

## ***WEST TAMPA PRIMED FOR REVIVAL***

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SOURCE: THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

The community-driven West Tampa Economic Development Plan won unanimous approval this week, signaling the revival of one of the city's historic treasures.

For years West Tampa has suffered from benign neglect, but residents and business owners there are ready for change.

Over the last six months, more than 500 people offered ideas and challenges for planners who aim to transform the area into a thriving urban village that retains the neighborhood's historic flair.

West Tampa is primed for redevelopment. Now that the plan has the approval of the city-county planning commission, the neighborhood's central location and rising property values make it imperative that recommendations are implemented with all due haste.

Among the plan's goals are fostering the collective influence of the neighborhood's diverse population to compete for local, state and federal dollars to pay for needed improvements.

It also calls for establishing clear regulations to control development of residential and commercial properties. To that end, the entire development code of West Tampa should be revisited to allow for heightened densities that would expand the tax base and give developers an incentive to invest there.

The idea is for residents and business owners, rather than developers, to control what their neighborhood will look like.

Of course, implementation is the hard part. The neighborhood includes many run-down areas, and work force development among the under- or unemployed population living in West Tampa remains a challenge.

The challenges the plan poses do not all have to be taken on at once. Revitalization can be achieved in small, well-planned steps.

The West Tampa community has stepped forward. It's time for the city and county to support its revival.