

**CITY OF TAMPA  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT  
COMMUNITY NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FY2006-2007  
December 5, 2006**

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**Block Club:** Area VI

**Neighborhoods:** Northeast MacFarland, Old West Tampa, and Ridgewood River.

**Boundaries:** Dr. Martin L. King Jr., Blvd. (north); I-275 (south), Florida Avenue (east); MacDill (west).

**Chairperson/  
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**Need and Recommendation 1. Encourage small business development in West Tampa.**

- a. Establish a three-year moratorium on City property tax increases within the boundaries described below for commercial properties.
- b. Allocate \$20,000.00 in CDBG funds for a three-year period to supplement the City of Tampa's payment of property tax increases for all commercial property within the boundaries described below.

The boundary for the recommended project is Enterprise Zone boundaries within the West Tampa Economic Development Plan Study Area: northern parcel line of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the north, the western parcel line of Himes Avenue on the west, the southern parcel line of Kennedy Boulevard on the south and the Hillsborough River on the east. Property taxes of all types are rising very rapidly in West Tampa, due to the early stages of the redevelopment process. Many of the existing small businesses within West Tampa's Enterprise Zones, which are often times owned by local residents, could be forced out, due to these tax increases.

During the early periods of redevelopment, small businesses within redeveloping areas are faced with triple-digit percentage increases in property taxes. Small businesses do not enjoy the benefit of the 3% cap allowed for residential property tax assessments.

The City of Tampa requested the West Tampa Economic Development Plan, and one of its major findings was the fragile nature of existing small businesses of all types of ownership in West Tampa. The process of redevelopment should not force out the very businesses that have stayed

**and attempted to make a business profitable within a redeveloping area. This is a direct economic incentive.**

**Response:** From Jeanette Fenton, Manager, Drew Park and West Tampa Redevelopment 274-8860. Concur with the recommendation to encourage small business development in West Tampa. However, the recommended actions of establishing a three year moratorium on city property tax increases for commercial properties within a specified boundary area and allocating Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to supplement payment of property tax increases for a three year period would need to be reviewed by the Legal Department to determine if this approach is legal before further evaluation of this recommendation.

**Response:** From Stuart Campbell, Urban Planner III, Housing and Community Development, 274-8228. Pursuant to the CDBG regulations, the payment of property taxes for a for-profit business is not an eligible CDBG activity.

**Need and Recommendation 2. Reduce cost of operating a business within enterprise zones in West Tampa.**

**The boundary for the recommended project are Enterprise Zone boundaries within the West Tampa Economic Development Plan Study Area: northern parcel line of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the north, the western parcel line of Himes Avenue on the west, the southern parcel line of Kennedy Boulevard on the south and the Hillsborough River on the east. The need is to encourage small business development within the West Tampa area. In addition to rapidly increasing property taxes, small businesses are also paying higher occupational license fees. It is counterproductive to charge businesses higher fees in redeveloping, poor areas. The recommendation is for \$20,000 per year in CDBG be used to supplement the city's payment of 50% of all occupational license fees for 3 years.**

**The City of Tampa is attempting to encourage the redevelopment of West Tampa in a manner that will not force out existing businesses. During the early stages of redevelopment, operating costs for businesses rise rapidly. As noted in the city-requested West Tampa Economic Development Plan, small businesses in West Tampa's (in particular those in Enterprise Zone) are in need of assistance, in order to maintain profitability. As a jump-start to redevelopment and as a transition period for small businesses during times of increasing costs, the City of Tampa could directly benefit small businesses by paying for 50% of the occupational license fees for all businesses in West Tampa Enterprise zones.**

**Response:** From Jeanette Fenton, Manager, Drew Park and West Tampa Redevelopment, 274-8860. I concur with the recommendation of reducing the cost of operating a business. However, the recommended actions of allocating of CDBG funding to supplement the city's payment of 50% of the occupational license fees for business in the West Tampa Enterprise Zone would need to be reviewed by the Legal Department to determine if this approach is legal before further evaluation of this recommendation.

**Response:** From Stuart Campbell, Urban Planner III, Housing and Community Development, 274-8228. Pursuant to the CDBG regulations, the payment of occupational license fees for a for-profit business is not an eligible CDBG activity.

### **Need and Recommendation 3. Expansion of boundaries of current façade program in West Tampa.**

**The boundaries for the current façade program in West Tampa should be expanded, in order to allow more businesses within the redevelopment area to apply and the amount of funds dedicated to the program increased in a proportionate manner.**

**It is suggested that the boundaries of the façade program in West Tampa be extended to the northern parcel line of Columbus Drive on the north, the eastern boundary of Himes Avenue on the west, Interstate 275 on the south and the eastern parcel line of Rome Avenue on the east.**

**In recognition of the increased boundaries, it is suggested that the amount of funds dedicated to the façade program in West Tampa be increased by 300%. The program should remain in effect for at least three years.**

**Response:** From Jeanette Fenton, Manager, Drew Park and West Tampa Redevelopment, 274-8860. I agree in general with expanding the boundaries, but do have concerns. If boundaries were to be expanded then the southern boundary should be extended past I-275, perhaps to Cypress Street. Another concern is the possibility that businesses in the expanded area could use up all the funds, even in a larger program budget, leaving the critical core corridors (Armenia, Howard, Main) without necessary improvements. A possible approach may be to reserve funding for the core corridors for the first 6 months of the program year, and then whatever monies not committed during that period could be used in the expanded West Tampa area. The time period could even be shortened to 3-4 months, the idea is to assure that there are funds available for the core, before releasing them to the larger area.

**Response:** From Stuart Campbell, Urban Planner III, Housing and Community Development, 274-8228. Based on the recommendation of the citizens and business owners in West Tampa, the city is currently reviewing the existing boundaries for the West Tampa Façade Improvement Program. The original intent in establishing the current boundaries was to invest the CDBG funds in a concentrated area to maximize the impact of the limited funds. Over the years, it has become apparent the West Tampa area will be better served by expanding the facade improvement boundaries to give more business owners access to this financial incentive.

The city is working diligently to spend CDBG West Tampa façade improvement funding in a timely manner. However, due to past limited participation of business in West Tampa, the city has a surplus of CDBG funds previously allocated for façade improvements. There are no current plans to increase the amount of CDBG funding allocated for the West Tampa Façade Improvement program boundaries to give more business owners access to this financial incentive.

**Update:** From Stuart Campbell, Urban Planner III, Housing and Community Development, 274-8228. The city is in the process of issuing a Request For Proposal (RFP) to solicit organizations to administer a façade improvement program in West Tampa. This proposed RFP is scheduled to be released after the first of the year. Depending on the responses, the façade improvement program may be expanded to include a larger area within the West Tampa area. Additionally, other areas of the city have expressed an interest in implementing a façade improvement program and, depending on the level of interest, that may reduce the amount of funds available for West Tampa.

**Need and Recommendation 4. Additional parking within the core of the West Tampa Economic Development Plan.**

**The specific request is for the area bounded by Tampa Bay Boulevard on the north, Habana Avenue on the west, Interstate 275 on the south and Rome Avenue on the east. It is recommended that \$20,000.00 in CDBG funds be used to leverage the entire amount of city general revenue funds needed to begin the purchase of property for public parking in West Tampa – parking that is concentrated in areas of mixed-use residential and commercial development. The City of Tampa should begin with the identification and purchase of a surface parking facility in the vicinity of Howard Avenue and Main Street. Expanding or new businesses, or new residential development within a reasoned distance of the parking facility would be allowed to pay a less-than-cost fee to claim spaces in the parking facility, in order to meet the requirements of the LDC.**

**The current land development code for the City of Tampa is based upon suburban parking criteria, as was noted in the West Tampa Economic Development Plan public input process. Given the setbacks and lot sizes within West Tampa’s commercial areas, it is oftentimes cost-prohibitive to redevelop commercial properties. The City of Tampa should provide assistance to businesses faced with this issue within a redeveloping area by providing either a funding mechanism where the parking costs can be amortized over time or simply provide the service as general policy.**

**Response:** From Jeanette Fenton, Manager, Drew Park and West Tampa Redevelopment, 274-8860. I concur with the recommendation. However, prior to allocating funding for acquisition of property for parking needs it is recommended that funding be used for a comprehensive study of parking needs, ideal locations for parking facilities, the type of facilities needed, and a long term financing plan, such as establishment of a parking utility or other funding mechanisms, for continued parking improvements. Exploring additional opportunities for mass transit should also be part of the overall strategy to address parking needs.

**Response:** From Gloria Moreda, Land Development Coordination (LDC) Manager, Business and Housing Development , 274-8406. The West Tampa Overlay currently allows consideration of waivers of parking for renovation/change of use of existing structures. LDC has committed to look at the overlay regulations for adjustments at the request of the neighborhood. The parking ratio for development in the West Tampa Core certainly can be analyzed at the same time.

**Update:** From Gloria Moreda, Land Development Coordination (LDC) Manager, Business and Housing Development , 274-8406. We are in the process of making recommendations to change Code requirements within the West Tampa Overlay District that will allow a more realistic ability for existing structures to be renovated and avoid the issues raised in complying with current parking standards. I hope to present these recommendations to City Council early 2007.

#### **Need and Recommendation 5. Traffic calming study for two roads in West Tampa.**

**The need is to improve the health, safety and welfare of citizens and the profitability of businesses within the Howard and Armenia corridor in West Tampa, by slowing traffic to the posted speed limits and reducing through heavy truck traffic. The recommendation is for \$20,000.00 in CDBG funds be used as seed money for the City of Tampa to fund a traffic calming study for the two roads. The beneficiaries of the study will be the low-income residents and small businesses in West Tampa. It is also recommended that CDBG funds be used in future years to assist in the funding of the traffic calming recommendations contained within the study – the improvements would likely be shared improvements by the county and the city. Howard and Armenia Avenues within West Tampa Economic Development Plan Study area are county roads.**

**The West Tampa Economic Development Plan, which was requested by the City of Tampa as a tool with which to guide the redevelopment of West Tampa, contains numerous public comments and data and analysis that support the need to calm traffic on Howard and Armenia Avenues in West Tampa. Traffic concerns on Howard and Armenia Avenues were mentioned most frequently as a public safety concern – over theft and burglary.**

**The redevelopment of West Tampa will not take place without a transportation system in West Tampa that supports West Tampa as an independent community, not a pass-through for south to north Tampa. After an analysis of Howard and Armenia Avenues, similar studies need to be funded for all of the arterial in West Tampa using CDBG funds to supplement city general revenue funds. Following the studies, the required improvements need to be made.**

**Response:** From Jeanette Fenton, Manager, Drew Park and West Tampa Redevelopment, 274-8860. I concur with the recommendation, but recommend that before embarking on a traffic calming study, transportation officials from Hillsborough County and the City of Tampa should jointly review the problems and make recommendations for improvements that can be made or the need for further study. Efforts are currently underway for the city and county to jointly review the problem.

**Response:** From William Porth, Traffic Studies Technician, Transportation Planning, Department of Public Works, 274-8333. Since both N. Howard Avenue and N. Armenia Avenue between W. Main Street and W. Columbus Drive were last studied over a year ago, and our findings did not indicate the presence of a speeding problem, new speed studies have been requested for these roads. The estimated time of completion is approximately 12 – 16 weeks.

However, N. Howard Avenue and N. Armenia Avenue do not qualify for City of Tampa traffic calming measures, because they are classified as Arterials, and fall under the jurisdiction of Hillsborough County through an Interlocal Agreement for Maintenance with the city. We must therefore rely on traffic enforcement as provided by the Tampa Police Department (TPD) whom you may contact at 231-6130 directly with your circumstances.

**Update:** From William Porth, Traffic Studies Technician, Transportation Planning, Department of Public Works, 274-8333. On Tuesday, March 21, 2006, 24-hour speed and volume studies were conducted on North Armenia Avenue between West Main Street and West Columbus Drive. The posted speed limit for this section of roadway is 40 mph. The resulting 85% percentile speed as determined by the study was 42 mph. Additionally, the 24-hour volume count indicated a total volume of 11,778 vehicles traveled south bound. Based on these results, North Armenia Avenue between West Main Street and West Columbus Drive does not appear to be experiencing a speeding problem.

On Tuesday, March 21, 2006, 24-hour speed and volume studies were conducted on North Howard Avenue between West Main Street and West Columbus Drive. The posted speed limit for this section of roadway is 30 mph. The resulting 85% percentile speed as determined by the study was 39 mph. Additionally, the 24-hour volume count indicated a total volume of 11,993 vehicles traveled north bound. Based on these results, North Howard Avenue between West Main Street and West Columbus Drive does not appear to be experiencing a speeding problem.

**Need and Recommendation 6. Full-time person from the small business information center to operate out of the West Tampa CDC offices.**

**The City of Tampa and Hillsborough County jointly fund the Small Business Information Center that currently provides part-time technical assistance to small businesses in West Tampa and in the form of seminars. The need and recommendation is for CDBG funds (\$50,000.00) to be allocated to fund a full-time person. The precise location of the WTCDC offices is 1803 N. Howard Avenue.**

**It was noted in the West Tampa Economic Development Plan that many of the small businesses within the Study area (as defined above under Need #1) are in need of technical or financial assistance. In that these businesses operate within a low-income neighborhood, their profits are usually corresponding low. A full-time person working out of the CDC office on Howard Avenue would allow for the establishment of trust over a period of time. Successful small business technical assistance is difficult on a part-time or irregular basis. It needs to take place over a period of years, often times with the same business person as their business moves through the stages of business development.**

**Response:** From Stuart Campbell, Urban Planner III, Housing and Community Development, 274-8228. In last year's, Action Plan, the city provided CDBG funding for Hillsborough County Small Business Technical Assistance program. This program provides technical assistance to for-profit business located in income qualified areas within the City of Tampa. West Tampa is a qualified area

and businesses in the area have received technical assistance. City staff will contact the organizations providing small business technical assistance and discuss the communities' desire to have an office located within West Tampa.

**Update:** From Stuart Campbell, Urban Planner III, Housing and Community Development, 274-8228. City staff has contacted two (2) organizations that are currently providing technical assistance, CDC of Tampa and Hillsborough County Small Business Technical Assistance. Although neither organization has an office located in West Tampa, both groups indicated they are currently providing business technical assistance in the West Tampa area.

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