-income individuals or neighborhoods.
- **Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG)** — Federal block grant funds may be used for economic development activities in eligible areas. These activities include the acquisition, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or installation of commercial or industrial buildings, structures, and other real property and equipment. The City has used CDBG funds for several projects, including a small business micro-loan program that is managed by the Fort Worth Economic Development Corporation.
- **Economic Development Initiative (EDI) funds** — A grant program created by HUD, EDI is an extra incentive for cities to use Section 108 loan funds. It is for infrastructure and other costs that cannot be covered under the Section 108 loan program. The City has received EDI grants for the Minyard's grocery store, the Mercado, and the Evans & Rosedale Business and Cultural District.
- **HOME funds** — A portion of these funds is used locally to provide gap financing for eligible single-family or multifamily development projects. The City offers such incentives through various programs, including the Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) Program Fund, the Affordable Housing Development Fund, and the Predevelopment Loan Fund for CHDOs. Funds can be used for closing costs, down payments, and deferred payment loans for qualified households.
- **Section 108 Loan Guarantees** — Section 108 is the loan guarantee provision of the CDBG program. The City borrows loan funds directly from HUD, backed by its current and future CDBG allocations. The City then uses that money to support projects that benefit low- and moderate-income communities. Loan proceeds can be used for site acquisition, site improvements, and construction, or it may capitalize an economic development loan fund. The development of Minyard Food Store (currently Fiesta) in southeast Fort Worth and supporting business development activity for the Mercado revitalization project along North Main Street are two examples of projects utilizing Section 108 loan guarantees.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA) FUNDS

These federal funds are administered by the Department of Commerce and are tied to job creation and business expansion. The City has used EDA funds for several projects including the Guinn School renovation, wherein an abandoned school was converted to office space, including a business incubator (Tech Fort Worth); infrastructure improvements in the Stockyards; streetscape enhancements in the Evans & Rosedale Business and Cultural District; and a small business revolving loan fund program.



OFFICE OF ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT (OEA) FUNDS

OEA funds fall under the Department of Defense and are used for communities adversely impacted by significant Defense program changes, such as base closures or realignments. The City received OEA funds to address the local defense downsizing, including the closure of Carswell Air Force Base that occurred in the early 1990s. The grant funds assisted the City in developing an economic diversification strategy that led to the creation of the Fort Worth Business Assistance Center, which is located at the renovated James E. Guinn School Complex.



BUSINESS LOANS, CONTRACTING, & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The following programs are offered by other agencies and are instrumental in providing financial, contracting, and technical assistance to local companies:

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA)

Small Business Administration (SBA) — The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) aids, assists, and counsels small businesses. One of the agency's primary roles is to act as a loan guarantor to qualified small businesses that cannot obtain financing from traditional lenders.



The following are some of the SBA programs offered in Fort Worth:

- **7(a) Small Business Loan** reduces risks to lenders by guaranteeing major portions of loans made to small and medium-sized businesses. This enables a lender to provide financing when funding would otherwise be unavailable. Loans can be used for expanding or renovating facilities, equipment purchases, leasehold improvements, refinancing existing debt, financing lines of credit and more. One variation of the 7(a) loans is the LowDoc loans with minimal paperwork.
- **Microloan Program** offers small businesses short-term loans of up to \$50,000 for the purchase of machinery and equipment, working capital, and other expenses. In addition to financing services, this program offers technical assistance.
- **Certified Development Company (Section 504) Program** provides long-term, fixed rate financing through certified development companies (CDCs) to small businesses to acquire real estate, machinery, and equipment for expansion of business or facility modernization. Most CDCs are private, nonprofit corporations designed to support economic development activities in the area they serve. Alliance Lending Corporation, (formerly known as The Fort Worth Economic Development Corporation) serves the entire state of Texas. The Alliance Lending Corporation headquarters is located at the James E. Guinn School Complex. In addition, the corporation has a satellite office in Dallas.

- **HUBZone Empowerment Contracting Program** stimulates economic development and creates jobs in urban and rural communities by providing Federal contracting preferences to small businesses. These preferences go to small businesses that obtain HUBZone (Historically Underutilized Business Zone) certification, in part by employing staff who live in a HUBZone. The company must also maintain a "principal office" in one of these specially designated areas. Fort Worth has several HUBZone qualified census tracks.
- **Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs)** offer one-stop assistance to small businesses by providing a wide variety of information and guidance. The program is a cooperative effort of the private sector, the educational community and federal, state, and local governments. SBDCs enhance economic development by providing small businesses with management and technical assistance. The Fort Worth SBDC is overseen by Tarrant County College and is located at the James E. Guinn School Complex.

TEXAS MEZZANINE FUND (TMF)

Texas Mezzanine Fund (TMF) — Introduced to Tarrant County in October 1999, the Texas Mezzanine Fund serves as an interim lender that supplements bank loans by providing terms rarely offered by banks. TMF's target market is growing companies that are located in low-and moderate-income communities or that provide jobs for low-to moderate-income persons. The TMF provides financing from \$50,000 to \$500,000 for business development, affordable housing, and community facilities.



TAX CREDIT, TAX EXEMPTION, & HOUSING LENDING PROGRAMS

The following programs are offered by other agencies and are instrumental in business and housing development:

- **Federal Tax Credits for Historic Property** — Federal income tax credits for 20 percent of the rehabilitation costs of a certified historic structure are available if proper procedure is followed. This credit can be applied only to commercial, industrial, agricultural, or rental residential properties. Certified historic structures are buildings that are either listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places, or are located in a registered historic district and certified by the National Park Service as contributing to the historic significance of that district. For a non-historic building built before 1936, a 10 percent income tax credit is available for rehabilitation.
- **Foreign Trade Zones (FTZs)** — FTZs provide special customs procedures to U.S. plants engaged in international trade-related activities. Duty-free treatment is accorded items that are processed in a FTZ and then re-exported, and duty payment is deferred on items until they are brought out of the FTZ for sale in the U.S. market. This helps to offset customs advantages available to overseas producers who compete with domestic industry. FTZs are administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce. Fort Worth has one FTZ located in the Alliance Corridor.
- **Freeport Tax Exemption (FTE)** — The governing body of each taxing entity must pass an ordinance electing to offer FTE in its jurisdiction. After the ordinance is passed, the exemption is applied to all properties which meet the requirements. FTE helps reduce costs associated with inventory taxes. The exemption allows products and goods to be moved through the state without incurring inventory taxes, if those products are held for less than 175 days. The City of Fort Worth, Tarrant County, and most Fort Worth area independent school districts offer FTE.
- **Low Income Housing Tax Credit** — Administered by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, this federal income tax credit is an incentive available to persons who build or rehabilitate rental units and rent a certain percentage to low- and moderate-income households.
- **New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC)** — Established by Congress in 2000, the NMTC program permits individual and corporate taxpayers to receive a credit against federal income taxes for making qualified equity investments that go toward financing community development projects, stimulate economic opportunity, and create jobs in low-income areas. The investor's credit totals 39 percent of the value of the investment and is claimed over a seven-year credit allowance.
- **Secondary Mortgage Lenders** — Fannie Mae works with lenders, nonprofits, mortgage insurers, community groups, state and local housing finance agencies, and others, including employers, to share information and create funding opportunities. Fannie Mae has three lines of business — Single-Family, Multifamily, and Capital Markets — that provide services and products to lenders and a broad range of housing partners. Together, these businesses contribute to the company's chartered mission to increase the amount of funds available in order to make homeownership and rental housing more available and affordable. The Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac) and the Government National Mortgage Association (Ginnie Mae) have similar housing programs.