

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, May 5, 2025, to discuss the Economic Development: Retention & Expansion / Solid Waste Rate Increase

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 7:33 p.m. The meeting was held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 25 Crescent Road, and virtually via Zoom.

PRESENT WERE:

Councilmembers Amy E. Knesel, Danielle P. McKinney, Jenni A. Pompi, Silke I. Pope, Rodney M. Roberts, Kristen L.K. Weaver, and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

STAFF PRESENT WERE:

Josué Salmerón, City Manager; Timothy George, Assistant City Manager; John Mason, Economic Development Manager; Luisa Robles, Sustainability Coordinator; Jamarie Spencer, Production Assistant; and Bonita Anderson, City Clerk.

OTHERS PRESENT WERE: Olivia Metz, Metz Group; members of the Greenbelt Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability, and various residents.

Economic Development Overview

Mayor Jordan led the discussion on the City's economic development efforts. Council discussed current economic challenges, opportunities for growth, and the need for a strategic framework to guide economic development over the next five years, particularly in light of ongoing business recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council received a presentation supported by a 90-page economic development report containing detailed data and analysis. The report will serve as the foundation for future policy decisions, implementation strategies, and funding considerations. Council members will continue to review the report and provide feedback.

Economic Base Assessment and Peer City Analysis

Olivia Metz of the Metz Group presented findings from the economic base assessment, which analyzed Greenbelt's business composition, employment trends, commuting patterns, workforce availability, and real estate market conditions. The presentation highlighted Greenbelt's service-based economy and identified a mismatch between resident skill sets and available job types.

A peer cities comparison analysis was also reviewed. Preliminary findings emphasized the importance of business climate feedback and economic diversification. Emerging industry opportunities were identified, including healthcare, bioscience, early-stage research and development, space life sciences, and small-scale bioprocessing, building on Greenbelt's existing ecosystem.

Real Estate Market and Business Climate

Council discussed the real estate market assessment, noting uneven growth across the city. While some areas have experienced reinvestment and revitalization, others continue to lag. Housing development trends were reviewed, with Council noting that Greenbelt has added new housing at a slower pace than peer jurisdictions.

Challenges related to land constraints and the need for managed growth were acknowledged. Business climate feedback identified strengths such as quality of life and amenities, as well as weaknesses including lengthy development processes and resistance to change. Opportunities for redevelopment and regional collaboration were discussed, with Council emphasizing the importance of supporting growth while preserving Greenbelt's cultural identity.

Economic Development Strategy Framework

Council reviewed the proposed economic development strategy, organized into three categories:

- **Revitalization Target Areas:** Roosevelt Center and the Greenbelt Road corridor, with a focus on advocacy, placemaking, and reinvestment.
- **Growth Target Area:** The Medical Mile, leveraging the concentration of healthcare and medical-related businesses.
- **Opportunity Areas:** Potential redevelopment of the Armory site and Fire Station site through public-private partnerships.

Council discussed the need to communicate expectations for reinvestment to property owners, particularly regarding vacant or underutilized properties. A deeper strategic discussion is planned for a future work session.

Project Implementation and Funding

Council discussed the importance of an implementation and funding plan that incorporates stakeholder feedback. Members emphasized prioritizing resources, establishing timelines, and scheduling a future consensus-building work session. Council expressed interest in further progress updates and continued work in June.

Solid Waste Collection Fees and Services

Council discussed the City's solid waste collection system and the need to adjust fees that have remained unchanged for approximately nine years. The goal is to ensure long-term financial sustainability while encouraging waste reduction, recycling, and composting.

Council reviewed the concept of a **pay-as-you-throw (PAYT)** model, a unit-based pricing strategy used by communities nationwide to reduce waste. Considerations included climate resilience, administrative feasibility, and impacts on residents.

Waste Reduction Strategies and Pricing Models

Council discussed national waste management challenges and case studies from other jurisdictions that have implemented PAYT systems, resulting in significant waste reduction. Concerns were raised regarding recycling contamination rates, fairness, and potential impacts on different household types.

Council explored the feasibility of a hybrid system that would balance simplicity, equity, and incentives for reducing waste through reuse, recycling, and composting.

Waste Management Model Presentation

The Green Team presented a proposed waste management model featuring:

- A base annual fee ranging from \$220–\$240
- An opt-out maximum fee of approximately \$410
- A bag-based pricing system with costs varying by bag size

The model is projected to break even or result in a modest surplus or deficit depending on participation rates, which are estimated at 50–60 percent in the first year. The model is intended to encourage recycling and composting.

New Trash Bag Program Implementation

Council discussed the operational aspects of implementing a new city-provided trash bag program, including partnerships with local retailers, bag tracking, and litter reduction strategies. The goal is to achieve cost recovery within two years.

Concerns included potential increases in recycling contamination and litter. Opt-out provisions, additional recycling bins, and bin lids were discussed as mitigation measures.

Curbside Composting Program

Council discussed the continuation of the curbside composting program currently funded by a USDA grant expiring in August. Options discussed included subsidizing the program, integrating composting into a new waste fee structure, and exploring scholarships or affordability options.

Council expressed interest in modeling costs and benefits for residents and the City, as well as negotiating with Compost Crew regarding future service arrangements.

Solid Waste Program Considerations

Council reviewed three primary issues: solid waste fee recommendations, implementation of a PAYT program, and continuation of composting services post-grant. Concerns included

administrative costs, equity, timing, and the feasibility of separating payments for certain housing types, including GHI.

Informational items were discussed.

The meeting ended at 10:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Bonita Anderson
City Clerk