Town of Orange Park
Economic & Community Development Committee
Meeting
Thursday, June 4, 2026
4:30 PM
Agenda

1. Call to Order/ Verification of Quorum

2. Approval of the Minutes
   a. Approval of Minutes

3. Chair Comments

4. Discussion on Vacant Building Ordinance (Staff Update)

5. Discussion on Procurement Policies for Local Bidder Preference (Staff Update)

6. Discussion on Zoning Flexibility to Facilitate Business Operations

7. Old Business
   a. ECDC Project Tracking Update (Staff)
   b. Sign Grant Update (Staff)

8. Public Comments

9. Information
   a. The next regular meeting of the Economic and Community Development Committee is July 2, 2026 at 4:30 p.m.

10. Adjournment

TOWN OF ORANGE PARK
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2026
4:30 PM

The Town of Orange Park Economic and Community Development Committee meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm by Councilman Doug Benefield, Chairman of the Economic and Community Development Committee. The following Committee members were present: Councilman Ken Vogel and Ms. Sandra DiGiovanni. Ms. Linda Knapp was absent. Also in attendance were Economic and Community Development Director Stephen Smith and Planning and Permitting Coordinator Maddie White.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE FEBRUARY 5, 2026 REGULAR MEETING

Ms. DiGiovanni moved to approved the minutes and Councilman Vogel seconded, which passed 3-0.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Councilman Benefield had no comments at this time.

DISCUSSION ON VACANT BUILDING ORDINANCE

Mr. Smith provided an update on the vacant commercial building ordinance, referencing prior discussion from the February 5th meeting. He explained that the current ordinance primarily focuses on property maintenance and security, such as requiring vacant building permits to prevent issues like vandalism and unauthorized entry. Moving forward, staff is exploring potential revisions to incorporate economic development strategies, including opportunities for redevelopment and business attraction. Mr. Smith noted that coordination with Code Compliance is ongoing, with a meeting scheduled with Mr. Smith and the Town Manager to further evaluate options.

The committee discussed whether the Town should maintain an inventory of vacant commercial buildings to assist with economic development efforts. Mr. Smith indicated that no formal inventory currently exists and explained that identifying vacant properties can be challenging, particularly when buildings are well-maintained. While maintaining such a list could be beneficial, staff noted that it would be time-intensive and may provide limited return, as most prospective tenants typically work through commercial real estate brokers.

The committee suggested the possibility of maintaining a more limited or targeted list, such as high-profile properties along the major corridors. Staff acknowledged that some informal tracking of key properties already occurs and noted that outreach is sometimes conducted to potential users when suitable opportunities arise. The discussion also

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touched on challenges associated with certain properties, including older or historically significant buildings, as well as site constraints that may limit redevelopment potential.

DICUSSION ON PROCUREMENT POLICIES FOR LOCAL BIDDER PREFERENCE

Councilman Benefield led the discussion on the potential for implementing a local bidder preference within the Town's procurement policies. Councilman Vogel referenced similar programs in Clay County, where local businesses may receive a pricing advantage (e.g., a percentage-based preference) during bid evaluation. There was general support for exploring a policy that incentivizes local participation, with Ms. DiGiovanni mentioning the flexibility in how "local" is defined (e.g., Town of Orange Park vs. Clay County, or tiered preferences). Councilman Vogel noted that adopting an existing model from another jurisdiction could streamline implementation.

Discussion also acknowledged the economic trade-offs, including whether awarding bids to slightly higher local bidders would result in greater overall community benefit through local spending, employment, and reinvestment.

DISCUSSION ON ZONING FLEXIBILITY TO FACILITATE BUSINESS OPERATIONS

The committee emphasized the importance of flexibility in zoning and land development regulations to better support small businesses and economic growth. Mr. Smith explained that the Town's current zoning framework separates residential and commercial uses and does not allow for true mixed-use development (e.g., residential units above businesses). Members discussed how this limitation may restrict opportunities for redevelopment, particularly in a largely built-out community like Orange Park.

There was strong interest in exploring mixed-use districts, especially along corridors such as Kingsley Avenue and Park Avenue. Members noted that mixed-use development aligns with current economic trends and could support small-scale, low-impact businesses. Potential barriers were also discussed, with Ms. DiGiovanni noting the parking requirements and some businesses may only need a few parking spaces, and community concerns about density. Mr. Smith indicated that upcoming Town Square development standards may provide an opportunity to introduce or expand mixed-use concepts.

OLD BUSINESS

The Committee discussed ongoing and potential initiatives, including the sign grant program currently under legal review and the addition of mixed-use development to the project tracking list. Councilman Vogel emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum beyond initial efforts and prioritizing visible, tangible projects that demonstrate progress and community investment.

The Committee also explored low-cost strategies to enhance community branding and support local businesses. Discussion included the concept of welcome baskets for new businesses, potentially incorporating contributions from local organizations and community groups. Members noted this approach could foster partnerships and increase engagement while minimizing costs to the Town.

Additional ideas Councilman Vogel noted was to include temporary art displays in vacant storefronts, collaboration with schools and community organizations, and small-scale incentive programs. Overall, the discussion focused on improving aesthetics, strengthening community identity, and reinforcing the Town's commitment to economic development.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments at this time.

INFORMATION

The next regular meeting of the Economic and Community Development committee is May 7, 2026 at 4:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilman Benefield adjourned the meeting at 5:18 p.m.