



10/15/18

Blue Ribbon Commission on Housing Issues Report

Housing, infrastructure and roads – they are the top priorities of any community, but even more so in a town growing very rapidly.

Carlsbad is at the epicenter of an oil boom. Additionally, and this is extremely important, there is strong evidence to indicate that the boom and bust cycle is going to be quite a bit different than what it has been – that Carlsbad will continue to grow steadily for many years. There are also upcoming job creators such as WIPP's new shaft and the proposed Holtec interim storage facility.

We fully support growth and opportunity, but with these come many challenges. There are only a handful of houses on the market in Carlsbad right now. While more houses and apartments are planned, there is much more work that needs to be done, both on the part of the private developers, and on the part of the City, who bears the responsibility of planning and ensuring that proper infrastructure is in place.

Many large companies are planning additional growth in the Carlsbad area. Some of these new employees will want housing, while others will live in man camps and RV Parks. We also need more houses and apartments, in a variety of price ranges, for teachers, nurses, restaurant and retail employees and many others. But how many? In what price range? And where?

Back in May, we formed a Blue Ribbon Commission to examine these issues. The committee has worked extremely hard and accomplished a great deal. Oran Means chairs the committee and Eddie Rodriguez is the co-chair. Members are Robert Baldrige (Intrepid Potash), Brett Beckett (Guaranty Title), Missi Currier (NWP), Danny Cross (Carlsbad Department of Development), Al Davis (Chevron), Wanda Durham (Chamber Retirement Committee), Janell Whitlock (Chamber Retirement Committee), Dr. Gregory Rodriguez (Carlsbad Municipal Schools) and John Waters (Carlsbad Department of Development), as well as City of Carlsbad employees Mike Hernandez, John Lowe, Jeff Patterson and Kyle Marksteiner.

Our commission has met and obtained feedback from builders and developers, academic institutions, oil companies and other industry leaders. We compiled lists of current and expected housing. Our City administration and planning team was then instructed to compile all available data and feedback. At this point, here are some key elements to our path forward:

- We are updating the City of Carlsbad Comprehensive Plan, which was last updated in 2013. We rely on these plans to ensure that the City grows in a responsible and organized manner. They guide development, identify areas for future development and allow us to plan infrastructure. A professional planning agency called Consensus Planning will help us update this plan.

- These plans take a while to put together, and Carlsbad needs help immediately. Working with Consensus Planning, we have also taken a detailed look at the area around Old Cavern Highway, where so much growth is taking place. We are looking at implementing a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan in the area around Old Cavern, which will could allow us to more rapidly handle infrastructure needs in that area through associated grants and partnerships.
- We are also working with Stantec Consulting Services to develop a proposal on capital planning. Stantec will make recommendations on issues related to capital infrastructure fees and the financing side of the equation.
- We are updating our 40 year water plan. This will ensure that the City's water rights and estimated future needs are covered.
- We have great city employees, but there are always ways to make processes run more efficiently. After compiling input from people who build houses and apartment complexes, we have formed an implementation team of city administrators and planners to make sure that everyone is on the same page when it comes to progress and developments. If a new development is proposed, we want to make sure everything is being done quickly and correctly to help the process move forward. We are already seeing positive results.
- We still have unanswered questions about what the future holds. To help us prepare for five years from now, we have asked New Mexico State University's Arrowhead Center to conduct an economic outlook study examining our projected future population, housing needs and employment rate. This study should be completed within a few months and will tie in with our comprehensive plan.

We want to again thank the members of the Blue Ribbon Commission, as well as all of our guests, for their candor and insight over the past few months. This is not a simple issue, but we are excited to be moving in the right direction. This period is one of the most important phases in Carlsbad's history, and it is an honor to be a part of the team.