

1. INTRODUCTION AND FRAMEWORK

The City of Benbrook is a complex social, physical and economic organization held together and shaped by laws, commonly-accepted social norms and community values, and physical, social and economic conditions and trends. The City's private and public sectors also function within a broader metropolitan, regional, state, and national framework. The parts of the complex structure are interrelated and forces changing one element may alter other elements. Some of the forces and trends can be influenced by the City, while some are immune to local actions. The Comprehensive Plan is a tool to be used to direct some of the forces shaping the City's physical, social, and economic structure in a coordinated manner toward a common goal.

As an official public policy adopted by the City, the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to guide decisions about the physical development and programs of the community. The Comprehensive Plan is not a law, but a well-formed policy guide that indicates how the City intends to shape the many decisions that affect changes in its physical and social character. The Plan is adopted and amended by resolution of the City Council, upon the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Both representative bodies consider public comment prior to making any recommendation or decision regarding the Comprehensive Plan.

The information, goals, and plans presented in the Comprehensive Plan are intended to be used to:

- A. guide day-to-day planning, engineering, and financial decisions by the City,
- B. foster communication between the City Council, staff and citizens by placing the government's future intentions on public display,
- C. provide a coordinating mechanism between City Departments, other governmental and quasi-public agencies, and private developers, and
- D. establish a basis for land use regulation and public investment which govern the growth of the City.

The Comprehensive Plan has been produced by a program that considers past and existing conditions in the City and anticipated trends in social, economic and physical characteristics. As a part of the program, the City has identified certain goals to describe the desired future of the City in broad terms. Plans for future development contained in the Comprehensive Plan provide guidance to the City in solving problems and shaping forces of change to create a better community in which to live and work.

In 1985, the Planning and Zoning Commission developed the currently adopted Plan, with limited technical assistance provided by Carter & Burgess, Inc., consulting engineers and planners. The Plan subsequently has been substantially revised and expanded upon the initiative of the Planning & Zoning Commission, city staff, and interested citizens. Any proposed Plan revisions are reviewed by the Planning & Zoning Commission, city staff and technical consultants, and other appropriate bodies (such as the Park and Recreation Board, Benbrook Water and Sewer Authority, or Benbrook Area Chamber of Commerce) prior to consideration by the City Council.

The Comprehensive Plan is a document; but just as important, it is part of a process to influence the community's many public and private decisions. The extent of application of the Plan to daily decisions in the City will determine its effectiveness. The Plan is not an end product, but a step in day-to-day planning and decision-making process. To accomplish this, normal staff decision-making processes will be reviewed so that Comprehensive Plan policies are followed by use of checklists and permit review forms.

The Comprehensive Plan is based on the premise that the adopted plan accurately reflects what the City wants to become in the future. For the process to be successful over time, the Plan must receive continuing review and support by public bodies and private citizens. As time passes and unanticipated events occur in the City, or the City realizes that it must narrow or expand its goals, the Comprehensive Plan must be updated to retain its relevance to conditions in the City and to retain allegiance from public and private interests. Past predictions and projections must be reevaluated for their accuracy and adjusted to fit reality. To accomplish this continuing review, the City Charter requires that the Planning and Zoning Commission review and make recommendations for revisions to the Comprehensive Plan no less frequently than once every five years. The zoning and subdivision ordinances also require Comprehensive Plan review and amendment for development proposals which significantly conflict with the current Comprehensive Plan elements.

To achieve its influence over various land use and policy decisions, the Comprehensive Plan should furnish clear guidance and yet provide sufficient flexibility to enable it to adapt to unforeseen events and trends. The Plan, therefore, must strike a balance between broad statements that give general guidance and specific suggestions for precise activities and events.

Although the Comprehensive Plan is divided into numerous elements, they can be grouped into four basic parts. Section 2 (Historical Background) and Section 3 (Factors Influencing the Comprehensive Plan) identify the existing conditions, how they evolved and what constraints and trends are present which may affect future development. Section 4 (A Vision of the Future) defines the future vision of the City and Section 5 (Goals Objectives and Strategies) identifies general steps to attain that vision. The next ten sections discuss specific factors of the Community's structure and how those factors interrelate. Specific plans and policies are identified which, when implemented, will achieve the City's goals and objectives within the pertinent constraints. Finally, Section 16 (Implementation) and Section 17 (Capital Improvements Program) identify specific tools and actions to implement the Comprehensive Plan.