



# City of Broken Arrow

## Minutes

### City Council SPECIAL MEETING

**Mayor Debra Wimpee**  
**Vice Mayor Johnnie Parks**  
**Council Member Lisa Ford**  
**Council Member Justin Green**  
**Council Member David Pickel**

City Hall  
220 S 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Broken Arrow OK  
74012

**Tuesday, January 7, 2025**

**Time 5:00 p.m.**

**Council Chambers**

#### 1. Call to Order

Mayor Debra Wimpee called the meeting to order at approximately 5:00 p.m.

#### 2. Roll Call

**Present 5 -** David Pickel, Justin Green, Lisa Ford, Johnnie Parks, Debra Wimpee

#### 3. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Council Member Lisa Ford led the Pledge.

#### 4. General Council Business

##### A. 24 1708

**Consideration, discussion, and possible approval PUD 001787 2024 (Planned Unit Development) and BAZ 001788 2024 (Rezoning), Gatesway Multifamily, 35.5 acres, Level 3 and 6 to Level 3, located one-half mile north of East Houston Street (81st Street) and one-quarter mile east of 9th street (177th East Avenue/ Lynn Lane Road)**

Rocky Henkel, Director of Community Development, presented P.U.D. 1787-2024 and B.A.Z. 1788-2024 request a zoning change for 35.5 acres, partially developed as part of the Gatesway Foundation campus, to allow for multifamily workforce housing with up to 108 units. The proposed P.U.D. reduces maximum dwelling units from 243 to 180, increases landscape buffers, modifies parking requirements, and allows longer building lengths compared to the existing P.U.D. The Planning Commission recommended approval on November 21, 2024, despite opposition from residents citing traffic and low-income housing concerns. A December 3, 2024, City Council meeting resulted in a request for a neighborhood meeting, leading to the current discussion.

John Feary – President of the Gatesway Foundation board, spoke to the council, emphasizing the organization's commitment to addressing community concerns about a proposed multifamily workforce housing project. He highlighted the longstanding relationship between Gateway and the community, the importance of the project for generating sustainable revenue to support vulnerable populations, and assurances that traffic, sewer capacity, and school overcrowding are not issues. Mr. Feary stressed the rigorous vetting of development partners and compliance with regulations while addressing concerns about property values and safety. He urged the council to approve the application, noting the organization's obligation to provide essential services and housing.

Vice Mayor Johnnie Parks asked for clarification that the comprehensive plan for the parcel in question was amended to unify its zoning. Initially, part of the parcel was designated as Level 6 (industrial) and part as Level 3. The change designated the entire parcel as Level 3, which already permitted the proposed use. Further clarification confirmed that the industrial designation applied to only part of the original parcel.

Bradley Armstrong Blanks, a long-time Gatesway resident of 36 years, expressed his deep appreciation for the organization and the support it has provided him. He shared how Gatesway helped him secure a home and a job, emphasizing his love for the community and the impact Gatesway has had on his life. Bradley highlighted the quality of his new home, built last year, describing it as beautiful and supportive of his needs. Mr. Blanks also praised his boss and colleagues for their kindness and encouragement. His positive testimony underscored the significance of Gatesway's role in improving lives and fostering a supportive community.

Claire Caldwell advocated for affordable and inclusive housing near supportive organizations like the Gatesway Foundation, emphasizing its importance for the neurodiverse community. She highlighted the challenges of finding safe and affordable independent housing, especially given the competitive market and limited eligibility for services based on IQ. Claire stressed that such housing enables individuals to focus on personal growth, job stability, and a sense of belonging without the added stress of unsuitable living conditions. Ms. Caldwell urged the council to consider the critical need for housing that promotes independence, security, and dignity for neurodiverse individuals.

Madison Imboden highlighted the challenges faced by neurodiverse individuals, particularly the significant pay gap, which can make independent living complex. She explained that neurodiverse workers often earn up to 30% less than neurotypical peers for the same work, exacerbating struggles to afford housing amid rising living costs. Madison emphasized the critical importance of affordable housing, noting how it enables individuals to access job opportunities, training programs, and a less stressful, stable life. Ms. Imboden urged the council to support initiatives that promote fairness and affordable living solutions for neurodiverse individuals.

Mollie Mills addressed the council as an advocate for the neurodiverse community and a working professional facing housing challenges. She highlighted the struggles of neurodiverse individuals, who often face pay inequities despite their capabilities, making independent living difficult without affordable housing options. Ms. Mills also shared her personal experience as a single mother and successful professional with a master's degree, noting that even with her achievements, rising rents and single-income constraints make finding affordable and desirable housing challenging. She urged the council to support affordable housing for the neurodiverse community and the broader workforce struggling with rising living costs.

Molly LaRive shared her experience with housing challenges and the support she received from Gatesway. She described struggling to find safe and affordable housing where she could grow mentally, physically, and spiritually. Molly emphasized the importance of Gatesway's program, which has been her support system for seven years, providing stability and preventing homelessness. Ms. LaRive expressed that the proposed apartments would offer much-needed safe and supportive housing options for individuals like her and others in need, including single mothers and those without family support. Molly urged openness to Gatesway's growth and its positive impact on the community.

Sarah Frey, a long-time Broken Arrow resident and Gatesway volunteer, shared her perspective on the proposed apartment project. While supportive of affordable housing, she expressed concerns about ensuring the development is safe and beneficial for everyone. Ms. Frey emphasized the importance of open communication with nearby residents to address their concerns and maintain a balance between meeting housing needs and preserving the quality of life for existing residents. She called for thoughtful consideration to ensure the project aligns with community expectations and values.

Alicia Hinkle, a Broken Arrow resident, raised concerns about the proposed 180-unit housing development, arguing it conflicts with the city's comprehensive plan and ordinances. She highlighted that most homes on College Street are zoned R1 or Agricultural 1, situated on large lots, and are not adjacent to arterial streets, a requirement for multifamily developments per her understanding. She cited ordinances emphasizing the need to preserve neighborhood character, prevent congestion, and avoid imposing additional burdens on public services. The resident expressed concerns about property value impacts, increased traffic, and the development's inconsistency with the area's quiet, low-density nature, emphasizing that it does not align with what homeowners in the area expected when purchasing their properties.

Rebecca Howeth, a long-time Broken Arrow resident, shared her concerns about the proposed development near College Street. Having lived near the area for nearly 69 years, she reflected on the city's growth, expressing bittersweet feelings about its changes. While appreciating progress like the Rose District, she opposed low-income housing, citing fears of increased traffic, safety issues due to inadequate infrastructure like curbs and sidewalks, and potential harm to the community's character and desirability. Ms. Howeth emphasized preserving the area's dignity, beautification, and quality of life, urging thoughtful progress that protects the community and its memories.

Amy Thomas raised concerns about the affordability and management of the proposed apartments. She questioned whether residents who previously supported the development could afford the projected \$900+ rent for a one-bedroom unit and whether they might be forced to share small spaces. She also criticized Beacon, the property management company, citing online reviews that reported issues such as bed bug infestations, mold, rising rents, poor employee relations, and negligent management. Ms. Thomas emphasized the importance of clear accountability, asking whether Gatesway or Beacon would oversee property management and expressing support for Gatesway's mission while doubting the suitability of

this project as a solution.

Ben Thomas appreciated Gatesway's program and its positive impact but raised concerns about the proposed 180-unit apartment complex. He emphasized that such developments typically take years to reach full occupancy and questioned its affordability, noting that \$900+ rent for a one-bedroom unit would not be viable for Gatesway employees or residents earning less than \$3,600 monthly. He highlighted the disconnect between the large-scale complex and the single-family neighborhood's character, suggesting a reduced density of four units per acre instead. Mr. Thomas proposed an alternative approach of building smaller fourplex units, which align with Gatesway's existing model and could maintain neighborhood compatibility. He recommended involving local investors to collaborate on a solution that supports Gatesway's financial sustainability without compromising the area's character. Mr. Thomas emphasized the importance of thoughtful planning, community involvement, and preserving Gatesway's mission while meeting funding needs.

Debra Stark opposed the proposed 180-unit apartment complex, sharing that she moved to Broken Arrow for its quiet, safe, and spacious neighborhood, which she cherishes. She acknowledged Gatesway's valuable community service but felt the development's scale is unsuitable for the area, particularly given the limitations of College Street, which already sees significant bus traffic. Ms. Stark raised concerns about the potential impact on the neighborhood's safety and tranquility, noting that the current environment allows for open doors and a sense of trust. She supported a smaller-scale development as a better fit for the community.

Steve Swagger, representing 56 residents, reiterated opposition to the proposed 180-unit multifamily complex on College Street, citing concerns about its impact on the neighborhood and the precedent it might set for additional apartment developments in the area. He referenced similar opposition in Tulsa to emphasize that this issue is broader. While acknowledging the value of hearing both sides, the speaker advocated for expanding the neighborhood with single-family homes, maintaining open spaces, and supporting homeownership opportunities. Mr. Swagger concluded by thanking the council for their service and considering community concerns.

Dee Wayne Howeth, a long-time College Street resident, expressed concerns about the proposed 180-unit apartment complex, citing potential complications and disruptions to the quiet lifestyle of the neighborhood. While supportive of Gatesway's mission, he noted issues such as increased pedestrian traffic through private property, past incidents requiring police intervention, and existing road safety concerns on College Street. Mr. Howeth emphasized that adding 180 units would likely exacerbate these challenges, particularly with speeding vehicles and inadequate infrastructure like ditches along the road. He urged careful consideration of the potential impact on the community.

Travis Yates, developer and representative from Beacon, addressed concerns about their reputation and partnership with Gatesway, affirming their commitment to quality and professionalism. He emphasized that Beacon has worked with Gatesway for nearly a year, engaging in weekly discussions to ensure the project aligns with Gatesway's mission and goals. He noted that Gatesway had owned the land for 40 years and had thoroughly vetted the proposal as the best use for their property to support their mission and create an income stream. Mr. Yates highlighted Beacon's intent to build with quality materials and be a good neighbor while acknowledging similar concerns in other communities where they have worked. He pointed out that Gatesway previously listed the land for sale, allowing others to propose alternatives they did not pursue. Mr. Yates concluded by emphasizing respect for Gatesway's decision to develop the property in alignment with their needs and vision for the community.

John Feary, President of the Gatesway Foundation board, addressed concerns about ordinances, land use, and vetting for the proposed development. He emphasized that the property has been thoroughly reviewed and vetted by Gatesway, city staff, and Beacon over an 11-month process. He clarified that the land's current zoning would allow apartments to be built without additional council approval. Still, he stressed Gatesway's commitment to carefully selecting a development plan that aligns with its mission and ensures community safety.

Mr. Feary stated Gatesway's dedication to being good neighbors, including implementing rigorous background checks for future residents to protect vulnerable populations, highlighted the organization's regulatory oversight and extensive due diligence, emphasizing their longstanding role in the community and the critical need for funding for this project. He also addressed traffic concerns, referencing an independent study that concluded no road widening was necessary. Finally, he thanked the council for their time and stressed the urgency of meeting a grant application deadline by January 9 to secure funding for Gatesway's initiatives.

Mayor Debra Wimpee addressed concerns about the affordability of the proposed apartments, pointing out that \$900 for a one-bedroom unit is not considered low-income housing. They acknowledged the opposition's conflicting concerns about low-income housing while questioning how Gatesway's residents or "friends" would afford the rent. Though unclear specifics, she suggested that state funding or special rates might assist residents.

Mr. Feary explained that the proposed housing would serve individuals based on the area median income percentages, with affordability determined by a breakdown of income ranging from \$32,000 to \$70,000 annually. They acknowledged that \$900 for a one-bedroom unit is not widely considered affordable but argued it is still less expensive than comparable new developments. Additionally, the housing would rely on state and federal funding to accommodate the needs of neurodiverse residents while including market-rate rentals to help fund Gatesway's mission.

Mr. Feary emphasized the necessity of diversifying revenue streams as state and federal support has dwindled, making such projects essential for sustaining services. He reassured the council that extensive vetting had been conducted with city staff, consultants, and legal experts to ensure compliance with all ordinances. He reiterated their openness to addressing concerns and stressed the project's importance in maintaining Gatesway's mission and financial viability.

Christina Watkins, a Gatesway staff member, shared updated information about the proposed housing project. She explained that rent rates had been adjusted to align with the area's median income, with expected monthly rates ranging from \$600 to \$700. This adjustment reflects affordability for individuals between \$12 and \$30 per hour. The project aims to support Gatesway's neurodiverse clients and their workforce, offering vetted and affordable housing options for employees serving this population.

Ms. Watkins highlighted the high demand for affordable housing, refuting claims that the units would take months to fill, noting existing waitlists for similar housing in the region. While no specific percentage of units is reserved for Gatesway's clients or staff, she expressed a long-term goal of maximizing housing for these groups while balancing economic considerations. Ms. Watkins emphasized the community's engagement and the importance of continuing Gatesway's mission to effectively serve residents and workforce needs.

Council Member Justin Green addressed concerns raised during the discussion, particularly allegations of a lack of transparency regarding the development process. They clarified that all planning and approval meetings were public, adequately posted, and open for attendance, emphasizing that no decisions were made "under the radar" or outside public view.

Council Member Green also responded to comments about complaints against Beacon, noting that issues reported in other locations may not reflect the potential for this project, as Broken Arrow is a unique community with its dynamics. Acknowledging the ongoing dialogue, he expressed an open mind and invited further clarification about land use intensity and the residential multifamily definition, asking city representatives to address those specific points.

In further discussion with the council, Rocky Henkel, Director of Community Development clarified several points regarding zoning, multifamily development, and the area's land use. It was confirmed that while additional standards for multifamily developments are located along arterial streets—such as enhanced landscaping and masonry requirements—there is no mandate in the zoning ordinance that multifamily housing must be adjacent to arterials. The necessary criteria for the current proposal were confirmed to have been met.

The discussion also revisited the area's zoning history. Previously designated as a mix of Level 3 (residential) and Level 6 (industrial), the area was rezoned to allow the multifamily development as a buffer between residential and industrial zones. Officials highlighted the importance of the industrial area to Broken Arrow, emphasizing its longstanding designation and the unlikelihood of additional apartment developments beyond the proposed transition zone.

Traffic concerns were also addressed. Industrial development is expected to generate more traffic, including heavy trucks, than the proposed residential project. Traffic studies and engineering analyses were cited to ensure that existing road infrastructure could handle projected volumes, even if perceptions of capacity differ from professional evaluations.

Charlie Bright, Director of Engineering and Construction, provided insights on traffic conditions related to the proposed development. He noted that current traffic counts on College Street are very low, with fewer than 1,000 vehicles per day between Lynn Lane and County Line and fewer than 200 vehicles near County Line. Mr. Bright explained that a standard two-lane road can handle up to 13,000 cars daily, highlighting the significant difference between current use and theoretical capacity.

Mr. Bright emphasized that the main concern would not be the road's capacity but potential peak-time traffic flow issues, particularly at intersections with arterials like Lynn Lane and County Line. He suggested turn lanes might be necessary at these points but deferred to the traffic impact analysis for detailed recommendations, which he had not yet reviewed.

Mayor Debra Wimpee stated that the motion passing acknowledged residents' concerns while reassuring them that city staff will work to address issues as the project progresses. She highlighted the importance of the decision, emphasizing that it provides much-needed housing for a specific and underserved segment of the community. Workforce housing, a critical need both statewide and nationally, was framed as a key accomplishment of the council's decision, addressing a longstanding priority for the city.

Council Member Justin Green highlighted the importance of workforce housing, emphasizing that the individuals who serve the community—such as retail workers and restaurant staff—often cannot afford high rents or mortgages. They pointed out that this is not a localized issue but a nationwide challenge frequently met with a "not in my backyard" attitude. Council Member Green stressed that regardless of their job or station, everyone deserves access to quality, affordable housing throughout the city rather than isolating such developments to specific areas.

MOTION: A motion was made by Johnnie Parks, seconded by Justin Green.  
**Move to approve PUD 001787 2024 (Planned Unit Development) and BAZ 001788 2024 (Rezoning), Gatesway Multifamily, 35.5 acres, Level 3 and 6 to Level 3, located one-half mile north of East Houston Street (81st Street) and one-quarter mile east of 9th street (177th East Avenue/ Lynn Lane Road)**

The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye: 4 -** Justin Green, Lisa Ford, Johnnie Parks, Debra Wimpee  
**Abstain: 1 -** David Pickel

**5. Remarks and Inquiries by Governing Body Members - None**

**6. Remarks and updates by City Manager, including Recognition of Recent Accomplishments by Employees and Elected Officials - None**

**7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:10 p.m.

MOTION: A motion was made by Johnnie Parks, seconded by Lisa Ford.  
**Move to adjourn.**

The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye: 5 -** David Pickel, Justin Green, Lisa Ford, Johnnie Parks, Debra Wimpee

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Mayor

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City Clerk