

# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

The Commissioners Court of Walker County will utilize this Policy to guide its review and consideration of economic development proposals from municipalities, institutions and/or private sector employers and/or developers. The Court will consider, on a case- by-case basis, participating in economic development projects and developments that serve to advance the County's goals as stated herein, that diversify the County's overall economy, and that provide economic opportunities for the citizens of Walker County.

## **Purpose of the Economic Development Policy**

1. Provide a general understanding of Walker County's planned role in pursuing economic development;
2. Establish a framework of accountability in advancement of the County's goals for economic development;
3. Provide a consistent, transparent and standardized evaluation process for use by Walker County in responding to economic development proposals;
4. Advise municipalities, institutions, private sector employers and/or developers, and the general public of the criteria that Walker County will consider in granting economic development assistance and identifying the tools it may choose to use; and
5. Protect Walker County's interest by ensuring that Commissioners Court has all the necessary information to make well-informed economic development decisions.

## **Walker County Economic Development Goals**

Protect and enhance the great quality of life for Walker County citizens by engaging in economic development activities that:

1. Promote and support the overall sound fiscal condition of the County by increasing the tax base and considering the impact on cost of service thereby resulting in increased revenue to the County in the foreseeable future; Encourage the development of industrial and housing uses;
2. Create and retain good paying jobs in Walker County;
3. Contribute to the ability of the County to improve public infrastructure;

4. Contribute to the ability of the County to improve its services and to attract retain staff with competitive pay and benefits;
5. Create economic opportunities and life style amenities valued by the citizens of Walker County; or
6. Diversify the economy of Walker County, while protecting the environment and natural resources

### **Tools and Collaborative Partnerships**

Walker County will consider partnering with municipalities, institutions, and private sector employers/developers to achieve the above stated Economic Development Goals. The County will utilize tax abatements, participation in tax increment reinvestment zones ("TIRZ"), and Chapter 381 agreement as its primary tools. The choice of tool will be determined by the amount and duration of investment proposed.

The County seeks to be a collaborative partner, but will review projects on a case-by- case basis. The County prefers economic development proposals that are structured as performance-driven, meaning that advance funding obligations reside with the applicant and repayment will be based on the ability of the project to generate sufficient tax revenue.

Should the appropriate tool establish one or more boards of directors, the County will seek representation on those boards of directors commensurate with its contribution to the project. Additionally, should the County agree to participate in an entity whose purpose is to promote economic development and/or market Walker County, the County will seek representation on the governing body of such organization commensurate with its contribution.

### **Application Requirements and Evaluation Criteria**

To be considered for economic development participation by Walker County, the Court will consider projects only upon receipt and review of a complete written application on the current approved form including the applicable application fee. A copy of the application and fee information is available at the Walker County Judge's Office.

#### **Evaluation Criteria**

##### **1. County Benefits Analysis**

As indicated by the graphic scale below the County will consider economic development proposals based on their furtherance of the County's economic

development goals, as stated above, and the overall benefits to the County as shown below.

|                                 |                                    | Economic Development Benefits  |   |   |                            |  |                             |                      |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|---|----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|----------------------|
|                                 |                                    | Retains or Increase Residents  | Provides Quality of Life Amenitiy for Residents | Enhances Ability to Provide County Services   | Local Partner Contribution | Increased Sales Tax Base   | Increased Property Tax Base | Primary Job Creation |
| Economic Development Commitment | Incentive Amount                   |  |   |   |                            |  |                             |                      |
|                                 | Incentive-Private investment Ratio |  |   |   |                            |  |                             |                      |
|                                 | Term                               |  |   |   |                            |  |                             |                      |
|                                 |                                    | ←————→   |   | ←————→  |                            | ←————→   |                             |                      |
|                                 |                                    | Justifies very litte, if any, County Investment if these are the only benefits |   | Could justify some County Investment, especially if other goals are also achieved, but use caution. |                            | Justifies the highest level of County Investment, depending on achievement of other goals as well. |                             |                      |

## 2. General Criteria

Once a project has been deemed to support one or more of the County's economic development goals and provides sufficient benefits to the County, the project will be considered in context of the following:

1. The overall positive contribution to the County's economy
2. Cost of Service burden - both near term and long term
3. The amount of private investment to be made
4. The number and quality of jobs created and number of Walker County residents estimated to be employed, both for construction and after completion
5. The duration of the County's investment in the project
6. Amount of public bonded indebtedness requested, if any
7. The amount and location of population growth of the County that may occur directly as a result of the project
8. The types and values of public improvements to be made by the applicant as a result of the project
9. The types and values of public improvements required to be made by the County as a result of the project
10. The extent to which the proposed project/business competes with existing businesses(resulting in the redistribution or loss of jobs instead of creation of new jobs) or activities to the detriment of the local economy
11. The impact on the potential growth of business opportunities of existing businesses
12. The potential to attract other new businesses to the County as a result of the new project/business

13. The environmental compatibility of the project/business with the County's quality of life goals
14. The overall compatibility of the proposed project/business with the existing character of its proposed location
15. Denial of Application. No economic development agreement should be approved if the Commissioner's Court determines that:
  - a. There would be a substantial adverse effect on the provision of government service or tax base if the proposal amount was granted;
  - b. The applicant has insufficient financial capacity;
  - c. Planned or potential use of the property would constitute a hazard to public safety, health or morals;
  - d. The applicant has a verifiable history of violation of other codes or laws;
  - e. The application was filed after the commencement of construction, alteration, or installation of improvements related to the project; or
  - f. Failed to meet the County's goals and criteria, or any other reason deemed appropriate by the Commissioner's Court.

Economic development projects approved by the County will be formalized by a written agreement adopted by Commissioner's Court after all applicable public notice and public hearing requirements have been met. No offer of assistance will be valid until execution of the agreement by all parties to the agreement.

#### **V. Coordination for Projects within Municipal Boundaries**

1. Properties or projects within the corporate limits or ETJ of a municipality must make application prior {or simultaneously} with that municipality.
2. The County generally will not take final action on an economic development agreement until after the municipality has taken final action.
3. The County's participation in an economic development proposal will be reviewed and coordinated as a total package combined with the participation level offered by the municipality.
4. The County's investment-to-retained-revenue from all sources ratio should be relatively equal to that same ratio for the municipality.

#### **Review and Approval Process**

The County is committed to providing timely review and action on economic development assistance applications. Submission of a complete and descriptive application will greatly improve the County's ability to make an informed and timely decision regarding the application.

The roles and appropriate contacts for the various implementation phases of the policy are depicted in the following table:

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b><i>Policy-Level Enforcement</i></b>                                  | County Judge                                  | Commissioner's Court   |
| <b><i>Collaboration with Other Entities</i></b>                         | Commissioner Serving Applicant's Project Area | County Officials/ Staff  |
| <b><i>Analysis of Application</i></b>                                   | County Judge Designee                         | Commissioner Court<br>Appointed Economic<br>Development<br>Application Review<br>Committee |
| <b><i>Consideration/Adoption of Economic Development Agreements</i></b> | Commissioner's Court                          | County Officials/Staff   |

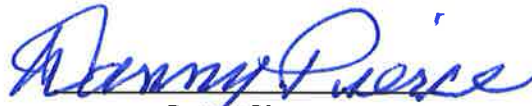
The following process will be followed to achieve the most timely review and consideration of economic development assistance applications:

1. Prior to the submission of any proposal for economic development assistance, the applicant must schedule an informal pre-application meeting with the County Judge and the County Commissioner for the precinct within which the proposed project is contained. The Judge and Commissioner may choose to involve other County staff members as needed. For projects within the corporate limits or ETJ of a municipality, the applicant should meet with that City prior to meeting with the County and a representative from that City is encouraged to attend the meeting with the County.
2. Completed applications should be submitted to the County Judge.
3. The County Judge will refer the application to the appointed Economic Development Application Review Committee and County Auditor for review.
4. The Economic Development Application Review Committee will evaluate the completeness of the application, utilizing additional County staff as needed, and contact the applicant if additional information is required. Applications will not be processed until all information is provided. In the event that consultants are needed to assist in the review process, those costs are expected to be paid by the applicant.
5. The goal for the initial review of application completeness is no more than 14 calendar days.
6. After the application has been accepted as complete, the chair of the d Economic Development Application Review Committee will coordinate an evaluation of the application based on the evaluation criteria and prepare an evaluation report and findings. In the preparation of this report, the chair of the Appointed Economic

Development Application Review Committee may consult with County elected officials, staff, consultants, and other agencies, as appropriate, for their input regarding the proposal and its impacts on, and costs and benefits to the County.

7. The goal for completing the evaluation report and findings is no more than 60 calendar days after the date of acceptance of the application as complete.
8. During the 60-day review period, the County may initiate interim requests for additional information and the applicant may update the application in response to such requests.
9. Following the review and evaluation process, the chair of the Economic Development Application Review Committee will deliver the evaluation report and findings to the Commissioners Court for review and questions.
10. Following review by the Commissioners Court, the chair of the Economic Development Application Review Committee will deliver a copy of the evaluation report and findings to the applicant.
11. Within 14 calendar days of receipt of the report, the applicant should notify the County if they wish to proceed with consideration of the application.
12. Upon notification by the applicant, the County will proceed with the consideration and adoption process as expeditiously as possible following prescribed statutory notice, public hearing, and adoption process relevant to the particular type of economic development tool being considered.

Signed this 24 day of October, 2022.



Danny Pierce  
County Judge



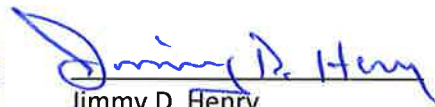
Danny Kuykendall  
Commissioner, Precinct 1



Bill Daugette  
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Commissioner, Precinct 2



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