

ON THE SCENE

Mark Collette



Now's The Time To Speak

If there's anything you love or hate about Tyler, there has never been a better time to say so.

In the coming months, the city government will hold public hearings over Tyler 21, the most detailed and important policy document in the history of the city. If you live in Tyler or nearby, it will affect you.

As they apply the finishing touches to hundreds of pages, officials will also work on a complete overhaul of planning and zoning ordinances, which affect almost everything that happens in the city.

The sky is the limit. In dozens of the meetings, hearings, discussions and debates about Tyler 21, I have yet to hear anyone say that any topic is off-limits, any concern too small or too large, to be considered in this sweeping plan that will guide leaders for decades.

If you don't speak up now, you could be forgotten. Case in point: At a Tyler 21 meeting this week, a cycling enthusiast examining a land-use map noticed there was no trail connecting two future park locations. The planning consultant acknowledged the oversight and immediately drew lines where the connections should have been noted.

If you don't look at the plan before the City Council votes on it, you will miss your chance to catch an oversight that's important to you or your children.

The city is spending more than half a million dollars. The money will have gone to waste if future officials don't embrace the plan. That means the May election and city elections for years to come should weigh heavily on every person who can vote.

Downtown is more than a jail and a courthouse. South Tyler is more than a busy commercial strip. Parks are more than swaths of open space. Just how much more is up to you. Government can only do so much if its people don't hold it accountable and motivate it.

Tyler 21 represents the best hope yet for citizen-driven revitalization of the city's north side. I've sat at meetings where citizens who feel neglected, who could have simply complained about the status quo, instead chose to channel the energy of their frustrations into a storm of ideas.

If you have anything to say about the city of Tyler and its future, here's what you can do:

- Watch for notices about public hearings and other meetings associated with Tyler 21 and changes to planning and zoning ordinances. You'll see announcements in the Tyler Paper and also on Tyler21.com. Watch the agenda page of city's web site, www.cityoftyler.org, for announcements. Read the plan drafts and submit feedback.

- Call your City Council representative or City Manager Bob Turner at 903-531-1250. Write letters to them at P.O. Box 2039, Tyler, 75710, or send an e-mail through the city's Web site. Ask them to respond.

- When anything related to Tyler 21 appears on a City Council agenda, sign up ahead of time to speak at the meeting. You'll be able to talk face-to-face with the entire City Council.

- If you want to be heard on issues involving land use, planning or anything that is or isn't regulated by city codes, call the planning department at 903-531-1175 and ask how you can be heard. Write a letter or e-mail to Planning Director Barbara Holly using the same address above.

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