HUNTSVILLE FUTURE CITY

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The Huntsville Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide future development, redevelopment, and community enhancement efforts over the next 20 years through 2040. It serves as a framework for thoughtful community discussion on the real and perceived challenges facing Huntsville currently, as well as the upcoming opportunities that will shape its future. Through long-range planning efforts, the community can accommodate its projected growth and revitalization in a manner that preserves its history, culture, and overall quality of life for current and future residents.

The Huntsville Comprehensive Plan resulted from a 12-month planning process. The plan's findings and recommendations focus on the physical and economic aspects of the community's projected growth and development in the coming years. It provides guiding principles, goals, and strategic action priorities that will help City officials and staff in determining the location, financing, and sequencing of public improvements; administering development regulations; and guiding reinvestment efforts. The plan also provides a basis for coordinating the actions of many different functions and interests within and outside of municipal government.

Purpose

A comprehensive plan is usually the most important policy document a municipal government prepares and maintains. This is because the plan:

Lays out a "big picture" vision regarding the future growth and enhancement of the community.

Considers at once the entire geographic area of the community, including areas where new development and redevelopment may occur.

Comprehensive Plan Focus Areas

- Land Use and Development
- Growth Capacity
- Transportation
- Economic Opportunity
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Recreation and Amenities

Assesses near- and longer-term needs and desires across a variety of inter-related topics that represent the key "building blocks" of a community (e.g., land use, transportation, urban design, economic development, redevelopment, housing, neighborhoods, parks and recreation, utility infrastructure, public facilities and services, cultural facilities, etc.).

Through a comprehensive plan, a community determines how best to accommodate and manage its projected growth, as well as the redevelopment of older neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas. The Huntsville Comprehensive Plan is aimed at ensuring that ongoing development and redevelopment will proceed in an orderly, well-planned manner so that public facilities and services can keep pace and residents' quality of life will be enhanced.

Significantly, by clarifying and stating the City's intentions regarding the area's physical development and infrastructure investment, the plan also creates a greater level of predictability for residents, land owners, developers, and potential investors.

Why Plan?

Local planning allows Huntsville to better control its future rather than simply react to change. Planning enables the City to manage future growth and development actively as opposed to reacting to development and redevelopment on a case-by-case basis without adequate and necessary consideration of community-wide issues.

Long-range comprehensive planning provides an opportunity for the City's elected and appointed officials to step back from pressing, day-to-day issues and clarify their ideas on the kind of community they are trying to create and maintain. Through the plan development process, they can look broadly at programs for neighborhoods, housing, economic development, and provision of public infrastructure and facilities and how these efforts may relate to one another. The plan ultimately represents a "big picture" of the community and its near-term and longer-range future. Bottom line, the essential reasons for long-range planning include to:

- Provide a balance of land uses and services throughout the community to meet the needs and desires of the population.
- Ensure adequate public facilities to meet the demands of future development and redevelopment.
- Achieve and maintain a development pattern that reflects the values of the community, and which ensures a balanced tax base between residential and non-residential development.
- Ensure the long-term protection and enhancement of the perception and image of the community.
- Involve local citizens in the decision-making process, provide a transparent planning process, and reach consensus on the future vision for Huntsville.

Use of This Plan

A comprehensive plan, if embraced by the community and its leadership, has the potential to take a community to a whole new level in terms of livability and tangible accomplishments.

The plan is ultimately a guidance document for City officials and staff, who must make decisions on a daily basis that will determine the future direction, financial health, and "look and feel" of the community. These decisions are carried out through:

- Targeted programs and expenditures prioritized through the City's annual budget process, including routine but essential functions such as code compliance.
- Major public improvements and land acquisitions financed through the City's budgeting efforts.
- New and amended City ordinances and regulations closely linked to Comprehensive Plan objectives (and associated review and approval procedures in the case of subdivision and land development activities).

- Departmental work plans and resources in key areas.
- Support for ongoing planning and studies that will further clarify needs, costs, benefits, and strategies.
- Pursuit of external grant funding to supplement local budgets and/or expedite certain projects.
- Initiatives pursued in conjunction with other public and private partners to leverage resources and achieve successes neither could accomplish on their own.

Despite these many avenues for action, the Comprehensive Plan should not be considered a "cure all" for every tough problem a community faces. This plan focuses primarily on the responsibilities of City government in the physical planning arena, where municipalities normally have a more direct and extensive role than in other areas that residents value, such as education and social services. Of necessity, long-range plans, as vision and policy documents, also must remain relatively general.

The resulting plan may not touch on every challenge before the community, but it is meant to set a tone and motivate concerted efforts to move the community forward in coming years.

Planning Authority

Unlike in some other states, municipalities in Texas are not mandated by state government to prepare and maintain local comprehensive plans. Section 213 of the Texas Local Government Code provides that, "The governing body of a municipality may adopt a comprehensive plan for the long-range development of the municipality." The Code also cites the basic reasons for long-range, comprehensive community planning such as, "The powers granted under this chapter are for the purposes of promoting sound development of municipalities and promoting public health, safety and welfare." The Code also gives Texas municipalities the freedom to "define the content and design" of their plans, although Section 213 suggests that a comprehensive plan may:

- Include but is not limited to provisions on land use, transportation, and public facilities;
- Consist of a single plan or a coordinated set of plans organized by subject and geographic area; and,
- Be used to coordinate and guide the establishment of development regulations.

Key Issues and Considerations

Pro-actively Preparing for Growth and Development

- Identify areas of preferred growth, infill development, and revitalization, recognizing the limitations of some land within the city and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) being "off-limits"/agency-owned land.

- Consider the implications of new growth for the City, including impacts to infrastructure and City revenues.

- Balance the maintenance of existing infrastructure with needs for new infrastructure to keep pace with development.

- As growth continues, review appropriate land use and growth management tools to ensure land use compatibility and properly located and timed infrastructure.

- Maintain the elements that give Huntsville a "small town feel" even while growing.

- Explore strategies for reducing wildfire and flooding risk and impacts, including development and site design practices, vegetation management, storm water management, and multi-purpose open space.

Enhancing Mobility and Access

- As the I-45 expansion project through the city occurs, ensure project outcomes beneficial to Huntsville.

- Continue to monitor the potential for high-speed rail and impacts to Huntsville.

- Expand the range of options for traveling within Huntsville, with a focus on safely linking Sam Houston State University (SHSU), downtown, and other key areas for pedestrians and cyclists.

- Explore the potential for public transit service, linking popular destinations and serving residents in need of enhanced mobility.

Building Huntsville's Economic Base

- Diversify the area's industry and employer base, also recognizing the changing nature of the office and retail landscapes.
- Ensure infrastructure supports evolving employer, workforce and educational needs, including fiber/high speed internet and other technology upgrades.
- Retain workers and talent in Huntsville, capturing a larger percentage of those who work in the area but choose not to live in Huntsville.
- Improve city appearance and image, including the revitalization of older commercial properties.
- Enhance the positive image of the city by sharing Huntsville's success stories, including those of key community partners such as SHSU and the Huntsville Independent School District.
- Support, retain and recruit establishments to address desires for more leisure/entertainment activities for residents, particularly youth and students.
- Bolster Huntsville's tourism industry, focusing on elements where Huntsville can differentiate itself from the competition, such as proximity to natural resources and extent of historic and cultural amenities.
- Continue active involvement of residents, through community events such as Fair on the Square and parades.
- Seek to improve the availability of quality healthcare options within Huntsville, including specialists.
- Support residents in need, seeking to provide opportunities for all residents to improve their quality of life, and recognizing the importance of equitable development and policies.

Making Housing Needs a Core Focus

- Revitalize and improve upkeep of older housing stock, including through code enforcement of derelict or unsafe properties.
- Attract more residential development to increase housing supply and meet workforce needs, at varying price points including housing that can make home ownership attainable for more residents.
- Maintain a diversity of housing types, including housing for students and for various life-cycle stages of residents, in appropriate locations.
- Manage the potential effects of rental activity in neighborhoods.

Expanding Recreational Opportunities

- Enhance opportunities for residents of all ages, particularly youth, to have active and healthy lifestyles, through provision of high quality recreational and park facilities and more options for safe pedestrian and bicycle circulation.
- Evaluate the feasibility of new sports and recreational facilities, including those with the potential to bring economic benefits by attracting tournaments or minor league sports teams.
- Enhance awareness of and access to the Huntsville area's incredible natural resources, including the Sam Houston National Forest and Huntsville State Park.

New and Improved Implementation Tools to Advance Plan Priorities

- Update the City's development regulations and standards based on its new long-range plan.
- Maintain up-to-date master plans (for infrastructure, public facilities, airport, parks, etc.).
- Itemize mechanisms suitable to Huntsville for promoting economic development and facilitating redevelopment.
- Continue emphasis on progress through partnerships (public/public, public/private, public/non-profit).

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

This plan section establishes the necessary policy guidance to enable the City of Huntsville to plan effectively for future development and redevelopment. Sound land use planning is essential to ensure that Huntsville is prepared for future growth, including public infrastructure and service needs, but also to create and maintain a desired community character. Throughout the planning process, residents expressed their desire to maintain Huntsville's "small town" appeal, have a vibrant downtown, and preserve the semi-rural feel provided by adjacent natural resources. The impacts of future growth and the ability of Huntsville to effectively channel growth and redevelopment in a manner that benefits existing and future residents, through improved employment and leisure options for example, is a primary focus for the Comprehensive Plan.

Land use considerations are integrated with all other components of the Comprehensive Plan. For instance, the transportation network provides access to land, which influences the type and intensity of development. The provision or lack of public utilities can also dictate the location, amount and timing of development. Similarly, proximity to parks and public facilities promotes public health and safety at specific locations and, as a result, affects the development potential of an area. Site design and development character shape community aesthetics and, thus, the perceptions held by area residents and those considering investment in Huntsville. Additionally, Huntsville's location between two large metropolitan areas and assets such as the historic downtown area will be a continuing draws for development.

Legacy of Past Planning

Previous Relevant Plans/Studies

The Huntsville Horizon Plan 2025, Huntsville's 2007 Comprehensive Plan, included the following still relevant land use and development goals:

- Well-managed growth that is fiscally responsible.
- Development patterns that promote economic vitality.
- A balance of new growth and careful redevelopment within Huntsville.
- Development and resource protection outcomes that preserve and bolster community character.

Accomplishments

The City of Huntsville and partner organizations have accomplished the following land use and development related initiatives to support the items stated above:

- Utilization of economic development tools, including Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ), to incentivize new commercial development along I-45.
- Continued design and construction of 2016 bond proposition projects that benefit existing and future residents.

Key Issues and Considerations

Through the Existing City and Plan Direction phases of this comprehensive planning effort, a set of six top strategic items were identified based on input from the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, joint workshops with City elected and appointed officials, results of varied public engagement activities and consultant team input. Four of the six strategic items are most relevant to the Land Use and Development portion of the Comprehensive Plan, along with the specific related issues under each:

Pro-actively Preparing for Growth and Development

- Identify areas of preferred growth, infill development and revitalization, recognizing the limitations of some land within the city and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) being "off-limits"/agency-owned land.
- Consider the implications of new growth for the City, including impacts to infrastructure and City revenues.
- As growth continues, review appropriate land use and growth management tools to ensure land use compatibility and properly located and timed infrastructure.
- Maintain the elements that give Huntsville a "small town feel" even while growing.

Building Huntsville's Economic Base

- Diversify the area's industry and employer base, also recognizing the changing nature of the office and retail landscapes.
- Support residents in need, seeking to provide opportunities for all residents to improve their quality of life, and recognizing the importance of equitable development and policies.

Making Housing Needs a Core Focus

- Attract more residential development to increase housing supply and meet workforce needs, at varying price points including housing that can make home ownership attainable for more residents.
- Maintain a diversity of housing types, including housing for students and for various life-cycle stages of residents, in appropriate locations.

New and Improved Implementation Tools to Advance Plan Priorities

- Update the City's development regulations and standards based on its new long-range plan.

Land Use and Development Goals

Goal LUD 1: A land use allocation and pattern that supports Huntsville's key focuses of increasing quality housing supply, economic development opportunities, and quality of life, while maintaining its "small town" and semi-rural feel.

Goal LUD 2: Revitalized high-profile corridors and continued focus on downtown, providing increased retail and entertainment options within the city.

Goal LUD 3: Focused growth within the city, promoting fiscal sustainability.

Strategic Action Priorities

Capital Investments

SAP 1.   Further community beautification through the design and construction of specific capital projects. Explore adding criteria to the City's capital improvements planning (CIP) process to ensure community

beautification, neighborhood needs, and enhancement opportunities are considered when identifying and prioritizing candidate capital projects.

SAP 2. Utilize the CIP process to ensure development occurs in suitable locations, based on the availability, sizing and timing of adequate water, wastewater, drainage and transportation improvements. Programming of capital improvements should help to further the City's economic development potential, and directing development intensity to locations that are suitable for such uses will help ensure the demands of business and industry are met.

Programs and Initiatives

SAP 3. Examine the use and development of incentives for new housing and/or commercial development in areas desired for new growth. This may include financial incentives (such as property tax abatements, fee waivers, public infrastructure funding, etc.), use of Chapter 380/381 agreements, non-financial incentives such as expedited development reviews, or creation of special districts for financing infrastructure and other improvements. Guidelines for any new incentives should be created. See SAP #8 in the Housing and Neighborhoods section for more information.

SAP 4. Identify and acquire vacant and/or dilapidated properties in key growth areas that become available through tax sales or other processes. See SAP #8 in the Economic Opportunity section for more information.

- Assess where the City, Walker County, Sam Houston State University (SHSU), or other entities own vacant properties in Huntsville and look for land consolidation opportunities to create larger development sites.

- Coordinate with ongoing capital improvements planning (CIP) to ensure that identified infrastructure improvements are coordinated with new growth.

Regulations and Standards

SAP 5. Evaluate the potential for the development and use of a fiscal impact model to gauge the economic impacts of proposed new development. This can help ensure new development will contribute positively to the tax base and offset expenditures to provide public facilities and municipal services.

SAP 6. Update the City's development ordinances and standards to reflect new Comprehensive Plan priorities including:

- Expand the number of development districts from the current three districts to address incompatible land uses, intensities and differences in character types.

  o The expanded development districts will allow for delineation of appropriate uses by district category, and address emerging land uses such as Recreational Vehicle (RV) parks.

  o The current "Management" development district encompasses almost all land uses and should be replaced by more specific development districts that better reflect the desired character of new development and redevelopment.

  o Expansion of Downtown District boundaries to encompass a larger area will promote additional connections between Downtown and SHSU.

- Incorporate zoning strategies that allow, promote and incentivize a variety of housing types for both infill development and new development.

- o Evaluate impact of manufactured housing and ways to better manage this housing type within the City.

- Incorporate zoning strategies that include more detailed standards and guidance to enable permitted-by-right development approvals when defined standards are met.

- Incorporate additional provisions that address community beautification, such as landscaping, buffering, screening, and lighting.

- Include neighborhood design guidance in the subdivision regulations and elsewhere to promote quality residential development.

- Consider alternative methods and provisions for achieving desired development and redevelopment other than through the Planned Development mechanism, which can be time-consuming and unpredictable for development applicants and for the City.

- Clearly allow for and promote mixed-use developments where appropriate, particularly in the downtown area, near Sam Houston State University, and along major corridors, including corridors identified for Corridor Mixed Use.

- Allow for accessory dwelling units where appropriate as a means to increase housing supply.

SAP 7. Integrate corridor standards to promote effective management of development quality, impacts and aesthetics along Huntsville's major roadway corridors. High priority corridors include the I-45 corridor, Sam Houston Avenue/Highway 75, 11th Street/U.S. Highway 190, FM 2821, and SH 30, among others. Provisions such as enhanced requirements for landscaping; screening and buffering between uses; outdoor storage, display and use activity; the type, size, number and placement of signs; site access and circulation; and building placement and orientation should be examined.

Partnerships and Coordination

SAP 8. Work with the Chamber of Commerce, economic development groups, and local developers to identify potential development and redevelopment sites, with a focus on infill and corridor sites within the city.

More Targeted Planning/Study

SAP 9. Complete targeted neighborhood and corridor plans, focusing on housing conditions, connectivity to parks and services, and any other priorities of the specific neighborhood.

Encouraging Redevelopment and Infill Development

During public engagement activities, participants stressed the need for expanded housing options as well as retail and entertainment options. Stakeholders mentioned the necessity of creating new housing to entice the employees of the area's businesses to choose Huntsville as their home. One of the issues identified in the Housing and Neighborhoods and Economic Opportunity sections is the need to work with the development community to encourage new development in Huntsville.

Huntsville should strive to remove obstacles to creating a development site by focusing on sites that have multiple positive redevelopment factors either in place or planned such as:

• Multiple vacant properties located within close proximity to one another to create a larger development site;

• Recent or planned public infrastructure improvements;

• Properties purchased/owned by the City of Huntsville or Walker County;

• Existing financial assistance mechanisms (e.g., TIRZ, Opportunity Zone);

• Near local shopping centers, employment centers or other attractions; and

• Close to community resources (e.g., schools, parks, open space, etc.).

Larger total acreages are preferred by the development community to help them achieve the economies of scale required to access construction capital and increase their return on investment. The City should consider the proximity to potential redevelopment areas when contemplating potential property acquisition.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

A Future Land Use map is intended to show the general pattern of uses anticipated and/or desired in and around the community in the years ahead. The map indicates the type of use that is expected to predominate in an area based on what is already on the ground and will likely remain or possibly evolve over time, as well as projected new development. Additionally, it is recognized that other complementary uses will also remain or emerge in each area of the city along with the predominant use types (e.g., small-scale, neighborhood-oriented retail uses near the edges of largely residential areas).

Specific locations are not yet known in some cases, such as for some future public facilities (e.g., schools, fire stations, parks, etc.), as well as places of worship, that often locate in or near primarily residential areas. Some uses are highly market-driven, with their timing and particular location dictated by the extent and pace of other types of development. This includes the typical trend of retail uses following residential "rooftops" – and typically locating at key roadway intersections. The location and extent of multi-family development can be difficult to predict ahead of housing market trends and cycles, and developer interest in whether, where and when to bring this product to market.

The Future Land Use Map focuses growth within the city, increasing residential, commercial, and industrial uses to respond to the key focuses of housing supply growth, increase in primary job opportunities, and increase in retail opportunities within the city.

The remainder of this section describes the land use categories shown on the City of Huntsville Future Land Use Map:
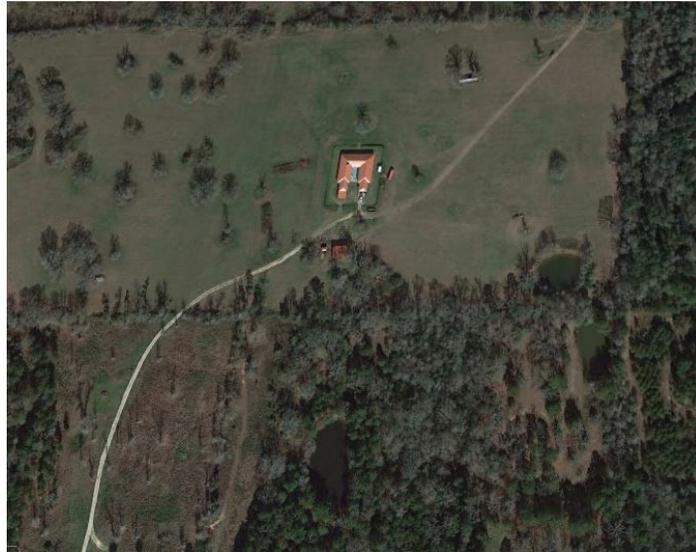
- Rural
- Parks/Recreation
- Estate Residential
- General Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial
- Corridor Mixed Use
- Downtown Area Mixed Use
- Industrial
- Public Facilities/Institutional

The descriptions indicate the types of development anticipated in each category. Also described is the intended character of the areas in which these land uses occur. Specific standards for land development based on these designations are articulated through the City's implementing regulations (zoning and subdivision) as they currently exist and may be further amended over time based on this planning guidance. The Future Land Use Map may also be amended over time, based on criteria listed in this plan.

Rural

This designation consists of lands that are sparsely developed, with mainly natural areas and very low-density residential as the primary uses. It is unusual to find extensive undeveloped areas within the city limits, except in areas that have been annexed for eventual development or that are not suitable for future development. Floodplain areas may also retain their rural character over the long term given their unsuitability for any intensive land development.

Development Types

- Agricultural uses
- Timber uses and supporting facilities
- Residential homesteads
- Public/institutional uses
- Parks and public spaces, nature preserves, and passive recreation areas

Characteristics

- Rural character from wide open landscapes, with minimal sense of enclosure and views to the horizon unbroken by buildings in most places.
- Scattered residential development on relatively large acreages, resulting in very high open space ratios and very low site coverage, and providing greater detachment from neighboring dwellings than in estate residential areas.
- Typically no centralized water or sanitary sewer service available. Much greater reliance on natural drainage systems, except where altered significantly by agricultural operations or regional storm water management projects and/or infrastructure.
- Potential for conservation developments that further concentrate the overall development footprint through cluster designs, with increased open space set-aside to maintain the overall rural character and buffer adjacent properties. May also make alternative community wastewater treatment methods feasible to eliminate the need for individual on-site septic systems.

Parks / Recreation

This designation includes the locations of City-owned and maintained public parks, designed for both active and passive recreational enjoyment as well as open space. This designation also includes Huntsville State Park and protected national forest areas.

Development Types

- Public parks and open space
- Public trails
- Joint City-school park areas
- Public recreation areas
- State or national parkland/forests

Characteristics

- Public parkland theoretically will remain so in perpetuity compared to other public property and buildings that can transition to private ownership at some point.
- Park design, intensity of development, and planned uses/activities should match area character (e.g., public squares/plazas in urban downtowns relative to nature parks for passive recreation in less developed areas).

Estate Residential

This designation is for areas that, due to public service limitations and/or prevailing rural character, should have limited development activity other than large-lot residential. Such areas provide a transition between a city's rural fringe and more urbanized in-city development patterns and intensities. Lots in this category typically range from one to three or more acres, which provides substantial openness and separation between individual dwellings.
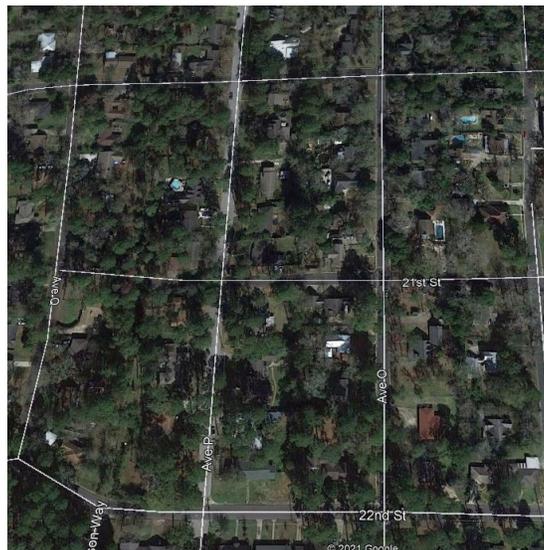
Development Types

- Detached residential dwellings
- Subdivisions planned with large acreages that are clearly set apart from other dwellings
- Public/institutional uses (including certain public assembly uses such as places of worship)
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Transition between rural areas and in-city development.
- Larger lots (typically one acre or larger), especially where required by public health regulations to allow for both individual water wells and on-site septic systems on properties where centralized water and/or wastewater service is not available or feasible.
- One-acre lots are usually adequate in wooded areas to achieve visual screening of homes from streets and adjacent dwellings. Three-to five-acre lots may be needed in more open areas with less vegetation.

General Residential

This designation covers areas with predominantly single-family residential uses at typical in-city densities.

Development Types

- Detached residential dwellings
- Townhomes and patio homes
- Duplexes
- Manufactured home park
- Planned development, potentially with a mix of housing types and varying minimum lot sizes, subject to compatibility and open space standards
- Public/institutional uses
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Residential neighborhoods with less openness and separation between dwellings compared to residential areas with larger lots.
- Potential for auto-oriented character, especially where driveways and front-loading garages dominate the front yard and building facades of homes. This can be offset by "anti-monotony" architectural standards, landscaping and limitations on "cookie cutter" subdivision layouts characterized by straight streets and uniform lot sizes and arrangement.
- Neighborhood-scale commercial uses are expected to emerge over time and should be encouraged on corner sites or other locations within (or near the edge of) single-family residential areas that are best suited to accommodate such uses while ensuring compatibility with nearby residential uses.

Multi-Family Residential

This designation involves areas devoted primarily to structures with multiple residential units, at a greater intensity (i.e., units per building or acre) than found in single-family residential. Higher intensities may be appropriate in certain locations. Site design and open space standards may be applied to offset the relative density of this residential type, to ensure adequate recreational space on the site for residents, and to provide buffering and screening between this and less intensive residential uses. This use category can also provide a transition from primarily residential to mainly non-residential areas.

Development Types

- Multi-unit attached residential in concentrated development, whether for rent (apartments) or ownership (condominiums)
- Public/institutional uses
- Assembly uses such as places of worship
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Auto-oriented character typically due to the extent of off-street parking needed. However, the auto-oriented appearance can be softened by perimeter and on-site landscaping, minimum spacing between buildings, site coverage limits, and on-site recreation or open space criteria.
- Multi-family residential can blend in with single-family residential areas if such standards and associated buffering requirements are set appropriately within the context of attached residential and/or single-family detached residential uses in the vicinity.
- May be limited to two or three stories, with setbacks and/or buffering also increased near less intensive residential uses for compatibility.
- May locate near medical facilities, parks and public services, and shopping areas.

Commercial

This designation is for properties in commercial retail, office and service uses, primarily along portions of major roadway corridors within the community for high visibility and accessibility, but also in other locations to accommodate neighborhood-focused businesses. Commercial uses include typical "big-box" developments that will draw patrons from a wide area, while neighborhood-focused businesses include smaller footprint sites that cater to serving a smaller area.

Development Types

- "Strip" commercial centers along major roadways, with a range of uses, including those on high-profile "pad" sites along the roadway frontage
- "Big-box" commercial stores (e.g., grocery, appliances, clothing, etc.)
- Restaurant chains including various "fast food" and casual dining establishments
- Automobile service related enterprises (e.g., gas stations, automobile service/repair, car washes)

- Offices
- Hotels and motels
- Mixed-use developments
- Public/institutional uses
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Commercial areas with an auto-oriented character that have significant portions of development sites devoted to vehicular access drives, circulation routes, surface parking, and loading/delivery areas, making pavement the most prominent visual feature. This can be offset by enhanced building design, landscaping, reduced site coverage, well-designed signage, etc.
- Buildings typically set back toward rear of site to accommodate expansive parking areas in front, closest to passing traffic, resulting in less emphasis on architectural design in many cases.
- Development desire to maximize signage (number, size) to capitalize on site visibility to passing traffic.
- Often not conducive for access or on-site circulation by pedestrians or cyclists.

Corridor Mixed Use

This designation is for properties in commercial retail, office and service uses along and near a high-profile roadway corridor where mixed-use development outcomes are desired and encouraged. The mix of uses may include residential, especially to provide additional housing options and forms within the community. Major public and/or institutional facilities may also serve as development anchors within the area. Where non-residential and mixed-use developments in Corridor Mixed Use areas are adjacent to residential neighborhoods, site standards involving building scale and placement should be triggered to ensure compatibility.

Development Types

- Planned development to accommodate custom site designs or a mixture of uses
- Wide range of commercial retail and service uses, at varying scales and development intensities depending on the site
- Office (involving large and/or multi-story buildings or small-scale office uses depending on the site)
- Live/work units

- Multi-unit attached residential whether for rent (apartments) or ownership (condominiums, townhomes, row houses, etc.)
- Mixed-use developments
- Public/institutional uses
- Assembly uses such as places of worship
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

The intent of a Corridor Mixed Use area may be to achieve a more urban character outcome, although this may be difficult to achieve in a setting where most business patrons, employees and visitors to the area will still reach their destinations by private vehicle. Site design and development criteria may at least be set to soften the auto-oriented development character found along most busy roadway corridors, as well as to enhance walkability and safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Site design and development criteria (landscaping requirements, setbacks, etc.) may also be used to improve continuity/compatibility between adjacent varying uses.

- Often not conducive for access or on-site circulation by pedestrians or cyclists. Although the corridors may not currently be conducive for pedestrians/cyclists, as these areas re-develop emphasis for a more walkable context should be a priority.

Downtown Area Mixed Use

This designation, in many cities, involves the most intensively developed area of the community in terms of the greatest coverage of sites with building footprints and the least amount of private development area devoted to off-street parking and landscaping. Instead, most parking is accommodated on-street and/or within public parking areas. This enables most streets and other public spaces to be framed by buildings with zero or minimal front setbacks, creating "architectural enclosure" versus the progressively more open feel in other character areas (auto-oriented, suburban, etc.). All of these elements, along with a mixed-use orientation, makes these areas of a city the most conducive for pedestrian activity and interaction. Public plazas and pocket parks can provide green space amid the urban environment and a place to gather and host community events.
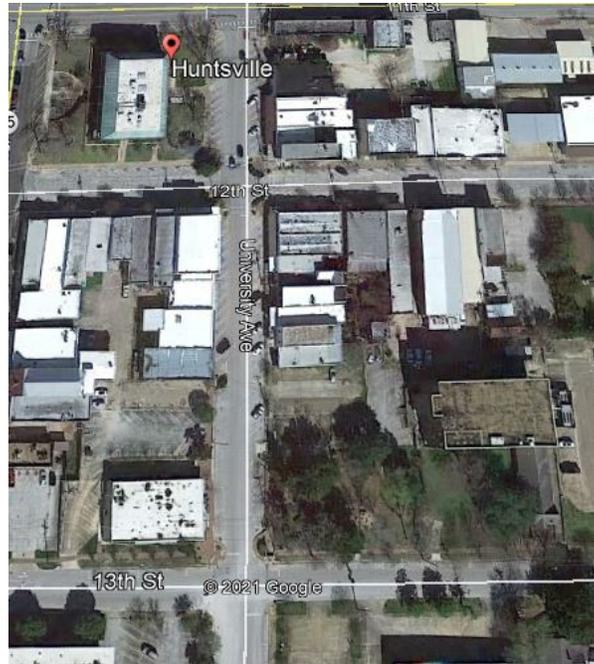
Development Types

- Mixed uses, on single sites and within individual structures
- Potential for residential space above commercial or office uses
- Attached residential types (e.g., townhomes, brownstones), and potential for detached residential on small lots in some cases
- Live/work units
- Commercial retail and services
- Office
- Entertainment uses (e.g., restaurants, pubs, live music venues, theater, cinema, etc.)
- Potential for parking structures and limited public or commercial surface parking areas in some downtowns
- Public/institutional uses (including certain public assembly uses such as places of worship)
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Multi-story structures encouraged or required in some downtowns to bolster urban character, encourage vertical mixed-use, promote retail viability, support transit ridership, etc.
- Mostly on-street parking and minimal off-street surface parking (until the urban character begins to give way to auto-oriented site design in transition areas around downtowns).
- Streetscape enhancements in public ways usually emphasized given limited area for private on-site landscaping relative to other areas.
- May exclude some auto-oriented uses that, by their very nature, cannot achieve an urban character.
- Public/institutional uses should be designed to match the urban character.

- Alleys and rear-access garages can reinforce urban character on blocks with attached or detached residential dwellings.
- Often the only place in a community where multi-level parking structures may make sense and be financially viable.

Industrial – Light and Heavy

These designations accommodate uses that are intensive in terms of how "light" industrial and especially "heavy" industrial activities can affect other nearby properties. This can include factors such as noise, vibration, light/glare, odor, truck traffic, and hours of operation, as well as the sheer scale and intensity of some heavy industrial uses. Depending on the standards applied through development regulations, an industrial area can allow for a wide range of uses, from office/warehouse to wholesale, product assembly, and manufacturing. Some communities aim for a more aesthetic business or industrial "park" environment, with specific standards for building arrangement and orientation, extensive landscaping, and especially full screening of loading and outdoor activity/storage areas, if such external activity is even permitted. A campus feel may be further reinforced by private or public streetscape and design enhancements, including special signage at industrial area entries and key intersections, unified lighting design, etc.
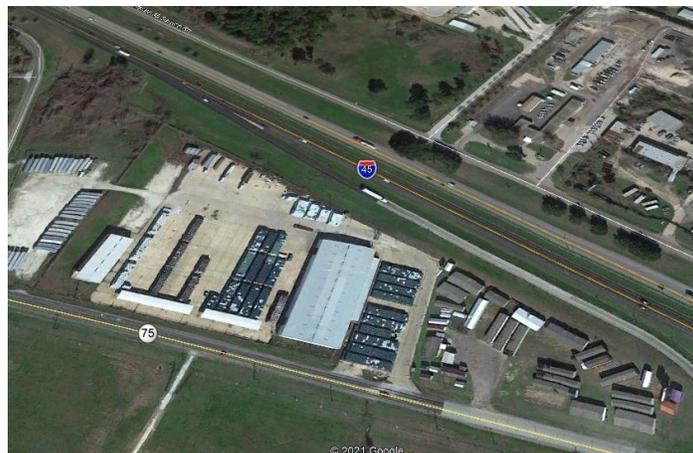
Light Industrial Development Types

- Warehousing
- Light manufacturing and/or processing/assembly
- Business parks
- Office uses accessory to a primary industrial use
- Retail sales and services, including heavy commercial uses (e.g., building supply)
- Public/institutional

Light Industrial Characteristics

- Typically auto-oriented character, although master-planned business or industrial park developments may feature more open space and landscaping, regulated signage, enhanced screening, etc.
- Potential for outdoor activity and storage, which should be screened where visible from public ways and residential areas.
- On-site large-scale moving equipment in some cases.

- Potential for environmental impacts that may affect the proximity and type of adjacent uses, including particulate emissions, noise, vibrations, smells, etc., plus the risk of fire or explosion depending on the materials handled or processed.
- Certain intensive publicly-owned uses are best sited within industrial areas (e.g., public works facilities, fleet maintenance, treatment plants, fire training).

Heavy Industrial Development Types

- Heavy manufacturing
- Oil and gas and petrochemical operations
- Office uses accessory to a primary industrial use
- Public/institutional
- The sole permissible location for sexually-oriented businesses under some local regulations

Heavy Industrial Characteristics

- Outdoor activity and large visible structures and storage facilities, which are difficult to screen from neighboring properties aside from fencing, landscaping and/or berms along site perimeters.
- On-site large scale moving and construction equipment in most cases.
- Environmental impacts expected that will affect the proximity and type of adjacent uses, including particulate emissions, noise, vibrations, lighting/glare, smells, etc., plus the risk of fire or explosion depending on the materials handled or processed.
- Often operate "24/7," which also requires adequate separation and buffering from any nearby residential areas.

Public/Institutional

This designation is for public facility land uses and their vicinities that warrant special consideration. Such consideration is necessary either to: (1) protect a major community asset or other highly-valued use; or (2) buffer and protect nearby properties from potential adverse effects depending on the nature and operational aspects of the public use.

Development Types

- Government offices and other facilities (e.g., community centers, libraries, post offices, etc.)
- Educational campuses or clusters of education facilities (public, private and parochial)
- Correctional facilities
- Cemeteries, whether publicly or privately owned
- Water and wastewater treatment facilities
- Other intensive public works sites and facilities, especially with outdoor activity and/or storage
- Sanitary landfills, active and/or closed sites

Characteristics

- As with all public/institutional uses, a facility developed and operated by a government entity should be designed to match the prevailing character of its vicinity, for compatibility with the character and quality expectations placed upon private properties and developments.

Huntsville Future Land Use Plan
Central City Core
ADOPTED 9/7/21

Future Land Use

- Rural
- Parks/Recreation
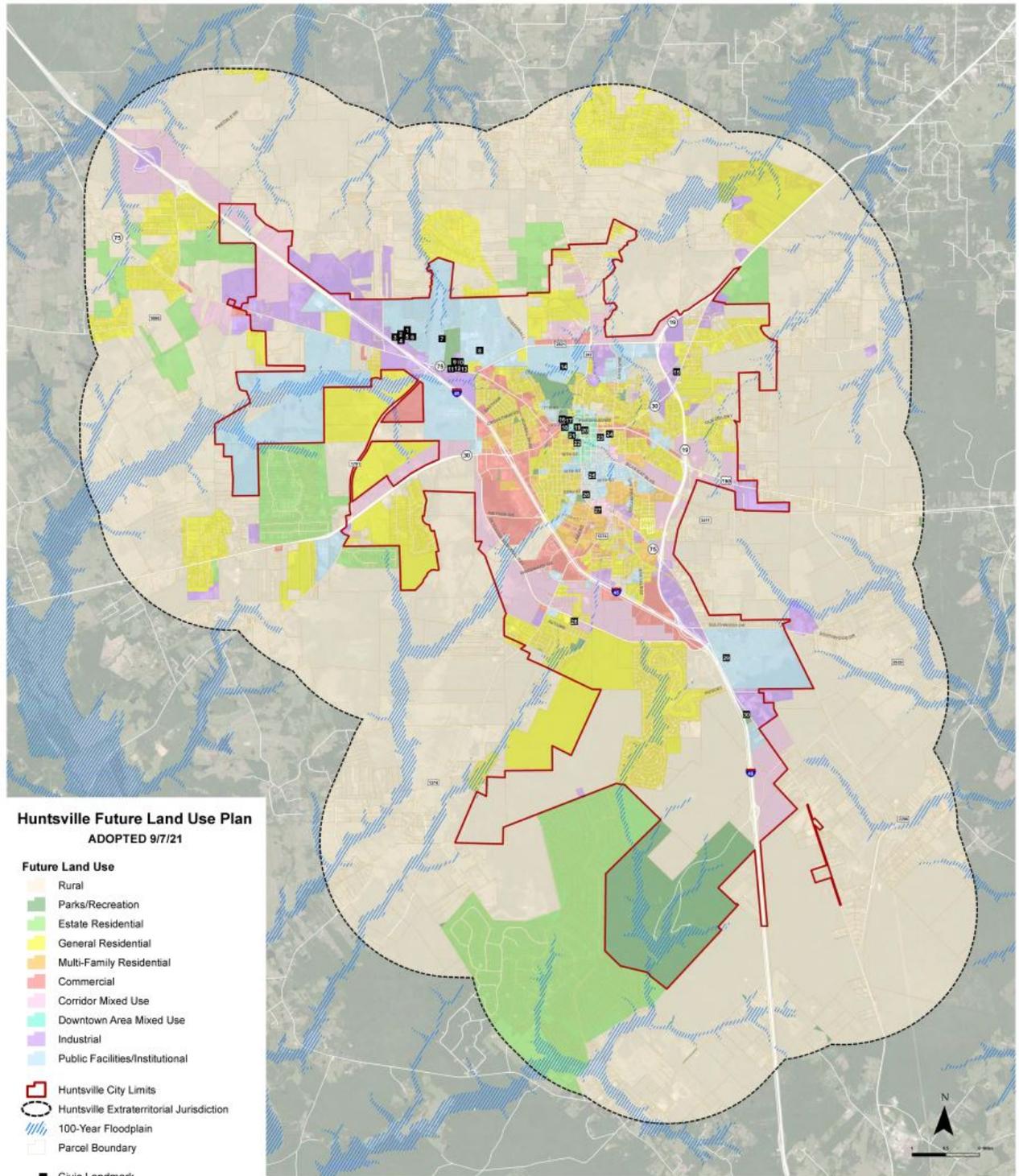- Estate Residential
- General Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial
- Corridor Mixed Use
- Downtown Area Mixed Use
- Industrial
- Public Facilities/Institutional

- Huntsville City Limits
- 100-Year Floodplain
- Parcel Boundary

- ■ Civic Landmark

Landmarks Shown on Map
  8. Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice Wynne Unit
  9. Warehouse
  10. Garage
  11. Fire Station #3
  12. Service Center
  13. Server Building
  14. Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice Byrd Unit
  15. Fire Station #4
  16. Aquatic Center Building #1

  17. Aquatic Center Building #2
  18. Wynne Home
  19. Police Department
  20. Walker County Courthouse
  21. City Hall
  22. Library
  23. Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice Huntsville Unit
  24. Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice Director's Office
  25. Sam Houston State University

  26. Fire Station #2
  27. Sam Houston State University Police
  28. Fire Station #1

NOTE: A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.

Huntsville Future Land Use Plan
ADOPTED 9/7/21

Future Land Use

- Rural
- Parks/Recreation
- Estate Residential
- General Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial
- Corridor Mixed Use
- Downtown Area Mixed Use
- Industrial
- Public Facilities/Institutional

- Huntsville City Limits
- Huntsville Extraterritorial Jurisdiction
- 100-Year Floodplain
- Parcel Boundary

- Civic Landmark

1. TIPS Warehouse
2. Recycle Building #1
3. Recycle Building #2
4. Transfer Station Scale
5. Transfer Station Office & Weld Shop
6. Transfer Station Main Building
7. Bruce Brothers Huntsville Regional Airport
8. Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice Wynne Unit
9. Warehouse
10. Garage
11. Fire Station #3
12. Service Center
13. Server Building
14. Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice Byrd Unit
15. Fire Station #4
16. Aquatic Center Building #1
17. Aquatic Center Building #2
18. Wynne Home
19. Police Department
20. Walker County Courthouse
21. City Hall
22. Library
23. Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice Huntsville Unit
24. Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice Director's Office
25. Sam Houston State University Campus
26. Fire Station #2
27. Sam Houston State University Police
28. Fire Station #1
29. Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice Goree Unit
30. Sam Houston Statue and Visitors Center

NOTE: A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.

Future Land Use Planning Versus Zoning

The side-by-side comparison below highlights the distinct purposes and uses of a future land use map relative to a zoning (development district) map.

	Future Land Use Map	Zoning Map
Purpose	▪ Outlook for the future use of land and the character of development in the community. ▪ Macro level - generalized development pattern.	▪ Basis for applying different land use regulations and development standards in different areas of the community ("zones"). ▪ Micro level—site and area-specific focus.
Use	▪ Guidance for the City's zoning map and related decisions (zone change requests, variance applications, etc.). ▪ Baseline for monitoring consistency of actions and decisions with the Comprehensive Plan.	▪ Regulating development as it is proposed, or as sites are positioned for the future with appropriate zoning (by the property owner or the City).
Inputs and Considerations	▪ Existing land use in the city. ▪ The locational aspects of community planning priorities involving economic development, housing, infrastructure, parks and recreation, public facilities, etc.	▪ Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use map for general guidance. ▪ Zoning decisions that differ substantially from the general development pattern depicted on the Future Land Use map should indicate the need for some map adjustments the next time the Comprehensive Plan is revised.

The City's development regulations are among the primary tools for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. The zoning regulations, in particular, play a significant role in establishing and protecting the physical character of the community. These regulations delineate land use districts and the types of uses permitted within them, together with standards for buildings and site improvements. As a result, the zoning regulations, together with the City's subdivision regulations where applicable, largely direct development outcomes. This is essential as it provides a regulatory context in which local land use decisions may be made to foster a prosperous economy, a sustainable environment, and a high quality of life for residents.

Although the Comprehensive Plan and associated future land use map provide only general planning guidance, their role is especially relevant as it can lead to rewrites and updates of the zoning regulations and district map. It is only through the official zoning map and the ongoing zoning administration process that binding, legally enforceable decisions are made about property uses and compatibility on a case-by-case basis. **Adoption of this Comprehensive Plan, including the future land use map, does not mean that the City's zoning approach or mapping will automatically change.** Instead, the future land use map provides a tool for ongoing evaluation of how land uses in certain parts of the community may evolve over time while some areas (e.g., established, stable neighborhoods) are likely to stay much as they are over the long term.

Current Zoning (Development Districts)

Provided in the table below, **Designations on Future Land Use Map Relative to Current Zoning (Development) Districts**, is a comparison between the land use and character designations described above and the current districts in Huntsville's zoning regulations.

Designations on Future Land Use Map Relative to Current Zoning (Development) Districts	
Designation	**Most Closely Associated Development District(s)**
Rural	Management District (M)
Parks and Recreation	Management District (M)
Estate Residential	Management District (M)
General Residential	Neighborhood Conservation District (NC) Management District (M)
Multi-Family Residential	Management District (M)
General Commercial	Management District (M)
Corridor Mixed Use	Management District (M)
Downtown Area Mixed Use	Downtown District (D)
Industrial - Light	Management District (M)
Industrial - Heavy	Management District (M)
Public/Institutional	Management District (M)

Criteria for Proposed Amendments to the Future Land Use Map

Along with procedures for monitoring and periodically updating the Comprehensive Plan, another specific issue involves consideration of proposed amendments to the adopted future land use map. A first consideration is whether a map amendment is necessary immediately, such as in conjunction with a particular rezoning request? Or, can a potential adjustment to the future land use map wait so that it may be examined more holistically, along with any other map changes under consideration, through the next interim review and update of the entire Comprehensive Plan?

The items below should be reviewed and addressed, especially by the Planning Commission, when a future land use map adjustment is proposed:

- **Scope of Amendment:** Is the proposed map change limited to one or a few parcels or would it affect a much larger area?
- **Change in Circumstances:** What specific conditions have changed sufficiently to render the current map designation(s) inappropriate or out-of-date (e.g., city's population size and/or characteristics, area character and building form, property/structure conditions, infrastructure or public services, market factors including need for more land in a particular designation, etc.)?
- **Consistency with Other Plans:** In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, is the proposed map change consistent with the intent and policy direction of any other applicable plans (utility infrastructure or drainage plans, parks master plan, etc.)?

- **Adequate Information:** Do City staff, the Planning Commission, and/or City Council have enough and appropriate information to move ahead with a decision (e.g., utility capacity, potential traffic impacts, other public service implications, resident/stakeholder concerns and input)?
- **Stakeholder Input:** What points, concerns and insights have been raised by area residents, property owners, business owners, or others?

Land Use Policies

The written policy statements below are intended as a supplement to the Future Land Use Map, which provides only a visual depiction of desired land use patterns and sound development practices. City officials and staff should use these statements as a guide and reference, particularly when making decisions regarding proposed development activity in the city limits and ETJ, and/or changes in zoning classifications within the city.

General

- Land uses should not detract from the enjoyment or value of neighboring properties.
- Potential negative land use effects (noise, odor, dust, excessive light, traffic, etc.) should be considered in development review/approval and mitigated.
- Adequate transportation access and circulation should be provided for uses that generate large numbers of trips. Pedestrian and bicycle access should be addressed where appropriate.
- Well-planned mixed-use projects are encouraged where compatible with nearby development.
- Floodplain areas should not be encroached upon by future development unless there is compliance with stringent floodplain management practices. These areas should be used for parks or recreational or related purposes, or for agricultural uses.
- Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected, including wildlife habitat areas.

Residential

- Residential areas should not be located next to industrial areas where avoidable.
- Residential and commercial areas may be adjacent if separated by a buffer.
- Schools, parks and community facilities should be located close to or within residential neighborhoods.
- Houses should have direct access to local residential streets but not to collector streets or thoroughfares.
- Houses should not be adjacent to major highways.
- New residential development should be buffered from collector streets and thoroughfares.
- Residential developments should include adequate area for parks and recreation facilities, schools and places of worship.

Retail / Office

- Neighborhood retail and service uses should be located at intersections of thoroughfares or collector streets or at the edge of logical neighborhood areas unless appropriately placed within a planned development.
- Retail development should be clustered throughout the city and convenient to residential areas.
- Buffers should separate retail/office uses and residential areas.

- The downtown area should be a focus for office, retail and service activities in appropriate locations relative to existing residential uses, particularly through adaptive re-use of existing structures or redevelopment of vacant properties and sites with heavy commercial or industrial uses.
- Office and professional uses should be compatible with nearby residential areas and other uses through appropriate building height limitations and adequate buffering and landscaping.
- Low-intensity office and professional uses should provide a transition between more intense uses and residential areas.

Commercial

- Commercial uses with more intensive operational or traffic characteristics should be located away from most residential areas.
- Heavy commercial development should be concentrated in nodes at intersections and along major thoroughfares that are designed and constructed to accommodate higher traffic volumes.
- Buffers should separate heavy commercial uses from any adjacent residential areas, especially where the commercial use involves visible display or outdoor storage of merchandise or materials.

Industrial

- Industrial development should not be directly adjacent to residential areas.
- Industrial uses should be located in dedicated industrial development areas.
- Industrial development should be separated from other uses by buffers.
- Industrial development should have good access to major thoroughfares and highways.
- Industrial development involving trucking operations should have good access to truck routes and designated hazardous material routes.

Parks and Open Space

- Parks should be evenly distributed throughout the city and include larger community parks and smaller neighborhood parks.
- Pedestrian connections should be provided between parks, schools, residential areas, and employment centers.
- Parks are a desirable use for floodplain areas.
- Parks and open space should be used to buffer incompatible land uses.
- Natural features should be used as buffers or preserved open space between or around developed areas.
- Community attractions that draw many external visitors should be in locations with good regional transportation access and visibility.

Community Facilities

- Community facilities should be located in easily accessible areas within the community.
- Community facilities, depending on their scale and level of activity, should be located adjacent to thoroughfares or collector streets to accommodate traffic.
- Community facilities should be well buffered from nearby residential areas.

- The downtown area should continue to be enhanced as a preferred location for civic, cultural, entertainment and tourism activities.

GROWTH CAPACITY

Introduction

This plan section focuses on the utility infrastructure, public safety services, and community facility needs of Huntsville in the decades ahead. Infrastructure investment, capacity, and maintenance are a critical component of the ability of Huntsville to successfully attract and accommodate new population and business growth. Likewise, infrastructure investment and maintenance are central components of successful revitalization of Huntsville's established neighborhoods and non-residential areas.

Capital investments in public infrastructure such as utilities and streets signal the desired locations for growth and revitalization, help maintain a high quality of life for residents, and create a framework for land development.

Legacy of Past Planning

Previous Relevant Plans/Studies

The Huntsville Horizon Plan 2025, Huntsville's 2007 Comprehensive Plan, included the following still relevant growth capacity goals:

- Adequate, reliable water supply and associated infrastructure to serve long-term community needs.
- Adequate wastewater collection and treatment capacity to accommodate long-term growth objectives and projected needs.
- Minimized risk to lives and property from flooding through effective storm water management practices.
- Reliable, cost-effective public safety services that assure the security of residents and businesses.
- Adequate community facilities to house essential City functions and also enrich the experience of living in Huntsville.

Accomplishments

Recent investments in Huntsville's facilities and infrastructure to support the items stated above include:

- 2016 Water and Wastewater Condition and Capacity Assessment Study and resulting capital projects
- 2016 voter-approved bond and resulting infrastructure and facility projects

Key Issues and Considerations

Through the Existing City and Plan Direction phases of this comprehensive planning effort, a set of six top strategic items were identified based on input from the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, joint workshops with City elected and appointed officials, results of varied public engagement activities and consultant team input. Three of the six strategic items are most relevant to the Growth Capacity portion of the Comprehensive Plan, along with the specific related issues under each:

Pro-actively Preparing for Growth and Development

- Identify areas of preferred growth, infill development and revitalization, recognizing the limitations of some land within the city and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) being "off-limits"/agency-owned land.

- Consider the implications of new growth for the City, including impacts to infrastructure and City revenues.

- Balance the maintenance of existing infrastructure with needs for new infrastructure to keep pace with development.

- As growth continues, review appropriate land use and growth management tools to ensure land use compatibility and properly located and timed infrastructure.

- Explore strategies for reducing wildfire and flooding risk and impacts, including development and site design practices, vegetation management, storm water management, and multi-purpose open space.

Building Huntsville's Economic Base

- Ensure infrastructure supports evolving employer, workforce and educational needs, including fiber/high speed internet and other technology upgrades.

New and Improved Implementation Tools to Advance Plan Priorities

- Update the City's development regulations and standards based on its new long-range plan.

- Maintain up-to-date master plans (for infrastructure, public facilities, airport, parks, etc.).

- Continue emphasis on progress through partnerships (public/public, public/private, public/non-profit).

Growth Capacity Goals

Goal GC1: A balanced approach to infrastructure investment that meets the infrastructure needs of new development and the reinvestment and rehabilitation needs of existing development.

Goal GC2: Continued high-quality public safety services that receive budget and community support to maintain responsiveness and levels of service.

Goal GC3: Public facilities and infrastructure that are well-maintained and serve the needs of Huntsville residents, visitors, and businesses, while allowing for growth.

Strategic Action Priorities

Capital Investments

SAP 1.   Continue use of, and focused implementation of short to mid-term capital projects with formalized Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process for identifying, prioritizing and funding essential capital projects. CIP projects should include basic infrastructure (water, wastewater, streets, and storm drainage), parks, trails, sidewalks, municipal buildings and property, rights-of-way / easement acquisition, plans and studies, design, construction, and signage. Grants can be utilized to supplement capital improvement projects.

Prioritization factors should include:

- Immediate public health and safety issues.

- Improvements dictated by state/federal mandates or as a permit condition.

- Geographic and/or socioeconomic fairness across the city.
- Public meetings and input (such as accomplished for this Comprehensive Plan).
- Input from City staff and/or consultants on technical and financial readiness for particular projects.
- Inter-departmental working groups, especially to coordinate on sequencing considerations for or across multiple projects.

SAP 2. Continue maintenance and rehabilitation of City assets and provide capacity increases to meet planned growth needs. Photo: Existing City Hall, 13th Street and Avenue M.

City Hall Renovations

The current city hall has foundation and structural issues and will need to be demolished according to project architects. The 2016 bond package included $13 million for a new city hall. The current city hall building will be demolished and rebuilt on its current site and will have two floors. Adjacent land will be purchased and utilized for surface parking. The total acreage of the adjacent properties is 2.65 acres.

SAP 3. Continue to implement the mitigation actions for the Huntsville Hazard Mitigation Plan Update and evaluate the plan for changing needs and potential funding opportunities.

Huntsville Hazard Mitigation Plan

The City of Huntsville adopted the Huntsville Hazard Mitigation Plan Update in 2018. This plan identifies hazards and mitigation actions to alleviate or respond to hazards. The plan addresses the following hazards and risks:

- Wildfires
- Hailstorm
- Windstorms
- Tornadoes
- Expansive Soils
- Floods
- Hurricanes/Tropical Storms
- Dam/Levee Failure
- Drought
- Extreme Heat
- Severe Winter Storms
- Lightning

2018

Huntsville Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

HALFF

Programs and Initiatives

SAP 4. Continue to improve City's water and wastewater systems, through continued implementation of the System Capacity CIP and Renewal Program CIP projects identified within the 2016 Water and Wastewater Condition and Capacity Assessment Study.

- Identify development that will trigger water and wastewater treatment plant capacity expansions and/or water distribution system and wastewater collection system upsizing.
- Evaluate lift station elevation and existing gravity collection lines. Examine the potential to eliminate the need for lift stations by extending gravity collection lines.
- Review the City's Certificate of Convenience and Necessity (CCN) for water and wastewater services and add or remove areas based on growth patterns of the city.

SAP 5. Consider regional storm water detention facilities in areas that will alleviate flooding and potentially establish new developable areas.

- A drainage analysis will need to be performed to validate the feasibility of regional storm water detention facilities within the city. The regional concept should be evaluated for a fee structure to allow developers to purchase volume or construction options based on City of Huntsville detention requirements.

SAP 6. Expand water conservation education efforts for residents, in alignment with Region "H" Regional Water Plan.

Texas Regional Water Planning Areas
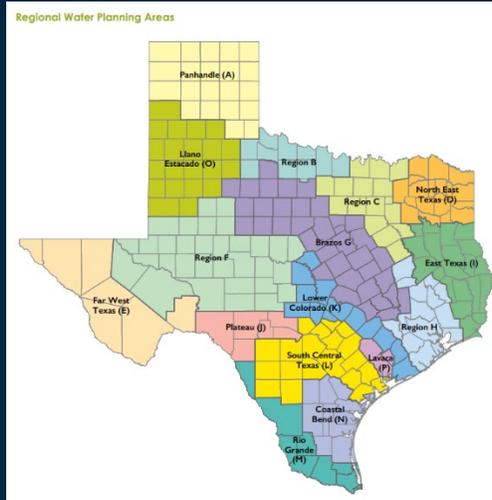
The Texas Water Development Board has divided the state into 16 regional water planning areas. Huntsville is located within what is known as the Region H Regional Water Planning Area. Each regional water planning area is responsible for identifying water supply needs and projects for their planning area.

SAP 7.   Continue to support improvements to the broadband and fiber internet network as a component of Huntsville's infrastructure, for example by encouraging "dig once" policies for infrastructure improvements.

SAP 8.   Work to expand Huntsville's voluntary cell phone registry for emergency notification of residents, in coordination with Walker County's Public Safety Command Center's CodeRED notification enrollment to ensure that residents that register with either system receive the appropriate emergency communications.

SAP 9.   Continue funding support to maintain high-quality public safety services, including staff levels, facilities, and equipment at an adequate level to maintain public safety.

- Maintain the Huntsville Fire Department's Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of 2, while continuing to strive to improve the rating to a coveted 1 (on a scale of 1 to 10).

- Continue the Huntsville's Police Department membership in the Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program.

SAP 10. Continue wildfire preparedness efforts, including Firewise education efforts, to reduce the risk of wildfires.

Wildfire Preparedness

A significant portion of the City and ETJ currently consists of undeveloped, forested land including Huntsville State Park and portions of the Sam Houston National Forest. Forested areas may experience wildfires. In 2011 Walker County experienced 104 wildfires that led to more than 6,700 acres of land burning. Substantial efforts by community leaders and state and federal agencies in recent years have helped to reduce the number and severity of wildfires.

"Ready, Set, Go!" Initiative

The City of Huntsville is part of the "Ready, Set, Go!" Initiative, a national program managed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). The main goal of this initiative is to develop and improve the communication between residents and the fire department. In order to achieve this mission, the Huntsville Fire Department identifies individuals living in high risk wildfire areas and the wildland-urban interface and teaches them safety precautions to follow in the event of a wildfire.

Firewise Communities

The Firewise Communities Program is led by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). As part of the program, federal and state land management agencies and local fire departments team up to provide resources for wildfire prevention. This program is only available to communities that meet certain criteria, including:

- Completing a community assessment
- Forming a Firewise board or committee to accept the assessment, create an action plan, and monitor activity
- Holding a Firewise Day event
- Investing at least $2 per capita annually in community mitigation activities

Once a community becomes a part of the program it receives periodic workshops and training sessions from program leaders and advocates that teach residents effective risk communication and behavior change techniques to reduce manmade ignition risks. Firewise communities may be eligible to receive funding from the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 for Firewise activities and, in the event of a fire, have access to FEMA pre- and post-disaster hazard mitigation grants.

The Elkins Lake community was the first in Walker County to receive the Firewise community recognition in 2012.

Walker County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (WCCWPP)

With the rising cases of wildfires across Texas in 2005, a partnership was formed between Walker County, Huntsville, Elkins Lake community leaders and the Texas Forest Service to help protect rural homes surrounded by the forest lands of the Sam Houston National Forest. The Walker County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (WCCWPP) was the first county-wide community wildfire protection plan in Texas. The main mission for this plan was to identify wildfire risks, create mitigation strategies and empower residents to protect their properties.
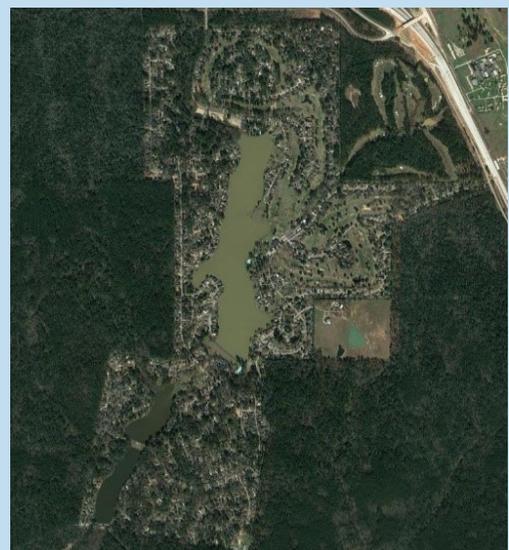
Elkins Lake Community over Satellite Image. *Google Maps*.

Regulations and Standards

SAP 11. Evaluate the potential to include provisions in the City's development ordinances and standards to incentivize "green" practices for ongoing operations and maintenance that reduce water and energy use, storm water runoff, and wastewater and solid waste generation.

SAP 12. Update the Unified Development Ordinance, Article 9 Flood Reduction, to develop higher standards for flood prone areas and critical facilities.

- Evaluate the required finished floor elevations to protect from flooding.

- Higher standards should address any new needs based on precipitation levels identified in Atlas 14. The floodplains and floodways may expand with analysis of Atlas 14. This may make it more difficult to develop in some areas of the city without mitigation of stormwater and flooding impacts. Consideration for regional detention and floodplain mitigation ponds should be analyzed and evaluated.

- Most of the wetlands identified within the city are in the southern portion of Huntsville, adjacent to rivers and streams. Wetlands should be considered during design and construction and mitigation measures taken for any potential wetlands loss or disturbance.

Atlas 14

In 2018 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) published Atlas 14, a study that found increased precipitation values in parts of Texas. This resulted in changes to the rainfall amounts that define 100-year events, which are those events that on average have a one percent chance of happening in any given year. NOAA Atlas 14 rainfall values are used to design infrastructure and for planning activities under local, state and federal regulations. The rainfall values also help delineate flood risk and manage development in floodplains.

SAP 13. Require or create incentives for use of "firewise" landscaping techniques and materials on private development sites.

SAP 14. Keep abreast of State level changes in annexation law (see sidebar). Continue to entertain and/or solicit owner-initiated annexations in areas that further City goals and/or pursue development agreements that address service provision, compliance with City development and building codes and standards, and potential cost-sharing arrangements. The City should not extend its utility infrastructure or other services into the ETJ without requiring annexation as a condition of such service provision.

Partnerships and Coordination

SAP 15. Continue regional water coordination and planning with the Region H Regional Water Planning Group.

SAP 16. Expand partnerships and marketing of "Project Help", which allows current Huntsville utility account holders to donate funds to assist other users with their utility bills. Consider expansion of the program to allow for donations beyond utility account holders.

- Advertise on the City's website not only how to donate to the program, but also eligibility for utilizing the program for those in need.

- The City suspended utility cut-offs during the COVID-19 pandemic, but when utility cut-offs are reinstated, delinquent utility account holders will be in need of assistance.

SAP 17. Continue emergency management coordination with local and regional partners, including Walker County, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), Sam Houston State University (SHSU), and the Houston-Galveston Area Council.

More Targeted Planning/Study

SAP 18. Update the 2016 Water and Wastewater Condition and Capacity Assessment Study. The study analyzed the water and wastewater systems and made recommendations for capital improvements through 2040. This assessment should be updated every five years to evaluate the needs of the City based on actual growth and anticipated growth changes. The City should continue to implement projects proposed in the most current plan.

SAP 19. Consider development of a Master Drainage Plan. The Master Drainage Plan can examine the potential for regional detention facilities through a drainage analysis.

SAP 20. Evaluate the potential to develop impact fees based on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) or an Infrastructure Master Plan. There are many different ways to structure impact fees. The first step is to determine if impact fees are needed and desired and the potential costs and benefits of such a fee.

Impact Fees

Texas Local Government Code Chapter 395 authorizes municipalities, counties, and other local governments to assess impact fees based on a CIP or Infrastructure Master Plan. Impact fees can be calculated for infrastructure such as water, wastewater and drainage. The purpose of impact fees is to ensure that new development, rather than existing taxpayers, shoulder the primary costs of the necessary infrastructure upgrades or extensions required by new development or redevelopment. The fees are assessed on infrastructure improvements and expansions, including distribution, transmission, collection systems and facility expansion that are needed by development.

SAP 21. Ensure that the Huntsville Hazard Mitigation Plan is kept up to date. This ensures eligibility for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation grants. Identify projects to include in the plan that could be eligible for grant funding.

TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

This plan section focuses on current, near-term and long-range transportation needs and priorities in and around Huntsville. Many of these are outward focused, involving regional partners and coordination, recognizing the important role that the Texas Department of Transportation plays in Huntsville's transportation network. Top transportation-related issues facing Huntsville include improving safety and connectivity and enhancing ways to move around Huntsville by walking and bicycling, particularly around Sam Houston State University and downtown.

Legacy of Past Planning

Previous Relevant Plans/Studies

The Huntsville Horizon Plan 2025, Huntsville's 2007 Comprehensive Plan, included the following still relevant transportation goals:

- An efficient and effective roadway network.
- Available and convenient parking in the University and Downtown areas.
- A mobility system that offers a variety of choice in modes of travel.
- A mobility system that is integrated into and complements neighborhood and community character.

In addition to Huntsville Horizon Plan 2025, in 2019 the City completed a Transportation Master Plan that addressed the transportation network, including pedestrian and bicycle circulation and safety, and recommended specific improvements.

Accomplishments

The City of Huntsville and partner organizations have accomplished the following transportation related initiatives to support the items stated above:

- 2019 Transportation Master Plan
- 2020 Airport Master Plan
- Ongoing public transportation feasibility study with the Houston-Galveston Area Council
- Ongoing coordination with the Texas Department of Transportation for I-45 reconstruction and widening project
- 2021 Transportation Alternatives Program grant applications for multi-modal projects

Key Issues and Considerations

Through the Existing City and Plan Direction phases of this comprehensive planning effort, a set of six top strategic items were identified based on input from the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, joint workshops with City elected and appointed officials, results of varied public engagement activities and consultant team input. Three of the six strategic items are most relevant to the Transportation portion of the Comprehensive Plan, along with the specific related issues under each:

Enhancing Mobility and Access

- As the I-45 expansion project through the city occurs, ensure project outcomes beneficial to Huntsville.
- Continue to monitor the potential for high-speed rail and impacts to Huntsville.
- Expand the range of options for traveling within Huntsville, with a focus on safely linking Sam Houston State University (SHSU), downtown, and other key areas for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Explore the potential for public transit service, linking popular destinations and serving residents in need of enhanced mobility.

Expanding Recreational Opportunities

- Enhance opportunities for residents of all ages, particularly youth, to have active and healthy lifestyles, through provision of high quality recreational and park facilities and more options for safe pedestrian and bicycle circulation.

New and Improved Implementation Tools to Advance Plan Priorities

- Update the City's development regulations and standards based on its new long-range plan.
- Maintain up-to-date master plans (for infrastructure, public facilities, airport, parks, etc.).
- Continue emphasis on progress through partnerships (public/public, public/private, public/non-profit).

Transportation Goals

Goal T1: Enhanced connectivity throughout the city that allows Huntsville's residents and visitors to travel safely by multiple modes, including walking and bicycling.

Goal T2: A road network that is in good repair and is safe and inviting for all users.

Goal T3: Enhanced partnerships and collaborative relationships with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and other transportation partners.

Strategic Action Priorities

Capital Investments

SAP 1. Develop a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) specifically for transportation related projects, prioritizing projects that:

- Address safety issues along various roadways and intersections within the city.
- Reduce congestion along major roadways such as 11th Street, Sam Houston Avenue, and Montgomery Road.
- Enhance mobility by providing a multi-modal transportation system for the residents of Huntsville.

- Enhance connectivity in and around the city and address Huntsville's development needs.

Focus on Transportation Safety

Over 6,000 crashes were recorded along Huntsville's roadways between 2015 and 2019 with 22 fatalities. High crash locations included I-45, State Highway (SH) 30, and Sam Houston Avenue.

SAP 2. Focus on implementation of short to mid-term projects identified in the 2019 Transportation Master Plan, and incorporated into the CIP. As many of the capital projects recommended are on TxDOT maintained roadways, Huntsville has to be in constant coordination with TxDOT to undertake the recommended projects. Currently, the following projects are being undertaken in a phased manner:

- TxDOT has scheduled the installation of overhead flashing beacons at the intersections of FM 2821 at Rosenwall Road, and Sam Houston Avenue at 22nd Street. This serves as an intermediate step until the intersection volumes increase to warrant a traffic signal.
    - The short-term signal coordination project is being undertaken in a phased manner and is expected to be completed by TxDOT as a mid-term capital improvement project.

- TxDOT has also scheduled contract letting for intersection improvement projects on Southwood Drive at SH 75 and SH 75 at Montgomery Road.

- The City is also undertaking a public-private partnership for a partial extension of American Legion Drive to Jenkins Road.

2019 Transportation Master Plan Projects
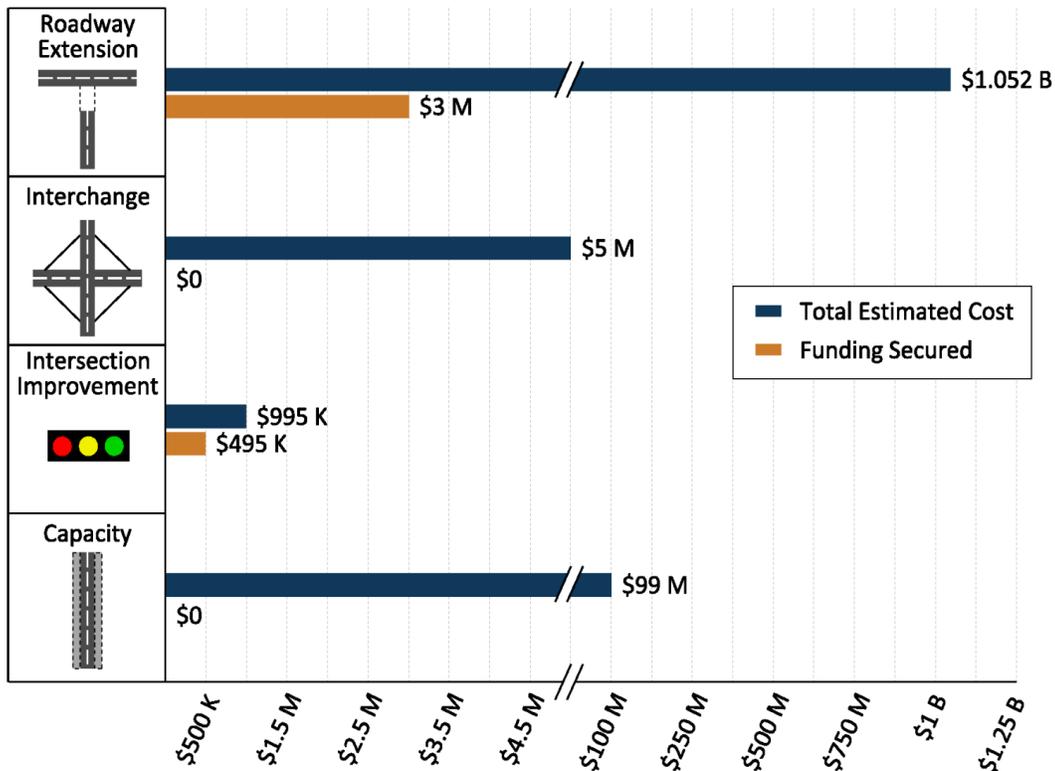
The following graphic compares the total estimated cost of all the projects recommended in the 2019 Transportation Master Plan, with the sum of funding secured thus far for the implementation of the projects.

Total Estimated Cost
$1.157 B

Funding Secured
$3.5 M

SAP 3.   Conduct pro-active preventative maintenance on streets and sidewalks and schedule targeted reconstruction in locations with deteriorated street conditions.

- Prioritize street repair projects in a transparent way and incorporate into a formalized CIP. The prioritization of street repairs should be based on a street condition inventory which uses technology to determine the condition of sub-surfaces and surfaces.

SAP 4.   Repair, replace, or install new sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb cuts in high pedestrian use areas adjacent to, and leading to and from schools (including SHSU), public buildings, highly utilized parks and other areas with the potential for high sidewalk usage, taking into account the sidewalk network analysis and recommendations from the 2019 Transportation Master Plan.

Sidewalks and Trails

In approaching sidewalks and trails, the first and foremost consideration should be pedestrian safety. A key for a well-utilized sidewalk or trail is that users feel safe. Accessibility and routing are also important, and these issues are often related as many pedestrians will consider safety as they choose their routes. Pedestrian facilities are required by federal law to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and this must be considered in design.

Some of the greatest needs in the city for safe and effective pedestrian travel will require installing sidewalks or trails on existing roadway corridors. Sometimes this involves filling "gaps" along a corridor to create a continuous pedestrian facility. Other times an entire corridor needs treatment to allow safe and accessible pedestrian travel. This includes both City-owned and TxDOT roadways.

Any roadway project within the city should consider pedestrian facilities as part of the project's scope.

Some existing corridors present a challenge to installing sidewalks and pedestrian features, often due to right-of-way constraints. Streets with open ditch drainage also present a challenge because ditches may need to be filled and piped, which can increase costs. Despite challenges in obtaining funding and retrofitting corridors, these improvements can have a positive effect in promoting safety and accessibility. *Photo: Downtown pedestrian improvements.*

Programs and Initiatives

SAP 5.   Evaluate the potential to launch a dedicated bike program to promote usage of bikes among the residents and students in Huntsville. The bike program should focus on make bicycling safer by planning and executing efficient biking solutions. The program should develop a long-term plan for improving access to bicycling.

SAP 6.   Encourage traffic demand management strategies to anticipate and mitigate traffic congestion. Traffic demand management is the use of techniques and policies to reduce the need for use of the roadway system, particularly by single-occupancy vehicles.

- Educate and encourage the public regarding available transportation choices, including teleworking and carpooling.

- Encourage ride sharing among commuters. Identify the origin and destination of commuter traffic and create a platform for ride-matching.

- Ensure adequate telecommunications infrastructure is in place (such as broadband internet) to enable teleworking as a transportation alternative to commuting. See the Economic Opportunity section for more information regarding broadband planning.

SAP 7. Preserve traffic capacity by implementing access management and other Transportation Systems Management (TSM) provisions in the city. For predominantly commercial corridors within the city, consider the applicability and benefit of implementing access management improvements, such as shared driveways.

- Additional TSM approaches may include signal improvements, special events management (such as for SHSU athletic events or other high-traffic generating events), and data collection.

Access Management Principles

With projected growth the need for access management will increase. The following principles should guide and direct any future access management planning.

- **Provide a Specialized Roadway System.** Design and manage roadways according to the primary functions that they are expected to serve.

- **Limit Direct Access to State Highways and Other Major Roadways.** Roadway operations can be improved by achieving the proper balance between traffic flow and access to abutting property.

- **Promote Intersection Hierarchy.** Roadways with high functional classifications (such as highways and arterials) should receive a higher application of access management techniques so that the roadway continues to perform according to the primary traffic flow function it was designed to serve.

- **Locate Signals to Favor Through Movements.** Failure to carefully locate access connections or median openings that may later become signalized can cause substantial increases in arterial travel times.

- **Preserve the Functional Area of Intersections and Interchanges.** Driveways located too close to intersections or interchange ramps can cause serious traffic conflicts that impair the function of the affected facilities.

- **Limit the Number of Driveways and Other Conflict Points.** Simplifying the driving task by limiting the number of conflict points a motorist is faced with contributes to improved traffic operations and fewer collisions.

- **Separate Driveways and Other Conflict Points.** Drivers need sufficient time to address one potential set of conflicts before facing another. Separating conflict areas helps to simplify the driving task and contributes to improved traffic operations and safety.

- **Remove Turning Vehicles from Through Traffic Lanes.** Turning lanes allow drivers to decelerate gradually out of the through lane and wait in a protected area for an opportunity to complete a turn, thereby reducing the severity and duration of conflict between turning vehicles and through traffic.

- **Use Non-Traversable Medians to Manage Left-Turn Movements.** Medians channel turning movements on major roadways to designated locations. Non-traversable medians and other techniques that minimize left-turns or reduce the driver workload can be especially effective in improving roadway safety.

- **Provide a Supporting Local Street System and On-Site Circulation System.** Interconnected local street systems and on-site circulation systems provide alternative routes for bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers alike.

- **Match Driveway Design with Operational and Safety Needs.** Driveways accommodate a wide range of vehicle types, traffic volumes, and vehicle turning speeds. Consequently, driveway design should be tailored to meet the needs of the vehicles using the driveway.

- **Coordinate Actively with Other Agencies Regarding Transportation and Land Use.** To optimize the benefits of access management, coordination and cooperation with all the appropriate transportation agencies is essential when introducing design techniques along a roadway or preparing an Access Management Plan.
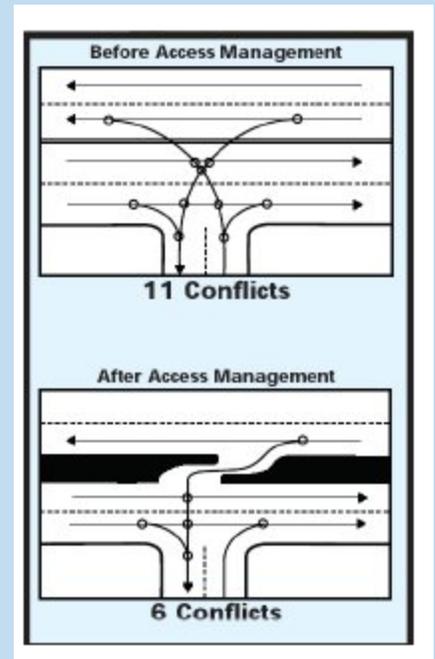
Source: FHWA

SAP 8.   Emphasize resiliency in future transportation network planning, including both redundancy in systems as well as protection from potential hazards and threats.

- Continue discussions with TxDOT about the impact of evacuations from the Houston area on Huntsville's transportation network and any needed improvements.

- Work to expand the number of residents who are signed up to receive emergency alerts via notification systems utilized by Huntsville and Walker County. Vulnerable residents, such as the elderly, the mobility impaired, and residents lacking personal transportation, need special evacuation and emergency planning attention, including potential coordination with Huntsville ISD for use of buses.

SAP 9.   Integrate the "Complete Streets" concept into local transportation planning and projects. This concept recognizes that streets should be designed for use by all modes, where appropriate. Complete streets can take the form of built projects and policies. Roadway projects should be planned to integrate all modes through appropriate design and facilities for private vehicles, public transit vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

Complete Streets

In communities across the country, a movement is growing to "complete" the streets. States, cities, and towns are requesting their planners and engineers build roads that are safer, more accessible, and easier for everyone to travel on. In the process, they are creating better communities for people to live, play, work, and shop. Complete Streets are streets for everyone. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users of **all ages and abilities are able to safely move** along and across a complete street.

According to the National Complete Streets Coalition, instituting a complete streets policy ensures that transportation planners and engineers consistently design and operate the entire roadway with all users in mind – including bicyclists, public transportation vehicles and riders, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

An **ideal complete streets policy**:

- Includes a **vision** for how and why the community wants to complete its streets;
- Specifies that "**all users**" includes pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses, and automobiles;
- Applies to both **new and retrofit projects**, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right-of-way;
- Makes any exceptions specific and sets a **clear procedure** that requires high-level approval of exceptions;
- Encourages **street connectivity** and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes;
- Is adoptable by all agencies to **cover all roads**;
- Directs the use of the latest and best **design criteria and guidelines** while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs;
- Directs that complete streets solutions will complement the **context of the community**;
- Establishes **performance standards** with measurable outcomes; and
- Includes specific next steps for **implementation** of the policy.

Source: Smart Growth America, National Complete Streets Coalition. http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/

SAP 10. Continue to plan for future transportation technology advancements such as more widespread use of electric vehicles, automated vehicles, and ride sharing. *Photo: Public electric vehicle charging station at SHSU Police Headquarters.*

Regulations and Standards

SAP 11. Ensure consistency between adopted design and construction standards, the Comprehensive Plan, the 2019 Transportation Master Plan, and the Major Thoroughfare Plan (TMP).

- Evaluate updating right-of-way (ROW) requirements and supporting cross-sections for roadway classifications. Appendix 1 contains draft proposal cross-sections for each roadway classification, as well as supporting documentation. The proposed cross-section and ROW standards represent minimum design requirements per TxDOT's Roadway Design Manual. Further analysis and discussion will be needed to finalize the cross-sections and ROW standards for each roadway classification.

Proposed Minimum Pavement Width and Right of Way				
Street Classification	Proposed Travel Lanes	Proposed Parking Lanes	Proposed Minimum Pavement Width (Feet)	Proposed Minimum ROW Width (Feet)
Arterial				
Primary Arterial	5	2	78	108
Secondary Arterial	5	0	58	88
Collector				
Standard Collector	2	2	38	68
Local				
Local - 1	2	1	29	49
Local - 2 (Low Volume)	2	0	22	42

Functional Roadway Classification

Traffic flows through a network of interdependent roadways, with each roadway segment moving traffic through the system towards destinations. The concept of functional classification defines the role that a particular roadway segment plays in serving this traffic flow through the network. Roadways are assigned to one of several possible functional classifications within a hierarchy according to the character of travel service each roadway provides. The functional classification adopted by the city of Huntsville is as follows:

1. Expressway/freeway
2. Primary Arterial
3. Secondary Arterial
4. Collector
5. Local Streets

The characteristics of each of the functional classifications are shown in the table below:

Functional Classification	Expressway/Freeway	Primary Arterial	Secondary Arterial	Collector	Local Street
Functional Role	Controlled access roadways carrying highest number of vehicles among all roadways	Roadways that connect freeways and other arterials	Connects freeways, primary arterials, and lower classification roadways	Connects arterials to local streets	Highly accessible roadways with very low volume
Distance Served/Roadway Length	Usually more than 5 miles	Usually more than 5 miles	Usually more than 3 miles	Around 1.5 - 2 miles	Less than 1 mile
Posted Speed	55 to 75 mph	40 to 55 mph	30 to 45 mph	30 to 35 mph	20 to 30 mph
Average Annual Daily Traffic	More than 40,000 vehicles per day	20,000 to 60,000 vehicles per day	5,000 to 30,000 vehicles per day	1,000 to 15,000 vehicles per day	100 to 5,000 vehicles per day
Access	Fully-controlled access	Highly restricted access	Restricted access	Relatively less restricted access	Highest access
On-Street Parking	Prohibited	Restricted	Restricted	Normally Permitted	Permitted

Source: 2007 Comprehensive Plan and Highway Functional Classification Concepts, Criteria and Procedures, 2013 Edition

Existing Functional Roadway Classification (from 2019 TMP)
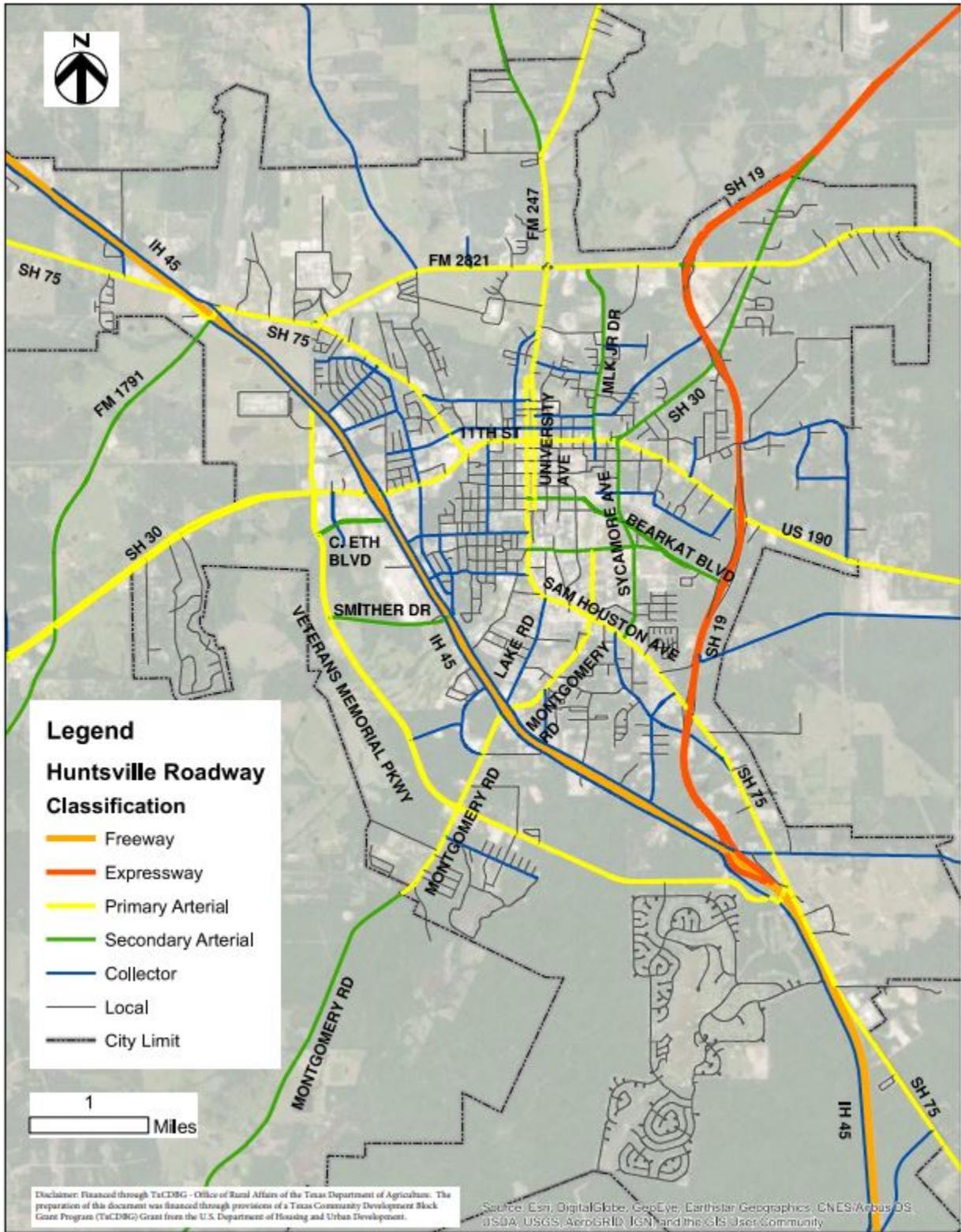
SAP 12. Evaluate whether existing parking regulations and standards are appropriately addressing parking issues on major roadways and local streets, particularly around high traffic areas such as SHSU. Ensure parking is restricted on any future bike lanes.
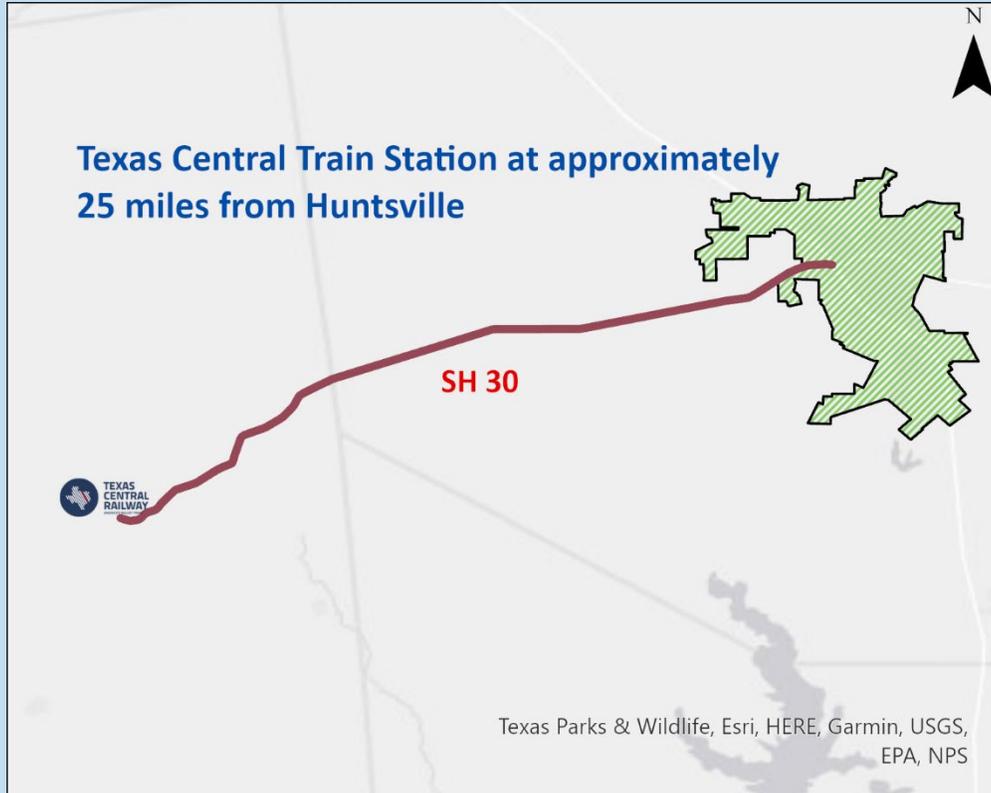
SAP 13. As new pedestrian and bicycle facilities are completed, utilize wayfinding signage that encapsulates the uniqueness of Huntsville. Standards developed for the signage should adhere to federal and state signage standards.

Partnerships and Coordination

SAP 14. Continue to monitor the potential for the development of high speed rail connecting Dallas/Fort Worth with Houston, with a potential station west of Huntsville.

Proposed High Speed Rail

The proposed Texas Central rail line connecting Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston has a planned station in the Roans Prairie area, around 25 miles west of Huntsville. If completed, the train will provide fast and efficient access to both metropolitan areas south and north of Huntsville. This may result in increased commuter traffic between the city and the train station. A possible shuttle service can be evaluated which provides the benefit of increasing the resident population within the city limits without increasing the commuter traffic within the city.

Texas Central Train Station at approximately 25 miles from Huntsville

SH 30

Texas Parks & Wildlife, Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, EPA, NPS

SAP 15. Continue active partnership and dialogue with the TxDOT Bryan District to ensure that TxDOT projects and roadways reflect the City's desires and needs. Of particular importance is the ongoing I-45 reconstruction and widening project.

- Advocate to advance state and regional funding for priority transportation projects. Much of the capital investment required for Huntsville's roadway projects may be funded through various TxDOT funding programs such as:
    o Highway Safety Improvement Program
    o Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program
    o Systemic Widening Program (SSWP)

Transportation Funding Programs

Highway Safety Improvement Program:

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is one of the largest funding programs for improving highway safety across Texas. The program is federally funded and is administered by TxDOT's Traffic Safety Division. For any safety project selected under the program, the project will be eligible for 90 percent of the construction costs. The City will have to coordinate with the TxDOT Bryan District to apply for funding under the program.

Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program:

The Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program is funded by TxDOT for construction of a variety of alternative transportation projects. Potentially eligible projects include ADA/pedestrian infrastructure, on- and off-street bikeways, shared use paths, infrastructure for access to public transportation, and access for non-motorized roadway users, including safe routes to schools. This program provides an opportunity for the City to apply for funding for installation and improvement of sidewalks, shared-use paths/trails, etc.

Systemic Widening Program:

TxDOT's Systemic Widening Program (SSWP) funds projects that help improve safety on rural 2-lane 2-way highways that have a paved width of 24 feet or less and have an Average Daily Traffic of more than 400 vehicles per day. Currently, the planned budget to fund SSWP projects is $15.5 million per year which can increase in the future years. The City can explore this funding opportunity to complete eligible roadway widening projects which address safety issues.

SAP 16. Actively work with TxDOT to prepare for the transition of traffic signals from TxDOT to Huntsville's management, which will occur when Huntsville reaches the 50,000 population threshold.

- Partner with TxDOT to create an ad-hoc team for transfer of knowledge from TxDOT. The City will have to recruit a maintenance crew knowledgeable in the operations of traffic signals and other related equipment. Feedback mechanisms, such as a website and/or call line, should be set up to receive any complaints regarding issues with the operation of traffic control devices. Successful fulfillment of these responsibilities requires successful collaboration and partnership with TxDOT.

SAP 17. Explore public-private partnerships as a funding source for minor transportation projects within the city. Projects such as minor roadway extensions, sidewalk extensions, installation of shared-use paths/trails, upgrading signage and pavement markings, and other minor projects are potential candidates for public-private partnership funding.

SAP 18. Consider establishing and hosting a formal quarterly meeting of key transportation related officials to facilitate better coordination of transportation planning goals and projects, including the Public Works Department, Police and Fire Departments, TxDOT, the Huntsville Independent School District, and Walker County.

SAP 19. Actively participate during regional transportation planning and funding processes to secure transportation funding and advance projects of regional significance. Huntsville is located within the 13-county planning area of the Houston-Galveston Area Council of Governments (H-GAC), which serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning within the eight-county region surrounding Houston. Note that while Huntsville is not currently in the planning area for H-GAC's transportation planning functions, H-GAC has periodically coordinated on transportation planning projects with Huntsville, such as the current transit feasibility study.

More Targeted Planning/Study

SAP 20. Keep pedestrian and bicycle components of the 2019 Transportation Master Plan up to date. Continue to examine potential improvements to promote safety and non-motorized mobility, as well as to enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, particularly to schools, parks, and other nodes of activity.

o Evaluate the potential for a pedestrian bridge across Sam Houston Avenue, as recommended by the 2019 Transportation Master Plan, to enhance safety and efficiency in moving pedestrians across Sam Houston Ave. A feasibility study should be undertaken to study the benefit-cost ratio along with the practicality of constructing a pedestrian bridge across Sam Houston Ave between 17th St and Lake Rd.

SAP 21. Keep the Major Thoroughfare Plan up to date, following a similar update schedule to that of the Comprehensive Plan. As noted below, it is recommended that the existing MTP be updated to remove the future extension of 20th Street, after further coordination and evaluation of alternatives is completed by the City.

Major Thoroughfare Plan (MTP)

A major thoroughfare plan represents a vision for the region's future transportation network. The MTP provides a framework for the orderly development of the area as well as the transportation network while responding to the present and future traffic needs of the community.

Uses

- Program and Project prioritization: Since resources to address the needs of transportation infrastructure and mobility are constrained, the MTP helps in prioritizing expenditures and allocating resources.

- Preservation of Right-of-Way: The MTP acts as a guiding document to preserve right-of-way based on the functional requirements of the roadway. Preserving the right-of-way provides an opportunity for the city to undertake future roadway expansion, adding capacity and reducing congestion.

- Establish Design Standards: The MTP helps the city to develop geometric design standards for each functional classification. The standards aid in the design of travel lanes, sidewalks, drainage, etc., based on the functional classification of the roadways.

Relationship between the MTP and Future Land Use

The MTP has a significant effect and influence on future growth and development within the city. The MTP acts as a guide for future development within the city. Any development activity should be considered when updating the MTP.

Recommended Update to Major Thoroughfare Plan

The existing MTP was reviewed as a part of the Comprehensive Plan process. A review of the existing and future roadway classifications in conjunction with the proposed Future Land Use Map revealed no major updates required for the MTP. However, based on the input and discussion with the members of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, a review was performed to see the rationality of the proposed extension of 20th Street to the I-45 North Freeway Service Road. Based on the examination of existing conditions, feedback received from the CPAC, and the limited potential for future development along 20th Street, the future extension of 20th Street is proposed to be removed from the MTP.

Further coordination with the City of Huntsville will be required to update the 2019 MTP.
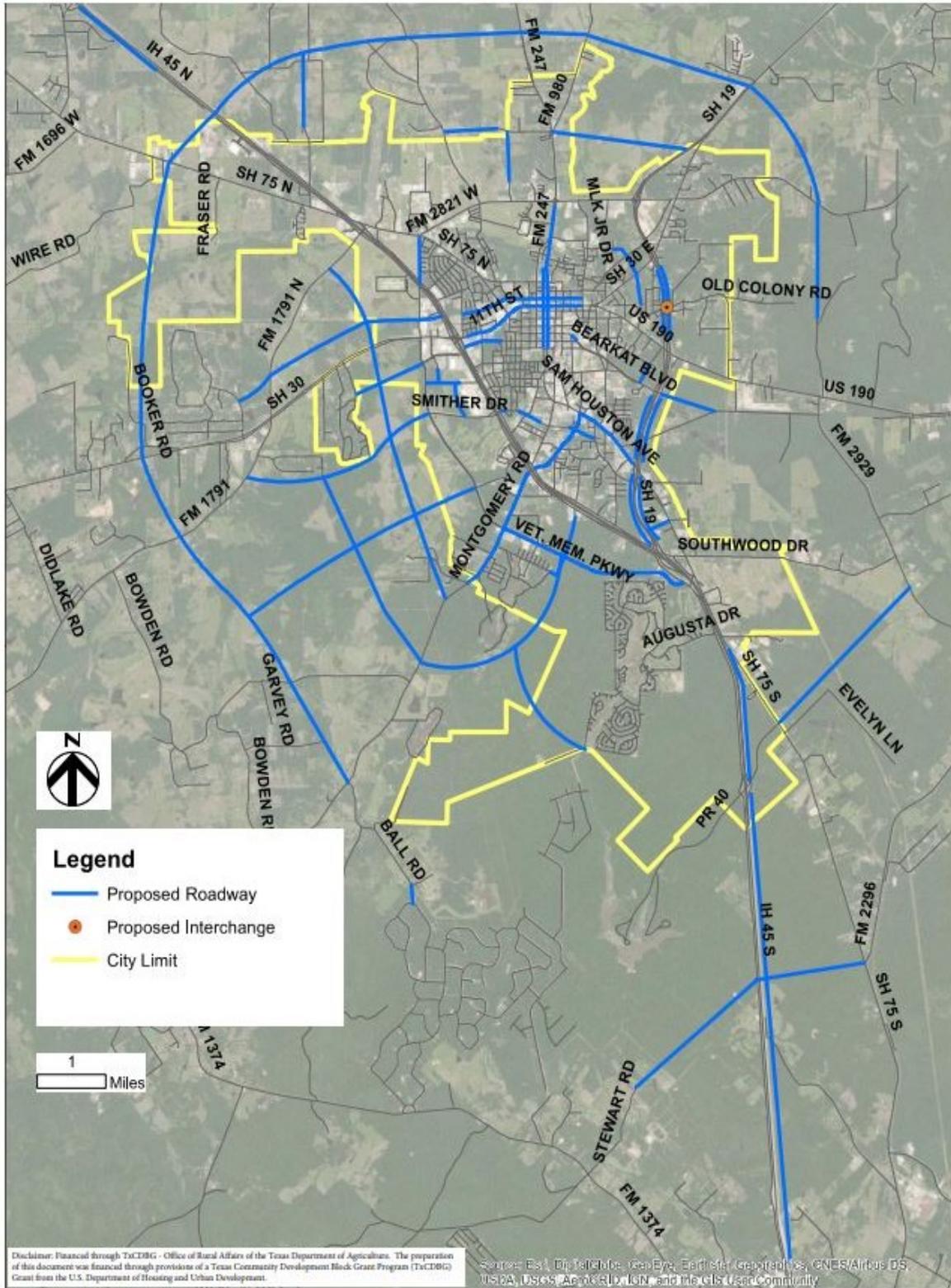
SAP 22. Continue implementation of the 2020 Airport Master Plan, including identifying grant and funding opportunities.

SAP 23. Upon completion, review recommendations of H-GAC's transit feasibility study to determine what type of transit service might be appropriate in Huntsville. The 2019 Transportation Master Plan suggests a high-level transit plan that aims at catering to the needs of the students and other residents of Huntsville by providing connectivity to the university, retail centers, health centers, etc.

SAP 24. Conduct Roadway Safety Audits to enhance safety along various roadways in Huntsville. Roadway safety audits should be performed along roadway segments and at intersections that experience an unusually high number of crashes. Performing such studies can be helpful in applying for funding under the Highway Safety Improvement Program.

Roadway Safety Audits

A Roadway Safety Audit (RSA) is performed to examine safety issues resulting in a high number of crashes within the study area. Performing an RSA along these high-crash corridors provides an opportunity to address the underlying safety issues and reduce incapacitating injuries and fatalities. The map below shows the crash heat map for the crash data recorded in Huntsville between 2015 and 2019.
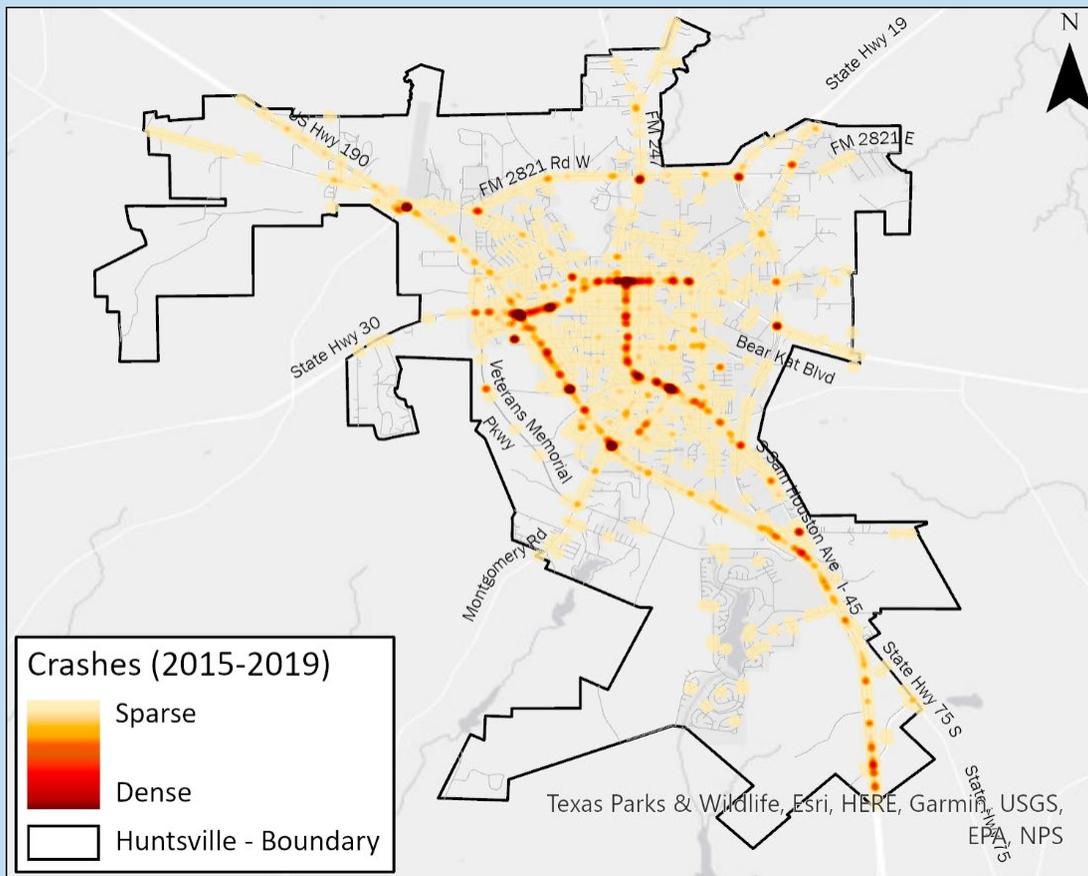
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Introduction

The creation of new economic opportunities in Huntsville requires a combination of capitalizing on existing strengths and industries, realizing the full potential of organizational partnerships, and pursuing capital investments. New business creation and growth market assistance may carry inherent financial risk and significant time expenditures by staff and partner agencies. This plan section highlights enhancements to policies, direct financial assistance, and programming (e.g., branding, events, marketing, etc.) identified through an assessment of Huntsville's existing conditions in the Existing City report.

The city is located between the Houston and Dallas/Fort Worth Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and Huntsville residents and businesses can access both cities within one to three hours. While this makes Huntsville part of a broader regional economy, proximity to larger urban and suburban economic centers creates unique circumstances that affect the city's regional competitiveness. The City of Huntsville can influence economic development in several areas, whether involving infrastructure availability and capacity, the size and skills of the local workforce, public improvements, "shovel ready" development sites and buildings, and development approvals and processes.

Increased economic activity grows the City's tax base, allowing the City to provide the infrastructure and services desired by residents and businesses. In turn, the services, infrastructure, and amenities the City provides are enticements that encourage further economic growth. Well-constructed economic development policies and incentives will provide City government the greatest opportunity to influence the quality, quantity, and timing of development. Such policies will create the ability to shift some of the financial cost of funding public improvements to private sector partners and will afford the opportunity to ensure growth pays for itself.

Links to Other Plan Sections
- Growth Capacity
- Land Use and Development
- Mobility
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Recreation and Amenities
- Implementation

Legacy of Past Planning

Previous Relevant Plans/Studies

Among various other topics, the Huntsville Horizon Comprehensive Plan of 2007 included goals, objectives, and recommendations addressing Economic Development. In 2020, Huntsville adopted the Huntsville Economic Development 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. Relevant themes from these documents included:

- Promote economic development opportunities in Huntsville by leveraging the presence of Sam Houston State University (SHSU) and its enrollment growth;

- Encourage entrepreneurship and retain recent graduates/alumni;

- Leverage the presence of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to expand economic development opportunities in Huntsville;
- Transform downtown Huntsville into a "university village";
- Support the retention and expansion of existing businesses in Huntsville;
- Increase the number and diversity of housing opportunities in Huntsville;
- Promote the development of a business/industrial park to increase competitiveness in the recruitment of new businesses;
- Support excellence in the school system; and
- Identify and promote the image of Huntsville as a tourist destination through marketing.

Accomplishments

The City of Huntsville, partner organizations, and local businesses have accomplished the following economic opportunity related programs and initiatives to support the items stated above:

- Completion of the Airport Master Plan;
- Designation as a Main Street community by the Texas Historical Commission;
- Creation of the "Huntsville First" brand and downtown business marketing campaign;
- Promotion of downtown and local businesses through local events and programming (e.g., farmers market, sip and shop, cars shows, Fair on the Square, Scare on the Square, etc.);
- Successful creation of a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone along I-45 and eventual completion of all development-related projects;
- Location of a portion of four Opportunity Zones within the city limits; and
- Response to COVID-19 with the Small Business Resource Grant.

Key Issues and Considerations

Through the Existing City and Plan Direction phases of this comprehensive planning effort, a set of six top strategic items were identified based on input from the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, joint workshops with City elected and appointed officials, results of varied public engagement activities, and consultant team input. All six strategic items are relevant to the Economic Opportunity portion of the Comprehensive Plan, along with the specific related issues under each:

- Pro-actively Preparing for Growth and Development.
  - Identify areas of preferred growth, infill development, and revitalization, recognizing the limitations of some land within the city and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) being "off-limits"/agency-owned land.
  - Balance the maintenance of existing infrastructure with needs for new infrastructure to keep pace with development.

- Enhancing Mobility and Access.
  - As the I-45 expansion project through the city occurs, ensure project outcomes beneficial to Huntsville.
  - Continue to monitor the potential for high-speed rail and impacts to Huntsville.

- Building Huntsville's Economic Base.
  - Diversify the area's industry and employer base, also recognizing the changing nature of the office and retail landscapes.
  - Ensure infrastructure supports evolving employer, workforce and educational needs, including fiber/high speed internet and other technology upgrades.
  - Retain workers and talent in Huntsville, capturing a larger percentage of those who work in the area but choose not to live in Huntsville.
  - Improve city appearance and image, including the revitalization of older commercial properties.
  - Enhance the positive image of the city by sharing Huntsville's success stories, including those of key community partners such as SHSU and the Huntsville Independent School District.
  - Support, retain and recruit establishments to address desires for more leisure/entertainment activities for residents, particularly youth and students.
  - Bolster Huntsville's tourism industry, focusing on elements where Huntsville can differentiate itself from the competition, such as proximity to natural resources and extent of historic and cultural amenities.
  - Continue active involvement of residents, through community events such as Fair on the Square and parades.
  - Seek to improve the availability of quality healthcare options within Huntsville, including specialists.
- Making Housing Needs a Core Focus.
  - Attract more residential development to increase housing supply and meet workforce needs, at varying price points including housing that can make home ownership attainable for more residents.
- Expanding Recreational Opportunities.
  - Evaluate the feasibility of new sports and recreational facilities, including those with the potential to bring economic benefits by attracting tournaments or minor league sports teams.
  - Enhance awareness of and access to the Huntsville area's incredible natural resources, including the Sam Houston National Forest and Huntsville State Park.
- New and Improved Implementation Tools to Advance Plan Priorities.
  - Itemize mechanisms suitable to Huntsville for promoting economic development and facilitating redevelopment.
  - Continue emphasis on progress through partnerships (public/public, public/private, public/non-profit).

Economic Opportunity Goals

Goal EO1: An economically resilient business environment that supports the attraction, creation, retention, and expansion of national, state, and local employers to create a robust tax base.

Goal EO2: Shopping and entertainment options that encourage area residents and employees to shop and live in the community.

Goal EO3: Recognition of the essential role of housing in economic development and the need to have an adequate supply and mix of housing for students and employees.

Goal EO4: A continued focus on Huntsville's existing economic assets, including the municipal airport, historic downtown, cultural and recreational tourism, Huntsville Memorial Hospital, TDCJ headquarters, and SHSU.

Goal EO5: A business climate that encourages entrepreneurs and local business start-ups to serve potential growth markets.

Strategic Action Priorities

Capital Investments

SAP 1. Coordinate future capital improvement projects and identify new projects that will most effectively advance Huntsville's economic development agenda.

- Essential infrastructure improvements should be targeted in high-priority development and infill areas, such as the existing Opportunity Zones, the I-45 corridor, parcels surrounding the airport, and downtown.

- Create physical enhancements at Huntsville's primary gateways and along busy arterial routes. Aesthetic enhancements may include:
    o Architecturally pleasing entrance signage – particularly in coordination with planned I-45 enhancements – announcing that visitors and residents have entered Huntsville;
    o Determine if additional wayfinding signage is necessary to help visitors find area attractions, museums, parks, and shopping/entertainment districts from the highway;
    o Landscaping enhancements; and
    o Public art and permanent sculptures.

- Develop a plan and the physical infrastructure to link Huntsville's economic assets (e.g., hospital, Huntsville State Park, City-owned parks, museum campuses, downtown, airport, and SHSU).

Opportunity Zones

"The Opportunity Zone Program was created through the Tax Cuts & Jobs Act of 2017 and is a federal initiative administered by the U.S. Department of Treasury. The program is designed to spur economic development and job creation in distressed communities throughout the United States. The program offers incentives, in the form of capital gains tax abatement, for those who invest eligible capital into Qualified Opportunity Zone assets. For more information, visit the U.S. Treasury Department's website.

On March 22, 2018, Governor Greg Abbott submitted the state's Opportunity Zone designations to the U.S. Treasury Department to encourage long-term investment in eligible Texas communities. Governor Abbott nominated 628 census tracts in 145 Texas counties as potential Opportunity Zones across the state's 5,265 census tracts."

Source: https://gov.texas.gov/business/page/opportunity-zones

Huntsville has a portion of four Opportunity Zones within its city limits.

Image source: https://www.huntsvilletx.gov/922/Opportunity-Zones-Map
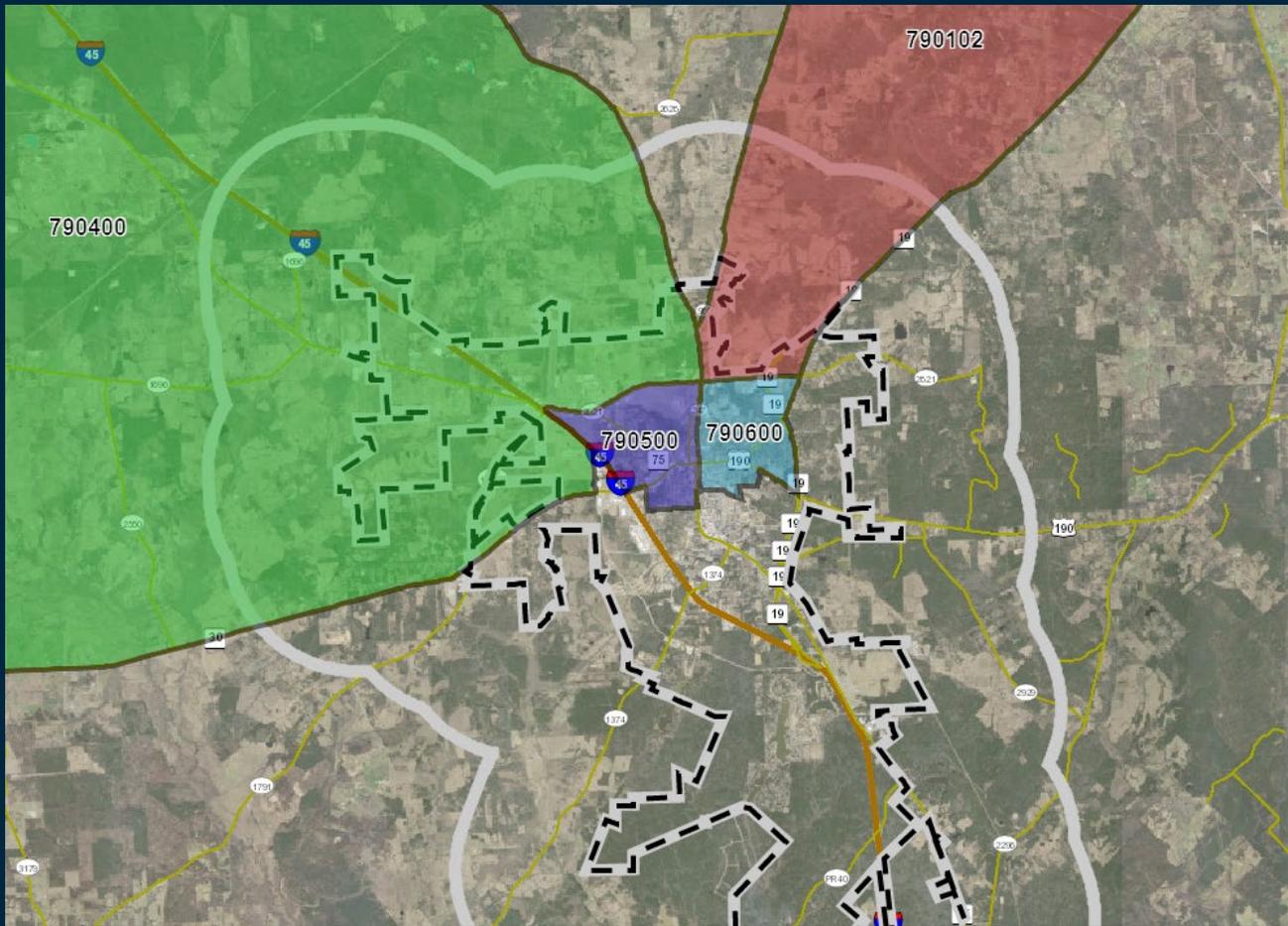
SAP 2.   Utilize vacant City-owned or SHSU buildings (alternatively, consider the purchase/lease of vacant office space) to host a business accelerator program in conjunction with community partners.

SAP 3. Consider the purchase of vacant, for-sale, land (potentially in combination with partner agencies, SHSU, and the Huntsville Memorial Hospital) to create a business park with "shovel ready" development sites. Any purchases should target for-sale properties and not utilize eminent domain. Important site selection factors include:

- Access to I-45;

- Proximity to existing employment centers, the airport, area attractions, and downtown;

- Presence of existing assistance programs or funding such as location within Opportunity Zone; and

- Land cost.

Government-Owned Business Parks

Business parks consist of improved "shovel ready" development sites, typically zoned for light industrial and office uses. In the context of a business park, shovel ready means that a development entity performs the land preparation efforts, such as obtain necessary zoning approvals, utility installation, road construction, and site grading. Developers often construct a speculative building space to kickstart interest from potential occupants. In turn, prospective businesses receive the benefit of not having to invest their time and capital dealing with these initial steps/approvals.

Often commercial/industrial property developers decline to take on this role due to perceived or actual investment obstacles. Real estate investors by nature are risk-averse and reluctant to "bet" on sites/markets with potential or known high-risk factors and expected low financial returns, such as:

- Lack of interest from employers and businesses;
- Low residential growth rates;
- Environmental contamination;
- No or limited access to regional highways, utilities, and broadband internet;
- Workforce mismatches; or
- High-land costs.

When the market declines to take on these projects, government or quasi-government entities (e.g., economic development corporations, regional economic development entities, development authorities, etc.) can step in to help create business interest/physical space. Public assistance models range from financial incentivization to assuming the developer's role in full from land acquisition to the construction of speculative building space.

Case Study

Hutto, TX, developed the Innovation Business Park in 2017. Partnering with a developer who acquired a 72-acre property in Hutto's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), the City committed to annexing the site and constructing $5 million in capital improvements. Phase I of the Hutto Innovation Business Park has a planned full build-out of 800,000 square feet in six buildings and will provide needed speculative industrial space to attract job creators and diversify Hutto's tax base. By the end of 2020, the first building was completed and partially leased, and the second building was under construction. Buildings three and four were sold as build to suit lots directly to businesses. (Building five shown below as "Building III" is a rendering for a third planned speculative building.)

Hutto Innovation Business Park

SAP 4. Similar to SAP 2 in the Housing and Neighborhoods section, consider adding a line item in the CIP for high-speed internet provisions, including the acquisition of right-of-way, conduit for fiber optic cables, and potentially the installation of these physical items. Providing access to high-speed internet infrastructure will assist to attract certain target industries discussed later in this section.

Programs and Initiatives

SAP 5. Develop a local entrepreneur pipeline.

- Identify local growth markets and under-served business categories. Restaurants, entertainment venues, and coffee shops were frequently cited during engagement activities.

- Actively recruit residents and new businesses to utilize the entrepreneur pipeline.

- Develop a referral "match-making" service for all business assistance resources to include: the City's economic development staff, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at SHSU, mentors, Huntsville/Walker County Chamber of Commerce, tourism groups, lending institutions, and local landlords. "Match-making" is the process of helping prospective businesses navigate the local business climate and typically involve assisting prospective business owners with:

  o Finding a location suitable for the business (e.g., appropriate zoning, right-sized space, affordable rent, etc.)

  o Navigating any land development and/or permit approvals required;

  o Investigating any available assistance or grant programs; and

  o Developing a marketing strategy once a new business is ready to open.

- Research the feasibility of developing one or more coworking spaces to recruit, train, and identify local entrepreneurs.

- Determine if these shared workspaces are most appropriate to be run by private entities or by local public agencies.

- Continue to work with SHSU and the Huntsville Independent School District (HISD) to expand on and develop entrepreneurial classes and new training programs related to identified target industries or retail needs.

SAP 6. Encourage local entrepreneurs and regional businesses to serve the demand for increased entertainment options.

- Create specialized incentives to help business owners convert vacant retail or office space into entertainment uses.

- Utilize the specialized demographic studies (see SAP 18 under More Targeted Planning/Study) to market Huntsville to regional and small market entertainment businesses.

- Research potential franchise entertainment businesses and match them with local entrepreneurs that are interested in starting a business and having national brand name recognition. Create financial or location assistance programs to help these new business owners meet franchise business minimum requirements.

The Evolving Shopping Environment

Approximately 25 years ago an online bookstore named Amazon started in Jeff Bezos' garage, the proliferation of discount goods via "big-box" stores began to disrupt the way consumers priced goods, and the overall rise of the internet predicted the need for a new type of commodity - the "experience". Fast forward to 2021 and the experience economy has arrived.

While attributed to the millennial generation this phenomenon has roots in the prevalence of technology. Long work days, the integration of social media as a primary source of interaction, and the ability to simply click a button and have a good arrive at your door all play a role in current trends. Shoppers don't need to go to physical stores to obtain a good; however, the desire to have an experience has driven some of the new and popular trends such as:

- Craft breweries/tasting rooms;
- Axe throwing clubs;
- Escape rooms;
- Food trucks and niche dining experiences;
- Food halls; and
- Indoor skydiving facilities.

Local entrepreneurs may have the capacity and local knowledge to fill the need for increased entertainment options in local shopping districts. Many of the uses listed above require a lower amount of initial capital investment and – if catered to local interests – create a niche set of businesses that will attract more tourists and provide additional reasons to spend the night in Huntsville.

"There are only three reasons why a consumer visits a store or a shopping center to purchase goods or services. They come either because of convenience, value, or experience. In the 'Age of Amazon', convenience is no longer enough. This leaves us with value or experience." – Garrick Brown, Vice President, Retail Intelligence – Cushman Wakefield

Source: Cushman Wakefield, The Great Retail Reinvention Experience Matters.

SAP 7.   Recruit nearby industries or area entrepreneurs to set up second or auxiliary extensions of their businesses in downtown. (For example, work with nearby wineries to open second tasting rooms in downtown.)

Coworking Spaces

The term coworking space has evolved to encompass a variety of "shared" working space models. Examples include:

- Coworking;
- Food halls;
- Maker spaces;
- Incubators;
- Accelerators; and
- Farmers markets.

Food Halls

Food halls are spaces that provide multiple small kitchen setups to vendors that are available for rent on a monthly or sometimes weekly basis with a shared dining room. They operate similar to a mall food court with one important distinction, the business does not own the space/equipment they use to cook. This setup is ideal to help young restaurateurs learn the basics of creating a menu, cooking items to order, and in some cases managing serving staff. This type of venue creates a logical tie-in to HISD's Career and Technical Education (CTE) culinary arts program.

Source: Food Halls 3.0, Cushman and Wakefield

Traditional Coworking Space

Coworking is a service model that involves individuals working independently or collaboratively in shared office spaces. The typical user of a coworking facility is self-employed, a telecommuter, or a freelance worker. Larger enterprises sometimes use coworking facilities to provide office space when they have more than the normal number of employees working at any given time. These businesses may also offer perks such as free coffee and networking events.

Source: https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/coworking
Image Source: https://www.25ncoworking.com/locations/frisco-tx/

Maker Space

A maker space is a collaborative workspace for making, learning, exploring, and sharing that uses high-tech and low-tech tools. These spaces may be open to youth, adults, and entrepreneurs and have a variety of equipment including 3D printers, laser cutters, computer numerical control (CNC) machines, soldering irons, sewing machines, metal-working equipment, etc. The key difference between a maker space and a coworking space is that they provide equipment for tenants to "make" prototypes, test products, and fine-tune these items before and after they are pushed to market, as opposed to just providing a desk and WIFI.
Source: https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/coworking

Incubators and Accelerators

Business incubators and accelerators are geared toward speeding up the growth and success of startup and early-stage companies. In addition to physical space offered at a coworking facility, they include more business assistance services, such as mentoring, links to investors, and technological help. Huntsville should examine linking and potentially co-locating all related business development and growth assistance partners into one incubator/accelerator space to improve efficiencies and create a "one-stop-shop" for future business owners/entrepreneurs. If the City and partners pursue a potential business park, as recommended in Economic Opportunity SAP 3, consider building a permanent location for this type of facility within that business park. An accelerator located adjacent to leasable space will encourage successful businesses to stay in Huntsville. Additionally, this close physical proximity may create synergies between new entrepreneurs starting the accelerator program and potential mentors who have recently succeeded and benefited from its existence.

Case Study

The Don Ryan Center for Innovation (DRCI) — located in Bluffton, SC — was founded in 2012 as a not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping entrepreneurs succeed and innovative companies grow. The center provides innovators with space, resources, experienced guidance, and contacts/mentors to assist with successful business launches and continued growth. This accelerator and incubator space was an initiative spearheaded by the City of Bluffton and their partner economic development agencies to deliberately develop local entrepreneurs into Bluffton businesses that create jobs in local identified target industries.

The DRCI offers local businesses these services:

- Assistance in helping businesses prioritize, reshape, communicate and maximize governmental policies and programs in preparing for the new normal of business;

- Convenient flex space in the heart of the Bluffton business community;

- Business-building resources, including marketing/PR/ branding support; and

- Pro bono assistance to help businesses navigate through legal questions and parameters facing businesses today.

Source: https://www.donryancenter.com/154/Don-Ryan-Center-for-Innovation

Regulations and Standards

SAP 8. Evaluate and update development regulations to encourage infill and revitalization of existing commercial space and housing supply.

- A holistic approach to revitalization could include infrastructure rehabilitation, public services, code enforcement, property maintenance assistance, rental property inspection and licensing,

commercial space to housing conversion programs, redevelopment and infill incentives, and special district and financing tools to encourage redevelopment.

- Evaluate long-standing vacant properties/buildings to identify necessary code or zoning designation changes based on frequent use requests, size/appropriateness of the property to the uses contained in the underlying Development District, and this plan's Future Land Use Map.

SAP 9. Continue to utilize code enforcement to ensure proper maintenance of commercial properties.

SAP 10. Review signage and landscaping ordinances for commercial properties to ensure a high-quality commercial environment is achieved.

SAP 11. Review existing land development regulations, policies, and business incentives to promote equity and provide ample opportunity for all neighborhoods to have access to essential businesses and services, such as grocery stores, financial lending institutions, and utilities.

Partnerships and Coordination

SAP 12. Develop benchmarks to measure the effectiveness of economic development initiatives.

- Benchmarks can include a variety of measures. (Examples: new jobs created, new sales taxes generated, and new businesses started.)

SAP 13. Continue to focus efforts on revitalizing downtown as a primary shopping, dining, cultural, entertainment, and entrepreneurial hub of the city.

- Leverage the Downtown Historic Restoration and Improvements Grant to assist with building renovations and beautification efforts.

- Evaluate the potential for new grant/financial assistance programs for permanent signage, outdoor cafes, awnings, etc. that increase business visibility to visitors.

- Consider recruiting or locating one or more types of coworking space downtown (see the sidebar titled "Coworking Spaces").

Beyond Traditional Benchmarks

Traditional economic development benchmarks consist of easily quantifiable measures, such as:

1. Job creation;

2. Jobs retained;

3. Increases in sales tax revenue; and

4. Vacancy rates.

Typical benchmarks are valuable but do not reflect all of the effort expended by communities to create or retain economic activity.

Metrics that examine the amount of time and energy it takes City staff and partner agencies to create and implement new programs should become part of the benchmarking process. For example, cities may document how many staff hours are required to market, connect, and attract new businesses. This type of performance measure provides valuable insights into which business attraction/retention activities are yielding results or whether a program is in need of revision.

- Utilize the "Huntsville First" brand narrative for all City-sponsored and partner agency branding efforts.

SAP 14. Evolve the "Huntsville First" branding narrative to include promoting ongoing success stories of the City and key partners, such as SHSU and HISD.

- Develop a tourism-specific sub-marketing campaign to attract local and regional visitors to Huntsville's cultural and recreational leisure assets.

- Create "mini-brands" to inform residents and visitors about Huntsville's unique districts, neighborhoods and activity centers (e.g., downtown, The Avenues, historic neighborhoods, Huntsville State Park, SHSU, etc.). This will also help to create distinct identities for these unique areas.

- Initiate an online shared community calendar that lists all events and activities in Huntsville.

SAP 15. Work with partner agencies to create an increased number of cultural and eco-tourism events centered on Huntsville's history, SHSU, natural resources and local sporting events to add to the mix of existing events and festivals. For example:

- Huntsville's history is tied to Sam Houston's life and the presence of TDCJ. The various Sam Houston museums and artifacts and the Texas Prison Museum create interesting and niche reasons to visit Huntsville.

- Events may be tied to education about the Huntsville area's natural resources, in coordination with Huntsville State Park, to increase awareness and appreciation of the value of conservation and natural resources.

SAP 16. Partner with medical institutions to determine any workforce challenges they may be experiencing to reinforce Huntsville's desire for continued strong medical and hospital presence, including specialists.

SAP 17. Add "micro-events" to the already impressive list of annual and monthly events and festivals hosted by the City and partner organizations. These types of events should be more frequent – weekly or bi-weekly – to constantly drive patrons to area attractions or shopping districts, such as restaurant weeks, free live music and performances, and pop-up business events (e.g., food truck gatherings, movies under the stars, and temporary in-store locations for new entrepreneurs testing out new products or markets).

SAP 18. Examine the retail gap analysis included in this plan section to determine which retail and entertainment categories will add variety and interest to the current mix of existing businesses.

Micro-Event Example

The Downtown Business Alliance of St. Charles, Illinois, organizes performances every Wednesday and Friday from May to September of each year. Performances range from live music to magic shows. The business alliance maintains a list of artists and arranges for them to play at a specific public place in downtown St. Charles or inside a business. Acts agree not to charge any money to the Alliance or venues in exchange for a free showcase space and exposure to potential future clients.

Source: https://www.stcalliance.org/stclive

This type of micro-event drives interest to downtown with a constantly evolving mix of new and staple entertainment acts. More importantly, patrons always know that there will be a performance on Wednesday and Friday nights.

Retail Gap Analysis

A retail gap analysis examines how much money is being spent locally and compares this to how much money "should" be spent locally based on the local population's income. This analysis helps to:

- Uncover unmet demand and possible opportunities;
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the local market area; and
- Measure the difference between actual and potential retail sales.

The Gap

This retail gap is stated in two categories, "leakage" and "surplus."

Retail Leakage

A positive number indicates a "leakage" and that money is being spent outside of the retail trade area boundary. It suggests that there is unmet demand in the identified retail trade area and that there is an opportunity for local businesses to capture more of this spending.

Retail Surplus

A negative number is called a "surplus" and means that more people are spending money in the area than just the local population. Surpluses, depending on a local retail trade area's market profile, may have multiple implications. It may mean that a retail trade area is over-capacity for certain goods and services (e.g., there are more stores than the trade area can support, and additional stores may struggle to survive). However, for specialty items (typically high-cost items such as jewelry, automobiles, and boutique clothing stores) a surplus may indicate that a regional business cluster exists and may support additional businesses despite more spending than the base local retail trade area population "should" support. Other factors that might create a surplus are regional shopping centers, high amounts of tourism, or convenient access from a nearby interstate.

Table: Huntsville Retail Gap Analysis, summarizes a high-level gap analysis of the Huntsville retail trade area (includes the city of Huntsville and a 20-minute drive time from the City's corporate limits). The overall gap is further broken down into North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) three-digit categories. Huntsville's retail trade area indicates that there is a total surplus of (-$449,319,842). The overall retail surplus is not surprising given the number of reasons to visit Huntsville (e.g., museums, students, and inmate visitors). This also confirms that tourism and SHSU are drivers of retail activity and that continuing to focus efforts on creating attractive and active entertainment options will help increase the number of visitors and business activity in the local market.

Upon closer review of individual business categories, the analysis reveals potential leakages in the following categories:

- Furniture and home furnishing stores;
- Electronics and appliance stores; and
- Clothing and clothing accessories stores.

The observed leakages in these categories indicate that shoppers are leaving Huntsville to purchase these goods or services. Existing businesses that sell these goods or services and can cater to the area's clientele represent potential growth opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

Table: Huntsville Retail Gap Analysis			
Huntsville Gap Analysis All NAICS Categories			
NAICS Category Name	**NAICS Category Number**	**Retail Gap**	**Leakage/Surplus Factor**
Total retail trade and food and drink	44-45,722	-$449,319,842	-32.2
Total retail trade	44-45	-$396,965,351	-31.7
Total food and drink	722	-$52,354,491	-36.1
Huntsville Gap Analysis NAICS Category Breakdown			
NAICS Category Name	**NAICS Category Number**	**Retail Gap**	**Leakage/Surplus Factor**
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	441	-$127,567,673	-40.3
Furniture and home furnishings stores	442	$2,541,057	9.8
Electronics and appliance stores	443	$4,861,539	19.0
Building materials, garden equipment, and supply stores	444	-$11,398,257	-17.7
Food and beverage stores	445	-$63,431,070	-29.0
Health and personal care stores	446	-$24,477,899	-33.0
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	448	$5,599,048	17.6
Sporting goods, hobby, book, and music stores	451	-$16,886,123	-37.3
General merchandise stores	452	-$14,798,345	-9.2
Miscellaneous store retailers	453	-$999,888	-2.9
Nonstore retailers	454	-$22,175,591	-62.9
Food services and drinking places	722	-$52,354,491	-36.1

More Targeted Planning/Study

SAP 19. Develop a detailed demographic report and methodology that identifies the population characteristics of Huntsville's demographic subsets that are not always separated out by traditional reporting systems to present to developers and business prospects.

- Focus on the characteristics of Huntsville's non-institutionalized residents (excluding the TDCJ population).

- Investigate the spending patterns of SHSU students.

- Monitor daytime population demographics (e.g., median income, commute times, and where employees currently reside).

- Discover the origins and destinations of Huntsville's tourists.

SAP 20. Examine the market for hotel space in downtown and near SHSU's campus.

SAP 21. Identify potential target industries by building on known industry clusters (public administration, criminal justice, and education) and physical assets (I-45, the municipal airport, land values, existing and planned infrastructure, and proximity to Houston and Dallas MSAs). Begin with analyzing these foundational items:

- Expand on early results from this plan's location quotient and shift-share analyses (see below) to determine specific business types that may consider locating in Huntsville.

- Examine existing community assets – workforce skills, student population, and existing degree and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs offered by SHSU and HISD – and determine which national and regional growth industries utilize these technical skills.

- Define a list of aspirational industry categories (e.g., data centers, robotics, web development, etc.). Aspirational business sectors are not ones already located or highly likely to locate in Huntsville on their own. In order to entice these industries, a determination of the necessary new building spaces, workforce skills, infrastructure, partnership, and incentives are needed to transform Huntsville into an attractive destination for these enterprises.

Potential Target Industries

Performing a target industry analysis will help identify the employment sectors that make logical sense to "court" based upon existing concentrations of industry sectors, suppliers to existing businesses, or categories the City and partners want to attract. Identifying target industries is a process that considers an area's strengths, such as location, infrastructure, available workforce, housing, and existing industry clusters. Inherent geographic weaknesses (e.g., lack of housing stock, high commuter ratios, etc.) should also be examined to determine how to address these challenges. The following location quotient and shift share analyses lay a high-level foundation to assist Huntsville leaders to determine which industry clusters already located in the city should be examined for expansion, and sectors not found in high concentration that might be good fits for attraction efforts. The information contained in the following tables creates a data foundation for local officials and partners to embark on Economic Opportunity SAP 19 above.

Location Quotient

Location quotient ratios indicate when there is a higher concentration of an employment industry within a given economy (Huntsville) as compared to a larger economy, such as the United States. If a local industry's ratio is 1.0 or higher, it suggests that this particular local economy has a competitive advantage related to these types of businesses. Also, high location quotients can indicate that a local economy has a large workforce trained in these industries, which can be used to promote industry clusters and complementary businesses. **Table: Location Quotient Calculations** compares Huntsville's economy to the Dallas/Fort Worth Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), Houston MSA, and United States economies.

In Huntsville, educational services and public administration show a high location quotient ratio. This attests to the importance and jobs created through SHSU and TDCJ as well as the City and County governments. Public engagement participants stated that these two employers are the major job creators in Huntsville. This analysis supports those comments. The majority of other industries have a ratio of under 1.0, meaning they are not considered high concentration employment sectors.

Huntsville's strategic location between both the Houston and Dallas MSAs metropolitan areas may provide an advantage in industry categories that have high location quotient values as compared to the U.S. economy. One example is in the transportation and warehousing category. Huntsville's property values combined with the I-45 expansion may provide an actionable advantage in the future for logistics and warehouse companies.

NAICS Industry Category	LQ Between Huntsville and Dallas/ Fort Worth MSA	LQ Between Huntsville and Houston MSA	LQ Between Huntsville and the US	LQ Between Houston MSA and the US	LQ Between Dallas/ Fort Worth MSA and the US
Table: Location Quotient Calculations					
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	0.53	0.52	0.08	0.15	0.14
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0.15	0.03	0.22	**7.70**	1.51
Utilities	0.66	0.30	0.36	**1.21**	0.54
Construction	0.21	0.15	0.26	**1.73**	**1.23**
Manufacturing	0.15	0.15	0.15	**1.03**	**1.04**
Wholesale trade	0.12	0.11	0.19	**1.70**	**1.64**
Retail trade	0.71	0.72	0.79	**1.09**	**1.11**
Transportation and warehousing	0.02	0.02	0.03	**1.32**	**1.57**
Information	0.19	0.42	0.24	0.58	**1.25**
Finance and insurance	0.20	0.38	0.35	0.94	**1.81**
Real estate and rental and leasing	0.35	0.36	0.54	**1.49**	**1.54**
Professional, scientific, and technical services	0.25	0.25	0.35	**1.38**	**1.38**
Management of companies and enterprises	0.01	0.01	0.01	**1.13**	**1.16**
Administration and support, waste management, and remediation	0.13	0.15	0.18	**1.23**	**1.37**
Educational services	**9.51**	**7.90**	**1.64**	0.21	0.17
Health care and social assistance	0.74	0.71	0.56	0.79	0.75
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	0.44	0.47	0.30	0.64	0.69
Accommodation and food services	0.72	0.70	0.72	**1.03**	**1.00**
Other services (excluding public administration)	0.48	0.43	0.43	**1.01**	0.90
Public administration	N/A*	N/A*	**10.92**	0.00	0.00

Notes:
* No employment numbers reported for this category in the Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston MSAs.

Shift Share

Shift share analyses compare a local economy's growth over a specified timeframe to the amount of growth in a larger economy (U.S.) over the same period of time. This type of analysis is typically broken down into these calculations:

- **National Growth for Industry** – The national growth for the industry number shows the number of local jobs a business category is expected to gain or lose based on that same category's national performance. Essentially, how many local jobs were created or lost because of that industry's rise or decline nationally.

- **Industrial Shift** – This measurement provides insight as to whether an industry is growing or shrinking nationwide. An industry with a negative industrial shift is declining may help a local economy identify if they are reliant on a shrinking industry or where not to focus recruiting efforts.

- **Competitive Share** – A positive competitive share value indicates that a particular industry is growing faster locally than the national economy and may indicate that the local economy has an industry-specific competitive advantage. Negative competitive share values indicate that this local industry is losing jobs faster than the national economy.

- **Absolute Change** – Absolute change illustrates the total number of jobs gained (positive number) or lost (negative number) in the local economy during the time period used for the shift-share analysis.

A shift share analysis was performed for Huntsville with the results displayed below in **Table: Shift Share Analysis**. The two time periods examined were total employment in 2008 compared to total employment in 2018. The competitive share value is the data point that is most insightful when performing this type of analysis. The largest competitive share values determined for Huntsville were:

- Public administration sector (410);
- Retail trade (219); and
- Accommodation and food services (167).

The positive results in the public administration category are likely the result of the TDCJ's presence in Huntsville, plus being the county seat along with staffing. Relatively high performance in the retail trade and accommodations and food services sectors performance is the likely result of successful developments along I-45 (and the TIRZ district used as a catalyst for this activity) and the attraction of new businesses to downtown.

The lowest negative values were found in:

- Education services (-671);
- Healthcare and social assistance (-604);
- Professional, scientific, and technical services (-209); and
- Construction (-143).

Given the presence of SHSU in the city, a negative shift share in the education services category was not expected. However, the absolute change during this 10-year period was -237 which is relatively low given the total amount of individuals employed locally in this industry. This data also includes HISD and any private schools, daycares, or for-profit institutions. Given all these variables, this analysis indicates that total Huntsville jobs in this industry should be monitored regularly, and given this category's high location quotient, considered a target industry. Public engagement activity participants mentioned that Huntsville Memorial Hospital had recently gone through some industry shifts which may explain the negative competitive Health Care and Social Assistance.

Table: Shift Share				
NAICS Industry Category	National Growth	Industrial Shift	Competitive Share	Absolute Change
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	19	-11	-51	-43
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	4	-5	13	12
Utilities	24	-21	-26	-23
Construction	146	-117	-143	-114
Manufacturing	118	-133	-7	-22
Retail trade	589	-466	219	342
Transportation and warehousing	14	-4	-22	-12
Information	46	-41	-13	-8
Finance and insurance	88	-68	82	102
Real estate and rental and leasing	60	-45	11	26
Professional, scientific, and technical services	203	-44	-209	-50
Management of companies and enterprises	1	0	0	1
Administration & support, waste management, and remediation	57	-20	84	120
Educational services	1308	-874	-671	-237
Health care and social assistance	662	4	-604	62
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	39	-11	-8	20
Accommodation and food services	408	-83	167	492
Other services (excluding public administration)	126	-105	-59	-39
Public administration	3171	-893	410	2688

Based on these preliminary analyses and public engagement activities, the City and its partners should consider the following as new target industries or retention/expansion industries for further investigation before deciding on specific target industries:

- Transportation and warehousing;
- Retail trade;
- Wholesale trade;
- Healthcare and social assistance;
- Information (specifically data warehouses, IT support, and cybersecurity companies or start-ups related to SHSU's Master's degree program in Computer Forensics);
- Arts, entertainment, and recreation; and
- Accommodations (particularly to add hotels and bed and breakfast uses in the downtown area).

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Introduction

Huntsville's ability to attract and retain residents and Sam Houston State University students is inextricably tied to the condition and availability of its housing stock. As Huntsville plans for the future, the quality, affordability, and selection of housing options will impact how the city grows. An increased supply of housing may allow Huntsville to capture a larger percentage of those who currently work in Huntsville but live elsewhere.

Challenges to the Huntsville housing market include regional competition from nearby recent residential construction (with new and updated amenities) in the Conroe and The Woodlands and a relatively low supply of new housing stock in Huntsville. Having a diverse stock of housing, both of varying types and price points, is instrumental in offering choice and providing for the individual needs of all households, regardless of economic status. In addition to tackling the challenge of addressing future housing needs, Huntsville must also work to sustain and enhance the

Links to Other Plan Sections
- Growth Capacity
- Land Use and Development
- Mobility
- Economic Opportunity
- Recreation and Amenities
- Implementation

condition of existing housing and neighborhoods. The purpose of this plan section is to identify strategies to ensure that Huntsville meets its existing and future housing needs through the provision of high-quality, attainable, and diverse housing offerings within safe, livable, and attractive neighborhood environments.

Legacy of Past Planning

Previous Relevant Plans/Studies

Among various other topics, the Huntsville Horizon Comprehensive Plan of 2007 included goals, objectives, and recommendations addressing Housing and Neighborhoods. Relevant themes included:

- Balance of new growth and careful redevelopment within Huntsville;
- Protect established neighborhoods in Huntsville to stabilize and reinvigorate older neighborhoods that have experienced some decline;
- Broaden the range of housing types and price diversity to meet the affordability needs of the population; and
- Use the City's development regulations to directly prevent and/or mitigate adverse impacts on the City's natural features and assets.

Accomplishments

The City of Huntsville, partner organizations, and local businesses have accomplished the following housing and neighborhood related programs and initiatives to support the items stated above:

- Adopted new Huntsville Development Code (HDC) in 2015.
- Completion of the H-GAC Housing & Economic Development Case Study Huntsville, Texas: Harnessing Huntsville's Potential Report.

Key Issues and Considerations

Through the Existing City and Plan Direction phases of this comprehensive planning effort, a set of six top strategic items were identified based on input from the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, joint workshops with City elected and appointed officials, results of varied public engagement activities, and consultant team input. Four of the six strategic items are most relevant to the Housing and Neighborhoods portion of the Comprehensive Plan, along with the specific related issues under each (follow the links below to see all related issues for each category):

- Pro-actively Preparing for Growth and Development.
  - Balance the maintenance of existing infrastructure with needs for new infrastructure to keep pace with development.
  - As growth continues, review appropriate land use and growth management tools to ensure land use compatibility and properly located and timed infrastructure.
  - Maintain the elements that give Huntsville a "small town feel" even while growing.

- Building Huntsville's Economic Base.
  - Support residents in need, seeking to provide opportunities for all residents to improve their quality of life, and recognizing the importance of equitable development and policies.

- Making Housing Needs a Core Focus.
  - Revitalize and improve upkeep of older housing stock, including through code enforcement of derelict or unsafe properties.
  - Attract more residential development to increase housing supply and meet workforce needs, at varying price points including housing that can make home ownership attainable for more residents.
  - Maintain a diversity of housing types, including housing for students and for various life-cycle stages of residents, in appropriate locations.

Housing Market Demand and Public Action

On the demand side of the housing market, any public action must be aimed at making a home purchase viable upfront and in the early years of ownership (e.g., down payment assistance, property tax relief, utility assistance, payment of homeowner association fees, etc.), especially for first-time homebuyers.

Housing Market Supply and Public Action

In general, any potential public action must be aimed at reducing upfront development costs while still ensuring that expectations for quality dwellings, neighborhoods, and amenities are not lowered. For municipal governments themselves – or entities they establish to engage and collaborate with the private real estate and development communities (e.g., nonprofit development corporations) – some options are "at arm's length" (e.g., tax or other financial incentives, cost-sharing arrangements for utility infrastructure and/or streets, etc.) while other strategies require very direct involvement (e.g., land acquisition/assembly, direct provision of street or utility infrastructure, neighborhood park improvements, etc.). Some Texas cities have extended the use of Public Improvement Districts (PIDs) to new residential development, enabling private development to deliver new, desirable housing units at a lower price point. Establishment of a new Neighborhood Empowerment Zone (NEZ) is another tool that can be utilized to incentivize infill development.

- Manage the potential effects of rental activity in neighborhoods.
- New and Improved Implementation Tools to Advance Plan Priorities.
  - Update the City's development regulations and standards based on its new long-range plan.
  - Maintain up-to-date master plans (for infrastructure, public facilities, airport, parks, etc.).

Housing and Neighborhoods Goals

Goal HN1: An increased housing supply within the city limits, capturing an increased amount of county and regional growth within the city.

Goal HN2: A wider variety of housing types available within the city, including rental options and options affordable across the income spectrum to meet the housing needs of residents, students, and local employees.

Goal HN3: Well-maintained existing housing stock, including multi-family complexes and single-family homes, that provide safe and quality housing options.

Strategic Action Priorities

Capital Investments

SAP 1.   Focus infrastructure improvements in the City's Capital Improvements Program near sites identified as prime residential neighborhood development opportunities.

SAP 2.   Consider adding a line item in the CIP for high-speed internet provisions, including the acquisition of right-of-way, the conduit for fiber optic cables, and potentially the installation of these physical items to supply new residential neighborhoods to promote "work from home" capabilities.

- Public engagement revealed that the decision of some employees who work but do not live in Huntsville stems from the location of a spouse's employment outside of Huntsville. With the increase in virtual workers, the City should position itself as a highly desirable "work from home" community, where broadband internet is easily accessible.

- Once established, assist local employers to advertise this feature as a reason to work and live in Huntsville.

Embracing Remote Work – Has the Office Changed Forever?

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how people work and these trends will most likely continue into the foreseeable future. According to a recent study by commercial real estate brokerage firm Cushman and Wakefield, "To work remotely or in the office is not a binary decision. Because people want flexibility and choice, and because organizations will need to cater to more dynamic uses of space, they will measure density differently."

According to their most current research on work from home trends, employees prefer a mix of work that takes place in a physical office and remotely. The right mix will vary by organizations and individuals. However, it is reasonable to expect reaching an equilibrium where the average employee works remotely approximately two days a week.

MOVING TOWARDS ECOSYSTEMS

Legend:
- Remote First
- Remote-First Hybrid
- Office-First Hybrid
- Office-First

Pre-COVID: 12%, 7%, 22%, 59%
Post-COVID: 10%, 23%, 58%, 10%

Hybrid expectations increase from 29% to 81%

Source: Cushman and Wakefield, Center for Real Estate and Urban Analysis; Workplace Ecosystems Of The Future
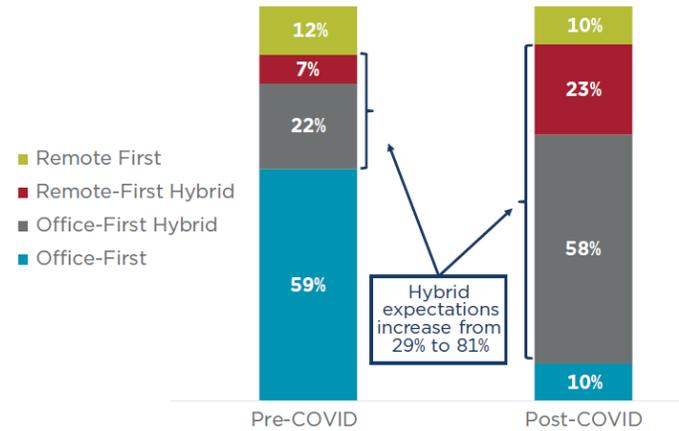
Implications for Huntsville

Remote work is a two-sided proposition for Huntsville's employment base. The potential to attract current and future area employees to live in the City is increased as their spouses/significant others may be able to work at home and forget their previous long commute concerns. However, current employers may decide to move to a hybrid approach; therefore, making it easier for workers to commute long distances to Huntsville businesses. As Huntsville plans housing and neighborhood improvement strategies, focus needs to remain on creating an environment that appeals to visitors, employers, workers, and residents to ensure that Huntsville is providing an attractive, high-quality place to live, work and raise a family.

Programs and Initiatives

SAP 3.   Develop a program to highlight successful neighborhood beautification efforts, such as a beautification spot of the month program, potentially in collaboration with local community groups.

SAP 4.   Increase code compliance education efforts geared toward homeowners, landlords, and property owners focused on both resources available and legal responsibilities.

- Increase enforcement efforts of existing maintenance and nuisance codes and development guidelines.

- Produce materials for homeowners detailing homeowner versus City maintenance responsibilities. Materials should include resources available for those who may need assistance in meeting their responsibilities.

- Enforce existing regulations through increased efforts to identify potential and existing issues and solutions before issuing citations.

- Work with landlords of student rental housing to ensure they understand maintenance responsibilities and that they are held to code compliance standards set by the City.

- Ensure homeowners, tenants, and landlords are aware of resources available through various state and federal programs, such as weatherization programs to improve energy efficiency.

- Develop guidelines and brochures to assist homeowners in historic neighborhoods to understand the value preserving historic neighborhoods and features brings to their properties and to Huntsville.

Property Revitalization

Revitalization of properties in Huntsville's existing neighborhoods will be an ongoing focus. An example of a successful City-led revitalization initiative is the City of The Colony, Texas.

The Colony's Volunteer Assistance Program seeks to address the needs of residents who are unable to abate property maintenance violations due to various hardships, including age, disability, and finances. A coalition of volunteers aids in the process.

A tool-lending program, called The Colony Cares, complements the Volunteer Assistance Program. The tool-lending program allows residents to checkout a variety of common home improvement tools for use on their property, free of charge. Most of the tools and equipment used in the program were acquired through donations or grants.
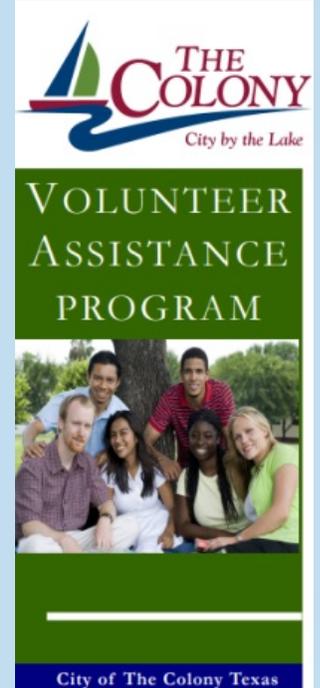
SAP 5. Evaluate, in coordination with not-for-profit, faith-based groups, SHSU, and Huntsville Independent School District (HISD), the potential for the creation of volunteer programs to assist elderly residents, or residents with limited means, with home repairs and property maintenance.

- Reach out to Huntsville Independent School District (HISD) officials to understand if students enrolled in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) horticulture or construction programs are able to offer assistance to residents for landscaping and home maintenance projects and track how many homes these efforts help.

SAP 6. Continue to prioritize protection of established neighborhoods in Huntsville and stabilization and reinvigoration of older neighborhoods.

- Coordinate with property owners and residents to identify and prioritize needed neighborhood improvements funded through a targeted-area capital investment program.

- Promote redevelopment or compatible infill development that maintains neighborhood character through incentive-based approaches such as permit streamlining and fee waivers.

- Assist residents of older areas with formation of official neighborhood organizations. Participation in neighborhood improvement and revitalization efforts may also be initiated by churches, schools and businesses through programs such as neighborhood clean-ups, home improvement, and beautification.

SAP 7. Create a financial assistance program that targets existing home maintenance.

- Investigate zero percent interest deferred payment loans to help very-low and low-income qualified residents perform structural, mechanical, and facia repairs to their homes.

- Utilize the City's bulk-purchasing power to create incentives for local businesses to offer lower rates to non-capable homeowners with regular maintenance, such as lawn mowing, tree and shrub pruning, planting flowers, and weeding.

SAP 8.   Develop first-time homebuyer financial assistance programs (e.g., down payment assistance, closing cost grants, first-year property tax forbearance, etc.) to encourage recent college graduates employed in local industries to purchase homes in the city.

SAP 9.   Attract a wider range of residential developers to build within the city. There is currently a limited number of developers that have pursued development of new housing within the city. Incentives may be financial incentives (such as property tax abatements, fee waivers, public infrastructure funding, etc.), use of Chapter 380/381 agreements, non-financial incentives (such as expedited development reviews), or creation of special districts for financing infrastructure and other improvements.

- Guidelines for any new incentives should be created to clearly define the parameters and outcomes.

- Incentives should prioritize development in areas already served by existing infrastructure or planned for future utility expansion.

- Seek and arrange information meetings with a range of developers to provide them information about Huntsville's development process.

- Prepare information to make available on the City's website, with specific information available for prospective buyers/renters and for builders. The information should detail both the process and provide prospective buyers/ renters with information on resources to find housing (whether through local realtors, online listings, etc.)

- Coordinate with Geographic Information Services (GIS) to maintain a vacant properties inventory and add City-owned parcels available for development.

Build-to-Rent Single Family Homes

As the name implies, the build-to-rent housing model consists of constructing homes with the original intent to rent them from the start. Two common examples of build-to-rent homes include:

Single-Family Rental Homes

Homes within this space are usually located within master planned communities and have a suburban style theme to them. These homes are generally developed in platted subdivisions at less than 10 units an acre. Typically renters pay a premium of about 5 percent to 20 percent per square foot compared to non-professionally managed homes but may receive the benefits of community amenities and front yard maintenance.

Image source: AHV Communities

Detached Single-Family Horizontal Apartment Complexes This type of apartment model offers a high number of homes as well as high density living. Typically, these complexes hold anywhere between 90 to 200 units and are developed at more than 10 units per acre over a single lot. Common plans include one, two, and three-bedroom units ranging between 700 to 1,300 square feet. Additionally, they may be branded as luxury apartments, with attractive features such as pet-friendly spaces, optional garages, community pools, and available recreation areas.
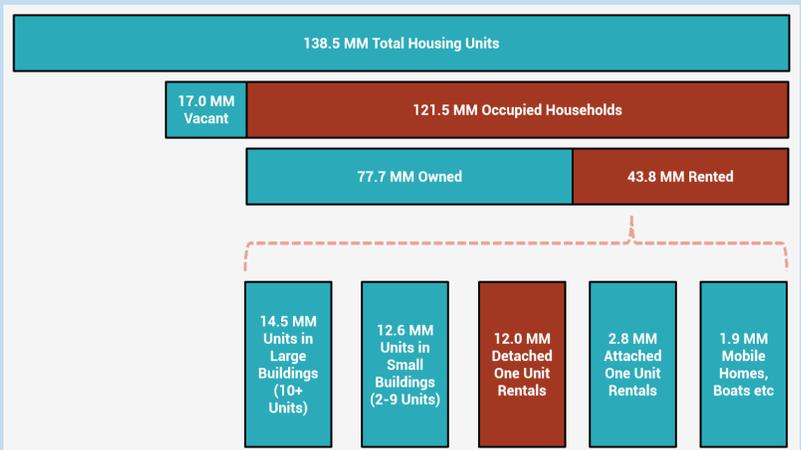
Image source: Christopher Todd Communities

Target Audience Build-to-rent homes play a large role in filling in a set of diverse housing options communities may lack. Known as missing middle housing, and as defined by Opticos Design, they represent "a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types, compatible in scale with detached single-family homes." The target demographic primarily consists of millennials, or those aged between 24 to 39 years, who may seek the benefits of a private, suburban lifestyle but may not be able to afford housing ownership or want the commitments that come with it. As housing prices get higher in some urban settings, and teleworking becomes a more common option, more millennials are choosing less urban settings. This trend may also have been augmented due to the social and economic effects of COVID-19

Growth and Projections Currently, detached one-unit rentals make up 12 million of the total housing units available in the United States, which is also about 27 percent of all rental housing units. Built-for-rent homes represent approximately 6 percent of all new single-family homes and are expected to encompass about 700,000 new units within the next decade. Source: 2018 American Community Survey (Table S2504); RCLCO.

Although the build-to-rent practice is significantly growing, according to RCLCO, this number falls short as the growing demand for

Regulations and Standards

SAP 10. Ensure development regulations allow a variety of housing types, including moderate density housing, accessory dwelling units, and other forms of "missing middle" housing. These housing types can often be developed more quickly and at lower cost than larger multifamily complexes.

SAP 11. Create mixed-use development guidelines, and potentially incentives, to clarify how and where the City would like to see mixed-use developments occur.

SAP 12. Develop a new master-planned community overlay district that permits a range of housing types and densities for residential developers to utilize while entitling large tracts of land. This new district should:

- Permit and require a variety of housing types at different densities that appeal to existing residents, area employees, and recent SHSU graduates; and
- Encourage a mix of for-sale and rental housing products.

SAP 13. Amend the Huntsville Development Code (HDC) to permit upper story apartment units in the Downtown District to ensure that land/building owners can develop rental apartments above retail stores.

SAP 14. Expand the Downtown District's footprint towards SHSU's campus to create a mix of shopping, residential, and entertainment uses along University Avenue and Avenue J. Zoning this area into the Downtown District will encourage redevelopment and physical links between these two cultural centers.

SAP 15. Review development regulations to pinpoint potential ways to streamline the development process and ensure that City permitting and approval processes do not unnecessarily hinder development and promote a variety of housing types. Ensure the development process is easy to understand, transparent, and results in desired outcomes.

- Update development, zoning, and subdivision regulations to ensure consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Conduct interviews, roundtable, or focus groups with home builders to get feedback on the City's development process and learn what it would take for them to consider home development in Huntsville.

Partnership and Coordination

SAP 16. Discuss "gap" financing programs with local banks, financial institutions, and corporate employers to assist eligible buyers to purchase homes within neighborhoods with declining market values.

SAP 17. Develop relationships with local and regional not-for-profit groups, such as Habitat for Humanity, to increase the supply of attainable housing within Huntsville and address other needs of residents.

SAP 18. Continue an active partnership with SHSU to understand enrollment projections and potential student housing needs, including projections for on-campus housing.

SAP 19. Work with Huntsville primary employers to develop employer-assisted housing programs that entice employees of these organizations to choose Huntsville as their home in addition to their place of employment.

- Develop a workforce housing task force and partner with local employers to better understand what price points and housing types are desired by their employees (such as high amenity rental housing, mid-range housing, executive-level housing, etc.), particularly for those employees who currently work, but do not live, in Huntsville.

- Examine the potential to develop a workforce housing incentive policy to assist developers with the infrastructure costs of new housing development.

- Investigate the feasibility of creating an Employer Assisted Workforce Housing program in which area employers help employees with rent or down payment assistance to live and work in Huntsville.

Employer Assisted Housing

Employer Assisted Workforce Housing programs are an employee benefit that employers have been using to help retain their workforce and provide affordable living solutions. At its core, this type of program is a direct financial benefit available for a company's employees. Indirectly, the unavailability of quality housing or lack of desire for employees to live close to the employer's physical location creates difficulties for employers to attract quality employees. By offering housing benefits, employers are able to set themselves apart from their competitors, while improving their competitive position.

In the City of Huntsville, this may also encourage new employees to live within its corporate limits as opposed to commuting. Employer-assisted housing is not just for the employees. Employer-assisted housing programs help build employee loyalty and increase productivity through improved morale, enhanced employee work/life balance, and decreased absenteeism. Increased retention saves companies money by reducing costs associated with losing employees such as lost revenue, productivity, and expenses related to hiring and training new employees.

Source: https://www.fels.upenn.edu/recap/posts/1570

Employer Assisted Housing Program Example: University of Chicago

The University of Chicago's Employer Assisted Housing Program showcases how this type of program is potentially structured. Their program provides down payment assistance and has assisted more than 240 employees since the program's inception in 2003. To qualify, applicants must be full-time employees of the University of Chicago and have passed their probationary period. Applicants must be purchasing or renting a home within one of the nine neighborhoods that surround the University's campus. The program has eligibility requirements that can be tailored to any community's needs. The following chart (for illustrative purposes) details the eligibility requirements and amount of assistance available to University of Chicago employees.

Determine Your Eligibility to Purchase by Neighborhood	Woodlawn Focus Area	Douglas, Grand Boulevard, Greater Grand Crossing, North Kenwood, Oakland, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn outside of Focus Area	Hyde Park/ South Kenwood*
Down Payment Assistance Amount	$10,000	$5,000	$2,500
First-Time Homeowners	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
Current Homeowners: Outside 9 Neighborhoods	Eligible	Eligible	Not Eligible
Current Homeowners: Within 9 Neighborhoods†	Eligible	Not Eligible	Not Eligible

*Household income must be 120 percent or less than the area median income (AMI). See adjacent table.
†Existing Woodlawn Focus Area homeowners not eligible.

Determine Your Eligibility to Purchase in Hyde Park/ South Kenwood*

Household Size	Maximum Income Eligibility Requirements
1	$63,840
2	$72,960
3	$82,080
4	$91,200
5	$98,520
6	$105,840
7	$113,160
8	$120,480

Source: Illinois Housing Development Authority
Note: Income limits are subject to change annually.

More Targeted Planning/Study

SAP 20. Conduct a Housing Action Plan to better understand the gaps and opportunities in the local and regional housing market and what current and future market conditions can support.

- The study should pay particular attention to the housing needs of SHSU students and should examine the types of housing that college students deem most desirable. Student preferences should focus on these variables:

- o Price point;
- o Physical types of housing (e.g., single-family, apartment buildings, university village, etc.);
- o Location variables including on-campus vs. off-campus and proximity to downtown.

SAP 21. Conduct neighborhood-level plans for SHSU and downtown areas and examine the best way to create a transition between these two cultural centers along University Avenue and Avenue J.

- Survey SHSU students – in partnership with SHSU – to gain a better understanding of which neighborhoods students favor and how they commute to SHSU's campus and align housing and zoning policies to ensure these neighborhoods are prepared to accommodate housing.

What is a Housing Action Plan

A Housing Action Plan (HAP) is a holistic approach to addressing housing challenges within a city. As opposed to housing studies that focus solely on one housing issue, such as affordability, an HAP examines the full range of housing challenges in a community, which are often interrelated.

Quality Neighborhood Design

As with economic development, where municipal government helps to ensure a positive and supportive "business climate" for commercial and industrial investment, the City has an essential role in promoting adequate and affordable housing development in quality neighborhood settings. The City's development and subdivision regulations help to ensure sound design practices, and the zoning regulations determine the range of housing types that may be built in the community, and where and in what amounts. These are critical functions given the proportion of developed land in Huntsville, as in most communities, that is devoted to residential use.

Effective land use planning and management also balances the convenience of shopping and services in close proximity to neighborhoods with the need to ensure compatible non-residential development near homes. Capital investments by the City and others in infrastructure, public facilities, and parks and trails provide the framework for private development to bring needed new dwellings to market. Furthermore, housing options and value are a key ingredient for economic development success – and that success, in turn, drives further housing demand, including for "move-up" homes when local income growth increases purchasing power and lifestyle aspirations.

Contemporary subdivision design too often overlooks the time-honored elements of what makes a neighborhood appealing and sustainable for the long term. Typical features of a quality neighborhood design include:

- Some focal point, whether a park or central green, school, community center, place of worship, or small-scale commercial activity, that enlivens the neighborhood and provides a gathering place.

- Equal importance of pedestrian and vehicular circulation. Street design accommodates, but also calms, necessary automobile traffic. Sidewalks along or away from streets, and/or a network of off-street trails, provide for pedestrian and bicycle circulation (especially for school children) and promote interconnectivity of adjacent neighborhoods.

- A variety of dwelling types to address a range of needs among potential residents (based on age, income level, household size, etc.).

- Access to schools, recreation and daily conveniences within relatively close proximity to the neighborhood, if not within or at its edges (such as along bordering major streets).

- An effective street layout that provides multiple paths to external destinations (and critical access for emergency vehicles) while also discouraging non-local or cut-through traffic.

- Appealing streetscapes, whether achieved through street trees or other design elements, which "soften" an otherwise intensive atmosphere and draw residents to enjoy common areas of their neighborhood. This should include landscape designs consistent with local climate and vegetation.

- Compatibility of fringe or adjacent uses, or measures to buffer the neighborhood from incompatible development.

- Evident definition of the neighborhood "unit" through recognizable identity and edges, without going so far (through walls and other physical barriers) as to establish "fortress" neighborhoods.

- Set-aside of conservation areas, greenbelts or other open space as an amenity, to encourage leisure and healthful living, and to contribute to neighborhood buffering and definition.

- Use of local streets for parking to reduce the lot area that must be devoted to driveways and garages, and for the traffic calming benefits of on-street parking.

- Respect for historic sites and structures, and incorporation of such assets into neighborhood design.

RECREATION AND AMENITIES

Introduction

This plan section emphasizes the essential contribution that natural resources, parks, open space and recreation facilities make to Huntsville's quality of life. Parks are integral parts of any city and are often among the public services most valued by residents and also enjoyed by visitors. Huntsville offers a well-utilized variety of parks and recreation facilities, in addition to its historic locations and cultural assets. Huntsville State Park and Sam Houston National Forest; in particular, represent the abundant natural resources, which contribute to the City's livability.

Links to Other Plan Sections

- Growth Capacity
- Land Use and Development
- Mobility
- Economic Opportunity
- Recreation and Amenities
- Implementation

Legacy of Past Planning

Previous Relevant Plans/Studies

The Huntsville Horizon Plan 2025, Huntsville's 2007 Comprehensive Plan, included the following still relevant parks and recreation goals:

- A balanced and wide variety of public parks, recreational areas and open space in near proximity to all residents;
- Conservation and public enjoyment of natural resources;
- Incremental development of a complete community trail network; and
- Coordinated and cooperative approaches to addressing the area's recreational needs and environmental conservation priorities.

Accomplishments

The City of Huntsville and partner organizations have accomplished the following recreation and amenities related initiatives to support the items stated above:

- Completion of the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan;
- Feasibility study for the renovated Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center; and
- Identification of funding for a new skate park.

Key Issues and Considerations

Through the Existing City and Plan Direction phases of this comprehensive planning effort, a set of six top strategic items were identified based on input from the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, joint workshops with City elected and appointed officials, results of varied public engagement activities and consultant team input. Four of the six strategic items are most relevant to the Recreation and Amenities portion of the Comprehensive Plan, along with the specific related issues under each:

- Pro-actively Preparing for Growth and Development.
    - o Explore strategies for reducing wildfire and flooding risk and impacts, including development and site design practices, vegetation management, storm water management, and multi-purpose open space.

- Building Huntsville's Economic Base.
    - o Bolster Huntsville's tourism industry, focusing on elements where Huntsville can differentiate itself from the competition, such as proximity to natural resources and extent of historic and cultural amenities.

- Expanding Recreational Opportunities.
    - o Enhance opportunities for residents of all ages, particularly youth, to have active and healthy lifestyles, through provision of high quality recreational and park facilities and more options for safe pedestrian and bicycle circulation.
    - o Evaluate the feasibility of new sports and recreational facilities, including those with the potential to bring economic benefits by attracting tournaments or minor league sports teams.
    - o Enhance awareness of and access to the Huntsville area's incredible natural resources, including the Sam Houston National Forest and Huntsville State Park.

- New and Improved Implementation Tools to Advance Plan Priorities.
    - o Update the City's development regulations and standards based on its new long-range plan.
    - o Maintain up-to-date master plans (for infrastructure, public facilities, airport, parks, etc.).
    - o Continue emphasis on progress through partnerships (public/public, public/private, public/non-profit).

Recreation and Amenities Goals

Goal RA1: Conservation of natural resources, including trees, environmentally sensitive areas, and future park areas in planning for future growth and development.

Goal RA2: A park and recreation system that adds to the positive image of Huntsville, provides enjoyment to residents, and attracts new visitors.

Goal RA3: A park and recreation system that promotes healthy and active living and is connected to the rest of the community through safe multi-modal trails, sidewalks, and/or bicycle facilities.

Strategic Action Priorities

Capital Investments

SAP 1. Continue implementation of the priority projects identified in the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, identifying next steps for each project, any challenges to implementation, and any needed updates to the project list.

- Priority projects identified in the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan include:
  - o Renovation of Kate Barr Ross Sports Complex;
  - o Construction of a multi-purpose recreation center at Eastham Thomason Park;
  - o Renovation of TH Ball "Josey" Park to include an additional adult softball field;
  - o Construction of a new Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreation Center at Emancipation Park; and
  - o Development of a City-Wide Trail System.

New Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreation Center at Emancipation Park

Design and renovation of an updated Recreation Center at Emancipation Park was one of the priority projects identified in the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. A feasibility study was concluded in December 2020 to examine potential enhancements to the existing 1970s structure. Proposed renovations would nearly double the amount of space in the center, add a multi-purpose classroom, teen room, conference rooms and event space. The approximate cost of the project is $2.9 million. Image: Feasibility study rendering of proposed enhancements to the Recreation Center.

SAP 2. Identify upgrades and improvements desired by the community for enhancing existing parks. Expand upon the range of amenities available, based upon the desires of residents for additional leisure and recreational options, targeting improvements that meet the needs of varying age groups.

- This may include amenities such as free-standing outdoor exercise equipment for seniors, a spray park, local art park, wildlife observation area, frisbee golf, additional fields for sports leagues or other elements.
- Ensure safety within parks is integrated as a key improvement factor.
- Upon completion of new skate park in Eastham Thomason Park, monitor usage to determine feasibility and need for additional skate park in Emancipation Park.

SAP 3. Evaluate potential to fund design and implementation of multi-modal improvements recommended in 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and/or 2019 Transportation Master Plan. The 2016 Parks

and Recreation Master Plan and the 2019 Transportation Master Plan both contain maps of proposed sidewalk, trail, and bicycle networks, as well as identification of specific projects and early implementation steps. These recommendations should proceed to the next step of design and feasibility for priority projects.

Multi-Modal Recommendations

2016 Parks and Recreation Park Master Plan Multi-Modal Recommendations Include:

- 3-miles of bicycle lanes and 24.6 miles of multi-use trails;
- Multi-purpose trail west side of Veteran's Memorial Parkway (concept image shown);

- Pedestrian connection/corridor enhancements linking Sam Houston State University (SHSU) to downtown;
- Bicycle path along 20th Street towards Bowers Boulevard; and
- I-45 South Feeder Road multi-use trail to connect to the trailhead into national Forest (in coordination with TxDOT).

2019 Transportation Master Plan Multi-Modal Recommendations Include:

- Upgrading existing sidewalks that are non-compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and have obstructions in the pedestrian path;
- Conduct extensive sidewalk inventory to upgrade sidewalks to ADA standards;
- Sam Houston Avenue pedestrian and bicycle improvements;
- Prioritize completing sidewalk gaps within the five and ten-minute walk sheds of schools; and
- Improve the existing pedestrian infrastructure (including crosswalks and curb ramps, with a particular focus on intersections along Sam Houston Avenue with substandard conditions.

Programs and Initiatives

SAP 4.   Evaluate future park needs and identify potential locations for regional-scale parks.

- The Huntsville Parks with Service Areas Map depicts the existing parks in the city with quarter-mile and half-mile radii around them, representing the typical distances that people are willing and able to walk to reach recreational facilities. Additionally, the map shows areas of the city that are lacking in park space (areas not covered by service area circles).
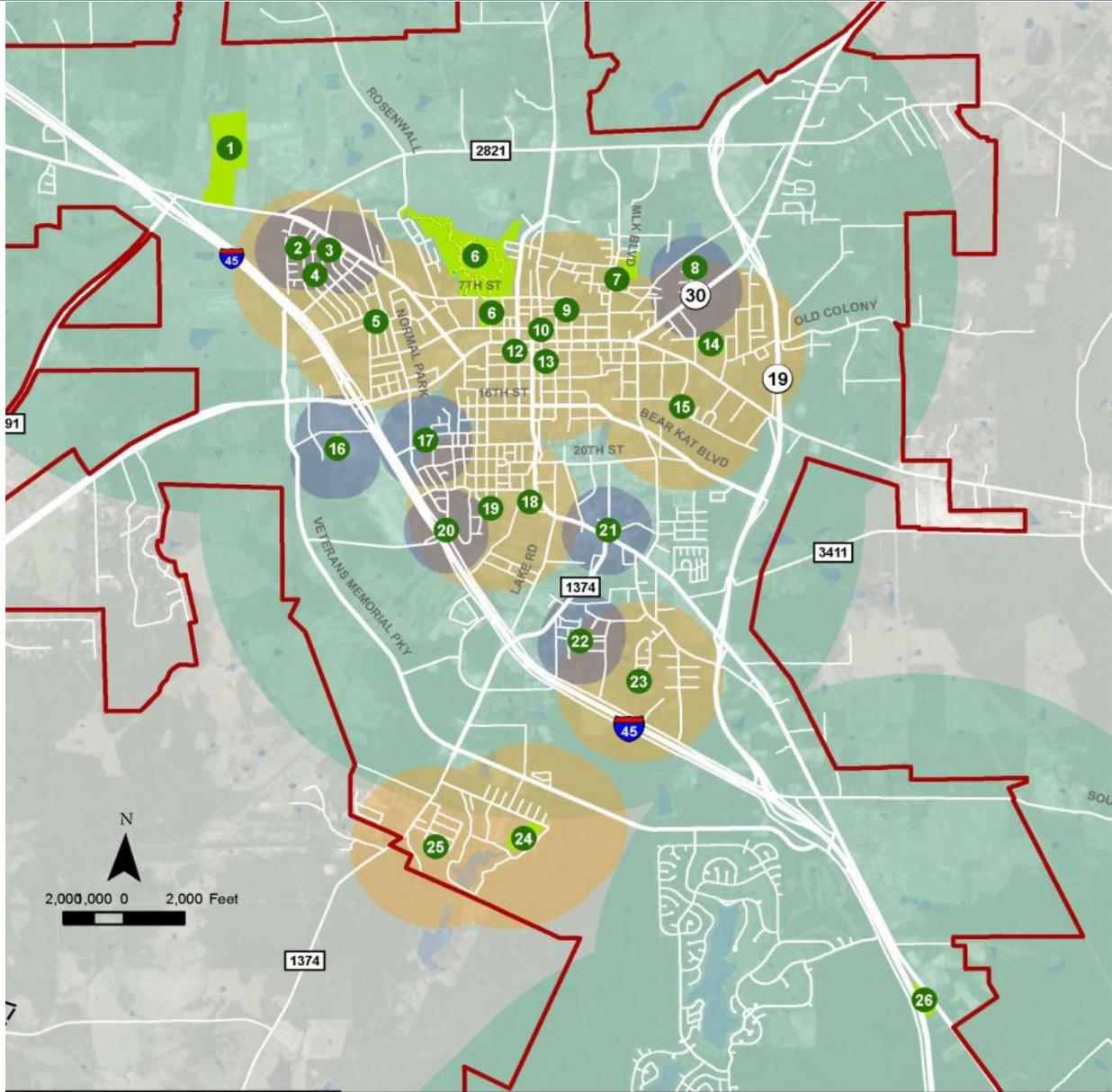
Future Park Needs

The 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan noted that the areas west of I-45 have fewer parks.

The plan notes that Huntsville, as of 2016, offers 6.70 acres per 1,000 residents (non-institutionalized population).

If the population grows as projected by this plan, the level of service will fall to 3.5 acres per 1,000 residents if no additional park acreage is developed. Of note, existing development regulations do require parkland dedication so if the non-institutionalized population is increasing, the amount of park space should also be increasing.

Legend

- Park Trail
- Huntsville City Limits
- Huntsville Extraterritorial Jurisdiction
- City Park
- Quarter-Mile Service Area
- Half-Mile Service Area
- Two Mile Service Area

1. Kate Barr Ross
2. Woods Addition
3. Bayou Bend
4. Forest Hills
5. Bush Miller
6. Eastham-Thomason
7. Emancipation
8. Raven Terrace
9. Gillaspie
10. Founders Spring
11. Sallie E. Gibbs
12. Town Creek
13. John Henry Rather
14. New Addition
15. Boettcher Mill
16. West Hill
17. Thomas Clifton Gibbs
18. Thomas Henry Ball (Josey)
19. Pineview
20. Smither
21. Montgomery Road
22. Shady Acres / Elks
23. Sandbrook
24. Emma Etheredge
25. Pine Shadows
26. Sam Houston Statue

SAP 5.   Develop a means to monitor, on an annual basis, parks and recreational facilities use. Reprogram parks as needed to ensure continued and enhanced active and passive participation, seeking input on programming desires from residents.

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Health and Parks

Well-designed parks and trails can encourage and allow a safe place for exercise and community interaction and can provide mental health benefits such as stress reduction. Tools such as Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) are used to quantify and qualify the public health impacts of proposed policies, plans or development projects.

HIAs help communities assess the potential effects of a proposed policy, plan, program or project on community health, including the distribution of benefits and costs within the community. HIAs recommend strategies for monitoring and managing health and bring public health issues to decision makers outside of the public health field, such as in transportation and land use. HIAs can be voluntary or regulatory processes that focus on health outcomes. HIAs specific to parks and trails can be completed to evaluate how to maximize the positive impact of new park and trail investments on public health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has a Parks and Trails Health Impact Assessment Toolkit available on its website.

Source: ULI - Intersections: Health and the Built Environment

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SAP 6.   Provide greater opportunities for individuals, including youth, families and seniors to participate in cultural, recreational, and educational activities that foster health and wellness and strengthen body and mind.

- Low-cost options can include facilitating events such as "Walk with a Doc" or Pop-Up Play Days in the Park, which encourage people to utilize parks for social, wellness, and fitness activities.

- Continue popular parks and leisure programming, such as Dance Fitness, and identify any gaps in residents served.
- Increase awareness of Huntsville parks and provide maps showing park areas and amenities.

SAP 7.   Evaluate additional passive recreational enhancements for particular demographics that may not be engaged in organized, team-oriented, active recreational programming, including young people not involved in team sports, adults, and elderly citizens. Depending on the desires of residents, this can include low-cost options such as providing community meeting space for knitting circles.

SAP 8.   Develop a park volunteer/stewardship program or Adopt-A-Park program. Build upon Huntsville's strong volunteerism spirit to create a pool of volunteers to aid in park clean-ups, plantings, general

maintenance and potential fundraising opportunities. In addition to individual volunteer recruitment, solicit the involvement of neighborhoods and local organizations to create shared stewardship.

- Develop formalized standards for park maintenance and improvement activities (such as where picked up trash is to be disposed, what plants to use in plantings, how far apart plants should be spaced when planting, etc.). It is also advisable that each adopting organization agree to an initial one-year trial basis, with an evaluation before extending their program.

SAP 9.   Utilize low-maintenance, drought tolerant and fire-resistant plant materials that are native to Texas and the region for all supplemental park land enhancements.

- Identify local growers of native Texas trees, shrubs, groundcovers and ornamental grasses.
- Develop annual targets for replacements and new plantings throughout the city.

SAP 10.   Encourage and incentivize community gardens, local food production, and the sale of nutritious items in neighborhood retail groceries, to promote healthy food consumption.

- The success of community gardens often depends on the buy-in of nearby residents. Any new community gardens should ensure that active communication and support from residents exists.
- Partnerships with local schools to provide hands-on educational experience to children should be investigated for new community gardens.
- Ensure any community gardens are right-sized to encourage proper ongoing maintenance.

Photo: BearKat Community Garden.

SAP 11.   Work to improve off-site accessibility to each park by developing a sidewalk improvement program to repair, replace, or install new sidewalks, crosswalks and curb cuts in high pedestrian use neighborhoods immediately surrounding parks, schools, and other community facilities. Photo: Forest Hills Park.

SAP 12. Improve on-site accessibility for persons with physical disabilities, the elderly, and people with strollers, among others, so that one can travel from off-site (e.g., neighborhoods or parking lots) into and through parks to their amenities. Photo: Josey Ball Park.

- Ensure that ADA-compliant handicapped accessible ramps, play structures, and equipment are incorporated into parks in Huntsville.
- As new playground equipment becomes needed in parks, consider inclusive playground equipment that is accessible to children with a variety of physical and sensory needs and abilities.
- The Huntsville Junior League is currently undertaking a playground upgrade project at Kate Barr Ross Memorial Park to include inclusive sensory equipment.

Regulations and Standards

SAP 13. Evaluate the possibility of allowing parkland fee-in-lieu as an additional option to the existing land dedication requirement for new developments, to allow for the creation of larger-scale parks.

- Ensure the parkland dedication requirements establish the legal authority to allow the City the ability to devote more funding, and a higher priority, to develop community-scale parks so that the City has the opportunity to invest in larger parks that benefit a larger service area. To ensure that residents receive the benefits of dedicated parkland, establish parkland dedication "zones" within which fees-in-lieu of parkland dedication can be expended.

- Include provisions and some degree of surety that will require an implementation timetable for the installation of parks to ensure that developers follow-through in their construction in a timely matter (i.e., certificate of occupancy may be deemed temporary until the park is determined to be sufficiently implemented).

SAP 14. Identify additional tree preservation options to ensure that city canopy contributing trees situated on public or private properties, along streets and/or are of a significant caliper are maintained as development (new and infill) occurs (beyond those currently provided in Article 7 Landscaping and Buffers).

- Expand resource protection standards within the Development Code to preserve stands of existing vegetation.

- Adopt street repair and improvement specifications that, to the maximum extent practicable, will not disrupt the drip line of existing trees, including provisions for protective construction fencing, limitations on grade changes, and prohibition of storing or dumping materials.

SAP 15. Incorporate into the City's development standards additional provisions for the protection of natural resources.

- For properties that have sensitive resources, a density bonus may be given to transfer development density to a less vulnerable area of the property, utilizing conservation development practices.

- The City should establish clear criteria for land dedications to avoid problematic, impractical sites with limited value for public use.

- Pursue open space preservation within adjacent development, dedication of conservation easements or fee simple acquisition of land near valued creeks and water bodies.

- The provisions should also require dedication of public access easements along natural features and linear greenways to promote recreational opportunities and to enable new developments to comply with parkland dedication requirements.

SAP 16. Utilize development regulations and coordination to ensure that new development links neighborhoods and parks with schools and commercial centers.

- Evaluate the potential to establish requirements within the Huntsville Development Code and development design standards for the dedication of easements or rights-of-way for trail network development.

Partnerships and Coordination

SAP 17. Continue coordination with Huntsville Independent School District and SHSU on the use of sports fields and recreational facilities, identifying additional opportunities for leveraging resources.

SAP 18. Maintain partnerships and communication with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and U.S. Forest Service to determine mutual ways to ensure the effective long-term management and conservation of Huntsville State Park and Sam Houston National Forest.

- Potential off-road trail linkages between the community and these regional recreational assets should be explored cooperatively, as this could incorporate bicycle rental concessions and other tourist-oriented services, interpretive signage and historical monuments and conservation initiatives along and near such trail segments.

SAP 19. In coordination with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and U.S. Forest Service, seek to boost visitation, awareness and accessibility of Huntsville State Park and the Sam Houston National Forest, to promote economic development, eco-tourism and environmental education.

- Coordinate walking tours or field trips for various groups such as seniors or youth.

- Promote awareness of Huntsville State Park among SHSU students.

- Solicit corporate sponsorship for family or student memberships to the State Park to off-set visitation costs, which were identified as a barrier during Comprehensive Plan engagement.
- Pursue educational initiatives related to local natural resources, such as identifying plaques/signage identifying local fauna and ecosystems and their importance.

SAP 20. Coordinate with public and private entities to provide access to and across their easements and/or rights-of-way for any new trails.

- The City's Parks and Leisure Department should work with the City's Public Works and Development Services Departments, homeowners' associations and other neighborhood groups to identify unimproved land that may be appropriate for trails or other open space.

SAP 21. Ensure on-street bicycle facilities, off-street recreational trails, and complete streets-related improvements are considered within any future TxDOT improvements for TxDOT roadways.

- Continue to identify potential grant or other funding sources for trail and pedestrian/bicycle related transportation improvements.
- Partnerships for funding applications and projects, such as recent efforts between City engineering staff and Texas Parks and Wildlife to help connect trail systems and create new trail opportunities should continue.

SAP 22. Continue to support existing recreation and leisure programs offered by the City, non-profits, and other local partners.

More Targeted Planning/Study

SAP 23. Update the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The plan recommends five-year updates to maintain eligibility to apply for Local Parks Grants funding. The plan is currently at the five-year mark (2021).

- The plan update should include an assessment of progress toward implementing items identified in the 2016 plan.

Economic Development Potential of Sports Tourism

Youth sports tourism is a recent trend in youth sports, where families will travel and spend time at a destination, often overnight, as part of an athletic themed tournament. A 2017 study by WinterGreen Research found 55 percent growth in the industry since 2010, making youth sports tourism a $15.3 billion industry as of 2017, with visitors spending an average of $250 per day. While sports facilities of the caliber to attract tournaments can bring needed revitalization, they can also be expensive to build and maintain.

SAP 24. Conduct a feasibility study to determine the potential economic impact (cost and benefit) of the development of new sports complex facilities, or upgrades to existing facilities at Kate Barr Ross, with the necessary amenities to attract tournaments.

- The feasibility study should, at a minimum, contain the following components:
  o Examine not only the breadth of the sports facilities needed to attract and support tournaments (including parking), but also the tourist infrastructure, such as hotels, restaurants and other attractions.

- Explore existing regional market competition of area sports facilities, the potential demand for programming and tournaments, and where the population served may come from.
- Determine what sports the facility would serve based on the desires and needs of existing residents and the potential to draw visitors. The complex should also focus on local community benefits, not solely on tourist attraction.
- Review case studies of other Texas cities that have gone down this path to see what lessons have been learned.
- Perform input-output modeling to determine direct spending, total economic impact, and the potential number of out-of-town visitors.
- Estimate facility costs (new or renovations of existing), annual operating and maintenance expenses, and marketing/advertising costs to draw tournaments. Economic impacts should distinguish between general recreation impacts and tournaments specifically.
- Examine the staffing needed to support a sports complex, including ongoing marketing and coordination of tournament bookings. Consider forming a sports committee within the Chamber of Commerce upon completion of the feasibility study.

Sports Tourism Case Study: Round Rock, Texas

The City of Round Rock is located in central Texas, north of the City of Austin. Round Rock markets itself as the "Sports Capital of Texas" and sports tourism is a central component of its long-range tourism plan. The City has a Sports Management and Tourism Department that programs, schedules, markets and maintains the City's sports facilities. The City has invested heavily in making Round Rock a sports tourism destination. Facilities include:

Round Rock Sports Center: Opened in 2014. Total of 82,800 square feet of indoor space and capacity for over 3,000 people. The facility cost $14.9 million.

Round Rock Multipurpose Complex: Opened in 2017. Includes ten multipurpose fields.

Dell Diamond: Home of minor league team for the Texas Rangers.

Local residents use the facilities for 50 percent of bookings, and hosting tournaments constitutes 26 percent of the facility usage. The Sports Center was primarily financed through hotel occupancy taxes (HOT). The multi-purpose complex was funded one-third by HOT revenue. The minor league baseball complex (Dell Diamond), was funded by a taxpayer approved bond. Operating costs of the facilities are paid completely by HOT revenue.

Total direct employment in Round Rock for the travel industry in 2017 was 3,250 jobs and $114 million in total direct earnings.

Round Rock documented $319 million in total direct spending to the city for international and domestic travel in 2017. State and local tax revenue generated directly by travel spending was $29 million the same year.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Comprehensive Plan provides the City of Huntsville and other partner agencies and organizations an essential document that should be frequently referred to for guidance in community decision-making. The plan should be a "living document" that is responsive to ongoing change. Its key planning considerations, goals, policies, and action strategies must also be revisited periodically to ensure that the plan is providing clear and reliable direction on a range of matters, including land development issues and public investments in infrastructure and services.

Why this Final Plan Section is Important for Huntsville

- Emphasizes the importance of not only creating a plan, but translating it into real action and tangible, beneficial results.
- Adds a shorter-term strategic perspective to what is otherwise intended as a guide to Huntsville's long-term enhancement over the next 20 years.
- Includes a list of priority actions for the City and other plan implementation partners to focus on during the next several years after plan adoption.
- Underscores the need to keep the plan fresh and relevant through annual review and reporting procedures and periodic updates.
- Advocates ongoing community engagement as the plan is implemented.

Implementation is not just about a list of action items. It is a challenging process that requires the commitment of the City's elected and appointed officials, staff, residents, business owners, major institutions, other levels of government, and other organizations and individuals who will serve as champions of the plan and its particular direction and strategies. Among its purposes, this final plan section highlights specific roles, responsibilities, and methods of implementation to execute priority plan recommendations. Equally important are formalized procedures for the ongoing monitoring and reporting of successes achieved, difficulties encountered, and new opportunities and challenges that have emerged since plan adoption. This is in addition to any other change in circumstances, which may require a rethinking of plan priorities. Scheduled plan evaluations and updates, as described later in this section, will help maintain its relevance and credibility as an overarching policy and action guide.

Planning for the 50,000 Population Threshold

Once a city's population reaches 50,000 or higher it may be designated an "urbanized area." Designation as an urbanized area typically occurs after the official decennial Census population numbers are released. Currently, some federal and state agencies use this urbanized area classification to allocate program funds and set program standards. Huntsville's population was 45,941 as of 2020 and is expected to surpass the 50,000 population mark by 2025. Population projections completed for the Comprehensive Plan indicate a population of 59,431 in 2035 and 64,496 by 2040. Discussions and feedback during the Comprehensive Plan process indicated that some believe Huntsville may grow at an even faster rate. Given these variables, Huntsville should start planning for reaching the 50,000 population threshold sooner rather than later.

It should be noted that as part of the 2020 Census, the U.S. Census Bureau proposed changes to the process and criteria for the designation of urbanized areas. As of June 2021, these proposed changes had not been adopted. As currently proposed, the 50,000 population criteria for urbanized areas may be eliminated. This does not mean that federal agencies and programs that utilize the 50,000 population criteria will also make such a change. Huntsville should monitor the outcome of the proposed criteria change process and any resulting changes to federal and state program criteria and funding.

Responsibilities

One of the primary responsibilities a local government currently assumes when exceeding 50,000 population is the operation of traffic signals within the city not already owned by the City. Previously handled by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), this responsibility includes installation, operation and maintenance of all traffic signals. Exceptions include when roadways intersect with the state highway system, in which case TxDOT handles these duties. Urbanized areas are also encouraged to have local police agencies respond to traffic incidents on interstate highways falling in their jurisdiction.

In addition to traffic signal responsibilities, urbanized areas that operate small municipal separate storm sewer systems are also subject to certain Phase II Storm Water Program regulations administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the federal Clean Water Act.

Once a city reaches the 50,000 population threshold, it may also become eligible for a variety of grants. For example, metropolitan cities with populations of at least 50,000 are eligible grantees for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement Program. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) distributes its funding authorizations according to three population-based formulas, through which areas between 50,000 and 200,000 population receive just under eight percent of total funds.

Potential Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to Join

Due to its close proximity to two established MPOs, Huntsville should initiate discussions with both the Bryan-College Station MPO that extends across most of Brazos County and the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) that encompasses eight counties in the Houston region to determine the process, desire, and benefits of potential membership in the respective MPOs. Currently, Huntsville is part of H-GAC's Council of Government service area in a 13-county region that includes Walker County, but not part of its 8-county MPO service area that extends north only to Montgomery County.

Implementation

During the development of this plan, representatives of government, business, community groups, and others came together to inform the planning process. These community leaders – and new ones that will emerge over the horizon of this plan – must maintain their commitment to the ongoing implementation and updating of the plan's goals, policies, and action strategies.

Education

Long-range plans such as the Comprehensive Plan are relatively general in nature, but they are still complex policy documents that account for interrelationships among various policy choices. As such, educating decision-makers and administrators about plan implementation is an important first step after plan adoption. As the principal groups that will implement the plan, City department heads, the City Council and Planning Commission should all be "on the same page" with regard to priorities, responsibilities, and interpretations.

Consequently, an education initiative should be undertaken immediately after plan adoption, which can include:

- A discussion of the individual roles and responsibilities of the Council, Planning Commission (and other advisory bodies), City departments and individual staff members;
- A thorough overview of the entire Comprehensive Plan, with emphasis on the parts of the plan that relate to each individual group;
- Implementation tasking and priority setting, which should lead to the establishment of a one-year and three-year implementation agenda; and
- An in-depth question and answer session, with support from the City Attorney and other key staff.

Types of Implementation Actions

Capital Projects

The City of Huntsville currently utilizes a multi-year Capital Improvements Program, or "CIP," to identify and budget for "big ticket" projects, especially those that must be phased and/or coordinated with other initiatives. Continued utilization and formalization of the CIP is one of the recommended Strategic Action Priorities of this plan. A Capital Improvements Program may include: street infrastructure; water, wastewater, and drainage improvements; parks, trails, and recreation facility construction and upgrades; and, construction and renovation of public buildings. Anticipating and adequately budgeting for major capital projects will be essential to implementing this plan. Likewise, decisions regarding the prioritization of proposed capital improvements should reflect the direction and priorities of this plan.

Programs and Initiatives

Programs involve the routine activities of City departments and staff, as well as special projects and initiatives they may undertake. As part of plan implementation, this may include initiating new or adjusting existing City programs and activities, expanding community outreach efforts, or providing specialized training to accomplish a priority objective more promptly and/or effectively.

Regulations and Standards

In Huntsville, zoning and subdivision regulations and associated development criteria and technical engineering standards are the basic keys to ensuring that the form, character, and quality of development reflect the City's planning objectives. These codes should advance the community's desire for quality development outcomes while recognizing economic factors. They should not delay or interfere unnecessarily with appropriate new development or redevelopment that is consistent with plan principles and directives.

Partnerships and Coordination

Some community initiatives identified in this plan cannot be accomplished by Huntsville on its own. This is particularly salient in Huntsville given the level of public and institutional partners with projects and property within the city, including Sam Houston State University, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Walker County and TxDOT, among others. Some initiatives may require direct coordination, intergovernmental agreements, or funding support from other public entities or levels of government. Additionally, the unique role of potential private and non-profit partners to advance the community's action agenda should not be underestimated. This may occur through cooperative efforts, volunteer activities, and in-kind services (which can count toward the local match requirements for various grant opportunities), and from public/private financing of community improvements.

More Targeted Planning/Study

Various areas of City governance require more detailed study and planning, especially as required to qualify for external funding opportunities. These studies involve targeted planning work at a "finer grain" level of detail than is appropriate for long-range planning purposes (e.g., utility infrastructure master plans, public facility needs assessments, neighborhood-level or corridor-focused plans, etc.). As such, some parts of this plan will be implemented only after some additional planning or special study to clarify next steps and associated costs and considerations.

Definition of Roles

As the community's elected officials, the City Council should assume the lead role in the implementation of this plan. The key responsibilities of the City Council are to decide and establish priorities, set timeframes by which actions will be initiated and completed, and determine the budget to be made available for implementation efforts. In conjunction with the City Manager, Council members must also help to ensure effective coordination among the various groups that are responsible for carrying out the plan's action strategies.

City Council

The City Council should take the lead in the following general areas:

- Adopting and amending the plan, after recommendation by the Planning Commission.
- Acting as a "champion" of the plan.
- Establishing the overall implementation priorities and timeframes by which action strategies in the plan will be initiated and completed.
- Considering and approving the funding commitments that will be required.
- Adopting new or amended land development regulations to implement the plan.
- Approving intergovernmental and development agreements that implement the plan.
- Offering final approval of projects and activities and their associated costs during the City's annual budget process, keeping in mind the need for consistency with the plan and its policies.
- Providing policy direction to the Planning Commission, other appointed City boards and commissions, and City staff.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission should take the lead in the following general areas:

- Ensuring that recommendations forwarded to the City Council are reflective of the plan goals, priorities, and action strategies.
- Recommending adoption of new or amended land development regulations to implement the plan.
- After holding one or more public hearings to discuss new or evolving community issues and needs, making recommendations to the City Council regarding plan updates and plan amendments.

City Staff

City Staff should take the lead in the following general areas:

- Managing day-to-day implementation of the plan, including coordination through an interdepartmental plan implementation committee.
- Supporting and carrying out capital improvement planning efforts.
- Managing the drafting of new or amended land development regulations.
- Conducting studies and developing additional special-purpose and/or special area plans.
- Reviewing land development applications for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Negotiating the specifics of intergovernmental and development agreements.
- Administering collaborative programs and ensuring open channels of communication with various private, public, and non-profit implementation partners.
- Maintaining an inventory of potential plan amendments, as suggested by City staff and others, for consideration during annual and periodic plan review and update processes.
- Generating and presenting an annual report to the Planning Commission and City Council concerning progress toward implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Periodically obtaining public input to keep the plan up to date, using a variety of community outreach and citizen and stakeholder involvement methods.

Action Agenda

The goals in this plan will ultimately be attained through a multitude of specific actions. Many of the initiatives highlighted in this section cut across – and are supported by – multiple elements within the plan. Compiled in the Action Agenda Table is a set of 14 key action items derived from the various plan elements. The table does not include every recommendation found throughout this plan. Instead, it details a shorter "to do" list of strategic priorities.

The action strategies have been categorized regarding those actions that will involve (1) capital investments, (2) programs and initiatives, (3) regulations and standards, (4) partnerships and coordination, and (5) more targeted planning/study. Most capital projects will also require, to varying degrees, additional feasibility analysis, construction documentation, specifications, and detailed cost estimates.

The Action Agenda Table provides a starting point for determining immediate, near-term, and longer-term task priorities. This is an important first step toward plan implementation and should occur in conjunction with the City's annual budget process, during CIP preparation, and in support of departmental work planning. Then, once the necessary funding is committed and roles are defined, a lead City staff member should initiate a first-year work program in conjunction with City management, other departments, and other public and private implementation partners. A prioritization exercise of the Action Agenda was conducted during a Joint Workshop of City Council and Planning Commission members in July 2021. This informal exercise revealed that top priorities within the Action Agenda items include updating the City's development districts, protecting established neighborhoods (including increased code compliance), continuing to revitalize downtown, and determining the feasibility of the development of a sports complex. Full results from the prioritization exercise are available in Appendix 2.

The near-term action priorities should be revisited by City officials and staff annually to recognize accomplishments, highlight areas where further attention and effort are needed, and determine whether some items have moved up or down on the priority list given changing circumstances and emerging needs, including available funding and resources. It should be kept in mind that early implementation of certain items, while perhaps not the uppermost priorities, may be expedited by the availability of related grant opportunities, by a state or federal mandate, or by the eagerness of one or more partners to pursue an initiative with the City. On the other hand, some high-priority items may prove difficult to tackle in the near-term due to budget constraints, the lack of an obvious lead entity or individual to carry the initiative forward, or by the community's readiness to take on a potentially controversial new program.

Progress on the near-term items, in particular, should be the focus of the first annual review and report a year after adoption of this plan, as described later in this section. Then, similar to multi-year capital improvements programming, the entire action agenda – and all other action strategies dispersed throughout the plan sections – should be revisited annually to decide if any additional items are ready to move into the next near-term action timeframe, and what the priority should be.

Action Agenda Table		
Action	**Where in Plan**	**Action Type**
Support residents in need, seeking to provide opportunities for all residents to improve their quality of life, and recognizing the importance of equitable development and policies.	Economic Opportunity, SAP 11 Housing and Neighborhoods, SAP 17	Regulations and Standards, and Partnerships and Coordination
Protect established neighborhoods and stabilize and reinvigorate older neighborhoods, including through increased code compliance for maintenance of properties.	Housing and Neighborhoods, SAP 4, SAP 6	Programs and Initiatives
Enhance safe mobility options, including the provision of trails, for pedestrians and bicyclists.	Recreation and Amenities, SAP 20, SAP 21 Transportation, SAP 3, SAP 4, SAP 20	Capital Investments, Partnerships and Coordination, and More Targeted Planning/Study
Encourage local entrepreneurs and regional businesses to serve the demand for increased entertainment options.	Economic Opportunity, SAP 6	Programs and Initiatives
Consider regional storm water detention facilities to reduce flood risk and potentially establish new developable areas.	Growth Capacity, SAP 5	Programs and Initiatives
Update the City's development ordinances and standards to reflect new Comprehensive Plan priorities.	Land Use and Development, SAP 6	Regulations and Standards
Bolster Huntsville's tourism industry, focusing on elements where Huntsville can differentiate itself from the competition, such as proximity to natural resources and the extent of historic and cultural resources.	Recreation and Amenities, SAP 19 Economic Opportunity, SAP 14, SAP 15	Partnerships and Coordination
Continue to focus efforts on revitalizing downtown as the primary shopping, dining, cultural, entertainment and entrepreneurial hub of the city.	Economic Opportunity, SAP 13	Partnerships and Coordination

Action Agenda Table		
Action	**Where in Plan**	**Action Type**
Support improvements to the broadband and fiber internet network.	Economic Opportunity, SAP 4 Growth Capacity, SAP 7 Housing and Neighborhoods, SAP 2	Capital Investments and Programs and Initiatives
Focus on improvements to the transportation network and the airport through the implementation of projects identified in the 2019 Transportation Master Plan and the 2020 Airport Master Plan.	Transportation, SAP 2, SAP 22	Capital Investments and More Targeted Planning/Study
Conduct a feasibility study to determine the potential economic impact of the development of a sports complex or upgrades to existing facilities.	Recreation and Amenities, SAP 24	More Targeted Planning/Study
Develop a detailed demographic report specific to Huntsville's unique characteristics to present to developers and business prospects.	Economic Opportunity, SAP 19	More Targeted Planning/Study
Promote success stories of the City and key partners, including SHSU and HISD.	Economic Opportunity, SAP 14	Partnerships and Coordination
Retain workers and talent in Huntsville, capturing a larger percentage of those who work in the area but choose not to live in Huntsville.	Housing and Neighborhoods, SAP 19, SAP 20	Partnerships and Coordination and More Targeted Planning/Study

Financial Implications

Implementation of strategic action priorities will take funding commitments. Some items are already accounted for within the City's annual budget, particularly for priorities that focus on continuing an existing program that the City currently administers. In general, items that are policy based (such as revision of City codes and ordinances) will be less expensive than capital projects (such as roadway construction).

Implementation of some strategic action priorities will necessitate new funding sources (such as bonds, taxes, etc.), grants, or partnerships. Not all strategic action priorities will occur through City funding and may be funded by external sources such as federal, state or regional grants, non-profit organizations, or other partner organizations. The reality is that not all items that are priorities will be feasible due to financial limitations. The City's annual budgeting process, and the resulting CIP, will identify how essential capital projects will be funded.

Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process

The Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a flexible document allowing for adjustment to changing conditions over time. Shifts in political, economic, physical, technological, and social conditions, and other unforeseen circumstances, may influence and change the priorities and fiscal outlook of the community. As Huntsville evolves, new issues will emerge while others will no longer be as relevant. Some strategic actions will be found impractical or outdated while other plausible solutions will arise. To ensure that it continues to reflect the overall goals of the community and remains relevant over time, the plan must be revisited on a regular basis to confirm that the plan elements are still on point and the associated goals and action strategies are still appropriate.

Revisions to the Comprehensive Plan are two-fold, with minor plan amendments occurring at least every other year and more significant updates and modifications occurring every five years. As an example, a minor amendment could include revisions to certain elements of the plan as a result of the adoption of another specialized plan. Major updates will involve: reviewing Huntsville's base conditions and anticipated growth trends; re-evaluating the plan findings and formulating new ones as necessary; and adding, revising, or removing strategic actions in the plan based on implementation progress.

Annual Progress Report

City staff should prepare an annual progress report for presentation to the Planning Commission, Mayor and City Council. This ensures that the plan is consistently reviewed and that any needed modifications or clarifications are identified for the biennial minor plan amendment process. Ongoing monitoring of consistency between the plan and the City's implementing regulations should be an essential part of this effort.

The Annual Progress Report should include and highlight the following:

- Significant actions and accomplishments during the last year, including the status of implementation for each programmed task in the plan.
- Obstacles or problems in the implementation of the plan.
- Proposed content amendments that have come forward during the course of the year.
- Recommendations for needed actions, programs, and procedures to be developed and implemented in the coming year.
- Priority coordination needs with public and private implementation partners.

Biennial Amendment Process

Plan amendments should occur on at least a biennial basis (every two years), allowing for proposed changes to be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effects may be understood. Factors that should be considered in deciding on a proposed plan amendment include:

- Consistency with the goals, policies, and strategic actions set forth in the plan.
- Potential effects on infrastructure provision including water, wastewater, drainage, and the transportation network.
- Potential effects on the City's ability to provide, fund, and maintain services.
- Potential effects on environmentally sensitive and natural areas.
- Whether the proposed amendment contributes to the overall direction and character of the community as captured in the plan goals, and as reflected in ongoing public input.

Five-Year Update / Evaluation and Appraisal Report

An evaluation and appraisal report to City Council should be prepared every five years. This report should be prepared by City staff with input from City departments, the Planning Commission, and other boards and commissions. The report process involves evaluating the existing plan and assessing how successful it has been in achieving the community's goals. The purpose of the report is to identify the successes and shortcomings of the plan, look at what has changed over the last five years, and make recommendations on how the plan should be modified in light of those changes.

The report should review baseline conditions and assumptions about trends and growth indicators. It should also evaluate implementation potential and/or obstacles related to any unaddressed major action strategies. The evaluation report and process should result in an amended plan, including identification of new or revised information that may lead to updated goals and action strategies.

More specifically, the report should identify and evaluate the following:

1. Summary of major actions and interim plan amendments undertaken over the last five years.
2. Major issues in the community and how these issues have changed over time.
3. Changes in the assumptions, trends, and base studies data in the Existing City Report, including the following:
   - The rate at which growth and development is occurring relative to the projections put forward in the plan.
   - Shifts in demographics and other growth trends.
   - City-wide attitudes, and whether apparent shifts, if significant, necessitate amendments to the stated goals or action strategies of the plan.
   - Other changes in political, social, economic, technological, or environmental conditions that indicate a need for plan amendments.
4. Ability of the plan to continue to support progress toward achieving the community's goals. The following should be evaluated and revised as needed:
   - Individual sections and statements within the plan must be reviewed and revised, as necessary, to ensure that the plan provides sufficient information and direction to achieve the intended outcome.
   - Conflicts between goals and strategic actions that have been discovered in the implementation and administration of the plan must be pointed out and resolved.
   - The list of priority actions must be reviewed and major accomplishments highlighted. Those not completed by the specified timeframe should be re-evaluated to ensure their continued relevance and/or to revise them appropriately.
   - As conditions change, the timeframes for implementing major actions in the plan should be re-evaluated where necessary. Some actions may emerge as a higher priority given new or changed circumstances while others may become less important to achieving the goals and development objectives of the community.
   - Based upon organizational and procedural factors, as well as the status of previously assigned tasks, the implementation task assignments must be reviewed and altered, as needed, to ensure timely accomplishment of the plan's strategic actions.
   - Changes in laws, procedures and missions may impact the community's ability to achieve its goals. The plan review must assess these changes and their impacts on the success of implementation, leading to any suggested revisions in strategies or priorities.

Ongoing Community Outreach and Engagement

All review processes and updates related to this plan should emphasize and incorporate ongoing public input. The annual and continual plan evaluation and reporting processes should also incorporate specific performance measures and quantitative indicators that can be compiled and communicated both internally and to elected officials and citizens in a "report card" fashion.

Examples might include:

- Amount of new development and redevelopment (including number of residential units and square footage of commercial and industrial space) approved and constructed in conformance with this plan and Huntsville's development regulations.

- Various measures of service capacity (gallons per day, etc.) added to the City's major utility infrastructure systems – and the number of dollars allocated to fund the necessary capital projects.

- New and expanded businesses, added jobs, and associated tax revenue gains through economic development initiatives.

- Lane miles of rehabilitated road, plus sidewalk, trail, and other improvements, added to Huntsville's transportation system to increase mobility options.

- Increase in usage of park and recreation system facilities and programming.

- Indicators of the benefits from redeveloped sites and structures (appraised value, increased property and/or sales tax revenue, new residential units, and retail and office spaces in mixed-use settings, etc.).

- The numbers of residents and other stakeholders engaged through City-sponsored education and outreach events related to Comprehensive Plan implementation and periodic review and updating, as outlined in this section.