

**COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING  
FOR SMALL TEXAS CITIES**

**OFFICE OF RURAL  
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**

**OUTREACH AND TRAINING  
SERVICES**

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## FOREWORD

Comprehensive planning can help any community deal with change more effectively and make good use of changes in local economic conditions and resources. The planning process is one approach that can help small cities deal with population growth and the changes it brings. Planning is also very valuable for communities with stable or declining economic situations.

The Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association has prepared a rather comprehensive manual to assist planners within this state. Titled *A Guide to Urban Planning for Texas Communities*, this is an extensive help for planners, yet it goes into far more detail than may be required for the smaller communities. For this reason, we believe that it is appropriate to update this manual, *Comprehensive Planning for Small Texas Communities*.

This is the second edition of this manual, which is designed to provide local officials and citizens in small cities with an easy-to-read guide to the development of a planning program. The report does four things: it describes the elements of comprehensive planning; it suggests an organizational structure for developing and implementing a planning program; it describes the necessary procedure for drawing up a comprehensive plan; and it summarizes the planning process step-by-step. A primary goal of the manual is to encourage the use of local resources and local manpower in the planning process.

The original manual was prepared in 1983 by the Texas Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations with financial support from the Texas Department of Community Affairs, now the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. Mr. Jim Reed of the ACIR staff researched and wrote the first edition under the supervision of Jay Stanford and the assistance of Janet Meyerdirk and Terri Barnard of the ACIR staff.

This third edition is now published by the Outreach and Training Services Unit of the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA). ORCA greatly appreciates the contribution of John Clary, former Manager, Local Government Services of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs with the assistance of June Scott, of the LGS staff. Appreciation is also extended to Mr. Reed, now Regional Planner for the Central Texas Council of Governments, for his technical contributions and to Dorothy Palumbo, formerly Assistant General Counsel of the Texas Municipal League, and now an Assistant City Attorney for the City of Denton, for her legal review.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
FOREWORD.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
 <b>I. INTRODUCTION</b>	
Why Plan.....	1
Decisions Guided by Comprehensive Planning.....	2
Planning in Town X.....	3
Purpose of the Manual.....	3
 <b>II. ELEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING</b>	
The Community Inventory.....	5
Goals and Objectives.....	6
The Comprehensive Plan.....	8
Plan Implementation.....	10
 <b>III. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION</b>	
City Council.....	11
Planning and Zoning Commission.....	13
Citizen Participation and the Citizens' Advisory Committee.....	16
Planning Office.....	18
Planning Consultant.....	21
Zoning Board of Adjustment.....	22
Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.....	23
 <b>IV. TOOLS AND PROCEDURE FOR DEVELOPING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN</b>	
Base Map.....	26
Population Statistics.....	28
Economic Information.....	29
Natural Resource Information.....	30
Procedure for Plan Preparation.....	33

**V. THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS:  
A SUMMARY OF THE STEPS**

Initial Interest in Planning..... 39  
 Initial Education About Comprehensive Planning..... 39  
 Appointment of a Planning Commission..... 39  
 Development of the Work Program..... 40  
 Community Inventory..... 40  
 Goals and Objectives..... 40  
 Preparation of the Comprehensive Plan..... 41

**APPENDIX A:**

**INFORMATION SOURCES: SELECTED STATE AND  
FEDERAL AGENCIES..... 43**

**GLOSSARY..... 46**

**REFERENCES..... 49**

**FIGURES**

1. Comprehensive Planning Process..... 4  
 2. Place of Planning and Zoning Commission in City Government..... 14  
 3. Activities of the Planning Staff..... 20

**TABLES**

1. Elements of the Community Inventory..... 7  
 2. The Comprehensive Planning Process: Suggested Schedule of Work..... 9  
 3. Implementation of Comprehensive Planning: Power and Duties  
of Planning Bodies..... 12

## INTRODUCTION

The character of many small cities and towns in Texas is changing dramatically due to rapid population growth over the last decade. From 1970 to 1980, cities with less than 10,000 population experienced a 27 percent increase in population. From 1990 to 1997, information from The Texas State Data Center indicates that the majority of the cities under 10,000 population have continued to increase in population. Of the 1,015 cities under 10,000 population, 925 experienced an average growth of 16 %. At the same time the Texas State Data Center report shows that 90 cities under 10,000 inhabitants lost population. In this same period, the State of Texas showed a population increase of 12.6 %. Forecasts indicate that this trend will continue for the next several years.

Faced with increasing population growth and resulting problems, small cities are looking for ways to accommodate new development without sacrificing quality of life. The term that is now being used in planning circles is *sustained growth*. Sustained growth is *that which embodies the efficient and equitable use of resources without endangering the future*. Comprehensive planning is one approach that can aid small cities in their struggle to preserve the unique character of their town, while taking advantage of the positive aspects of growth. Comprehensive planning can also help towns experiencing population decline or no growth.

Comprehensive planning is a process by which the community assesses what it has, expresses what it wants, decides how to achieve its wants and, finally, implements what it decides. It is a process that should require the active participation of community residents--the city council, planning and zoning commissioners, city administrators, advisory committees, neighborhood leaders, business people, and others interested in improving the city. Through the planning process, local citizens must share in the formulation of policy statements, which serve as guides for decision making by city leaders.

The product of planning is the comprehensive plan. Also known as a master plan, a general plan, a strategic plan, or simply the plan, the comprehensive plan is a guide to the future physical development of the city. It generally consists of a series of documents prepared by the city, which set forth policies for the future of the community. It results from extensive study and analysis of existing physical, economic, and social conditions. When adopted by the city council, it serves as a guide for public decisions in the areas of land use, capital improvements, zoning, and other land management decisions. To maintain its effectiveness, the plan should be updated periodically to reflect changing goals and conditions.

### **WHY PLAN?**

Planning is often thought of as an urban phenomenon, which is not necessary in small towns and rural communities. However, the concept of planning has much to offer in the small town setting. Orderly development can help a community absorb population growth while preserving the quality of life. In addition, good planning can save the city money by increasing the efficiency of decision making.

For example, a decision about when to pave a road is made after taking into account the laying of a water or sewer line along the same road. Planning prevents the road and curbs from being put in prematurely, only to be dug up later to install a utility line. Thus comprehensive planning can help a town spend its scarce budgetary resources effectively.

At some level, all cities are involved in planning whether they recognize it or not. The city plans to drill a new well to ensure continued water service to city residents. The fire department plans how to reach a cluster of new houses on the outskirts of town in case of a fire. The city manager or budget officer draws up next year's budget showing how the city plans to spend its revenues. Therefore, planning is a familiar exercise for cities.

The difference between the kind of planning described above and comprehensive planning is that the comprehensive planning attempts to tie together all the separate decisions made by various city officials. The comprehensive planning process is a way to base individual project decisions on well-researched and well-conceived criteria, rather than on piecemeal and fragmented information generated by day-to-day crises. Reacting to crises rather than planning to avoid them results in an inefficient use of local funds. Comprehensive planning places individual projects in a short- and long-range perspective, which enhances effective decision-making.

### **DECISIONS GUIDED BY COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING**

Once a planning program is put in place, a variety of policy decisions can be made in a careful and rational way. One of the main decisions governed by planning concerns alternative uses of land. With a comprehensive plan, a city council has a basis for deciding whether to allow the XYZ Company to locate a manufacturing in the northwest sector of town. The plan may show that the northwest sector is environmentally unstable and supports a stream that supplies the town with drinking water. Based on that information, the council would suggest that the southeast part of town is more suitable for a manufacturing plant. Subdivision of land for residential development is likewise guided by the comprehensive plan.

The plan, in addition, guides the capital improvements portion of the city budget. Decisions concerning the paving of roads, the extension of water mains, the preservation of historic neighborhoods, and the construction of new public facilities are coordinated through the comprehensive plan. A random and ad hoc approach to capital improvements often produces unneeded facilities and strain on the city's budget. Virtually every decision a city makes can be aided through comprehensive planning.

Texas law authorizes cities to spend money for planning purposes, but does not require it. (Texas Local Government Code "LGC", Chapter 371) Further, the statutes give to a city authority to adopt a comprehensive plan and to define the content and design of a comprehensive plan, (Chapter 219, LGC), but any map of a comprehensive plan must contain a clearly visible statement that "A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries."

Realistically, a more effective planning process can be devised when the citizens of a community call for it, rather than when the state or federal government mandates it. Too many "top down" mandates for planning have resulted in virtually useless city plans. Effective planning programs are more often the result of grassroots events similar to those that took place in Town X, as described below.

## **PLANNING IN TOWN X**

Residents of an older neighborhood in Town X became concerned when a developer announced plans for a multifamily housing development on property adjacent to the neighborhood. The neighbors were worried about traffic congestion, overcrowding of community facilities, and loss of neighborhood character. The neighbors formed a neighborhood association to represent their views at city council meetings.

Much to its dismay, the association discovered that the city had no ordinances governing the placement of multifamily housing. The city had no legal basis to deny the developer his building permit. This activated the association, which began researching the process of planning and putting political pressure on the council. The city council became convinced of the need for planning and hired a part-time planner. The planner first recommended a moratorium on building permits be enacted so that the problems of different sections of the city could be addressed. He then helped devise a plan and the ordinances necessary to implement the plan. The developer, was in turn, denied a permit to build his multifamily housing development in the Northwest Sector as planned, but was encouraged to explore alternatives that would address the complaints of the neighborhood. Thus, planning became a part of the daily governmental processes of Town X.

## **PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL**

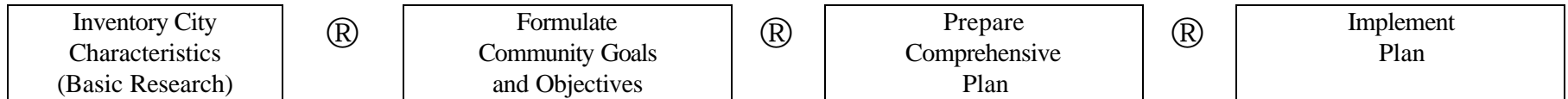
Small cities and towns that have incorporated planning into their city management practices are generally pleased with the results. Planning provides elected officials and administrators with a solid basis for policy decisions, while encouraging community residents to become involved in the processes of city government. This manual is designed to assist communities that wish to undertake comprehensive planning. The manual explains the elements of planning and suggests an organizational structure for developing planning using largely local resources and people. In addition, the booklet explains the mechanics of writing a comprehensive plan and where to find appropriate information. Special attention is given to the subject of base mapping. Finally, the concluding chapter illustrates how the planning process might be developed in a step-by-step manner. A glossary defines the planning terms used throughout the manual.

For those wanting a more comprehensive planning guide, we encourage you to contact the Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association regarding their *Guide for Urban Planning in Texas Cities*. The Executive Director is Dick Lillie. He can be reached at (512) 329-8260.

Figure 1

**COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS**

**Steps:**



**Elements:**

- Adequate Base Map
- Economy
- Population
- Physical Environment
- Existing Land Uses
- Traffic Circulation
- Housing
- Public Community Facilities

Goals (General)

Example:

- Attract Jobs-Producing Industry

Objectives (Specific)

Examples:

- Improve Water Supply
- Establish an Industrial Commission
- Widen Main Street

- Goals and Objectives Statement

- Results of Community Inventory

- Land Use Plan

- Transportation Plan
- Community Facilities Plan
- Implementation Strategy
- Special Plans (Optional)

- Zoning Rules

- Subdivision Regulations

- Capital Improvements

- Annexation

## II

# ELEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Comprehensive planning enables a community to develop a vision of what it wants to be, assess what it has, decide what it needs to move toward accomplishing the vision, and implement what it decides. The planning process consists of four basic steps (see Figure 1):

1. Basic research and analysis to evaluate current conditions (the community inventory)
2. Statement of community goals and objectives (The development of the vision of what it wants to be.)
3. Preparation of a comprehensive plan
4. Implementation of the plan

This chapter gives the reader an overview of comprehensive planning. Later chapters go into detail about the actual steps to be taken in developing the planning process as well as the mechanics of preparing the community inventory.

### **1. THE COMMUNITY INVENTORY**

Before a city plans ahead, it should be familiar with its current situation. The community inventory, which can be undertaken by local residents, analyzes and evaluates current community conditions. The areas to be considered include the following:

Economy and population

Physical environment and existing land use

Traffic circulation and housing (always be sure to include housing conditions)

Public community facilities

An adequate base map of the community is a valuable part of the inventory as well. In fact a good clear base map including streets as well as lot and block lines is a must prior to beginning the inventory. The base map creates a visual perspective that is vital to effective planning. The base map is examined in detail in Chapter IV.

Understanding the economic structure and population characteristics of a city is vital in detecting trends regarding future development. The nature and extent of local industry, employment composition, and income levels are components of the economic survey. The population study should examine population trends, age and sex distribution, educational levels, birth, and death rates.

The physical environment should be examined to determine suitability for different kinds of development. This may include a study of the soils, ground and surface water, vegetation, wildlife, topography, and climate patterns. This information, combined with a survey of present land use (residential, commercial, industrial, public, recreational, and vacant) presents a comprehensive picture of the city's current and potential development.

The condition and quantity of housing, streets, and transportation facilities is another part of the inventory. Housing structures should be examined to determine their condition. 1) dilapidated structures are those that should be torn down, 2) substandard are those that are showing signs of deterioration, but can be restored, 3) and standard are those that are in good condition or those that might need only a coat of paint to bring them back to very good condition. Their types (single family, duplex, apartment, manufactured housing, etc.), conditions, and their number should be recorded both on the map and in the report. Streets and transportation facilities should be reviewed in detail. Street rights-of-way, paving width, surface conditions, and traffic volumes should be identified and mapped. Other useful information may include local connections with major truck, bus and airline routes as well as access to pick up and delivery by carriers such as freight lines, United Parcel Service, or Federal Express.

Finally, the location and condition of community facilities should be examined and placed on the planning maps. The following facilities should be included: water and wastewater systems and gas services including exact locations of mains and appurtenances, electric utility facilities, telephone and cable services, storm drainage facilities, health care facilities, schools and libraries, parks, and recreational facilities, and other public buildings such as city hall, police and fire stations, state or other government offices. It is important to note sanitation facilities and routes as well as transfer stations, etc. Table 1 on page 7, shows the various elements of the community inventory.

A key goal of the community inventory is to evaluate the condition of the various facilities in the city. Deficiencies should be noted and needs should be assessed. This analysis which is covered in detail in Chapter IV, in conjunction with the goals and objectives statement, forms the foundation of the comprehensive plan.

## **2. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The statement of goals (general needs) and objectives (specific projects to work toward accomplishing the goals) reflects the needs, wishes, and desires of the local residents. It can be accomplished through public hearings, attitude surveys, or other methods. The purpose is to air all points of view and attempt to achieve consensus on future development policy. The statement ranges from very broad and general observations, encompassing various aspects of the town's character, to specific suggestions. It may include consideration of population and economy, land use and open space, water and wastewater development, housing, transportation, health, and law enforcement, among others. A general goal might be: stabilize the migration of young people to metropolitan areas by creating employment opportunities in our community through the promotion of industrial growth. A specific objective might read as follows: "Develop, within the next five years, additional water supplies for industrial use."

All citizens should be encouraged to take part in this process so it becomes their plan. A plan has a better chance of being implemented if key individuals in the community are involved in its preparation. Broad involvement is particularly critical in the small community because so much of the community effort is of a voluntary nature. Many projects in non-urban areas frequently do not depend in any way upon tax funds

and public officials, and even when they do, voluntary contributions often play a supporting role. A spirit of active participation is imperative for success.

Table 1

**ELEMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY INVENTORY**

Base Map	Economy	Population	Physical Environment	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Public Community Facilities
<u>Should Show:</u>	Economic Base	Total	Climate	Residential	Highways	Number and Condition	Utilities (Water, Waste-water, Storm Drainage, Electric, Gas)
Highways and Streets	Industrial Diversity	Past Trends	Minerals	Commercial	Streets	•Standard •Substandard •Dilapidated	
Street Names	Family Income	Age/Sex Distribution	Vegetation	Industrial	Bus Service		Administrative (City Hall, Post Office, State and Federal Building)
Grade Separations	Employment by Occupation	Natural Increase (Birth/Death Rate)	Wildlife	Public and Semipublic	Truck Routes	Type •Single-family •Apartment •Manufactured housing and mobile homes	
Subdivisions	Labor Force	Migration	Surface Water	Recreational	Air Connections		Police and Fire Stations
Property Lines	Unemployment	Population Forecast	Drainage	Agricultural	Rail Service	Number	Health Care (Hospitals and Clinics)
Bodies of Water			Groundwater	Streets and Highways			Educational (Schools and Libraries)
Major Drainage Ways			Soils	Railroad			Parks and Recreation
Easements				Vacant			Sanitary Landfill
Railroads							Airport
Major Public and Private Facilities							
City Limit Line							

### **3. THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The comprehensive plan combines the community goals and objectives with the inventory of city resources. In the process of developing the goals and objectives, citizens and officials have evaluated the needs of the community. The comprehensive plan maps out how the city will meet its needs. It specifies the way residents envision their community in the future and spells out strategies to accomplish their goals. In general, a comprehensive plan consists of the following sections: the goals and objectives statement, the results of the community inventory, the land use plan, the transportation plan, the community facilities plan, and the strategy for implementation. Although the plan consists of separate parts, the various sections should form a cohesive unit. Each part is briefly described below.

- The goals and objectives statement and the community inventory have already been discussed. Together they form the basis for the comprehensive plan.
- The land use plan is a graphic and written analysis of desirable and feasible land use patterns or alternative patterns. It projects future land uses as far ahead as it is reasonable to foresee. It is based on the goals and objectives of the community and the necessary research and analysis to support the conclusions.
- The street transportation plan, through maps and written analysis, outlines present and proposed street and highway patterns with an identification of substandard streets in relation to city design standards. It outlines a program for street improvement and construction of transportation facilities. The program should include priorities or at least a set of criteria for setting priorities.
- The community facilities plan describes the general location, character, extent and adequacy of public facilities and outlines the expected needs of the community based on citizens' objectives, employment and population studies, land uses, and recognized design standards. For example, the water facilities requirements must be based on a design to provide adequate volume and pressure to all parts of the community but also on water system and fire protection requirements established by the State Commission of Fire Protection, the Texas Department of Health, and the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission.
- The strategy for implementation suggests steps the city council, planning commission or planning and zoning commission, and city administrator should take to enforce the provisions of the plan.
- Often a special plan may be a part of a comprehensive plan, such as a historic preservation plan, a downtown redevelopment plan, or an environmental protection plan.

The completed comprehensive plan becomes the city's blueprint for future development. It serves as a policy guide for city council decisions concerning land use, utility extensions, road improvements, and other development issues. Plans vary in length and detail, according to the size of the community. The plan can be reduced to a single sheet containing a map on one side and definitions on the opposite, or it may consist of a series of publications with considerable detail on each element of the plan. As long as a plan contains the suggested elements and can be practically applied in city decisions, the length and detail are secondary. Likewise, the time spent preparing the plan varies from town to town. Table 2,

Table 2

**THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANING PROCESS: SUGGESTED SCHEDULE OF WORK**

Steps in Comprehensive Planning	Executing Body	Approximate Time in Months												
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1. Explanation of comprehensive planning to city council and Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z).	Planning Expert	X												
*2. Appointment of Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).	P&Z/City Council		X											
3. Request to the state and other sources for assistance, if necessary.	City Council		X											
*4. Meetings of P&Z and CAC.	P&Z/CAC			X	X	X								
5. Conducting attitude surveys, holding public hearings.	P&Z/CAC			X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
6. Designing and drafting maps.	City Engineer or Consultant			X	X	X					X			
7. Inventorying and classifying the community resource base.	Planning Office/Local Citizens				X	X	X							
8. Meetings of CAC and P&Z to discuss goals and data.	CAC/P&Z			X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
9. Completion of rough draft of proposed plan.	Planning Office/Consultant							X	X	X				
10. Editing, reviewing, rewriting, supplying missing data.	Planning Office/P&Z/CAC								X	X	X			
11. Final drafting, publication.	Planning Office Consultant									X	X	X		
12. Delivery of plan to city council, public.	P&Z/CAC											X	X	
13. Public information campaign.	All Participants	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
14. Commencement of implementation.	Local Government										X	X	X	

Source: Adapted from Rural Environmental Planning, Frederic O. Sargent, University of Vermont, 1977.

Note: Total time required to produce a comprehensive plan varies from six months to two years.

\* Indicates optional steps

page, 9, indicates the progression of a sample comprehensive plan. It suggests a timetable for completion of the various tasks and indicates the city body in the best position to undertake those tasks.

#### **4. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

The implementation step is the most critical in the comprehensive planning process. Unless the plan can be turned into a strategy for action, the process becomes an exercise in futility. Because the emphasis in this manual is on the development of the comprehensive planning process, implementation methods are discussed only briefly later in the text. The most common action taken to realize plan implementation is the passage of ordinances by the city council governing zoning, subdivision development, annexation, and manufactured housing. The enforcement of such ordinances by the city administrator varies from city to city, but a city should never adopt an ordinance that it does not intend for the staff to enforce. The capital improvements program is also a primary tool for plan implementation.

With an examination of comprehensive planning complete, the following section presents an overview of the organizational structure that can facilitate the use of the plan. The duties and responsibilities of each participating body are described.

### III

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION**

This section of the manual describes an organizational structure for the development and implementation of a planning program. No organizational structure is guaranteed to produce quality planning, and this manual does not pretend to provide all the answers. However, there are some basic structural devices that have proven successful. Each community should choose the elements and the structure of organization that are best suited to its needs.

The various planning bodies discussed include the following:

1. City Council (The elected governing body which is totally responsible for the planning process and what is or is not done.)
2. The Planning or Planning and Zoning Commission (the chief advisory body for the city council)
3. Citizens Advisory Committee or Council (Optional) (Another advisory body)
4. Planning Office (supervised by the city manager, city administrator or other chief executive officer)
5. Planning Consultant
6. Zoning Board of Adjustment

Each of these is examined in terms of organizational structure, functions and responsibilities, and interaction with other components of the planning mechanism. Table 3, on page 12, lists the duties of each planning body.

#### **1 CITY COUNCIL**

The city council, which is elected by the voters, is the final authority on policy formulation for the community. It adopts the budget, passes local ordinances, and develops planning policy. Thus, before a planning program is instituted in the city, the council must approve it. Council support is essential for effective functioning of the planning process. The city council appoints the planning and zoning commission members, chooses, or at least approves selection of, the planning supervisor, selects the planning consultant when necessary, and adopts the comprehensive plan and establishes the implementation tools. To implement the comprehensive plan, the city council adopts the capital improvements program, passes subdivision regulations and zoning ordinances, and annexes adjacent territory when appropriate, and establishes other regulations as needed. The city council is at the very heart of the planning process.



Table 3

**IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING:  
POWER AND DUTIES OF PLANNING BODIES**

	City Council	Planning and Zoning Commission	Citizens Advisory Committee (Optional)	Planning Office (City Manager)	Zoning Board of Adjustment
<u>Power</u>	Final authority on virtually all planning issues	Advisory authority only, except may give final approval for subdivision plats.	Advisory authority only.	Administrative authority conferred by city council.	Judicial authority to grant variances. (Appeals go only to the district courts.)
<u>Duties</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops planning policy</li> <li>• Appoints planning and zoning commission members.</li> <li>• Chooses or arranges for the selection of a planning supervisor for city.</li> <li>• Adopts comprehensive plan after holding public hearings.</li> <li>• Adopts ordinances governing local development processes.</li> <li>• Approves capital improvement program.</li> <li>• Selects the planning consultants should there be need of this assistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervises the production and updating of the comprehensive plan.</li> <li>• Holds public hearings on the various sections of the comprehensive plan.</li> <li>• Makes recommendations to city council on comprehensive plan</li> <li>• Holds public hearings on the development of the zoning ordinance and the designation of zoning districts and on requested changes in the zoning ordinance and recommends council action. The statutes prohibit council action until P&amp;Z report is received</li> <li>• Approves or dis-approves subdivision plats.</li> <li>• Makes recommendations on hiring planning consultant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve as a forum for discussion of issues surrounding the comprehensive plan.</li> <li>• Conduct neighborhood meetings and public hearings to develop community goals and objectives.</li> <li>• Makes recommendations to city council and planning commission.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manages the comprehensive planning process.</li> <li>• Supervises city staff, volunteers, and/or consultants in map preparation, data collection, and analysis of planning activities.</li> <li>• Provides technical support to the council and P&amp;Z commission relating to the comprehensive plan.</li> <li>• Plans the capital improvements program.</li> <li>• Administers the zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants variances from the terms of the zoning ordinances.</li> <li>• Hears Appeals from decisions by the building official</li> <li>• Decides special exceptions to the terms of the zoning ordinance when required by the ordinance</li> <li>• Hear and decide other matters authorized by an ordinance adopted under Chapter 211 of the Texas Local Government Code</li> </ul>

## **2. PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

The major impetus for planning is often growth and changes caused by growth. All too often, residents of a community will express the need for planning only when they see changes that they perceive as detrimental occurring in their neighborhood. Citizens see open spaces disappearing, roads becoming overcrowded, deteriorating public facilities, and increased housing density changing the character of their neighborhoods. The first step the elected officials can take to address these problems is the formation of a planning and zoning commission (P&Z) and designating qualified individuals to fill positions on the commission. The P&Z is a key mechanism that serves as the focal point of the planning activities. (*Texas Local Government Code*, Chapter 211)

The planning and zoning commission<sup>1</sup> is a voluntary group of local citizens appointed by the city council to formulate and recommend planning policy to the council. The P&Z, while representing the views of the community, brings an added level of expertise to the process. The primary function of the commission is to oversee the production and periodic revision of the community's comprehensive plan and its implementation tools. In cities with an adopted zoning ordinance, the P&Z commission makes recommendations on zoning matters. Review and approval or disapproval of subdivision plats is another key function of the P&Z, however, the legislature has now authorized city councils to delegate approval of plats to others.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the commission can make recommendations on the capital improvements program and the hiring of planning consultants. Some cities assign other duties to the planning and zoning commission.

In the event that a city has no zoning, it may still have a planning commission. It may develop a comprehensive plan, but it will be limited in enforcement tools without zoning.

### **Structure**

In the absence of specifications required by Texas law, matters pertaining to the size and structure of the P&Z and to the qualifications and tenure of its membership are left to the discretion of the city council. Many cities have a commission composed of seven members, although no particular number is correct for every community. The tenure of a commissioner also varies, with two or three years being common terms of office in Texas; although some feel that it takes at least two years for a P&Z commissioner to get fully acquainted with the program. A commissioner's term should be long enough for the individual to acquire an understanding of the fundamental planning process and its relationship to other functions of city government.

Persons from diverse backgrounds can serve effectively as planning commissioners because the qualifications for membership are very general in nature. Basically, the potential commissioner should exhibit awareness of the community, be able to use information in deciding between alternative courses of action, and be willing to participate actively in commission business. Finally, the commission should represent a cross section of the community and avoid undue representation of special interests.

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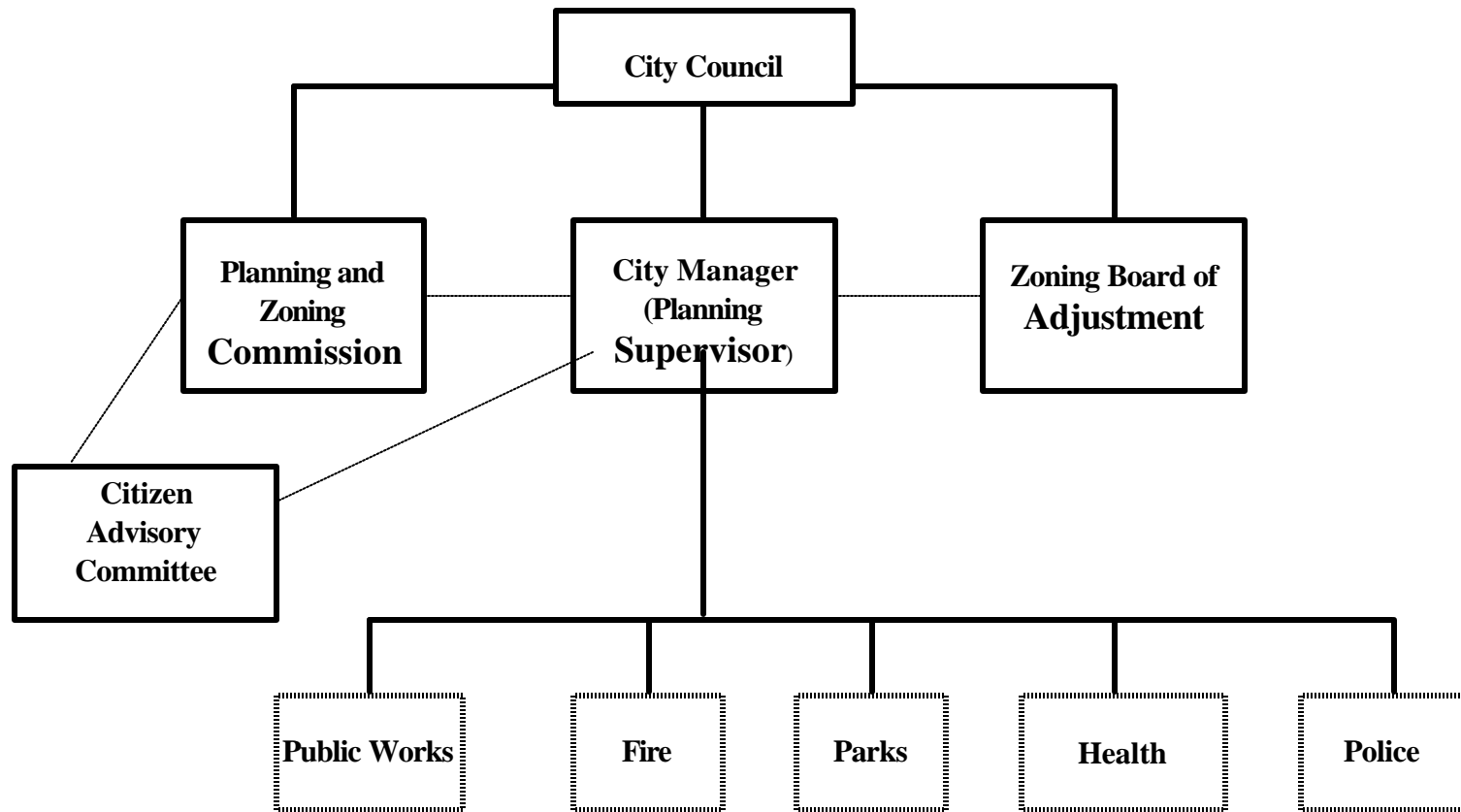
<sup>1</sup> Local Government Code, Chapter 211.007.

<sup>2</sup> Local Government Code, Section 212.0065.



Figure 2

**PLACE OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
IN CITY GOVERNMENT**





## Responsibilities of the Commission

The primary task of the P&Z commission is to ensure that the city is equipped with a well-prepared and up-to-date comprehensive plan. In this endeavor, the commission is involved closely with the city council, acting in an advisory capacity. Because the council alone has ultimate authority, the commission's most important responsibility is to ensure that the council is aware of the various community viewpoints, recommended standards, etc. concerning the comprehensive plan. The community's perspective is obtained through public meetings, mail surveys and, most importantly, informal interaction with city residents.

The commission's job is not to actually write the plan. That task is undertaken by the planning office and its staff with assistance from consultants when necessary. The commissioners assist by ensuring that the values of the community residents are represented in the final plan. The P&Z, with help from other citizen advisory committees, acts on behalf of the citizens of the city. Figure 2 on page 14 shows the place of the P&Z in relation to other city offices.

The P&Z is involved in a wide range of other activities, and many of these activities are associated with implementing the comprehensive plan, in particular zoning and subdivision regulations. On zoning matters, it is the duty of the commission to see that the zoning decisions are in compliance with the comprehensive plan. The commission holds public hearings on zoning amendments, conditional uses, and other zoning matters. It then analyzes zoning proposals and makes recommendations to the city council. According to the statutes, the P&Z commission must make a formal report to the city council relating to any zoning or proposal for a zoning change that comes before the commission. In the event that zoning changes are made, it may be necessary to modify the comprehensive plan. This is true particularly if any of the changes being made are contrary to the land uses recommended in the land use plan.

The commission also plays a key role in subdivision regulation. Texas law originally gave authority to approve subdivision plats to "City Plan Commissions." As noted earlier, now the city council may also authorize other persons or offices the authority to approve plats. Through the plat approval process, commissioners and other approval authorities are required to ensure that developers subdivide land according to the intentions of the comprehensive plan and appropriate city ordinances. The city staff, the planning and zoning commission, and the city council all must remember that a plat that meets all city requirements must be approved, and that the plat must be acted upon within 30 days after the date the plat is filed. A plat is considered approved unless it is disapproved within that period.

Only some of the tasks that the planning commission can perform are discussed here. In many cases, the city council is willing to agree to proposals for added commission activities. In other cases, the ordinance establishing the P&Z will list additional responsibilities. One of the most commonly assigned and a most important duty is the preparation and regular review of the capital improvements programs and making recommendations to the city council on timing and funding of capital projects.

## The Annual Work Program and Report

The P&Z should write an annual work program. This program describes the staff assignments and the projects that the city planning office and the commissioners have agreed to work on in the forthcoming year. (It goes without saying that the staff assignments and projects for which staff are responsible are subject to the approval of the city manager or the city administrator.) Voluntary work programs at the

local level are useful in two ways. One is to help the commission plan and evaluate its internal operations. The second is to keep the city council and community residents informed of its proposed activities.

Some of the planning and zoning commissions in larger cities prepare an Annual Report of the commission's activities. While the work program is an "agenda" for the commission's yearly work, the report serves as a summary of "minutes" from commission meetings and notes of other significant outcomes. It serves the dual purpose of providing evidence for evaluation of the commission's annual progress, while informing the public of its actions.

### **3. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND THE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Citizen involvement in the planning process is important. Involvement increases understanding of the benefits of planning while decreasing the uncertainty about the negative effects of planning on personal freedom and property rights. In turn, increased involvement contributes to political acceptance and success of the planning process. In addition, residents can aid the planner through their knowledge of the community. Often, citizens with professional expertise can contribute their talents to the technical aspects of planning, thus reducing the need for consultants. Finally, involvement in the process assures that citizens are given a chance to become aware of the practical matters surrounding implementation of plans. Plans are most successful when the citizens feel an ownership in the final product. Their realistic perspective helps keep the planning process on track and down-to-earth. The benefits of citizens' participation are substantial. The problem is working out a way to involve a significant number of residents.

#### Citizens Advisory Committee

An effective way to get people involved is by forming a citizens advisory committee (CAC). A CAC can be very helpful to the P&Z as well as to the city council during the development of the comprehensive plan, especially in larger communities. Although it is optional and not absolutely necessary, especially in very small communities, a CAC can serve to increase public participation in the planning process, while relieving the P&Z of some of its workload. A CAC does not replace the P&Z; it merely assists.

The CAC for the comprehensive plan is often a fairly large, voluntary group of residents who have a stake in planning the future of the community. Members are appointed by the P&Z or by the city council. A good CAC is broadly based and representative of all the local interests. Ideally, it includes city department heads (such as fire, police, public works, and community development or other representatives of the city who are able to speak in the interest of the various functions of the city), leaders of neighborhood associations, developers, local business people, city council members, planning and zoning commissioners, the local parent-teacher associations, and others who have decision-making power. In addition, the CAC should include a representative sample of community residents from all sectors of the city and all walks of life.

The purpose of the CAC is to provide a forum for discussion of the comprehensive plan or of other matters assigned to the CAC. In the event of the creation of a CAC, the creating statement must clearly point out the specific tasks the CAC is to perform, the time frame for its functions, how it is formed, to whom it reports, who appoints the various members, and how the chair is to be determined.

One important duty the CAC may perform is to assemble the goals statement. Subcommittees of the CAC or an executive committee may hold meetings in various neighborhoods around the city to solicit input. The results of such meetings are then compiled by the committee and reported to the P&Z.

The CAC meets regularly to discuss the progress of the plan and to review parts of the plan as they become available. It makes recommendations and ensures that the plan is developed according to the desires of the community. It works with the P&Z, and it is important keep the public informed of progress.

A CAC is not needed in all communities. In some towns, it may slow down the process instead of facilitating progress. Other towns may prefer to set up a CAC made up of local scientists, engineers, and technicians for technical matters related to the comprehensive plan. Creating a CAC is purely optional. It is up to the individual community to decide whether it is a worthwhile alternative.

### CAC Examples

One city in South Texas has used a CAC for over a decade to generate a biennial statement of goals. The committee consists of about 40 community leaders representing virtually every interest in the city. The group divides into four subgroups to generate discussion on different topics. Each subgroup then reports its goals to the whole committee, which adopts the top ten goals and recommends these to the P&Z. Because the CAC has nurtured broad-based consensus, every goal adopted since the program's inception has been implemented.

Once the CAC establishes the top 10 goals, other citizen's advisory panels are formed around specific areas of implementation such as water and wastewater, law enforcement, recreation, and planning and zoning. These panels meet to decide on ways to implement the goals. A city council member chairs each advisory panel. Because the city council is actively involved in the process, recommendations from the advisory groups are generally adopted by the council.

Support for the program is strong across the community because numerous citizens play a role. Those involved are natural advocates for the policies they are dealing with because they have had extensive input. A successful planning program involves as many citizens as are willing to participate. Broad-based involvement results from the effective use of CACs.

In another somewhat larger city, the city council established a "Committee of 100" consisting of 10 separate committees of ten citizens with each covering one of the ten elements of the city's comprehensive plan that was being prepared by a consultant. The various committees provided advice to the consultant as the various elements were developed. The ten committee chairs then formed an executive committee that met regularly with the city council to provide information and advice regarding the progress and development of the comprehensive plan. Here again, the planning effort was successful and resulted in the implementation of most of the recommendations proposed by the plan.

### Other Forms of Citizen Participation

Besides membership on advisory committees, community members can become involved in other ways, such as:

1. Membership in civic organizations that keep abreast of planning developments.

2. Responding to public opinion surveys designed to provide information to planners.
3. Voluntary input such as attendance at meetings or writing letters to the P&Z commission or to the city council or even writing letters to the editors of the local newspapers.
4. Participation in public hearings and in town meetings to voice opinions.
5. Serving in elected or appointed office with planning duties.
6. Talking with and advising members of the city council, planning and zoning commission or to the members of the citizens advisory committees.

### The Use of Volunteers

Small cities and towns are often fortunate to have residents with expertise related to planning. Retired professionals, teachers at local schools and colleges, and professionals who commute to nearby cities can make valuable voluntary contributions. These contributions may make it possible for a town to establish a planning program that it can afford. For example, retired people may agree to do some of the leg work involved in surveying the housing stock, land uses, and conditions of streets. They may assist in production of maps, preparing recommendations, providing technical expertise, etc.

The problem is identifying these people and the encouraging them to become active participants. There are no sure-fire formulas to make it happen. However, one northeast Texas community of about 8,000 has been able to use local expertise and city staff to accomplish 90 percent of the necessary work involved in developing its planning program. This community has the advantage of being the site of a state university. The town was able to use voluntary university expertise to aid it with organizational development, historical background, mathematical ability, and access to computer operations. (Very capable computers are now readily available to most every community.) Of course, not every small community has a university in its backyard, but many do, and even those that do not have a university may be able to access one in a city not too far distant. There are nearly 150 four-year and two-year institutions of higher learning across Texas. These schools can offer a great deal of voluntary expertise.

## **4. PLANNING OFFICE**

This section reviews the functions of a planning office and suggests how a town can implement a planning program without a full-time professional planner. In a larger city, planning staff handles the nuts and bolts of planning. The staff does the studies, tracks down the information, and prepares the maps needed for the comprehensive plan. This manual recommends that the planning process be supervised by the city administrator or city manager with help from the current city staff. A consultant may be necessary for technical matters such as map drafting, however with the GIS and/or computer mapping software packages that are now available, a local person who has more than just basic computer expertise may be able to prepare the maps without going to a consultant. Before any city embarks on a mapping project, it must first check to see what maps that the Central Appraisal Office has in its files. There may be maps available that will serve the purpose without having to draft new ones.

## Organization and Functions of the Planning Office

The functions of the planning office in a city are diverse and varied, and may vary considerably from city to city. Some of the more common functions are:

1. Management and supervision of the community's comprehensive planning program.
2. Provision of technical support to the city council and to the P&Z on planning matters.
3. Supervision, or actually doing, the map preparation, data collection, and analysis of planning activities.
4. Administration of zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations and other regulations relating to planning and development.
5. Preparation, in coordination with appropriate city departments, of a budget for capital improvements.
6. Public education.

The responsibilities listed above can be divided into two categories: long-range planning and current planning or implementation. The primary functions under each category are shown on Figure 3, page 20.

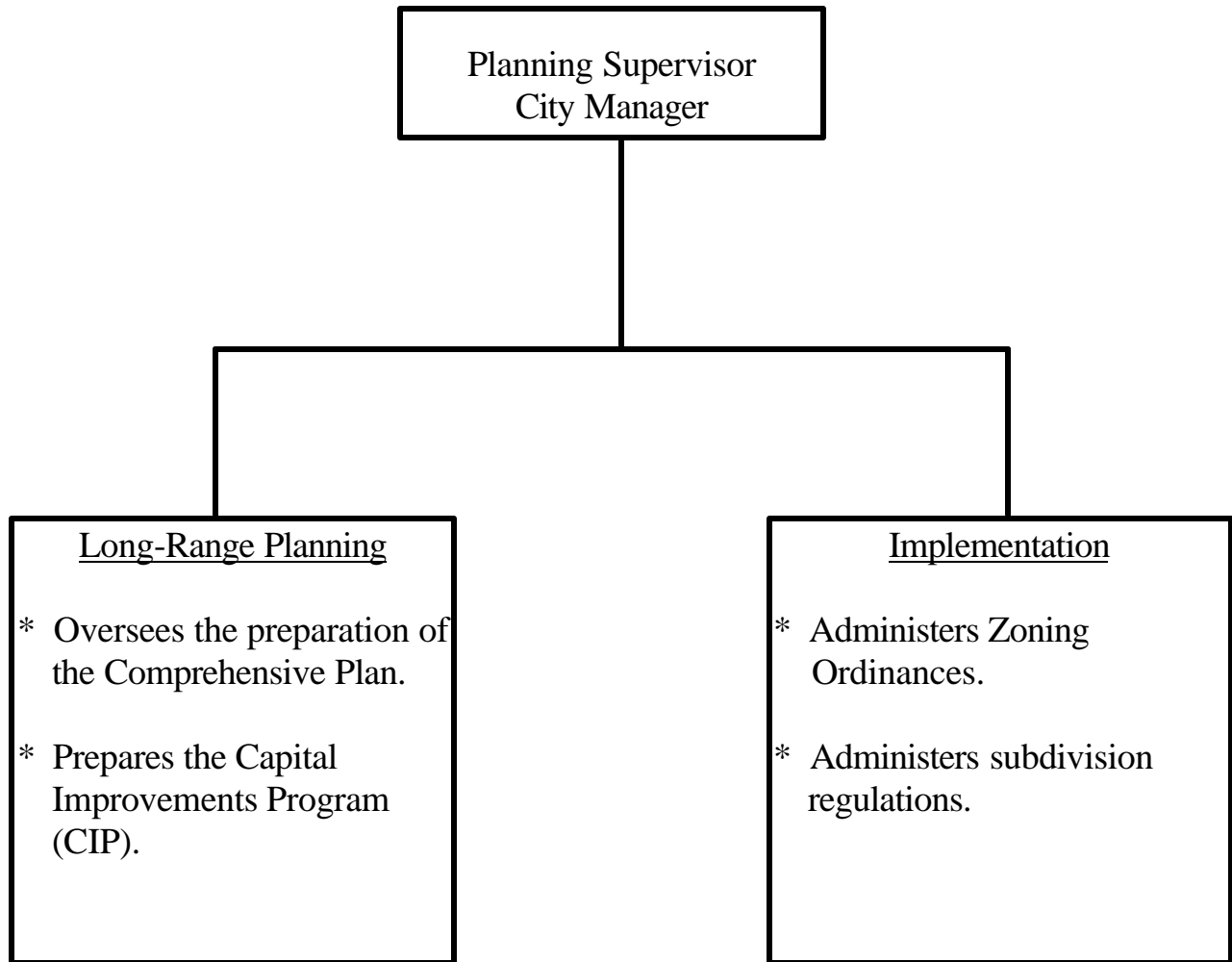
Long-range planning involves technical research, map preparation, compilation of data, preparation of the comprehensive plan, and work with other city officials and the public in devising the capital improvements program (CIP). The implementation section develops, maintains, and administers zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations. In addition, this section provides support services to the planning and zoning commission and the city council. These services include the preparation and presentation of appropriate studies, reports, analyses, and maps. Finally, the implementation section undertakes short-term projects and public education activities.

The planning supervisor directs all these planning activities, in addition to serving as spokesperson for the planning office in meetings with the city council, the P&Z, and the public. The planning supervisor often needs some help with these responsibilities. The administrative details can often be handled by a person already on the city staff such as the building inspector, the zoning official, or the community development director, that is assuming that the city has these staff positions. Someone, and it is generally a secretary, needs to be available to keep records and to type the written portions of the plan. When available, a student from a nearby college can serve as an intern and provide valuable assistance. However, the bulk of the workload will fall on the shoulders of the planning supervisor.

Small communities have about four alternatives when considering how to set up a planning office. They can hire a full-time planner and place that person on the payroll to handle the office and its responsibilities. Another option is to hire a planning consultant to help with the preparation of the comprehensive plan. Where available, the use of circuit riders from the local council of governments or possibly from some university or a state office could serve some of the functions of the planning office. In this option, there would need to be a lot of local assistance from other city staff or from volunteers.

Figure 3

### ACTIVITIES OF THE PLANNING STAFF



The fourth option is to take advantage of local volunteer resources and expertise to accomplish certain planning activities while relying on consultants to supply needed professional involvement. This choice generally has appeal to small cities that are strapped for funds. The choice a community makes is determined by individual circumstances. Some cities that are growing at a rapid rate and have adequate resources see the need to take on a full-time planner and staff. Cities that believe they can handle implementation of a plan, but need help preparing a plan will probably hire a consultant. This may not be as costly as a full-time planner, but when a consultant is used, some staff member or volunteer needs to be available to work closely with the consultant. This person can help to provide information to the consultant and by working with the consultant, pick up valuable insights that should be helpful in the adoption and implementation of the plan. Still other towns may be short on revenue and must rely largely on local resources, using professional help sparingly.

In the absence of a hired planner, one person in the community should be designated as the supervisor of the planning program. The most logical person to do this is the city administrator or city manager, because of his/her broad knowledge of how the city works. If for some reason the city manager cannot fill the position, the community development director or public works director could fill the role. Other possibilities include a member of the city council or a particularly active planning commissioner or other citizen volunteer.

The key ingredients for successful planning are dedication and direction. The person chosen must understand and be committed to planning. The person must be a leader with a vision for the community. He/she must be able to persuade other citizens to participate in the process. This person, with some administrative staff assistance could manage the planning process.

## **5. PLANNING CONSULTANT**

Many small cities do not have the internal expertise to complete each step in the planning process. Assistance from consultants is often needed when the more technical stages of planning are reached. In particular, consultants are often needed to draft and produce maps, analyze water and wastewater systems, determine storm water drainage patterns, and conduct economic and statistical analyses. Strategic use of consultants by a community brings expertise to the process, while maintaining a homegrown flavor.

In choosing a consultant, city representatives should talk with previous clients of the consultants that are under consideration. Other work completed by the consultant should be studied. The consultant's previous work experience and familiarity with small cities should be checked. Fees should be compared and assessed in light of city budgetary constraints. Shopping around and comparing consultant services should ensure that the community finds the expertise that it needs. The community needs to keep in mind that even in the face of budgetary constraints, the consultant offering to do the work at the lowest price may not be the most appropriate person or firm to do the job.

In the selection of a consultant it is recommended that the city send out a request for proposals to a number of possible consultants. The proposals should then be carefully studied to determine the consultant that the city believes is the one to do the work needed. After the one is singled out, the city should then negotiate with this firm to determine the cost of the work to be done. The negotiation will be based on the work that is needed and the ability of the city to pay. Should the city not be able to reach an agreement with their first choice, the city then should begin negotiations with their second choice.

The consultant should work closely with the community in the performance of each task. Ongoing communication is vital to the ultimate credibility of the planning document. Citizens should not be intimidated simply because of a consultant's expertise. Community residents frequently have specific knowledge about their city, which can direct and assist the consultant. The city council and the planning commission must remember that long after the consultant has completed its work, the city council and the planning commission members must still be there to live with the completed project.

## **6. ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT**

The zoning board of adjustment, sometimes called board of appeals, is a quasi-judicial body with three fundamental powers:

1. To hear appeals from individuals contesting zoning decisions where the appellant believes that an error has been made in the enforcement of the ordinance.
2. To hear and to decide special exceptions to the zoning ordinance (where the city council has granted the power to the board, rather than to the zoning commission).
3. To grant variances from the terms of the zoning ordinances where unusual conditions justify changes. In these cases, the board must find that an actual hardship exists prior to justifying the change.

In Texas, boards of adjustment must consist of at least five (5) members appointed by the city council for terms of two years.<sup>3</sup> The council must provide, by charter or ordinance, the procedure for the appointment, and in a Type A general-law municipality, the council may by ordinance grant to the council the authority to act as a board of adjustment. A quorum is 75 percent of the members, and to facilitate assuring that a quorum is available for meetings, the council may provide for the appointment of one or more alternate board members to serve in the absence of a regular member. Alternate members serves for the same period as regular members, and vacancies among regular members or alternate members are filled in the same manner as original appointments to serve the unexpired terms. A regular board member as well as alternate board members may be removed for cause only on a written charge and then after a public hearing.

The concurring vote of 75 percent of the members of the board is necessary to: (1) reverse an order, requirement, decision, or determination of an administrative official; (2) decide special exceptions to the terms of a zoning ordinance when the ordinance requires the board to do so; or (3) authorize a variation from the terms of a zoning ordinance if the variance is not contrary to the public interest and due to special conditions, a literal enforcement of the ordinance would result in unnecessary hardship; and hear and decide other matters authorized by an ordinance adopted under Chapter 211, Subchapter A of the Local Government Code. (The courts have held that financial considerations do not represent a hardship.)

Once the board is appointed, no formal relationship exists between the board and the city council or the planning and zoning commission. Appeals from a decision of the board of adjustment cannot be heard by either the city council or the planning and zoning commission, but must go to a court of record. While not a

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<sup>3</sup> Local Government Code, Section 211.008

regular occurrence, city councils have been known to appeal the decisions of its own zoning board of adjustment.

As this is a quasi-judicial body and appeals may go only to the courts, the zoning board of adjustment, or in the case of a Type A general-law municipality in which the city council has elected to serve as the zoning board of adjustment, the zoning board of adjustment must assure that all of its actions are proper, that all witnesses are sworn, and that accurate minutes and records are kept.

## **7. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Numerous tools are available to the city to facilitate implementation of the comprehensive plan. Among the most important are zoning, subdivision regulations, annexation, and capital improvements. These tools allow the city to translate the goals and objectives of the plan into action. The scope of the manual does not allow for a detailed examination of the implementation procedures. Thus only a brief overview is presented here. For full treatment of the comprehensive plan implementation, we recommend the *Guide to Urban Planning in Texas Communities* prepared by the Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association.

### Zoning

Zoning is a widely accepted and important tool in the implementation of the comprehensive plan for most cities. Zoning is authorized by Chapter 211 of the *Texas Local Government Code*. Basically, zoning is the division of a city into districts in order to regulate the use of private land. The traditional divisions include residential, commercial, and industrial and various subsets of each. These districts are designated on a zoning map. The zoning ordinance specifies the permitted uses, conditional uses, setback requirements, density, height restrictions, parking and open space requirements, and other prerequisites for development within each district. Through zoning, a city can manage the type and location of development and land uses occurring within its boundaries.

Texas law requires that zoning systems be based on a comprehensive plan. In order for a city to enact zoning ordinances, the governing body of a home-rule city shall, and the governing body of a general-law city may appoint a zoning commission to make recommendations on zoning matters. If the municipality has a planning commission, the governing body may appoint that commission to also serve as the zoning commission. The zoning ordinance must be adopted in accordance with a comprehensive plan and all subsequent zoning decisions should be compatible with the goals of the comprehensive plan. Because zoning is an important tool, ad hoc zoning decisions made without regard to the plan may soon render the comprehensive plan useless. Following the plan is essential to making consistent and fair zoning decisions, while protecting the public interest.

### Subdivision Regulations

Subdividing land has a profound influence of the development of a community. It can promote economic development while providing increased housing opportunities, or it can promote urban sprawl, contribute to skyrocketing service costs, and eliminate open space. Thus, a city should establish regulations to ensure that the subdivision of land is accomplished in a careful and environmentally sound manner. Subdivision regulation, like zoning, is an exercise of police power and a principle tool for implementing the comprehensive plan. Chapter 212, Texas Local Government Code, (formerly Article 794a, Vernon's Texas Revised Civil Statutes Annotated) provides the basic authority for Texas cities to enact and enforce

subdivision regulations. The regulations should be based on the comprehensive plan. As such, the regulations are designed to ensure orderly development of new subdivisions and provide for adequate streets, lot design, water and wastewater as well as other utilities, city services, open space, and other facilities consistent with the wishes of the city residents.

The regulations are developed by the planning commission in consultation with all the affected participants - the city manager, department heads, local business persons and developers, neighborhood groups, and interested citizens. Then the draft regulations are then placed into ordinance form and forwarded to the city council. The city council then must hold hearings on the proposals, and when the council is satisfied that the regulations are in the necessary form, the ordinance is adopted by the council.

### Capital Improvements

The capital improvements program (CIP) for a community is a logical extension of the comprehensive plan. The plan projects the future desires and vision of the community concerning public facilities, while the CIP presents a strategy for converting the desires into reality. Capital improvements are public facilities of fairly large size and long life, financed by nonrecurring expenditures.

Examples include a community recreation center, a fire station, major street improvements, a new water well and/or new main extensions, or a wastewater treatment plant. Because of their unique nature, major capital improvements are considered separately from the city's annual budget, but should be shown in a separate section or an appendix to the budget.

The CIP is designed to guide the construction of public facilities by balancing revenues, expenditures, and the sequence of construction over a five or six-year period. The real work undertaken to determine the extent and nature of capital improvements is done in the comprehensive planning process. Here, the community determines where and how it will grow and what facilities are necessary to accommodate the growth or just to provide adequate service. Of course the first step is to assess the existing facilities and their adequacy and then to plan the sequence of improvements to keep up with the needs of the community. When it comes time to assemble the CIP, the comprehensive plan serves as a guide. The CIP should be visited every year with as much as possible of the proposed projects being included in the city's annual operating budget or funded from other sources and another year added to the CIP.

### Annexation

Annexation is another option that a city can exercise to implement the comprehensive plan. Annexation allows a city to incorporate into its boundaries areas within the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). For cities under 5,000 population, the ETJ extends one-half mile, while those with populations from 5,000 to 24,999 have an ETJ of one mile. Cities of 25,000 to 49,999 have an ETJ of two miles; those with 50,000 to 99,999 have an ETJ of three and one-half miles; and those with populations over 100,000 have an ETJ of five miles.

While home-rule cities may include in their home rule charters, authority to annex unilaterally, general-law cities are much more restricted. Those general-law cities meeting the following conditions may annex without consent of the residents or owners of the area under consideration:

1. has a population of 1,000 or more and is not eligible to adopt a home rule charter;
2. the procedural rules of Chapter 43 of the Texas Local Government Code are followed;

3. the municipality must be providing the area with water or sewer service;
4. the area does not include unoccupied territory in excess of one acre for each service address for water or sewer service;
5. the service plan requires that police and fire protection at a level consistent with protection offered within the municipality must be provided to the area within 10 days after the effective date of the annexation;
6. the municipality and the affected homeowners have not entered an agreement to not annex the area for a certain time period.

General-law municipalities not meeting the above conditions may annex only territory within their ETJ and only upon approval and request of the residents or the property owners of the area in question. As a result of legislation in 1999, all cities must adopt an annexation plan and explicit restrictions were placed on annexations of 100 tracts on which one or more residential dwellings are located on each tract. Each city needs to have its attorney carefully study the annexation requirements before proceeding with annexation of any territory.

Cities need to be very careful about extending water, wastewater, or other city services to areas outside the city limits in order to give reason for those who wish to have these services but live outside the city to initiate action to have their properties annexed. An out-of-city property owner who receives all city services without paying city taxes has little reason to want to become a city resident.

By regular review of development patterns and city service capability, cities may be able to use annexation and regular boundary adjustments to ensure that adjacent areas develop in accordance with the city's comprehensive plan and implementing ordinances. Annexation is not always necessary to ensure quality growth since the city's subdivision regulations, if extended by ordinance, apply to those tracts in the ETJ. In those cases where growth is occurring beyond the ETJ, however, annexation of the area within the ETJ may extend the jurisdiction of subdivision regulations to the new ETJ, which may cover the area of growth. Thus, the community may be able to exercise control over development that may eventually become a part of the city. The city needs to regularly review its limits and the development patterns and maintain an aggressive annexation policy.

## IV

### TOOLS AND PROCEDURE FOR DEVELOPING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The community inventory and analysis provide the basis for comprehensive planning. To develop this inventory, the city needs several tools. These include:

1. Maps (a base map plus other maps as the planning proceeds)
2. Population statistics
3. Economic information
4. Natural resource information

Each of these tools is examined in this chapter, along with information about where to obtain the necessary data. (Addresses and phone numbers of appropriate state agencies are listed in the appendix.) In addition, this chapter includes specific procedures for plan preparation.

Frequently, much of the information needed for the community inventory has already been compiled in other sources. In the past regional council of governments (COGs) assembled regional plans with help from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. While most COGs no longer concentrate on general regional plans, they may have special plans such as criminal justice plans, solid waste plans, economic development studies, natural resource inventories, water studies, etc. that may be helpful to the city. Information relating to your community may be extracted from plans at the COG office.

Many communities have used 701 funds administered by the Texas Department of Community Affairs to draw up their own comprehensive plans in the 1960s and 1970s or with planning capacity building funds available from the Department of Commerce and now the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs in the 1980s and 1990s. (In most cases, copies of these plans are on file at the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.) Much of the technical information in the old plans is still valid, particularly relating to geologic formations, soil types, biology, and mineral deposits. Making use of previously compiled data saves the community time, effort, and dollars.

#### **1. BASE MAP**

Because the comprehensive plan deals primarily with the physical elements of the community, graphic representation is essential. Maps should show present land use, proposed land uses, the location of physical facilities, major transportation routes and other useful data.

Obtaining or preparing a base map of the corporate area and the ETJ is the initial step in the community inventory process. At a minimum, it should include the following:

1. Highway and street rights-of-way
2. Highway designations and street names
3. Highway or street grade separations
4. All subdivisions;
5. Block and lot lines for all platted subdivisions;
6. Property lines within unplatted subdivisions, where available;
7. Major bodies of water;
8. All major drainage ways (such as rivers, creeks, underground drainage systems, drainage ditches, or canals);
9. All deeded or dedicated easements with dimensions shown with dashed lines (such as easements for utilities and pipelines, etc.);
10. Railroad rights-of-way, complete with location of the tracks and the name of the rail line;
11. Other major facilities such as airports, major as well as minor parks, hospitals, schools, recreational areas, fire stations, and any other public facilities or spaces;
12. The location of any barriers such as flood plains, escarpments, etc.
13. And most certainly city limits lines and the exact location of the limits of the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction.

If buildings, subdivision names, church names, lot or block numbers, and similar details are added to the primary base map, careful graphic composition should be used to ensure readability, particularly should the map be enlarged or reduced.

The base map should be prepared in ink on a mylar drafting film not to exceed the width of reproduction machines, generally 48 inches. Sufficient space at the lower border is needed to include city name, legends, north point, graphic scale, and date last updated. The scale of the base map for small cities should be not less than 1" = 400', keeping in mind, the larger the scale, the more information can be included and the easier the information can be read. Base maps of 1" = 100' are preferred as these can include information such as exact location of property lines, curb lines, water and wastewater lines, valves, manholes, other utilities, etc. In larger cities these 1" = 100' maps may be put together as section maps to be kept in the office. Cities that have Geographic Information Systems (GIS) may have all of the data on the maps in the office but also have the information computerized on lap-tops that are carried in the field. For example, with a GIS, a street address can be entered and all of the data available can be displayed on a computer in the office or even on a laptop in the field.

As noted above, state statutes require the city to have a map that displays the city's corporate limits, but also the limits of the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction. The ETJ for cities of various sizes as defined by the State of Texas are shown below:

<u>City's Population</u>	<u>Extent of ETJ Beyond the City Limits</u>
Under 5,000	One-half mile
5,000 to 24,999	One mile
25,000 to 49,999	Two miles
50,000 to 99,999	Three and one-half miles
Over 100,000	Five miles

The ETJ map should adhere to the same general specifications of the corporate base map, but may be on a smaller scale in order to fit the width of the reproduction machines.

### Other Maps

The city may also wish to prepare a topographic map. Such a map should overlay the ETJ base map and show numbered contour interval lines consistent with US Geological Survey maps. This map should indicate natural features such as hilltops, river valleys, etc. Thus, it is important for recording utility and drainage data.

Aerial mosaic and planimetric maps are often useful in the planning process. Private aerial mapping firms offer such maps along with special services like planning, interpretation, and drafting. The area COG may have aerial photographs in its possession, and the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission or the Texas Department of Information Services may have maps available. Aerial maps also may be available from the nearest office of the Consolidated Farm Services Agency (formerly the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, US Department of Agriculture). Another source for aerial photographs or maps is the Texas Natural Resource Information Systems of the Texas Water Development Board.

## **2. POPULATION STATISTICS**

A determination of the quantity, characteristics, and distribution of population in the community is necessary in order to develop a pragmatic, long-range plan for the future growth of the city. Population forecasts are the basis for deciding where and when new schools, parks, streets, utilities and other community facilities will be needed. Forecasts also will help the city decide how much land will be required for various kinds of land uses. In order to adequately forecast future population, trends must be studied. The Bureau of the Census (US Department of Commerce) publishes useful data on population, but the Texas State Data Center at Texas A&M University prepares forecasts by county and by city based on ages, sex, ethnicity. Most of the COGs have this data available.

Should the community wish to do its own projections, using past population figures, future population growth can be projected through a variety of techniques.

One is the arithmetic projection method which assumes that population will increase in absolute numbers in future years at the same numerical rate as it has in the past. For example, if a city experienced an increase of 400 people between 1980 and 1990, this method assumes a 400-person increase between 1990 and 2000 or 40 persons per year. A similar method is the geometric projection, which uses a percentage increase instead of a numerical increase. Thus, if the 400-person increase represented a 25 percent jump, one would expect a 25 percent increase over the following 10 years or approximately 2.5 percent per year.

Another population projection technique is the relationship projection. Local area projections are based on previous forecasts made for a larger area. The growth of the local area as a percentage of the larger area is found and applied to the previously developed projections. Still another method is to expand projections made in previous comprehensive plans for the city. The results of all of these methods should be averaged to produce a "recommended" projection.

The population projection should cover a 15 to 20 year period in five-year increments. To keep it current, the forecast should be updated periodically to reflect changing conditions. In addition, other factors should be considered in settling on a projection. Among them is the availability of vacant land suitable for residential development, the possibility of high-density residential development, opportunities for local increases in employment, and the desirability of local living conditions. The growth trends in the surrounding region should also be considered. For example a town's proximity to a rapidly growing metropolitan area contributes to the rate of growth. These factors considered together form the basis for a reasonable population forecast.

Another factor to consider is the birth and death rate. The number of births exceeding the number of deaths is the natural population increase. Subtracting this figure from the overall population increase gives the net migration number. The migration number is an important factor in the population forecast. Trends in the age of local residents should also be considered to project potential work force members as well as potential retirement groups. On the national level, as a baby boom generation enters the job market, demand for housing will rise. The number of aged citizens nationally is substantially increasing as well, while birth rates are declining, but this is not the same in Texas as birth rates are actually growing. This forecasts the need for more elementary schools, but only in selected areas of the state. It also forecasts the need for both new housing, particularly more affordable housing as well as more community centers and other facilities for the elderly. Each community must assess its own situation using trend analysis of Census and the Texas State Data Center projections or whatever other information is available.

### **3. ECONOMIC INFORMATION**

The health and extent of diversification of the local economy are important data for the comprehensive plan. Towns that depend on one company or one industry for their livelihood are vulnerable to economic downturns. Thus, an analysis of the community's industrial base is necessary so that the need for diversification can be identified in the comprehensive plan. In small towns with a small number of employers, this task is relatively uncomplicated. The planner can simply interview the affected businesses and their owners or managers. In larger towns, the production, distribution, and consumption activities that make up the local economy are more complex and require more detailed analysis. The following economic model is offered as a way to evaluate the local economic base and to forecast employment.

#### Economic Base Analysis

A useful approach, which allows cities and towns to determine the impact of existing and potential economic growth on the community, is economic base analysis.<sup>4</sup> This approach separates the local economy into two broad categories -- the basic activities that produce goods and services largely distributed outside of the local area, and the service activities (non-basic) that are consumed in the community. This approach assumes that basic activity brings new money into the community, while the service economy simply re-circulates money that is already there. (The older generations described this as “taking in one another’s washing.”)

A primary principle of base theory is that basic industry is the key to the city’s economic muscle. Expansion of basic industry in turn creates growth in the local service sector. In addition, it furthers economic growth by creating new jobs and improving standards of living for those employed in existing jobs. In economic jargon, this is known as the multiplier effect.

For the local community, using the multiplier approach which is described below, can help forecast future economic growth. By determining the existing mix of basic and service jobs, the community can predict the economic effect of new industrial growth. For example, if the Widget Company decides to locate in Dead Oak City a new plant which will employ 100 workers, economic base analysis allows Dead Oak residents to expect that 20 new jobs will be created in retail. There will be 1.5 new jobs in city government, 10 new teaching jobs, 3 banking jobs, and so on.

The first step in economic base analysis is the classification of local activities into either the basic or service category. Basic activities, or those that bring in outside income, include manufacturing, extractive industry, wholesale trade, resorts, tourism, lodging, and the like. The service economy consists of local-serving stores and banks, lawyers, doctors, city government, etc. Larger retail, medical, educational centers of higher learning that bring in students from other areas, and other facilities that bring in customers from other areas may be classified as partly basic and partly service. For example, a large Wal-Mart Center may bring in customers from a large area, but may also cut heavily into the customer base of those existing retail establishments of the community. Local educational activities are mixed as they draw local taxes, but they also draw nearly 50 percent of their funding from the state government. Sharp distinctions are difficult to make.

Another important initial step is defining the boundaries of the local economic area. Using the city limits as boundaries can give a distorted picture of the economic base since economic activity does not recognize political boundaries. A more realistic approach is to define the economic area according to widely accepted trade area designations. Local merchants and credit operations can generally supply this information by examining the origin of their customers. The circulation radius of the local newspaper is often helpful in this regard as well.

To obtain the data needed to conduct the analysis, local plant managers, business people, and other employers in the community are surveyed. The survey is designed to find out how many workers each company employs and what percentage of sales during the year were local and how much were non-local.

The sales percentages indicate how many employees are engaged in basic and service activities. Once these figures are available, the multiplier can be determined by dividing the total number of workers by the

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<sup>4</sup> This discussion is based largely on the economic base analysis discussion in F. Stuart Chapin, Jr., and Edward J. Kaiser, *Urban Land Use Planning* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), pp. 147-157.)

number of those workers in basic industries. This ratio is then used as a predictor for employment in service activities when new basic industries with a set number of jobs come to town.

For example, if the ratio equals 1.5, that means for every 100 jobs in basic industry, a total of 150 new jobs are created and 50 of those are generated in the service sector. Knowing the approximate number of jobs created by new industry can help the community figure out how much local unemployment will be eliminated and how much immigration is to be expected.

This brief and simplified explanation of economic base analysis is designed to give the non-economist a way to roughly estimate the impact of new industry on the community. For a more precise analysis or where the economic situation is more complex, an economist should be consulted.

In addition to the economic base analysis, a labor market study is useful. The labor market study lists employment opportunities in the community, points out pockets of unemployment and underemployment, and catalogs labor market participation rates. Such a study gives the community some idea of what kind of employer would best serve the residents, given their level of education and skill.

#### Sources of Information

The Bureau of Business Research at the University of Texas is a valuable source of data. It publishes the *Texas Business Review*, a Bi-monthly summary of business and economic conditions Texas. In addition, it keeps information on building permits, and this may helpful in comparing data, but actual building permits for your city should be available from the building inspection office.

Information on employment conditions and trends is also available from the Texas Workforce Commission. Its monthly report, *Texas Labor Market Review* gives considerable data on the labor force and employment data.

## **4. NATURAL RESOURCE INFORMATION**

Data on geology, ground water, surface water, minerals, soils, wildlife, and vegetation are important in determining land use. Such information aids a community in deciding what kind of development is suitable for the particular area. It is crucial that environmental suitability be determined so that problems such as cracked foundations, flooded homes and businesses, and polluted drinking water caused by excessive industrial runoff can be avoided. When this information is not available from previous studies, many state and federal sources can be consulted.

### Geology and Groundwater

The Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas at Austin is the primary source of geologic studies, mapping, and resource investigation in Texas. The Bureau has conducted geologic studies in virtually every part of the state. It has published the Geologic Atlas of Texas, which is a compilation of geologic maps from across the state. Geologic maps show major outcroppings and other formations useful for preliminary evaluation of land use potential. Bureau bulletins, circulars, and reports are available at a nominal cost. The US Geological survey is also a good source of geologic information.

The Texas Water Development Board through its Texas Natural Resources Information System is a clearinghouse and referral center for information on water quality, streamflow, earth science information as well as ground water reports. Ground water and environmental assessments and technical studies in support of evaluating water rights are available from the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. The US Department of Agriculture and the Natural Resources Conservation Service is a source of information relating to soils, erosion, flooding pollution, water and related subjects.

### Surface Water

Comprehensive planning involves cataloging the water resources of the community. Such cataloging includes the identification of flood plains, the location and quality of surface water, and the uses of surface water. The surface water study not only helps to determine where development should be discouraged because of hazards, it also helps the community to plan to meet future needs for agricultural, industrial and residential water.

Water resources information is available from a variety of sources. The Texas Water Development Board is the primary agency to contact for information about lakes, rivers, streamflows, quality standards, permits for water diversion, and a wide variety of other data. Permits for wastewater discharges and other waste disposal are issued by the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. For flood plain information, contact the Water Development Board, the Federal Emergency Management Agency or the Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board. In addition, the Army Corps of Engineers has conducted extensive studies on Texas river basins. Local water districts and river authorities may be able to furnish helpful water data as well.

### Minerals

Knowledge of the community's mineral resources is vital to effective planning. Many Texas cities rely on mineral deposits for their economic health. Knowing the present value and size of the deposits is important in forecasting community growth, or in the case of depleted mineral deposits, the possibility of loss of population.

Mineral information is available from the Bureau of Economic Geology, the General Land Office of Texas, and The Texas Railroad Commission, but don't overlook the Central Appraisal District of the county. Federal agencies that collect, analyze and disseminate mineral data include the US Bureau of Reclamation, the US Bureau of Mines and the US Geological Survey.

### Soils

Intelligent land use involves consideration of soil information. General soil maps indicate which land areas are suited to various types of development. Soil maps are available from the local county agent of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. Other soils information is available from the State Soil and Water Conservation Board or the various soil and water conservation districts, the Soil Crop Science Department at Texas A&M University, or from the Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas at Austin.

### Wildlife and Vegetation

Information on vegetation and wildlife can be obtained from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The Department has used LANDSAT maps to inventory vegetation type and wildlife habitats across the state.

#### Texas Natural Resources Information System

Virtually all of the state agencies included in this report have participated in the Texas Natural Resource Information System (TNRIS). While the participating Task Force no longer exists, TNRIS still is a source of primary data concerning land, water, geology, biology, meteorology, and socio-economics. Data has been collected by the member agencies and are supplemented by access to federal data banks and other public and private sources. TNRIS facilities are available to users in all levels of government, education, and private sector at a nominal fee to cover computer time and products. TNRIS operates out of the Texas Water Development Board and is an excellent source of data for comprehensive planning.

### **5. PROCEDURE FOR PLAN PREPARATION**

The comprehensive plan is a series of individual plans covering different subject areas. Although the plans are separate, they should complement one another. The individual plans should cover the important characteristics of the city. For the small city, the relevant components include: housing, streets, schools, parks and recreation, public buildings, water systems, wastewater systems, storm drainage, and land uses. Larger cities may have other elements included in their plans.

The procedure for producing plans in each of these areas is discussed below. Depending on the city, it may necessary to prepare still other plans which deal with a municipally owned gas or electric utility, the redevelopment of the central business district, and historic preservation. For these plans and others, the general steps toward preparation are the same.

Three basic steps make up the planning process: survey, analysis, and recommendation. The survey step is an examination of the existing structures and facilities in the community. Questions to be answered include: "Where is it located? How old is it? What is its capacity? In what condition is it?" Much of the survey work should be completed during the community inventory. When undertaking the inventory and other parts of the planning process, planners find it helpful to break the task down by subject area and to divide the city into planning districts.

This allows for accurate and orderly examination of city characteristics. It also makes the inventory more manageable because the task becomes a series of small molehills rather than one giant mountain. The planning districts should be defined by roads, railroad tracks, creeks, or other features which are easily recognizable. Districts should also be based on neighborhood units since neighborhoods are the basic building blocks of city development. A word of caution in to be used defining planning district boundaries. While roads, creeks and other easily identifiable features may appear to be convenient boundary lines, the road, creek, etc. may in fact split a recognized neighborhood.

The survey results, which should be depicted in table form and on a map overlay to the base map, lay the groundwork for the next step - analysis. The purpose of analysis is to identify present problems and deficiencies, determine trends, and help define future needs. It is at this point that city residents can see what they have and what they need to do to improve the city.

The final step is to prepare a plan for the future. The plan often consists of the base map overlays, which show proposals for future growth and recommendations for implementation. These recommendations are generally suggestions for capital improvement projects and proposed ordinances governing city development. This three-step procedure is applicable in developing plans concerning all city activities. Differences arise, naturally, when specific aspects of each planning element are discussed. To aid understanding of these specifics, the particular aspects of each planning element are examined.

#### Four Step Process to Improve Your Community with the Power of Vision

Ms. Marie Valenta, in an article in the February 1995, issue of the Texas Town and City Magazine published by the Texas Municipal League, has described a process of improving communities with the power of vision. The four-step process includes:

1. Clarifying your vision. How would you like for your community to be in five years, in ten years, or more? Describe how it would look, what its financial situation will be like, and what values will you observe as you walk down Main Street.
2. Clarify the current situation. Answer the same question regarding how things are today. Define and prioritize all of the current problems.
3. Conduct a “gap analysis.” Measure the gap, in some quantitative or qualitative way, between where you are now and where you want to be.
4. Have representatives from the key segments of the community participate in designing a strategic plan to close the gaps and move your community toward its vision.

The current and future situation should include all areas of the city. Certainly this is somewhat oversimplified, but this process is the same basic steps as has been described in this manual.

#### Housing

The survey component of the housing plan should identify housing units according to their condition (standard, substandard, or dilapidated) and number for every planning district. Vacancy rates should also be determined.

Analysis of the city’s housing should identify problems such as lack of adequate low-priced (affordable) housing. The plan should suggest ways to deal with the problems. A list of recommendations might include:

1. Demolish dilapidated houses and other similar structures.
2. Rehabilitate deteriorating dwelling units.
3. Survey residents to ascertain which community services are being offered and which services are needed.
4. Establish a nonprofit housing corporation to provide low-cost housing in the city and to help fund rehabilitation of substandard dwellings.

5. Add a planned unit development district to the zoning ordinance.
6. Encourage private construction of variously priced types of housing.
7. Establish neighborhood improvement committees.
8. Investigate “in-fill” possibilities. This would involve encouraging using owner development of vacant lots or for the city to acquire vacant properties and make them available for development of housing.
9. The plan map should show the areas to be rehabilitated, cleared, redeveloped, and conserved in addition to the areas chosen for future residential development.

### Streets

The survey of city streets should record paved streets, including type of paving, condition of pavement, presence of curbs, and streets that are unpaved but improved and totally unimproved streets, if any. The record should be kept for each planning district. The results should be displayed on a map and on tables for analysis. The street information should be examined in relation to design capacity of streets, traffic control facilities, established standards (found in subdivision regulations), and drainage data from the storm drainage study. Such comparisons help identify problem areas and suggest roads which need upgrading, those in need of repair and drainage concerns that need to be addressed.

The street plan should show proposed extensions of thoroughfares, roads requiring resurfacing, intersections in need of grade separations, and areas needing additional traffic signals or other traffic controls. A strategy for capital improvements to accomplish the proposed improvements should be included in the plan.

### Schools

Since the provision of educational facilities in Texas is ordinarily not the responsibility of city government, but instead that of the independent school districts, planning for schools must be a joint venture. The city must be aware of school district plans for change because of the impact school facilities have on land use, traffic, population distribution, and other planning factors. Just as important is the need for schools to be aware of the city’s plans and projections for development.

### Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation areas should be inventoried according to location, size, and facilities. Each park should be evaluated to determine its adequacy and the possible need for improvements to park and the possible need for more parks. Particular attention should be paid to the distribution of park land. Each neighborhood should have a park of some type. The overall standard for park development should be a minimum of one acre for each 100 persons in the community. Based on population projections, the parks plan describes the city’s need for future parks and recreation facilities and suggests future park locations. The plan also outlines improvements that should be made to existing park facilities.

## Public Building

Many types of buildings and facilities are required to carry out the functions of local, county, and state governments. Government renders services, protects life and property, and serves social and cultural needs. Placement of buildings designed for these different purposes requires careful study and a long-range perspective. Generally, public buildings serving the entire community, such as the city hall, county courthouse, the police station, the central library, and other community wide services should be centrally located. Other facilities such as fire stations, community centers, recreation facilities should be placed where needed.

Each public building should be examined for location, age, and adequacy of facilities. Analysis should evaluate the facility in the light of expected population growth or changes. For example, one neighborhood may have at one time needed youth recreation centers, but over time the population has changed and now the area needs senior centers. The public building plan should recommend where and when new facilities are needed. Besides the facilities already mentioned, others to be considered include hospitals or other medical facilities, maintenance centers, airport, solid waste disposal facilities, as well as state and federal buildings. Strong consideration should be given to rehabilitation and reuse of older structures and historic sites. One city in Texas has made a very functional city hall from an abandoned three-story school building.

## Wastewater Systems

This plan is somewhat different than the others because it requires the work of an engineer. The required steps are the same, however.

Prior to undertaking the study, it is useful to refer to previous studies of the city's sewer system, if available. Often these older studies contain valuable material. Next is the inventory of the existing sewage collection system- - including number and location of lines, condition of these lines, collection mains, lift stations, outfall facilities, sewage treatment plant or plants, and the uses of the sewage effluent and sludge or other waste products.

Analysis of the system should include determination of overall operational problems, deficiencies relating to age and capacity, and the coverage of the system. The system can then be evaluated as to its adequacy in meeting existing and forecasted needs. Based on these evaluations, a general plan of improvements is prepared which includes an estimate of costs, a list of improvement priorities, and probable sources of funding. It is critical that efforts be made to find practical uses of the wastewater effluent rather than just dumping it down the creek. Water is too precious a commodity to waste it. The city should also explore uses for sludge from the wastewater operations.

## Water System

Again, an engineer is needed to evaluate the city's water system. The inventory includes examination of existing sources of water, availability of an adequate supply of water to meet the needs of the future, number of pump stations, capacities of lines, and other facilities. Analysis is needed to identify water quality, present water treatment and storage requirements, water pressure in various areas of the city, extent and condition of distribution lines, and the cost of buying or producing and treating the water.

Based on this analysis, judgments are made and a plan of improvements is written including priorities and probable sources of funding.

### Storm Drainage

Often this study is undertaken in conjunction with the water and waste water system studies and/or street condition studies. The steps are the same except for the details. The survey part identifies the drainage areas and existing drainage facilities and their capacities and problem areas. Analysis determines the projected peak discharge and runoff volumes of various frequencies and intensity in each drainage area. In this analysis, care must be taken to consider future development that may occur within each drainage area. Once the major problems are discovered, a plan of improvements is developed, again showing costs and priorities. A word of caution to be used in the planning and making projections and plans to cope with drainage. While storm drainage planning is often limited 10, 15, or 25-year floods, Texas is noted for varying rates of rainfall and has, in isolated locations, experienced rainfall rates that have been called 500-year floods.

### Land Use

The land use survey can be conducted with volunteer help if citizens can be recruited. Otherwise, city staff or consultants must undertake the task. The survey involves classifying each parcel of land in the community under a land use category. These categories include as a minimum:

- Residential (single family, two family, multifamily, and manufactured houses ‘mobile homes’)
- Commercial (retail uses, office uses, wholesale uses);
- Industrial (Light, heavy, railroad right-of-way);
- Public and Semipublic (schools, parks, public buildings, hospitals, churches, streets, alleys, or other thoroughfares);
- Undeveloped areas (cultivated, pasture, ranges, vacant platted, vacant undeveloped, underdeveloped).

The results of the survey should be shown on the “Existing Land Use Map,” which is an overlay to the base map. The survey results should also be displayed on tables that indicate the total number of acres devoted to the various uses as well as the total percent of the land area that is developed and undeveloped. A narrative should accompany the map and tables. This analysis should identify trends in land uses.

The future land use plan is based on many variables. An important factor is the input of citizens through the goals and objectives process. Environmental factors such as flood plains, wet lands, etc. identified in the storm drainage plan affect future land use. Other factors such as escarpments, railroads, drainage ways, rivers, etc. must be identified for these will impact development.

There may have been identified other areas which have been determined to be highly environmentally sensitive and also need to be carefully addressed. The plan is also based on recommendations from other plans, especially the housing, streets, utility, and park plans. The land use plan shows where new

residential, commercial, and industrial should locate. It should point out areas where parks or schools need to be planned.

In integrating the recommendations of all other plans, the land use plan becomes one of the more important components of the comprehensive plan.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS: A SUMMARY OF STEPS</b></p>
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So far, the manual has explained what comprehensive planning is, suggestions as to the kind of structure that is needed to develop it, and what tools are needed to undertake planning. This final chapter is intended to illustrate the steps that might be taken in the development of a comprehensive planning program.

### **1. INITIAL INTEREST IN PLANNING**

Towns become interested in planning through a variety of ways. In the example of Town X, neighborhood residents, worried about encroaching apartments, brought the benefits of planning to the attention of the city council. Often a city manager has background in planning and pushes the idea. Sometimes it is initiated by the Chamber of Commerce. Community residents who have lived in other cities that practice planning frequently raise the issue. Elected officials may recognize planning as a way to manage growth effectively. For comprehensive planning to get started, someone in the community has to initiate it, and the whole community must support it.

### **2. INITIAL EDUCATION ABOUT COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING**

The person or persons in the community who back planning must convince the city council and local residents of its merit. One of the most successful procedures to introduce planning is to conduct a town meeting with a presentation by an expert in the planning field. The expert can be a town resident, planner from another city, a technical assistance specialist from the state, or a private consultant. The planner explains the comprehensive planning process and the steps a city must take to initiate a planning program. In order to have maximum effect, the town hall meeting should be widely advertised. Key citizens should be encouraged to attend. There are other means of introducing planning, but all require broad dissemination of information and a strong education program for the public.

A community in Southeast Texas was facing growth after years of basic stagnation. The city council participated in a workshop sponsored by the planners of the region and led by a noted planner from a prominent college. Following the initial introduction to the planning process, the City is determined to proceed with planning and adoption of development controls and is collecting data and making plans to appoint a planning and zoning commission. The city has a commitment from the planner that he will provide training and direction to the commission as soon as it is organized.

### **3. APPOINTMENT OF A PLANNING COMMISSION**

The city council decides to initiate a planning program and designates someone to develop the project. If the city has no planning commission or a planning and zoning commission, (P&Z), the city council may want to adopt an ordinance creating a commission and appointing the members. An appointed citizens advisory committee (CAC) can also assist in the development of a comprehensive plan. The city manager or city administrator is usually selected to coordinate the project and assignments.

#### **4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORK PROGRAM**

The various planning groups meet to discuss strategies for starting up the program. A work program should be set up that clearly defines the tasks to be completed and the person(s) responsible for each task. It is here that the roles of resident volunteers, city staff, and planning consultants are made clear relating to the community inventory, the goals and objectives statement, and preparation of the plan.

The base map should be prepared at the outset. Many communities have maps from previous planning efforts or other sources that can be updated. Maps are ordinarily prepared by the city engineer or a consultant with the help of the P&Z or CAC and city staff.

#### **5. COMMUNITY INVENTORY**

The community inventory process is a major undertaking and must be accomplished according to professional criteria in order to produce credible analyses. Meetings should be held to determine the allocation of the various planning tasks outlined in the work program. The city manager or administrator coordinates the administrative details. Each functional area is often undertaken by a subcommittee of citizens drawn from the various planning groups. A consultant may be needed to help combine the diverse pieces of each planning element such as the analysis and plan projections into a usable format.

#### **6. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Following sufficient inventory and analysis of planning elements, the city next formulates a statement of goals and objectives. Many alternative methods are available for receiving residents' input. In small communities, two or three town meetings may be sufficient to develop a statement. In larger towns, a mail survey to all residents may be an efficient way to solicit information. The P&Z or the CAC would then use the information to write a goals statement. Another option is to hold meetings in each city neighborhood. The meetings should be well advertised, and then carefully monitored to assure that a special interest group does not follow the meetings from neighborhood to neighborhood to "stack" the meetings." Responses from the neighborhood meetings are then cataloged and written in the statement by the P&Z and CAC.

For the work to progress at a faster rate, it often helps to break the CAC into groups based on issues (such as parks, water and sewer, transportation, etc.). Each subgroup works on its issue and then reports to the entire group. To assure coordination, P&Z commissioners may be designated to chair each subgroup.

Once the statement is prepared, it is made available for review and comment to ensure that it represents the residents' interests. The city council holds hearings to receive the comments. Upon completion of revisions, the city council adopts the statement of goals and objectives.

## **7. PREPARATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The majority of the work has been done at this point. It is now up to the P&Z and the advisory group, with assistance from the staff and/or consultant, to translate the community's goals and objectives into specific proposals that are compatible with the results of the community inventory and analysis.

Once the various planning elements are prepared, town meetings are held to allow the community to review and comment. A final draft of the plan is presented to the city council for approval. The city council must hold at least one formal public hearing prior to the adoption of the comprehensive plan. Upon council approval, the process of writing ordinances to implement the plan begins.

**APPENDIX A:**

**INFORMATION SOURCES:**

**SELECTED STATE, FEDERAL and PRIVATE AGENCIES**

**APPENDIX B:**

**GLOSSARY**

**APPENDIX C:**

**REFERENCES**

## Appendix A

### INFORMATION SOURCES: SELECTED STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

#### **FEDERAL**

Bureau of Labor Statistics  
US Department of Labor  
Griffen Square Building  
Griffin and Young Streets  
Dallas, Texas 75202  
(214) 767-6970

Bureau of the Census  
US Department of Commerce  
6303 Harry Hines Blvd. Suite 210  
Dallas, Texas 75235-5269  
(214) 640-4410

US Geological Survey  
12201 Sun Rise Valley Drive  
Reston, VA 20192  
(703) 648-4000

Farm Service Agency  
US Department of Agriculture  
2222 West 2300 South  
Salt Lake City, UT 84110-2020  
(801) 975-3503

#### **STATE**

Bureau of Business Research  
The University of Texas At Austin  
Box 7459, University Station  
Austin, Texas 78712  
(512) 471-1616

Bureau of Economic Geology  
The University of Texas at Austin  
Box X, University Station  
Austin, Texas 78712  
(512) 471-1534

General Land Office  
Stephen F. Austin Building, Room 835  
1700 North Congress  
Austin, Texas 78701  
(512) 463-5001

Governor's Office of Planning and Intergovernmental Relations  
PO Box 12428, Capitol Station  
Austin, Texas 78711  
(512) 463-1778

Office of Rural Community Affairs  
Outreach and Training Services  
P.O. Box 12877  
Austin, Texas 78711-2877  
(512) 936-36701  
Fax (512) 936-6776

Railroad Commission of Texas  
1701 North Congress  
Austin, Texas 78701  
(512) 463-7269

Soil Crop Science Department  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, Texas 77840  
(409) 845-3341

State Soil and Water Conservation Board  
311 North 5th  
PO Box 658  
Temple, Texas 76503-0658  
(254) 742-9700

Texas Agricultural Extension Service  
Texas A&M University  
Administration Building, Room 106  
College Station, Texas 77843-7101  
(409) 845-9358

Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission  
PO Box 13087  
Austin, Texas 78711-3087  
(512) 239-1000

Texas Workforce Commission  
101 East 15th Street  
Austin, Texas 78778  
(512) 463-2222

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
4200 Smith School Road  
Austin, Texas 78744  
(512) 389-4800

### **ASSOCIATIONS**

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## APPENDIX B:

### GLOSSARY

**Annex:**

To bring a parcel of land outside the city limits into the city and under the city's jurisdiction.

**Base Map:**

A map showing the important natural and man-made features on an area, which is used to establish consistency when maps are used for various purposes in the planning process.

**Capital Improvements:**

Public facilities of fairly large size and long life financed by nonrecurring expenditures.

**Cluster Improvements:**

Refers to a development pattern in which the uses are grouped or "clustered" rather than spread evenly throughout a parcel.

**Compatibility:**

The characteristics of different uses or activities that permit them to be located near each other without conflict.

**Comprehensive Plan:**

A document prepared by a city setting forth policies for the future of a community. Also referred to as a master plan, a general plan, a future land-use plan, or a future development plan. This can range from a single map with explanations to multiple documents covering the various elements of the plan.

**Dedication:**

Under subdivision regulations, the voluntary transfer of property such as street rights-of-way, alleys, park properties, etc. from private to public ownership.

**Density:**

The average number of families, persons, or housing units per unit of land, usually expressed "per acre."

**Easement:**

A right given by the owner of land to another party for a specific limited use of that land.

**Eminent Domain:**

The right of a government to take private property for public use upon paying just compensation.

**Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ):**

The annexable perimeter surrounding the boundaries of all incorporated cities, towns, and villages; the population level of the municipality determines the width of the ETJ.

**Land-use Controls:**

Refers to the power of the city to control and guide land use and development, generally through zoning and subdivision regulations.



**Metes and Bounds:**

Measurements and boundaries of a tract of land described by beginning at a given point on the boundary and proceeding around the entire tract by following a series of directions (also called courses) and distances.

**Moratorium:**

The official suspension of development processes for a specified period of time.

**Planned Unit Development (PUD):**

A permitted use included in a zoning ordinance that allows innovative land use within a designated area that does not conform to the established zoning districts.

**Planning Commission:**

A unit designated by a city council to which citizens are appointed by the council to advise the city council on planning policy. The planning commission oversees the preparation of the comprehensive plan, may give approval to subdivision plats, and may recommend a capital improvements program to the council.

**Planning and Zoning Commission:**

This body, created by the zoning ordinance, has the same role as the planning commission, but may also be assigned the responsibility of providing recommendations to the council relating to zoning as well as planning.

**Plat:**

A map of a land tract showing the developer's subdivision plan. It indicates the boundaries of the parcel, the boundaries of lots within the parcel, streets, alleys, easements, and other appropriate data. Parcels that have been properly platted and recorded can be identified simply by the lot number, the particular block of the subdivision and the name of the subdivision without having to describe the metes and bounds of the lot.

**Rezoning:**

An amendment to or change in the zoning ordinance. These must be heard at public hearings before the planning and zoning or zoning commission and before the city council before they can become effective.

**Right-of-Way (ROW):**

A space or area dedicated for use as a road, alley, or utilities. In most cases, the right-of-way will be wider than the actual property being utilized. For example, a street may have a right-of-way of 50 feet, but the actual street from curb to curb may be only 30 feet in width. This would leave approximately 10 feet of ROW on either side of the street for sidewalks, utilities, etc.

**Setback:**

The required distance, set forth in the zoning ordinance, between a structure and the front line, side line or rear line of the lot.

**Subdivision Regulations:**

Ordinances adopted under authority granted by the state that regulate the conversion of raw land into lots for residential or commercial development.

Variance:

An authorization that allows the property owner to depart from certain provisions of the zoning ordinance due to unique difficulties or unnecessary hardship. Variances can be only be granted by the zoning board of adjustment or by the city council of a Type A general-law municipality that by ordinance has granted the members of the council to act as a board of adjustment.

Zoning:

An exercise of police power, conferred on a city by a state, to regulate lot size, building bulk, placement, other development standards and uses of land through the establishment of zoning districts and designated permitted uses in each district.

Zoning Board of Adjustment:

A local body, created by ordinance, to hear appeals from decisions of the city building officials and to hear requests for variances from the zoning ordinance.

Zoning District:

Designations prescribed by a zoning ordinance which set development standards and permits specific uses of land within such districts. The standard zoning districts include residential, commercial, industrial and often with numerous categories within each district.

## APPENDIX C:

### REFERENCES

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Not cited, but a lot of very useful information can be found in the various Papers presented at the University of Texas School of Law's Annual Conference on Land Use Planning Law. The School may be contacted at 727/East 26<sup>th</sup> Street, Austin, Texas 78705. Phone (512) 475-6700.