

MINUTES OF THE
HENDERSON CITY COUNCIL
Regular Scheduled Meeting

February 18, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: *The Mayor of the City Council called the Workshop to order, declare a quorum if present, and declare notices legally posted pursuant to Open Meetings Act. The Chairperson of the Economic Development Commission called the workshop to order.*

Council members present were Stephen Strong, Michael Searcy, Greg Jackson, Melissa Morton, and Gina Juarez.

Economic Development Corporation members present were Michael Marshall, Noble Welch, Trey Segoria, James Holmes and Bret Gardella.

COUNCIL BUSINESS – REGULAR SESSION

1. Open a workshop to discuss topics related to residential and commercial development.

Vice President Brian Ballard opened a residential and commercial development workshop and turned the floor over to Henderson Economic Development Executive Director Bret Gardella.

Bret Gardella stated we recognize the pressing need for housing and the interconnected nature of residential growth, job creation, and infrastructure. This workshop allows council members and the EDC board to align priorities and ensure we're moving in the right direction. My staff and I have spent months engaging in the community, promoting small businesses, and working on recruitment efforts. We're also rebranding Henderson, Texas Economic Development with a new logo, marketing strategy, and website. Our goal is to raise awareness, attract investment, and support local businesses. We want to hear your priorities to ensure our efforts align with the city's vision. Let's collaborate to drive Henderson's growth. We're rebranding as Henderson, Texas Economic Development—no more HEDCO. Our new logo, featuring a bold "H" with an upward arrow, symbolizes our city's growth. Our focus is on recruitment, residential growth, and retail expansion. We can't sell Henderson from behind a desk—we need to be out promoting it. On residential development, a study showed that 30% of employees in 10 major local businesses live elsewhere due to a lack of housing options. We need everything from multi-family housing to executive homes. We're exploring tools like public improvement districts (PIDs), tax incentives, and development agreements to attract builders. For retail, growth depends on population and business expansion. We must strategically recruit businesses that fit our community. Our approach: work fast, be competitive, and make development easy. Henderson needs to operate at the speed of business, not government. By combining city efforts, incentives, and smart planning, we can drive meaningful growth. A tax rebate for a developer only benefits them, similar to a 380 agreement, which returns city taxes for a set period. A TIRZ zone can last decades, but if only at the city level, the county benefits without contributing. Attracting builders is crucial. The mayor and I have discussed projects like tiny homes and citywide cleanups. Retail is always a hot topic, but we need realistic goals. We need to elevate our expectations and invest strategically. Some businesses won't come because we're too small and stagnant. Growth requires rooftops, which attract retail, creating a cycle of development. We recently partnered with Placer AI to analyze consumer data. Understanding shopping patterns helps target businesses that fit. Michael Searcy commented that our recreational facilities need investment too. The Henderson Boys Baseball Association has improved, but fields and parks need upgrades to attract young families. Bret said, ultimately, we must take an honest look at ourselves, refine our priorities, and actively promote Henderson's potential. A few months ago, we launched a small business grant program offering a 50/50 match of up to \$10,000. In just 90 days, we've approved six grants, totaling over \$100,000 for local businesses, including one industrial project. We want businesses to know we're here to help—whether through beautification projects, infrastructure improvements, or attracting new opportunities. These efforts enhance Henderson's appeal and drive economic growth. We're also working on youth sports facilities, airport expansion, and long-term job creation. Our goal is to attract niche manufacturing, aerospace, and data centers while improving local infrastructure. However, property challenges remain—vacant and deteriorating buildings need action. We must push for better maintenance, explore redevelopment options, and create incentives for growth. To compete, we must actively seek businesses, not just wait for them to arrive. This is about securing a future for Henderson—bringing in jobs, housing, and retail to ensure long-term success. Beyond beautification, we need better connectivity—sidewalks and trails, especially near Winley Foods, where walking and biking are unsafe. Henderson needs visibility. Housing

is a challenge. Land is costly, and developers hesitate, yet demand exists. A phased approach is needed. Developers may start with 50-100 units. Senior living apartments filled quickly, proving the need. Henderson needs growth to attract businesses and residents. Senior apartments filled quickly, proving demand exists, but developers hesitate. Beyond housing, Henderson needs diverse dining and retail. Big chains won't come without growth, but local franchisees could help. Without a college system, fostering entrepreneurship is a challenge. To change, Henderson must invest in infrastructure, housing, and business opportunities—or risk falling behind. The focus is on doing things differently, being aggressive, and working closely with the city. There's a desire downtown to have a clear identity, with improvements like better sidewalks and better accessibility for pedestrians, as parking isn't the core issue. Ideas like a sculpture trail, inspired by other successful cities, were suggested to draw people downtown. The city needs infrastructure upgrades to improve the walking experience, and the challenge is to find the money to make it happen. The conversation centers around the challenges and strategies for funding community projects, especially considering current state legislature decisions. The focus is on using grants, debt service, and tax strategies to fund initiatives like downtown revitalization, with a major emphasis on finding additional grant opportunities.

ADJOURNMENT

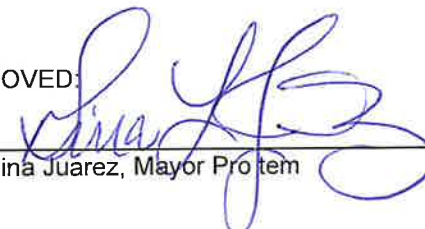
2. Adjourn

Council Member Michael Searcy made a motion to adjourn at 6:01 p.m., duly seconded by Council Member Greg Jackson. The vote was unanimous.

ATTEST:


Cheryl Jimerson, City Secretary

APPROVED:


Gina Juarez, Mayor Pro tem