

## **Overview**

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the City of China Grove held a listening session with community members to discuss the future of economic development and growth of the community. UTSA staff attended to facilitate the discussion and share insights into best practices and strategies from comparable communities.

The following insights summarize the feedback gathered from the community:

## **Zoning/Land Use**

China Grove has successfully preserved large property lots, which community members value for the quality of life it provides compared to denser neighboring communities. However, they also recognize that this requirement can limit growth opportunities.

China Grove's unique layout and proximity to Highway 87/Rigsby Avenue make it particularly susceptible to traffic and development challenges along this key route.

While neighboring communities have restored older buildings to attract new businesses, China Grove faces challenges in doing so due to outdated building stock and underdeveloped water and sewer infrastructure.

### *Considerations:*

Consider modifying minimum lot sizes in future zoning discussions. This will require further input from residents and a weighing of the pros and cons for future growth, particularly when it comes to tax base and school concerns. The Texas General Land Office also provides funding for expert zoning and planning services which can be investigated.

Pursue funding for infrastructure to modernize sewer and water infrastructure to attract and retain businesses. There are currently funding mechanisms available through the Texas Water Development Board. Water is likely to be a major topic during the 2025 State Legislative session and more programs may come as a result. This should be monitored over the next few months.

Previous work done on communication with Bexar County Commissioners regarding roadwork should also be continued. Continue to build relationships with TxDOT for input and guidance on development plans for major roads in the area.

## **Business Community**

Community members expressed interest in the following types of businesses, noting that while they wish to spend local, most of their spending in these categories currently goes to neighboring communities.

- Hardware store
- Pharmacy
- Urgent Care (specifically one that accepts Medicare)
- Coffee Shops, particularly drive-thru options
- A larger grocery store

- Retailers, including large national chains
- More variety in restaurant choices

To pursue this, city staff should prepare a comprehensive business attraction strategy to include community key points and benefits, as well as speak with interested parties to recruit them to relocate. UTSA staff can assist with data collection and comparables for marketing materials. These materials can be used for outreach efforts and by assigned City representatives to proactively recruit businesses to the area.

Existing businesses should also be supported to increase jobs. Continue discussion with the existing business community to determine what is needed to grow, as well as understand their future growth plans. Additionally, find prospective entrepreneurs in the City who are likely to want to begin a business but have not taken the leap yet.

A “buy local” campaign can be easily started from gathering a list of businesses in the community and brief messaging campaign, potentially including signage, web postings, and similar services.

## **Community Development**

Residents expressed interest in adding community amenities, such as a local park with small sports facilities. However, some noted the challenges of finding available space and the presence of nearby outdoor amenities at local churches already being utilized by residents.

Next steps:

Evaluate available land for public use and explore grant opportunities through federal, state, and nonprofit funding sources to develop these resources. Consult community for most desired amenities if potential land and capacity is located.

## **Conclusion**

The first community session provided a starting point for development plans over the near future. Regular economic development updates, such as quarterly reports at City Council sessions, can help build community engagement and support.

The suggested first steps include launching a 'buy local' campaign, developing a one-page business recruitment document to promote China Grove, and exploring funding opportunities through the Texas Water Development Board for infrastructure upgrades.

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