



City of Tulsa

BEAUTIFICATION TASK FORCE

Submitted: November 29, 2012 at a meeting of the City Council with Mayor Dewey Bartlett Jr.

Rationale

Beautify Tulsa – Statement:

The Mayor and the Council share a belief that Tulsa should be “America’s Most Beautiful City.” From increasing public art, to improving code enforcement, Tulsa has a litany of opportunities to enhance our beautiful city. Ultimately, it was decided to form a Task Force for the purpose of making recommendations and plans toward this goal.

Beautify Tulsa – Goals and desirable outcomes

General Description:

By April 1, 2012, create (by Council resolution) a Tulsa Beautification Task Force to draft steps that will once again make Tulsa “America’s Most Beautiful City.” The Task Force is to deliver actionable steps to the Council and the Mayor by December 1, 2012.

The Task Force will look into all means necessary to restore Tulsa to its once prominent place as “America’s Most Beautiful City,” including, but not limited to, illegal sign removal, sign ordinance modifications, graffiti abatement, median upkeep solutions (short-and long-term), landscaping standards, zoning, parking-lot specifications, lightscaping standards (and other hardware associated with traffic signals, etc.), landscaping neighborhood beautification programs, bus bench standards, and a roaming team to perform general clean-up/trash removal/maintenance, etc. Other criteria could be used in evaluating and selecting beautification criteria to be included.

Task Force Members

Citizens

Ken Busby, Chair, Angelle Cole, Peggy Helmerich, Joe Howell, Michael Patton, Peter Walter

City Staff

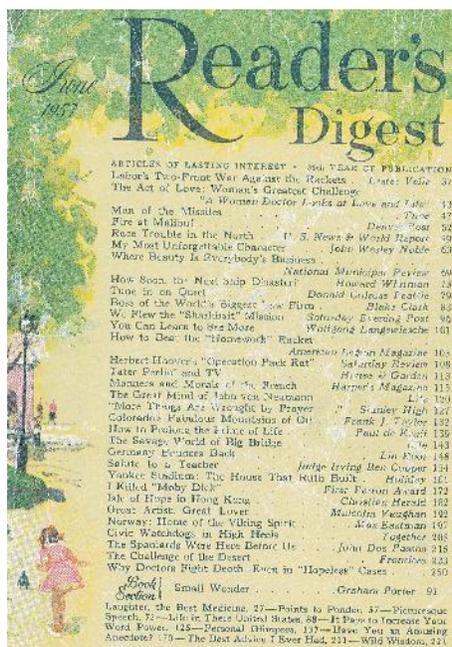
John Fothergill – Tulsa City Council, Keri Fothergill – Tulsa Mayor’s Office

Introduction to Projects

The Task Force established a meeting schedule to engage volunteers on work projects that should include a brief synopsis of action items and discussion of what to do after a plan is established. The Task Force discussed potential projects and areas of concerns of each member. To be effective, the committee focused on key areas. Our recommendations are to establish a working framework for initial beautification efforts but in no way try to address every potential area of concern or opportunity. We agreed to pick our top ideas for the initial focus and encourage the City to continue to engage other citizen groups to work on other initiatives.

The following are our top recommendations for submission to the Mayor's office and Tulsa City Council. The Task Force felt strongly about beautification efforts being a priority for future City of Tulsa budgets. With that note, we believe that in each of these projects there should be a concerted effort to seek outside sponsorship to supplement public dollars. We urge the City of Tulsa both to make beautification efforts a budget priority when possible and actively pursue private dollar assistance for these efforts. We also feel strongly that it is essential to fully budget the necessary dollars to maintain our public properties.

The Task Force met once or twice each month in person during the late spring through the late autumn months and through e-mail correspondence during the same time period. We want to thank the City staff for providing logistics. The following is a brief summary of our top recommendations.

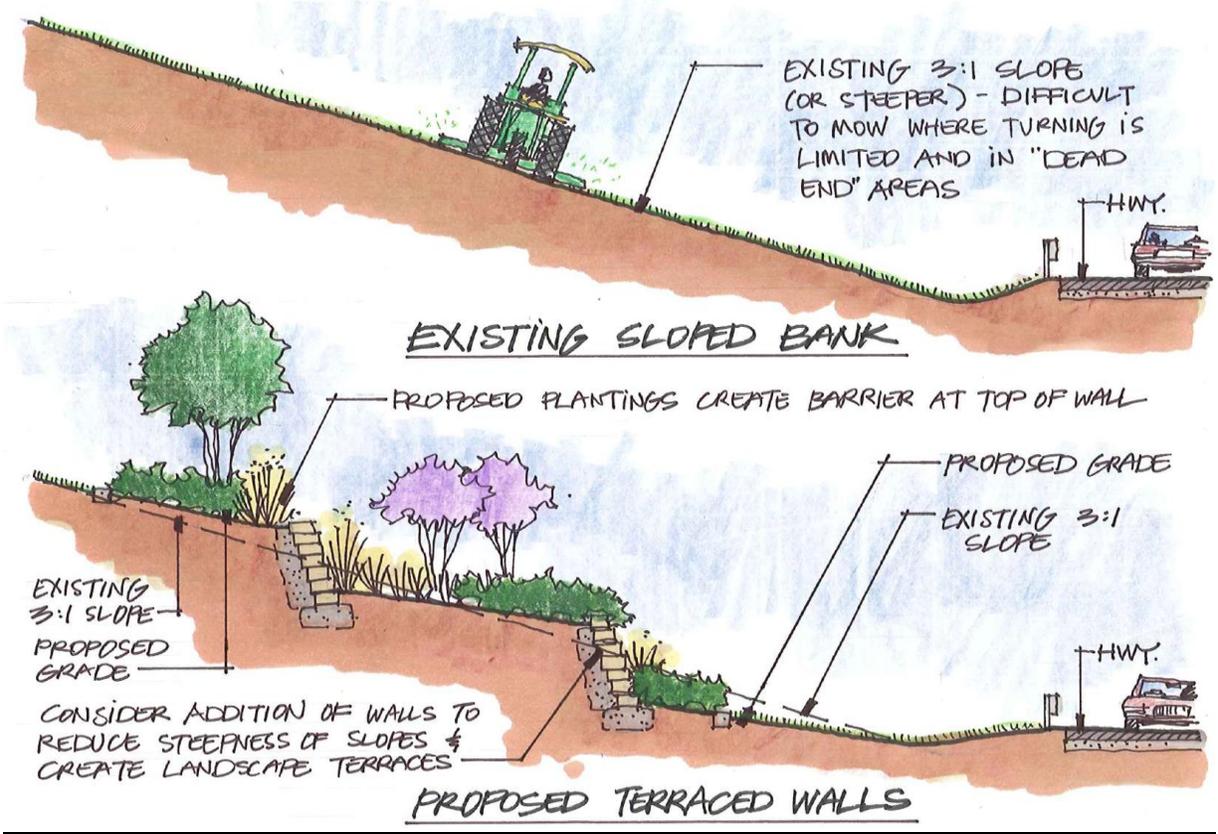




America's Most Beautiful City – Welcome signs

An opportunity for adding beauty to our community is welcome signage along interstates and vistas. The Task Force discussed the lack of welcome signs and encourages a specific effort be given to the entryways to the community along major highways. We felt that the welcome signs should not be necessarily placed at the city limits, but in locations that have vistas that showcase our wonderful city.

These welcome spots should be constructed using flowers, trees, and signage that reflects public pride and could serve as backdrops for photographers. The Task Force felt strongly that suggested language for each sign is to include the slogan "You are looking at Americas Most Beautiful City." We also want to encourage the reclaiming of the slogan "America's Most Beautiful City!" and for it to be used by the City and The Tulsa Metro Chamber in public relation campaigns.



Corridor Connecting Downtown and Airport

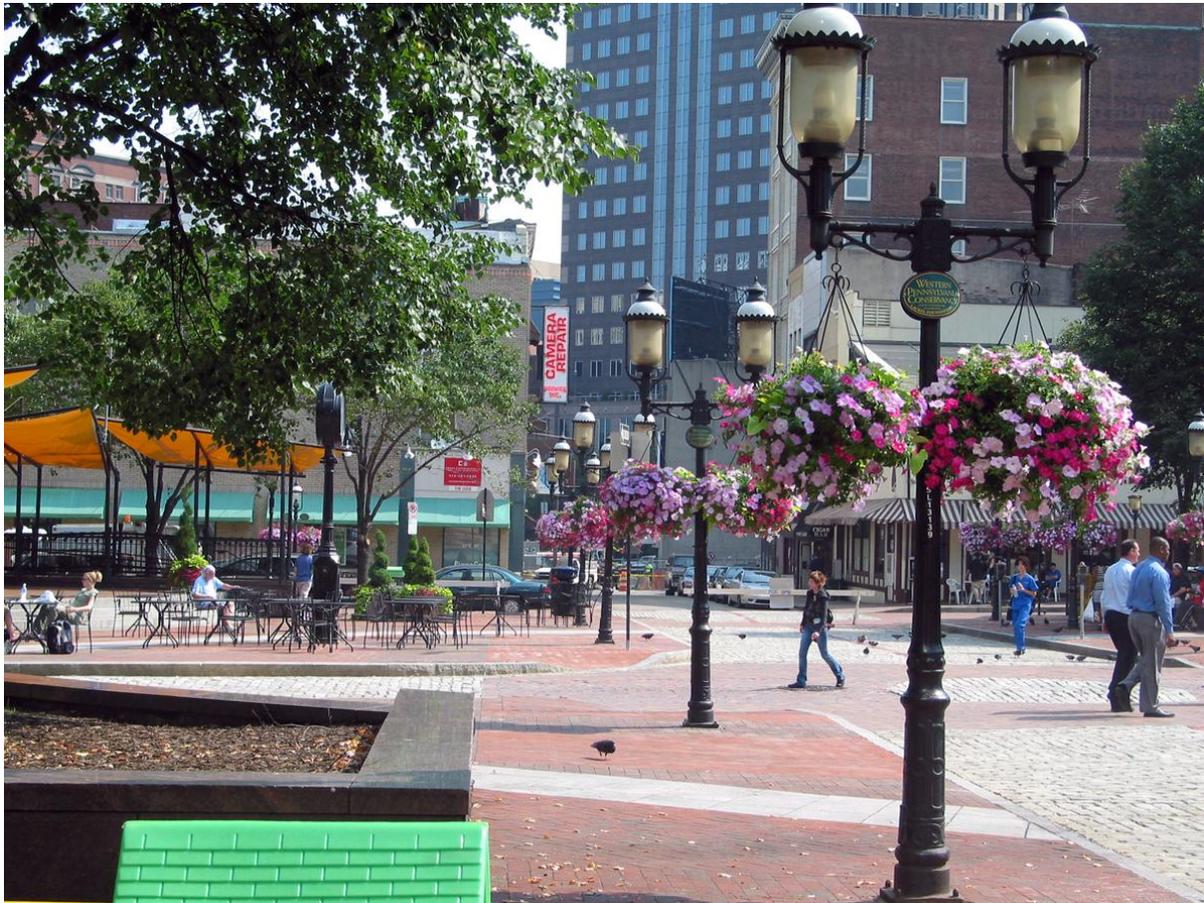
The Task Force identified a beautification effort corridor that connects the airport to the downtown central business district along I-244. We believe that our beautification efforts should focus on visitor’s initial impressions. We identified a recent improvement mostly funded by the Tulsa Beautification Foundation (TBF) near the airport and researched present and future plans along the corridor.

We invited TBF representative Josh Miller to attend a meeting to give the Task Force an update on their projects. Josh described improving bridges and rights-of-way with painting and staining crews to begin in early 2013. The Task Force also took a tour by bus, stopping at each of the on and off ramps to discuss potential improvements and made a list of existing tree planting sites from Up with Trees.

There was consensus among Task Force members that the fences dividing properties between the I-244 expressway and the adjoining neighborhoods were in poor condition and also served as a catch-all for blowing debris. In addition there is a tremendous undercover of volunteer plants along the fence with no visible mitigation efforts. The fences along I-244 look terrible and appear to have not been properly maintained for a lengthy period of time.

We recommend open discussion with ODOT of the possibility of removing the fences.

We also want to replace volunteer plants with appropriate trees and garden ground cover to reduce maintenance and minimize watering. In a couple of onramp areas the concrete is in such bad shape that staining may not be sufficient, therefore, additional concrete work is probably needed. We identified a triangle of land on I-244 and Utica for a possible intense beautification demonstration area. We also discussed the idea of adding low maintenance garden areas as long as they were designed to not impede mowing efforts and include watering if possible.



Downtown Flowers

The Task Force reviewed the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan assembled for the Downtown Coordinating Council and discussed at length potential enhancements to the plan. Ideas discussed to supplement the report by the committee include a design competition for interesting, aesthetic urban outdoor areas. Once the competition is complete, the model could be used as a template or inspiration for other downtown blocks to duplicate. There was consensus among the Task Force to include flowerpots and seasonal flowers to the downtown area but only upon proper funding of maintenance including watering.



Signs and billboards

Another project identified by the task force was addressing the proliferation of signs and Tulsa enforcement efforts. Some Task Force members were highly concerned that billboards in certain parts of town were unattractive and also hide beautiful vistas like the downtown skyline. In addition, some signs appeared to have a driving hazard by their location too near the intersections. The committee reviewed and discussed the history of sign abatement efforts by the city, including citizen training for cleanup efforts (individuals who are authorized to remove small signs for political campaigns and small businesses that were out of compliance). We also reviewed the recent history of the sign inspector operations and discussed private funding to help pay salaries for a limited time.

As a Task Force, we recommend more stringent enforcement on existing signage codes and laws. We encourage the city to properly fund the sign inspection division and continue to train volunteers towards the removal of illegal signs.

We also encourage efforts to slow the growth of billboards permitted in the city limits. We believe that abating signs illegally placed along city rights-of-way is an achievable task and will make a major difference in our beautification efforts.



THE CITY OF TULSA
2012 BEAUTIFICATION AWARD

*Honoring accomplishments that enhance
the beauty and environment of our community
is presented to:*

TULSA CITIZEN

Devo Barrett
Mayor

Jack Weidman
Councillor - District 1

Justin C. Co
Councillor - District 2

James Patrick
Councillor - District 3

Blake Pugh
Councillor - District 4

James Gillett
Councillor - District 5

Brian "Big" Jones
Councillor - District 6

Thomas Matur
Councillor - District 7

Phil Taylor, Jr.
Councillor - District 8

G.T. Stearn
Councillor - District 9

Recognition Program

The last major recommendation from the Task Force is to begin a recognition effort for beautification projects such as an annual banquet and/or an awards program. Additional recognition efforts could include a garden of the month or publishing a calendar of beautiful spots in the community. We believe that annual awards of individual and corporate beautification efforts would be very successful. We also felt it important to make sure that beautification efforts are not only defined as trees and flowers but also architecture, sculptures, and murals.

Other Suggestions

The Task Force felt strongly that the first step should be to engage civic pride by declaring our community "America's Most Beautiful City." The very use of such language will go a long way in changing our perceptions to ourselves and to visitors.

The Task Force encourages the city to continue to fund the neighborhood cleanup efforts and the free landfill days. These efforts have many years of proven success and make a visible difference in the look of the community. The Task Force feels that graffiti abatement, sign inspection and code inspection should be maintained at current levels and enhanced when needed. We also feel a need to expand maintenance budgets for Tulsa Parks Department and Stormwater detention facilities when possible. We also urge the city to make concerted efforts to attract private sponsors of beautification efforts including gardens and trees.

The Task Force would like to see more efforts to provide unique solutions to maintenance needs. This would include expanding the median upkeep from other organizations such as with Up with Trees projects; the medians on Yale at La Fortune Park, the medians on 15th in front of Expo Square and the 71st Street corridor.

The Task Force would like the City to request, possibly through the franchise agreement process, that all overhead utility lines to be buried starting with downtown and continuing throughout the city. This will not only beautify Tulsa, but improve our utilities reliability.

Finally, the Task Force encourages the continuing conversation on converting zoning codes to a building-based code as alternative to a zoning code based on use. The aesthetics of how buildings interact with each other can enhance the look and feel of a community without negatively impacting the use of the facility.

Summary

The following are the Task Force recommendations:

Declare ourselves “America’s Most Beautiful City.”

Build welcome spots along all entry points into Tulsa using the slogan “Welcome to America’s Most Beautiful City.”

Add to efforts on beautification focus on I-244 corridors between airport and downtown.

Establish a demonstration block and initiate a downtown garden design competition that can be replicated while adding flowers to the city’s core.

Enhance sign enforcement efforts utilizing city workers and citizens.

Create a recognition program for private and public beautification efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Busby", written over a horizontal line.

Ken Busby
Tulsa Beautification Task Force Chair

Citizen committee members:

Angelle Cole
Peggy Helmerich
Joe Howell
Michael Patton
Peter Walter

John Fothergill – Tulsa City Council
Keri Fothergill – Tulsa Mayor’s Office