

# Fort Worth Star Telegram

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## Strategy for attracting business

By Robert Cadwallader,  
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**MANSFIELD** - West Broad Street residents can rattle off a list of businesses they've needed, starting with a full-service grocery store. But getting businesses to listen hasn't been easy.

"I've lived out here 32 years, and all I've ever known was just a little old store to get a little gas, a little bread, and maybe some weenies," said west Mansfield resident Willie McCalister. "It seems like they're putting everything on the east side and north side of Mansfield. But we need something over here."

City officials recently approved a new policy on property tax abatements to encourage more businesses to go into areas that need economic development.

The policy, put into effect in late September, gives merchants property-tax incentives for developing or expanding in areas such as West Broad Street, the city's older industrial parks and the historic downtown.

The policy also lowers the amount of investment needed to qualify for an abatement in the designated areas. The minimum \$2 million investment drops to \$100,000 for a downtown project and \$500,000 on West Broad or an industrial park. Investing more can extend the abatement period. And the policy broadens its original focus to include commercial and retail development and cuts property taxes by 50 percent.

"I think it's a great benefit," said Ann Smith, who has served on several city boards and championed downtown revitalization. "If we don't make it easier for people to come in, we'll be left behind."

Some provisions are similar to those in Arlington's policy, which provides additional incentives for development in certain areas. When the Arlington policy was rewritten last year, the Interstate 20 corridor and entertainment district were added to the target areas, said Craig Richard, senior vice president for the Arlington Chamber of Commerce's economic development program.

"It's a proven tool," Mansfield City Councilman Jeff Newberry said. "New companies coming here are going to look for the best deal available to them. I like the new, aggressive approach."

Former Councilman Mac Moody, a longtime west Mansfield resident, said the tax abatements and a new large subdivision could attract at least a full-service convenience store.

"When you have nothing, anything's better than nothing," Moody said.

