

Introduction & Vision

Horizon Plan

The Huntsville Horizon Comprehensive Plan is designed as a framework for the future development of the City and its two-mile planning jurisdiction over the next 20 years and beyond. It is intended to guide the community's decisions regarding its future physical and economic development. This plan identifies goals, policies and actions for elected and appointed officials, members of advisory committees, civic groups and organizations, directors and staff, and citizens to use as decisions are made and the community's vision is achieved.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Huntsville is confronted with considerable challenges in managing its character, creating good jobs and sustaining a sound tax base, and overcoming its housing constraints in the coming years. The combination of the state's prison system and a major university campus presents perhaps the most unique challenge to the community – the amount of state-owned land within the City's boundary and the resulting strain placed on its tax base.

On the other hand, between the Sam Houston National Forest and Huntsville State Park, there are plenty of recreational resources to enjoy in this Piney Woods setting in east Texas, and the community also derives great benefit from hosting Sam Houston State University and Texas Department of Criminal Justice facilities. Yet the need for broader economic diversification, and the potential downsides of more growth and urbanization in coming years, may make it difficult for Huntsville to fully realize its potential and maintain its special charm.

The purpose of this plan is to establish a vision that residents, business and land owners, the University, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, and public officials prefer – and will support with action over the next 20 years. The plan must go beyond general and lofty sounding goals like "provide affordable, quality housing for all residents." While everybody may agree with this statement as a goal of the community, in order to achieve it the plan must establish the policy framework and provide guidance as to how it is to be done. The goal implicitly recognizes that there is a problem. However, for the plan to be effective the problem must be researched and analyzed, solutions and alternatives evaluated, and a realistic and feasible plan

Planning is ultimately about **implementation**. The costs of implementation and the community's willingness to pay them will be at the heart of this plan's success.

Walker County has an important role to play in Huntsville's current and ongoing planning efforts.

of action put in place to overcome the deficiency. The evaluation of alternatives for resolving the problem – and the selection of one or more strategies that are both reasonable and acceptable – are essential elements of the community planning process. All the alternatives will have costs, whether through regulations that impose costs on developers, future businesses, and homeowners, or through increased taxes borne by the entire population. Once the costs associated with such strategies become clear, the community must then reach agreement on the best ways to implement the plan in a fair and equitable manner, which will require both cooperation and collaboration. It is possible that the process of selecting the best implementation strategy may warrant modification of the original goal to tolerate the associated costs.

Ultimately, there is no reason to create a Comprehensive Plan unless it serves as a policy framework that allows the City to achieve what is envisioned for the future. In order to achieve success, there must not only be an understanding of the City's assets and strengths, but also an honest assessment of its problems and challenges. The intended vision is to build on the assets while mitigating the liabilities.

While this is primarily a plan for the City, it also spans lands in Walker County within two miles of the City's corporate boundaries. This is an area where, by State statute, the City may exercise its subdivision authority. Hence, it is vitally important for there to be close coordination between the City and County within this area. While there is a clear jurisdictional boundary, it has little real meaning from the perspective of future planning as the economy, housing needs, and environment are not influenced by such boundaries.

WHY PLAN

Development in and around Huntsville is undertaken by individual landowners, the City, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), Sam Houston State University (SHSU), and the Texas Department of Transportation, among others. For the City to realize its vision, a plan is needed to coordinate the activities and investments of these and other groups. If each group continues to make its own decisions without due consideration of their influences and impacts on the others, it forces each into a reactive rather than pro-active mode. Can water and wastewater service be provided to a site to achieve the standard required by development? If the facilities are not of adequate capacity or designed to an acceptable standard, either the developer cannot build what is desired or, alternatively, the level of service may be reduced. For instance, reduced water pressure will affect new development and existing residents, as well as fire-fighting capabilities. There would also be other implications like increased insurance rates as a result of insufficient fire flows. Virtually all development depends on one or more services offered by the City, other governmental agencies, or independent service providers. Governments have limited

financial resources – increasingly so in recent years. It is always more expensive to react to development than it is to plan and prepare for development and guide it to appropriate areas. Furthermore, government may not be able to react quickly. While adding an additional school bus stop is easily accomplished, extending a sewer line or upgrading road or utility capacity has a lag time of several years.

Problems and liabilities do not cease to exist on their own. Wishing that a problem or issue was corrected simply means it will persist and possibly worsen over time. Without plans, the forces that created a problem will remain. Therefore, a plan with foresight and preparedness can respond to such forces and find solutions to resolve long-standing issues. The task of attracting good, new jobs, for instance, has much support; however, aspects of the City that are unattractive to businesses create an obstacle. These situations have appeared, not because there was intent by some in the marketplace to harm the City's economic development efforts or create problems for their neighbors, but, rather, because there was a lack of sensitivity to the impacts of their actions on the community at-large and its physical or economical attractiveness. In other cases, there are divergent interests and motivations. Only by developing and acting on a plan can local government eliminate the problems that are constraining growth from taking place in a desirable and cost-effective manner.

Key elements of this Comprehensive Plan include:

- ◆ A **realistic vision** of the City's future; what it will be like in 20 years. This must be both in text form and illustrated graphically.
- ◆ Specific **goals, supporting objectives, and realistic actions** to be achieved during the planning period. Goals are intended to be broad while objectives must be measurable.
- ◆ A map that illustrates the City's vision and provides guidance to **coordinate capital investments and provide adequate facilities and services**. Such an exhibit must address future land use, community character, and locations of major infrastructure.
- ◆ **Identification of needs and estimated costs of initiatives** that can be further quantified in the annual budgeting process. The plan must identify order-of-magnitude costs, which may then be refined through a multiple-stage capital programming process.
- ◆ **Priorities established for both programmatic improvements and capital investments**. Capital programming is important, but departments must also address and allocate operational and maintenance costs.

The plan is a result of careful consideration of the issues and choices of implementation strategies that were deemed the best fit for Huntsville.

Starting with a Vision

The CPAC(X) was tasked with developing the overall vision for the Comprehensive Plan. Such statements are an important part of the process since they express the community's core values and what the ultimate outcome is expected to be. A vision statement identifies where the community intends to be in the future or where it should be to best meet the needs of its residents. A vision incorporates a shared understanding of the nature and purpose of the community and uses this understanding to move it toward a greater purpose. A vision describes the community's preferred future.

- ◆ **Recommendations on regulations.** A significant portion of implementation will be achieved by regulations – zoning, subdivision, building codes, and code enforcement.
- ◆ **Public-private partnership** to allow governments to work cooperatively with the private sector, often achieving objectives that neither can accomplish alone. Affordable housing and redevelopment strategies are common examples requiring both government and private sector participants.
- ◆ **Intergovernmental cooperation** between the City, County, University and State agencies to enable coordination of actions and, in some cases, sharing of resources.
- ◆ **Governmental programs** of acquisition and renewal spanning a wide range of areas, from acquiring land for parks, community facilities and rights-of-way to establishing redevelopment and reinvestment programs.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

This process was initiated in 2006 and resulted in a vision statement being approved by the Planning Commission in 2007. A Citizens Project Advisory Commission (CPAC(X)) led the initial visioning efforts, and their involvement, in addition to those from the community who participated throughout this process, is essential to the success of planning. The process was kick-started with an intensive one-day reconnaissance and public input process where the consultants and staff met with a large number of special interest groups. Additionally, there were weekly Ward Meetings held throughout the month of September 2006, in each of the City's four wards. Two other special meetings were held to discuss the economic development of Huntsville and allow Sam Houston State University faculty and students to participate in this process. The issues and comments received during these meetings, as well as observations of the community planning consultant, are woven throughout this document in the form of issue summaries, goal and objective statements, and specific recommendations for action.

Citizen involvement continued throughout the process, offering an ongoing forum for residents to participate in forming the plan and its recommendations, to respond to concepts and ideas put forward as potential solutions to the identified issues, and to remain diligent in ensuring the plan accurately reflects the values of the community and its residents. A notice of each CPAC(X) meeting was sent to all plan participants inviting them to hear the presentations and discussions of each plan element. Also, special interest groups and key stakeholders were contacted for additional meetings. This process provided an opportunity for citizens to participate in planning for the City's future and have their individual concerns heard and taken into account. Occurring simultaneously, economic consultant TIP Strategies conducted their own series of meetings with citizen groups from the community, as

OUR VISION

By the Year 2025, Huntsville will have ...

... absorbed continued growth in Sam Houston State University, dealing more effectively with off-campus housing, student safety, in-town job and social options, and local retention of graduates,

... successfully managed new development along the Interstate 45 corridor, reaping the economic benefits without sacrificing the character or image of the city's "front door,"

... strengthened the economic pillars of its downtown through greater retail diversity, residential presence, cultural and entertainment offerings, and urban design initiatives,

... extended basic services to all incorporated areas and made tangible progress in neighborhood revitalization efforts,

... witnessed the emergence of well-planned residential and business development to the west of Interstate 45, focused around Veteran's Memorial Parkway,

... reversed the area's deforestation trend through firmer tree preservation rules and public-private tree planting initiatives,

... established the value of ongoing strategic and long-range planning through implementation successes across the city, and

... enhanced communications and strengthened essential partnerships with Walker County and TDCJ.

well as representatives from Sam Houston State University and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

For each of the key issues – and, most importantly, for the “critical path” issues – the draft plan documents were made available for public comment as to the alternative methods of addressing such issues. This was an important step toward consensus-building since, in most cases, there were a number of solutions available and a range of opinions as to how best to accomplish the vision of Huntsville. The meetings were used to inform citizens and officials of the consequences associated with the different options, the likely outcomes for achieving the goals, and probable impacts on individual areas of the community. This provided an opportunity for residents to discuss and debate the alternatives and seek those that best meet the goals while, at the same time, ensuring that no area solely bears the costs or undue burdens.

The resulting plan contains the following chapters:

- ◆ **Chapter 1, Introduction and Vision.** This chapter explains the purpose of planning and the value that will be accrued from undertaking a comprehensive planning process in Huntsville and its two-mile planning area. It also outlines the public participation program that served as a foundational element of the planning process. Finally, this chapter offers an introduction to Huntsville and Walker County by summarizing the information and findings in Chapter 2, Community Profile.
- ◆ **Chapter 2, Land Use and Community Character.** This chapter provides a vision for the future physical development of Huntsville and its two-mile planning area. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the necessary policy guidance that will enable sound decision-making about the compatibility and appropriateness of individual developments within the context of the larger community. An essential component of this chapter is the land use plan, which establishes the City's policy for directing ongoing development and managing future growth, preserving valued areas and lands, protecting neighborhoods, and realizing the envisioned community character.
- ◆ **Chapter 3, Transportation.** The purpose of this chapter is to address community-wide mobility needs on all levels, from sidewalks and trails, to local streets and neighborhood access, to arterial roadways and highways. This plan element includes a Thoroughfare Plan, which is the long-term plan for developing an overall system of roadways for the City and its planning area. This long-range transportation plan is to be used as a guide for securing rights-of-way and upgrading and extending the network of local, collector and arterial roads and highways in an efficient manner.

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- ◆ **Chapter 4, Economic Development.** The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance on how the community can achieve its vision while being pro-active about economic development. This chapter contains an economic assessment and outlines ways to support and retain existing businesses, attract and grow new businesses, and train the community's workforce – all with a view toward achieving improved livability.
- ◆ **Chapter 5, Parks and Recreation.** The purpose of this chapter is to ensure that the City "catches up" on any deficiencies in the provision of parks and recreation areas and facilities and then keeps pace with the facility requirements to support new development. A system plan results from this analysis, complementing the future land use plan. The system plan also indicates the effective service areas of the existing parks, but, more importantly, identifies areas of future needs. The chapter includes an adequacy assessment of the current parks and a needs assessment determining future needs for additional land and improvements.
- ◆ **Chapter 6, Growth Capacity.** In order for the community to seize its economic development potential, it must be forward-thinking to ensure that it has the capacity of community facilities and services to sustain its future development. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the pattern of development relates to the ability of the City to efficiently provide adequate facilities and services. Without a mechanism to consider the direction of development, sprawling patterns will blur the edge and lessen the community's identity and character. This chapter outlines the methods by which the community can effectively manage its future development in a wise and fiscally responsible manner.
- ◆ **Chapter 7, Implementation.** The purpose of this chapter is to integrate the different elements of the plan together in such a way as to provide a clear path for sound decision-making. It outlines the organizational structure necessary to implement the plan, including roles and responsibilities; establishes a process for annual and periodic evaluation and appraisal of the plan, and sets forth a five-year action plan.
- ◆ **Appendix A, Meeting Notes.** The purpose of this Appendix is to document the community outreach and involvement activities conducted in support of the comprehensive planning process, including a series of focus group interviews, public meetings in each of the City's four wards, special forums for economic development and Sam Houston State University, and additional input received via e-mail.
- ◆ **Appendix B, Community Profile.** The purpose of this Appendix is to present more detailed data and charts on key demographic and socioeconomic indicators for Huntsville, Walker County and comparison communities, highlights of which are summarized within Chapter 1, Introduction and Vision.

CPAC(X) reviewed, discussed and provided input to each of these elements, with additional input from the public. Upon incremental review of all eight chapters, the advisory committee made a recommendation for plan acceptance and adoption. Plan adoption included a public hearing before the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council prior to their final action on the plan.

HISTORY

Huntsville was founded in 1835 by Pleasant and Ephraim Gray as an Indian trading post and was named for Huntsville, Alabama, former home of the Gray family. The city originally lay within the northeast section of Montgomery County, which was organized in 1837. It was designated the seat of Walker County when the county was organized in 1846. Huntsville acquired a post office on June 9, 1837, with Ephraim Gray as the first postmaster. The Grays' trading post was well situated to trade with the Bidai, Alabama and Coushatta Indians. Relations between these groups and the early settlers around Huntsville appear to have been peaceful. As trade along the Trinity River grew and as colonists arrived to exploit timber resources and rich alluvial bottomlands, Huntsville became the center of increasing activity. The 1840s and 1850s saw the arrival of a few relatively well-to-do families from the Carolinas, Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee, along with larger numbers of yeomen. Huntsville was also the home of many prominent early Texans, including Sam Houston.

At the end of its first decade, Huntsville also became the site of the new Texas State Penitentiary, established by the legislature in 1848. The prison received its first convict on October 1, 1849. The following year Huntsville lost out to Austin in an election to choose the state capital.

The oldest continuous business in the state is the Huntsville firm of Gibbs Brothers and Company, begun as Gibbs and Coffin in 1841. According to one account, most of the manufacturing in Huntsville before the Civil War was carried on by slaves, who made shoes and other leather goods and cigars. During the war, cloth produced at the penitentiary was made into uniforms for Confederate soldiers. For transportation, early residents had access to the Trinity River through the port of Cincinnati, fifteen miles to the north, as well as stage lines. As early as 1856 Huntsville citizens planned a line called the Huntsville Railroad to connect at Cypress (Harris County) with the Houston and Texas Central Railway, but the road was never built.

Economic development suffered considerably from a yellow fever epidemic in 1867, which reportedly killed 10 percent of the town's population. In 1872 the Houston and Great Northern Railroad bypassed Huntsville to the east. The town acquired a rail connection that same year, however, when the eight-mile Huntsville

Historical Timeline

Below are key dates in Huntsville's history:

1835-36: City founded by the Gray family from Alabama as an Indian trading post.

1840s: Huntsville became home to the Texas State Penitentiary System, with the arrival of the first inmate in 1849.

1841: Gibbs & Bros., the oldest continuously run business in the state, opened in Huntsville.

1846: Designated the County seat of Walker County.

1850s: Austin College (the predecessor to SHSU) opened its doors.

1867: 10% of the population succumbed to yellow fever.

1872: Houston and Great Northern Railroad bypassed Huntsville to the east.

1936: President Roosevelt authorized the purchase of land for the Sam Houston National Forest.

1937-38: Huntsville State Park was established through the purchase of private land and opened to the public the following year.

1986: Texas Prison Rodeo closed after 55 years.

Branch linked it to the H&GN at Phelps. In 1875 Huntsville was also a stop on four stage routes: Cypress (Harris County) to Cincinnati, Nacogdoches to Brenham, Huntsville to Waxahachie, and Huntsville to Chaneyville, Louisiana. On the whole the Huntsville economy remained fairly stable from the Civil War through the Great Depression. Highway development in the late 1920s and early 1930s enhanced Huntsville's position as a trade center for a significant rural area of East Texas.

Sam Houston State University was founded in 1879 and named after General Sam Houston. Enrollment for 2005-06 was approximately 15,300 students.

"A Tribute to Courage," the Sam Houston Statue, was designed and constructed by artist David Adickes. He dedicated the statue to the City of Huntsville on October 22, 1994. It is the world's tallest statue of an American Hero at 67 feet tall on a 10-foot sunset granite base.ⁱ

SOCIOECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

This profile offers a summary-level introduction to the City and its socioeconomic characteristics. It is not intended as a comprehensive assessment of the City's demographics and existing conditions, but, rather, as a foundation from which the other elements of this plan may build upon in their more detailed analyses, policy formulation, and recommendations.

This analysis is valuable in that it allows assessment of the community in terms of where it has been in years past, where it is presently, and where it appears to be headed in the forthcoming years based upon the most recent available data and forecasts. Comparison with other communities, as well as the County and State, provides a baseline for determining how Huntsville is doing relative to other jurisdictions. This "big-picture" view enables community decision-makers and residents to better understand the issues and challenges before them and, subsequently, develop policies and implementation strategies to proactively manage the future course of the community. Central to this plan is that there are clear connections between the identified issues and the corresponding policy response and strategic implementation plan.

This section of the plan refers to the tables and illustrations found in [Appendix B, Community Profile](#).

Year 2025 Population

1. Since 1970, the City's population has increased an average of 26 percent per decade, or roughly 2.63 percent annually. A straight-line continuation of this trend would result in a Year 2025 total population of 50,470 persons, or an

additional 15,392 persons since 2000. It is important to note, however, that a significant share of the population lives within institutionalized group quarters (Texas Department of Criminal Justice population) and non-institutionalized group quarters (Sam Houston State University students in college dormitories).

2. As shown in **Figure B.4, Huntsville Population Groups, 2000**, 25.4 percent of the population was within institutionalized group quarters in 2000, which increased from 23.89 percent in 1990. Assuming a straight-line continuation of the increase in institutionalized persons between 1990 and 2000, this would result in an institutionalized population of 13,599 persons in 2025. Of course, this assumes that there is the requisite capacity in the prison units.
3. There are seven TDCJ facilities in Walker County and as shown in **Tables B.2, TDCJ Capacities for Walker County Facilities; B.3, TDCJ Occupancies for Walker County Facilities; and B.4, TDCJ Populations for Walker County Facilities**, the capacity of the facilities and historic occupancies and populations has remained relatively consistent. In 2005, there were a total of 13,612 incarcerated individuals in Walker County facilities compared to 12,245 in 1995, an increase of 1,367. Meanwhile the combined capacity of all seven facilities in 1995 was 14,817 versus 13,316 in 2005 – an overall decrease of 1,501.
4. Persons living in college dormitories decreased from 9.65 percent (2,694 students) in 1990 to 7.10 percent (2,295 students) in 2000. During this decade, Sam Houston State University enrollment approached 13,000 in 1995 but ended the decade at 12,305 students in Fall 2000. The University reported an on-campus student population of 3,207 in Fall 2006. The University also provided additional data on the following items:
 - ◆ Total enrollment in Fall 2006 was 15,935, which included 12,302 full-time students (77.2 percent) and 3,633 part-time (22.8 percent).
 - ◆ The share of full-time students had increased significantly over the five-year period since Fall 2002, when it was 61.2 percent (9,752 students out of 13,091 total enrollment).
 - ◆ The percentage of commuting students versus those residing in Walker County (either on or off campus) increased slightly from 53.8 percent in Fall 2002 (7,038 of 13,091 total students) to 54.7 percent in Fall 2006 (8,724 of 15,935 total).
 - ◆ Regarding the extent of enrollment at the University Center in The Woodlands, the University confirmed that those numbers had reached a plateau the last few years (1,538 in Fall 2006).
 - ◆ Indications are that SHSU's overall enrollment growth is due primarily to retention efforts on campus in Huntsville (and many of the students in The Woodlands are also enrolled in additional courses at the main campus).

The projections of the University indicate growth to 25,000 students by 2015, which will have a major impact on the community's permanent and day-time populations and its economic development.

5. The resident population, excluding the institutionalized and college dormitory populations, was 18,267 persons in 1990 and 23,701 persons in 2000, as displayed in **Table B.6, Estimate of Annexed Persons**. Assuming a straight-line continuation of this trend, the resident population would be 34,204 persons in 2025.
6. A portion of the population increases reflected by the U.S. Census counts in 1990 and 2000 were the result of annexations that occurred during the preceding decades. An estimate of the population added is based on the current number of lots within the annexation areas, which is high likely due to development that has occurred within these areas in the time since the annexations. However, there is no readily available information as to the number of units for persons residing within these areas at the time of annexation. Annexations that occurred in the 1980s accounted for 808 units or 1,883 persons, using 2.33 persons per unit.¹ During the 1990s there were an estimated 1,695 units annexed into the City, which resulted in an estimated population of 3,915 persons, using 2.31 persons per dwelling unit.² Therefore, the net increase in population excluding annexations during the 1980s was 2,106 persons. Similarly, during the 1990s the net increase in persons was 5,498 persons. Again, since the estimated number of annexed persons is based on number of lots rather than the number at the time of annexation, the net increases were likely higher than these estimates.
7. Using a range of statistical projection techniques, the City's Year 2025 population ranges from 45,993 persons (Texas Water Development Board) to 71,185 persons (exponential growth). Based upon the projection of permanent residents and the expected increase in student enrollment, it is reasonable to expect a Year 2025 population of 58,191 persons, which is a mid point of the alternative scenarios. Also, contributing to the viability and methodology used to derive this future population estimate are the following:
 - ◆ The resident population, excluding institutionalized persons and those residing in dormitories, was 23,701 persons in 2000. A straight-line (linear) projection results in a 2025 resident population of 34,204 persons.
 - ◆ According to SHSU projections, the student population will increase to 25,000 by 2015. Assuming 45.3 percent are non-commuting students (as in Fall 2006) it is estimated that there will be 11,325 students residing in Huntsville in 2025.

¹ 1990 U.S. Census

² 2000 U.S. Census

- ◆ Assuming 25.4 percent of the population is institutionalized in 2025 as in 2000, which allows a moderate growth of the TDCJ, the institutionalized population will amount to 11,564 persons.
 - ◆ Adding the resident population (34,204 persons) to the non-commuting students (11,325 persons) and those institutionalized (11,564 persons) results in a Year 2025 estimate of 57,093 persons. This estimate plus any added population via annexation validates the reasonableness of the mid point population estimate of 58,191 persons.
 - ◆ During the 1980s and 1990s approximately 1,883 persons and 3,915 persons, respectively, were added to the City's population by way of annexation.
 - ◆ The City's share of the County's population has remained steady since 1970, ranging from 54.8 percent in the 1980s to 57.3 percent in the 1970s.
 - ◆ According to the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M, 1,203 new units have been constructed since 2000, amounting to 2,779 new residents.³
8. Rather than relying on selection of a projected future population figure, the City should refer to a service population; the number of persons requiring public services. For the purposes of this plan, the following will be used:
- ◆ 45,529 persons for calculating future parks and recreation demands. This excludes institutionalized persons.
 - ◆ 58,191 persons for purposes of expressing demands for housing and public facilities and services.
 - ◆ 58,191 persons plus an estimate of the added population within the service areas for utility provision (to be determined by the Public Utilities Department).

Relevance to this Plan

Population projections are an important component of the long-range planning process. Their purpose is to:

- ◆ Evaluate a range of future population scenarios, enabling the community to identify the internal and external factors that may contribute to its rate of population increase. For instance, decisions that are made by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and Sam Houston State University (SHSU) will have significant impacts on the community and its population. The implications of such decisions must be anticipated and adequately addressed by this plan.
- ◆ Adequately determine and quantify the demands that will be placed on public facilities and services, such as fire and police protection, water and wastewater

³ Assuming 2.31 persons per household, 2000 U.S. Census.

facilities, transportation and drainage infrastructure, parks and open space, and municipal buildings and staff.

- ◆ Allow advanced planning to effectively guide new development, coordinate timely provision of adequate infrastructure, and appropriately direct available resources.
- ◆ Create a strategy to seize opportunities and overcome foreseen challenges.

Age and Gender

1. As shown by **Figure B.8, Huntsville Age/Gender, 2000**, there are significantly more males in the community than females. This is due to more male students enrolled at SHSU plus the male population at the TDCJ facilities within the City.
2. The median age in Huntsville in 2000 was 28.3 years, which is lower than each of the other non-University communities. Nacogdoches (Stephen F. Austin State University), San Marcos (Texas State University), and Stephenville (Tarleton State University) each had a lower median age of 24.4, 23.3, and 27.7 years, respectively. This may be partially explained by Tarleton State University having a similar percentage (7.0 percent) and both Stephen F. Austin State University (11.7 percent) and Texas State University (12.7 percent) having a higher percentage of students living in college dormitories than SHSU. In other words, there may be more student residents and fewer commuting students.

Relevance to this Plan

The age of the population is relevant for the following reasons:

- ◆ The other socioeconomic categories tend to be skewed by college-age students. For instance, median household income is usually lower in University towns, reflecting the presence of students.
- ◆ There are different demands for housing types and price ranges for persons of a younger age due to living preferences and incomes.
- ◆ The demands for parks and recreation facilities are different as youth and young adults are more interested in active recreation facilities such as fields and courts rather than passive picnic and trail facilities.
- ◆ There is an increased demand, particularly in a University environment, for walking and bicycling opportunities.
- ◆ The employment base is much different due to the age and educational attainment of employable persons and the types of employment suitable for a younger population.

Ethnicity and Language

1. The population in Huntsville is 65.8 percent “White alone” and 26 percent “Black or African American alone.” The remaining eight percent are in the other designated races, as shown in **Figure B.11, Latino Population, 2000**. Only 16 percent of the population is of Hispanic or Latino descent, which is much lower than the state (68 percent). However, the “Black or African American alone” population is more significant in Huntsville than the state (11.5 percent).
2. As displayed by **Figure B.12, Language Spoken in the Home, 2000**, a larger percentage of the Huntsville population (84 percent) speaks English as the primary language than statewide (70 percent). At the same time, a smaller percentage speaks Spanish in Huntsville (16 percent) than statewide (28 percent). The other languages reflect negligible differences between the City and state.

Relevance to this Plan

- ◆ It is important to consider the ethnicity of the population to ensure that the process is inclusive and representative of the community. In other words, through the public involvement program there must be efforts made to attract a sound cross-section of Huntsville so as to allow every opportunity for all persons to be equally represented and involved.
- ◆ The language spoken by a majority of residents in a community is an important consideration in order to plan appropriately for bilingual communication in public meetings. In addition, this may be important in the use of media to promote and advertise public meetings. Also, being aware of other languages is important for other purposes, such as signage at public parks, etc.

Housing Occupancy and Tenure

1. As expected, the percent of renter-occupied housing units is higher than the number of owner-occupied housing units, due to the younger student and inmate populations, as displayed in **Figure B.18, Housing Occupancy, 2000**. In Huntsville, as of the 2000 Census, 51.7 percent of the housing units were occupied by renters whereas 48.3 percent were occupied by owners. This is comparable to Nacogdoches due to the presence of Stephen F. Austin State University. San Marcos, on the other hand, is much different as a result of the larger number of students (as are each of the other communities that do not have a university). Stephenville had higher owner occupancy likely due to the relatively small size of Tarleton State University.
2. As shown in **Figure B.17, Median Gross Rent, 2000**, the median gross rent was \$515 in Huntsville, which was higher than each of the other communities

except for Conroe and San Marcos. Conroe is located closer to the Houston metropolitan area and its relative housing market. The gross rent in San Marcos was much higher due to its proximity to Austin and a larger student population (27,171 students) as a percentage of the community.

3. According to **Figure B.19, Age of Structure, 2000**, 54 percent of the structures within the community were built in the 1970s and 1980s, meaning that a majority of the homes are between 17 and 36 years of age. Approximately 21 percent were constructed between 1990 and 2000. The median year of structures built was 1979, meaning that the median structure in Huntsville is 27 years old.
4. According to the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University, as provided in **Table B.5, Number of Dwelling Units**, there have been 1,203 units constructed in Huntsville since the 2000 U.S. Census. This amounts to an additional 9.5 percent relative to the 11,508 units included in the 2000 Census.
5. As shown by **Figure B.20, Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income, 2000**, 78.7 percent of the population spends less than 30 percent on their mortgage, which is the common Federal definition of housing affordability. Those spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing account for 21.3 percent of the population, with the largest percentage (10 percent) spending 50 percent or more. While this is partially expected as a result of the student population – who generally are unemployed or underemployed – this remains a significant percentage of the population.

Relevance to this Plan

- ◆ While it is expected that there will be a high percentage of renter-occupied units due to the presence of the University population, it is an important consideration in the compatibility of land uses and the long-term integrity of neighborhoods. Measures must be considered to ensure compatibility between higher- and lower-density living environments. There may also be other housing types besides large apartment complexes that can absorb the expected future increase in student population, which must be accommodated and/or encouraged by the City’s land use policies and zoning regulations.
- ◆ The student population will likely remain a significant proportion of the renter occupancy. There is a national trend of parents purchasing homes within the community where their children attend college, which is an investment for them and provides a place for their child to live while attending college. This may be a strategy for the City to pursue in an effort to encourage homeownership versus saturating the housing market with renter-occupied complexes and converted living units.
- ◆ A challenge before the City is to increase homeownership among the permanent population. This plan may address this issue in terms of strategies to increase the

median household income through the types of employment opportunities and local wage rates.

- ◆ A topic to be explored further in this plan is the reason for the higher median gross rent. It is expected that this is due to the local student housing demand, which is common within university towns. However, there may be other community policies and ordinances that influence this pricing, which must be considered and planned for accordingly.
- ◆ The age of structures impacts the median house value and, hence, property taxes and the tax revenues of the City. It is also of relevance to the size and style of housing available to those interested in moving to the community. Without adequate choices in the type, size, age and style of housing, there are economic development limitations in attracting employers to the community. The age of housing and the level of maintenance influences the appearance and integrity of neighborhoods, which creates a perception among community residents and visitors.
- ◆ Housing affordability is essential to the success of the community and its economic development program. This topic will be studied further from the perspective of the influences of land use policies on affordability and the economic development strategies to aid in closing the gap of cost-burdened residents.

Household Size and Income

1. As shown by **Figure B.15, Average Household Size, 2000** and **Figure B.16, Household Composition, 2000**, there were 2.31 persons per household as of the 2000 U.S. Census, which decreased slightly from 2.33 persons per household as of the 1990 U.S. Census. The largest percentage is two-person households (44 percent) followed by three-person (24 percent) and four-person (18 percent) households.
2. The median household income in 2000 was \$27,075, which was higher than Nacogdoches and San Marcos but lower than each of the other comparison communities, as displayed by **Figure B.30, Median Household and Per Capita Income**. The median household income in Huntsville was 71 percent of that in Walker County and 68 percent of that in Texas, which is likely a reflection of the extent of prison population in Huntsville, which skews the City's Census statistics.
3. The per capita income was lower in Huntsville than all other comparison communities, except San Marcos, plus Walker County and the State. Again, this

is largely due to the student and inmate populations. Nonetheless, it is an important planning consideration.

Relevance to this Plan

- ◆ The stability in persons per household means that there is also a stable housing demand. In other words, had the persons per household declined more significantly in the 1990s, there would have been an artificial increase in housing construction with a lower than expected net increase in population, i.e., fewer persons occupying more units.
- ◆ Median household income is a good barometer of the City’s economic health. If the median household income is higher, the disposable income may be higher, allowing increased local spending and tax generation. While the income is higher in Huntsville than Nacogdoches and San Marcos, this remains an area of emphasis in the community’s economic development program. Strategies must be devised and an implementation plan developed to provide more higher-paying job opportunities for community residents.
- ◆ It is likely that per capita income will lag behind median household income due to the increasing number of students who are either unemployed or employed part-time. This, too, must be an area of focus to increase the number of employment opportunities for these persons and hence, increase per capita income.

Education Accountability and Attainment

1. As shown by **Table B.7, School District Comparison, TEA 2004-05 Reporting Data**, the Huntsville Independent School District (HISD) had an accountability rating of “Academically Acceptable”, with Stewart Elementary, Gibbs Elementary and Scott Johnson Elementary rated as “Recognized” and the other school campuses rated as “Academically Acceptable.” Of the 1,229 districts throughout the state, 11 districts (0.9 percent) were rated “Exemplary” and 172 (14.0 percent) were rated “Recognized.” There were 989 of the 1,229 districts that achieved the “Academically Acceptable” rating, which comprised 94.3 percent of the total students enrolled statewide. (The TEA Accountability Rating system only applies to public and not private schools.)
2. The statistic that varies the most from the other comparison districts is that 89.3 percent of the students in HISD are economically disadvantaged. Otherwise, each of the other statistics is generally on par with the other comparable districts, with some ranking higher and some lower than Huntsville.
3. As displayed by **Figure B.32, Education Attainment Comparison, 18-34 years (high school and college graduates)**, Huntsville has a high percentage of high

POVERTY “LINE”

The U.S. Census Bureau currently has a set of 48 “thresholds” for money income (before taxes) to determine who is in poverty. These thresholds vary by family size and composition (e.g., age of householder, number of related children, etc.). If a family’s total income is less than the family’s threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty.

school graduates compared to the other cities. The percentage of residents who have completed “some college” is lower than all other communities. The percentage who have completed college is lower than San Marcos and Stephenville and higher than Walker County, Brenham, Conroe, Corsicana and Nacogdoches. As displayed by Figure B.32, Huntsville is the median among the comparison cities as to its percentage of high school graduates. Residents with a bachelors degree or higher make up a larger percentage of the population in Huntsville than the other communities except San Marcos and Stephenville (two other state university towns).

Three categories define students’ economically disadvantaged status:

1. Eligible for free meals.
2. Eligible for reduced meals.
3. Students come from families with an annual income below the poverty line; students eligible for other public assistance; students received a Pell Grant; students eligible for programs assisted under Title II of Job Training Partnership Act; students eligible for food stamps.

Source: Texas Education Agency

Relevance to this Plan

- ◆ The quality of schools is a major consideration when deciding whether to move to the community, particularly for young parents with school-age children. While most of the statistics are generally on par with the other districts, the quality of primary education and the appearance of school grounds and facilities are essential for the community and its economic development program.
- ◆ The fact that nearly 90 percent of students are classified as economically disadvantaged is significant. Paired with the lower median household and per capita incomes, this statistic warrants near-term attention and strategies to increase the incomes of local families and individuals. This also may lead to a skewed perception of the district by those considering Huntsville as a place to live and raise a family.
- ◆ While the community is home to SHSU, its educational attainment remains relatively low compared to other peer communities (although, as with other Census statistics for Huntsville, this is likely skewed by the extent of prison population within the city limits). The high rate of high school graduates generally reflects those University students who claim Huntsville as their primary residence on the U.S. Census forms. Since the percentage of persons who have completed college declines relative to those with a high school diploma, this indicates that most students leave Huntsville upon graduation.

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Therefore, an economic development strategy may be to create opportunities in the community to capture a portion of the University graduates, particularly those who grew up in Huntsville. To do so, there must be gainful employment and sufficient housing opportunities to encourage students to remain upon graduation.

Economy

1. The local economy is highly dependent on employment from the public sector due to Huntsville being home to Sam Houston State University (SHSU) and several Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) prison units. Nearly 50 percent of local employment is concentrated in the public sector.
2. Employment and labor force growth have slowed in recent years while other peer communities have experienced stronger rates. Their higher growth rates, however, are likely not due to local factors. The success of many of these areas is undoubtedly related to their proximity to growing metropolitan regions. For example, Conroe and San Marcos both lie just beyond Houston and Austin, respectively, and are located on major interstate highways. Much of their growth in employment and labor force is surely linked to spill-over growth emanating from their larger neighbors.
3. Walker County has recently enjoyed very strong employment growth rates in Professional and Business Services. Financial Activities and Healthcare have also increased employment lately. This development should be given strong consideration, especially due to the relatively high wage rates typically seen in these industries. Further, these sectors offer strategic value as well due to their ability to assist in transforming a community into a regional center. Walker County also enjoys a high concentration of employment in the Leisure and Hospitality sector. This may indicate that tourism, recreation and retiree attraction strategies hold some potential.
4. "Traditional" industries should not be overlooked. Given Huntsville's location along Interstate 45 between Houston and Dallas, transportation and logistical opportunities may also be available. In addition, the large loss in manufacturing jobs may indicate the need for a more aggressive approach to business retention strategies.
5. From 2000 to 2005, the number of employed persons living in Walker County increased by 566 persons, representing a 2.4 percent change. During the last year, employment in the county declined slightly. During the same period, Walker County's unemployment rate also increased slightly but has fallen the past two consecutive years. A comparison of the area's unemployment rate to its regional

rivals reveals that Walker County's 2005 rate was the second highest, yet still in line with the state and the nation.

6. Walker County's civilian labor force grew 2.8 percent from 2000 to 2005. This represents the slowest growth rate among Huntsville's regional rivals. Data from the latest Census reveals, however, that Huntsville enjoys a well-educated, young labor force. For example, 77 percent of residents 18 to 34 years of age had earned at least a high school diploma in 2000. In addition, the share of the City's young adults who had earned a bachelor's degree or higher was nearly 20 percent. This percentage was lower than only San Marcos and Stephenville — other communities with state universities.
7. Over the last 30 years, the number of jobs located in Walker County has increased substantially from approximately 7,400 in 1970 to 23,400 total wage and salary jobs in 2004. Walker County enjoyed its highest job growth rates over a prolonged period from the early 1970s through the mid 1980s. The latter half of that decade was characterized by stagnating employment opportunities, while the mid 1990s represented a period of renewed job growth. From 1999 to 2004, however, the number of wage and salary jobs in Walker County declined slightly.
8. When adjusted for inflation, the average wage per job located in Walker County increased 14 percent from approximately \$25,000 in 1970 to nearly \$29,000 in 2004. This wage gain was comparable to that of the nation during the same period. By comparison, the state's average wage increased 24 percent. The gap between the U.S. and Texas was largely closed by 1980. Since then, the state and national wage rates have remained closely synchronized. During the 10-year period from 1994 to 2004, Walker County's average wage increased 6.4 percent when adjusted for inflation. This was the second lowest percent increase among its peers. At the same time, job holders in Walker County still earned the second highest wages when compared to other comparison counties.
9. Nonfarm employment data reveals that an extremely high share (46 percent) of jobs located in Walker County is concentrated in the public sector. By comparison, approximately 14-15 percent of jobs nationally and statewide are in government. Due to this high share in a single sector, the percentage of jobs in all other industries is below that of the state. A look at private employment trends in Walker County reveals that the local area fared well overall from 2001 to 2004 in comparison to the state and nation. For example, the total number of local private sector jobs increased two percent. Statewide, private employment decreased 1.2 percent. Much like the nation and the state, Walker County suffered its greatest percentage decreases in the Manufacturing

Location Quotients

A location quotient (LQ) is calculated as a local industry's share of total local employment divided by the same industry's share of employment at the state level. If the local industry and state industry are perfectly proportional, the location quotient will be 1.00. If an industry is heavily concentrated at the local level (e.g., automotive industry in Detroit, technology in Silicon Valley, gambling in Las Vegas), then the location quotient will be higher than 1.00. Conversely, if the industry is sparsely concentrated at the local level, the location quotient will be lower than 1.00. Generally, LQs greater than 1.25 represent high industry concentrations while LQs less than 0.75 represent weak concentrations.

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and Information sectors during the last recession. Locally, however, private job growth was very strong in Professional and Business Services and Healthcare. Trade, Transportation and Utilities along with Financial Activities also enjoyed modest increases.

10. Despite Walker County's strong growth, location quotient (LQ) analysis reveals that the County has a very low concentration (LQ 0.41) of Professional and Business Service jobs. In other words, Walker County firms in this sector employ only 41 percent the number of persons one would expect given national employment rates. Other low LQs in the county are in Manufacturing (0.60), Information (0.67) and Construction (0.67). Walker County, however, enjoys high LQs in Leisure and Hospitality (1.66), Healthcare (1.47) and Natural Resources and Mining (1.36). Depending on local factors, industries at either extreme may represent good target industry opportunities. For example, the fact that Walker County is under-represented in Professional and Business Services may mean that local businesses and residents must travel outside the area to receive such services. If this is the case, this demonstrates that high local demand for a bundle of services is not currently being met in the economy. As a result, economic developers may consider strategies for increasing employment opportunities in this sector. Likewise, Leisure and Hospitality as well as Healthcare appear to be acting as export industries for Walker County. Their high LQs seem to indicate that Walker County receives a large number of visitors and patients from other areas. If this is the case, then local economic developers may consider strategies for sustaining or leveraging comparative advantages that are supporting these figures.

Relevance to this Plan

- ◆ The fact that a disproportionate share of local employment is public sector has several implications. Among them is the amount of land that is exempt from the tax rolls, which limits the tax-generating values necessary to fund the demands being placed on the City by development and residents. Growth in a fiscally responsible manner is imperative to conserve resources and avoid premature and costly infrastructure improvements. Strategies to increase the amount of private sector development will be an important economic development consideration in this plan.
- ◆ The location of Huntsville relative to the expanding Houston metropolitan area will likely become a factor of increasing importance in the coming years. While Houston's influence is only beginning to have an impact on the community, it is expected to emerge as a greater force during the horizon of this plan as people seek to live in a small-town environment within commuting distance of their employment. As there are increased employment opportunities in The

Woodlands, Conroe, and along the I-45 corridor, there will likely be increased development pressure in and around Huntsville.

- ◆ Leveraging industries that have relatively high wage rates will be an important strategy to seize the community's economic development opportunities. The community's position within the region is also an important consideration as Huntsville may increase its market share as a regional hub of economic activity. The roles that tourism, recreation and retiree attraction play will be evaluated as a possible strategy for growing the local economy.
- ◆ Business retention must be a focus of the local economic development program. Entrepreneurialism also merits attention since most new jobs added are by small businesses. The Small Business Development Center through the University may play a significant role in this function of job growth. Traditional attraction of employers is also a consideration due to the community's location along the I-45 corridor.
- ◆ Reasons for a higher unemployment rate and slower growth in civilian labor must be uncovered and evaluated as part of this planning effort. Strategies for diversifying and strengthening the local tax base and increasing job growth and wage rates are essential objectives of the economic development plan.
- ◆ While wages in Walker County have maintained their strength among the comparison communities, the average wage per job increased by only 14 percent between 1970 and 2004 while the state's average increased 24 percent. Therefore, continuation of this trend will lessen the County's competitive advantage without pro-active means for attracting target industries with higher wage rates.
- ◆ National trends in employment, and evaluation of the industries that are growing and declining, will be important considerations as to the types of productive employers that are well suited for Huntsville. These industries must be identified and pursued with viable strategies to grow and then sustain the local economy.

ⁱ www.huntsvilletexas.com

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