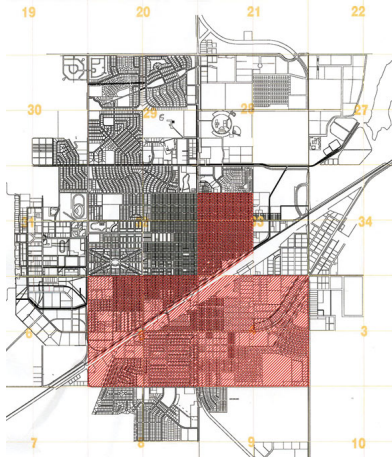


## Plan offers tax rebates for renovations

Thursday, 27 February 2014 10:52

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The neighborhoods in red represent the areas open to the city's new revitalization plan where tax rebates will be given to homeowners who renovate their property. Map courtesy City of Liberal

By ELLY GRIMM

• Leader & Times

A new housing revitalization program will soon be enacted to help areas of Liberal.

The areas that will be most impacted by this program include most of east Liberal and much of southwest Liberal south of Second street.

The project was proposed in late January and, according to Karen LaFreniere, director of housing and community development, it has been in the works for some time.

“It initially started with our housing assessment and that was the last one that Jeff Parsons and I did,” she said. “We updated the previous housing assessment from 2008 so it was out there and now we’re ready.”

This particular plan, which was passed during a city commission vote on Tuesday, was proposed to help areas of Liberal that are either hard to develop or that need more attention, which, according to LaFreniere, is why the areas were chosen.

“They’re underdeveloped as well as deteriorated,” she said. “It’s really old housing and just more attention needs to be there.”

LaFreniere emphasized that the city is not actually going in and revitalizing the chosen areas but rather, the plan is a tax rebate program for those homeowners who perform renovations on their homes or businesses and could include those who plan to build new homes.

To qualify for this rebate, the homeowners must first apply (before beginning the renovations) so that while they’re applying for their city permits, they can see if their project qualifies.

According to LaFreniere, at least \$5,000 worth of work must be done to qualify for the application, and it must be determined whether or not their project will increase their property’s value at least that amount.

“Rehab projects would increase the value of a property like additions and major renovations,” she explained. “But just a paint job and basic repairs aren’t going to significantly

increase a property's value.”

The plan will not immediately take place, however. Before the project is officially enacted, the county would have to approve an interlocal agreement and determine their portion since they'll also be in charge of appraisals and the refunds due to the fact that the taxes all go through the county.

“It's all about what people want to do – if they own a business or own a home or have lots over there or have rental properties over there, if they're putting money into it then they can apply to get this tax rebate,” LaFreniere said. “It's not coming out of anybody's pocket, which is kind of the beauty of a tax rebate and this type of program.”

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