



“What do You Think” Pearl District?

April 10, 2007

On April 10, [Theron Warlick](#) met with the Pearl District. The Pearl District is a neighborhood group located east of downtown comprised of residents, property owners, and other interested persons. The boundaries of the Pearl District are I-244 to the north, Utica Avenue to the east, 11th Street to the South, and the Inner Dispersal Loop to the west. Here’s what they had to say:

What does Tulsa most need to achieve?

1. Not just improve, but Reinvent
 - a. Tulsa shouldn’t be thinking about Wichita and Des Moines. They should be thinking about Hong Kong, London, Paris, etc.
2. Balanced Approach for City Investments
 - a. Can’t just concentrate resources on growth areas, e.g., south Tulsa.
 - b. The whole City needs to be a growth area. A coordinated effort should be made to restore, re-grow, reinvent, the City as a whole (north, east, west, downtown, too).
 - c. The City needs policy for measuring the “Return on Investment”. Get beyond “fixing things” and start evaluating investments that can make our city great.
3. Diversity
 - a. Tulsa is growing as a series of isolated pockets. Too many boundaries: race, income, housing, age, geography.
4. Sustainability
 - a. Livability. Walkability. Healthier.
 - b. Responsible use of energy.
 - c. Rebalance – “live lightly” vs. cowboy/manifest destiny.

- d. Financial sensibility. More on “Return on Investment”:
Evaluate infrastructure investments. Make sure that we can afford to build, manage, and maintain.
 - e. Since the Fifties, we’ve been *moving backwards*. Getting less efficient, not more. Continues today.
 - f. Density. City (utilities, etc.) should favor projects that make more efficient use of infrastructure. “If we can put a man on the moon, we can figure out how to build a more compact city.”
5. Community Schools – Schools as multi-use facilities serving surrounding neighborhoods.
- a. Neighborhood gathering points/ places to meet and share.
 - b. Not just for students, but families and friends.
 - c. City/County Library system could co-locate, too. Efficient. Accessible.
6. Transportation should include *all* forms of mobility. Integrated approach.
- a. Mass transit.
 - b. Sidewalks.
7. Time for a “Lifestyle Change”. What we have been doing for the last fifty years may not work that well for the next fifty years.

What are Tulsa's most valuable or important assets?

8. The River
- a. Particular emphasis on improving the “downtown” portions.
 - b. Pedestrian/bike access is improving, but not the activity center it could be.
 - c. Festival Sites.
9. Pleasant surprise for visitors. We don’t capitalize on these like we should:
- a. More cosmopolitan than people expect.
 - b. World Famous Art Deco architecture.
 - c. Good people. Nice people.
 - d. Water. Lakes, River
 - e. Diverse Topography. Hills. Green Country.
10. Arts/Culture “bigger” than a city our size. Unexpected.

- a. This is something that oil era delivered
 - b. It's reaching some of the younger generation, but we are still losing the fight.
11. Parks system. But needs attention.

What are Tulsa's most critical issues, problems, or concerns?

12. Flood Control for Elm Creek (the basin within the Pearl District) and City.
- a. No one wants to build in a floodplain.
 - b. Elm Creek remains a major problem.
13. City Management - Development
- a. Tulsa is the "big giant". Slow. Inflexible. Drives folks off.
 - b. Smaller cities have better process. More inviting.
14. We need incentives for Urban Reinvestment.
- a. Tear down barriers.
 - b. Not just "fast track", but "lightening track". Needs to be considered "Rapid". We're considered slow in most circles.
 - c. Free inspections, permits?
15. Tulsa is running OUT of developable land.
- a. Redevelop/reinvent some areas.
 - b. Denser.
 - c. Mass transit is integral part. Improvements to buses. Rail.
16. Inadequate/inaccessible bicycle and pedestrian ways.
- a. You shouldn't have to drive to get "outdoors".
17. Security. Perception does not match reality. Pearl is no worse than any other part of town, but that's not what others think.
- a. More visible police force - Community policing, foot/bike patrols,
 - i. It *would* make sense if we built at higher densities. Lots of things would.
 - b. Neighborhood sub stations. Only three stations in Tulsa – not establishing presence.
 - c. Pedestrian lighting.
18. We need mixed-income neighborhoods.

- a. Zoning prevents housing diversity, e.g., “granny flats” in rear yard.
19. We need more Home Ownership. Creates stability in neighborhoods.
- a. Incentives/abatements to foster home ownership in older areas.
 - b. Stringent standards for absentee owners. Rental property cannot be allowed to “drag down” an area.
20. For older areas, we need parking strategies *up front*. Be proactive.
- a. On-Street.
 - b. Shared Parking.
 - c. Be thinking ahead to structured parking.
21. Revamp tax structure.
- a. Reliance on sales tax too volatile. Limits our vision.
22. Lack of consistency in leadership.
- a. Annexation as an example: we don’t aggressively pursue some (Town West), we reject others (north of Tulsa), and we are too aggressive (generating tension) on others (Fairgrounds).
Where’s the consistency? Predictability, etc.?
23. Parts of our built environment are wearing out
- a. We’re a new city, but some of the housing and infrastructure is showing signs of age.
 - b. We need to figure out revive areas without gentrification.
 - c. We need to hold onto the “good stuff”, and reinvent other things.