

## Placemaking Using “Special” Districts, e.g., Fort Worth.

### Theory of Private-Public Placemaking.

Individual development projects prosper when located in an area with a mix of other developments that attract people. A mix of private and institutional uses that comprehensively result in mixed-use, people-oriented places will include: restaurants, hotels, apartments, entertainment and sporting venues and cultural venues; supplemented by placemaking public parks and plazas, complete streets and civic buildings.

The underlying theory is that public vision-consistent infrastructure and regulations can facilitate and encourage private investments that are community vision-driven. Special districts and programs help make this happen. In big cities, special districts focus on small places that relate to residential and shopping neighborhoods. Private development participation in public planning efforts can improve the results.

### Use of “Special Districts” to Promote Private-Public Placemaking.

The City of Fort Worth subscribes to this approach. Their approach is manifested through urban street, parks and civic building programs in tandem with the establishment of a myriad of special districts and area development programs that focus on creating places within the City. The focus builds on a public-private idea that City government through infrastructure investments and purposeful regulations can encourage and enable private investments that create places and spaces that build a vision-consistent community.

### Types of “Small Areas” and “Special Districts” in Fort Worth.

1. Neighborhood Improvement Strategy Target Areas
2. Neighborhood Empowerment Zones
3. Public Improvement Districts (PIDs)
4. Tax Increment Finance Districts
5. Tax Abatement Program
6. Enterprise Zones
7. Opportunity Zones
8. Urban Villages
9. Brownfields
10. Preservation and Urban Design Districts
11. Historic Preservation
12. Urban Design Districts
13. Area Plans

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## Overview of “Small Areas” and “Special Districts” in Fort Worth.

The City of Fort Worth has many programs designed to promote community redevelopment in conjunction with private sector driven economic development. The programs use small area planning and development ideas to address neighborhoods and villages on a small scale within a large city. The programs are fully described on the City’s website at two locations:

<https://www.fortworthtexas.gov/departments/development-services>

<https://www.fortworthtexas.gov/business>

### 1. Fort Worth Neighborhoods w/Strategies.

Neighborhood Improvement Strategy is a pilot program with six areas aimed at using data about neighborhoods to make communities more vital and raise the quality of life.

### 2. Neighborhood Empowerment Zones (NEZ).

Promote housing, economic development and quality services in Fort Worth central city. Now there are more reasons than ever to build in Fort Worth’s central city, thanks to an incentives package recently approved by the city council for any NEZs designated in the city. Municipal property tax abatements, fee waivers and release of city liens are available to property owners who build or rehabilitate property within a NEZ. These incentives, offered to six areas in the City, are designed to promote affordable housing, economic development and expanded services.

### 3. Public Improvement Districts.

**Public Improvement Districts (PIDs)** are defined geographical areas established to provide specific types of improvements or maintenance, which are financed by assessments against the property owners within the area. PIDs provide the city with a development tool that allocates costs according to the benefits received. A PID can provide funding for supplemental services and improvements that meet the needs of the community, that could not otherwise be constructed or provided.

Chapter 372 of the Texas Local Government Code authorizes the creation of PIDs by cities. The owners of the properties in the defined PID area can request the City to form a PID through a petition, which may include the establishment of an Advisory Body. Once an Advisory Body is established, the property owners within the PID have control over the types of improvements, level of maintenance, and amount of assessments to be levied against the property owners.

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### 4. Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs).

Tax increment financing is a tool authorized by Chapter 311 of the Texas Tax Code by which local governments can publicly finance needed structural improvements and enhanced infrastructure within a defined area called a reinvestment zone. For more information about this tool, view the City of Fort Worth's adopted [TIF Policy \(PDF, 47KB\)](#).

### 5. Tax Abatement Program, Purpose of incentive.

Based on [Chapter 312](#) of the Texas Local Government Code, the City of Fort Worth may award development projects a Tax Abatement based on the value that the development adds to the property. However, there are certain guidelines that developers must meet in order to be eligible for either a Tax Abatement or a [Chapter 380 grant](#).

### 6. Enterprise Zone Program.

Enterprise Zones offer local and state tax benefits for new and expanding businesses in economically distressed areas. Benefits include State Sales and Use Tax refunds and Franchise Tax reductions or credits. Approved projects in Enterprise Zones must commit to create or retain permanent jobs, make capital investment in the zone, fill at least 25 percent of its new jobs with individuals who are economically disadvantaged or residents within the zone, and maintain an agreed upon number of jobs for at least three years.

### 7. Opportunity Zones, Purpose of incentive.

The Opportunity Zones program is a federal tax benefit that encourages private investment in certain state-designated zones. Benefits to an investor's federal income tax is earned through reinvestment of capital gains into qualified projects. The overall aim of the program is to draw investment to otherwise overlooked opportunities in generally low-income census tracts. The City of Fort Worth can further support or enhance that investment in a variety of important ways.

### 8. Urban Villages.

The City website has designated 16 designated Urban Villages. Urban Villages are small geographic areas (usually one square mile) zoned for dense, multiple-use development that is mass-transit and pedestrian-friendly. Parks, business, entertainment, homes and stores – all within walking distance of each other in an area with a consistent look and feel that emphasizes the culture and heritage of those who call it home. A city within a city.

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The City of Fort Worth is working with developers, business groups and neighborhood associations to revitalize older commercial districts using capital improvements, mixed-use zoning and economic incentives to help urban villages throughout the Central City. For more information, call **817-392-7621**.

### 9. Current Brownfields Projects.

The City is working three brownfields sites: Lucky Lady Oil Corporation site, the UCC-Bethlehem Project and Crossroads Art Gallery [in Progress].

### 10. Preservation & Urban Design Districts.

Fort Worth's Preservation & Design division provides leadership for the physical design of the city. The Preservation & Design division offers guidance to property owners and developers throughout the development process to ensure the logical organization of our future city via the creation of vibrant public spaces that cultivate public life. The Preservation & Design team oversees the City's Preservation Program, Design Districts, and Form-Based Code districts with the shared goal of rehabilitating and creating high-quality buildings that contribute to a dynamic public realm. This division also manages the Historic & Cultural Landmarks Commission, the Urban Design Commission, and the Downtown Design Review Board.

### 11. Historic Preservation.

Through historic preservation, we look at history in different ways, ask different questions of the past, and learn new things about our history and ourselves.

Local Historic Districts Design guidelines are regulations specific to a historic district, used in conjunction with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* to guide preservation, rehabilitation, conservation, and the revitalization of historic districts. They are created and approved by the property owners of the historic district and then adopted by the City Council for use by the Historic & Cultural Landmarks Commission to review applications for a certificate of appropriateness. Once adopted, amendments may be approved only with the majority vote of the historic district and the City Council. Guidelines typically address new construction and alterations to the materials and design of existing structures. In the absence of approved guidelines for a district, the [Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties](#) are used.

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### 12. Urban Design Districts and Overlays.

Throughout the City of Fort Worth, there are various design districts in which design is regulated through standards and guidelines. Urban Design districts play a crucial role in the economic and physical revitalization of private and public spaces throughout Fort Worth.

### 13. Area Plans.

The City has [as of early 2022] six communities designated to participate in economic development strategic planning. This City’s webpage provides an overview of area planning projects underway in Fort Worth. Private developments consistent with the City’s area plans should receive favorable reviews. The areas are: Northside Economic Development Strategy, Texas Motor Speedway Area Master Plan, Cavile Place Neighborhood Transformation Plan, Lake Arlington Master Plan, Lake Worth Vision Plan (LWVP) and Downtown Urban Design District.

**From CT.org...**At the end of the day, private developers can find a place within the City’s wide-ranging system of infrastructure and regulatory programs that enables profitable development consistent with the City’s vision for the community’s development. A win-win works for everyone.