

Item

Discuss the City of Tulsa's 71st Street revitalization efforts.

Background

The City of Tulsa is launching a focused effort to promote redevelopment, support retailers, and enhance the appearance of the 71st Street shopping corridor, from just west of Memorial Dr. to Garnett Rd. There are three main components:

Reforming Zoning and Development Standards

The City is working to make it easier to open new businesses by simplifying the zoning regulations along 71st Street, which have become very complicated and difficult to understand and administer over time, for business owners, developers, and City officials. The area is full of Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), customized zoning regulations adopted primarily in the 1970s, 80s and 90s for individual properties, at a time when developers and city officials had very different development objectives than today.

Back then, the focus was on placing buildings far away from the street (often 1,000 feet or more) behind massive parking lots without any trees or landscaping, limiting building heights to two stories, and severely limiting uses on each property. Complicating the matter, most of these PUDs have been amended dozens of times over the past 50 years, making it virtually impossible for developers, business owners, and property owners to understand quickly and easily what is and is not allowed on an individual property, which deters reinvestment and redevelopment. The result today is a major shopping corridor that is stagnating, showing its age while also being difficult to redevelop.

Recognizing the importance of this corridor to the local and regional economy, the City plans to replace the complex, restrictive, individualized PUDs with one simple, modern, standardized set of zoning regulations for the entire corridor. This City-led rezoning initiative will allow property owners, developers, and business owners more flexibility to adapt these properties to modern needs and to keep up with growing retail competition from areas that do not face the same restrictive, outdated regulations. The new regulations will be far easier to understand, will encourage redevelopment and reinvestment, and will enhance the area's appearance over time.

Beautification

Overhauling the planted medians along 71st St. is a major priority, and work is beginning on pruning and replacing trees, and planting additional trees, from Riverside Dr. to Highway 169. Additional beautification efforts include new sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and other streetscape elements, from west of Memorial Dr. to Highway 169. Those projects will be funded by a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district associated with the new Scheel's store under construction at Woodland Hills Mall and by City of Tulsa right-of-way maintenance funds. The Scheel's development will also include hundreds of new trees and extensive landscaping around their building and parking lot.

Commercial Redevelopment Incentives

Support for businesses along this corridor is being made available through the City's Commercial Revitalization Revolving Loan Fund, a flexible loan program for small businesses and property developers looking to expand in key commercial corridors, along with the City's Retail Incentive Program and Economic Development Infrastructure Fund. Additional information about these and other economic development programs is available from PartnerTulsa and TEDC, the City's economic development teams.

Together, these efforts to standardize and clarify development standards, assist businesses, and improve the public realm will make 71st Street more appealing for redevelopment and reinvestment, and a more pleasant place to visit, shop, work, and live.

