CITY OF STAFFORD

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Letter from Leonard Scarcella

Mayor, City of Stafford

In 1971, President Richard M. Nixon mandated that cities of the U.S.A. should have a comprehensive plan for the development of their municipalities. With that in mind, the City Council of the City of Stafford retained a consultant, named a committee, and began efforts to develop a blueprint which would assist it in transforming Stafford from an agrarian community with an abundance of cotton and okra fields to one that was urbanized. The ultimate document that was approved and produced following many months of discussions and deliberations was a bound volume that has been referenced many times over the past 44 years.

Source: City of Stafford

In 2014, the Stafford Planning & Zoning Commission recommended amending and updating the 1971 document. Likewise, a committee was appointed; and it has been endeavoring to produce a similar and refined version of the initial plan.

The main objectives have been to develop the goals, priorities, and funding for the City going forward to the Year 2040. One of the most emphasized aspects of this process has been to fully recognize that this is to be implemented over the next quarter century and IS NOT a plan that is to be completed in a year or other short-term period. What is presented here is the culmination of the efforts not only of the committee, the Planning & Zoning Commission, and City Council but also of the consultants, staff, and—most important—feedback from the public.

Obviously, goals are paramount in formulating this 25-year game plan. Further, considering the extended period which it is meant to entail, the priority of each of these goals is most important. Finally, but of critical importance, is a perspective on the funding mechanisms to implement these goals as prioritized.

To put this Comprehensive Plan into perspective, it is appropriate that we review a few of the main highlights that transpired since the original plan was adopted. First and foremost, in 1976, at the urging of the citizens and a most contentious situation with Fort Bend Independent School District over the education of the Stafford children, City Council authorized a study to determine the viability of breaking away from Fort Bend ISD and Houston ISD and creating the Stafford Municipal School District. After the study pronounced that such a move would be viable and the City could create the Stafford Municipal School District, the citizens proceeded to secure a petition which authorized calling an election in January 1977. A vote of 73% in favor dictated moving forward with

this action, and the war was on. Five-and-a-half years later after numerous administrative hearings, trials in the federal district court, and two hearings before the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans, the federal appellate court did something one had never, and has not done since in spite of 300 such attempts: ordered the implementation of a breakaway school district. In August 1982, the first children entered the make-shift facility of the Stafford Municipal School District—a converted builders' warehouse—for the initial elementary school classes. Fast forward 33 years, and SMSD remains as the only municipal school district in the State of Texas with budgeting and tax authorizations shared jointly by the SMSD Board of Trustees and Stafford City Council.

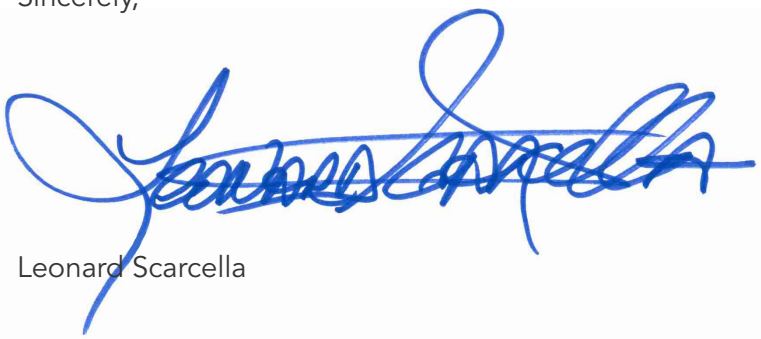
In 1995 Stafford made another unprecedented move. It abolished city property taxes. The Wall Street Journal indicated it was an experiment quoting one think tank guru who said, "I can't believe there are more than one in a million spots where you could get away with doing this". Twenty years later, the zero property tax is alive and well, has gained the City national acclaim, and has placed it in a most enviable position for cash fund balances. An indelible corollary to this effort has been a steadfast commitment for this City to "live within its means".

Questioned by many that a dual venue for a performing arts theater and a convention center would be successful, that criticism has been laid to rest by more than three million people who have attended this outstanding and highly-recognized facility which has hosted the likes of Willie Nelson, Steve Martin, Kevin Costner, Olivia Newton-John, and, most recently, the Russian Grand Ballet, which put on a sterling performance to an enthusiastic sell-out audience a couple of weeks ago.

To put the icing on the cake and to clearly illustrate the fiscal acumen and unique attitude towards a solid financial structure, last year, the City eliminated all general obligation debt. This action, along with the zero property tax, places Stafford in the stratosphere of a responsible fiscal achievement being one of only a handful of cities in the nation without a property tax and any general obligation debt.

With this slate of highly-unusual accomplishments as a backdrop, it is still without question that "projecting into the future" is a most perilous pursuit. Anticipating what should occur over a quarter century, and however best to fund that development—as well as utilizing a model which will continue to be challenged as the world goes through ever-evolving, rapid changes—is a daunting task. Yet, that has to be the concerted effort and the underpinnings of this Comprehensive Plan. The future always has unforeseen surprises, and requires overcoming obstacles to attain the dictates presented. Nevertheless, the concerted approach put forward and encompassed in this Comprehensive Plan seeks, just as it did in 1971, to provide the best vision for Stafford's future—this time to propel us to the Year 2040.

Sincerely,



Leonard Scarcella

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Introduction

Introduction

There are two interrelated focuses of a Comprehensive Plan. One, it allows the citizens of a community to create a shared vision of what they desire for their community, and two, it establishes ways in which a community can effectively realize that vision. The Stafford Comprehensive Plan tells the story of who Stafford is and what it wishes to become as it grows and redevelops. The City of Stafford is at an opportune crossroad for a new and exciting period in its history. A fresh sense of direction and collective excitement has created the need for re-examining the community's vision. Stafford residents and the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) provided valuable input and direction for the recommendations of this plan--through a community survey, two public meetings, and more than six CPAC meetings—it was determined that no City boasts the qualities and amenities that Stafford has, including into the future. A City that is fiscally responsible and maintains no general obligation debt has a dedication to providing sound judgment and strategic actions in providing for its citizens. Stafford has taken a proactive role in regional participation—including transportation studies, corridor plans, growth projections, commuter rail discussions and policymaking. This assessment will help the community reach consensus moving into the future so that sound decisions can be made regarding key issues. As a result, this update to the City's previous Comprehensive Plan was desirable, bringing together residents, elected officials, City staff and community stakeholders. What was most important to Stafford, was the Plan stayed true to the hard work, dedication and strides already taken by the historical figures of the community--that the plan build

Freeport Tax Exemption

The City of Stafford holds the unique distinction of being the largest city in Texas to abolish city property taxes. This includes both commercial and residential properties. In addition to a lack of city property taxes, the State of Texas has no state property taxes. This combination means more money back into the pockets of your business and employees. The Freeport Tax Exemption is offered by specific cities, counties, and school districts. The City of Stafford is unlike many cities in that three tax entities (City of Stafford, SMSD, and Fort Bend County Water Control and Improvement District No. 2) are part of the program.

The Freeport Tax Exemption does require that certain criterion be met:

- The exemption applies to goods, wares, ores, and merchandise other than oil, gas, and petroleum products and aircraft/repair parts.
- The freeport goods qualify if they leave Texas within 175 days from the date they are brought into or acquired in the state.
- Goods must be in Texas for assembling, storing, manufacturing, repair, maintenance, processing or fabricating purposes.

upon these strong foundations and grow from their successful roots. The CPAC kept a very wide lense on all issues, taking into consideration options and scenarios for key areas of town. The strides the City has already taken in the U.S. 90 rail initiatives, in the corridor commercial destinations, the high-quality education provided by Stafford Municipal School District (SMSD), the future of the Texas Instruments property will only set the essential stage for the future successes of Stafford.

The City of Stafford has put much effort into building a City that can stand out among the other communities in the region, by offering the quality of services, education and business climate that no other City can boast. The business-friendly climate has drawn industries from across the spectrum from manufacturing to office parks. Stafford's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) has built strong relationships with local business owners and has a long-standing relationship with many companies throughout the City. Doing business in Stafford is more than geography, as the continued interest and influx of businesses in relocating to Stafford has indicated.

A city's Comprehensive Plan is well-defined as a long-range planning tool that is intended to be used by City staff, councils and boards, along with citizens, to guide the community's physical development for 10 years, 20 years, or an even longer period of time. The purpose for Stafford's

Three key influences of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan:

1. **The importance of being fiscally responsible (as shown by the elimination of city property taxes);**
2. **Living within the City's means; and**
3. **Maintaining no general obligation debt.**

Comprehensive Plan is to serve as a flexible guide and living document for both current and future decision-makers. There were three major influences discussed throughout the comprehensive planning process: the importance of being fiscally responsible (as shown by the elimination of city property taxes in 1995), living within the City's means and maintaining no general obligation debt. These are interwoven into each element of this plan, the underlying foundations for many of the goals and strategies.

The primary intentions of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan include the following:

- Efficient delivery of public services;
- Coordination of public and private investment;
- Minimization of potential land use conflicts;
- Management of growth in an orderly fashion;
- Cost-effective public investments; and
- A rational and reasonable basis for making development decisions about the community.

A Comprehensive Plan is not a zoning ordinance, but rather it is a high-level tool utilized by the City to make development decisions. As development applications, zoning requests and other development decisions are made, the Comprehensive Plan helps to safeguard coordinated growth. Determining what land uses are appropriate within Stafford, and where such land uses should be located, helps to protect the integrity of the City's neighborhoods and corridors. Ultimately, synchronized land-use patterns help to protect private property by maintaining and enhancing value and protecting property from incompatible uses.

This Comprehensive Plan examines realities of existing conditions, demographic implications, areas of growth potential and strategies for improving quality of life. The Plan focuses not only on the physical redevelopment and development of the city, but also the overall goals to become a more livable and economically vibrant community. While the plan is visionary and outlines citizens' desires, it is also measurable by employing implementation-focused recommendations. The CPAC, staff and consultants worked very hard, taking into consideration all public input and comment on the subject, to identify the key opportunity areas for strategic recommendations and strategy development. Key input was taken from

LIKE A PUZZLE…

When putting together a puzzle, it is often helpful to know what the ultimate outcome of the puzzle will be. While you would still be able to assemble the puzzle without the vision, knowing your ultimate vision makes assembling the puzzle much easier. This comprehensive plan works the same way—establishing a vision for what Stafford is ultimately working for as a community and makes assembling all the various pieces of the development puzzle much easier.

Major Accomplishments:

- Stafford Municipal School District
- Zero Property Taxes since 1995
- No general obligation debt
- Landscaping prototype project along U.S. 90A
- Fountain's Development
- Stafford Centre
- Margaret Havens Memorial Garden
- Gateway elements
- Underpasses at U.S. 90A
- Business-friendly economic and development climate

local leaders and business owners, as well as residents and staff about upcoming projects and future needs of the community. It's important to understand the on-the-ground knowledge from the constituents in order for the Plan to actively address the true future of the City. This Plan takes into consideration all of the valuable public input, as well as all of the valuable history and on-the-ground knowledge and experience provided by community leaders.

With several exciting potential developments, Stafford is on the brink of tremendous improvements. Now is the time for the City to take advantage of its positions to choose its own path. This Comprehensive Plan anticipates change and proactively addresses major issues. Planning defines how investments help to shape the city. This vision process can help minimize conflicts in decision-making, saving time, money and resources. This Plan will lay the foundation for future improvements and priority action items.

In 1840, settlers were profiting from sugar cane and the local economy was growing. Attracted by this expanding community, Stafford's Point [Stafford] became the terminus of the first railroad tracks built in Texas. By 1853, the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railroad was running from Harrisburg to Stafford's Point. There are over 12,000 miles of railroad tracks throughout the State of Texas today.

Source: City of Stafford

Legal Authority in Texas

The State of Texas has established laws in regard to the way incorporated communities can ensure the health, safety and welfare of their citizens. State law gives municipalities the power to regulate the use of land, but only if such regulations are based on a plan. Authority of a City to create a comprehensive plan is rooted in Chapters 211, 212 and 213 of the Texas Local Government Code.

Chapter 211

Chapter 211 of the Texas Local Government Code allows the government body of a community to adopt zoning.

Chapter 212

Chapter 212 of the Texas Local Government Code allows the governing body of a community to regulate subdivision development within the City limits and also within the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) which vary depending upon the population of the community.

Chapter 213

Chapter 213 of the Texas Local Government Code allows the governing body of a community to create a comprehensive plan for the long-range development of the municipality. Basic recommendations for comprehensive planning are to address land use, transportation and public facilities, but may include a wide variety of other issues determined by the community.

It is important to note that a comprehensive plan is NOT a zoning ordinance, but rather is intended to be used as a tool to guide development, infrastructure and land use decisions in the future. The comprehensive plan does, however, serve as a basis on which zoning decisions are made, as specified by Chapter 211 of the Texas Local Government Code.

Stafford is ranked the

3rd BEST

place to start a business in Texas

In an article published by *nerdwallet*.com, the City of Stafford was ranked the third best place to start a business in Texas. The study analyzed 220 places, each with a population of at least 10,000 people, and evaluated data from the U.S. Census. The Houston metroplex dominated the top 10 spots, with five cities being i nthe Greater Houston Area (Webster, Stafford, Katy, Deer Park, Texas City).

In the Houston metropolitan area, Stafford has the third-highest number of businesses per 100 people (15.26). Despite its agricultural roots, Stafford has grown significantly in recent decades--especially since the elimination of property taxes for residents and businesses owners in 1995 (as discussed throughout this chapter). The article references the over 2,700 businesses that call Stafford home, including Seamar Divers (a subsea construction and inspection company) and General Technologies Inc. (an equipment manufacturer)

Source: nerdwallet.com

Planning Context

An understanding of the planning context will help to set the framework for which planning decisions can be made. This includes an understanding of both local and regional planning efforts as well as issues which may significantly impact future planning decisions within the City.

REGIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Stafford is located along State Highway 59 (whose name has been changed to Interstate 69 or the I-69 corridor) and U.S. Highway 90-A, just southwest of Houston. The City is mostly within Fort Bend County—with a small portion in Harris County—and surrounded by the cities of Sugar Land, Missouri City, Meadows Place and Houston (See ***Figure I.1, Regional Context Map***, on the following page). Stafford is located in the southwest region of the State, a 18.9-mile drive from the City of Houston.

Historically, Stafford was settled by William Stafford (in 1830) to serve as his plantation homestead. By 1853, people began settling around the plantation and the area became Stafford's Point. By this time, Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railways had started stopping at Stafford's Point, bringing much of the growth and development that ultimately warranted incorporation in 1956.[1]

1 *Stephen L. Hardin, "STAFFORD, TX," Handbook of Texas Online (http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hgs15). June 2010.*

The City has a complex ETJ that is situated within the Houston Independent School District, the Alief Independent School District, and the Fort Bend Independent School District. For this reason, Stafford has not annexed land outside of its city limits because doing so would extend the City's boundaries into school districts other than the Stafford Municipal School District (SMSD). Only in Stafford are the school district boundaries the same as the city limit boundaries. Not to mention, SMSD would need permissions from the other districts to do so. [2]

RELATED AND REGIONAL PLANNING EFFORTS

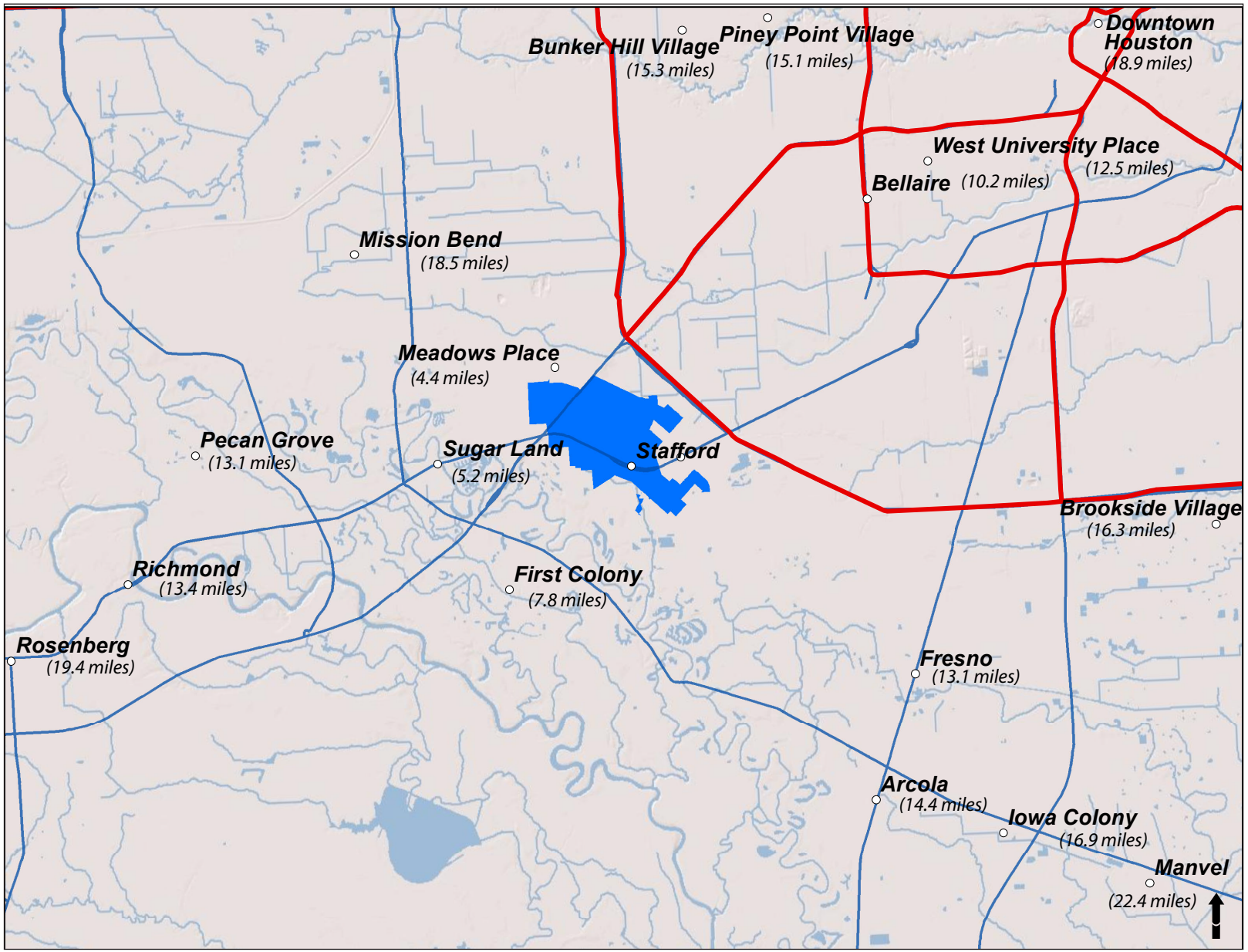
Relevant local and regional planning efforts should be considered when developing a Comprehensive Plan to ensure strategic and coordinated recommendations for the study area. This section provides an overview of these related efforts.

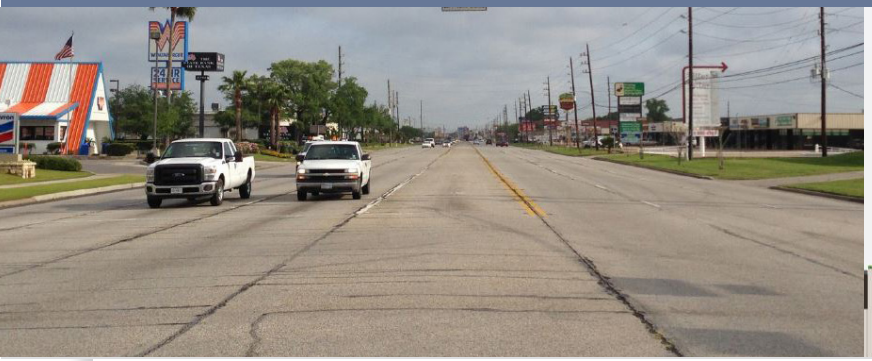
1971 Comprehensive Development Plan

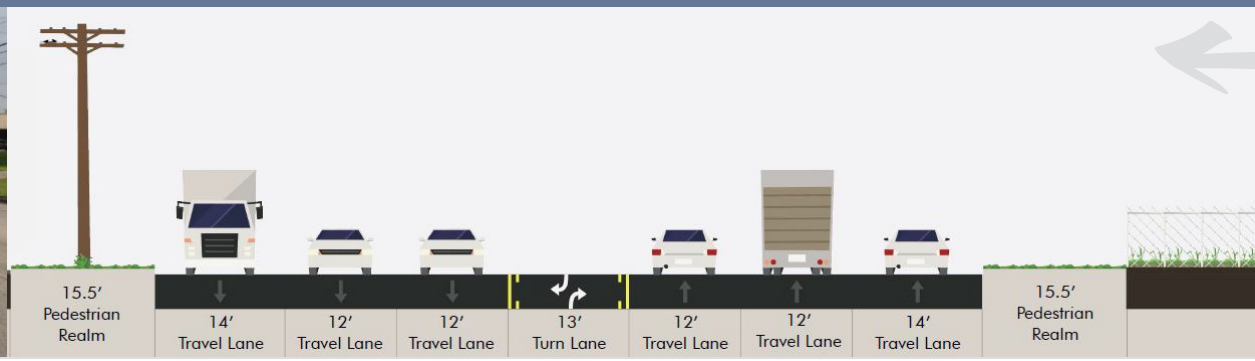
In 1971 the City's first *Comprehensive Development Plan* was written. The report outlined city limits and growth zones, regional relationships, challenges to the program, process for accomplishing the Plan, on-the-ground characteristics of the

2 *Kumar, Seshadri. "Stafford, SMSD mull over annexation." Houston Chronicle. October 30, 2006.*

Figure I.1, *Regional Context Map*







City, development goals and objectives, and development standards and design principles.

To some degree, this Comprehensive Plan update has been guided by the 1971 Comprehensive Development Plan, and generally follows its outline, with respect to identification and analysis of plan elements, organization of demographic and statistical information, the development of goals and objectives, standards and design principles, etc. Several important issues identified and discussed within the *1971 Comprehensive Development Plan* are still relevant today, though many of the recommendations/objectives have been addressed since that time. A few of these issues have been kept in this Plan, though updated to reflect current conditions and technologies, including the following:

- Street maintenance along key corridors
- Code requirements
- Image and identity
- Partial urban culture
- Streets, connectivity, and design elements
- Housing variety
- Efficient development
- The creation of a "total environment" (p. 15 of 1971 Comprehensive Development Plan)
- Urban beautification

The 2015 Plan update departs from its predecessor document in many significant ways, some of which include:

- Targeted recommendations for key nodes and intersections throughout the City
- Prioritized recommendations based on public input and comments
- Strategic and detailed infill and redevelopment analysis to aid in future decision-making
- The consideration of how several major redevelopment projects can and will have positive major impacts on the City.

Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) 2035 Regional Transportation Plan

The H-GAC 2035 Regional Transportation Plan seeks to address greater regional growth and explore how the core values of our region's residents relate to the way in which the Houston-Galveston region

Houston-Galveston Area Region Map Depicting Counties

Source: The 2035 Houston-Galveston Regional Transportation Plan (2007)

What is Access Management?

By definition, access management is a strategy to reduce and consolidate access points along a corridor to reduce the number of conflict points between drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Improving the visibility and operations of driveways, as well as creating clear channels for turning movements and cross movements along a corridor, will improve safety along a corridor due to reduced conflict points, and it will also increase mobility and traffic flow.

Source: FM 1092 Access Management Study

will grow and the quality of life that this growth will afford. The Plan illustrates the importance of linking land use and transportation planning and policy to afford residents more options when it comes to modes of travel. It focuses on system efficiencies, opportunities to manage demand and improve safety, as well as options for adding roadway and transit system capacity.

The Plan goes on to make recommendations for regional coordination and implementation across all eight counties on topics such as, transportation system expansion, demand management, operations management, livable centers and air quality. These recommendations imply direct impacts on cities like Stafford that are located along major access corridors. Recommendations that influence this Plan include:

- Expansion of public transportation services by filling gaps and expanding coverage
- Improve connectivity, by exploring opportunities for expanding multi-modal transit facilities for connecting local services
- Work with local transportation to develop flexible, seamless fare policies across providers
- Explore public-private partnerships to encourage commuter rail in the US 90A and U.S. 290 corridors
- Promote access to public transportation
- Explore potential High Capacity Transit (HCT) Corridors (potentially along US 249, US 290, SH 521, SH 288, SH 225, SH 146, and SH 36).

H-GAC Regional Plan for Sustainability

According to the summary of the Our Region Plan: "The Regional Plan for Sustainability looks at current and future opportunities to meet the needs of the diverse communities and residents of the region in a manner that does not compromise the needs of future generations." The Plan outlines goals for the region, develops metrics to assess sustainability, analyzes regional scenarios and make recommendations for implementation strategies.

The *Our Region* plan spans a variety of topics such as housing, transportation, economic development, resiliency, healthy communities, and the environment. The sustainability plan is important in the consideration of this Comprehensive Plan because these goals align with a number of the goals outlined in this Plan to enhance sustainability efforts in new construction (such as drainage and runoff considerations), the facilitation of public-private partnerships, and neighborhood preservation initiatives. Ensuring a regional connection and perspective among local adopted plans, such as this one, is key in ensuring the long-term viability and success of this Comprehensive Plan.

FM 1092 Access Management Study

FM 1092, also known regionally as Murphy Road, is the main north-south corridor through the City of Stafford connecting the U.S. 59/I-69 corridor and the City of Houston to the north and the City of Missouri City to the south.

The FM 1092 corridor plays two primary roles in the City of Stafford. First, it is the primary connection for many north-south trips through Stafford connecting SH 6 and Missouri City on the south with major roadways such as U.S. 90A and the U.S. 59/I-69 corridor. Its role is crucial because there are limited alternative north-south corridors in eastern Fort Bend County. Secondly, it is an economic backbone of the City and is home to many businesses and potential development sites that make up a significant portion of the city's tax base. The FM 1092 Access Management Study Steering Committee ultimately developed three overarching goals for the study to serve as a framework for more specific recommendations.

Recommendations include:

- Improve FM 1092 Corridor Mobility
- Address safety Issues
- Enhance Economic Development Opportunities

Thus, recommendations were developed that address the entire corridor, specific intersections, streetscape elements and strategic economic development priorities and opportunities focused around key opportunity nodes along FM 1092.

The recommendations of the FM 1092 Access Management Study will be essential in the consideration of this Plan because this Plan will need to take into consideration the ground-level analysis and recommendations for this corridor as an economic generator and part of the larger community character fabric. This report outlines implementation strategies that include economic development strategies, potential partnerships, and approaches to redefine key development nodes along the corridor. By coordinating the recommendations of the FM 1092 Study with the development of this Comprehensive Plan update, and the creation of a supportive regulatory environment (i.e., policies and decision-makers) that is aligned with community goals, it will ensure that FM 1092 can remain a "Main Street" for the City of Stafford and provide a safer, more efficient connectivity and mobility for the region.[3]

U.S. 90A Corridor Rail Feasibility Study

The Houston-Galveston Area Council's U.S. 90A Corridor Rail Feasibility Study examines a delineated 25-mile long rail study corridor, extending from the vicinity of the METRORail Fannin South Park and Ride light rail station (LRT) at Fannin and West Bellfort in the City of Houston and parallels Holmes Road and U.S. Highway 90A, to the State Highway 36 Bypass, located west of the City of Rosenberg. The study corridor is located within Fort Bend County and Harris County. The Fort Bend County segment of the study corridor consists of the following municipalities: Rosenberg, Richmond, Sugar Land, Stafford, Missouri City and Meadows Place.[4]

The most popular destination for most rail riders will be the City of Houston, along the METRORail light rail line. METRORail will connect passengers to two major employment centers—Downtown Houston and the Texas Medical Center—as well as several college campuses, including the University of Houston, Houston Community College and Rice University. Also accessible via light rail will be cultural, sports and entertainment complexes like Reliant Park, the Houston Zoo, and the Museum District. Within or adjacent to the Fort Bend portion of the study corridor are a variety of major trip generators and attractions, including the Fountains, the Stafford Centre, Houston Community College (HCC), and potential Transit Oriented Development (TOD—to be discussed later in this chapter). This study is important because rail services could address some major issues within the region by making major changes at the local level, including:

- Addressing congestion
- Increasing travel options
- Providing time saving and reliability
- Increasing access for all (commuters, seniors, people with disabilities)
- Support to local businesses by bringing potential customers
- Increasing residential and commercial property values
- Reduction of harmful automobile emissions that contribute to smog

3 *FM 1092 Access Management Study. Houston-Galveston Area Council.(December 2013).*
4 *U.S. 90A Corridor Rail Feasibility Study. Houston-Galveston Area Council (April 2004).*

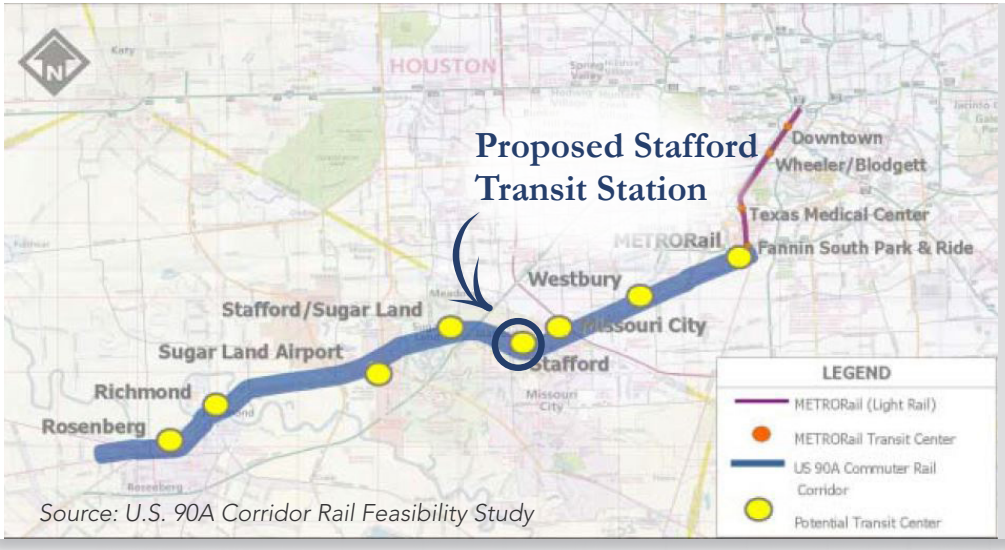
- Provision of fewer disturbances to the local environment
- Allowing for community integration and planned growth
- Improving safety at all rail crossings.
- Providing safe travel
- Improving quality of life for travelers (such as relaxing travel, amenities, fewer weather delays, work/rest during travel and convenience).

The study proposes a transit center at Stafford Road and U.S. Highway 90A within the city limits of Stafford. This approximate site is near the Stafford Centre and Houston Community College (HCC) campus. The proposed parking and platform would be on the north side of the right-of-way,with vehicular access to the parking area accessible through the Stafford Centre Development. This site was vacant at the time of the study could accommodate a large parking area for the projected volume of ridership.

The rail study is critical to the development of the Comprehensive Plan because the development of a commuter rail transit station within the City could bring about substantial economic growth and population increase. As more people have access to Stafford, it will likely draw more businesses to the City (to provide easy access for employees and potential consumers) and more residents looking for convenient and affordable housing with access to employment centers around the greater Houston metroplex. Although the actual transit station site could change in the future, the Comprehensive Plan recommends the current Stafford Centre/ HCC site for potential TOD development,

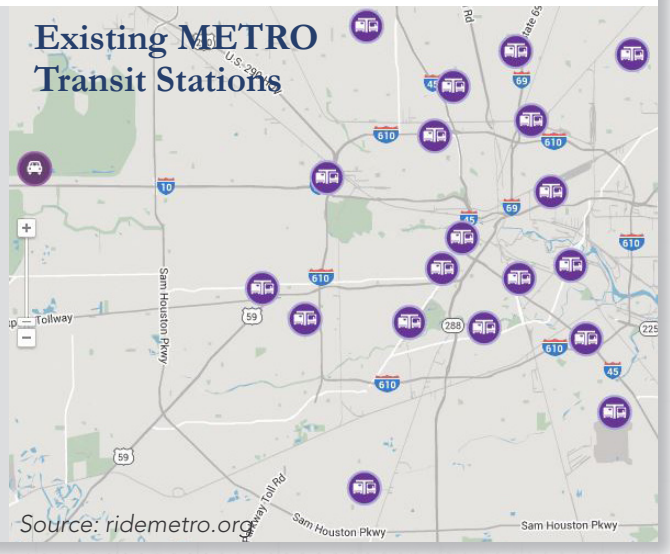
Source: gometrorail.org

Source: lightrailnow.org



Source: U.S. 90A Corridor Rail Feasibility Study

Stafford is listed as one of the top recommended sites for a commuter rail transit station, as identified by the U.S. 90A Corridor Rail Feasibility Study.



Source: ridemetro.org

and must take into account the potential accessibility implications this may have for the City as it continues into the next 20 years.

Master Thoroughfare Plan

The City of Stafford's Master Thoroughfare Plan was last updated in 2007. This Plan includes an update to the Master Thoroughfare Plan map, including updated information from the FM 1092 Access Management Study, planned development and potential connections to major activity nodes throughout the City.

2015 Comprehensive Plan

A city's Comprehensive Plan can be defined as a long-range planning tool intended to be used by municipal staff, decision-makers and citizens to direct the growth and physical development of a community for anywhere from 10 years to 20 years or more.

This Comprehensive Plan, once adopted, becomes the official policy of the City—meaning it will help guide zoning and development decisions, and it will also serve as a basis for future capital expenditures. This Plan should not be viewed as a rigid policy, but as a guide that is intended to be flexible and to provide opportunities for more thorough analyses that usually guide zoning and development decisions. Comprehensive planning should not be viewed as a single event, but as a continuous and ever-changing process; therefore, the Plan itself is not intended to be a static document, but a living, adaptable guide to help citizens and officials shape the City's future.

As the community livability and development expectations for Stafford evolved, it became necessary to update the City's previous Comprehensive Plan. The City of Stafford has embarked on an important journey—the creation of its 2015 Comprehensive Plan. This Plan is not a mandate, but rather a flexible guide for City Staff and elected officials as to what the future of the City should be. This Comprehensive Plan contains ideas, goals, strategies and actions that ultimately stem from the identified vision created by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) and citizens.

This Plan will serve as an update to the City's previous 1971 Comprehensive Development Plan by revising the community vision and future land-use plan, where necessary, by updating the City's goals and objectives and by setting new strategies for the community to raise the bar on new development. These updates will help Stafford continue to be a desirable and sought after community by both residents and businesses alike. This Plan will appeal to business and real estate investors by showing that investment in our City is part of a greater plan, ensuring the long-term sustainability and viability of business and real estate investment.

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

A deliberate plan development process involving background research, visioning, recommendations and implementation was utilized. This process is reflected in this document's nine distinctive components:

Community Snapshot

To understand where Stafford is going, it was first necessary to understand where the City has come from. This section serves as the reconnaissance stage for the planning process. Historical population trends, demographics, existing conditions, physical constraints and past planning efforts are all examined to begin to set the baseline from which future planning decisions should be made.

Vision, Goals and Strategies

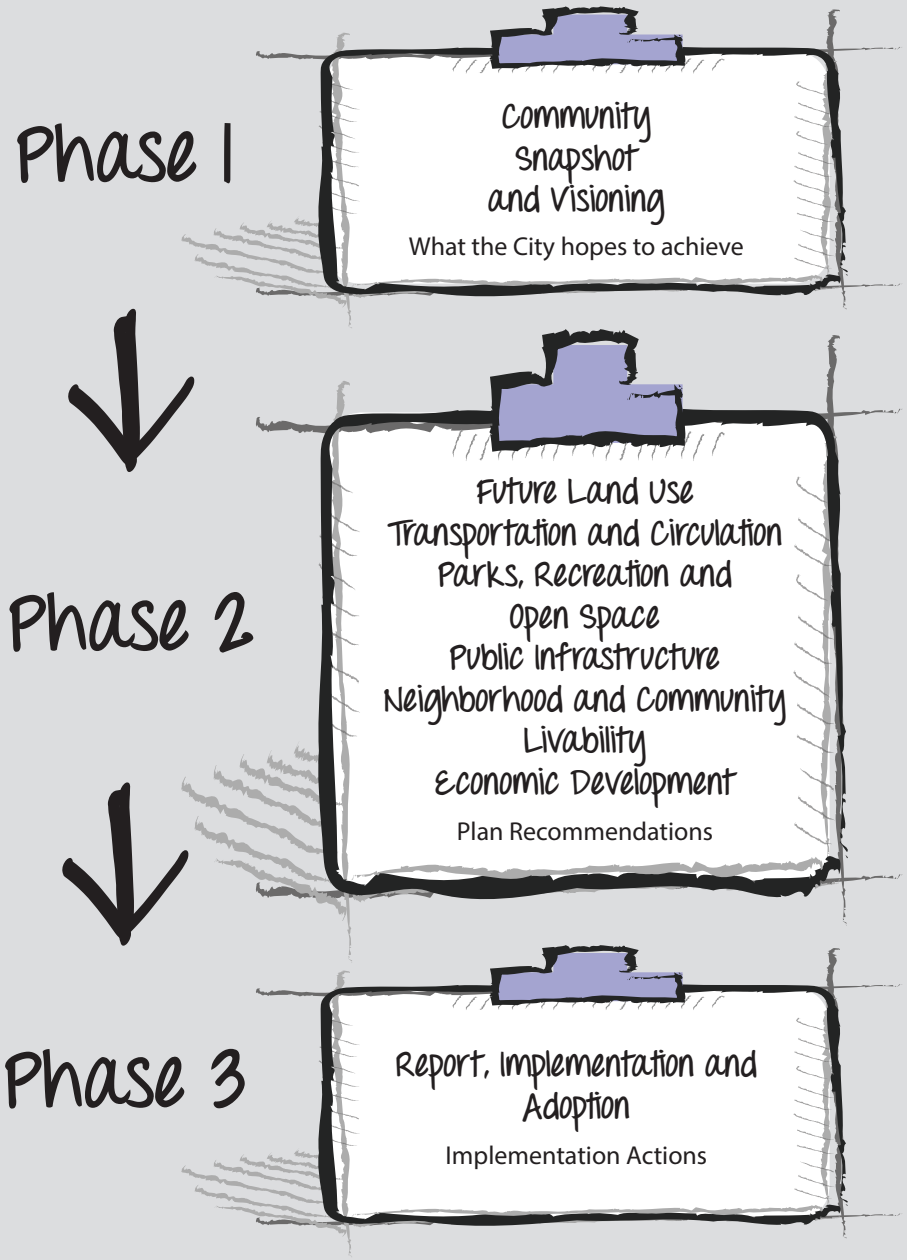
The community's vision is reflective of the many tangible and intangible characteristics and values, which Stafford desires to preserve and provide for current residents and future generations. This section identifies the primary issues provided by community stakeholders and

Planning Process

Stafford's Comprehensive Plan represents an accumulation of public participation, volunteer work, stakeholder discussions, consultant work and city initiatives. The comprehensive planning process occurred over a 18 month period, beginning in January 2014 and culminated in the Summer of 2015. A Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) guided the development of goals, strategies and the future land use plan for the City. The CPAC was made up council members, the planning and zoning commission, community stakeholders, and citizens. Bringing together a group of community leaders and decision-makers helps to facilitate meaningful discussion and ensures that a variety of perspectives are considered during the planning process.

The CPAC members gathered multiple times during the project to discuss a variety of topics and issues related to the development of the Comprehensive Plan. Initial stages of the process included issue identification and visioning exercises. The committee's foresight, in conjunction with public participation, formulated the plan's vision and goals. Following, the CPAC served as a sounding board for plan strategies and recommendations.

Community input was gathered through a variety of communication channels and techniques. Online surveys were developed to poll citizens on issues and a variety of other areas such as transportation and parks. In addition to the CPAC meetings, two public meetings were conducted during the course of the Comprehensive Plan to gather input, develop scenarios and to present recommendations. Engagement exercises used during the planning process included visioning exercises, land use scenario exercises, issue identification, visual character survey and workshops to develop planning goals and strategies.



lists the goals and strategies derived from stakeholder consensus. The goals and strategies will ultimately guide action items and are prioritized in the Implementation Plan Matrix.

Future Land Use

The cornerstone of the Comprehensive Plan is the Future Land Use Plan Map. This section describes the appropriate land-use types within Stafford and graphically depicts the ideal locations for such uses on the Future Land Use Plan Map.

Transportation and Circulation Plan

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a transportation framework that will serve as a guide for mobility decisions within Stafford. Land-use decisions ultimately impact the City's transportation network and thus this Master Thoroughfare Plan provided in this section presents roadway recommendations that coincide with future land use decisions.

Public Infrastructure Assessment

Public investment into community services and the level of community services provided are critical to manage growth and safety. This chapter reviews existing conditions for public infrastructure (like water and wastewater systems) and recommends strategies to expand Stafford's facilities appropriately to adequately provide for future city growth and redevelopment.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space

The space devoted to satisfying the active and passive recreational needs of citizens is a vital component of any community. The Parks chapter is a system-wide plan providing guidance for parks and open space improvements. This Plan examines and analyzes existing recreational opportunities and recommends future park system expansion that is consistent with present and future community needs.

Neighborhood and Community Livability

Livability refers to the many tangible and intangible characteristics that contribute to the City's quality of life. This section provides recommendations pertaining to quality of life issues within Stafford. The cornerstone of a livable community lies with its neighborhoods, and therefore recommendations were created using windshield survey observations and community input. Community livability refers to the many things that conjure community pride and help make the City attractive to visitors. This includes aesthetics, social well-being, health and wellness.

Economic Development Summary

The City of Stafford has a very proactive and accomplished Economic Development Corporation, which is an asset to the community. They recently completed a

market analysis (2014), which is summarized in this chapter. This chapter examines the existing information from the market analysis, as well as potential incentives and programs.

Implementation Plan Matrix

The Implementation Plan Matrix organizes and prioritizes the recommendations contained within the various plan elements into an understandable action matrix.

Conclusion

The remainder of this document will expound upon the data collected, and the goals and strategies developed through the planning process. The recommendations found in each chapter will help to ultimately achieve the vision established by the community and CPAC.

Chapter 1

Community Snapshot

Community Understanding

The focus of planning is primarily with the future, specifically the next 10 to 20 years. Engaging in a comprehensive planning program will allow the City of Stafford to have a greater measure of control over its future and the opportunities and challenges that accompany it. Planning will enable the City to pro-actively manage future growth and development / redevelopment on a holistic basis, taking into consideration community-wide issues and objectives. Before the Visions, Goals and Objectives can be formulated, it is necessary to establish a foundation of information from which to make the most appropriate and effective recommendations. This research provides data and analysis on the City's existing conditions and recent trends, and the overall context in which this planning effort is occurring.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

People are the heart and lifeblood of any community, thus the following discussion is intended to provide insight into the historic and existing characteristics of the residents of Stafford. This demographic analysis and insight will help in planning for the future growth of the City and needs of the future citizens.

POPULATION CHANGES AND GROWTH TRENDS

Establishing population change and growth trends, in both the City and region, is key in understanding and predicting the type of growth the City may have in the future, both independently and in relation to its surrounding areas.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census and shown in ***Table 1.1, City and County Population***, the population of Stafford is approximately 17,693 residents, an increase of 2,012 people or 12.8 percent. The City has experienced major growth since 1970, slowing down in the last decade as the City approaches residential build-out. Fort Bend County has experienced similar growth rates after 1980, following a massive influx of 150.3 percent growth in the county compared to the City's 63.6 percent increase between 1970 and 1980 (see ***Figure 1.1, City and County Growth Rate***). According to the Houston-Galveston Area Council 2025 Regional Growth Forecast, in 2025 the populations of Fort Bend County and Harris County will be 749,000 and 5, 385,000 respectively.

Another method of evaluating the City's growth is to compare it to the larger surrounding area. The percentage of the Counties (Harris and Fort Bend) that the City occupies allows for a comparison of Stafford's growth and that of adjacent communities. According to HGAC's 2035

Table 1.1, *City and County Population*

Year	Stafford		Fort Bend County		Harris County	
	Population	Percent Change	Population	Percent Change	Population	Percent Change
1970	2,906	n/a	52,314	n/a	1,741,912	n/a
1980	4,755	63.6%	130,962	150.3%	2,409,547	38.3%
1990	8,397	76.6%	225,421	72.1%	2,818,199	17.0%
2000	15,681	86.7%	354,452	57.2%	3,400,578	20.7%
2010	17,693	12.8%	585,375	65.1%	4,092,459	20.3%
2025	20,541	16.1%	749,000	28.0%	5,385,000	31.6%

Source: Texas State Historical Assocation; U.S. Census; Houston-Galveston Area Council

Figure 1.1, *City and County Growth Rate*

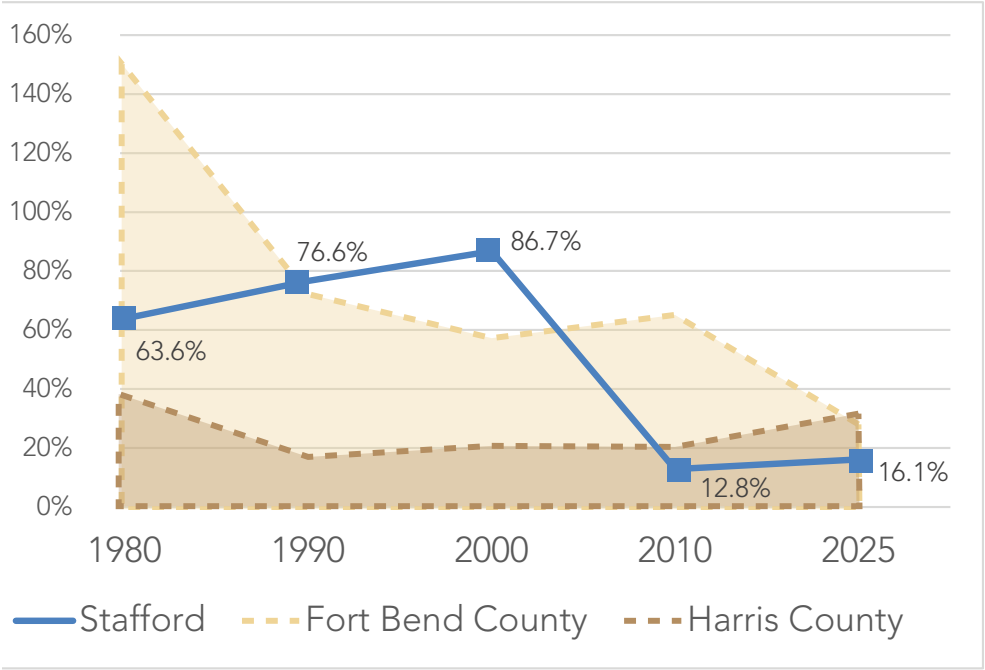
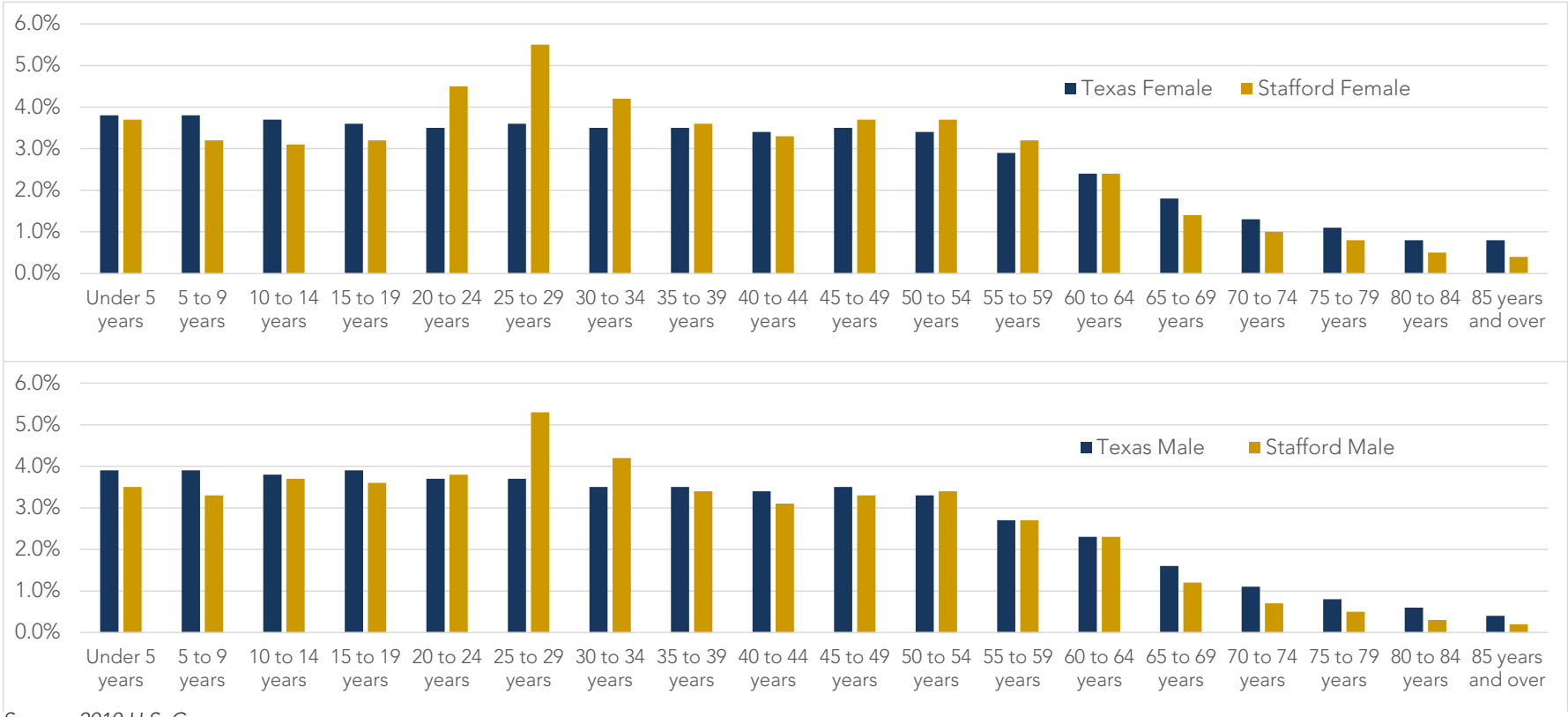


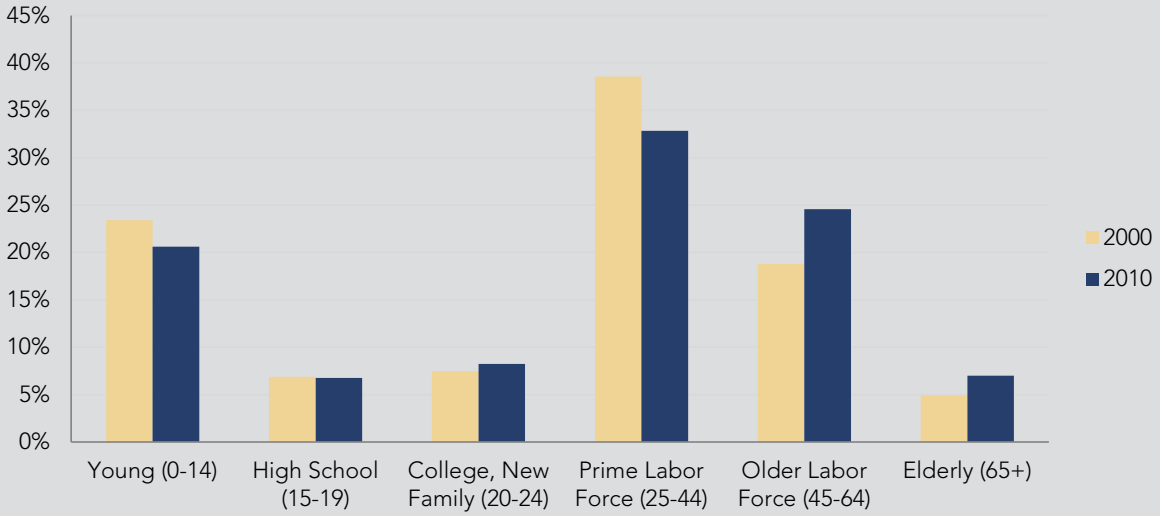
Figure 1.2, *Age and Gender Breakout*



Source: 2010 U.S. Census

Regional Growth Forecast, Harris County is predicted to capture nearly 60 percent of the total population growth in the region; however its share in total regional population in 2035 is projected to decrease, which indicates a continued general trend towards population dispersion. Although the growth experienced by the region in the last decade has been among the fastest in the nation, it is significantly less that the growth rates experienced in past decades. In the coming decades, the region is expected to continue to grow vigorously, but at a slower rate than in the past.

Figure 1.3, *Age Distribution - 2000 & 2010*



system, and may indicate that families with young children have relocated into the City to take advantage of the outstanding schools within the Stafford Municipal School District. In ***Figure 1.3, Age Distribution - 2000 & 2010***, it shows that the two largest age groups of the City's population are Prime Labor Force (aged 25 to 44 years) and Young (aged 0 to 14 years) categories, which are 32.82 percent and 20.6 percent respectively. From this data it can be deduced that Stafford has a high concentration of families that will have special needs and services that should be considered.

Stafford also has an increased population of middle-aged adults (between 40 and

GENDER, AGE AND HOUSEHOLD TYPE

The analysis of Stafford's age composition can assist in planning for future possible needs, such as a senior citizens' center or a new elementary school. ***Figure 1.2, Age and Gender Breakout***, shows the age distribution by gender for Stafford compared to the State average. It is most important to note the general increased percentage of residents under the age of 35 and decreased percentage of those 65 years and older.

The increased percentage of population under the age of 35 is important particularly in relation to employment and the school

Table 1.2, *Household Type: Stafford, Texas City Limits*

Household Type	2000		2010		Percentage Difference
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
City of Stafford, Texas	4,033	68.8%	4,483	66.4%	-2.35%
Own Children Under 18 Years	2,259	38.5%	2,242	33.2%	-5.30%
Married Couple Family	3,099	52.8%	3,046	45.1%	-7.71%
Own Children Under 18 years	1,669	28.5%	1,435	21.3%	-7.20%
Female Householder, No Husband Present	717	12.2%	1,102	16.3%	4.10%
Own Children Under 18 Years	498	8.5%	656	9.7%	1.23%
Non-Family Households	1,832	31.2%	2,267	33.6%	2.35%
Householder Living Alone	1,492	25.4%	1,880	27.9%	2.41%
65 Years and Over	148	2.5%	318	4.7%	2.19%
Total Households	**5,865**		**6,750**		-
Average Household Size	2.67		2.62		-

National Trend Highlight: U.S. Children in Single-Mother Families

Across the United States the number of children in single-mother families has risen dramatically, drawing the attention of policymakers and the public. According to a 2010 data brief by the *Population Reference Bureau*, nearly one-fourth (roughly 24 percent) of the 75 million children under 18-years old live in a single-mother family. Of the 18.1 million children in single-mother families, 9.2 million are under the age of nine. The likelihood of having a single-mother varies across racial/ethnic groups; 38 percent of white children live in single-mother households, compared to 25 percent of Latino children and 31 percent of African American children. This data is important to consider because most single-mother families have limited financial resources available to cover education, childcare, and medical costs for children, as well as their own. According to the brief, this melting pot of single-mother families with different backgrounds—some divorced, separated, never married, or cohabiting—creates a unique challenge for policymakers who need to recognize the diverse paths to single motherhood and the various needs of children in different types of families.

The rapid increase of Latinos and Asians into the U.S. is changing the make-up of the country's population and will affect future trends. In addition to parents being the primary source of social and economic support for their children, neighborhood characteristics, schools and peer networks play a major role in children's development. Thus, it is critical that Stafford continue to consider and ensure that single mothers have access to education, job training, quality child care, and resources to ensure successful and happy families.

Source: Mather, Mark, P.h.D. Data Brief: U.S. Children in Single-Mother Famliies. Population Reference Bureau, www.prb.org

"Ensuring that single mothers have access to education, job training, quality child care, and equal wages are some of the ways to ensure children's successful transitions to adulthood."

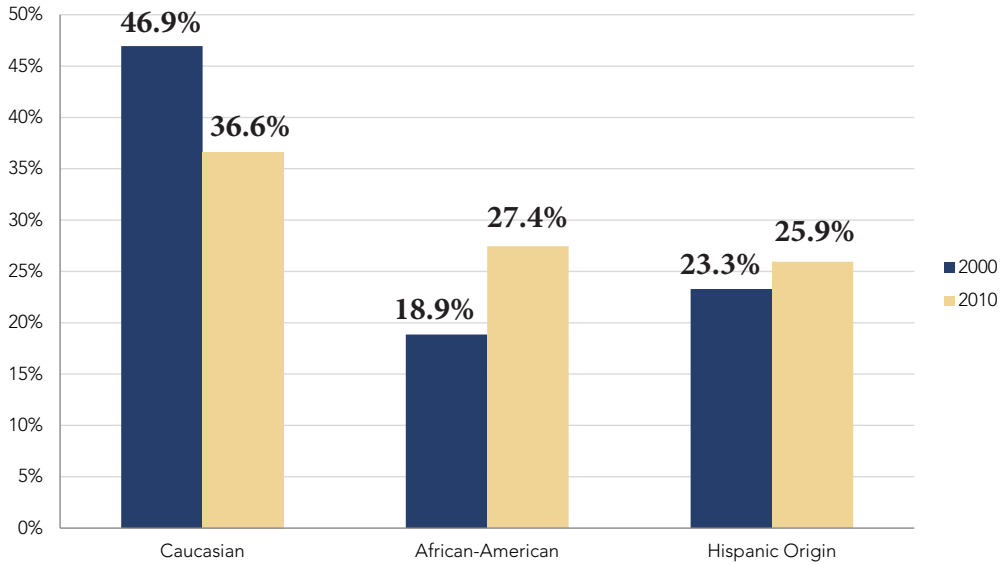
Source: Population Reference bureau, www.prb.org

60 years of age), which is likely influenced by the age and establishment of the residential neighborhoods in the area; 57.1 percent of the population moved into homes between 2000 and 2009 (see ***Housing Data*** section on Page 1.8).

Table 1.2, Household Type includes information regarding the composition of households in Stafford in 2000 and 2010. As shown, the majority of households in the City are comprised of married couple families, which accounts for approximately 45.1 percent. Of these families, 21.3 percent have children under 18 years of age. A major trend worth noting is the 4.1 percent increase in single-mother households since 2000 (from 12.2 percent to 16.3 percent). This trend is seen nationally, but is significantly higher in Stafford than the U.S. (9.6 percent), Texas (10.8 percent), Fort Bend (10.4 percent), and Harris County (11.7 percent). Most noteworthy is that 9.7 percent of these households have children under the age of 18. Knowing this information is critical in helping the City understand the needs of single-mothers and providing the services, programs, and amenities to help them successfully raise their families in a safe and supportive environment. See sidebar ***U.S. Children in Single-Mother Families***, on the following page, for more information.

The average household size of Stafford, 2.62 persons, has remained relatively the same (varying only .05 since 2000). This indicates that there is no change in demand for larger housing sizes, though household composition may have

Figure 1.4, *Race and Ethnicity - 2000 & 2010*



> **Stafford is the *most* racially diverse City in Fort Bend County.**

Source: City of Stafford

some indications in that regard. Single-parent households may desire less space to maintain as they raise their families, or also a variety of housing types in which they can move to when their children have left the nest.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Data analyzed regarding race and ethnicity is important to local governments to ensure that all of its citizens are being represented in decision-making processes.

The Caucasian population is the largest ethnic demographic in the City comprising 36.6 percent, while African Americans are the second largest with 27.4 percent, followed by those of Hispanic origin as the third largest ethnicity at 25.9 percent of the population (see ***Figure 1.4, Race and Ethnicity - 2000 & 2010***). Those of Asian decent make up 22.8 percent of the population and 9.3 percent identify themselves as "some other race." These numbers strongly imply that Stafford is one of the most, if not the most, racially diverse cities in Fort Bend County.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The educational attainment of a community can be an indicator of the types of jobs in the region and can provide general information on the skills and abilities of the local workforce. Knowledge of its workforce can also help a city to target and recruit certain types of businesses to the community.

Table 1.3, Educational Attainment provides detailed information regarding the population of Stafford compared to the population of Texas.

Table 1.3, *Educational Attainment*

Educational Attainment	Stafford		Texas	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population 25 years and over	11,902		15,765,048	
No High School	779	6.5%	1,521,564	9.7%
Some High School	901	7.6%	1,509,625	9.6%
High School Graduate	2,090	17.6%	3,986,617	25.3%
Some College	3,067	25.8%	3,592,978	22.8%
Associate's	734	6.2%	1,014,456	6.4%
Bachelor's	2,995	25.2%	2,761,112	17.5%
Graduate	1,336	11.2%	1,378,696	8.7%
Percent High School Graduate or Higher	85.9%		80.8%	
Percent Bachelor's Degree or Higher	36.4%		26.3%	

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 1.5, *Graphic Display of Educational Attainment*

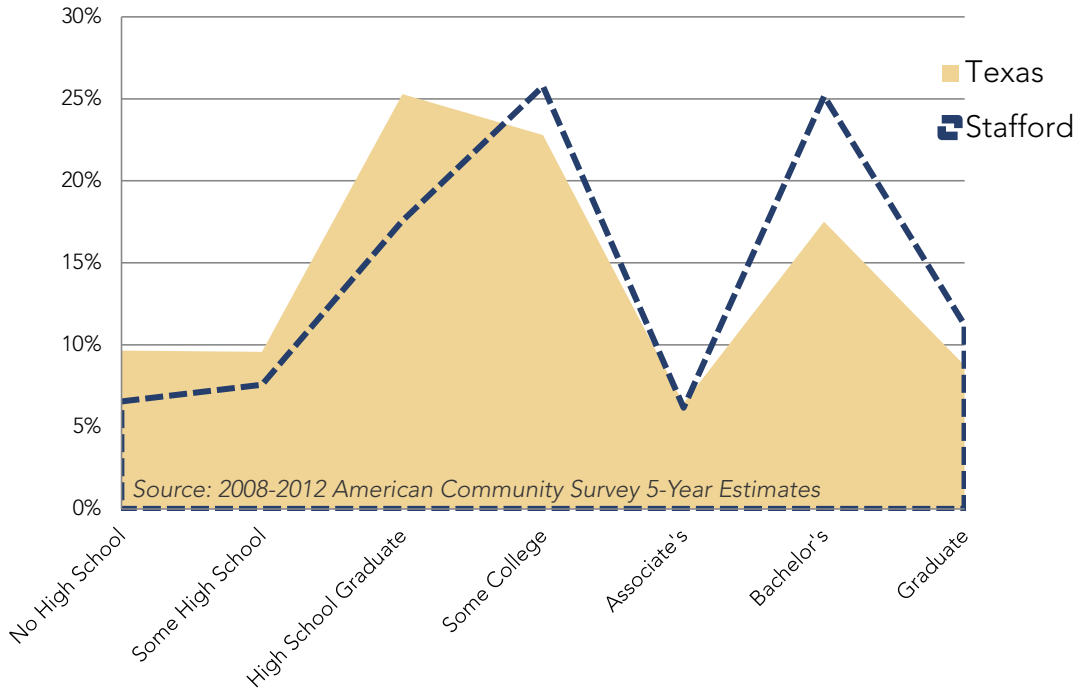


Figure 1.5, Graphic Display of Education Attainment shows more clearly the overall tendency toward higher levels of education when compared to the State.

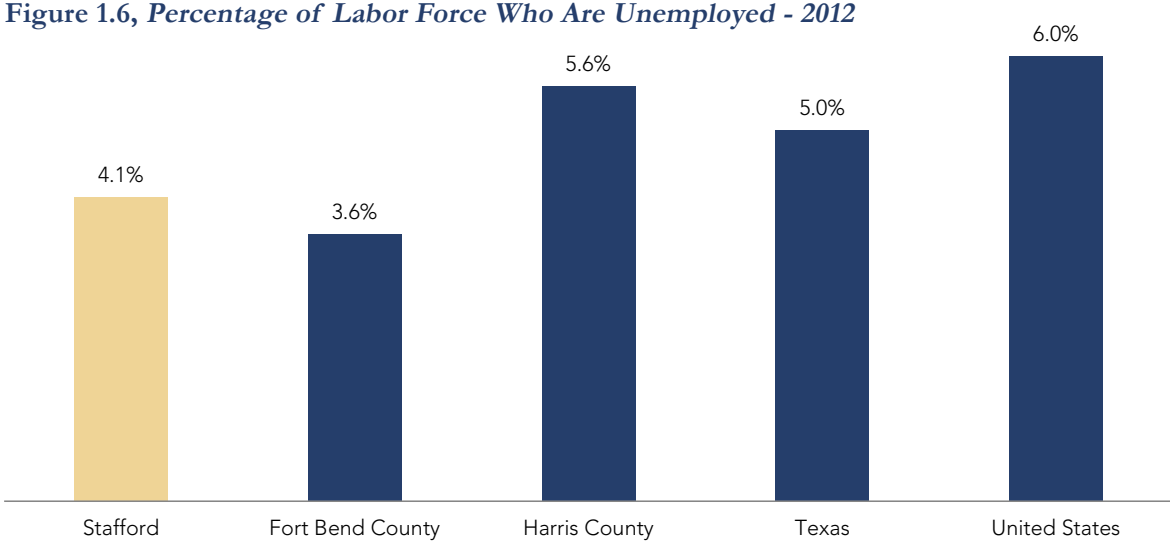
As shown, 36.4 percent of Stafford's population has received a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 26.3 percent of the State's total population. Stafford boasts higher educational attainment trends in its populations with some college or more than compared to the State, a trend that is a major asset and should translate into greater economic development opportunities from new businesses and industries that desire a college-educated workforce within the City.

Table 1.4, *Employment by Occupation - 2000 & 2012*

Occupation	2000				2012			
	Stafford		Texas		Stafford		Texas	
Civilian employed ages 16 and over	8,365		9,234,372		9,556		11,440,956	
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	3,667	43.8%	3,078,757	33.3%	4,345	45.5%	3,919,380	34.3%
Service occupations	845	10.1%	1,351,270	14.6%	1,123	11.8%	2,003,418	17.5%
Sales and office occupations	2,492	29.8%	2,515,596	27.2%	2,582	27.0%	2,880,468	25.2%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	561	6.7%	1,008,353	10.9%	701	7.3%	1,282,484	11.2%
Production, transportation, and material moving	800	9.6%	1,218,910	13.2%	805	8.4%	1,355,206	11.8%

Source: 2000 Census; 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 1.6, *Percentage of Labor Force Who Are Unemployed - 2012*

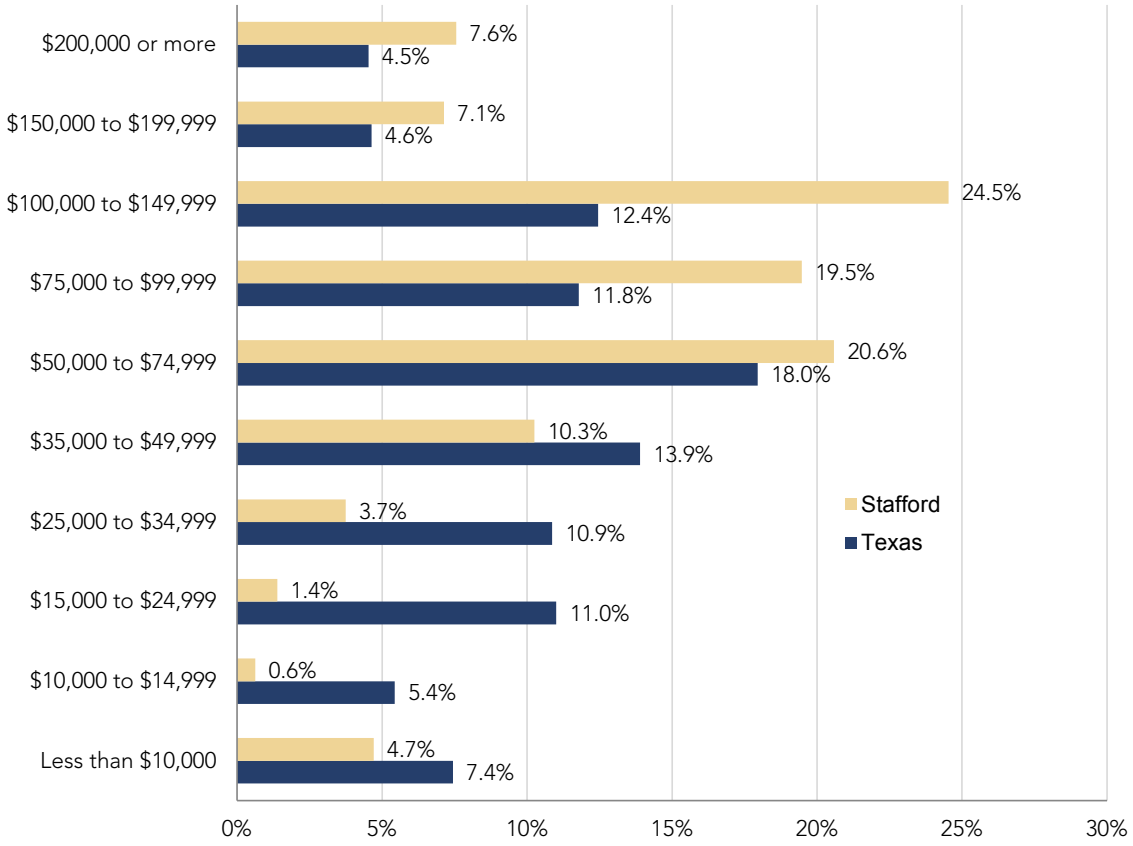


Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

Employment opportunities can have major impacts on the growth rates of cities. Jobs are important because they make it possible for citizens to settle into a community, establish a home and begin a life. If citizens do not find a job in an area, then many times they are forced to move elsewhere--removing their property and sales tax revenue from the local economy as well. Cities are generally dependent on businesses to provide employment opportunities that in-turn pay the citizens'

Figure 1.7, *Household Income Levels*



Source: 2000 Census; 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

salaries and provide them with the ability to buy and sell goods, pay taxes, and sustain a high quality of life.

The most recent unemployment data from the Census Bureau is from the 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and is illustrated in ***Figure 1.6, Percentage of Labor Force Who Are Unemployed - 2012***. Stafford's unemployed population percentage is greater than Fort Bend County (4.1 percent compared to 3.6 percent, respectively), but lower than Harris County, the State of Texas, and the United States. This trend can be easily remediated as new businesses and economic growth continue to remain a priority of the City's.

Table 1.4, Employment by Occupation-2000 & 2012 compares the percent of each occupational category for the City of Stafford and State of Texas. The most noticeable difference is the *management, business, science, and arts occupations category*, which is a more professional/office skilled category, with 43.8 percent in Stafford and only 33.3 percent in Texas. The industry with the lowest percentage (6.7 percent) is *natural resources, construction, and maintenance*, where the jobs are more manual/industrial-oriented. These trends are consistent with the previous analysis of Stafford's educational attainment (see ***Table 1.3*** on Page 1.7)—more residents with more than a high school education and more skilled, professional-type jobs.

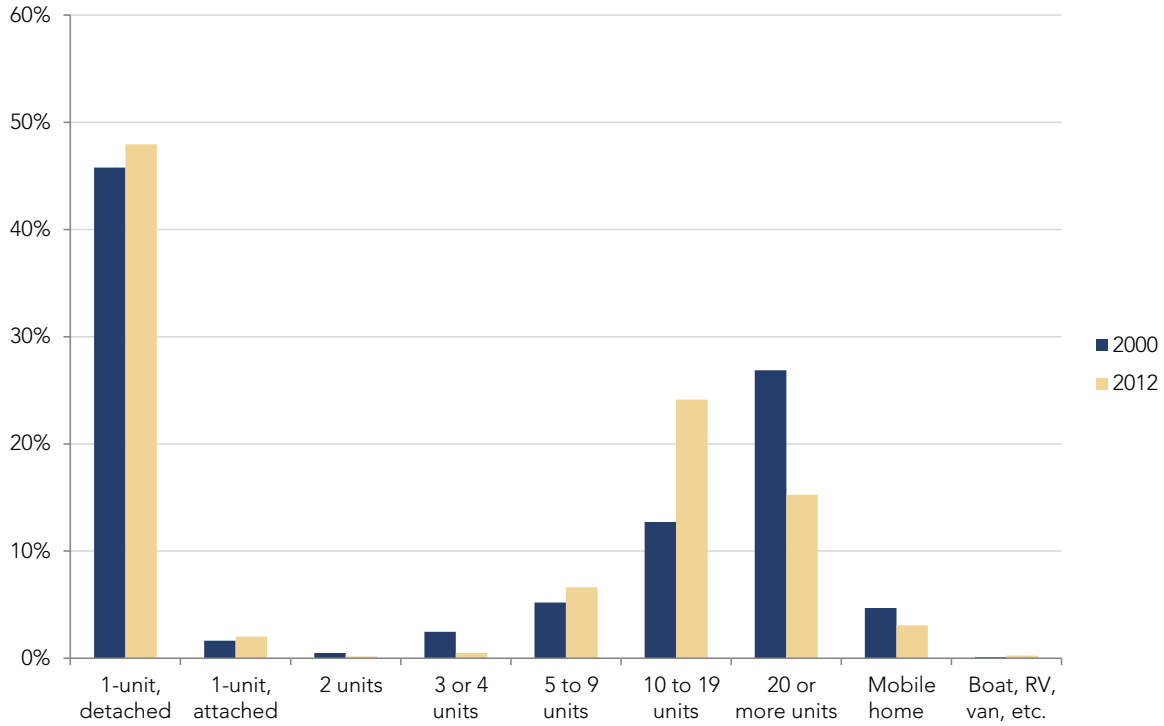
Household income levels are also an important factor in planning Stafford's future. For example, income levels reveal to potential retailers whether or not the City is a prime location to situate their business. The amount of disposable income is a major factor that influences the type and amount of retail development that a city can support. In addition, income is a key deciding factor in homeownership; a high level of homeownership is usually seen as a positive characteristic in communities. Thus, income levels play a role in the size, type, and quality of residential development that a community ultimately attracts.

As shown in ***Figure 1.7, Household Income Levels***, Stafford's income levels have a tendency toward higher incomes when compared to the State. The most common income levels range from $50,000 to $149,999; however, Stafford's median income is roughly $60,808, which is the lowest of the comparison communities (see ***Table 1.5, Median Household Income in Comparison to Surrounding Cities***).

HOUSING DATA

The quality of housing and affordability of housing options are key planning considerations that can influence the desirability of Stafford as a place to live, as well as the availability of housing and conditions of existing neighborhoods. Housing plays an important part in attracting potential commercial development in parts of the City and adjacent surrounding areas. The community has an interest in attracting new businesses, as well as ensuring adequate housing options for its residents. The following section discusses the implications of Stafford's housing statistics for future planning initiatives and considerations.

Figure 1.8, *Housing Type - 2000 & 2012*



Source: 2000 Census; 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 1.5, *Median Household Income in Comparison Communities*

Stafford	$60,808
Meadows Place	$80,050
Missouri City	$83,307
Sugar Land	$107,149

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 1.6, Year Housing Value of Owner-Occupied Units - 2000 & 2012

House Values	2000				2012			
	Stafford		Texas		Stafford		Texas	
Owner-Occupied Units	2,399		3,849,585		2,757		5,609,007	
Less than $50,000	111	4.6%	875,444	22.7%	194	7.0%	696,888	12.4%
$50,000 to $99,999	1,083	45.1%	1,561,509	40.6%	369	13.4%	1,361,239	24.3%
$100,000 to $149,999	661	27.6%	700,830	18.2%	783	28.4%	1,238,795	22.1%
$150,000 to $199,999	439	18.3%	335,179	8.7%	771	28.0%	895,978	16.0%
$200,000 to $299,999	105	4.4%	223,968	5.8%	626	22.7%	758,661	13.5%
$300,000 to $499,999	-	-	104,821	2.7%	7	0.3%	436,502	7.8%
$500,000 to $999,999	-	-	37,697	1.0%	0	0.0%	167,999	3.0%
$1,000,000 or more	-	-	10,137	0.3%	7	0.3%	52,945	0.9%
Median house value	$100,300		$82,500		$151,900		$128,000	

Source: 2000 Census; 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Single-family units make up nearly

50%

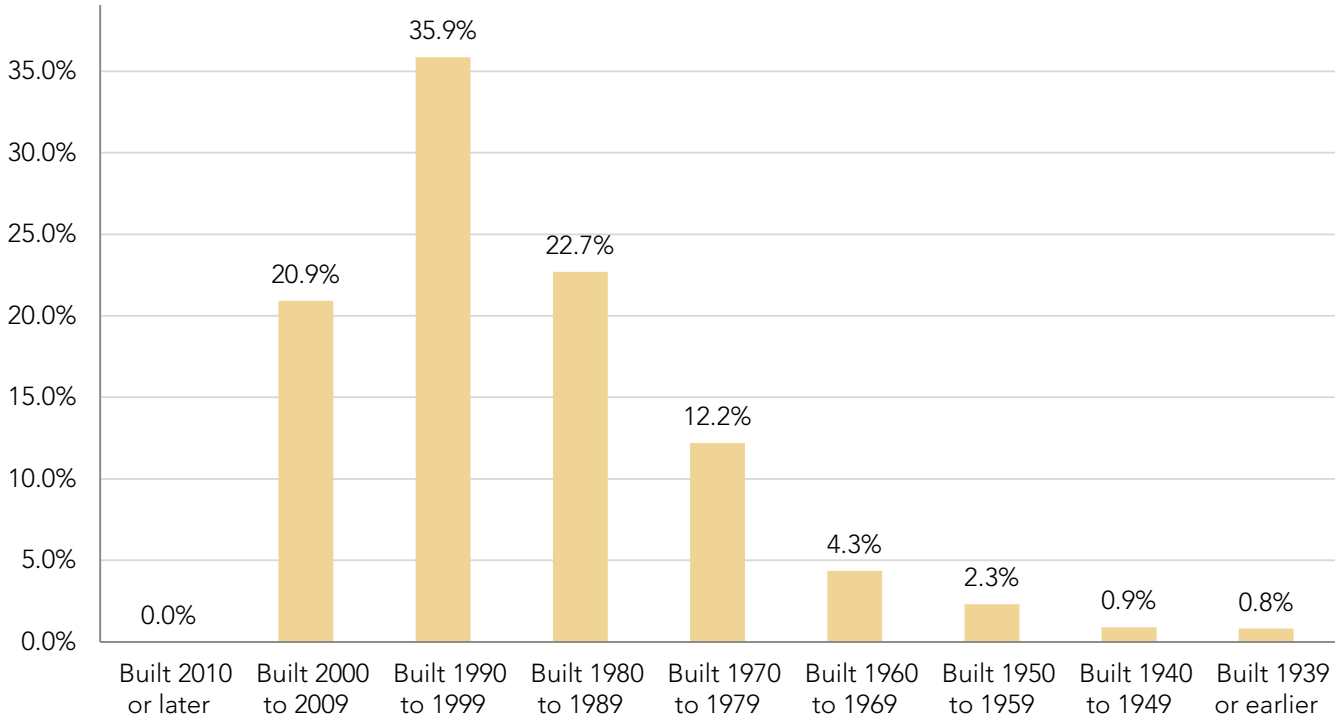
of the City's housing stock.

Figure 1.8, Housing Type - 2000 & 2012 compares the types of residential structures. As shown, Stafford has more multi-unit dwellings than it did in 2000 (slightly more units in the 5-to-9 and 10-to-19 range), though the majority of housing stock is still single-family, one-unit detached dwellings (47.9 percent). Stafford is lacking in the middle variety of housing types—primarily the lower density, multi-unit structures that range only from two to four units. These lower-density units are great housing options for younger, childless families, college students, senior citizens, and single parents and may be a consideration as mixed-use development is explored in some of the undeveloped properties around the City.

The value of local residential property is an important factor for cities to consider. Residential property valuation within Stafford influences City services and City staffing levels.

Table 1.6, Year Housing Value of Owner-Occupied Units - 2000 & 2012 shows the distribution of home values for Stafford and the State of Texas in 2000 and 2012. Roughly 56.4 percent of Stafford's housing stock is valued between $100,000 and $199,000, with another 22.7 percent valued between $200,000 and $299,000. Compared to the State, Stafford's housing stock is much more expensive—nearly $23,900 more expensive than the national median home value. These values can have a very positive impact on property tax revenue gains, however Stafford is quite unique in that it does not collect property taxes and is therefore dependent upon other tax revenues from elsewhere in the City. Lastly, only 20.4 percent of Stafford's homes are less than $99,000, which may have implications for an affordability issue in allowing housing types that accommodate lower-income families, retired citizens, or single-income families to purchase a home in the City.

Figure 1.9, *Year House Constructed*



Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Structural age often influences the value, physical condition, and desirability of a home. The year of construction for the housing stock in Stafford compared to the State of Texas is illustrated in ***Figure 1.9, Year House Constructed*** (on the following page). As shown, 56.8 percent of Stafford's housing stock was constructed between 1990 and 2009, indicating a relatively newer majority of housing units. However, 34.9 percent of the City's housing stock was constructed from 1970 to 1989, which indicates a good portion of the stock that is relatively older than the rest and may need to be renovated or rebuilt. The homes that are part of the older housing stock may become dilapidated and run-down if not kept up. These homes can be easily monitored and maintained with higher enforcement of the City's codes/regulations and more attention from neighborhood organizations/homeowner's associations.

Existing Land Use

Providing for the orderly and efficient use of land is a major planning consideration in Stafford. The pattern of land use that exists today has evolved to accommodate the City's past and present needs. The activities of local residents create a need for various land uses, as well as for the supplemental systems that support the land uses (e.g., thoroughfare systems). The relationships of existing and future land-uses will shape the character and quality of life of the community for many years to come. To accurately assess the City's future land-use needs, an analysis of past land use trends and present land-use patterns was the first step in this process.

Additionally, Stafford's man-made and physical environment have great influence on future land-use patterns and growth rates. It is important to document and analyze the physical factors that will ultimately contribute to the City's urban form and content. Each element of this Plan must be fashioned with these physical factors in mind.

CITY LIMITS AND ETJ

Stafford has a total of 4,108 acres within its current city limits. Single family residential constitutes the largest land use at 16.6 percent (see ***Table 1.7, Existing Land Acreages within the City of Stafford***, next page). Stafford's ETJ is 1,354 acres, almost one quarter its city limits. The ETJ serves two purposes. First, cities can annex land only within their ETJ, and there is statutory prohibition against another municipalities annexing into the ETJ of another city. Secondly, cities can extend and enforce their subdivision regulations into their ETJ. Cities cannot, however, enforce zoning regulations in the ETJ. Annexation in Stafford is a complicated matter that affects the Stafford Municipal School District (SMSD) and adjacent Independent School Districts as well. The SMSD boundaries parallel the city's incorporated boundaries. Annexing land would redistrict the parcels to SMSD and can only be done with approval from all districts. Stafford does not currently plan to annex any properties in the ETJ, as it is the City's desire to keep the school district boundaries and city limits the same.

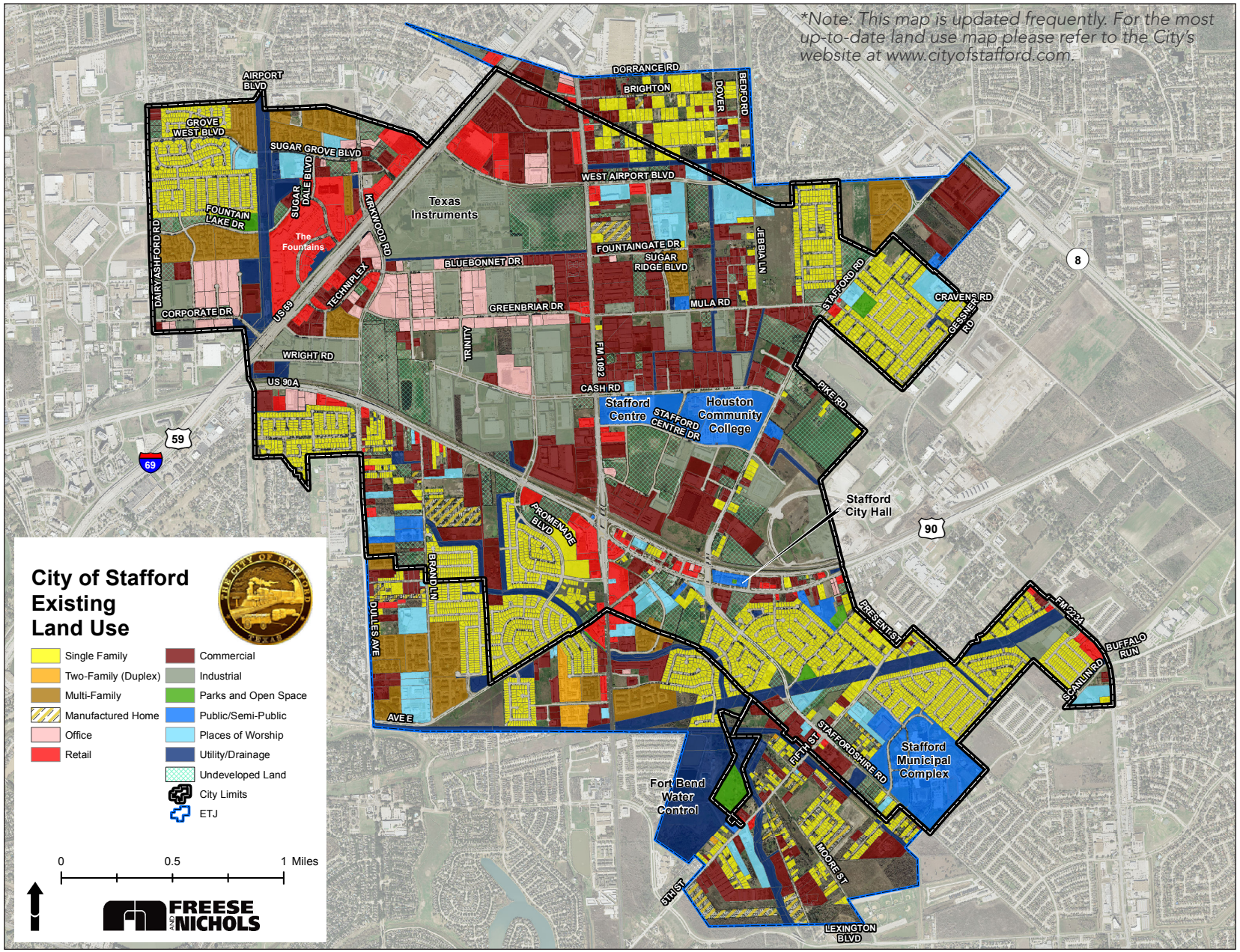
Table 1.7, Existing Land Acreages within the City of Stafford

Land Use	City Limits		ETJ		Planning Area	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Single Family	682	16.6%	222	16.4%	904	16.6%
Two-Family (Duplex)	0	0.0%	19	1.4%	19	0.3%
Multi-Family	129	3.1%	144	10.6%	273	5.0%
Manufactured home	35	0.9%	54	4.0%	89	1.6%
Parks and Open Space	194	4.7%	105	7.8%	299	5.5%
Public/Semi-Public	365	8.9%	53	3.9%	418	7.7%
Private Recreation	17	0.4%	0	0.0%	17	0.3%
Retail	211	5.1%	21	1.6%	232	4.2%
Office	170	4.1%	3	0.0%	173	3.2%
Commercial	668	16.3%	209	15.4%	877	16.1%
Light Industrial/Manufacturing	494	12.0%	4	0.3%	498	9.1%
Utility	47	1.1%	84	6.2%	131	2.4%
Right-of-Way	683	16.6%	142	10.5%	825	15.1%
Railroad Right-of-Way	33	0.8%	0	0.0%	33	0.6%
Vacant Building	3	0.1%	0	0.0%	3	0.1%
Vacant	377	9.2%	294	21.7%	671	12.3%
Total Acres	4,108		1,354		5,462	

VACANT ACREAGE

Approximately nine percent of Stafford's 4,108 acre city limits area considered vacant or undeveloped land. This amounts to 377 acres that have the potential to be

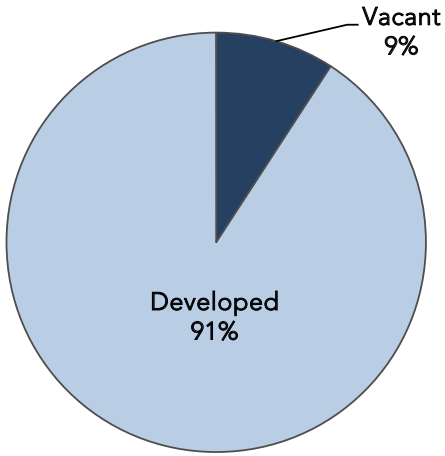
Figure 1.10, *Existing Land Use Analysis Map*



developed in the future or preserved for community open space (see ***Figure 1.11, Vacant versus Developed Land***). There is almost 294 acres of vacant land in the City's ETJ, but as discussed, the City will not likely annex any development in those areas. Total vacant acreage within the City's total planning area is 671 acres.

The importance of analyzing the amount of vacant land within the City is that it will allow Stafford to grow in population and develop in the future. This land also represents areas where decisions must be made regarding service provisions and roadway expansion and maintenance. The remaining land can be developed in many ways, thus it is important to consider the findings of this Plan so that decisions will be made accordance with the City's established vision.

Figure 1.11, *Vacant versus Developed Land*



EXISTING LAND USE WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS

Growth and development occurring in Stafford in the future will require the conversion of vacant and the redevelopment of existing parcels to more intensified or compact urban uses. The conversion process and how it occurs will be very important to the City in that it is one of the factors that will determine the community's future form, and in turn, its attractiveness. The relationships of existing and future land uses will not only have an impact upon Stafford economically, but will also shape the character and livability of the community in the years to come. Likewise, these relationships will be reflected in the provision of services and facilities throughout the community. An orderly and compact land use arrangement can be served more easily and efficiently than a random and scattered association of unrelated uses.

To analyze the land use trends within Stafford, aerial photography supported by field verification was used to identify existing land uses in the preparation of this chapter. This survey occurred in late 2014 and into 2015, and each parcel of land was color-coded according to various land use types. The information obtained form the survey is used herein to create **Figure 1.10, *Existing Land Use Analysis Map***, and discuss Stafford' current land use pattern.

The following section provides an overview of the different types of land uses included within the analysis.

The existing land use of Stafford reflects past development decisions and tells the story of the City's development history and trends. The planning process helps to ensure that coordinated land use decisions enhance the overall quality of life in Stafford by mitigating the impacts of incompatible uses near neighborhoods. This process begins with examining the types and locations of existing land uses within Stafford and determining how and where new growth and development may be accommodated.

The existing land uses of the community represent suburban-density development patterns indicative of many cities within the Houston metroplex, adjacent to the City of Houston. Stafford's suburban-density residential nature is attractive to residents and retailers alike, who consider population and rooftops a part of their site selection criteria.

Single-family land uses account for the largest land use at 16.6 percent. All residential products make up about 21 percent of the city limits total land. Railroad, street and utility rights-of-way comprise approximately 18.5 percent of the total area. Parks and open space are only 4.7 percent of the total area, a generally low percentage and future efforts will likely

need to increase this percentage based on community feedback. Commercial land uses make up 16.3 percent of the land area, almost 668 acres, making it the third largest land use in the City of Stafford. It is worth noting that industrial land uses make up 494 acres or about 12 percent of the developed area, a generally large percentage that likely serves numerous manufacturers or production type employers.

Conclusion

Stafford is amidst a very exciting time in its history where what has once defined the City is becoming an opportunity for a new vision and exciting new opportunities for the entire community. The fiscally sound and conservative perspective held by leaders of the community has established what exists today; with the help of community members and visionaries.

The unique context, physical characteristics and demographics of Stafford lay the most essential foundation for determining the future needs of the community, as well as the collective vision. In a community with older housing stock and limited vacant land on which to develop, it becomes imperative that the City undertake long-term and short-term planning initiatives that ultimately achieve the goals identified by the community for the purposes of this Plan. Initiatives and recommendations are discussed in detail for each element of the Plan, within its respective chapter.

Chapter 2

Vision, Goals and Strategies

Purpose

The intent of the many principles, actions, and policies outlined within this chapter are to facilitate and encourage compact and efficient development or redevelopment patterns, thereby minimizing fiscal and other possible impacts caused by poor development guidance. What Stafford really needs is sound, research-based and strategic development guidance.

This comprehensive plan makes assumptions anticipating the pattern of future growth and offers the necessary policy guidance to effectively manage it. Through advance planning efforts, an opportunity exists to ensure that new development occurs in a more connected, orderly and fiscally responsible manner through the subdivision and zoning regulations and other regulatory policies and incentives; and at the appropriate times.

Managed growth involves promoting and ensuring a sequential development pattern that encourages the efficient use of resources. The most efficient pattern of growth for the community is infill and contiguous growth that occurs adjacent to existing developed areas and is closely coordinated with adequate service provision, as well as other City projects. Unplanned development that occurs in an unregulated and uncontrolled manner can be inefficient, undesirable and costly. Rather, Stafford must establish a plan for sequencing growth in targeted areas of the city.

Ultimately, growth management and infrastructure investment should be based on the community's identified goals and strategies pertaining to the kind of community which residents want to live. As highlighted throughout this report, Stafford's residents have expressed the following community development aspirations:

- The importance of being fiscally responsible shown by eliminating city property taxes in 1995
- Living within Stafford's means and maintaining no general obligation debt
- Encourage more entertainment choices and a variety of services and amenities for all residents
- Beautify City corridors and major gateways to enhance community identity and character for those passing through and those residing in Stafford
- Encourage neighborhood cleanup and renovation
- Enhance existing parks and greenspaces, as well as the connectivity between them
- Be proactive, not reactive in City policies and actions regarding economic development and attracting new businesses

Vision Creation Process

During the planning process, the community was brought together with city staff and elected officials to build consensus for the City's vision. The visioning led to a set of goals and strategies that will ultimately guide the policy and decision making surrounding new development and redevelopment.

Citizen and stakeholder input and participation was included during the vision creation process. The CPAC was formed to oversee the planning process and provide insight. The CPAC helped to identify critical issues, provided guidance for plan development and served as a checkpoint for recommendations. Many additional avenues for communication were used to reach other citizens including a project website, online surveys, public announcements and social media.

Community Input Methods

ONLINE SURVEY

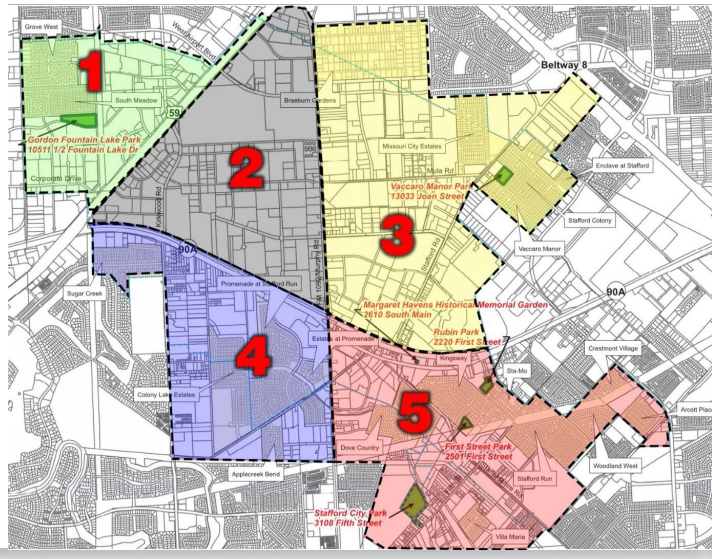
A 16-question online survey was posted to the project's website and a link was provided on the CIty's website. Paper surveys were also available for pickup at City Hall. Over the course of the plan, the survey was answered by 136 individuals—most of whom lived in Zone 5 (nearly 28.1 percent of respondents). Refer to the figure on the right, ***Figure 2.1, Geography of Survey Participants***. Approximately 7.2 percent of those who responded to the online survey live in Zone 1, 1.5 percent live in Zone 2, 19.5 percent live in Zone 3 and 25 percent live in Zone 4. Of the total responses, 18.7 percent of those individuals did not live in the City.

The vision and goals in a comprehensive plan are attained through a multitude of specific actions. Many of the action initiatives highlighted in this chapter cut across—and are supported by—multiple chapters within this plan.

Some of they key questions asked of the public were:

- How long have you lived in the City of Stafford?

Figure 2.1, *Geography of Survey Participants*



- If you could select one other city that has amenities that you would desire in Stafford, what city would that be and what are those amenities?
- How would you rate Stafford in terms of general appearance?
- What was the most important factor for you when you decided to move to Stafford?
- What makes Stafford attractive and distinguishable from surrounding communities?
- What would you consider the greatest single issue facing Stafford today?
- What would you consider to be Stafford's greatest asset?
- What would you consider to be Stafford's greatest opportunity?

PUBLIC MEETINGS

The City hosted a public meeting to gather first-hand knowledge and historical context from the local citizens. Over fifty participants attended the first public meeting, representing a diverse group of residents. The meeting included a series of community input boards, as well as a Visual Preference Survey to poll resident's interest in various development types and concepts (discussed in the following section).

Highlight: Online Survey Responses

When asked to list a city that has the desired amenities, 92 percent mentioned:

Sugar Land

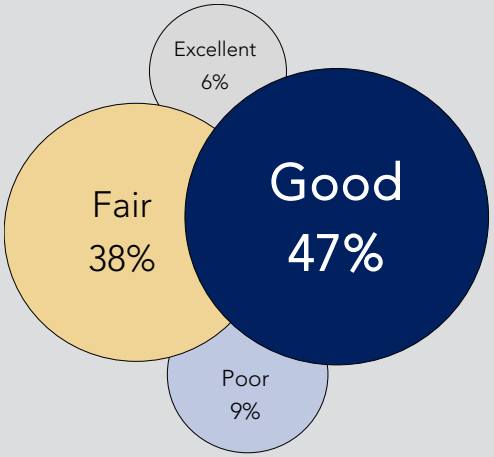
Other cities included:

- City of Houston
- Missouri City,
- Pearland,
- Houston and
- The Woodlands.

What is your vision for Stafford?

- A city that is visually attractive and safe
- A place to retire
- A place to truly live, work and play
- A vibrant city center
- Large city appeal with small-town atmosphere
- A city with strong economic growth

How would you rate Stafford in terms of aesthetics and general appearance?



Stafford's Greatest Assets:

1. Low taxes
2. Great location

Why did you move here?

- Proximity to employment
- Low Tax Rates

What makes Stafford unique?

- No City property taxes
- Affordable housing

Greatest Issues Facing Stafford:

1. Lack of major grocery stores
2. Aesthetics

What is the City's Greatest Opportunity?

- TI Property

The most repeated responses from the online survey results reference the community's desire for more *recreational amenities* (such as trails, parks and sports fields) to improve the quality of life for residents.

Some of the handwritten comments from residents were that they imagined Stafford as a "walkable community" with a "community center and gardens" to enjoy. When asked '*What do you like most about Stafford?*' responses included the following:

- Clean city
- School system
- No City property taxes
- Proximity to Highways and Medical center
- Neighborhoods
- Vaccaro Manor Park

Public meetings are one of the most important tools of the comprehensive planning process. Without the on-the-ground knowledge from Stafford residents and community leaders, the plan would lack key strategies and targeted actions that ultimately determine the Plan's success.

The final public meeting was conducted in June of 2015 to present to the public the Comprehensive Plan's priority recommendations, as well as the detailed strategies for each chapter. Over twenty members of the community attended the meeting, as well as CPAC members and City Council members, as well as Planning and Zoning Commission representatives. This meeting was intended to gain public input and comment on anything that might stand out or need further discussion. Citizens provided valuable input regarding housing strategies that are now reflected and emphasized in this Plan.

Plan Influence

The goals, strategies, and action items documented in this chapter and throughout the plan should serve as the foundation for decision-making and judgment regarding:

- The timing and availability of infrastructure improvements to serve new development;
- The compatibility of proposed development and redevelopment;
- The consistency of zoning change requests and other zoning-related actions with the principles and policies of this plan;
- Expansion of public facilities, services and programs to meet current and future demands;
- Priorities for annual capital budgeting;
- Potential re-write and amendments to the City's zoning and land development ordinances and related code elements;
- Intergovernmental coordination and agreements, operations, capital improvements, and programming.

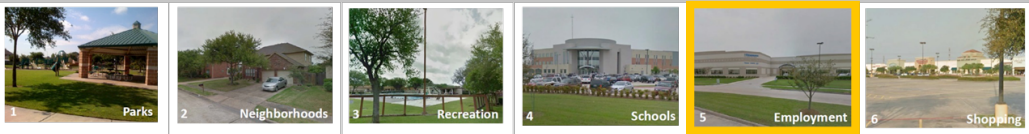
VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY

During the first public meeting, consultants used polling technology to gain key citizen input. Using the electronic polling devices, participants were able to vote for images displayed in the presentation. Those participating chose from strongly dislike, dislike, neutral, like, or strongly like to rate their preference for the images. This type of input was invaluable in establishing the community's priorities.

For example, residents polled that they "strongly liked" open spaces, parks and trails when asked to evaluate a series of amenities that they valued in a community. Residents were strongly in favor of seeing some new commercial areas develop, or redevelop, as a power center or lifestyle center. It was interesting that many of the respondents voted that they found mixed use residential, townhouses and loft-style housing appropriate within the City. This could be an exciting opportunity for the City to capitalize on changing trends and preferences within the community.

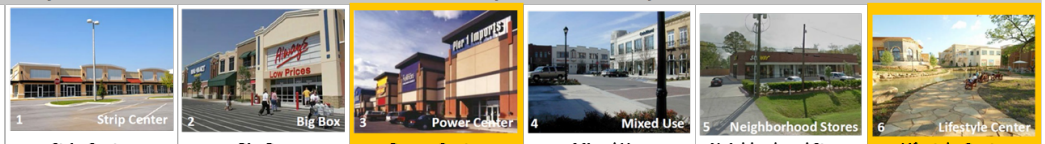
A few of the polling results are displayed on the left. It is no surprise that many of the recommendations made in this plan result from input and information that was gathered from the visual preference survey. Specifically, recommendations regarding parks, trails, recreation, future land use, transportation, neighborhoods, livability, and economic development.

Question 1: What do you like most about living in Stafford?



	Parks	Neighborhoods	Recreation	Schools	Employment	Shopping
Strongly Like	36.84%	16.22%	11.43%	30.56%	**44.44%**	25.64%
Like	**42.11%**	**40.54%**	22.86%	**41.67%**	22.22%	**38.46%**
Neutral	15.79%	21.62%	**42.86%**	16.67%	25%	5.13%
Dislike	2.63%	18.92%	8.57%	5.56%	2.78%	17.95%
Strongly Dislike	2.63%	2.70%	14.29%	5.56%	5.56%	12.82%

Question 3: How you would like to see commercial areas developed or redeveloped.

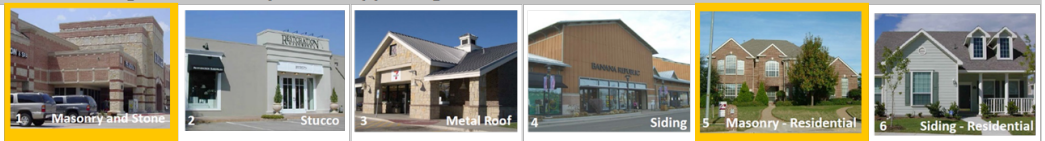


	Strip Center	Big Box	Power Center	Mixed Use	Neighborhood Stores	Lifestyle Center
Strongly Like	15.00%	17.95%	**39.47%**	26.83%	20.51%	**43.59%**
Like	**27.5%**	**43.59%**	**39.47%**	**39.02%**	20.51%	28.21%
Neutral	12.5%	17.95%	10.53%	14.63%	**23.08%**	17.95%
Dislike	**27.5%**	7.69%	0%	12.2%	20.51%	0%
Strongly Dislike	17.5%	12.82%	10.53%	7.32%	15.38%	10.26%

Question 4: Evaluate the following amenities you value in a community.

	Open Space	Gathering Places	Entertainment	Parks	Walkable	Trails
Strongly Like	**43.24%**	24.39%	22.50%	**36.59%**	27.5%	**30%**
Like	29.73%	**51.22%**	**55%**	31.71%	**45%**	**30%**
Neutral	18.92%	17.07%	20%	17.07%	12.5%	25%
Dislike	5.41%	4.88%	0%	12.2%	12.5%	5%
Strongly Dislike	2.7%	2.44%	2.5%	2.44%	2.5%	10%

Question 5: Which building materials do you find appealing for Stafford?



	Masonry and Stone	Stucco	Metal Roof	Siding	Masonry - Residential	Siding - Residential
Strongly Like	**58.97%**	8.11%	2.63%	2.63%	**64.1%**	5%
Like	35.9%	29.73%	**39.47%**	7.89%	20.51%	12.5%
Neutral	2.56%	**32.43%**	31.58%	18.42%	12.82%	**32.5%**
Dislike	2.56%	16.22%	10.53%	**42.11%**	0%	25%
Strongly Dislike	0%	13.51%	15.79%	28.95%	2.56%	25%

Major Themes from Public Input

Economic Advancement

- Location within the region provide opportunities for drawing people into the city
- Room for economic growth for residents
- Sound financial structure with strong city services

Quality of Life

- Strong quality education system
- A live, work and play community that is walkable and safe
- Consider improving drainage capacity in residential areas, if needed.
- A city that citizens can take pride in
- An efficient multi-modal transportation system for a sustainable lifestyle
- Recreational opportunities throughout the city to enhance the health of citizens
- Life cycle of housing choices for all ages

Beautification

- Infrastructure maintenance is important to attract potential businesses into city
- Building and signage uniformity to improve aesthetic quality
- A city with manicured landscape, safe streets inviting public spaces
- A city center that is visually appealing

Additional Comments:

- Lack of building regulations on building design and signage
- Clean up of streets and corridors is critical
- Park and trails needed
- Recreational facility and outdoor sport amenities
- Quality of life
- Good city government
- Industry is good, but need to focus more on residential
- Forward-thinking, technologically advanced, environmentally friendly
- Safe, clean and efficient

Major Opportunities for the City of Stafford

During a planning process, identifying issues help inform recommendations to address them. The following are important issues in Stafford identified during the plan's development.

1. ***Former Texas Instruments Property Development*** – This property has the potential to become a major cornerstone for future development in Stafford. It is important that any development on this site is connected to other areas of the city visually and physically.
2. ***Infill*** – Although Stafford has been growing in some areas, infill development and redevelopment are important strategic actions for the future due to aging homes and commercial properties.
3. ***Corridors*** – The growth and expansion in Fort Bend County—along the U.S. 59/I-69 corridor, U.S. 90A and FM 1092—will continue to impact the local economy and physical development of the City. Visibility and accessibility, by various modes, will be important considerations as businesses continue to seek locations along these major corridors. Beautification along these corridors will also be a key component in enhancing Stafford's community character and aesthetic quality, but also boost and revitalize the perception of the City.

4. ***New Industry*** – As new industry seeks to locate in the City, it will be important to have a variety of different site options available that provide mobility, accessibility and visibility within the City of Stafford.
5. ***Fiscal Balance*** – Stafford's Land Use pattern is its prime revenue source. Therefore a good balance of infill and redevelopment of existing land uses, as well as new land uses, will aid in its fiscal health.
6. ***The Front Door*** – There are several key entrances or gateways into the City. It will be important to have a positive appearance for these areas—this includes quality land uses. Gateways should be enhanced and located at additional points throughout the City to function as secondary, or internal, gateways from the surrounding cities.

Goals and Strategies

The following are goals and strategies that were developed through multiple methods and information gathering techniques discussed previously in this plan. In addition, there were a series of meetings with the CPAC focused on developing, refining, and approving goals and strategies. The CPAC committee was made up of 17 members who were chosen based on their participation and interest in the planning process. The members represented a wide cross-section of community stakeholders including Stafford citizens, Council members, and Planning and Zoning Commission representatives. City staff was also present at the CPAC meetings and helped provide input and insight. CPAC members provided valuable input that was taken into consideration and incorporated in the creation of the following goals and strategies.

Each goal and strategy listed in this chapter has related action items discussed specifically in each chapter. The action items are prioritized in ***Chapter 9, Implementation***, so that targeted decisions and policymaking will achieve the vision, goals, and strategies of this Plan.

GOAL 1: Foster a strong and diverse economy, through unique and innovative policies with a full range of employment and economic opportunities underscored by a zero city property tax.

STRATEGIES

- Preserve the City's culture of limiting debt and expenditures to attract future residents and businesses.
- Maintain an aggressive policy to "live within our means."
- Promote Stafford as a major regional employment center through public policies that encourage expanded opportunity for jobs.
- Target redevelopment in strategic areas to accommodate increases in population or employment.
- Encourage a range of quality amenities for Stafford residents in order to attract and retain a stable and diversified population.
- Coordinate strategic planning efforts, led by the Stafford Economic Development Corporation, with the community.
- Create partnerships with Stafford Municipal School District (SMSD), Houston Community College, and businesses to provide technical and career development.

GOAL 2: Create a thriving city, with emphasis on education through SMSD that attracts people of all ages, welcomes diversity, and fosters a family-friendly atmosphere.

STRATEGIES

- Elevate SMSD and utilize Houston Community College to assist with the education of SMSD students.
- Encourage programs, events, amenities, and land uses that benefit the populous.
- Seek development of and promote existing entertainment venues, the arts, and recreational amenities.

- Develop annual health and wellness fair to promote healthy living and activities.

GOAL 3: Ensure adequate facilities and services to maintain the safety and well-being of Stafford's residents, workers, and visitors.

STRATEGIES

- Provide street lighting to ensure the public safety in commercial, retail, and residential neighborhoods.
- Encourage streets and high traffic pedestrian areas to include sidewalks and other pedestrian-friendly amenities such as crosswalks, pedestrian countdown signals, and update to current standards, if necessary.
- Improve existing street networks in accordance with the Thoroughfare Plan.
- Provide the necessary and appropriate technology, buildings, equipment and people to continue delivery of quality services now and in the future.
- Provide plans and studies to investigate deficiencies in City-maintained and operated infrastructure, reviewing and revising, as appropriate, engineering technical design and construction standards to meet current practices (i.e. roadway, drainage, and water/wastewater facilities).
- Coordinate with the Fort Bend County Water Control and Improvement District No. 2 during design and plat review to strive for an infrastructure system that will effectively serve existing and projected needs of the community in a safe and efficient manner.
- Ensure that infrastructure is sufficient to support future development in key development areas, such as updating the Master Drainage Plan to ensure new development and redevelopment drainage facilities are properly sized and constructed.
- Proactively work with Fort Bend County Water Control and Improvement District No. 2 to develop and implement Stormwater Program Best Management Practices (BMPs).
- Address drainage concerns within older neighborhoods.

GOAL 4: Strengthen Stafford's image, identity, and character to foster a distinctive and appealing place to live, work, and visit.

STRATEGIES

- Establish a community image theme with participation of residents, business owners and property owners.
- Enhance and design gateway and main corridor standards and themes that generate a positive first impression.
- Create a practical trail system to connect neighborhoods with parks and other amenities.
- Encourage business owners, through the Beautification Award Program, to use landscaping and other design aesthetics to beautify their buildings, entrances and parking lots.
- Identify city entryways lacking strong identity to implement branding.
- Improve signage along main corridors to direct residents and visitors to activity areas.

GOAL 5: Facilitate development and redevelopment to create an urban mixed-use environment to attract people and foster a sense of place.

STRATEGIES

- Strengthen the existing land uses located in the Island District, and encourage reuse of vacant building spaces for new and complementary uses.
- Support activities and developments that draw people from outside the area to Stafford for the purpose of entertainment, shopping and living.
- Support development of unique restaurants and entertainment that reflect the City's diversity.
- Ensure that designated mixed-use developments contain a higher degree of urban design with buildings fronting the building lot line, wide sidewalks, street trees and pedestrian amenities.
- Create landscaping and thematic design guidelines for development along high-traffic frontage roads.
- Utilize existing vacant land not designated as open space by steering outside parties on existing land uses and development standards of the property.

GOAL 6: Provide a balanced mix of land uses, in accordance with the vision of Stafford residents, that diversify the sales tax base to attract people to live, work and shop in Stafford.

STRATEGIES

- Provide a range of housing types in Stafford to encourage a diverse population.
- Seek development of quality food stores.
- Maximize development along the frontage of the U.S. 59/I-69 corridor, U.S. 90A, FM 1092, and the Island District by providing opportunities for mixed-use retail/residential development.
- Revitalize areas of opportunity to attract new investment and activity.
- Encourage redevelopment and investment near Houston Community College, Stafford Centre and surrounding areas.

GOAL 7: Protect the quality and integrity of Stafford's neighborhoods.

STRATEGIES

- Ensure that there are provisions for meeting the housing type and satisfy needs of families with children, single parents with children, young adults just leaving home, young professionals, empty-nesters retirees and the elderly.
- Encourage housing maintenance to maintain neighborhood integrity.
- Ensure that all homes comply with the City's building standards and ordinances to maintain desirability, value and reinvestment.
- Require the use of durable building materials, such as stone or brick, and encourage the use of high-pitched roofs to enhance the overall housing appearance.
- Ensure that single-family residential neighborhoods are protected from intensive areas of development by using screening and buffering techniques.

- Ensure that neighborhoods and large developments, that require Traffic Impact Analysis, have roadway access points to provide more direct and interconnected forms of vehicular and pedestrian travel.

GOAL 8: Require high quality and visually attractive architectural characteristics in both residential and non-residential developments.

STRATEGIES

- Update the existing zoning ordinance to promote the development and redevelopment of properties for the highest and best use.
- Improve the existing sign ordinance for continuity throughout the City.
- Encourage the creation of nodal, master-planned retail centers over strip center developments to encourage long-term viability and investment in retail centers.
- Mandate the use of high-quality building materials, such as brick and stone, to protect the long-term durability of non-residential construction. Require all non-residential developments to contain a majority percentage of masonry.
- Require architectural enhancements, such as pitched roofs, awnings, enhanced canopies and building articulation to create visually attractive developments.
- Require all parking rows to contain landscape islands.
- Encourage the planting of trees within parking lots so that a shade canopy covers a large percentage of the parking area at tree maturity.
- Encourage parking lots, larger than one acre to contain a shaded pedestrian way.
- Allow Stormwater BMPs to count towards a portion of landscaping requirements.
- Encourage the use of thematic, decorative and enhanced lighting features within the public right-of-way, residential areas (when necessary) and retail/commercial areas.

GOAL 9: Partner with, TxDOT, H-GAC, and other local intergovernmental agencies to improve mobility and funding opportunities in Stafford.

STRATEGIES

- Utilize the Thoroughfare Plan Map as future roadway improvements are designed and constructed to create a network of major and minor thoroughfares, collector and local streets.
- Ensure that Stafford's thoroughfare network is coordinated with neighboring communities and work to negotiate and resolve any conflicting issues.
- Utilize shared access easements and cross-access to provide connectivity between adjacent non-residential uses, limiting the number of driveways along major corridors and allowing for continuous landscaping.
- Connect various portions of the community, including neighborhoods, public facilities and parks, with a system of pedestrian trails to provide interconnectivity and create a system of non-motorized linkages within the community.

- Consider utilizing Context Sensitive Solutions to design roadways within the context of their adjacent development.
- Create a Streetscape Design Program that intentionally characterizes individual roadways based upon anticipated forms of development
- Monitor regional rail initiatives for changes or updates to a potential commuter rail line, with regard to how changes could impact Stafford, and identify potential locations for commuter rail stop(s) within Stafford's city limits.
- Identify city-wide roadway projects based on need and determine if it is cost effective to partner with the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC).
- Coordinate with TxDOT and H-GAC on the identified needs within the FM 1092 Access Management Study.
- Create and maintain partnerships with local, state and federal agencies such as Fort Bend County, Harris County, Sugar Land, Missouri City, Meadows Place, City of Houston, the H-GAC, TxDOT, and Federal Highway Administration to fund projects within the city limits.
- Explore innovative and advanced mass transit system including passenger rail and other modes of transportation such as double decker buses for intra-city transit.

Source: houston.backpage.com

Chapter 3

Future Land Use

Overview

In communities everywhere, the use of land is a key ingredient in determining the way people live and work. Most land in today's communities is held in private ownership, resulting in three aspects of land use that must be taken into consideration:

1. The owner should be able to build structures and make other improvements that enable them to use their property.
2. The adjacent property owners should be assured that their properties and lives will not be negatively impacted by the actions of the property owner.
3. All property owners in a community have a shared interest in ensuring that the property held in common (such as public land) and the cumulative results of all individual land use decisions create a community that is a stable and desirable place to live and work.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the guidelines that enable Stafford to effectively plan for future growth, development, and redevelopment. Sound planning is essential to ensure that Stafford is prepared to serve anticipated infrastructure needs, as well as preserving key community areas in the face of future growth. Ensuring high quality development is as necessary as providing the infrastructure and connecting streets.

The Future Land Use Plan

The concepts of land use and future land use largely affects all of the elements of this Comprehensive Plan. For instance, the transportation network provides access to land, which influences the type and density of development that will ultimately be placed there. The provision or lack of utilities can also dictate the amount, location, and timing of future development. Community aesthetics are largely defined by the design and development character, and thus, the perceptions that are developed by citizens and those considering investment in Stafford. On the same note, proximity to parks and other public facilities can have affects on public health and safety at specific sites and, as a result, impact the development potential of an area.

The goals and strategies previously outlined explain the community's vision regarding future development, use, and redevelopment of land. The Future Land Use Map provides a geographic application of these policies to the areas within the City and Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), for use during the development review process. The Future Land Use Plan will ultimately be mirrored in the City's policy documents and development decisions. The ultimate purpose of the Future Land Use Plan is to serve as a flexible guide to City staff and City decision-makers. It provides a rational basis for decision-making by ensuring that each individual decision is working towards a larger community goal. The Future Land Use Plan also protects property investments by facilitating compatible development. The last, and most tangible, purpose of the Future Land Use Plan is to help the City plan for infrastructure improvements by determining where transportation and other improvements should be made to accommodate current and long-term needs.

The Future Land Use Plan is not a zoning map, which addresses specific development requirements on individual parcels. The zoning map should be guided by the City's preferred long-range development pattern, as shown on the Future Land Use Map.

The right of a municipality to manage and regulate land use is founded in its need to protect the health, safety and welfare of local citizens. The first step in establishing the guidelines for such management and regulation is the Comprehensive Plan. Although it is one component of the Comprehensive Plan, the significance of the Future Land Use Plan text and map cannot be overstated—it may be the most important element of this plan because it synthesizes everything learned, discussed and analyzed in this plan, including community growth and redevelopment, mobility, neighborhood preservation, utility infrastructure, and economic development.

Similar to the way in which a road map serves as a guide to a particular destination, the Future Land Use Plan should serve Stafford as a guide to accomplishing its unique vision for the future. Each mile that is depicted on a map can also be compared to individual actions that the City has taken with regard to land use and zoning; these individual decisions either lead to or detract from the City attaining its future vision. To provide the most complete map possible, the Future Land Use Plan establishes an overall framework for the preferred pattern based principally on balanced, compatible, and diversified land uses.

Stafford's land use pattern has evolved over the past several decades to become what it is today. The challenge now is to maintain the City's quality of life and key neighborhoods, while encouraging new, quality development and redevelopment in key locations that will contribute to the City's success and vitality in the years to come.

Highlight: The Differences Between Planning and Zoning Maps

The side-by-side comparison below highlights the distinct purposes and uses of a long-range land use plan map (such as ***Figure 3.3, Future Land Use Map***, in this chapter) relative to a City's official Zoning District Map (which Stafford maintains and makes available on the City's website).

Future Land Use Plan vs. Zoning District Map

PURPOSE

- Outlook for the future use of land and the character of development in the community.
- Macro-level, general development plan.

USE

- Guidance for City zoning and related decisions (zone change requests, variance applications, etc.).
- Baseline for monitoring consistency of actions and decisions with Comprehensive Plan.

INPUTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Inventory of existing land use in the City.
- Developing better area character and identity (for High-Density Residential/Low-Density Residential, Mixed Use, Office, Retail/Commercial, Industrial, Public/Semi-Public and Parks/Open Space) as a core planning focus along with basic land uses.
- The map includes a notation required by Texas Local Government Code Section 213.005: "A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries."

PURPOSE

- Basis for applying unique land use regulations and development standards in different areas of the City.
- Micro-level, site-specific focus.

USE

- Regulating development as it is proposed, or as sites are positioned for the future (by the owner or the City) with appropriate zoning.

INPUTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Future Land Use map, for general guidance.
- Other community objectives, such as economic development, redevelopment, flood prevention, etc.
- Zoning decisions which differ substantially from the general development pattern depicted on the Future Land Use map should indicate the need for some adjustments to the planning map the next time the Comprehensive Plan is updated.

Compatibility of Land Uses

Compatibility of land uses has always been an important consideration for cities, residents, businesses and planners. In fact, zoning was originally recognized as a public, health, safety and welfare issue due to the need to separate or buffer incompatible land uses from one another. Variables like noise, pollution, light and traffic can play a huge role in the quality of life in surrounding areas and have direct impacts on adjacent land uses and residents. It is the City's responsibility to ensure that factors such as these do not negatively impact the community or its residents. This is especially critical in a unique community like Stafford that is made up of numerous land uses, including single-family homes, industrial, retail and commercial businesses. Therefore, an important consideration of this Future Land Use Plan is to guide the allocation of land uses in a pattern that is fiscally balanced and intended to produce greater compatibility between the different types of existing land uses.

As shown in ***Figure 3.1, Compatibility of Land Uses***, the more intense the type of nonresidential land use is, the less compatible the land use is with residential uses. In general, office uses and small (neighborhood) retail establishments adjacent to residential uses create positive relationships in terms of compatibility; these are considered lower intensity land uses. There are many techniques, including buffering, screening and landscaping, that can be implemented through zoning and subdivision regulations that would help increase compatibility between different land uses—many of which Stafford already takes into consideration and regulates through existing policies and documents. Specific consideration should be given to how the various types of land uses relate to one another within the development as well as to how the overall development relates to the existing land uses surrounding it.

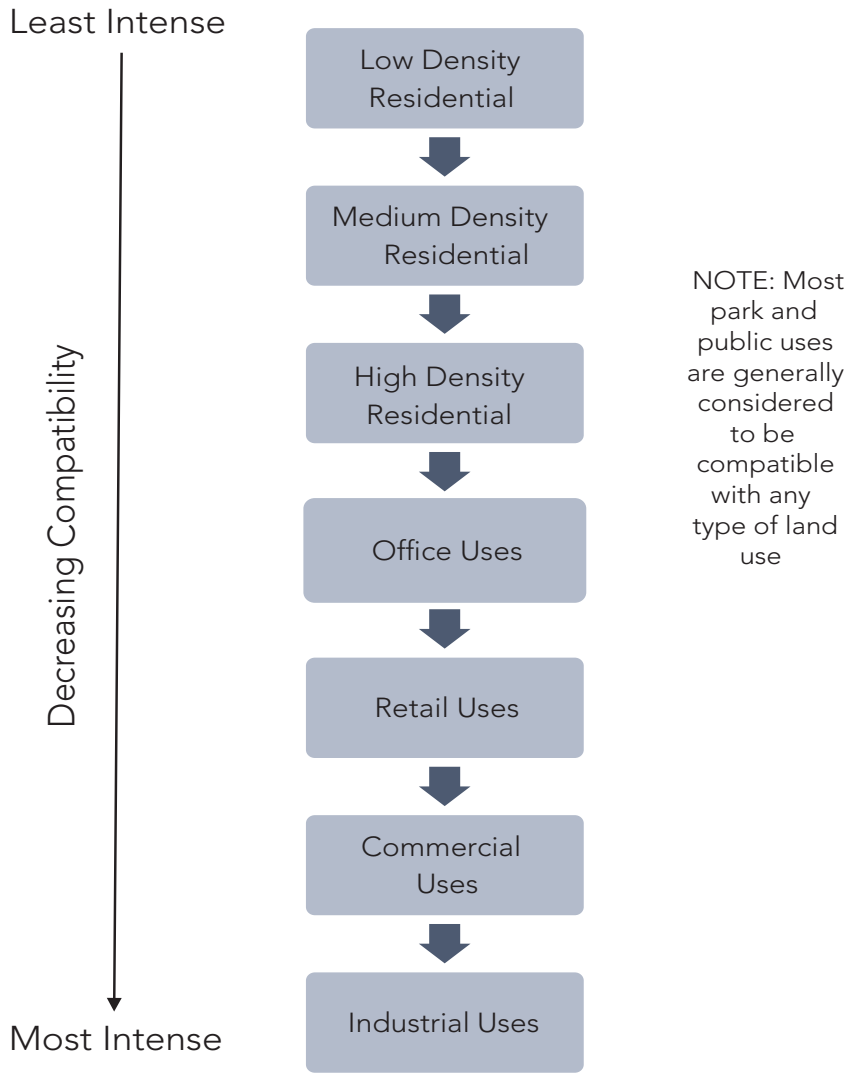


Figure 3.1, *Compatibility of Land Uses*

Future Land Use Types

Future land uses in this element have been recommended based on three principal factors:

1. Preserving residential neighborhoods;
2. Maximizing non-residential land uses where possible, and
3. Creating an overall balanced land-use pattern throughout the City.

Knowledge of the recommended future land use will help the City apply zoning regulations accordingly. This knowledge can also help the City ensure there are adequate public facilities available, such as water, wastewater, transportation and park facilities for future developments. The chapters of this Comprehensive Plan address these needs and have been rooted in the Future Land Use Plan. The following discussion offers general descriptions of each of the land use types portrayed on the Future Land Use Plan Map (see ***Figure 3.3, Future Land Use Map***). The following are specific characteristics that define each future land use category in Stafford. More specific information related to design and community character are included in ***Chapter 7, Neighborhood and Community Livability***.

RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

Residential land uses are currently the predominate use within Stafford. It should be noted that low density residential land uses can be buffered from non-residential uses with medium and high density residential land uses. The following sections discuss specific aspects of the recommended residential land uses within Stafford.

Low Density Residential Land Use

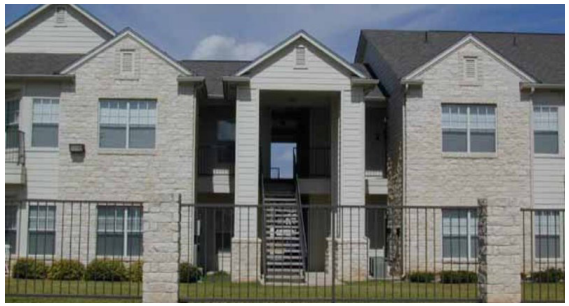
Single-family detached residential structures and some manufactured homes are examples of low-density residential uses. This land use represents the majority residential land use in Stafford. Typically, low-density residential land uses will include homes located on 5,000 to 8,000 square foot lots and greater. Residential densities within low-density areas will generally be less than six dwelling units per acre.

Medium Density Residential Land Uses

Medium density residential is up to and including ten dwelling units per acre or up to 20 bedrooms per acre, which is less. These types of residences include duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes, and small-scale apartments.

High Density Residential Land Uses

Traditional apartment-type units in attached living complexes (including lofts and condos) characterize high density residential land use. Generally, high-density residential areas will have densities over ten dwelling units per acre or more than 20 bedrooms per acre.



PUBLIC LAND USES

Park & Open Space Land Uses

This land use designation is provided to identify all public parks and open spaces within Stafford. A community's park system is key to a high quality of life. The City has recognized this not only through its allocation of park areas (now and throughout the City's history), but also by the fact that a parks, recreation and open space plan for Stafford's existing park network has been incorporated as part of this Comprehensive Plan. Residents cited new parks as a desire for future amenities, as well as trail linkages among the City's parks and to destinations across Stafford.

Public/Semi-Public Land Uses

This land use designation is representative of uses that are educational, governmental or institutional in nature. Public/semi-public uses are generally permitted within any area; therefore, the areas shown on the Future Land Use Plan include the related uses that are currently in existence.

NON-RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

Generally, residents of a community should be able to live, work, and recreate all within the community itself; the existence of non-residential uses allows this to occur. These uses provide a positive element for residents, and the community as a whole. A key benefit is the tax base and revenue that is provided by nonresidential uses. Citizens of Stafford should not have to travel to other cities in order to meet their needs for employment, goods or services; as these needs should be met within the City. Therefore, several areas of the City have been recommended for various types of non-residential use, primarily dependent on the area's location and proximity to other types of land use. The following sections discuss specific aspects of the recommended nonresidential land uses within Stafford and its ETJ.

Office Land Uses (Light Intensity Business)

Office uses are characterized by activities generally focusing on business, professional, insurance or financial services. Accessory uses may include cafeterias, health facilities, parking or other amenities primarily for the use of employees in the firm or building.

Retail Land Uses

This land use type is intended to provide for a variety of restaurants, shops, grocery stores, and personal service establishments. Retail businesses generally require greater visibility than do other types of nonresidential land use (e.g., office, commercial). In response to this need, retail land uses should be designated in the high-traffic areas. Retail uses are also appropriate within Mixed Use areas.

Commercial Land Uses

Areas designated for commercial land use are intended for a variety of commercial uses and establishments with outside storage, display and sales. Examples of such uses include business establishments that primarily provide a service such as automobile service stations, automobile sales lots, self-storage businesses, and repair shops. It should be noted that within recommended commercial areas, office and retail uses should be permitted; however, commercial uses should not be permitted within office or retail areas. Commercial uses should be permitted within industrial areas, provided that they are buffered from less-intense uses properly.

Light Industrial

The light industrial land use applies to areas intended for a range of light commercial, assembly, warehousing, and manufacturing uses. These businesses can be advantageous for a municipality in terms of providing employment and an increased tax base.

Mixed-Use Description

Vertical mixed-use refers to residential or office uses located above ground level primarily retail uses. Horizontal mixed-use refers to a blend of primarily nonresidential uses located adjacent to one another. Mixed-use design should be oriented around the pedestrian. Buildings should be placed along the property line and should be oriented towards the street and civic area. Wide sidewalks, benches, shade trees, raised/enhanced crosswalks and other pedestrian amenities should be considered during street design. On-street parking, such as parallel or head-in parking, may be incorporated; however, all parking lot areas should be located behind buildings and away from the main center of activity to ensure safe pedestrian movements.

Highlight: The Stafford Centre and Potential Transit-Oriented Development

The City of Stafford has invested in gathering information and providing input on the subject of light rail. From community stakeholder meetings with agencies like Harris County, the HGAC, METRO, and private land owners, Stafford has played a key role in the discussion about location. The proposed light rail stops will generally follow along U.S. 90A, potentially stopping in several cities, including Stafford—effectively creating the opportunity for a major Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). Recent economic trends indicate that workers want to live in places with destinations, public and civic spaces, vibrant social atmosphere, recreational opportunities, and a reasonable commute—all of which are usually included in a mixed-use development. Stafford can expect modest growth over the next 30 years (as discussed later in this chapter), with ongoing demand for both residential and non-residential real estate. The TOD site would capture a fair share of that growth so long as it includes a mix of mutually reinforcing land uses for both day and night.

The area designated for a TOD off of U.S. 90A is intended to enhance the relationship between land use and transportation by focusing on design, layout and intensity of use. This area is situated north of the highway. The present plan for this area includes co-location of a new central transit station with the METRO light rail and supporting development surrounding the site. When combined with effective transit service, the neighborhood presents more walkable opportunities nearby and safe, comfortable options for routes to walk as well as destinations to walk to. In turn, the transit provides residents and workers in the area reliable transportation choices, extending their options, and supports the more intense use of land. In addition to transit access, characteristics of this land use type often include lower speed roads and narrower cross sections to encourage safe walking, a mix of residential uses within a quarter mile of the transit service, multistory residential, sidewalks buffered from roads, reduced parking and parking behind buildings, and a mix of uses to encourage options nearby to live, work, and play. They may also include adaptive reuse of existing buildings, design elements like awnings on buildings to protect residents from weather, pedestrian scaled lighting, benches, street trees and landscaping. Safe biking facilities like bike lanes and lower road speeds can extend the range of the TOD effective area and can further provide good alternatives to walking and driving short distances.

It is important for Stafford to remain in these critical discussions to ensure that the City is poised for this type of future development. The City's proximity to Houston makes it a prime candidate for commuter traffic along multiple-modes. A TOD location located near the Stafford Centre and Houston Community College would capture ridership from students, families, entertainment seekers, visitors, tourists, shoppers and more. By identifying a potential location within this Plan will help the City to set itself up for consideration in the future. Though details of the project may change, the interest and considerations for future TOD development will have been outlined within this Plan.

Future Land Use Projections

As depicted in ***Figure 3.2, Future Land Use Pie Chart***, the largest land use in Stafford will continue to be low-density residential, comprising approximately 25 percent of the total future land uses. Medium-density residential and high-density residential are projected to make up 1.5 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively. The categories that will comprise the smallest land uses projected for Stafford are medium density residential, office, parks and open space, and high density residential (refer to ***Table 3.1, Future Land Use within the City Limits***). ***Table 3.1*** depicts the acreage breakdown of Stafford based upon the future land use plan. The total acreage of the future land-use plan coincides with the total acreage within the planning area (including both the city limits and ETJ).

To ensure the City maintains zero property taxes, it will be necessary for Stafford to diversify the tax base and capitalize on non-residential tax generators (primarily the commercial, industrial, office and retail uses). As depicted on the ***Figure 3.2, Future Land Use Pie Chart*** (on the following page), the largest land uses in Stafford will continue to be residential—comprising 30.7 percent of the total land uses in Stafford. If additional community services, such as parks and recreation, are to be provided, non-residential land uses must be fully utilized to maximize sales-tax revenue. The Future Land Use Plan indicates that 12.3 percent will be devoted to light industrial, 11.3 percent will be retail, commercial will cover 8.9 percent, and 5.4 percent will be devoted to mixed-use land uses.

Parks and open space will comprise approximately 3.2 percent of Stafford's land use. Public/semi-public land uses will comprise 8.1 percent of future land uses. These two categories include developed recreational spaces, passive open spaces, the Stafford Centre and civic buildings/properties. These green spaces and destinations will help to maintain Stafford's quality of life by generating trips and providing a variety of accessible functions and services—from entertainment to exercise—for the entire community.

Table 3.1, *Future Land Use within the City Limits*

Future Land Use		City Limits		ETJ		Total	Percent
		Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent		
Residential Uses							
	Low Density Residential	916.3	22.3%	450.3	33.3%	1366.6	25.0%
	Medium Density Residential	37.4	0.9%	43.0	3.2%	80.4	1.5%
	High Density Residential	101.8	2.5%	129.4	9.6%	231.2	4.2%
Public Uses							
	Parks and Open Space	120.0	2.9%	52.6	3.9%	172.6	3.2%
	Public/Semi-Public	329.6	8.0%	115.4	8.5%	445.0	8.1%
	Right-of-Way	706.7	17.2%	291.2	21.5%	998.0	18.3%
Non Residential Uses							
	Office	97.6	2.4%	1.8	0.1%	99.4	1.8%
	Retail	538.5	13.1%	76.8	5.7%	615.3	11.3%
	Commercial	367.3	8.9%	119.8	8.8%	487.1	8.9%
	Light Industrial	609.2	14.8%	62.9	4.6%	672.1	12.3%
	Mixed Use	283.6	6.9%	10.7	0.8%	294.3	5.4%
Total		**4,108**	**100%**	**1,354**	**100%**	**5,462**	**100%**

As stated, approximately 5.4 percent of Stafford future land use will be mixed-use. This is important because businesses along and south of the U.S.59/I-69 corridor will function as income generators for the community both through tax base and sales tax revenue. These districts will be largely retail and light commercial in nature—some with establishments that could potentially have a regional draw—as well as high-density residential and potential transit oriented development (TOD). RIght-of-Ways, including railroad right-of-ways, throughout Stafford make up 18.3 percent of the future land uses. Because projected right-of-ways are subject to change in the future, the acreage and proportion of land uses was determined by evaluation of existing ROW dedication, remaining acreages within the planing area and the proposed Master Thoroughfare Plan (as seen in *Chapter 4, Transportation and Circulation Plan*.

Figure 3.2, *Future Land Use Pie Chart*

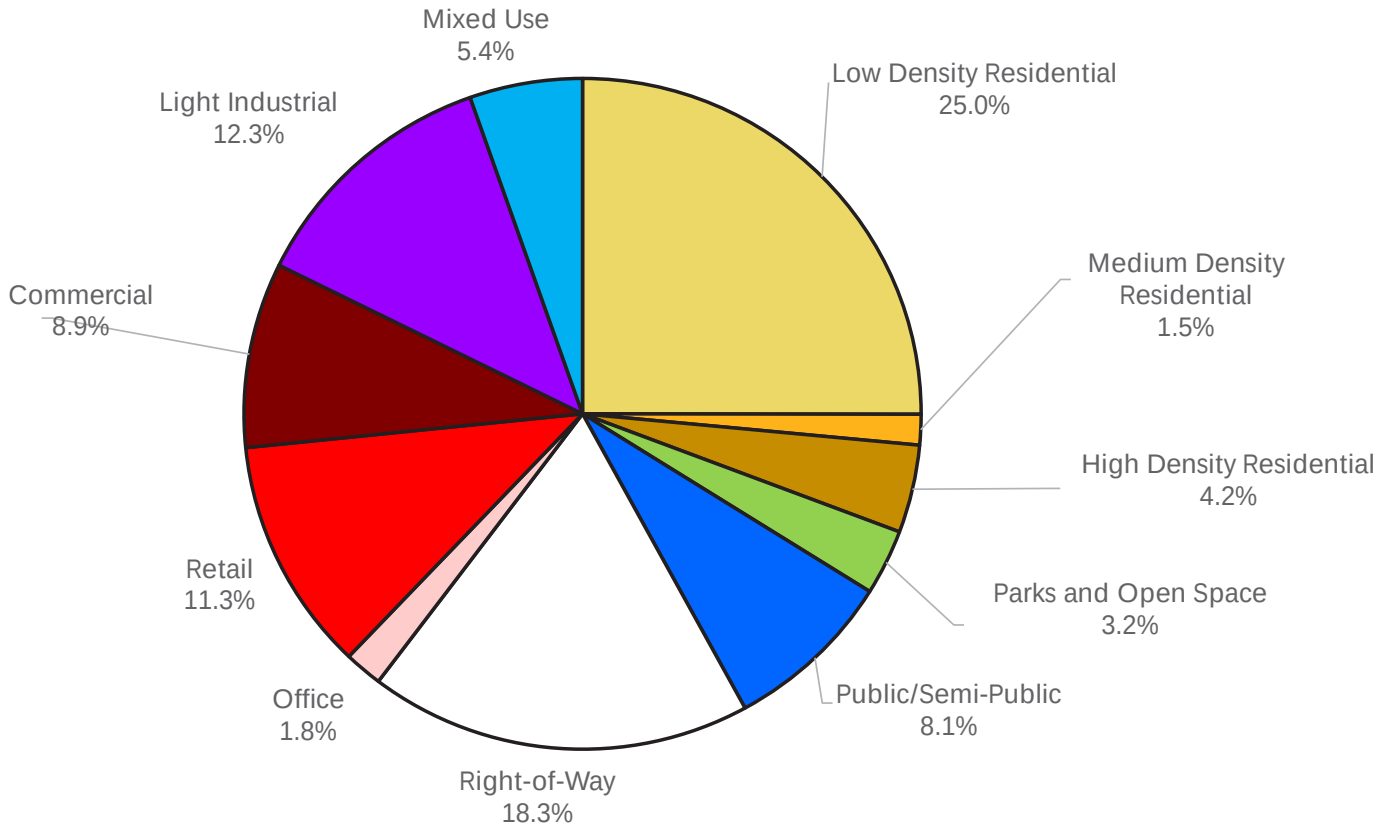
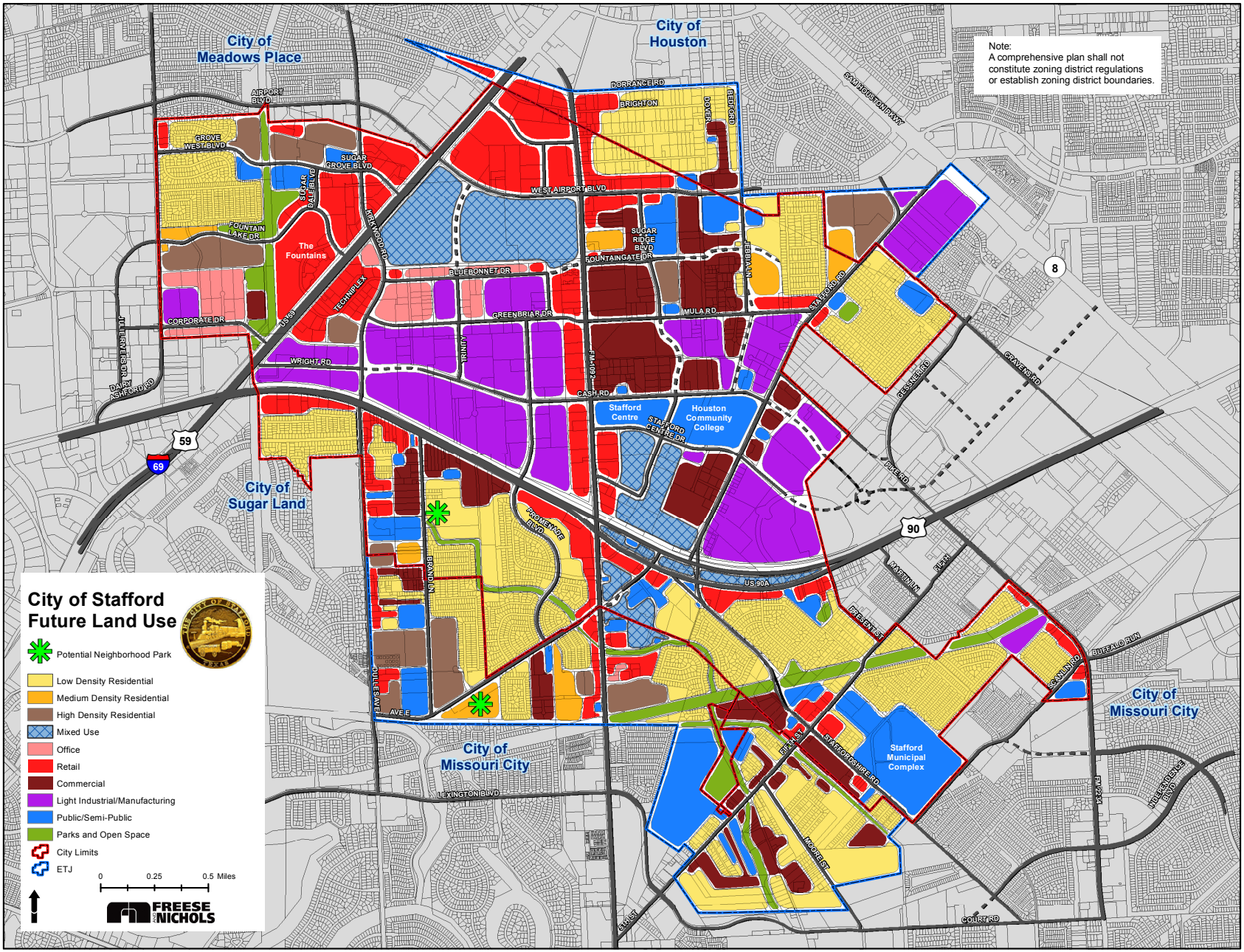


Figure 3.3, *Future Land Use Plan*



Historical Growth Rates

A City's historical growth rates are sometimes the best indicator of what the future growth rates may be. As outlined in ***Table 3.2, Population Growth, 1970-2025***, Stafford's population and percent change are shown by decade, as well as the compound annual growth rate (CAGR). The City experienced the largest population growth from 1990 to 2000, experiencing almost 87 percent growth that decade and adding 7,284 residents. Growth has slowed sine 2010 and is predicted to continue into 2025 and as the City approaches build-out. The CAGR of 3.31 percent is high due to the major growth period between 1980 and 2000. This growth rate will be used to determine the most feasible population projections for Stafford.

Population Projections

Population projections are based on past population growth rates and anticipated future development, as well as future land use recommendations. Stafford's population projections out to the year 2040 can be seen in both ***Table 3.3 Population Growth Scenarios*** and ***Figure 3.12, Population Projections***. It is also important to consider the projected populations in order to determine the ultimate capacity at which they City may be required to function, so that the City may more adequately and efficiently plan for these services.

Table 3.2, *Population Growth, 1970 - 2025*

Year	Population	Population Change	Percent Change	Annual Average Compounded Growth Rate	CAGR
1970	2,906	-	-	-	3.31%
1980	4,755	1,849	63.6%	5.10%	
1990	8,397	3,642	76.6%	5.9%	
2000	15,681	7,284	86.7%	6.4%	
2010	17,693	2,012	12.8%	1.2%	
2025	20,541	2,848	16.1%	1.0%	

Source: U.S. Census and 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Projections

Table 3.3, *Population Growth Scenarios*

Growth Rate Scenarios											
1.0 % CAGR		1.5 % CAGR		2.0 % CAGR		2.5 % CAGR		3.0 % CAGR		3.5 % CAGR	
Year	Population	Year	Population	Year	Population	Year	Population	Year	Population	Year	Population
2013	17,840	2013	17,840	2013	17,840	2013	17,840	2013	17,840	2013	17,840
2014	18,018	2014	18,108	2014	18,197	2014	18,286	2014	18,375	2014	18,464
2015	18,199	2015	18,379	2015	18,561	2015	18,743	2015	18,926	2015	19,111
2016	18,381	2016	18,655	2016	18,932	2016	19,212	2016	19,494	2016	19,780
2017	18,564	2017	18,935	2017	19,311	2017	19,692	2017	20,079	2017	20,472
2018	18,750	2018	19,219	2018	19,697	2018	20,184	2018	20,681	2018	21,188
2019	18,938	2019	19,507	2019	20,091	2019	20,689	2019	21,302	2019	21,930
2020	19,127	2020	19,800	2020	20,493	2020	21,206	2020	21,941	2020	22,697
2021	19,318	2021	20,097	2021	20,902	2021	21,736	2021	22,599	2021	23,492
2022	19,511	2022	20,398	2022	21,320	2022	22,280	2022	23,277	2022	24,314
2023	19,706	2023	20,704	2023	21,747	2023	22,837	2023	23,975	2023	25,165
2024	19,904	2024	21,015	2024	22,182	2024	23,408	2024	24,695	2024	-
2025	20,103	2025	21,330	2025	22,625	2025	23,993	2025	25,436	2025	-
2026	20,304	2026	21,650	2026	23,078	2026	24,593	2026	-	2026	-
2027	20,507	2027	21,975	2027	23,540	2027	25,207	2027	-	2027	-
2028	20,712	2028	22,304	2028	24,010	2028	-	2028	-	2028	-
2029	20,919	2029	22,639	2029	24,490	2029	-	2029	-	2029	-
2030	21,128	2030	22,978	2030	24,980	2030	-	2030	-	2030	-
2031	21,339	2031	23,323	2031	25,480	2031	-	2031	-	2031	-
2032	21,553	2032	23,673	2032	-	2032	-	2032	-	2032	-
2033	21,768	2033	24,028	2033	-	2033	-	2033	-	2033	-
2034	21,986	2034	24,388	2034	-	2034	-	2034	-	2034	-
2035	22,206	2035	24,754	2035	-	2035	-	2035	-	2035	-
2036	22,428	2036	25,125	2036	-	2036	-	2036	-	2036	-
2037	22,652	2037	-	2037	-	2037	-	2037	-	2037	-
2038	22,879	2038	-	2038	-	2038	-	2038	-	2038	-
2039	23,107	2039	-	2039	-	2039	-	2039	-	2039	-
2040	23,338	2040	-	2040	-	2040	-	2040	-	2040	-

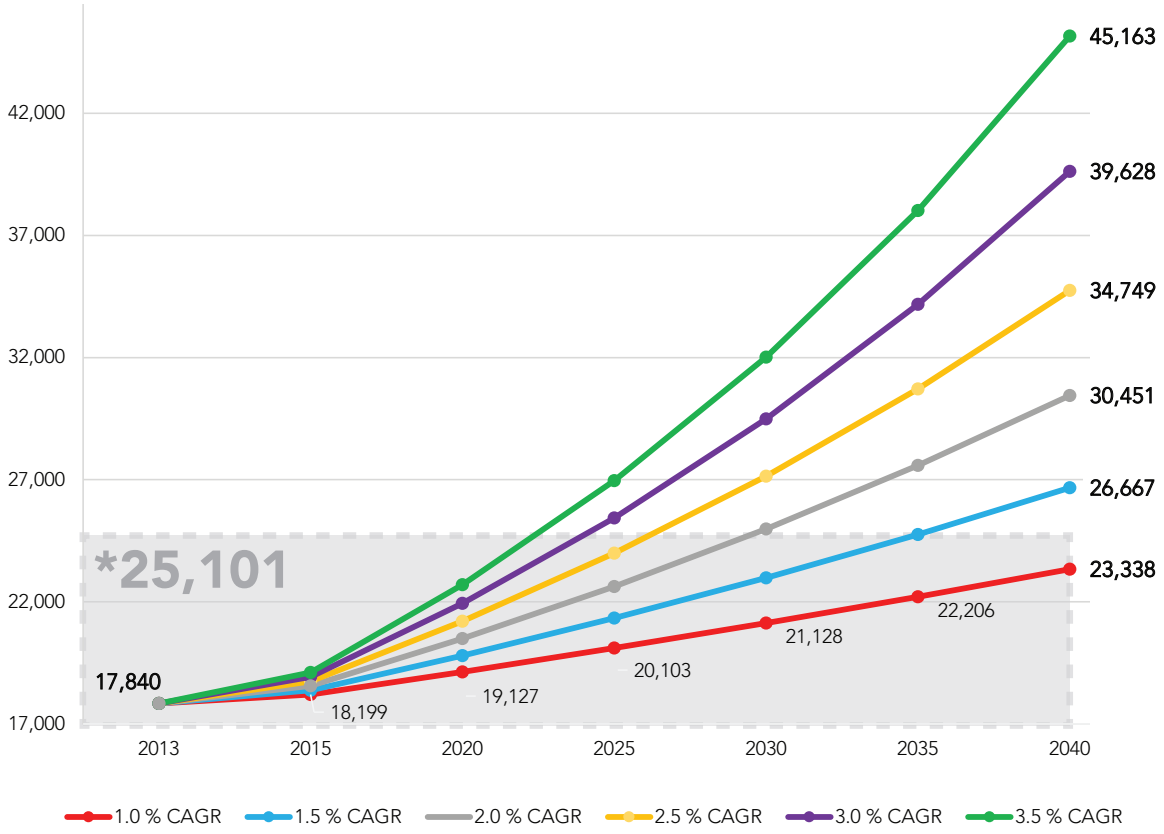
Souce: 2009 - 2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The projected growth rates (1, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5, 3.0 and 3.5 percent) are estimates of what the potential future population of Stafford could be from now until 2040. Stafford has historically seen a very high CAGR of up to 6.4 percent (as reflected in ***Table 3.2***), however in recent years the CAGR has declined to 1.2 percent. Because of this trend, and for the purpose of this plan, a conservative 1.0 percent CAGR has been used as the most likely population scenario for the City of Stafford.

As discussed in detail in the following section, the City is estimated to reach ultimate capacity at approximately 25,101 residents; therefore the projected population could exceed the capacity by 2023 (with a 3.5 percent CAGR) or after 2040 (with a 1.0 percent CAGR)—see ***Table 3.4, Ultimate Capacity within Vacant Areas: Stafford: TX***. The ultimate capacity as reflected by the gray area in ***Figure 3.4***, shows the projected ultimate capacity as it relates to six population growth scenarios that range from very conservative (1.0 percent) to very aggressive (3.5 percent).

Based on this analysis, if Stafford grows at a CAGR between one percent, then ultimate capacity will not be reached until 2040 or beyond. If Stafford grows at a slightly higher CAGR between 1.5 and three percent, then ultimate capacity will be reached as early as 2023 (with 3.5 percent CAGR) or as late as 2040 (one percent CAGR). It is important to keep in mind that population projections are subject to change and can be impacted by a number of factors, such as the local and national economies, and the real estate market.

Figure 3.4, ***Population Projections***



Source: U.S Census and Freese and Nichols Inc.

Ultimate Capacity

The ultimate capacity is the estimated build-out population of Stafford. It represents the ultimate population that could be accommodated if Stafford develops according to the land-use patterns portrayed in the ***Future Land Use Map*** (Page 3.11). Calculating ultimate capacity is important because it helps define what the implications of land use decisions may be. Additionally, determining ultimate capacity assists in planning future infrastructure needs—particularly water and wastewater.

Stafford is an encapsulated community, meaning that it will never be larger than its ETJ, thereby making the estimate of build-out more reliable.

The ultimate capacity is based upon a number of different assumptions. The *2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* for Persons Per Household (PPH) was used for assumptions regarding the number of residents per household. Approximately 191 acres of vacant land remains within the residential land use categories of the Future Land Use Map—87 acres for low density residential, 36 acres for medium density residential, 0.25 acres for high density residential, and 68 acres for total mixed use residential (see ***Table 3.4***).

For all of the residential development in the future, it is projected that the City's ultimate capacity for the remaining vacant lands will yield approximately 10,362 new housing units, add 9,729 new households, and increase the total population by 7,261 residents. As seen in ***Table 3.2***, recent CAGR has slowed to less than one percent and therefore conservative population projections, using a 1.0 percent

Table 3.4, ***Ultimate Capacity within Vacant Areas: Stafford, TX***

Ultimate Capacity within Vacant Areas: Stafford, TX								
Vacant Residential Land Use	Vacant Acres	DUA(1)	Occupancy Rate(2)	PPH(3)	ROW(4)	Future Projected		
						Housing Units	House-holds	Population
Low Density Residential	87	6.0	99.2%	3.09	30%	365	362	1,120
Medium Density Residential	36	8.0	93.1%	2.34	15%	245	228	533
High Density Residential	0.25	20.0	93.1%	2.34	15%	4	4	9
Mixed Use Residential	10	20.0	93.1%	2.34	15%	170	158	370
TI Property Residential	*58*	*20.0*	*93.1%*	*2.34*	*15%*	*2,400*	*2,234*	*5,228*
Current Population*						7,178	6,742	17,840
Ultimate Capacity within Vacant Areas						3,184	2,987	7,261
Ultimate Population Capacity						10,362	9,729	25,101

Source: U.S. Census & FNI Data

* Population derived from 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (S0101)

(1) Dwelling Unit Per Acre (Net Acreage)

(2) Occupancy Rate - 2010 Census Data (DP-1)

(3) Person Per Household - 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (DP04)

(4) Percentage of "Vacant Acres" subtracted for roadways

CAGR were used to determine the future population, as well as the future capacity of the land (refer to ***Figure 3.12, Population Projections***).

Lot sizes within the single-family residential district must be a minimum of 7,150 square feet (approximately six dwelling units per acre). This translates to approximately 365 new housing units, 362 additional households, and around 1,120 new residents to be captured by Stafford's future low density residential areas.

Medium Density Residential will have more units per acre than low density. At eight dwelling units per acre and 36 acres of vacant land designated for this use, it is projected that medium density residential uses will add 245 housing units, 228 households and 533 residents to the City.

High density residential land uses will then have a higher number of units per acre than both low and medium density residential uses. An estimate of 20 dwelling units per acre was utilized in the analysis as an average for both high density and mixed-use residential areas. With only 0.25 acres of vacant land dedicated to high density residential, the future projections for this land use are lower than the other residential categories analyzed. According to ***Table 3.4, Ultimate Capacity within Vacant Areas: Stafford, TX***, only four new housing units, four new households and nine new residents are projected to be captured by the high density residential land use areas.

Lastly, the mixed-use district will likely have a dense residential component, which will be critical in ensuring the vibrancy and synergy of the area. The designated mixed use areas yields a total of about 58 acres of vacant land. Higher quality multifamily units, such as the units found in mixed-use developments today, generally have higher densities and therefore an estimate of 20 dwelling units per acre was used for assumption purposes. Within the mixed-use residential category, there is already a proposed development concept for the vacant TI property (a mixed-use designated site) that is proposing 2,400 housing units. For the purposes of this plan, the TI conceptual development's proposed mixed-use residential units have been included to ensure that the table is taking into account major projects in the pipeline and changing data. ***Table 3.4*** was able to project that approximately 170 dwelling units, 158 households, and 370 residents will be captured by future mixed-use development in Stafford on the remaining 10 acres of land. The TI property currently proposes approximately 2,400 housing units, 2,234 households, and will bring in an additional 5,228 new residents.

Stafford has presently reached almost 71.1 percent of its build-out, or ultimate population of approximately 25,101 persons. As discussed in the Future Land Use Plan and ultimate capacity projections, approximately 7,261 new residents could call Stafford home at build-out. When combined with the 2013 population estimate of 17,840 people, the ultimate capacity of Stafford will be 25,101 residents. The City is estimated to have an ultimate total of 10,362 housing units and 9,729 households—a 3,184 unit and 2,987 household increase from existing conditions.

Approximately 9 percent (377 acres) of the land remaining in the community has yet to be developed. Taking into consideration the fact that Stafford is virtually landlocked by surrounding municipalities, there is limited vacant areas for the City to grow geographically by annexation—not to mention the difficulties in redistricting the Fort Bend ISD and SMSD boundaries (as has previously been discussed). This means that population increase will only occur by developing the vacant residential areas that are already within the City's limits or redeveloping areas. To guide the City in planning for how many people may ultimately need to be supported, an assessment of Stafford's ultimate population is provided in ***Figure 3.12, Population Projections***.

Land use considerations and guidance are at the core of any comprehensive city plan. Effective land-use planning provides a framework for successful economic development efforts, for quality and sustainable residential development, for timely investment in new and upgraded infrastructure, and for coordinated extension of the public park system and a range of other municipal services, especially critical public safety services.

Features of the Plan: Stafford's Opportunity Areas

Over the last four decades, the City of Stafford has seen much development and growth. As cities like Stafford begin to reach build-out, development and redevelopment opportunities become critical. There are certain types of development that last for some time once constructed, therefore it is important for cities to encourage types of development desired.

In terms of land use, development typically refers to areas and properties previously vacant before structures were constructed. This is also referred to as greenfield development. Redevelopment involves infill (i.e. previously developed property), denser land usage (i.e. block of townhouses into a larger apartment building), and adaptive reuse (i.e. industrial mill into housing lofts). There are opportunities for both development and redevelopment in Stafford.

Currently, 377 acres of land remains undeveloped in Stafford, equating to approximately 9 percent of the City's acreage (as discussed in the *Introduction*). ***What is the highest and best use for these remaining areas? How can new opportunities for improvements, including development and redevelopment, add to Stafford's identity?*** These questions are addressed in the five opportunity areas that have been identified in *Figure 3.5, Stafford's Opportunity Areas*.

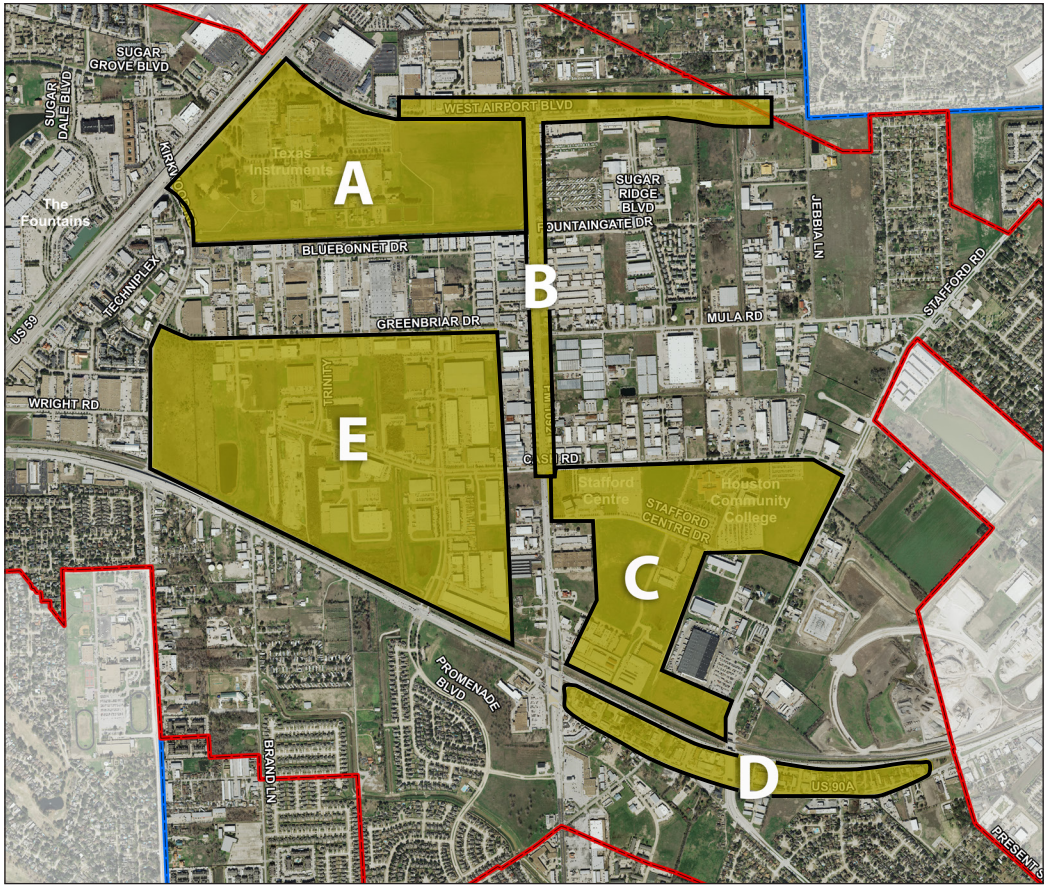


Figure 3.5, *Stafford's Opportunity Areas*

OPPORTUNITY AREAS:

A. Mixed Use Development

B. FM 1092 and West Airport Boulevard Corridor

C. Arts and Entertainment District

D. Island District

E. Industrial District

The following opportunity areas discussed will serve as a guide in how these areas should develop and redevelop. The recommendations for potential programs, implementation strategies, and financing options in these areas will help City leadership and staff encourage the desired development that has been envisioned.

OPPORTUNITY AREA A - MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

The former Texas Instruments (TI) site is a large tract that has great potential for mix use development. Its location along the US 69 corridor gives the site great visibility, that should encourage a unique development. The site is approx. 192 acres and is currently being programmed by a developer.

Potential Program

There are particular land uses, character and elements that should be incorporated into the development of this area. The following is the recommended program:

- Light commercial, retail, office, residential, and industrial land uses
- Internal pedestrian and vehicular connectivity
- Open spaces

Opportunity Areas Financing Options:

The following are financing options to consider for the opportunity areas:

Public Improvement District – This special district is created by a local government to fund services and improvements beyond those normally provided by the municipality. The district is funded by special property assessments paid by taxpayers.

Municipal Management Districts – This is a special district that is self-governed, but help provide infrastructure and other services within the district.

Shared Cost – The FM1092 Access Management Study recommended cost shared between TxDOT, the City, and other entities. These cost should be considered for any future improvements along the FM1092 corridor. The city also partners with Fort Bend County for construction projects through the TIP program. There are currently several funded bond programs with Fort Bend County. FM 1092 at W Airport is an identified project, as well as the Kirkwood Road right turn lane, Staffordshire sidewalks and FM 1092 at Ave E.

Economic Development Grants – Companies considering a relocation/expansion or new commercial development may be eligible for a grant in lieu of tax abatement or to defray project costs such as: land purchase, building costs, public infrastructure costs, development fees, right of way abandonment fees, loan guarantees, training costs, relocation costs, etc.

New Market Tax Credits – The NMTC program is a federal program operated by the Department of Treasury that provides opportunities for new development in traditionally under-served areas. Corporate or individual investors can receive tax credits for qualified investments.

Public-Private Partnerships – A public-private partnership (PPP) is a tool that local governments can use to help fund costly investments, particularly infrastructure. A PPP is an agreement between the government and the private sector to jointly fund and/or manage a public infrastructure project.

Freeport Tax Exemptions – A property tax exemption which includes various types of property detained in Texas for a short period of time (175 days or less) to be transported out of Texas. The City of Stafford, SMSD, and Fort Bend County Water Control and Improvement District No. 2 already offer this exemption.

Implementation Strategies

- Ensure appropriate ordinances and design standards are in place in order to achieve Stafford's vision.
- Coordinate with developer(s) and Fort Bend County WC & ID #2 regarding the site layout, roadway connections, and infrastructure.

Financing Options

- Public-Private Partnerships
- Public Improvement District
- Partnerships with Fort Bend County and TxDOT

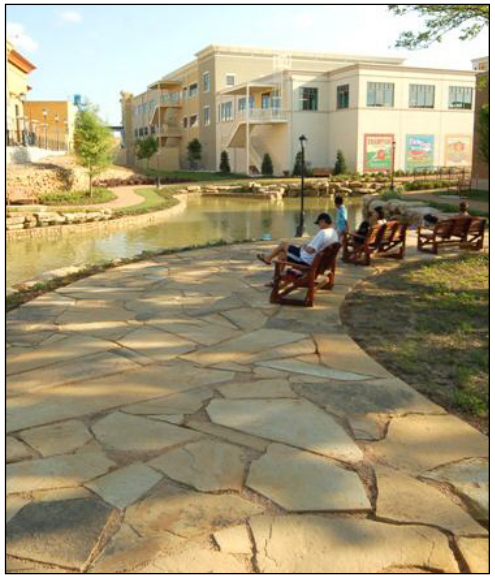
Estimated Cost to Stafford

- Property Ordinances/Design Standards – Administrative Cost
- Land for development – Private Investment

Project Time frame

- Planning and Design – two years
- Development and Construction – three to eight years

This site should be connected visually and physically to other key areas of the city (see Figure 3.5 on the following page). It is important that this site does not become an island, but rather a springboard to encourage other opportunity areas to develop.



Character Image - Open/Gathering Space

Character Image - Mixed Use Building

Character Image - Outdoor Dining

Figure 3.6, *Opportunity Area A - Conceptual Development Plan*

Source: Street Level Investments

OPPORTUNITY AREA B - FM 1092 AND WEST AIRPORT BOULEVARD CORRIDOR

These corridors serve as major arterials through the City of Stafford, giving them the potential for opportunities to create a sense of place. The focus area is along FM 1092 between Cash Road and West Airport Boulevard. Also, along West Airport Boulevard, just east and west of FM 1092, see ***Figure 3.6, Opportunity Area B - Focus Boundaries***.

A recent study of the FM 1092 corridor is a great starting point to begin implementing streetscape elements to help transform this corridor, as seen in ***Figure 3.7, Streetscape Recommendations***. It is recommended that the bike lanes suggested in this study be removed from the roadway and substituted for shared use paths located off street (see ***Figure 3.8, FM 1092 Proposed Street Cross-sections***).

The corridor also serves as a key connection between two major activity nodes, also identified as Opportunity Areas A and C.

Potential Program

The following bullets detail elements of the recommended program:

- Light commercial and retail land uses
- Enhanced intersections and streetscape
- Shared use paths
- Signage improvements

Implementation Strategies

- Ensure appropriate zoning is in place to achieve desired development. Currently, Opportunity Area B is zoned Primary Corridor (PC), Mixed Use-2 (MU-2), and Residential, Commercial and Technology (RTC). Residential zoning should be removed from areas designated as commercial and retail on the Future Land Use Map.
- Implement components of the FM1092 Access Management Study. Begin intersection improvements, median installation, and streetscape and pedestrian enhancements.
- Update Subdivision Ordinance Sec. 82-98 to state that new shared use paths should be built to a minimum of six feet in width and sidewalks should be built to a minimum of five feet. Share use paths should be installed as identified in ***Figure 4.8, Connectivity and Activity Node Map***.

Financing Options

- Municipal Management Districts
- Public Improvement District
- TxDOT and Fort Bend County Shared Costs

Estimated Cost to Stafford

- Rezone Property – Administrative Cost
- Land for development – Private Investment
- Corridor, Intersection and Streetscape recommendations (FM1092 Study) - $1.9M - $3.9M

Project Time frame

- Planning and design – two years
- Signage, striping, smaller scale Infrastructure – zero to five years
- Larger scale infrastructure and enhancements, streetscape improvements (medians and sidewalks) – five to 15 years
- Projects to address future demand – 15+ years

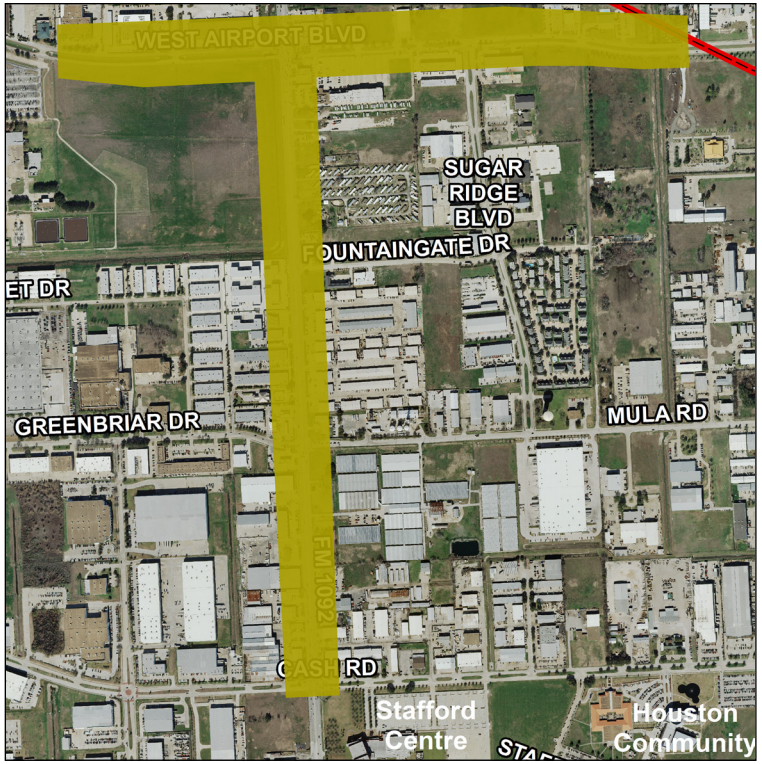


Figure 3.7, *Opportunity Area B - Focus Boundaries*

Figure 3.8, *Streetscape Recommendations*

Source: FM1092 Stafford Access Management Study

Figure 3.9, *FM 1092 Proposed Street Cross-sections*

Source: FM1092 Stafford Access Management Study

OPPORTUNITY AREA C - ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

Located south of the Stafford Centre and Houston Community College, the Future Land Use map recommends approximately 48 acres of mixed-use development. The conceptual district delineation is shown in ***Figure 3.10, Opportunity Area C - Focus Boundaries***. This area could contain an upscale hotel with meeting spaces and a portion of the building to accommodate condominium units. Near or adjacent to the hotel, a smaller mixed-use building containing small offices over restaurants and service retail could make the area more appropriate for a transit-oriented development.

The area would also feature a large open space/gathering area that can accommodate outdoor entertainment and large festival type events. Entertainment venues and options may draw customers from a geographic market area beyond the market area for the retail uses. To accommodate on-site and off-site demand, a three-level shared public parking structure is recommended.

Potential Program

The following is the recommended program:

- Upscale hotel with meeting spaces
- Condominium units
- Mixed-use building with restaurant, service retail, and small office spaces
- Three-level shared public parking structure
- Large open space/gathering area
- Transit-oriented development. Adjacent areas should encourage development that is compatible with a TOD (see page 4.8 for other potential TOD locations).

Implementation Strategies

- Ensure appropriate zoning is in place to achieve desired development. Currently, Opportunity Area C is zoned Arts and Education (AE) and Residential, Commercial and Technology (RTC). The RTC zoning district is not appropriate for the mixed-use developments and should be changed to the Arts and Education or Mixed Use 2 zoning districts to allow desired uses.
- Develop detailed site plan, cost estimates, and renderings of development at build out to help attract developers (potential commuter rail stop location).
- Coordinate with the Stafford Economic Development Corporation and create a target list of developers, and directly advertise the project.
- Lease or sale the city-owned property in this area, but influence the desired development.
- Once a developer is on board, coordinate to discuss responsibilities between public and private investment.

Financing Options

- Municipal Management Districts
- Public Improvement District
- Public-Private Partnerships

Estimated Cost to Stafford

- Rezone Property – Administrative Cost
- Site plan and renderings - $50,000 - $70,000
- RFP Package - $20,000
- Land for development – City contribution

Project Time frame

- Planning and design – two years
- Development and Construction – three to six years

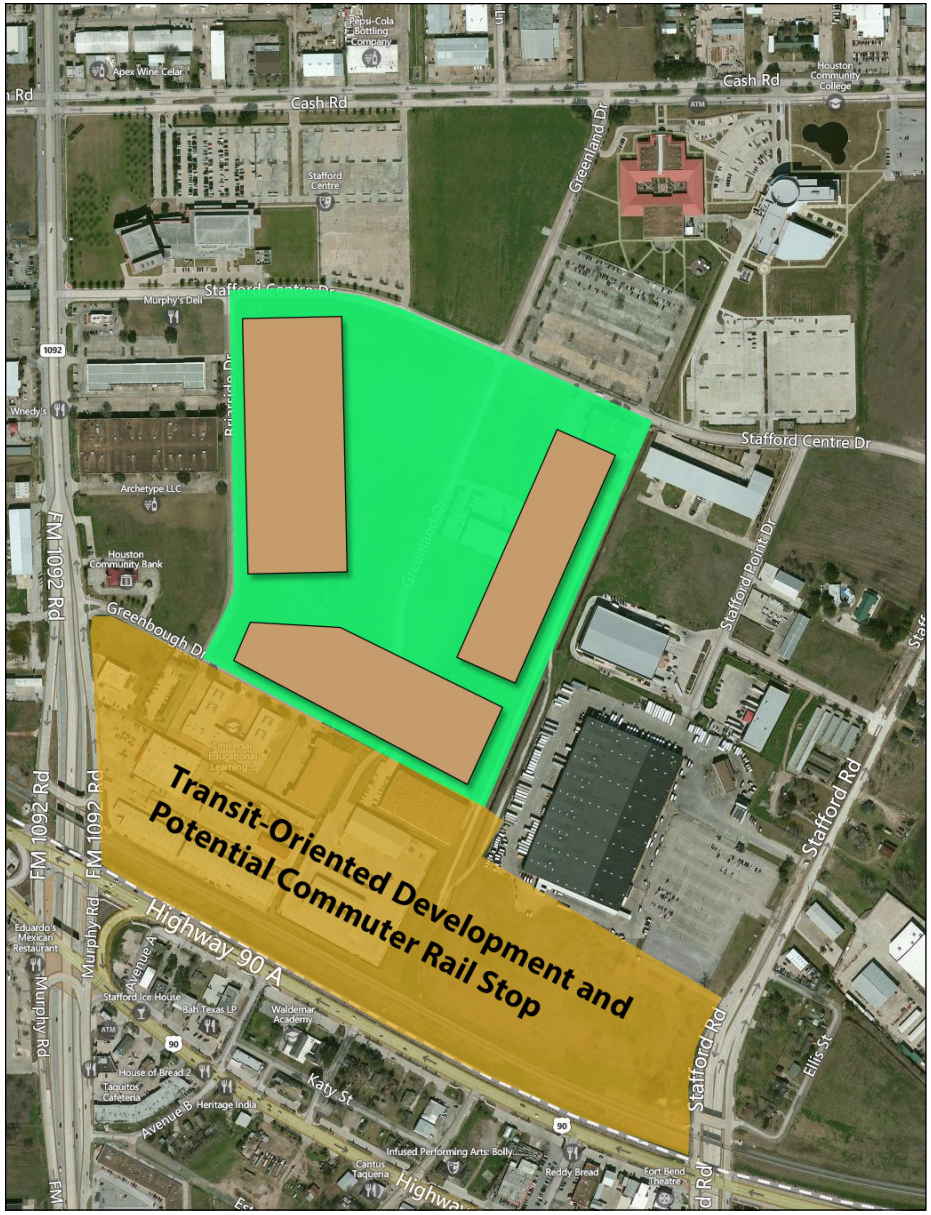


Figure 3.10, ***Opportunity Area C - Focus Boundaries***

Character image - Hotel/Condos

Character image - Open/Gathering Space

OPPORTUNITY AREA D - ISLAND DISTRICT

Located between FM 1092 and Present Street, and bounded by Highway 90A to the north and south, the Island District is comprised of industrial, commercial, retail and residential uses (see ***Figure 3.11, Opportunity Area D - Focus Boundaries***). It is recommended the future land uses exclude residential, and promote some restaurants and third place uses—although, live-work units above are allowed.

The Future Land Use Plan recommends this district be mixed use, which will not affect the recent rewriting and reworking of the zoning ordinance.

Potential Program

The following is the recommended program:

- Restaurants, commercial, and retail
- Third place uses (uses such as cafes, clubs or parks)
- Small bars

Implementation Strategies

- Ensure appropriate design standards are in place to achieve desired development.
- Encourage the consolidation of land by private investors.
- It is recommended the City administration buildings remain in the Island District, but if they are relocated in the future the property could be sold or leased to a private developer.
- Coordinate with the Stafford Economic Development Corporation to determine the type of grants that could be offered for certain developments.

Financing Options

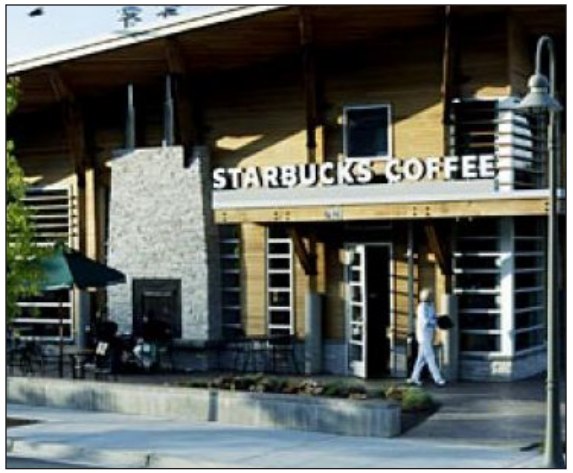
- Economic Development Grants
- New Market Tax Credits

Estimated Cost to Stafford

- Rezone Property – Administrative Cost
- Provide Economic Grants-Administrative Cost

Project Time frame

- Planning and ordinance revisions – two years



Character Image - Third Place Use

Character image - Food/Gas (Third Place Use)

Figure 3.11, ***Opportunity Area D - Focus Boundaries***

Character image - Small Restaurants

OPPORTUNITY AREA E - INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING DISTRICT

This area is currently home to many light industrial and office uses; Opportunity Area E is delineated in ***Figure 3.12, Opportunity Area E - Focus Boundaries***. There are some vacant parcels that should continue to be used to expand existing development. As ownership turns over, the area should continue to promote uses to help sustain and increase Stafford's sales tax base.

Potential Program

Below is the recommended program:

- Light Industrial
- Product supply (order-based retail, office, shipping, production) - See ***Stafford Zoning Ordinance Analysis and Recommendations*** section.
- Sales tax generating businesses

Implementation Strategies

- Ensure appropriate zoning or design standards are in place to achieve desired development.
- Encourage the sale of any vacant buildings.
- Coordinate with the Stafford Economic Development Corporation to determine the type of grants that could be offered for certain developments.

Financing Options

- Freeport Tax Exemptions
- Economic Development Grants
- FBC to construct roads
- New Market Tax Credits

Estimated Cost to Stafford

- Rezone Property – Administrative Cost
- Provide Economic Grants-Administrative Cost
- Promote Development – Administrative Cost

Project Time frame

- Planning and ordinance revisions – two years

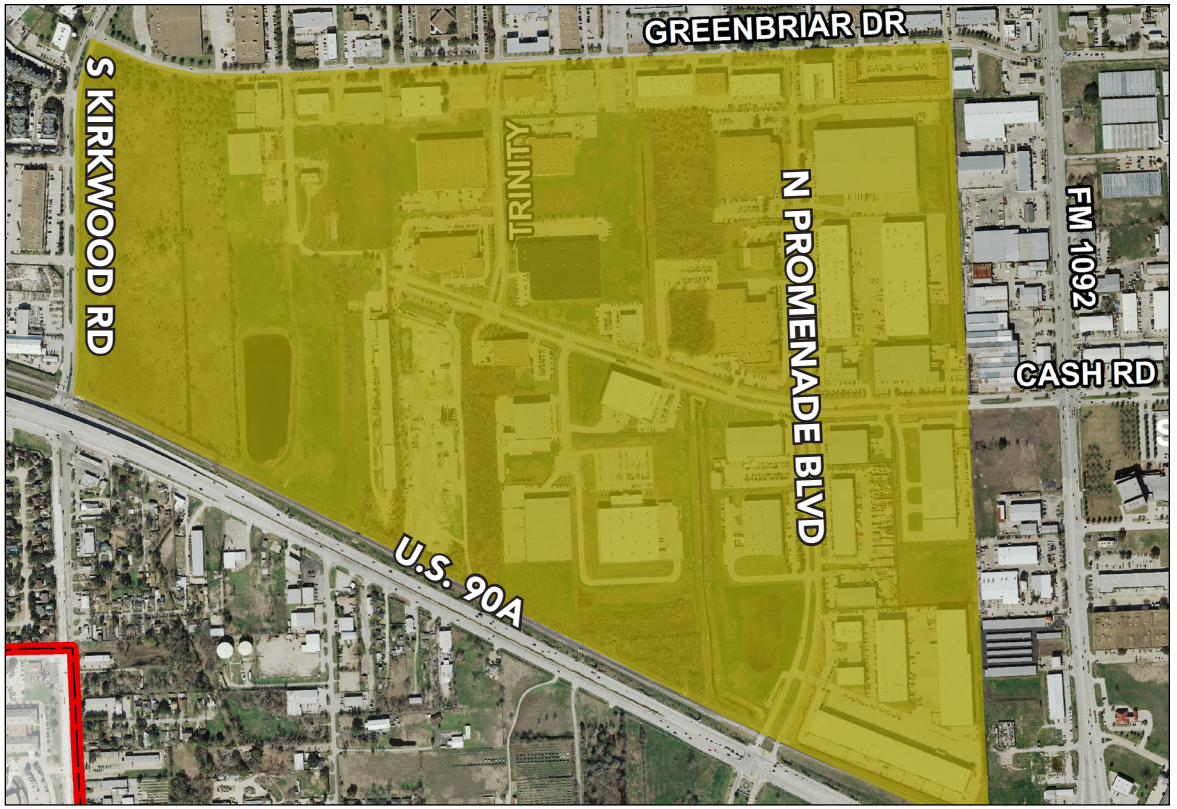


Figure 3.12, *Opportunity Area E - Focus Boundaries*

Character Image - Industrial Uses

Character Image - Product Supply

Stafford Zoning Ordinance Analysis and Recommendations

One of the biggest issues and discussions for the future of Stafford revolves around redevelopment and infill. The five recommended redevelopment areas can be seen in ***Figure 3.5, Stafford Opportunity Areas,*** and are discussed in detail in the previous sections. To successfully implement and direct future development into these areas, as well as attract the types of businesses and companies that are most suitable, the City must have the regulatory tools and directives in place. To ensure that the City of Stafford is successful in marketing and investing in these areas, it is critical that this Plan evaluate the City's existing Code of Ordinances and make recommendations to ensure that the City's vision can be smoothly and practically implemented. The City already has zoning districts that apply to these areas. These zoning districts, listed by redevelopment area are discussed in detail below.

OPPORTUNITY AREA A - MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

The 192-acre, former Texas Instruments (TI) site has great potential for mixed-use development, as previously discussed (see ***Figure 3.6, Opportunity Area A - Focus Boundaries***). Its location along the US 69 corridor gives the site major visibility, that should encourage a unique, one-of-a-kind gateway development. This space should absolutely boast light commercial, retail, office and residential, as well as internal pedestrian and vehicular connectivity that is enhanced by flexible open spaces. The City is currently working with developers on a design and plan that will include a variety of amenities, destinations, and uses (including residential). The design includes a hotel, corporate offices, higher-density residential units, and flexible commercial space to accommodate a variety of commercial options (see Catalyst Commercial's 2014 Market Study for greater detail on potential tenants for this development).

The City currently has a zoning district and design specifically for this TI property, called Mixed Use – 2 (District MU-2). The visual impressions and character presented by this property, especially streetside, will be critical in developing overall community character and visitor impressions of the City. This district was created to accommodate mixed uses such as commercial, light industrial, technology, residential and medical industrial. The vision for this area is becoming a reality as Stafford and its stakeholders continue to work with developers to incorporate these elements. Residential units are a key component of a successful mixed-use center because not only is the site a destination for shopping, eating and entertainment, but it is also a place to reside—this creates a safe and exciting area in the evenings when many office and retail personnel have left the site. The zoning that is in place and its allowed uses in this district are appropriate for the vision and goals laid out by the City, but it is recommended that this section be revisited upon completion of the TI redevelopment to ensure that these regulations are still appropriate and descriptive for the developer. It may be appropriate to amend the existing district or create a Planned Development (PD) to customize the zoning for this area.

Planned Development (PD) District – A land development project comprehensively planned which permits flexibility in building location (lot lines, setbacks, density, etc.), mixtures of housing types and land uses, usable open spaces, and the preservation of significant natural features.

Recommendations:

- Revisit ordinances periodically to ensure that regulations are still up-to-date and appropriate for current and future development.
- Consider amending existing regulations to include more explicit regulations.

- Consider creating a Planned Development (PD) District designation to allow for flexibility in building siting, mixture of housing types and land uses, usable open spaces, and the preservation of significant natural features.

OPPORTUNITY AREA B - FM 1092 AND WEST AIRPORT BOULEVARD CORRIDOR

The focus area is along FM 1092 between Cash Road and West Airport Boulevard. Also, along West Airport Boulevard, just east and west of FM 1092 (see ***Figure 3.8, Opportunity Area B - Focus Boundaries***). The zoning along these corridors is Primary Corridor (District PC). The PC District is meant for areas along and adjacent to FM 1092 North and South of US 90A and areas South of US 90A, as shown on the City's current zoning map. This corridor is highly visible within the community and region and therefore, plays a major role in the visual impressions formed by those who utilize it. The purpose of this district is to enhance property values, business opportunities, and community identity.

The uses allowed in the Primary Corridor Districts (such as along FM 1092) include: commercial, office, restaurant, retail, recreation and entertainment, industrial, institutional, government facilities, existing residential, and utilities (to name a few). These uses compliment the idea of a vibrant entry corridor that generates community character through enhanced intersections and streetscapes, signage improvements, and shared-use paths for connectivity all the way through Stafford along this corridor. Some residential uses exist along these corridors, but are really not intended as permanent land uses. These corridors are highly visible therefore, it is critical that the uses along these roadways show drivers and other roadway users what Stafford has to offer—from safe connected destinations to unique goods and services. This type of visible and highly-trafficked development may pose a threat to the safety and comfort of residents that choose to remain on permitted parcels due to increased travel demand to the area, limited pedestrian infrastructure, noise and sound pollution, and screening issues, to name a few.

It is recommended that the existing residences be allowed, through specific-use permits, to remain, as is, until the residential use is no longer desired by the property owner; in the future, retail or other land uses may be allowed to retrofit homes in good condition to become smaller, local businesses and keep/foster the small-community, home-grown business feel along the corridor. It is recommended that retail and light commercial uses be allowed in this district by right, but that light industrial uses be allowed only by specific use permit (SUP). The City's current zoning regulations do not offer an explicit definition of "commercial" within their text, thus it is also part of the recommendation that commercial land uses be defined explicitly, including heavy and light commercial. Because Stafford can only absorb so much retail in the remaining market niches, it is imperative to encourage and allow as much and as many types as possible in the areas that will generate the most business and revenue for the City.

Commercial – *Commercial Use is defined as a type of nonresidential land use that has one or more of the following characteristics: 1) the use is service-oriented; 2) the use does not primarily sell retail items; 3) the use sells goods or products on a wholesale basis; or 4) the use has or has the need for open storage areas or warehouses its products. Such uses often include motels, auto dealerships, welding shops, manufactured home sales, mini-warehouses, funeral homes, auto body repair shops, and air conditioning and/or heating services.*

Stafford Zoning Ordinance Analysis and Recommendations (*continued*)

Light/Neighborhood Commercial – *Light/neighborhood commercial activities directly serve residents in surrounding neighborhoods and have only a limited impact on nearby development. Approved uses will have a limited impact on the surrounding residential areas in terms of lighting, signage, traffic, odor, noise, and hours of business. These uses may include neighborhood scale commercial, professional, and office uses such as individual medical offices, branch banks, small service establishments, daycare centers, churches, convenience stores with limited operation hours, small restaurants, and smaller public facilities. Uses that should not be permitted in these areas include fast-food restaurants, 24-hour convenience stores, and gas stations.*

Light Industrial – *Light industrial use is defined as uses engaged in the processing, manufacturing, compounding, assembling, packaging, treatment, or fabrication of materials and products, from previously manufactured materials. Such uses are capable of operating in such a manner as to control the external effects of the manufacturing process, such as smoke, noise, odor, light, etc.*

Recommendations:

- Consider revising and amending the City's regulations to exclude residential land uses from the Primary Corridor District.
- Consider adding regulations to the ordinance to include the retro-fitting of old residences in this district to retail or light commercial uses.
- Consider adding an explicit definition of commercial to the City's ordinances, including detailed definitions for light versus heavy commercial uses.
- Allow light industrial in this district with a Specific-Use Permit.

OPPORTUNITY AREA C - ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

The proposed arts and entertainment district is to be located south of the Stafford Centre and Houston Community College. From the Future Land Use map recommendations outlined in this plan, mixed-use development is recommended in this area. The vision includes an upscale hotel with meeting spaces and potential condominium uses, mixed-use buildings with restaurants/retail/office, public parking structures, open spaces, gathering areas, and a potential TOD site. It is critical to include this site in the Comprehensive Plan update to ensure that the City's interests and desires are communicated to those that reference this document for potential investment in Stafford. It is an exciting time in the Houston metropolitan area as multi-modal transportation options are being explored seriously in communities throughout the region—Stafford included.

The recommended area, as illustrated in ***Figure 3.10, Opportunity Area C - Focus Boundaries***, would be the most ideal location for a TOD development because of its location adjacent to HCC and the Stafford Centre; ridership to these locations will be high and desirable among those in the community, as well surrounding cities. HCC expects to enroll more than 20,000 students once fully developed in Stafford, while the Stafford Centre continuously draws thousands of people to a variety of events that occur throughout the year—including musicals, plays, and other entertainment.

The City's current zoning for most of this designated "redevelopment area" is Arts and Education District (District AE), which is meant to accommodate

small-scale mixed commercial uses to complement and support uses dedicated to arts, entertainment, education, and tourism industries. These may include: antique shops, arts and crafts shops, boutiques, bakeries, bookstores, florists, health clubs, jewelers, artist studios, and delicatessens, to name a few. There are no residential uses allowed in this district, which is somewhat appropriate given the public and highly-trafficked nature of the existing and proposed uses in some portions of the redevelopment area. The noise levels, infrastructure required, and basic development standards would not be conducive to safe and hospitable traditional residential units, so it is best that these uses are deferred to adjacent zoning districts to accommodate them more completely. However, Transit-Oriented Developments tend to include residential units above the retail or first-floor uses; thus, it is important to keep some options available on the site, though located primarily to the south of the site—away from the bustling and highly-trafficked area to the north of the site (where the Stafford Centre and HCC are located).

It is recommended that the language in this district remain the same and perhaps an amendment or a new district be created to accommodate the TOD and the specific desires and requirements for development in that area. Though there is not a specific location outlined for this TOD, the vision and general guidelines can promote this area to those seeking regional light rail accessibility and exposure in Stafford. This Plan's express purpose is to outline the future goals and vision of Stafford and it was expressed numerous times by the public, staff and CPAC that a commuter rail stop is desired for the City. Now is the time to identify the best location or area within the City to house this type of development, as well as begin to conceptualize and picture what this area will look like and include. The more the City can identify and prioritize ahead of the development, the greater the chance that these desires and visions will be considered and accounted for in the partnership with rail providers and development entities. This vision is also critical in outlining the long-range goals and ideas of the community with regards to this area so that when the time comes to choose a rail stop location, there are guidelines and established desires from the local community that will influence the decision-making processes. In the area outlined by this plan, the City also provides zoning for the Primary Corridor District (District PC), as discussed above. This is the area that the City may want to consider as part of the new TOD development area—if not part of the arts and entertainment district. The PC district allows for existing single family dwellings to remain, as well as government facilities, industrial uses, and general retail. These uses are not as unique and special as the uses proposed by the Arts and Education District—the City might consider changing the designation of this area to AE or an amended TOD district.

Recommendations:

- Consider amending the City's ordinance or creating a new district to accommodate the TOD necessary adjacent to light rail and multi-modal transportation stations
- Consider limiting residential uses to the southern part of the redevelopment site away from the Stafford Centre and HCC, but continuing to allow them in conjunction with TOD development.
- Consider changing the zoning designation of PC to AE or TOD to encourage and foster the creative type of entertainment and cultural destination district envisioned by the City.

Stafford Zoning Ordinance Analysis and Recommendations (*continued*)

OPPORTUNITY AREA D - ISLAND DISTRICT

The Island redevelopment area is based specifically on the boundaries of the Island District, as outlined by the City's zoning map and illustrated in ***Figure 3.11, Opportunity Area D - Focus Boundaries***. The City appointed a committee that extensively revised this district in 2012. This area is primarily comprised of industrial, commercial, retail and residential uses at this time. Many of the community and industrial uses are now non-conforming and require a Specific-Use Permit in the Island District. The ordinances states that "The standards of this district offer increased flexibility in recognition of its development constraints and incentives by way of floor area bonuses for vertical mixed use, centralized and preferably structured parking, as well as property assembly"—this ultimately describes an urban character distinguished by increased development densities. The regulations allow buildings up to eight stories high—while this is considered urban, it may not be the most practical.

The Island District is a key component of the strengthening Stafford's land uses and community vision for the next twenty years; key questions such as "Will City Hall be relocated?" "What types of businesses could benefit from this location?" "What is the character and identity of the Island District going to be?" need to be discussed and responses prioritized in order to direct future land uses. The current zoning ordinance allows residential, office, retail, restaurant and recreation, among others. The allowed uses are desirable in an area like this, however traditional residential is not recommended for this area. City Hall, in its current location, could be used as leverage to encourage businesses to Stafford and The Island District. The Island District should be re-branded and become a destination for bars, restaurants, and other retailing uses—"The Island." The City's regulations should be sure to allow light commercial, retail, and offices to encourage a variety of uses that could serve the visiting populations and add to the exciting experience of being at "the Island."

It is recommended that the district description be reworded to eliminate the allowance of residential uses (except live-work units) in the future plan for this district, thus focusing efforts on generating another unique and exciting destination in Stafford for entertainment, eating, etc. A live-work unit is defined as a single unit (such as studio, loft, or one-bedroom) consisting of commercial or office spaces with a residential component that is occupied by the same resident. It will be important to generate an idea of the character for this district—whether that be eclectic, old western, or modern—so that new businesses can be targeted or recognize from the descriptions the compatibility of their businesses for the Island District. Ultimately, the zoning for this district is appropriate, but it could be enhanced and more explicit with the addition of more definitions and the clarification of land uses—including a new definition of light commercial, as previously discussed. Light commercial should also be included as an appropriate land use for this district.

Recommendations:

- Consider amending the description of the district to remove residential land uses as an approved use, with the exception of the live-work units.
- Develop a character and brand for The Island district, such as "Stop Off at the Island."
- Add more definitions and clarification of land uses, including light commercial.

OPPORTUNITY AREA E - INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING DISTRICT

The industrial redevelopment area is currently home to many light industrial businesses and office uses, as well as vacant parcels. As ownership turns over in the future, it is envisioned that the area should continue to promote uses to help sustain and increase Stafford's sales tax base—including the incorporation of light industrial and product supply (order-based retail, office, shipping, and production processes).

The proposed area for redevelopment currently lies within the City's Residential, Commercial, and Technology (District RCT). The RCT district seeks to protect and preserve appropriate locations for a wide range of existing and future high-tech industries and distribution centers that rely upon regional accessibility through proximity to major highways and transit corridors. The district is also designed to accommodate existing and future large scale retail, office, hotel and multi-family residential development associated with Highway 69 frontage.

Traditional residential uses may not be the most appropriate uses to include adjacent to manufacturing and production sites, thus it is recommended that the inclusion of residential types be removed. It can become a challenge to market an area to larger developers or businesses that feel their uses are not suitable adjacent to residential uses or fear the public backlash of such a development. Uses such as food services, administrative, support and waste management and remediation services, finance and insurance services, health care and social assistance, as well as accommodations be included in these areas. Office parks are only as successful as their adjacent uses because employees often utilize other services in the area before, during and after work—such as dry cleaning, pharmacy needs, grocery shopping, convenience stores, and restaurants, to name a few. It will be essential to provide a variety of land uses in this district alongside the larger businesses and office-oriented developments so that they might both become vibrant and successful areas of commerce.

Recommendations:

- Consider amending the regulations to exclude residential land uses from this district; however, add the new definition of commercial uses to be allowed in this district (that includes light manufacturing, office and light industrial).
- Develop an economic development strategy to target businesses for this district, including other areas as well because these areas are more than just those marked in ***Figure 3.12, Opportunity Area E - Focus Boundaries***.
- Consider rezoning this area as light industrial without the inclusion of residential uses.

Administration of the Future Land Use Plan

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AND THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

At times, the City will likely encounter development proposals that do not reflect the purpose and intent of the land use pattern shown on the Future Land Use Plan. Review of such development proposals should include the following considerations:

- *Will the proposed change enhance the site and the surrounding area?*
- *Is the proposed change a better use than that recommended by the Future Land Use Plan?*
- *Will the proposed use impact adjacent residential areas in a negative manner? Or, will the proposed use be compatible with, and/or enhance, adjacent residential areas?*
- *Are uses adjacent to the proposed use similar in nature in terms of appearance, hours of operation, and other general aspects of compatibility?*
- *Does the proposed use present a significant benefit to the public health, safety and welfare of the community? Would it contribute to the City's long-term economic well-being?*

Development proposals that are inconsistent with the Future Land Use Plan (or that do not meet its general intent) should be reviewed based upon the above questions and should be evaluated on their own merit. It should be incumbent upon the applicant to provide evidence that the proposal meets the aforementioned considerations and supports community goals and objectives as set forth within this Plan.

It is important to recognize that proposals contrary to the Plan could be an improvement over the uses shown on the Plan for a particular area. This may be due to changing market, development and/or economic trends that occur at some point in the future after the Plan is adopted. If such changes occur, and especially if there is a significant benefit to the City of Stafford then these proposals should be approved, and the Future Land Use Plan should be amended accordingly.

ZONING AND THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Chapter 211 of the Texas Local Government Code states that *zoning regulations must be adopted in accordance with a comprehensive plan*. Consequently, a zoning map should be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan to the fullest extent possible. See ***Figure 3.13, City of Stafford Existing Zoning Map*** (on the follow page) to see existing districts as they are designated today.

REACTIVE AND PROACTIVE USE OF ZONING AND THE PLAN

Approval of development proposals that are inconsistent with the Future Land Use Plan may result in a greater inconsistency between the future Land Use Plan and zoning regulations. It is recommended that Stafford amend the Future Land Use Plan prior to or at the same time of rezoning land that would result in such inconsistency. To expedite the process of amending the Future Land Use Plan to ensure zoning regulations correspond, the related amendment recommendation(s) could be forwarded simultaneously with the rezoning request(s). It is recommended that the City of Stafford engage in regular review of the Future Land Use Plan to further ensure that zoning is consistent and that the document and the map reflect all amendments made subsequent to the Plan's initial adoption. It should be noted that specific implementation measures related to zoning are addressed within the Implementation Strategies of this Comprehensive Plan.

While the recommended Future Land Use Plan herein was partially based on existing land use and the City's adopted zoning map,

some areas within Stafford conflict in terms of the way in which they are recommended to develop as reflected on the Future Land Use Plan and the way in which they are currently zoned. In certain instances, such inconsistency can be in the City's favor; this would be the case if the zoning map showed an area zoned as agricultural, while the Future Land Use Plan showed the same area recommended for a nonresidential use. Such a reactive position can enable the City to rezone, thereby allowing the nonresidential use, when the particular proposed use is ideal for the location.

The recommendations contained herein should guide Stafford future land use planning and related policies. It is important to note that the Future Land Use Plan is not the community's official zoning map. Rather, it is a guide to decision making in the context of the City's future land use patterns. The Future Land Use Plan should be used consistently and updated as needed. As coordinated, quality redevelopment continues in Stafford over time. The official copy of the Future Land Use Plan is on file at Stafford's City Hall. The boundaries of land use categories as depicted on the official map should be used to determine the appropriate land use category for areas that are not clearly delineated on the smaller-scale Future Land Use Plan contained within this Comprehensive Plan document.

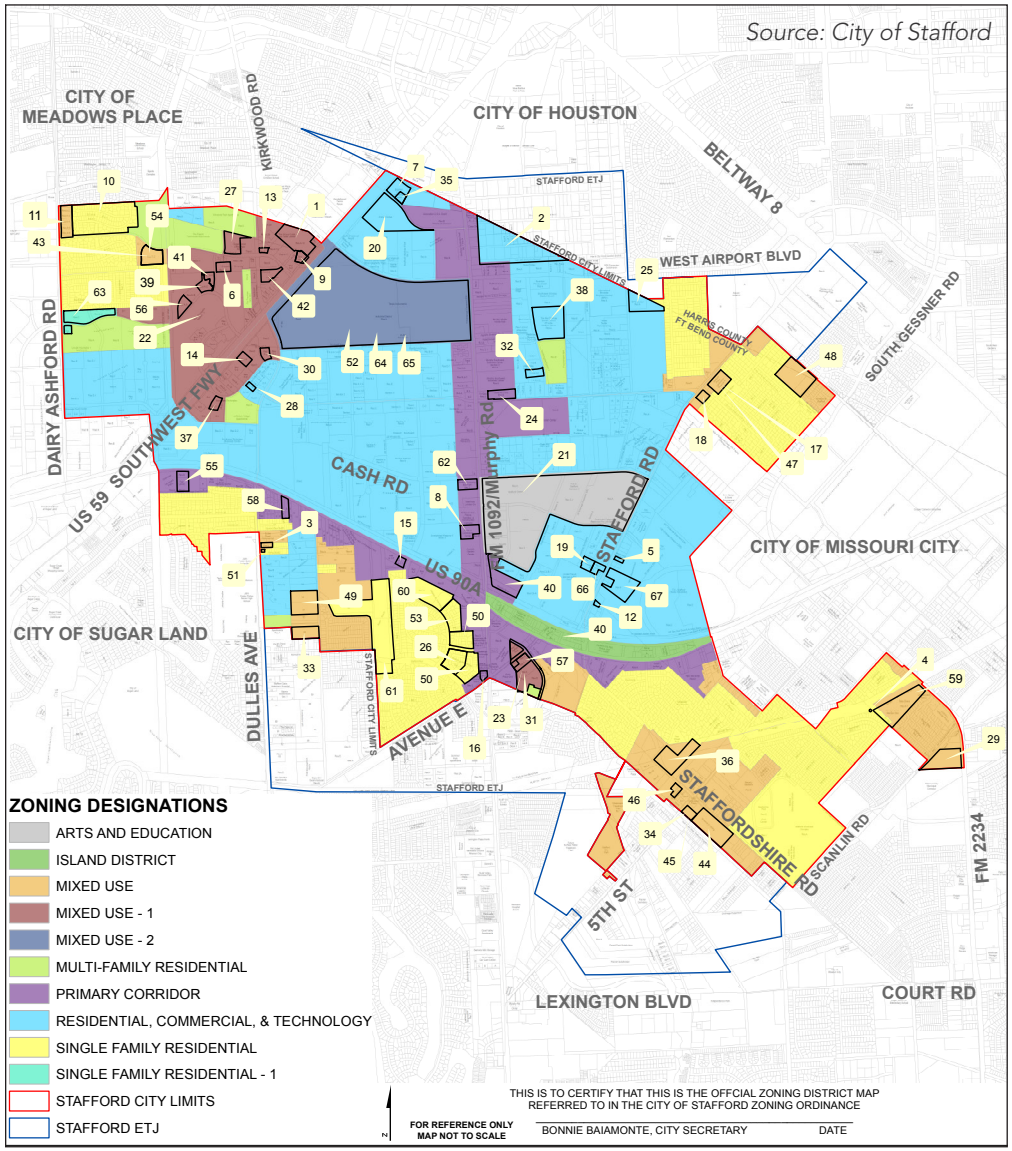


Figure 3.13, ***City of Stafford Existing Zoning Map***

**Note: This map is updated frequently. For the most up-to-date land use map please refer to the City's website at www.cityofstafford.com.*

Future Land Use Recommendations

Below are a number of additional land use recommendations to consider as Stafford develops and redevelops.

GOAL 1: Foster a strong and diverse economy, through unique and innovative policies with a full range of employment and economic opportunities underscored by a zero city property tax.

STRATEGIES

Promote Stafford as a major regional employment center through public policies that encourage expanded opportunity for jobs.

- Create a special zoning districts that allows commercial, retail, and industrial uses that help promote Stafford as a major employment center.

GOAL 2: Create a thriving city, with emphasis on education through SMSD that attracts people of all ages, welcomes diversity, and fosters a family-friendly atmosphere.

STRATEGIES

Seek development of and promote existing entertainment venues, the arts, and recreational amenities.

- Consider using city-owned properties for future sales tax generating projects, especially in the Arts and Entertainment area and the Island District.

GOAL 3: Ensure adequate facilities and services to maintain the safety and well-being of Stafford's residents, workers, and visitors.

STRATEGIES

Provide street lighting to ensure the public safety in commercial, retail, and residential neighborhoods.

- Reduce energy consumption by requiring the use of more energy efficient lighting fixtures as part of any new development and redevelopment.

STRATEGIES

Encourage streets and high traffic pedestrian areas to include sidewalks and other pedestrian-friendly amenities such as crosswalks, pedestrian countdown signals, and update to current standards if necessary.

- Promote land strategies that foster creation of walkable and pedestrian friendly places.

STRATEGIES

Provide the necessary and appropriate technology, buildings, equipment and people to continue delivery of quality services now and in the future.

- Consider relocating City Hall and other city departments to a location that is easily accessible to residents of Stafford.
- As population increases, evaluate which city service departments may need to increase staff.
- Obtain control of public facility sites that will be required by future growth and development.

STRATEGIES

Provide plans and studies to investigate deficiencies in infrastructure City-maintained and operated infrastructure.

- Review and amend the Comprehensive Plan every two to three years to confirm it is accurate to address future needs.
- Determine if right-of-way is needed to construct commuter rail in Stafford in relation to a TOD site and park-and-ride service.

- Determine if the Fort Bend County or Harris County ETJ should be annexed and what annexed property future land uses would be. Conduct a Fiscal Impact Analysis (FIA) to analyze this information.

GOAL 4: Strengthen Stafford's image, identity, and character to foster a distinctive and appealing place to live, work, and visit.

STRATEGIES

Establish a community image theme with participation of residents, business owners and property owners.

- Enhance and develop building standards for commercial and retail development by creating a list of desired aesthetics and materials list.
- Perform diagnostic and update zoning ordinances to include building standards appropriate to zoning districts.

STRATEGIES

Improve signage along main corridors to direct residents and visitors to activity areas.

- Update the city's Sign Ordinance to help with re-branding Stafford.

GOAL 5: Facilitate development and redevelopment to create an urban mixed-use environment to attract people and foster a sense of place.

STRATEGIES

Strengthen the existing land uses located in the Island District, and encourage reuse of vacant building spaces for new and complementary uses.

- The City should develop a small area plan to determine specific steps for revitalization of the Island District. The small area plan should consist of a conceptual plan showing the area at build out.

STRATEGIES

Support activities and developments that draw people from outside the area to Stafford for the purpose of entertainment, shopping, and living.

- Promote the Activity Nodes concept that will help to connect various high-activity areas within the city, encouraging entertainment, shopping, and living at each node.

STRATEGIES

Ensure that designated mixed-use developments contain a higher degree of urban design with buildings fronting the building lot line, wide sidewalks, street trees and pedestrian amenities.

- Provide site design guidelines in the zoning ordinance to ensure developments are constructed to the city's development standards.

STRATEGIES

Utilize existing vacant land not designated as open space by steering outside parties on existing land uses and development standards of the property.

- Coordinate with and reference the Future Land Use and Thoroughfare Plan maps when meeting with outside parties regarding development opportunities.

GOAL 6: Provide a balanced mix of land uses, in accordance with the vision of Stafford residents, which diversify the sales tax base, to attract people to live, work, and shop in Stafford.

STRATEGIES

Provide a range of housing types in Stafford to encourage a diverse population.

- Update zoning ordinance to include a variety of housing types, lot sizes, and expand the single family and/or multifamily residential types in the city for infill.
- Identify impediments for creation of a greater range of housing.
- Stimulate the production of new housing for all incomes, ages, and family types.

STRATEGIES

Seek development of quality food stores.

- Locate uses adjacent to each other that are compatible and complimentary, such as residential and some nonresidential development. Offices and small (neighborhood) retail establishment should be adjacent to residential uses.
- Encourage neighborhood retail nodes to develop at key intersections in order to serve the needs of adjacent neighborhood areas within an approximate one-mile radius.
- Through coordination with the market analysis, help attract a quality food store.

STRATEGIES

Revitalize areas of opportunities to attract new investment and activity.

- Identify areas ripe for redevelopment and coordinate with Stafford Economic Development Corporation to help attract investment.
- Remove any impediments in zoning ordinance to redevelopment to ensure new investments are made within the city.

STRATEGIES

Encourage redevelopment and investment near Houston Community College, Stafford Centre, and surrounding areas.

- Consider promoting city-owned land just south of the Stafford Centre for mixed use and community entertainment uses.
- Seek and encourage hotel and transit oriented development near Houston Community College and Stafford Centre areas.

GOAL 7: Protect the quality and integrity of Stafford's neighborhoods.

STRATEGIES

Ensure that there are provisions for meeting the housing type and satisfy needs of families with children, single parents with children, young adults just leaving home, young professionals, empty-nesters retirees and the elderly.

- Promote unique housing choices in Stafford, featuring a variety of lot sizes, type and building materials for all people regardless of the current life cycle they are in.
- Consider creative housing options, such as lofts, especially in mixed use areas and rehabilitated structures.
- Create and establish minimum and maximum densities for various single and multifamily areas in the city other than SFR, SFR-1, and MFR.

STRATEGIES

Require the use of long-lasting/durable building materials, such as stone or brick, and encourage the use of high-pitched roofs to enhance the overall housing appearance.

- Update the Subdivision Ordinance with new design standards and layouts for housing.

STRATEGIES

Ensure that single-family residential neighborhoods are protected from intensive areas of development by using screening and buffering techniques.

- Limit single family and multifamily to specific areas in the city. Refer to the Future Land Use Plan.

GOAL 8: Require high quality and visually attractive architectural characteristics in both residential and non-residential developments.

STRATEGIES

Update the existing zoning ordinance in order to promote the development and redevelopment of properties for the highest and best use.

- Update the existing zoning ordinance.
- Remove residential uses from zoning districts that are primarily non-residential in the city.
- Consider rezoning the Island District to Mix Use to help facilitate unique redevelopment opportunities.

STRATEGIES

Improve the existing sign ordinance for continuity throughout the City.

- Prepare a visual assessment survey of City corridors to identify problem areas that negatively impact community character.
- Revise sign ordinances to reduce signage inconsistencies along major corridors.

STRATEGIES

Encourage the creation of nodal, master planned retail centers over strip center developments to encourage long-term viability and investment in retail centers.

- Create overlay districts to encourage the creation of nodal, master planned retail center development.

STRATEGIES

Mandate the use of high-quality building materials, such as brick and stone, to protect the long-term durability of non-residential construction. Require all non-residential developments to contain a majority percentage of masonry.

- Create design guidelines to address aesthetics and building materials of non-residential construction.

STRATEGIES

Require architectural enhancements, such as pitched roofs, awnings, enhanced canopies and building articulation to create visually attractive developments.

- Create a development prototype or pattern book that visually shows the types of building materials, housing types, site design, decorative lighting, etc. that are desired in new developments and redevelopments in the city.

STRATEGIES

Require all parking rows to contain landscape islands.

- Update zoning ordinance to require all parking rows to contain landscape islands.

STRATEGIES

Encourage the planting of trees within parking lots so that a shade canopy covers a large percentage of the parking area at tree maturity.

- Update zoning ordinance to require tree planting within parking lots to create shade canopies.

STRATEGIES

Encourage parking lots, over one acre, to contain a shaded pedestrian way.

- Update zoning ordinance to require parking lots, over one acre, to contain a shaded pedestrian way.

STRATEGIES

Allow Stormwater BMPs to count towards a portion of landscaping requirements.

- Update landscape ordinance to allow Stormwater Best Management Practices to count toward a portion of landscape requirements.

STRATEGIES

Encourage the use of thematic, decorative and enhanced lighting features within the public right-of-way, residential areas (when necessary) and retail/commercial areas.

- Designate appropriate zoning districts to encourage the use of thematic, decorative and enhanced lighting features within public right-of-way (i.e. Island District).

GOAL 9: Partner with, TxDOT, H-GAC, and other local intergovernmental agencies to improve mobility and funding opportunities in Stafford.

STRATEGIES

Utilize shared access easements and cross-access to provide connectivity between adjacent non-residential uses, limiting the number of driveways along major corridors and allowing for continuous landscaping.

- Examine city code to update and allow for shared use easements to facilitate private agreements between adjacent property owners to allow for shared access.

Chapter 4

Transportation and Circulation Plan

Transportation and Circulation

The transportation component of the Comprehensive Plan identifies future transportation needs for The City of Stafford, the basis for them, and describes goals and policies to direct related decisions. The transportation component of a community is often a high profile element of a plan, since it is experienced by residents daily as they make choices of how to connect with where they live, work and play. This plan provides a framework for a balanced transportation system to offer choices in how people travel, and includes assessment of traffic volumes and crash statistics, corridor design and a recommendation for the Master Thoroughfare Plan with functional classifications and multi-modal components. The Transportation Plan serves as a blueprint for future investment related decisions into the transportation system and was developed based upon past transportation planning efforts and input from the Comprehension Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC), City Staff and the public.

The following guiding principles were developed by stakeholders and integrated into the plan recommendations:

- The thoroughfare network should maintain strong, diverse economy of and remain efficient, underscored by the City's fiscally conservative outlook. The plan considers integrating multi-modal forms of travel to enhance transportation choices, as well as maximizing the carrying capacity of the system, and leverage regional partners to make strategic improvements.
- The network should provide adequate facilities to maintain the safety and well-being of residents, workers, and visitors. Stafford should have safe internal circulation between neighborhoods and core community activity nodes.
- The network should facilitate development and redevelopment. It should help to create an urban mixed-use environment to attract people and foster a sense of place. The transportation system should not only provide for mobility but support strategic economic development initiatives.

The Master Thoroughfare Plan establishes the framework for community growth and when combined with the Future Land Use Plan, forms a long-range statement for public policy. For established communities such as Stafford, alignments and right-of-ways for major transportation facilities are often existing routes and adjacent to developed property. This makes it increasingly difficult to facilitate system changes without significant financial impacts. However, by incorporating programmed land uses and densities outlined in the Future Land Use Plan, strategies can be put into place to guide further growth that benefits the land use/transportation relationship.

The City's proactive monitoring process of other regional transportation planning and regional growth initiatives should also be continued in order to assess implications to the current thoroughfare plan.

Existing Conditions

Several local mobility and congestion issues were identified as part of the public input process. Other key issues affecting the City include; the regional context, regional traffic, local mobility, and potential transportation issue areas for the city. An evaluation of Stafford's existing transportation system was performed as the basis in the Master Thoroughfare Plan development . Topic areas addressed in this analysis include; functional classifications, existing traffic signal locations, and existing roadway levels of service based on available TxDOT average annual daily traffic (AADT) volumes, saturation traffic counts, and the FM 1092 Access Management Study.

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

As noted in the ***Introduction***, Stafford is located in the Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown metro area, in the northeast of Ft. Bend County. Regional planning by H-GAC in the 2040 Regional Transportation Plan identifies priority transportation investments over the eight central counties of the region to support anticipated household and job growth. These initiatives are aimed at addressing growth over the next 25 years. Currently, over $75 billion in investments are recommended in the plan. Regional plans considered in the context of this plan include:

- *Our Great Region 2040* – H-GAC 2014
- The *2014 H-GAC Subregional Planning Initiative (SPI)* (useful for trails, regional transit planning efforts)

Creating and maintaining partnerships with local, state and federal agencies such as Fort Bend County, Harris County, Sugar Land, Missouri City, Meadows Place, City of Houston, the H-GAC, Texas Department of Transportation, and Federal Highway Administration will allow Stafford to obtain support in funding projects within the city limits.

ISSUE AREAS

Identified issue areas have been incorporated into the plan recommendations include regional traffic, intersection spacing and excessive numbers of driveways.

Regional Traffic

Peak period congestion is common in successful urbanized areas, and the City of Stafford is no exception. The thoroughfare network shows signs of heavy use despite Stafford's relatively small geographic size. Regional traffic traveling through the City significantly contributes to periodic congestion delays in certain locations within the City. Most notably, commute volumes on FM 1092 and Avenue E in the Island District, as commuters use the route to avoid congestion on U.S. 90A. This congested intersection is a project the City of Stafford has identified for potential application to Fort Bend County Bond Program. Also, FM 1092 at W Airport that is used as an alternate route to the U.S-59/I-69 corridor during peak times to access FM 1092. Because of this, traffic numbers have substantially increased on the FM 1092 and W Airport corridors. However, the increased ridership along these corridors has provided the opportunity for a gateway identity enhancement.

The Union Pacific Rail Road (UPRR) has a double track through Stafford that once separated north Stafford from south Stafford. There are two underpasses constructed at U.S. 90A at Stafford and U.S. 90A at FM 1092; as a means to bypass the train. However, the two U.S. 90A railroad crossings at Promenade and at Kirkwood are at-grade. UPRR it set to begin constructing a second railroad track through the City this year [2015], likely increasing the delay at these intersections.

Intersection Spacing

Generally, the roadway network offers more major corridors than collector connections,. This can constrain vehicle trips to few routes, thereby limiting the ability for traffic to flow optimally and restricting pedestrian opportunities, due to longer and disconnected routes. As a result, traffic is channeled on one of the major corridors, even for shorter, local trips. Higher traffic volumes and speeds on roads increase traffic flow, but can detract from the street as an attractive place to spend time or locate retail businesses and residences. A more connected grid primarily allows for alternative as well as shorter routes for all modes.

The City code currently references requiring maximum block lengths of 1,800 feet on major thoroughfares (see Section 82-85 of the City's Code of Ordinances for more detail). This is slightly longer than recommended intersection spacing for thoroughfares forming the backbone of the transportation network, where shorter distances provide alternative routes for connecting collectors and local streets. Yet, through connections made by collectors or local roads at smaller distances contribute to better connectivity and mobility and for all modes when combined with access management considerations detailed later in this chapter.

Excessive Driveways on Major Corridors

Development over time has created an excessive number of access points along major corridors. While properties have access rights to public corridors, the excessive number of driveways has reduced

U.S. Highway 59/I-69 Corridor at Stafford Gateway Monuments

U.S. 90A (Main Street) at City Hall

the carrying capacity for key corridors, such as FM 1092 and segments of North and South Main Street. FM 1092 was the subject of a detailed access management and corridor study. Recommendations should eventually be implemented.

Regional Highways

Stafford sits at the confluence of three major freeways that frame the center of the community and one major highway that runs through the center of the City.

- ***U.S. 59 (Southwest Freeway)/I-69 Corridor:*** This eight-lane freeway with express lanes and frontage roads provides key regional spine of mobility to and from Stafford through the Houston area and Southwest Houston. Carrying a daily volume of almost 225,000 vehicles in the Stafford area, this corridor provides access to Loop 610, SH 6, Beltway 8 and the Interstate freeway system. Express lanes connect Stafford to central Houston for high occupancy vehicles.
- ***U.S. 90A (Main Street):*** U.S.-90A is a highway that runs east-west through Stafford, from central Houston, through Sugar Land to Richmond and Rosenberg. The highway acted as an original main street for all of these cities; and Stafford maintains central civic functions through the Islands district, allowable by splitting the roadway into one-way pairs. Outside of the center of the city, the road functions more as a controlled access, regional connector for Stafford, serving commuters and truck freight. The current daily traffic ranges from about 44,000 vehicles east of the Island District to 51,000 west of the district, inside the city limit.
- ***Sam Houston Tollway (Beltway 8):*** Owned and operated by the Harris County Toll Road Authority, Beltway 8 circumnavigates Houston and connects Stafford to George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) to the north, and Hobby Airport to the east. It is 88 miles in total length, and its frontage roads function as a regional state highway. Together with the main lanes, Beltway 8 conveys upwards of 96,000 vehicles on an average weekday.
- ***FM 1092:*** FM 1092 serves as a critical connection for regional trips with direct access to both the U.S. 59/I-69 corridor and U.S. 90A. It is classified as Farm-to-Market (FM) road by both the Texas Department of Transportation and Fort Bend County. It is classified in the City of Stafford as a Major Thoroughfare, and has an existing 6-lane section with center two-way left-turn lane north of U.S. 90A and 4-lane section with center two-way left-turn lane south of U.S. 90A.

Connectivity and Activity Nodes

A major challenge seen in many cities across the nation is how to connect different areas and sectors of the community. Not only connecting areas, but even though separated by distance, how can they generate nodes of activity, share different identities, and still have a community that functions as a whole.

Although on a larger scale, the City of New York is a great example of a well connected city, with various areas and sectors that boast their own identities, yet the City still functions as one. Stafford may be landlocked, but it is still a growing community with opportunities to foster activity nodes, creating their own identities, while being connected, functioning as one city.

Connectivity can occur through a variety of ways. The most common method is connections through roadway networks. Connectivity can also be pedestrian in nature, such as, trails, sidewalks and shared use paths. Shared use paths are pathways between 10 to 12 feet, accommodating pedestrian and bicycle traffic. They are located off of the roadway in order to provide safety for its users.

Connections may not always be in the form of built facilities, but signage, gateway monuments, lighting, and banner poles can also create visual connectivity throughout a city.

Figure 4.1, Connectivity and Activity Nodes, identifies four activity nodes that are connected through roadway networks and shared use paths. Eventually, these four areas should continue to become connected through established identities, signage, and internally through strategic placement of sidewalks. The connectivity of these fours areas are important so that no one activity nodes becomes an island, separated from various areas in the community. The connectivity of these areas will allow Stafford to function as one city, rather than independent parts.

The Fountains activity node is well established and identifiable, featuring retail and restaurants. It's location and access to U.S. 59/I-69, provides great visibility, helping to attract visitors throughout the week and yearly. The U.S. 59/I-69 freeway somewhat divides this activity node from the eastern portion of Stafford, but through signage and a pedestrian connection it can still be identified as a part of the community.

The former Texas Instruments (TI) property is a future activity node that is planned to feature mixed use, office, and residential projects. Because of its location and access to U.S. 59/I-69, it has the potential to become a key activity generator and crucial link between the other three activity nodes. The FM 1092 corridor will also be important in how it is redeveloped, and any efforts must be intentional in providing

Photo: Bill Montgomery, Houston Chronicle Staff

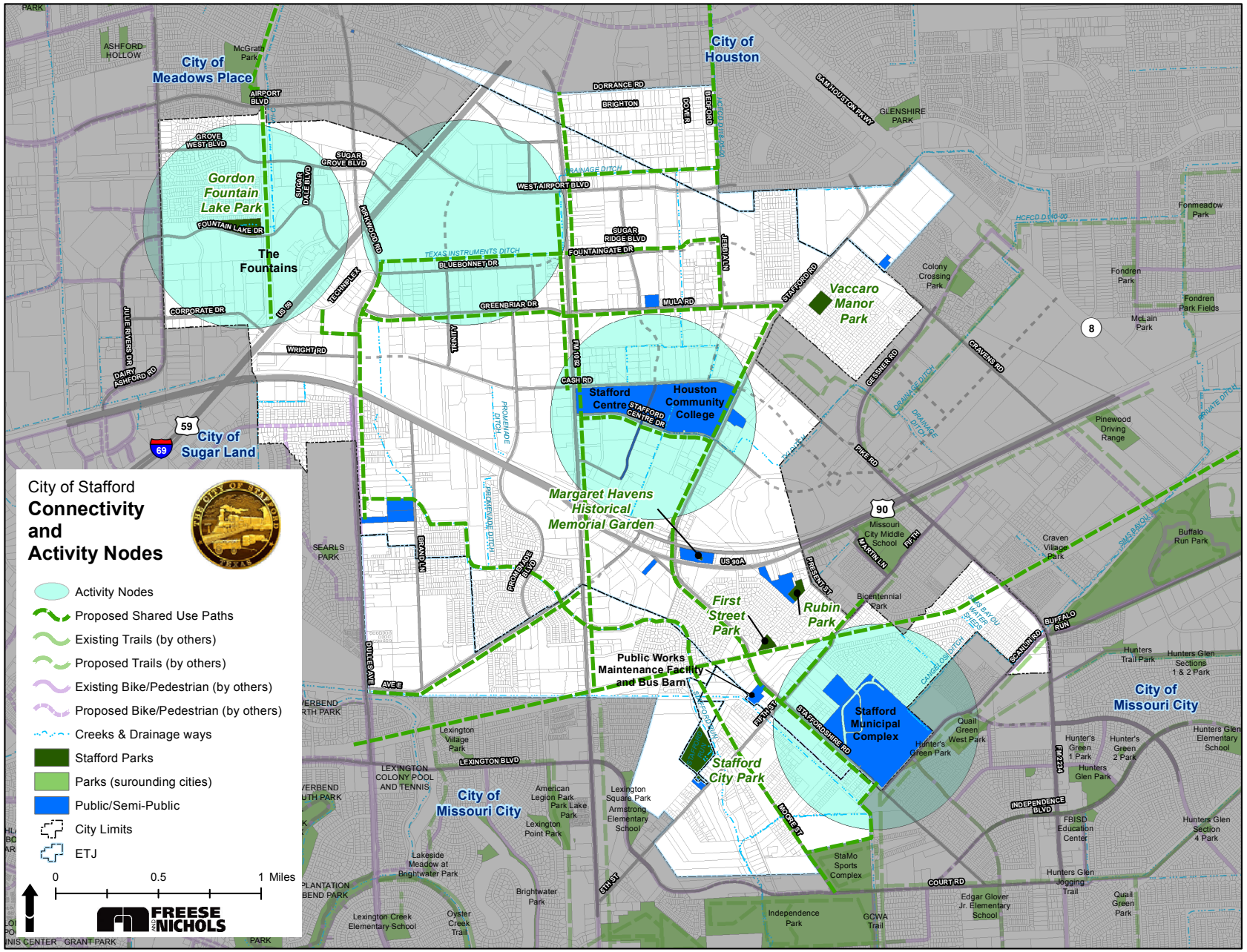
Highlight: Hobby Goes International

Hobby Airport recently celebrated Southwest Airlines' first international flight between Aruba and Houston. In 2012 a campaign to Free Hobby was launched in an effort to begin international flight service out of Hobby Airport. There was much dissent over this, due to the proximity of IAH and other major airline carriers. Even so, after much debate between city council and city leaders, Southwest Airlines won approval from the City of Houston to begin construction on a new $156 million, five-gate international concourse (to be completed in the Fall of 2015). This is an exciting step in establishing Hobby Airport as a regional international air service provider.

Source: Harty, Jack. "First Southwest Airlines International Flight Lands in Houston". Airways News. March 9, 2015.

Photo: Jack Harty, airwaysnews.com

Figure 4.1, *Connectivity and Activity Nodes*



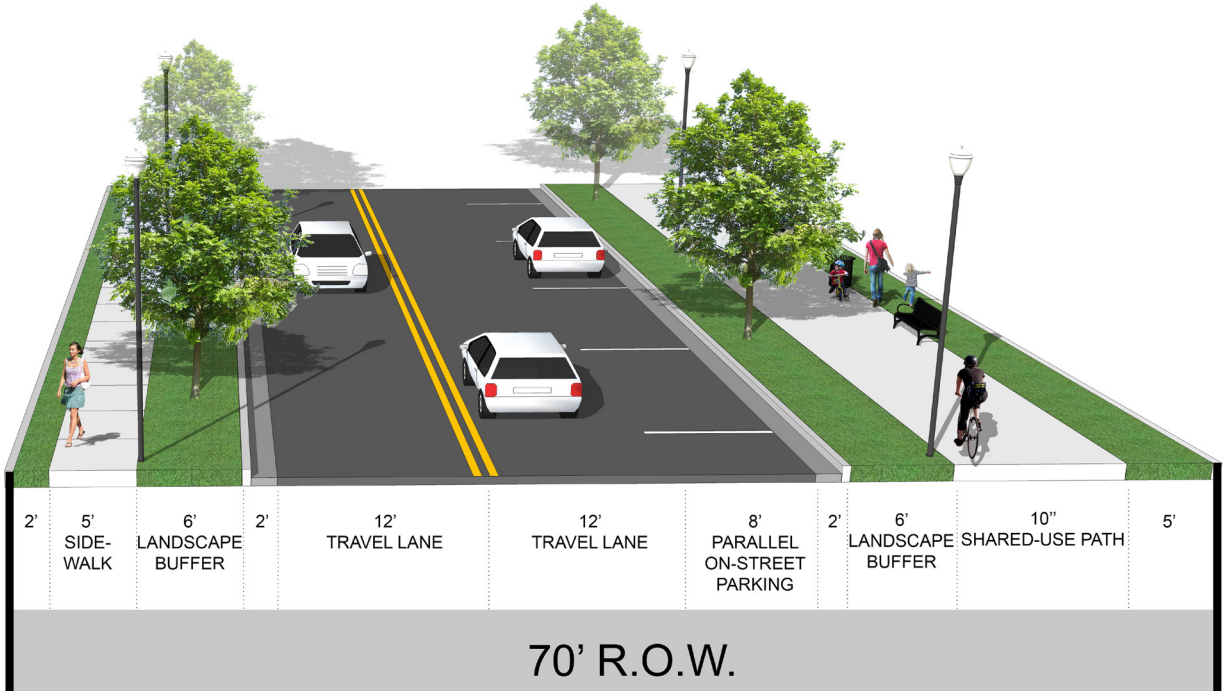
connections through signage and shared use paths. An update of city ordinances can help encourage proper development along the FM 1092 corridor, to aid in the connection to other activity nodes.

Another up and coming activity nodes is the Arts and Entertainment District identified in ***Chapter 3, Future Land Use***. This area has the potential for small-scale mixed use, lodging, and transit-oriented development. With the existence of the Stafford Centre and Houston Community College, activity is already being generated, and will help boost future development. The proximity from the TI site again allows for connections through FM 1092, shared use paths, and signage.

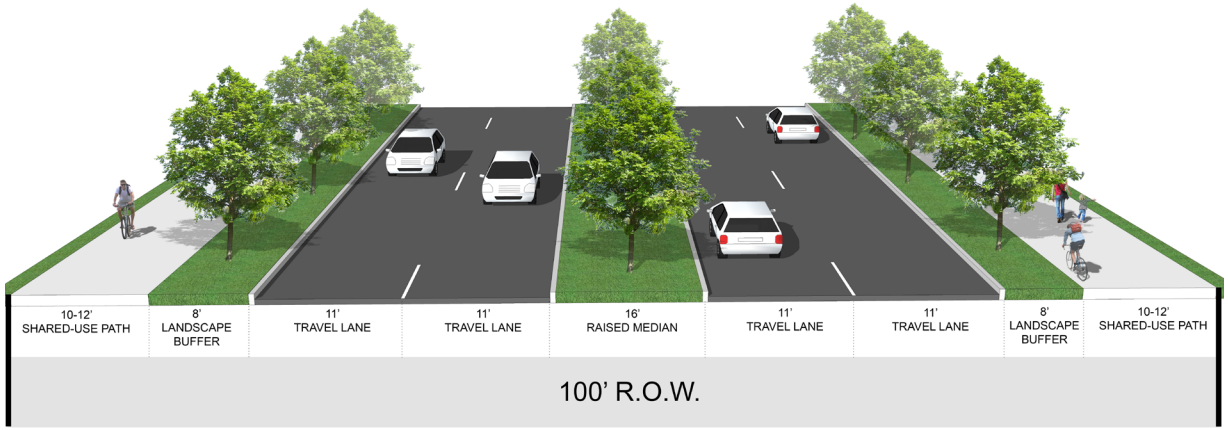
The final and fourth activity node, the Stafford Municipal Complex, is south of U.S. 90A. The activities generated here are more recreational, however, through shared use paths this activity node can easily be connected to the others.

Over time through a series of shared use paths and trails, Stafford should make an effort to connect, not only activity nodes, but other areas of the community. These type of amenities are what people look for when considering relocating or remaining to reside in a community. These amenities and connectivity can also be enjoyed by people of all ages.

Example of Shared Use Path along a Major Collector Street



Example of Shared Use Path along a Major Thoroughfare Street



Highlight: Stafford's Impact on Rail Transportation

As discussed in ***Chapter 3, Future Land Use***, commuter rail is a key opportunity for the City of Stafford, especially in the targeted area surrounding the Stafford Centre and HCC. Two other locations considered are north of U.S. 90A just east of U.S. 59/I-69, and north of U.S. 90A at Present Street, near the Stafford and Missouri City city limits. This is a topic that Mayor Leonard Scarcella has championed for and made major strides toward during his extensive tenure on the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors. Harris County, the City of Houston, and Fort Bend County created the Gulf Coast Rail District (GCRD) under authority granted by the State of Texas in Section 171 of the Transportation Code. It the mission of the GCRD to work with public and private partners to develop and implement a systematic approach to improving the regional rail network for the benefit of the region's residents and economy.

In addition to championing for rail solutions via the GCRD, Mayor Scarcella has also actively positioned Stafford in the regional conversation about commuter rail—a discussion that also includes Congressman Al Green and the mayor of Missouri City, Allen Owen. Congressman Al Green thanked the mayors of Missouri City and Stafford for the determined support they have shown to the rail line plan since it won approval by the voters in the 2003 METRO Solutions referendum. "Their drive and enthusiasm to turn this project into a reality has laid the foundation upon which we have formed a strongly unified coalition. That is one of the principal reasons we are successfully moving forward in Congress."[1]

Stafford has log been a part of the rail conversation and it's position and success has largely been built off of the forward-thinkers and decision-makers within the community.

Leonard Scarcella is currently leading the discussion against a planned double-track by the Union Pacific Railroad through Stafford. His top priority is not letting the double-track interfere with the City's initiative to bring commuter rail to Stafford. Union Pacific does not want any part of the commuter rail designs on the U.S. 90A corridor—they do not want the commuter rail in their right-of-way or next to their right-of-way. The Mayor was quoted as saying, "This city will never achieve what it is capable of achieving without passenger rail service."[2] Sighting TOD development and accessibility opportunities near the Stafford Centre and HCC will directly feed into the economic benefits of a commuter rail service.

Source: Gulf Coast Rail District. www.gcfrd.org

1 "Congressman Al Green Presents the US 90A Commuter Rail Project to Fort Bend County's Business Community." NewsWireHouston.com. Published August 18, 2010.

2 Fulenwider, Barbara. "Stafford mayor raises red flag over Union Pacific Railroad's future plans." Fort Bend Independent. Accessed June 20, 2015.

l-r: Stafford Mayor, Leonard Scarcella; Congressman Al Green; former Sugar Land Mayor, David Wallace; and Sugar Land City Council member, Don Smithers.

Mayor Leonard Scarcella and TxDOT's planning director Gabe Johnson, joined city council members, TxDOT officials and Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce at a ribbon cutting ceremony on the Stafford Road/Staffordshire Road underpass at U.S. 90A marking the completion of the $100-million U.S. 90A widening project in Stafford. The project includes an underpass at Murphy Road and an overpass at Dulles Avenue.

Commuter Rail Timeline

2000 – Fort Bend County Commuter Rail Meetings began with Congressman John DeLay, Former Rosenberg Mayor Gurecky, Missouri City Mayor Allen Owen, Former Sugar Land Mayor Hrbacek and Stafford Mayor Scarcella

2001 – The Legislature approved a bill authorizing $175,000 for TxDOT to conduct a study on US 90A to determine if the corridor is viable for commuter rail

2003 – Metro, including its member city Missouri City, voted to authorize commuter rail from the Medical Center to Beltway 8

2004 – Houston–Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) conducts US 90A Corridor Rail Feasibility Study

2006 –Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) started a concerted effort to block any commuter rail on or adjacent to its 100' right of way through Fort Bend County

2010 – Gulf Coast Rail District initiates Fort Bend Bypass Report study

2015 – Gulf Coast Rail District presents results of Phase II of the Fort Bend Bypass Study

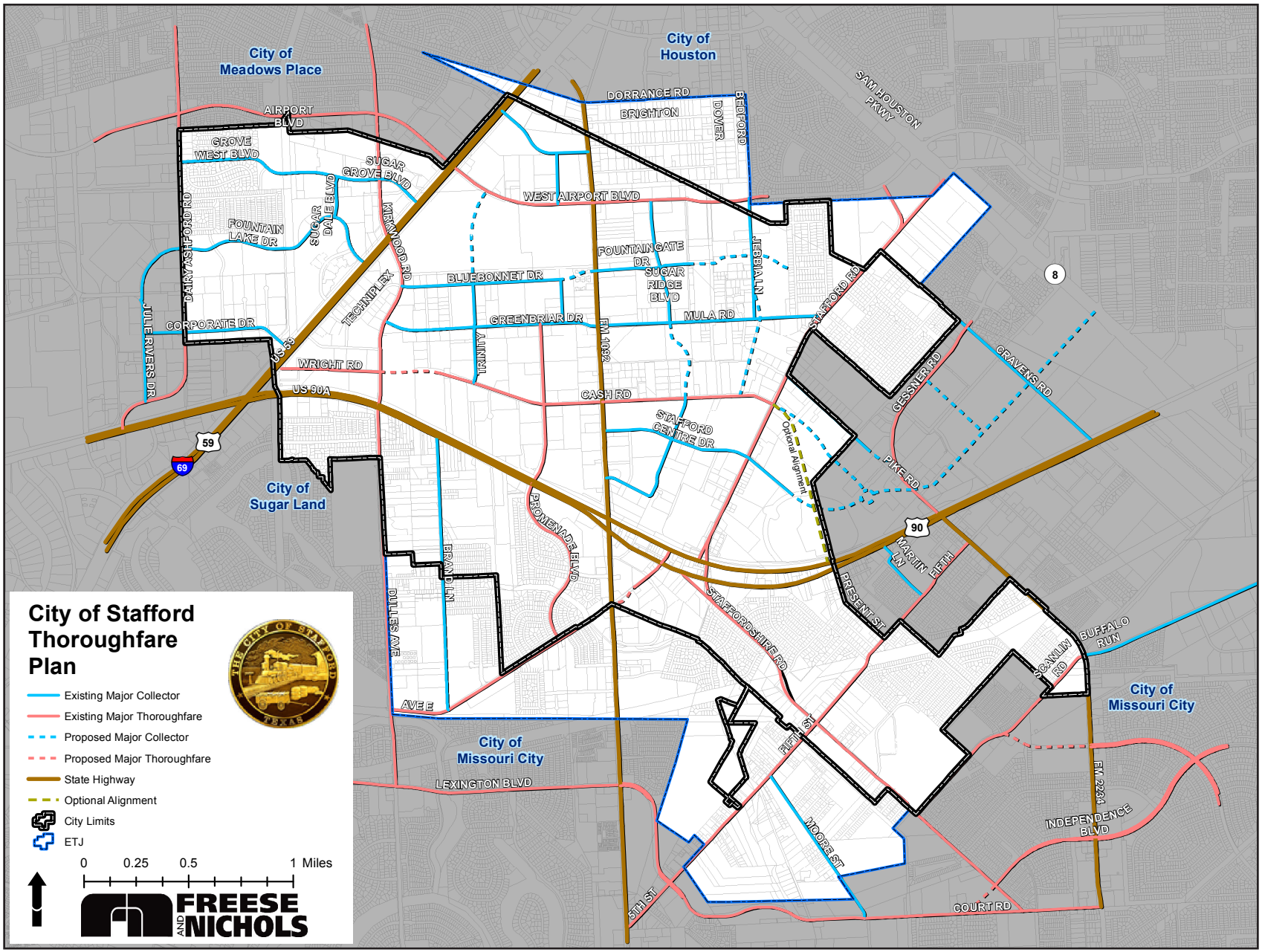
Challenges Facing Establishment of the U.S. 90A Commuter Rail Line:

- Although the Fort Bend Bypass Study claims to remove 70 percent of freight rail traffic, that ignores UPRR's acknowledged intentions of expanding freight rail traffic on its U.S. 90A freight rail ROW. Currently, UPRR is installing a second freight rail line to two lines with the subtle, but unmistakable desire to add a third freight rail line in that ROW.
- Assuming the U.S. 90A Commuter Rail Line is provided in Missouri City, the next challenge would be structuring an agreement with Metro to extend it from Stafford to Rosenberg (since these cities are not a part of Metro). Examples of the difficulty of the extension of this line are: the 10 at-grade railroad crossings in Sugar Land and constructing a freight rail line over the Brazos River into Richmond.
- It is believed that commuter rail along U.S. 90A to Rosenberg would require an incremental approach. For example, the first installation of the project would be outside of Missouri City that extend through Stafford to just east of U.S. 59/U.S. 90A intersection in Sugar Land. This would generate significant support for this commuter rail line, not only to Stafford, but in cities to the west of it.

Potential Impacts of a Class 1 Freight Rail Expansion in Stafford:

- As freight rail continues to expand in Fort Bend County, there will be significant interruptions to vehicular mobility, emergency operations and travel safety.
- ***Will it get better?*** **Probably not.** There are few indications that the Class 1 Freight Rail carriers are willing to diminish or impede their operations to accommodate the public.
- ***What will it take to counter these negative impacts?*** A strong public awareness and ultimately vocal opposition by the public to its legislators that the public is dissatisfied and disturbed with this increasing restriction on its travel and safety.
- When opposing the freight rail carriers, it must be understood that they [the organizations] have one of the strongest and most efficient lobbying efforts in the nation and Texas. Activities that potentially restrict their activities are likely to meet with extreme and powerful opposition.

Figure 4.2, *Master Thoroughfare Plan*



Master Thoroughfare Plan

The Master Thoroughfare Plan builds upon the transportation principles established at the outset of the chapter, coordination with The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), input throughout the planning process, and goals and strategies identified in ***Chapter 2, Vision, Goals and Strategies***. Although much of Stafford's thoroughfare system is in place, several general thoroughfare modifications are recommended to enhancing system functionality:

- Complete the existing roadway functional street classification system
- Make network improvements to provide alternative routes, necessary access points off of major thoroughfares and shorter and more direct routes for local users.
- Create shared use path system to connect community assets such as activity nodes and parks.

As seen on the previous page, ***Figure 4.2, Master Thoroughfare Plan*** illustrates the recommended Master Thoroughfare Plan. The plan aims to provide increased mobility, connectivity, and allow for alternatives to the automobile.

As mentioned previously, the majority of Stafford's thoroughfare system is in place, in fact, there are 42 miles of existing roadway network within the city limits. Three miles of proposed roadway extensions are recommended by the Master Thoroughfare Plan. Notable proposed extensions are optional alignments of Cash Road to Present Street or Pike Road, Cash Road to South Kirkwood Road, and a future north/south street through the former TI site to provide internal connections.

The recommendations within the Master Thoroughfare Plan are not all inclusive and as needs change, the plan should be amended to maximize system investments to the community. Transportation planning initiatives should be coordinated with other infrastructure investments within the city and adjacent cities and/or regional agencies to leverage financial resources and implementation time frames. One example amendment to the Master Thoroughfare Plan may be in regards to coordinating future transit services and connectivity—one of the medium-term projects considered in the 2014 H-GAC Subregional Planning Initiative (SPI) Plan is for a signature rapid bus service to serve the Murphy Road/FM 1092 corridor. Service would be provided by connecting networks from Missouri City to the South, from Bellaire to the Northeast, and downtown Houston and beyond. Three stops along this service network are currently envisioned in Stafford: one at Airport Road, one at the Stafford Center, and one at the Stafford Municipal Complex.

Transportation and Circulation Recommendations

The following are action items related to transportation and circulation.

GOAL 3: Ensure adequate facilities and services to maintain the safety and well-being of Stafford's residents, workers and visitors.

STRATEGIES

Encourage streets and high traffic pedestrian areas to include sidewalks and other pedestrian-friendly amenities such as crosswalks, pedestrian countdown signals, and update to current standards if necessary.

- Prioritize sidewalk improvement areas based upon propensity to generate pedestrian traffic. Solicit available funding for these types of pedestrian mobility accommodations.

STRATEGIES

Improve existing street networks.

- Maintain implementation priorities for all street improvements through a capital improvements planning process.
- Identify funding alternatives and resources available for roadway maintenance implementation.

- Develop a policy and programs for City consideration of public/private partnerships and donations to fund transportation infrastructure, amenities and aesthetics.

STRATEGIES

Provide plans and studies to investigate deficiencies in infrastructure City-maintained and operated infrastructure.

- Coordinate and incorporate the Master Thoroughfare Plan with development decisions.
- Determine if right-of-way is needed to construct commuter rail in Stafford in relation to a Transit Oriented Development site and park-and-ride service.

STRATEGIES

Ensure that infrastructure is sufficient to support future development in key development areas.

- Based on development patterns, prioritize and implement the Master Thoroughfare Plan.

GOAL 4: Strengthen Stafford's image, identity, and character to foster a distinctive and appealing place to live, work, and visit.

STRATEGIES

Establish a community image theme with participation of residents, business owners and property owners.

- Identify and develop special area plans for key corridors and activity nodes. Special area plans will provide a detailed study of corridors and activity nodes, and visually display how they should develop and redevelop.
- Develop design guidelines to ensure neighborhood and corridor integrity.
- Enhance and develop building standards for commercial and retail development by creating a list of desired aesthetics and materials list.
- Perform diagnostic and update zoning ordinances to include building standards appropriate to zoning districts.

STRATEGIES

Create a practical trail system to connect neighborhoods with parks and other amenities.

- Conduct a trails master plan to recommend potential trail routes and expansion to include potential funding options. Consider developing a trail system in the utility and/or drainage easements throughout the City.
- Establish a recreational trail hierarchy that specifies width, material, use and location criteria. Sidewalks should be inventoried to identify broken links, and the local system should be tied to regional networks.
- Promote the use of easements, utility corridors, drainage ways and greenbelts as private trail locations.

GOAL 5: Facilitate development and redevelopment to create an urban mixed-use environment to attract people and foster a sense of place.

STRATEGIES

Create landscaping and thematic design guidelines for development along high-traffic frontage roads.

- Create corridor overlays in selected areas in order to require a higher standard of landscaping and thematic design.
- Establish Entry and Corridor Maintenance Plan to ensure high quality visual aesthetics of major entry points and key corridors.

GOAL 7: Protect the quality and integrity of Stafford's neighborhoods.

STRATEGIES

Ensure that neighborhoods and large developments, that require Traffic Impact Analysis, have roadway access points to provide more direct and interconnected forms of vehicular and pedestrian travel.

- Maintain a hierarchy of thoroughfare classifications that will provide for safe and convenient flow of traffic throughout the community. Maintain a thoroughfare planning process to ensure efficient and desirable connections between major thoroughfares, neighborhoods and community facilities.
- Utilize the collector network of streets to supplement the major roadway network, connect neighborhoods with commercial corridors.

GOAL 9: Partner with, TxDOT, H-GAC, and other local intergovernmental agencies to improve mobility and funding opportunities in Stafford.

STRATEGIES

Utilize the updated Master Thoroughfare Plan Map as future roadway improvements are designed and constructed to create a network of major and minor thoroughfares, collector and local streets.

- Require dedicated ROW from redeveloping properties to finish out the major and minor thoroughfare network and construction of linkages serving contributing properties.
- Participate in acquisition of and construction of key links in the thoroughfare network that cannot be provided through redevelopment process.
- Require a linkage and alignment study for eastward extension of Cash Road to connect with Gessner Road in the City of Houston at the time of the redevelopment of the former Texas Instruments property.

STRATEGIES

Ensure that Stafford's thoroughfare network is coordinated with neighboring communities and work to negotiate and resolve any conflicting issues.

- Meet with adjacent cities public works staff to confer on Master Thoroughfare Plan alignments and classifications to elicit input.
- Meet with Fort Bend County, Harris County and HGAC staff to confer on Draft Master Thoroughfare Plan alignments and classifications to elicit input.
- Ongoing coordination with neighboring cities, the County, and regional agencies on construction and maintenance of the roadway network and infrastructure.

STRATEGIES

Utilize shared access easements and cross-access to provide connectivity between adjacent non-residential uses, limiting the number of driveways along major corridors and allowing for continuous landscaping.

- Examine city code to update and allow for shared use easements to facilitate private agreements between adjacent property owners to allow for shared access.
- Offer incentives for reducing number of driveway access points along major thoroughfares - such as city partnered landscaping, sidewalk, or shared use path construction.
- Work with partner and regional agencies to implement sections of access management, such as portions of the FM 1092 corridor, that are prioritized for the greatest safety and traffic benefit.

STRATEGIES

Connect various portions of the community, including neighborhoods, public facilities and parks, with a system of pedestrian trails to provide interconnectivity and create a system of non-motorized linkages within the community.

- Conduct a pedestrian crossing audit of specific pedestrian generators, such as schools, to ensure safe access exists, and document needed facilities in order to prioritize and communicate needs.
- Partner with TxDOT, Ft Bend County, Harris County, and H-GAC to construct pedestrian accommodation along roadways in proximity to pedestrian generators such as schools, parks, and neighborhoods, with a priority of connecting to existing pedestrian connections.
- Require developments to include Shared-Use Paths and sidewalks along their properties to connect to existing and planned facilities, particularly with an eye toward pedestrian generators and attractors.
- Investigate and pursue grant funding to provide linkages along roadways where space currently allows for the provision of safe non-motorized transportation alternatives in the ROW, and pursue design and construction of linkages that connect neighborhoods, parks, public facilities and other pedestrian attractors and generators.
- Partner with regional agencies and the County to implement within existing access easements of linear stormwater facilities and bayous to provide more direct non-auto connections between destinations in areas not prioritized for automobiles.

STRATEGIES

Utilize Context Sensitive Solutions to design roadways within the context of their adjacent development.

- Use roadway striping techniques to test out innovative median configurations, bike accommodations, lane widths before investing in full capital programs.
- Ensure design speeds of roadways match posted speeds.
- Incorporate public participation and stakeholder participation comments in roadway designs as roadway projects are designed for implementation.

STRATEGIES

Create a Streetscape Design Program that intentionally characterizes individual roadways based upon anticipated forms of development.

- Create design guidelines to be referenced by the City code that include design guidelines for roadway landscape treatment.
- Identify sponsors to develop individual corridor streetscape design with a dedicated focus assessment and make improvements to streetscaping.

STRATEGIES

Monitor regional rail initiatives for changes or updates to potential Commuter Rail Line, particularly how such changes impact Stafford, and identify potential locations for Commuter Rail stop(s) within Stafford's city limits.

- Participate in HGAC technical advisory committee (TAC) and policy council meetings and encourage the TAC to reflect the modeling of express transit from Fort Bend County for policy discussions.
- Support Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) expansion of a second track through Stafford, as dual track also allows for the higher probability for rail implementation.

- Partner with other regional interests to conduct review of Rail District analysis of potential ridership for a commuter line along U.S. 90A connecting to central Houston.

STRATEGIES

- Identify city-wide roadway projects based on need and determine if it is cost effective to partner with the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC).
- Participate in HGAC process to identify roadway project candidates for implementation and encourage projects that support local and regional return on their investment.
- Identify top priority transportation projects from this plan and communicate them to regional partners as priorities for implementation consideration.
- Conduct independent research of literature on project types to determine cost effectiveness or "return on investment" for select projects to then seek partnership funding from regional partners.
- Sponsor project design for prioritized projects as a way to accelerate implementation of Stafford prioritized projects for consideration in regional funding project discussions.

STRATEGIES

Coordinate with TxDOT and H-GAC on the identified needs within the FM 1092 Access Management Study.

- Partner with Missouri City to encourage TxDOT and H-GAC on the benefit and need for FM 1092 access management improvements.
- Consider sponsoring project design for a prioritized section of FM 1092 as a way to accelerate consideration by partner regional funding agencies.

STRATEGIES

Create and maintain partnerships with local, state and federal agencies such as Fort Bend County, Harris County, Sugar Land, Missouri City, Meadows Place, City of Houston, the Houston-Galveston Area Council, Texas Department of Transportation, and Federal Highway Administration to fund projects within the city limits.

- Constructively participate in HGAC policy council meetings, including seriously considering H-GAC guidance and recommendations into account for City policies and local share of implementation.
- Constructively participate in HGAC policy council meetings and technical advisory committee (TAC) meetings and encourage the TAC to reflect the modeling of regionally relevant transportation alternatives in the Regional transportation demand model.

STRATEGIES

Explore innovative and advanced mass transit system including passenger rail and other modes of transportation such as double decker buses for intra-city transit.

- Encourage land use densities and diverse land use types that are effective uses of commuter rail and intra-city transit.
- Encourage and embrace rail and other higher frequency, regional and intra-regional transit as supportive of the economic vitality of Stafford.
- Support structured parking and shared parking arrangements proximate to transit corridors that provide park and ride service, as a first step in developing ridership patterns that can then progress to higher order transit service when critical ridership levels and land uses are achieved.

Chapter 5

Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces

City parks are vital institutions that play a critical role in the social, economic and physical well-being of America's cities and residents. Notable landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted designed America's first city parks in the 19th Century. These green spaces provided relief from the stresses and strains of urban living and brought people together across social, economic and racial divides.

Cities across the country are finding that populations are being attracted back into more urbanized areas, revitalized park systems and recreation facilities are becoming central themes of this urban renaissance. They are not only safe and beautiful, but parks also aid in addressing critical urban issues from health to housing, to education and tourism—all of which are discussed in greater detail throughout the chapter.

Purpose

In order for the City of Stafford to continue to provide for its current residents and attract future populations, it must continue to place a priority on economic well-being and enhancing quality of life-related issues— especially the development and revitalization of the City's parks, recreational opportunities, trails and green spaces. Parks and recreation facilities are an essential part of a healthy and vibrant community environment, providing the flexible venue for activities or events outside the home, after work and after school.

City of Stafford's Unique Parks & Destinations:

- Gordon Fountain Lake Park
- First Street Park
- Rubin Park
- Stafford City Park
- Vaccaro Manor Park
- The Fountains
- Stafford Centre
- Houston Community College
- Margaret Havens Historical Memorial Garden
- Stafford Municipal Complex
- Stafford Municipal School District (SMSD)

The Stafford Centre

Photo Source: staffordcentre.com

Whether for passive or active use, parks and recreation facilities are an important part of everyday active living. Much like the road network, public infrastructure, emergency services, and other municipal facilities and services, parks are an integral component of the municipal infrastructure. Thus, they warrant a significant level of attention and commitment of time, financing and personnel resources.

This chapter, as an update of the *1971 Comprehensive Development Plan,* provides direction over a 20-year planning period, with revisions and updates to be made every five years, as needed, to meet current and future demands. It includes the policy direction the City should champion regarding the preservation and conservation of natural areas and open space, timing of park and trail developments,, their placement and connectivity within and throughout the City and ETJ, and the types of facilities needed and wanted by the citizens of Stafford. It will be the duty of the City and the Parks Committee to make sure future development projects uphold the priorities of the City—especially with regard to community assets and amenities like parks.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

Stafford is a unique Southeast Texas community whose diversity contributes to its character. This uniqueness is a point of community pride. The specific objectives of this Plan are to:

- Provide a framework for orderly and consistent park planning and development.
- Provide research and facts about the community character and demographics.
- Establish park system standards and criteria to guide future park development and land acquisition.
- Guide staff and elected official decision-making for park, recreation and open space funding and development.
- Identify the need for additional park service and facilities.
- Evaluate the spatial distribution of existing parks to measure service levels.
- Establish park, recreation and open space goals.
- Make certain future growth and development is accompanied with appropriate park service levels and recreation amenities.
- Determine needs based on citizen input and tailor standards for feasibility.
- Establish recommendations and priority action items.
- Create a plan to help with grant funding opportunities, partnership generation, and future development considerations.

The Benefits of Parks in Advancing the Development of Healthy Communities

According to the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), parks and recreational uses possess three core values that make them essential and irreplaceable services provided to communities and their constituents:

1. **Economic Value:**
   - Parks increase property values.
   - Cities can use parks to reduce public costs for stormwater management, flood control, transportation and other infrastructure.
   - Quality parks and recreation are identified as one of the top reasons for business relocation decisions.
   - Parks and recreation programs generate revenue from operating costs.
   - Indirect revenues are generated for the local and regional economies through the hosting of sports tournaments and special events such as arts, music and holiday festivals. Economic activity from hospitality expenditures, tourism, fuel, recreational equipment sales and many other private sector businesses yields more sustainable local and regional economies.

2. **Public Health and Environmental Benefits:**
   - Parks are the places people go for exercise.
   - Parks and recreational programs and services contribute to the health of children, youth, adults and seniors.
   - Designing places within which people can become physically active can improve individual and community health, and result in an increase of residents who exercise regularly.
   - Research shows correlations between the reduction of stress, lowered blood pressure, and perceived physical health and the length of time spent in parks.
   - Parks and other conserved open spaces help to improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve air quality, produce wildlife habitat, and provide places for individuals to connect with the natural environment and recreate outdoors.
   - Cities can use parks to help preserve essential ecological functions and to protect biodiversity.
   - When planned as part of a system of green infrastructure, parks can help shape urban form and buffer incompatible uses.

3. **Social Importance:**
   - Parks are a tangible reflection of the quality of life in a community; providing identity for citizens and enhancing the perception of quality of life in the community.
   - Parks provide gathering places for social groups and families, as well as for individuals of all ages and economic status, regardless of their ability to pay for access.
   - By providing gathering places, parks facilitate social interactions among residents that are critical to maintaining community cohesion and pride, as well as developing social ties that become the glue that holds the community together and drives future actions.
   - Voter approval rates for bond measures to acquire parks and conserve open space has exceeded 75 percent in recent years, revealing the public's prioritization of parks in government spending.
   - Parks and recreational programs provide places for health and well-being that are accessible by persons of all ages and abilities, especially to those with disabilities.
   - Community involvement in the planning and design of neighborhood parks, as well as access to parks and recreational opportunities are positively associated with lower crime rates, vandalism and juvenile delinquency.
   - Parks have a value to communities in the formation of a sense of public pride and cohesion.

Source: National Recreation and Parks Association. "Why Parks and Recreation are Essential Public Services." http://www.colchesterct.gov/Pages/ColchesterCT_Dept/PR/forms/Parks-Are-Essential-Public-Services.pdf

Plan Development Process

Through analyzing existing conditions, assessing community needs, and incorporating relevant issues, this chapter outlines a series of strategies and actions that will aid the City in maintaining and preserving, enhancing and developing the existing parks and recreation system to provide for the health, safety and welfare of the future citizens of Stafford. This chapter is divided into seven topical areas:

1. PUBLIC AND COMMITTEE INPUT

The first topic presents the public and committee input that was gathered as part of the comprehensive planning process and spanned much of the project. Input was gathered at two public meetings, multiple CPAC and stakeholder meetings, as well as an online survey.

2. GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goals and strategies were developed as part of the comprehensive planning process and specific parks and recreation strategies were developed. The goals and strategies were further refined throughout the process and helped to inform recommendations. Please see ***Chapter 3, Vision, Goals and Strategies***, for community goals and strategies.

3. CONTEXT AND BASELINE DATA

The introduction portion of the document was created to define the overall contents and factors influencing the master plan. Such influences include parks background, history, existing plans and area growth trends. Reviews of existing park plans and previous planning documents set the stage for the planning team to better understand how the City's past efforts have produced the existing park system.

Working maps, aerials and GIS information was collected to set the foundation for the assessment. A review of relevant demographic information was conducted to understand current and future trends affecting parks and open spaces in Stafford. Variables such as age and family composition can help the City make certain that the appropriate park facilities are selected and prioritized to meet demographic trends.

4. PARK CLASSIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS

Chapter five of this Plan includes refinement of local park standards to make certain Stafford's preferences are appropriately paired with available land, along with economic and natural resources. Stafford's existing park facilities were compared to national standards published by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). Appropriate adjustments were made to park definitions, sizes and service levels to better align with Stafford's park system and future land use goals.

5. INVENTORY

An inventory of the existing park system was developed that identified park types, amenities and existing park acreages. This task was directly generated from the City's current park inventory and descriptions. The purpose of this is to develop a thorough understanding of the recreation system as it stands today, so that informed and strategic recommendations are made.

6. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

One of the most important parts of Chapter five was establishing a local needs assessment to determine the park and recreation needs of the community. This included a series of steps revolving around two assessment types: demand and standards. Public meetings, interviews, data gathering, an online survey, mapping exercise and committee discussions all formulated the demand-based criteria. The planning team used several standard-based analyses to establish a baseline and to compare levels of service. This shows how well citizens' needs are being met based on acres, facility quantities and service areas.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIZATION

The last section of Chapter five synthesizes the information gathered in the previous sections into workable solutions. The results are parks and recreation recommendations. Generating the recommendations involved a process of ranking the priorities for future park facilities and park development from highest expressed needs to lowest expressed needs. Citizen and committee input obtained during the planning process were used to pinpoint priorities for recreation opportunities. This document establishes the guidelines that will direct the future acquisition, development, and maintenance of parks, recreation areas and open spaces.

Related Plans

1971 COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Many of the recommendations and focus areas highlighted in the previous Comprehensive Plan, with regards to parks and recreational open spaces, are still relevant today even though the City has accomplished much since the Plan was written. Some of the key recommendations from the previous plan that will continue to be a priority for the City of Stafford are listed in the following bullet points:

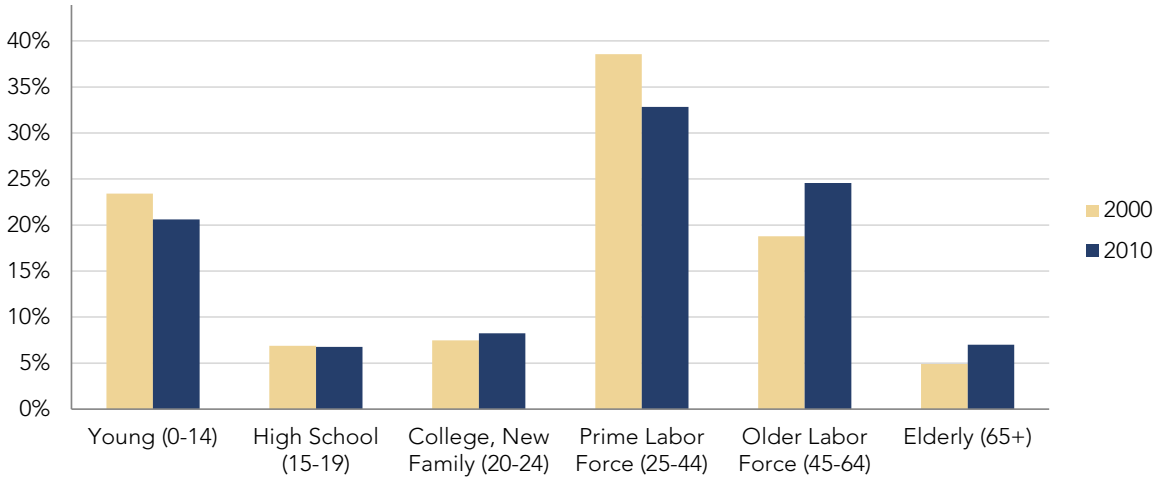
- Prepare and adopt a park and open space site location plan including provisions for local, community and city-wide parks.
- Conservation of the mature tree covers and canopies within Stafford.
- Recreational and park usage of drainage and canal easements, power easements, school sites and other lands that could serve multiple functions.
- Provision for play space as part of neighborhood and residential developments.
- Beautification and renovation of existing, as well as new, development to include gathering spaces, green spaces, and opportunities for people to interact with each other alongside nature.

Community Snapshot

It is important to consider Stafford's demographic information—such as population and household characteristics—when planning park facilities to accommodate the unique needs of specific populations. Please see ***Chapter 1, Community Snapshot***, for full community demographic and baseline assessment.

As shown in ***Figure 5.1, Age Distribution: 2000 & 2010***, Stafford has a relatively large number of individuals between the ages of 25 and 64, as well as below 14 years of age. This often indicates a large demand for flexible recreation space and playgrounds that can be used for picnics, family gatherings, athletic games and tournaments, festivals, exercise and more (uses that can be used by a variety of populations in all walks of life).

Figure 5.1, *Age Distribution: 2000 & 2010*



The Margaret Havens Historical Memorial Garden

The Margaret Havens Historical Memorial Garden was a collaborative effort between the City of Stafford and the Stafford Historical Society. Instrumental in the process was the City's Parks Committee, under the leadership of its Chairman, Councilman John Rose. Working collaboratively, the Parks Committee and Historical Society developed plans and a concept to recognize the history of Stafford and the SMSD. A key contributor in this endeavor was John Ferro, who strongly advocated such a venue when he was President of the Historical Society. With City Council's authorization to fund the project, Mr. Ferro was designated to sell the benches, pavers and bricks as not only a source of revenue but, most importantly, to provide families and individuals with a connection to Stafford and SMSD to demonstrate their affiliation and affection. No discussion of this project would be complete without recognizing the crucial contribution of City Public Works Director Lawrence Vaccaro, who was pivotal in planning, coordinating and constructing this facility and overseeing its every detail.

This Garden is named in honor of Margaret Havens. Born Margaret Bonano in Steele Store, Texas, in 1918, she moved to Stafford as a teenager to complete her secondary education. Upon graduation from Missouri City High School, she enrolled and matriculated from Southwest Texas State in two-and-a-half years. She returned to Stafford and began a career in education, which spanned 57 years. Included in that vocation were 48 years as a teacher in the Missouri City School District, which later became a part of the Fort Bend ISD, where she concluded her career as a coordinator. She retired in 1984, and then sought and was elected to three terms as an SMSD Trustee. Her proudest moments in education came in the lengthy tenure as a second grade teacher and in assisting with formulating policies for SMSD. Also noteworthy was her selection during World War II, when no qualified males were available to serve as principal of the segregated "Latin School" for Hispanic students.

In addition to her role as an educator in the community, she was active throughout her adult life in many civic and political activities in Stafford, and was one of the founders of the Historical Society. After beginning her teaching career, she married Leon Scarcella, a musician and the first band director in the community. He died in 1951. They had one child, Leonard Scarcella, who became and currently serves as Mayor of the City of Stafford. She later married Louis Havens. Margaret Havens died in 2003. The Historical Society, by unanimous vote, recommended to City Council that this Garden be named in her honor.

This Garden is dedicated with the intention of standing as a lasting monument to all the dedicated people over the past 185 years who promoted and supported Stafford and the SMSD.

Source: City of Stafford, cityofstafford.com

The Margaret Havens Memorial Garden is meant to be a lasting monument to those who promoted and supported Stafford and the SMSD.

Goals and Strategies

Please see ***Chapter 3, Vision, Goals and Strategies***, for community goals and strategies.

Park Classification

Traditionally, the most common standards for park planning used by cities throughout Texas and the United States have been the published guidelines by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The purpose of the classifications and standards is to establish guidelines for the development of future parks and open spaces. These classifications balance amenities and access, yet are appropriate for the community's size and existing conditions. The following classifications and general considerations were developed to promote a park system that is viable and supports the community's vision. The classifications create a hierarchy of park types through sizes, location, recreational types and service areas. These park standards are unique to Stafford, and capitalize on local features and community desires. The standards are shown in detail, below, in **Table 5.1, *Park Guidelines***.

Parks and recreation standards are typically expressed in terms of acres of park land per unit of population, such as two acres per 1,000 persons (for neighborhood parks). While general standards are useful, it is critical to establish standards founded upon unique local factors, such as participation trends and projections, user characteristics, demographics, climate, natural environment, land availability, and more. Values related to leisure and recreation are unique to each municipality; therefore, the standards should represent the interests and desires of local parks users.

Stafford's classifications were developed based on several factors. First, the NRPA *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* (as mentioned above) were used as a baseline tool to determine park types, but modified to specific conditions in Stafford. Second, modifications were made based on the community's size, community input, a realistic approach to implementation, land availability, and the current and future needs of the community.

Table 5.1, *Park Guidelines*

Park Type	Recommended Size (acres)	Recommended Service Area (miles)	Recommended Acres Per 1,000 persons
Pocket Park	< 5	0.25	0.5 acre / 1,000 persons
Neighborhood Park	5 - 10	0.5	1.0 acre / 1,000 persons
Community Park	30 - 50	1 - 1.5	4.0 acre / 1,000 persons

Source: National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

POCKET PARKS

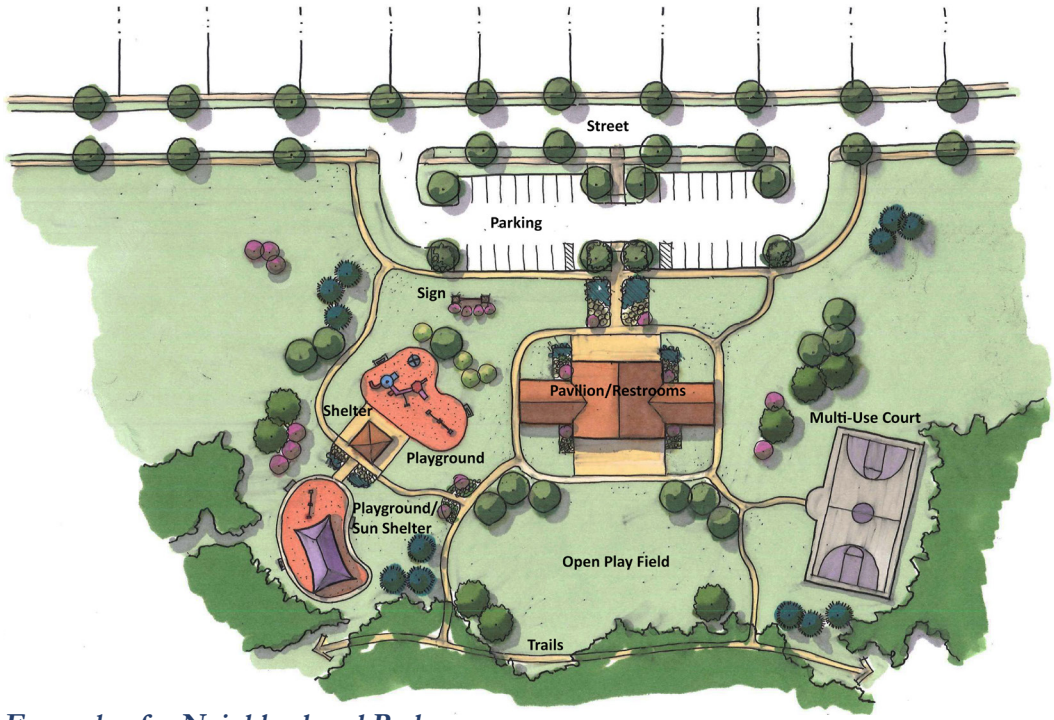
A pocket park is a small area, generally less than five acres and are intended for active recreational use by nearby residents, such as within apartment complexes and residential subdivision; oftentimes use as a children's playground or as a passive or aesthetic area by senior citizens. There is no specific criteria to guide development of pocket parks, although they should have facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of children and their families living in the immediate area. Pocket parks provide half an acre for every 1,000 persons and are often owned or maintained by a property association. The primary function and use of this type of park is to provide recreational opportunities in a safe space for preschool-aged and elementary school-aged children near their residences. Where higher-density residential uses, such as apartments, are proposed, it will be important to incorporate pocket parks into these areas to attract new residents, to provide adequate and accessible services to residents, and to preserve the community's character.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

The neighborhood park is one of the most important features of a park system—often times considered one of the major cohesive elements in neighborhood design. Neighborhood Parks are five to 10 acres in size and should provide facilities and improvements that conveniently accommodate use by surrounding neighborhoods. Ease of access from adjacent neighborhoods, central location and pedestrian/bicycle linkages are key considerations when developing neighborhood parks. A neighborhood park should be located near the center of the neighborhood and have a service area of 0.5 mile radius. The recommended service level is 1.0 acres of neighborhood parks per 1,000 residents.

Safe and convenient pedestrian access (sidewalks or trails) is important to a neighborhood park location. Generally, the location should not be adjacent to a heavily traveled major thoroughfare. Neighborhood parks should be designed to accommodate the needs of all ages and, therefore, should have a blend of passive and active facilities, which may include any combination of the following:

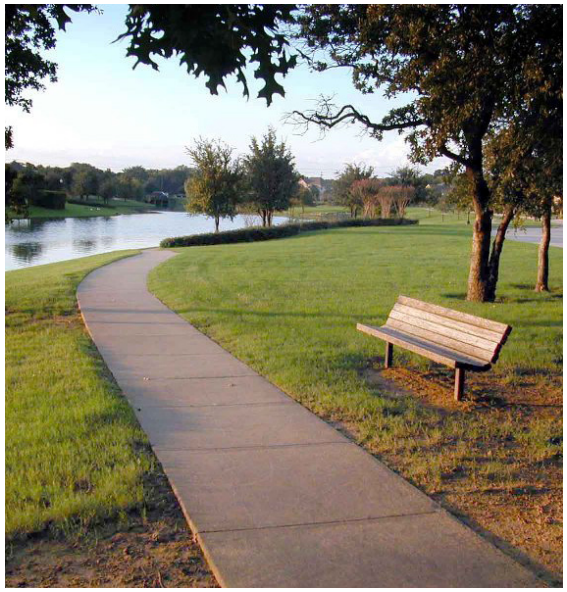
- Playground equipment for small children
- A multi-purpose, surfaced play area
- An athletic area (non-lighted) for games, such as baseball, football and soccer, and a surfaced area for such sports as volleyball, basketball and similar activities.
- Small lawn for passive non-organized play such as toss or Frisbee
- Pavilions/Gazebos
- Loop trails and trail head connections to any adjacent city-wide trail system
- Passive recreation elements and site furnishing such as tables, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, walks and small shade structures or pavilions
- Gardens or water features



Example of a Neighborhood Park

COMMUNITY PARKS

A community park is bigger than a neighborhood park and is oriented toward providing active recreational facilities for all ages. Community parks include a wide range of active and passive recreation opportunities. They can help to provide those recreational needs not featured in smaller neighborhood parks. Community Parks are 30 to 50 acres in size and are intended to function on a large scale, serving the parks and recreational needs of an entire community. They typically include facilities and improvements for area-wide activities and assembly events. These can include:



Examples of Community Parks

- Children's playground with fall surface and equipment
- Hard surface play areas or court games such as basketball, tennis and volleyball
- Sport and practice fields for organized team sports
- Looped walking trails, access to trail systems and trail head connections to any
adjacent city-wide trail system
- Splash pads or swimming pool
- Open lawn for passive, non-organized play, such as toss or Frisbee

- Passive recreation elements and site furnishing such as tables, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, walks and small shade structures or pavilions
- Pavilions or multi-purpose structures for family events or activities
- Restrooms
- Support facilities such as maintenance buildings
- Natural or preserved areas including unique terrain, floodplains, greenbelts or water features

The service area should be a one mile radius, but can be up to a 1.5–mile radius. The recommended service level is four acres of neighborhood parks per 1,000 residents. Four acres is a conservative recommendation, but is likely more appropriate for Stafford's future based on the aforementioned analysis of current conditions and trends.

It is important that adequate off-street parking be provided near these types of parks because it is likely that visitors of these parks will be traveling by car. Where feasible, community parks should be located adjacent or connected to greenways and trails to provide alternative access routes and a network of off-street linear linkages to other areas.

Rubin Park (left) and First Street Park (right) are both pocket parks that provide a variety of amenities to Stafford residents.

Inventory of Existing Facilities

In **Table 5.2, *Inventory of Existing Parks and Open Spaces Facilities***, all of Stafford's existing park and recreational facilities are detailed. The descriptions are a enumeration of the existing parks, their size, and the NRPA park classification which best describes their function within the City's park system. Stafford currently has six parks totaling 32.63 acres (refer to **Table 5.2** on Page 5.11).

POCKET PARKS

Stafford currently has three pocket parks with a combined total of 6.27 acres (including the Margaret Havens Historical Memorial Gardens, a community amenity that is maintained by the City). Parks and trails are part of a service hierarchy system. Pocket parks are Stafford's base unit and provide a defining character of individual residential areas. Pocket parks should provide amenities based on adjacent populations and primarily serve the surrounding uses within walking distance.

The City recently installed stretching equipment in all of the City parks so that residents can reap the benefits of daily stretching and exercise. The City is currently planning to replace water fountains, benches and picnic tables in many of the City's parks, including the neighborhood parks, so that citizens can continue to have the best experience possible when enjoying the park amenities.

The City is responsible for the maintenance on these properties. Notably, the City makes periodic upgrades to the pocket park playscape installations and park facilities; which may include fresh paint, upgraded technologies and new equipment. First Street Park and Rubin Park are both located south of U.S. 90A, near the Stafford Municipal Complex and other public buildings. Sidewalks and jogging trails through the park are paved and lighting is provided to ensure safety and usability at all times of the day. Water fountains are provided to ensure the comforts and necessary needs of residents utilizing the parks is adequately provided for.

The Margaret Havens Historical Memorial Garden is located off of U.S. 90A at City Hall. This pocket park has historical significance and pays tribute to the history of Stafford, its residents and leaders. Though this is the smallest park in Stafford, it retains great significance and is a treasure to the community.

New stretching equipment, as seen below in Vaccaro Manor Park, is being installed in almost all of the City's parks. Stretching equipment is a public health and recreational installation project that has gained popularity in many cities.

Table 5.2, *Inventory of Existing Parks and Open Space Facilities*

Park Name	Park Address	Acres	Amenities	
Pocket Parks				
Rubin Park	2260 First Street	3.14	• open play field • playground equipment • picnic tables • benches • sidewalks	• two basketball goals • pavilion • pet waste station • water fountain • lighting
First Street Park	2501 First Street	2.3	• jogging trail with lights • open play field • picnic tables • benches	• stretching equipment • pet waste station • water fountain
Margaret Havens Historical Memorial Garden	2610 South Main	0.13	• reflection pond • benches • donation pavers	
Subtotal	**3 parks**	**6.27 acres**		
Neighborhood Parks				
Vaccaro Manor Park	13000 Stafford Colony Lane	4.5	• .25–mile jogging trail with lights • soccer/open play fields • playground equipment • picnic benches • sidewalks	• stretching equipment • pavilion • pet waste station • water fountain
Gordon Fountain Lake Park	10701 Fountain Lake Drive	8.5	• a lake • .5–mile jogging trail with lights • playground equipment • picnic tables • benches	• stretching equipment • pavilion • pet waste station • water fountain • sidewalks
Subtotal	**2 parks**	**13 acres**		
Community Parks				
Stafford City Park	3108 Fifth Street	16	• softball/baseball fields • covered basketball courts • soccer/open play fields • playground equipment • picnic tables	• benches • pavilion • pet waste station • water fountain
Subtotal	**1 park**	**16 acres**		
Other Amenities				
Stafford Centre	10505 Cash Road	-	• open fields for rental	
Total	**6 Parks**	**32.63 Acres**		

Source: City of Stafford

Vaccaro Manor Park (left) and Gordon Fountain Lake Park (right) are both neighborhood parks, as well as the most visited parks in the Stafford parks system.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

The City of Stafford has two neighborhood parks totaling 13 acres of park land—Vaccaro Manor Park (4.5 acres) and Gordon Fountain Lake Park (8.5 acres). These neighborhood parks have a combination of sports fields (including soccer fields and baseball/softball pitches), jogging trails, picnic areas, sidewalks and playground equipment—ideal amenities for local sports leagues, families and visitors.

Fountain Lake Park and Vaccaro Manor are the most visited parks in Stafford, because they are medium-sized parks located within or adjacent to residential areas, making them easily accessible to a large concentration of citizens. Both parks have playscape infrastructure, pedestrian facilities (like watering fountains, trash cans, restrooms, picnic tables, etc.), walking trails, a pavilion, stretching equipment and flexible open spaces that function as athletic playing fields for various sports like soccer and cricket.

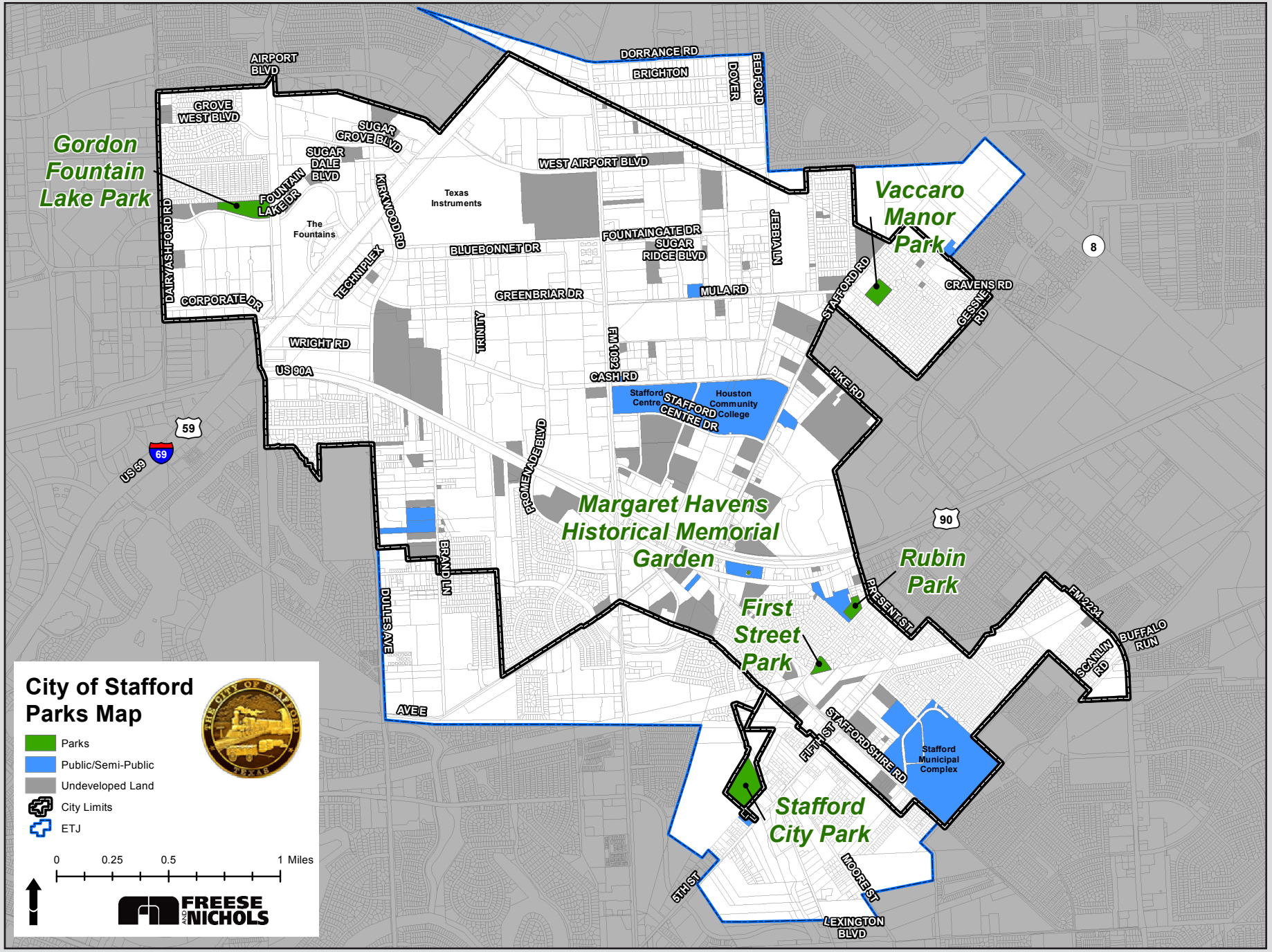
COMMUNITY PARKS

Stafford City Park is Stafford's only community park (see photo below). At 16 acres, the Stafford City Park is also the city's largest park. The park contains softball/baseball fields, basketball courts, soccer/open fields, playground equipment, picnic benches and a pavilion. The Stafford City Park pavilion was recently renovated with new gutters and a fresh coat of paint to keep the space looking fresh and inviting for the many birthday parties, cricket matches and cookouts that take place there.

Challenges facing the park system are vandalism and crime, especially in Stafford City Park. Stafford City Park is the largest park in Stafford with the potential to become a destination for residents, but not until this issue is resolved. Located behind several buildings, the park's location makes it a target for crime. By installing lighting and emergency call boxes, requesting police patrols and increasing pedestrian traffic to this park, Stafford could easily revitalize the image of the park and restore a major amenity.

Stafford City Park (above) is one of the most visited parks in Stafford. In addition to being the largest park in Stafford, it is also located near the Stafford Municipal Complex and serves a large portion of the population in the southern part of the City.

Figure 5.2, *City of Stafford Existing Parks*



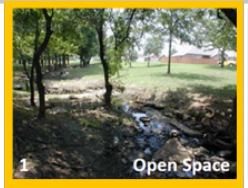
Needs Assessment

A needs assessment is an objective planning tool that helps to determine whether parks and open spaces are being effectively provided to meet the needs of the community. The information being analyzed is based upon existing conditions, community input, community resources and area trends. Results are then matched with available lands and future amenities to determine current and future needs. The demands and deficiencies identified form the basis for park and open space recommendations.

While park plans often rely heavily on national standards, it is very important to note these provide only a piece of the overall assessment. National standards can appear difficult to apply, which is acceptable, because they are only meant to be a guideline. Thus, this planning effort employed them as a benchmark and will use additional methods of assessment to determine the community's needs. This needs assessment relies heavily on public comments, staff knowledge and stated desires. As determined for Stafford, the community is short of dedicated park land

Examples of Visual Preference Survey Questions with Public Input

Question 4: Evaluate the following amenities you value in a community.



	Open Space	Gathering Places	Entertainment	Parks	Walkable	Trails
Strongly Like	**43.24%**	24.39%	22.50%	**36.59%**	27.5%	**30%**
Like	29.73%	**51.22%**	**55%**	31.71%	**45%**	**30%**
Neutral	18.92%	17.07%	20%	17.07%	12.5%	25%
Dislike	5.41%	4.88%	0%	12.2%	12.5%	5%
Strongly Dislike	2.7%	2.44%	2.5%	2.44%	2.5%	10%

Question 6: Which pedestrian amenities do you find appropriate for Stafford?

	Outdoor Seating	Plaza Seating	Sidewalks	Neighborhood Connectivity	Crosswalks	Pocket Parks
Strongly Like	20.51%	23.08%	**43.59%**	**33.33%**	**35.9%**	**34.21%**
Like	**30.77%**	**58.97%**	33.33%	**33.33%**	25.64%	18.42%
Neutral	**30.77%**	15.38%	17.95%	30.77%	28.21%	23.68%
Dislike	12.82%	0%	2.56%	2.56%	2.56%	15.79%
Strongly Dislike	5.13%	2.56%	2.56%	0%	7.69%	7.89%

acres. This will present a challenge in the future when balancing limited resources to both create new parks and new facilities while maintaining existing parks.

DEMAND-BASED ASSESSMENT

The demand-based approach is the reflection of a community's needs. It is derived from public input that was gathered through various community engagement activities and methods. In this case, community engagement included advisory committee meetings, public meetings and online surveys. A summary of the online survey responses and visual preference survey are provided in ***Chapter 2, Vision, Goals and Strategies***.

During the visual preference survey conducted during the public meeting, citizens expressed positive responses to the notion of parks and recreation. Respondents indicated that parks trails and open spaces were strongly valued as elements of their ideal community (see pictures below). Nearly 34 percent of participants indicated that pocket parks would be an appropriate amenity for Stafford.

The online survey yielded candid responses from residents, but the most repeated responses from the survey were made in reference to the community's desire for more recreational amenities. Specific comments even mentioned trails, park and sports fields, in addition to park system connectivity.

"No single park, no matter how large and how well designed, would provide citizens with the beneficial influences of nature; instead parks need to be linked to one another and to surrounding residential neighborhoods."

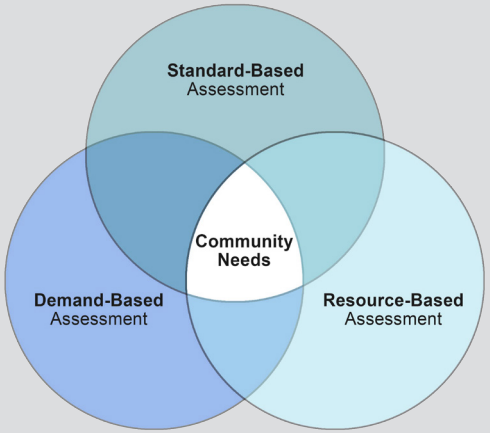
- Frederick Law Olmsted

Assessment Methodologies

This chapter and its recommendations have employed three methods of analysis to assess current and future park needs. These three approaches follow *Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Master Plan Guidelines* approach. The three methods types are:

- Demand-Based,
- Standard-Based, and
- Resource-Based.

The findings from the three methods are not necessarily weighed equally; for this analysis the most weight is applied to the demand-based information. However, all three assessment types do provide a broad range of planning information that will ultimately be synthesized to form the recommendations and priorities of this Plan.



STANDARD-BASED ASSESSMENT

The standard-based assessment uses established guidelines set by the NRPA and refined for the 2015 Comprehensive Plan. A Level of Service (LOS) is described for park types and how they serve the community. LOS figures represent a specific acreage of park land, facility or number of parks needed per given population or area. Three types of standards were examined.

The first standard is Acreage Level of Service (ALOS) is based on NPRA park acreage and is applied to only the identified Stafford park types. The results are expressed as park acreage per 1,000 residents. The ALOS is the standard. A Target Level of Service (TLOS) is defined through refinement of the NPRA standards to better align with the community's goals, local challenges and trends. The TLOS is then used to determine park acreage needs based on existing park acreage, current populations and future populations. The second is a Spatial LOS assessment and identifies LOS-based on spatial distributions. The standards are based on NRPA service radius and are expressed or illustrated per park type within a specific distance. The Spatial LOS helps to identify underserved areas and how many parks are spatially needed to provide service coverage.

Acreage Level of Service

It is worth noting that a minimum of 10 acres per 1,000 residents has often been used in the past as a general rule-of-thumb for parks planning. While this is a simplified standard and has since been scientifically refined, it remains a basic checkpoint to make sure standard assessments are aligned with on-the-ground implementation practices. According to the NRPA guidelines, pocket, neighborhood and community park acreages should be between 6.25 and 10.5 acres per 1,000 residents. See ***Table 5.3, Park and Recreation Needs*** for Stafford's recommended acres per 1,000 persons.

Acreages were assessed for neighborhood, community, and pocket parks. As shown in ***Table 5.3***, a recommended Total Level of Service (TLOS) was selected slightly below those outlined by the NRPA standards at 5.25 acres per 1,000 persons (0.25 acre for pocket, 1.0 acre for neighborhood and 4.0 acres for community). Stafford's recommended TLOS for park acres is on the lower end due to the current level of service, land availability, funding and projected gaps, and is therefore more appropriate for the future parks system plan recommendations.

Table 5.3, *Park and Recreation Needs*

Park Type	Existing Parks (Acres)	NRPA Recommended Acres per 1,000 Persons (ALOS)	Current Level of Service per 1,000 Persons (CLOS)*	Stafford's Recommended Acres per 1,000 Persons (TLOS)	TLOS Park Acres Needed for Existing Population*	TLOS Park Acres Needed for 2020 Population**	TLOS Park Acres Needed for 2025 Population***
Pocket Park	6.27	0.25 to 0.5	0.35	0.25	4.46	4.78	5.03
Neighborhood Park	13.00	1.00 to 2.00	0.73	1.00	17.84	19.13	20.10
Community Park	16.00	5.00 to 8.00	0.90	4.00	71.36	76.51	80.41
Total	35.27	6.25 to 10.00	1.98	5.25	93.66	100.42	105.54

*Based on 2015 estimated population of 17,840
**Based on 2020 estimated population of 19,127
***Based on 2025 estimated population of 20,103

Park Land Service Levels

Based on the recommended TLOS, ***Table 5.4, Stafford Level of Service and Acquisitions***, takes Stafford's freshly established TLOS a step further to identify park acreages needed for the current, five-year projection and 10-year projected populations. The current and future populations are based on growth projections found in ***Chapter 1, Community Snapshot***. The Current Levels of Service (CLOS) for pocket, neighborhood and community parks are 1.98 acres per 1,000 residents, a good bit below the recommend 5.25 acres.

With regard to the current population of 17,840 residents within the city limits, 93.66 acres are needed to meet current community needs—primarily, 71.36 acres of community parks.

For the 5-year projections of 19,127 persons, the parks system will need an additional 100.42 acres to adequately serve the population in 2020. Pocket parks will exceed the recommended TLOS by 1.49 acres in 2020; neighborhood parks will need an additional 6.13 acres and community parks will need about 60.51 acres to meet this total demand.

The table also projects a total of 70.27 acres deficient by 2025. Based on the standards outlined in this Plan, the roughly 71 acres needed to supplement the parks system by 2025 would consist of a combination of one to three new pocket parks (depending on the size of a potential park, more or less sites will be necessary to acquire) or two new neighborhood parks, and perhaps one large community park. Unique public spaces within new developments, utility easement/drainage open spaces, and park land dedications within residential developments will also be necessary to supplement the parks system and its needs for future populations in the years to come. The City can get creative in addressing parks, recreation and open space needs—any combination of the park types, creation of unique public spaces or even recreational facilities can contribute to the overall system provision and quality of life in the community.

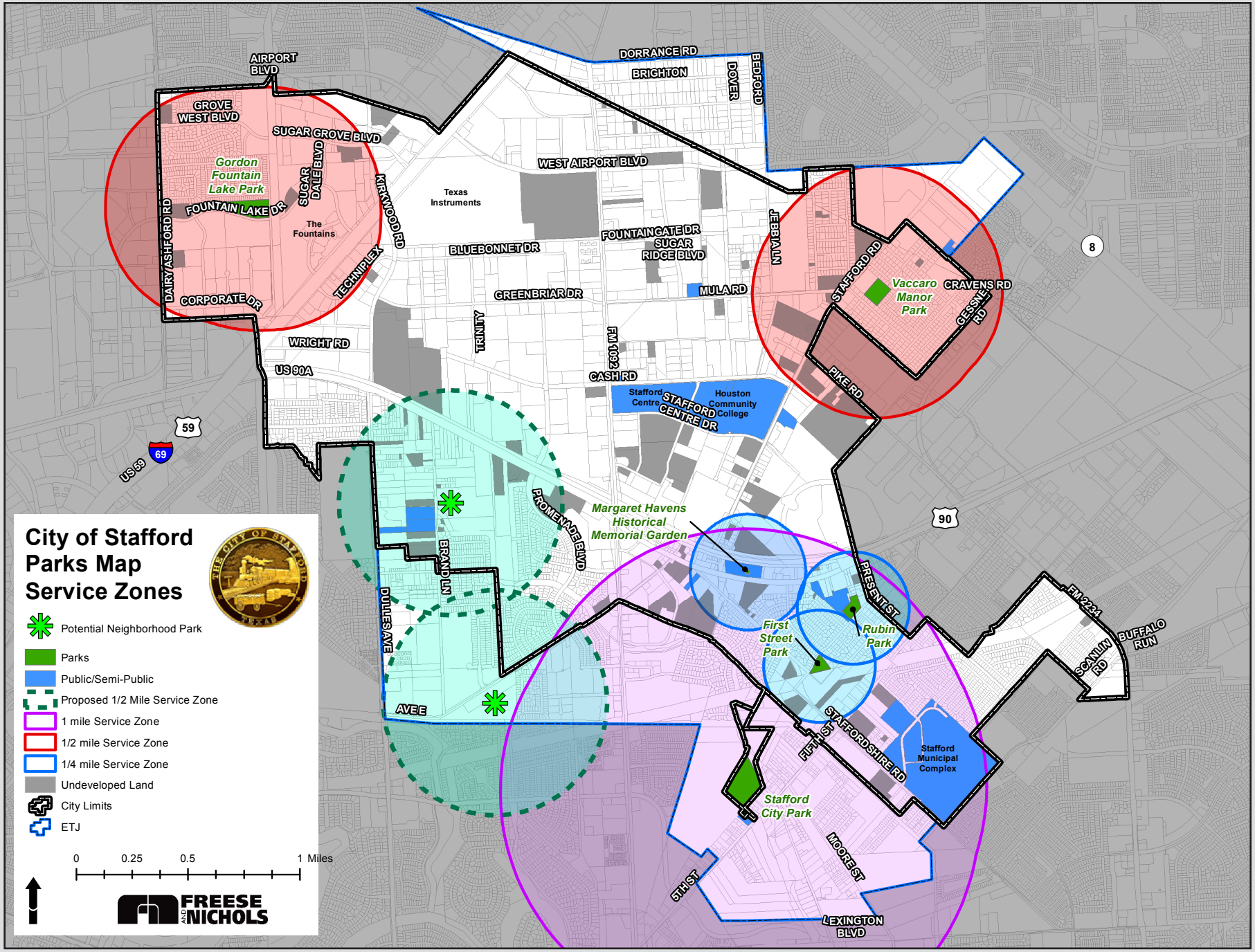
Table 5.4, *Stafford Level of Service and Acquisitions*

Park Type	Existing Parks (Acres)	NRPA Recommended Acres per 1,000 Persons (ALOS)	Current Level of Service per 1,000 Persons (CLOS)*	Stafford's Recommended Acres per 1,000 Persons (TLOS)	TLOS Park Acres Needed for 2020 Population**	Total Park Acres Needed to Acquire to Meet 2020 TLOS**	TLOS Park Acres Needed for 2025 Population***	Total Park Acres Needed to Acquire to Meet 2025 TLOS***
Pocket Park	6.27	0.25 to 0.50	0.35	0.25	4.78	(1.49)	5.03	(1.24)
Neighborhood Park	13.00	1.00 to 2.00	0.73	1.00	19.13	6.13	20.10	7.10
Community Park	16.00	5.00 to 8.00	0.90	4.00	76.51	60.51	80.41	64.41
Total	35.27	6.25 to 10.50	1.98	5.25	100.42	65.15	105.54	70.27

*Based on 2015 estimated population of 17,840
**Based on 2020 estimated population of 19,127
***Based on 2025 estimated population of 20,103

Notes:
Existing pocket parks exceed the 2020 TLOS acres by 31.1 percent
Existing neighborhood parks are 68 percent of 2020 TLOS acres
Existing community parks are 20.9 percent of 2020 TLOS acres
Existing parks, in total, provide 35.2 percent of 2020 TLOS acres

Figure 5.3, *City of Stafford Parks Map Service Zones*



Spatial Level of Service

A spatial level of service coverage analysis was conducted to determine the number of future parks needed per park type. This spatial analyses is very general in nature and examines parks needs spatially for an ideal 100 percent coverage of the city limits. The goal is to minimize service area overlap while maximizing service area coverage—making for the most cost-efficient and equally distributed service provision possible. Spatial LOS has been conducted for pocket, neighborhood and community parks in this section. Service zones include 0.25, 0.5 and one-mile radii, for pocket, neighborhood and community parks, respectively. The service zones are applied to Stafford's existing parks, but also include the predicted service zones for two neighborhood parks that are proposed in the ***Future Land Use Plan*** found in ***Chapter 3, Future Land Use***. Refer to ***Figure 5.3, City of Stafford Parks Map Service Zones*** (on the following page) to see the findings of the spatial LOS assessment.

The neighborhood and pocket parks, as seen in **Figure 5.3**, primarily over-serve the southeastern half of the City. For example, there is very little coverage that exists within the boundaries of U.S. 90A, the U.S. 59/I-69 corridor, Airport Boulevard, and Stafford Road. There is also little to no park service coverage south of U.S. 90A and west of FM 1092 (where the proposed neighborhood parks are currently displayed in ***Figure 5.3***). This may infer that the City should reevaluate the criteria in which they require, choose, and acquire additional parks into the larger parks and recreation system—especially for new development. With that being said, these under-served areas are mostly developed and may not necessarily accommodate additional parks until new development occurs—in which case smaller parks may suffice in serving these populations. As new residential development occurs, as cited in the ***Figure 3.1, Future Land Use Plan*** in ***Chapter 3***, there will be a need for additional park space, but not necessarily in the addition of neighborhood parks—perhaps the relocation of existing neighborhood parks, in combination with pocket parks could serve as a viable solution to acquiring new lands. Also, park land dedication requirements may be employed for future development to ensure that land is set aside.

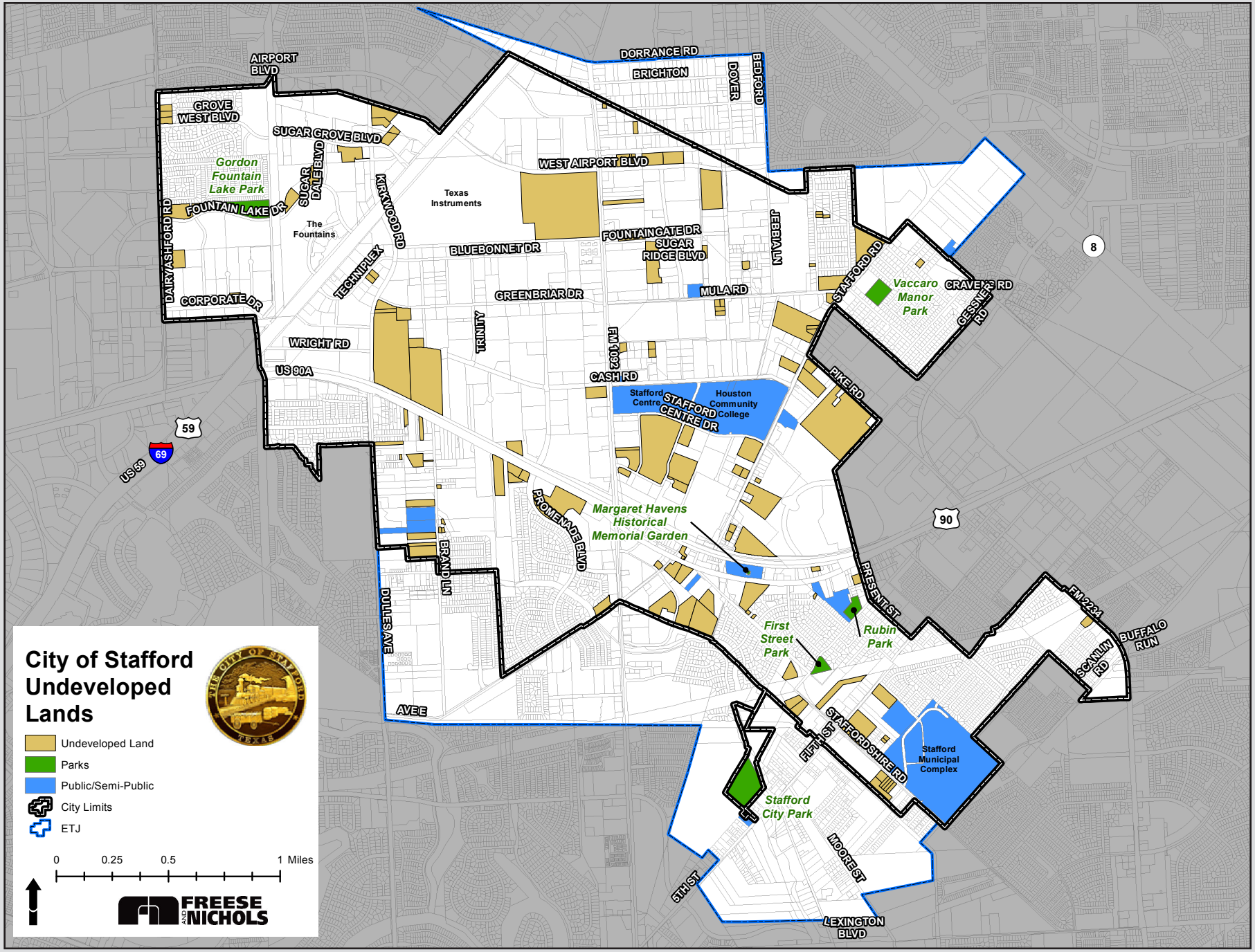
Highlight: The Future of the Former Texas Instruments (TI) Property

Since the1970s, TI has been an icon in Stafford, employing thousands of people between the 70s and 80s. After 40 years, TI closed its facility in Stafford for a smaller location in Sugar Land. The former Texas Instruments (TI) property located off FM 1092 will be an exciting new development and is expected to begin demolition in 2016 and last between 18 to 24 months. Developers are working with the City on incorporating pedestrian amenities, and public spaces, as well as signage, utilization of parking and security, and the clean-up related to the well contamination that resulted from TI's chip-making process.[1] See the proposed conceptual plan above.

The proposed project hopes to draw new residents, shoppers and sales-tax revenue to Stafford. Creating a diverse economy is important in keeping the local economy stable and sustainable to future changes in Stafford.

1 Kirk, Bryan. "Stafford focuses on redevelopment of Texas Instruments site." Houston Chronicle.March 5, 2015.

Figure 5.4, *City of Stafford Undeveloped Land Map*



According to *Table 5.4*, the park system acreages do not currently—and likely in the future will not—adequately meet the demands of the community. Two neighborhood parks are currently proposed in the western areas of the City, but additional pocket or neighborhood parks could be added in the northern and central parts of the City to provide greater coverage of the City and equally provide park services throughout the community. Due to the limited inventory of vacant land remaining in Stafford, acquiring new park land may not be feasible, thus creative and unique ways to enhance green spaces and landscaping elements throughout the City and new development must be employed to supplement the City's parks and open space network, as well as enhance community image, pride, aesthetics, and key destinations, to name a few.

RESOURCE-BASED ASSESSMENT

The resource-based assessment is the third analysis for the needs assessment. This exercise recognizes key physical, man-made or natural resources within the community. For each element, opportunities with the resource and how the feature can play a future role in the park system.

The City limits contain only a limited amount of undeveloped areas. Some of the areas have noteworthy natural features including mature tree canopies, ponds and natural drainage ways. These features are not always preserved during development or redevelopment; oftentimes mature trees are taken down and replaced with young plantings with no consideration for the impact that the greenery provided for the surrounding aesthetics, nor for the history of the site. As illustrated in *Figure 5.4, City of Stafford Undeveloped Land Map*, Stafford currently has around 377 acres of undeveloped land remaining within the city limits.

377 acres of undeveloped land remain within the city limits.

Future park planning efforts should take into consideration existing utility easements and greenbelts to recognize their unique opportunities for recreation. Stafford should consider taking advantage of existing easements and greenbelts on several levels. First, they can serve as a natural edges along major roadways, providing natural aesthetics and visual interest unique for Stafford. They also offer a great opportunity to frame future development patterns and future land uses should create an amenity edge adjacent to rights-of-way and tree canopies. These amenities can serve as buffers for residential neighborhoods and as backdrops to commercial and restaurant uses. For recreational purposes, these green spaces could also be potential trail corridors, as seen in other cities in the area. Future shared-path routing should take full advantage of the greenbelts for multi-purpose trails that connect parks, neighborhoods and points of interest throughout the community.

Park, Recreation and Open Space Recommendations

The recommendations and implementation strategies are the result of incorporating the inventory, park classification and standards, and needs assessment. It is the community's desire to increase livability through quality of life by promoting improvements to the existing parks and trail system. The park planning process helped to formulate recommendations while setting realistic goals for Stafford. Stafford's park and recreation facilities face many challenges including existing park conditions and an extremely large park acreage LOS gap, as identified in the needs assessment. Because Stafford is far from reaching 130.97 acres of park land and due to existing land development patterns and future land use designations, it is unrealistic to think that an additional 72.34 acres could be acquired within five or 10 years with the amount of vacant land left inside the city limits. Leadership in City staff and elected officials must help to accomplish continuous improvements and focus on measurable and achievable actions.

While Stafford is short on park land, the facilities that have been updated in recent years are shining stars within the park system. The City recently installed stretching equipment in all of the City parks so that residents can reap the benefits of daily stretching and exercise. The Stafford City Park pavilion was also recently renovated with new gutters and a fresh coat of paint to keep the space looking fresh and inviting for the many birthday parties, cricket matches, and cookouts that take place there. The City is currently planning to replace water fountains, benches and picnic tables in many of the City's parks so that citizens can continue to have the best experience possible when enjoying the park amenities provided throughout the park system. The improvements for existing parks, particularly neighborhood parks, should go hand in hand with neighborhood revitalization efforts of the Comprehensive Plan. Sometimes the renovation and enhancement of a neighborhood park can become a catalyst for reinvestment in the surrounding homes and subsequent neighborhoods within a community.

Parks and trails are part of a service hierarchy system. Pocket parks are Stafford's base unit and provide a defining character for individual residential areas. Pocket parks should provide amenities based on adjacent population and primarily serve the surrounding uses within walking distance. Pocket parks, however, are the smallest level of park service and have a limited service area. Neighborhood parks serve adjacent neighborhoods and provide important functions to a larger neighborhood area. Community parks are the next level of park service and have a much larger service area, such as an entire region.

With the service levels established, it is imperative to connect residents to destinations. Future trails will provide access to destination points, enhance greenbelts and promote natural areas. Most of the trails proposed in Stafford have been made by entities such as H-GAC and Fort Bend County, as well as existing plans such as the FM 1092 Access Management Study , the U.S. 90A Corridor Rail Feasibility Study, etc. (see ***Introduction***). It is important to include regional connections for consideration, as well as for the ability to view the City's connectivity in the context of the larger regional network.

Most of the proposed trails within Stafford's city limits are shared-use paths along major roads like FM 1092, Kirkwood Road, Stafford Road, and Avenue E (see ***Map 4.8, Connectivity and Activity Nodes***). It will be critical that the City provide multi-modal access to activity nodes, public/ semi-public lands, and city parks so that all residents can easily access and utilize the variety of amenities and services provided by the City.

Stafford's top Parks, Recreation and Open Space priority needs are summarized in ***Chapter 9, Implementation***. These are based on all needs assessments, consultant evaluation, staff input and the Comprehensive Plan planning process. Future Park and Recreation efforts should work towards fulfilling these community needs.

Key Focus Areas

1. CONTINUE TO PROVIDE TIMELY UPDATES, REPAIRS, AND RENOVATIONS TO EXISTING PARKS

The operation of improving existing parks and infill of new amenities will need to be overseen by park staff with this document serving as a resource. It will require steadfast commitments from elected and appointed officials in order to make certain appropriate funding is provided.

Pocket and neighborhood parks are the foundation for Stafford's park system. Both provide important close-to-home amenities for their surrounding residential areas. However, due to natural age and wear over time from the elements, it will always be a priority to reinvest in these vital community assets. The City currently budgets nearly $40,000 for ground maintenance requirements necessary in the City's parks and open spaces, as well as nearly $100,000 for the acquisition of new park land and enhancements.

In general, the existing parks are in very well-maintained conditions. The City prioritizes the replacement of all sick and dead landscaping materials, trees and shrubs, as well as the inspection and repair all light posts and park equipment, as needed on a yearly basis. The quality of Stafford's parks, along with other City efforts to revitalize residential areas, form the foundation for this focus area. In general, existing neighborhoods parks incur a number of issues, including repair, maintenance, landscaping, drainage, and safety. Examples include: outdated equipment, aging structures, erosion, vandalism, crime and accessibility challenges. The City should complete a thorough physical assessment of the existing parks system to prioritize improvements and future updates.

2. DEVELOP A PARKS, RECREATION, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACES MASTER PLAN

The City and Parks Committee have made significant investments of time and money to plan for the future. It is prudent to continue these long-term investments so that the valuable information gained and the hard work put in by many during the planning process are not lost. It is important that the City document the community's vision regarding parks and open spaces, as well as outline the City's priorities with regard to future actions and needs.

It is important for Stafford to increase future park level of service through some limited park land acquisitions, but more importantly through detailed development requirements that require dedicated green spaces and site landscaping that ultimately contribute to the community's character

and aesthetic quality. Because Stafford's current level of service is around 2.13 acres per 1,000 residents and the City is over 65.81 acres short of meeting their established standards, it is recommended that several specific under-served areas be cited for potential future park development. New development on vacant parcels will be required to dedicate a portion of their site to greenspace or landscaping so that the area will at least maintain the natural and aesthetic feel that park spaces often provide for a community. The Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan will identify these under-served areas for future potential park locations, as well as provide examples of amenitized open spaces, green spaces within developments to create unique spaces, pedestrian amenities, and aesthetic landscaping. This will be key in maintaining the City's existing facilities, preserving the aesthetic qualities provided by green spaces, and providing premier facilities for the future residents of Stafford.

3. INCREASE VARIETY OF PARK FACILITIES AND AMENITIES BASED ON NEEDS ASSESSMENT

There are several key recommendations for new and expanded amenities that should be considered with the development of new parks and within existing parks. As shown in the needs assessment and gathered from pubic input, some recreational needs are: baseball fields, passive play areas, trails, walking track and multi-use courts. When combined with public input, the following should be considered as top priority needs for Stafford are:

- Trails/park connections
- Pocket parks in underserved areas
- Baseball/sports fields
- Play areas
- Practice fields/passive open space
- Multi-use courts
- Restrooms
- Sports complex

4. EXPLORE ENTERTAINMENT, ARTS, AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The citizen input and public meetings, as well as the existing condition observations have all recognized a shortage of indoor recreation spaces and youth-oriented activities. Athletic fields for sports tournaments and matches were also mentioned by residents who have to travel outside of the City to practice with their children and leagues. The cricket teams that practice and play at Stafford City Park are evidence of the local demand for passive open spaces that can be utilized as play fields during the year and require very little maintenance.

The community might consider an aquatic center or recreation center as a top ranking amenity with benefits for the City as well as SMSD students and families. Due to needs

of existing parks, funding resources and other needs assessment factors, new and improved sports fields or indoor recreation facilities remain a mid- to long-term action item.

5. ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY

An essential part of a parks and recreational system is the linear linkages that tie together the community's neighborhoods, parks, schools, and other public spaces. Such connections may boost accessibility to parks and other public spaces, thereby expanding the effective service area coverage of existing parks and allowing more people to access to them. Stafford has little to no connectivity of trail networks, pedestrian pathways, or bike paths; but because Stafford's street network is laid out in a traditional grid pattern it would be easier and more efficient to link recreational trails into shared-path networks (e.g., bike lanes and sidewalks). Stafford's street network, as discussed in ***Chapter 4, Transportation and Circulation Plan***, provide an ideal opportunity for adding on-street bike lanes that directly connect to the Stafford Centre, as well as other parks and recreation facilities within the City (see ***Figure 4.8, Connectivity and Activity Nodes***).

The recreational value of parks dramatically increases when they are linked through a series of greenbelts along easements and drainage ways, trail and walkway/bikeway corridors, and other internal connections. The proposed paths will link most of the City's developed park lands. Linking all of the parks with multi-modal accessibility and direct connectivity allows for greater equality in the provision of services and amenities to the City's population. Though this Plan will need to be implemented in phases, long-range system planning will ensure that this form of infrastructure grows in coordination with development patterns and community needs.

6. ADVANCE PARK AND RECREATION FUNDING SOURCES

For Stafford's park system to see the needed expansion and updates, additional sources of revenue and funding should be evaluated and researched. A multi-tool approach is recommended, in which multiple strategies, funding sources and partners are employed in order to collectively work to achieve the desired results. A range of strategies may be appropriate within a given location and, therefore, each possible strategy should be understood and examined in order to determine where it may be most appropriately used. In many cases, funding could include a combination of resources, such as private funding, City funds, bonds, state and federal grants, and sponsor-based funding. The funding resources in the following section are just a few examples of the types of monies and partnerships available to the City; additional funding sources and partnership opportunities may be discovered during implementation.

Potential Funding Sources

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) are often utilized in communities as a means of concentrating resources towards economic development and creating new jobs. The advantages to EDCs are that they may exist as a public entity (directly associated with municipal government) or may exist as a non-profit organization. EDCs may be created to promote and attract economic development for the City as a whole, or they may be created to specifically address issues within a particular neighborhood or area within the community. EDCs often receive funding from both public and private sources, such as funding by 4B sales tax revenues, and essentially act as an ambassador for the area that they serve. Advocacy and proactive outreach are important functions of EDCs in their attempt to explain and reach out to potential development and provide reasons and offer incentives for choosing to locate within the identified area. It is recommended that members of the EDC use this document as a guide in promoting and attracting development within the study area.

DEVELOPER REQUIREMENTS

This involves requiring new development to provide a dedication of land for parks (or fee-in-lieu of land), park development fees, and trail rights-of-way or easements to offset the City's costs.

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANTS

This grant provides 50–percent matching grant funds to municipalities, counties, MUDs and other local units of government with populations less than 500,000 to acquire and develop parkland or to renovate existing public recreation areas. Eligible sponsors include cities, counties, MUDs, river authorities, and other special districts. Projects must be completed within three years of approval.

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT INDOOR RECREATION GRANTS

This grant provides 50 percent matching grant funds to municipalities, counties, MUDs and other local units of government with populations less than 500,000 to construct recreation centers, nature centers and other indoor recreation-related buildings.

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT COMMUNITY OUTDOOR OUTREACH PROGRAM (CO-OP) GRANTS

The CO-OP grant helps to introduce under-served populations to the services, programs, and sites of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. This is not a land acquisition or construction grant; this is only for programs. Grants are awarded to non-profit organizations, schools, municipalities, counties, cities, and other tax-exempt groups. Funds may be used for direct program costs for outdoor recreation or environmental education and conservation programs.

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT RECREATIONAL TRAIL GRANTS

TPWD administers the National Recreational Trail Grants in Texas under the approval of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). This federally funded program receives its funding from a portion of federal gas taxes paid on fuel used in non-highway recreational vehicles.

PRIVATE DONATIONS

This source of financial assistance would usually come from a citizen, organization, or business that has an interest in assisting with the development of the park system. Land dedication is not an uncommon occurrence when property is being developed. The location of a neighborhood park within a residential development offers additional value to residential units within that neighborhood, especially if the residential development is occupied by younger families with children. Once property is acquired through this method, the City should be prepared to improve the facility for use within a reasonable length of time.

Private donations may also be received in the form of funds, facilities, recreation equipment, art or in-kind services. Donations from local and regional businesses as sponsors for events or facilities should be pursued. A Parks Improvement Trust Fund may be set up to manage donations by service organizations, benevolent citizens, willed estates and other donated sources. The purpose of this trust is to establish a permanent source of principal value that will increase as donations occur. The principal cannot be decreased; however, the annual interest can be used for park development.

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS DISTRICT (PID)

When authorized by City Council in compliance with state laws, new developments can establish a Public Improvement District (PID). As a taxing district, the PID provides funds specifically for the operation and maintenance of public facilities such as parks and major boulevards.

TAX INCREMENT REINVESTMENT ZONES (TIRZ)

A TIRZ is a tool used by local governments to finance public improvements in a defined area as approved by the City Council. When an area is designated as a TIRZ district, the tax base is frozen at the current level. As development occurs within the TIRZ, the increased value of property, or the tax increment, is captured. The tax increments are posted to a separate fund to finance public improvements within the district.

Additional Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Recommendations

The following are action items related to parks, recreation and open spaces.

GOAL 1: Foster a strong and diverse economy, through unique and innovative policies with a full range of employment and economic opportunities underscored by a zero city property tax.

STRATEGIES

Encourage a range of quality amenities for Stafford residents in order to attract and retain a stable and diversified population.

- Implement a parkland dedication ordinance.
- Identify location and purchase property for a future park in the southwest portion of the city to service under-served residential neighborhoods in Stafford.
- Target park grant funding sources.

GOAL 2: Create a thriving city, with emphasis on education through SMSD that attracts people of all ages, welcomes diversity, and fosters a family-friendly atmosphere.

STRATEGIES

Seek development of and promote existing entertainment venues, the arts and recreational amenities.

- Engage in discussions with citizens, city staff, parks board, elected and appointed officials about indoor recreation needs, locations and funding.

GOAL 3: Ensure adequate facilities and services to maintain the safety and well-being of Stafford's residents, workers and visitors.

STRATEGIES

Provide the necessary and appropriate technology, buildings, equipment and people to continue delivery of quality services now and in the future.

- Use the National Program and Playground Safety guidelines and/or the United States Consumer Products Safety Commission standards in the design and replacement of playground equipment, all surface areas, and other recreational facilities and improvements.

STRATEGIES

Provide plans and studies to investigate deficiencies in infrastructure City-maintained and operated infrastructure.

- Create a Capital Improvement Program for streets, utilities, drainage, parks, and public facilities.
- Complete a thorough physical conditions review and needs assessment to confirm and prioritize necessary improvements to the City's park system and related amenities and programs to maintain sound operations and appealing, competitive facilities.
- Fund and implement a Parks and Open Space and Trails Master Plan in order to qualify for funding.

GOAL 4: Strengthen Stafford's image, identity, and character to foster a distinctive and appealing place to live, work, and visit.

STRATEGIES

Create a practical trail system to connect neighborhoods with parks and other amenities.

- Prepare a trails master plan to recommend potential trail routes and expansion to include potential funding options. Consider developing a trail system in the utility and/or drainage easements throughout the City.
- Establish a recreational trail hierarchy that specifies width, material, use and location criteria. Sidewalks should be inventoried to identify broken links, and the local system should be tied to regional networks.
- Promote the use of easements, utility corridors, drainage ways and greenbelts as private trail locations.

Chapter 6

Infrastructure Assessment

Infrastructure Assessment

Planning for and providing infrastructure is perhaps one of the most important responsibilities of a municipality. Citizens need to be secure in the knowledge that they can rely on their local government to ensure an adequate and safe water supply and wastewater capacity for current populations and that proper plans are developed to provide for future growth. Additionally, citizens look to the City to regulate growth to protect citizens from flooding.

There are numerous detailed technical studies that can be used to analyze these current and future needs for the City. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to determine whether the City has made or plans on undertaking these types of efforts. This Infrastructure Assessment is intended to provide a broad overview of Stafford's infrastructure system and capacity and assess the system's ability to reliably serve current and future populations. The existing water and wastewater service and utilities are provided by the Fort Bend County Water Control and Improvement District No. 2 (The District).

Water System

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

The current water supply is provided by the District which operates five groundwater wells at four water plant facilities located throughout the District and a Surface Water Treatment Plant located in the south-central portion of the District. The District operates on a single pressure plane.

The wells draw from the Evangeline Aquifer, each of the water plants has ground storage tanks and pumping facilities. One site has an elevated storage tank. The District has an annual ground water withdrawal permit, but daily production is not limited. Total system production capacity exceeds 6.0 MGD.

The District has secured a raw water supply contract with the Gulf Coast Water Authority (GCWA) for a firm supply of 4.0 MGD with an option for an additional 6.5 MGD. The District constructed the Surface Water Treatment Plant in 2011. The intake structure is located on GCWA Canal-A just east of Stafford Run and a 24 inch transmission line that connects the intake to the Surface Water Treatment Plant.

In addition, the system has four emergency interconnects:

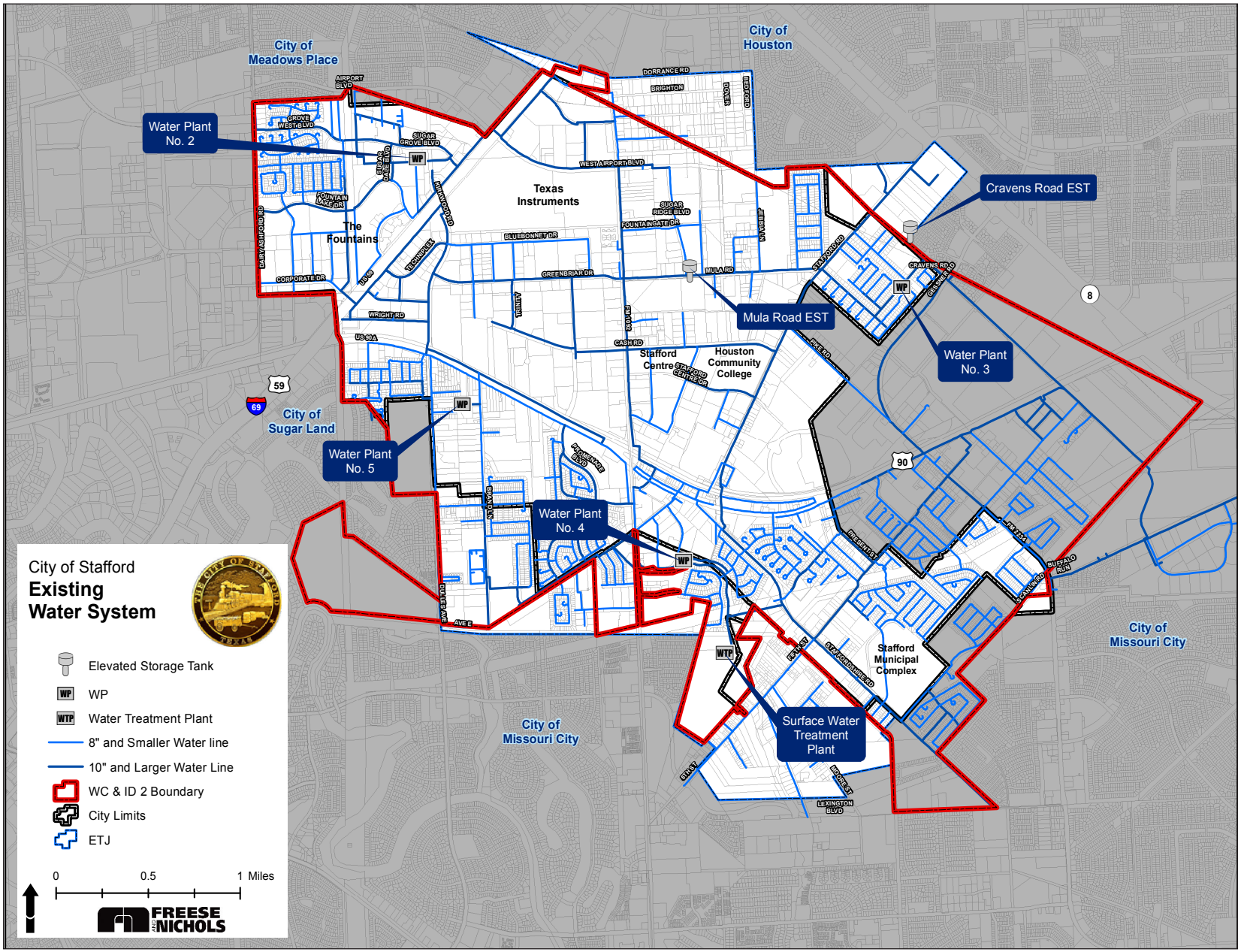
- City of Sugar Land – 12inch Interconnect
- City of Missouri City – 8 inch Interconnect
- Harris County MUD 122 – 10 inch Interconnect
- Blue Ridge West MUD – 8 inch Interconnect

STORAGE AND USAGE

The Texas Commission for Environmental Quality (TCEQ) requires 200 gallons per connection of storage, of which 100 gallons must be elevated storage. The City currently has 2.06 million gallons elevated storage capacity and an additional 6.7 million gallons in six ground-storage tanks. Since the limiting factor in this case is the elevated storage capacity, based on the current elevated capacity of 2.06 million gallons, the number of connections that would be allowed by TCEQ is 20,600. The District currently has 14,183 connections.

Based on information provided by the District Engineer, the District has a 22,360 gpm pumping capacity and experiences an average daily demand of approximately 4.5 million gallons.

Figure 6.1, *Fort Bend County W.C. & I.D. No. 2 Water System Map*



The District does not anticipate much extension to the distribution system except in areas where developers would design and install required infrastructure. Tracts larger than one acre require a service feasibility study if utilities are to be constructed or conveyed to the District for operation and maintenance, or subject to reimbursement. The former Texas Instruments property will require distribution, collection and expansion of production, storage and pressure facilities. The District is planning to construct a new groundwater plant and elevated storage tank in the next year and is confident that the development schedule can be accommodated.

CONSIDERATIONS

The City of Stafford is located within the Fort Bend County Subsidence District. The Fort Bend County Water Control and Improvement District No. 2, Harris County Municipal Utility District No. 122, Fifth Street Water Supply Corporation, and the City of Meadows Place developed a joint groundwater reduction plan that requires 60% of ground water usage to be converted to an alternate source by 2025. The groundwater reduction plan notes that the District has secured enough supply to meet the currently projected requirement beyond 2050. To process this additional raw water supply, the existing surface water treatment plant will need to be expanded. By securing a raw surface water supply contract with the GCWA, the District has been progressive in seeking solutions for long-term water supply.

Wastewater System

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

The City of Stafford is currently served by The District Wastewater Treatment Facility located at 902 Corine St. in Stafford. The treatment plant has a capacity of 6.0 MGD under Permit WQ0010086001. The average daily flow is 4.0 MGD and includes industrial and commercial constituents.

Due to the terrain within the District, lift stations are required. The District currently owns 25 lift stations and operates 30 lift stations. None of these lift stations are connected to a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, which monitors the system electronically.

The District uses public funds to rehabilitate and maintain the system, proactively targeting areas with records of greater maintenance activity. A rehabilitation program currently exists to replace manholes, sewer lines and hydrants in the District's older neighborhoods.

Water System Reuse

Once the wastewater has entered the WWTP, it does not mean that it is the end of the story. There are many possibilities for the reuse of WWTP runoff and treated water. The treated effluent from a WWTP can be used to irrigate parks, dogparks, sports fields or for irrigation of medians in new or redeveloped properties (as seen in the pictures below).

The District does not anticipate much extension to the system except in areas where developers would design and install required infrastructure. Again, tracts larger than one acre require a service feasibility study.

CONSIDERATIONS

The wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is nearing the end of plant capacity and an additional WWTP will be required in the coming years to meet TCEQ requirements. The District plans to convert Lift Station 19 to a new WWTP.

The District has also considered the implementation of a reclaimed water system in the future.

The District completes a master utilities plan update every 5 years. The last update was completed in 2010. The Plan should be updated to define needed capital improvement projects. This new master utilities plan will take into account current population levels, projected growth, updated future land use and usage characteristics. **Figure 6.1, Fort Bend County W.C. & I.D. No. 2 Wastewater System Map** illustrates the existing wastewater system in the City of Stafford.

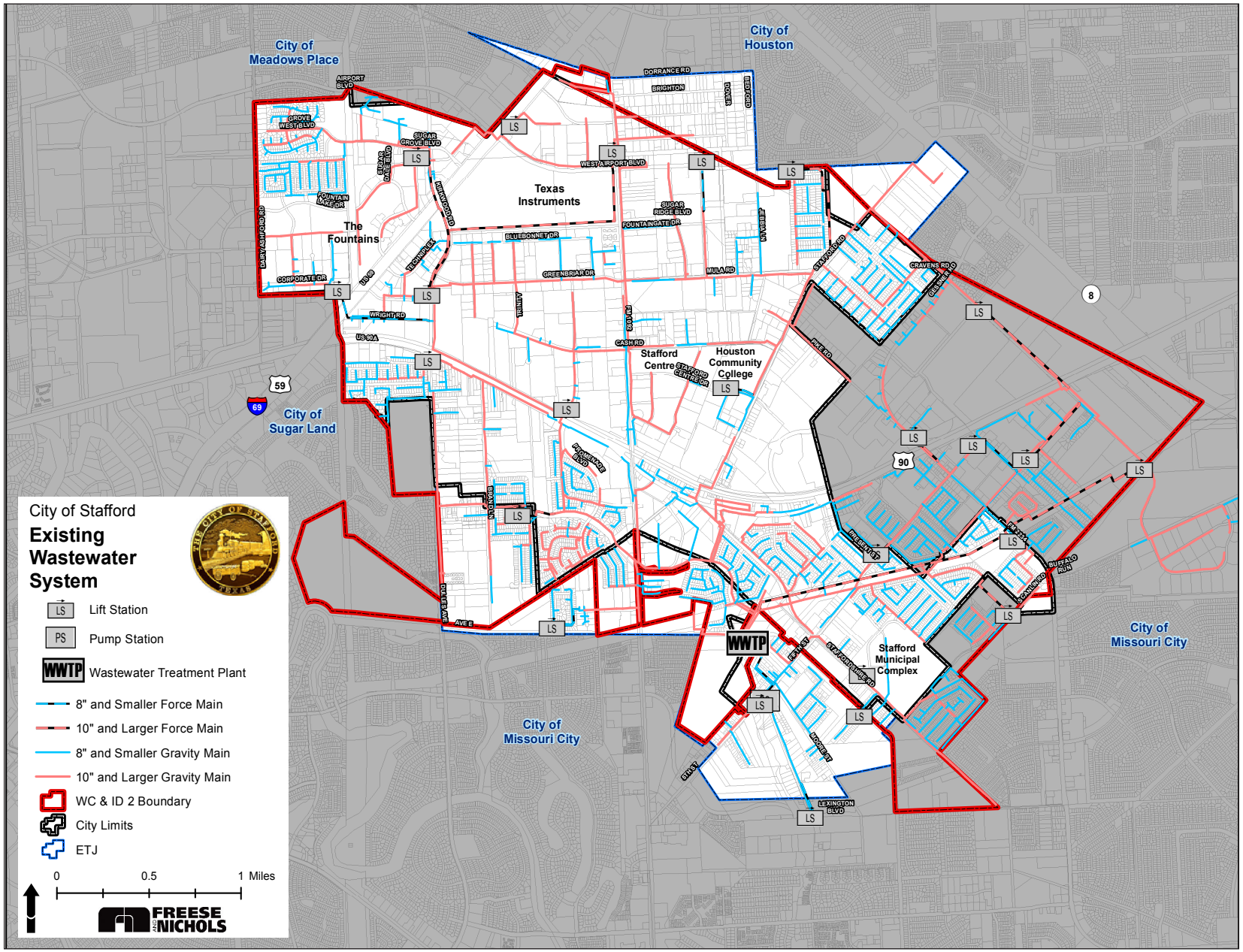
Stormwater Drainage System

EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

The City of Stafford owns and maintains the stormwater drainage system within the City. The City Streets group is also responsible for cleaning the drainage system pipes. The drainage system is in good condition with the oldest lines installed in the 1970s.

In 1987, a drainage master plan was developed. Since that time, several studies have been completed that have looked at issues of regional detention. Specific areas within the City experience drainage challenges. Certain subdivisions were planned to use the streets as storage for stormwater runoff, and consequently, experience street flooding during storm events. Certain subdivisions were planned to use the curb & gutter streets to convey larger than standard rainfall event runoff which is typically collected by the street drainage system, to help protect the homes, but tends to create short-term street ponding till system recovers and starts to drain through underground system. On boulevard type streets, ponding could be limited to outside lanes thus allowing a passable driving path for

Figure 6.2, *Fort Bend County W.C. & I.D. No. 2 Wastewater System Map*



motorists seeking to exit the neighborhood or evacuate during a hurricane (as has been the case in this region).

Hydraulic studies are currently underway for the Missouri City Estates and Sugar Creek subdivisions. Other subdivisions will be identified for future studies, such as Vaccaro Manor. The purpose of these hydraulic studies is to determine the cause of the drainage challenges and evaluate alternatives to improve the drainage issues in these specific areas of the City.

CONSIDERATIONS

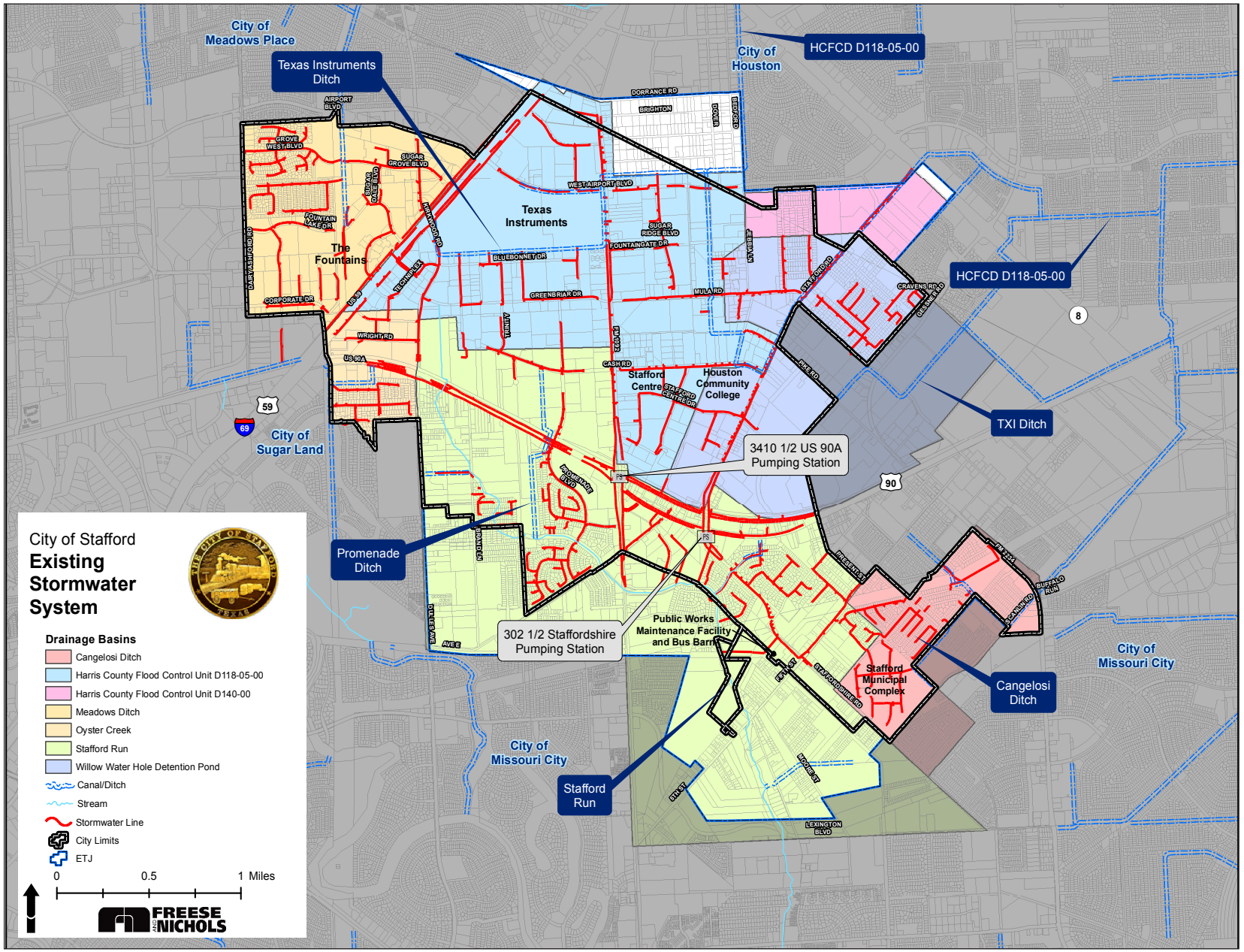
Because the City last completed a comprehensive drainage master plan in 1987. The City should examine the potential for a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) to complete the drainage improvements recommended in the 1987 Jones & Carter Master Drainage Plan. The City should continue acquiring right-of-way along ditches to complete ditch widening and should consider expanding the Willow Waterhole Detention Site.

The City does not anticipate extending the system except in areas where developers would design and install required infrastructure. Additionally, any new development is required to follow Fort Bend County Drainage requirements.

Stormwater Systems Used in Development

The excess water and runoff from weather events can often be troublesome. Many cities have combated stormwater system challenges by implementing detention features that are decorative elements within developments. The image below, taken at the University Branch Library of Houston Community College in Sugar Land, is a great example of a landscaped detention feature. This functions both as a runoff collection site and an aesthetic feature on the campus. Developers are coming up with new and creative ways to use stormwater systems as development features that enhance the function of the site, as well as the aesthetics.

Figure 6.3, *City of Stafford Stormwater System Map*



Additional Infrastructure Recommendations

The following are action items related to the City's infrastructure.

GOAL 1: Foster a strong and diverse economy, through unique and innovative policies with a full range of employment and economic opportunities underscored by a zero city property tax.

STRATEGIES

Preserve the City's culture of limiting debt and expenditures in order to attract future residents and businesses.

- Consider developing an ordinance for Low Impact Development (LID) and for incorporating greywater or water reuse where possible.

STRATEGIES

Maintain an aggressive policy to live within our means.

- Develop a capital improvement program in order to rank the importance of projects to ensure they are constructed based on need. Add public facilities to be constructed or renovated to the capital improvements program in order to plan for future availability of funding.

GOAL 3: Ensure adequate facilities and services to maintain the safety and well-being of Stafford's residents, workers and visitors.

STRATEGIES

Provide the necessary and appropriate technology, buildings, equipment and people to continue delivery of quality services now and in the future.

- Obtain control of public facility sites that will be required by future growth and development.
- Develop a long-term maintenance program to ensure adequate maintenance of existing and proposed facilities.
- Integrate technology systems such as phone applications, information kiosks, e-newsletters, etc., to facilitate awareness of Stafford's special events, amenities, recreational opportunities, and history. Technological upgrades are a current priority in many communities given the evolving technical expectations and sophistication of facility users.
- Utilize tools such as value engineering (as applicable) to develop the most cost effective facilities.

STRATEGIES

Provide plans and studies to investigate deficiencies in infrastructure City-maintained and operated infrastructure, reviewing and revising, as appropriate, engineering technical design and construction standards to meet current practices (i.e. roadway, drainage, and water/wastewater facilities).

- Create a Capital Improvement Program for streets, utilities, drainage, parks, and public facilities.
- Update the Master Drainage Plan.

STRATEGIES

Coordinate with the Fort Bend County Water Control & Improvement District No. 2 during design and plat review to strive for an infrastructure system that will effectively serve existing and projected needs of the community in a safe and efficient manner.

- Partner with Fort Bend County to determine status of completing the regional detention pond in Stafford Run.

STRATEGIES

Ensure that infrastructure is sufficient to support future development in key development areas, such as updating the Master Drainage Plan to ensure new development and redevelopment drainage facilities are properly sized and constructed.

- The City should continue acquiring right-of-way along ditches to complete the ditch improvements recommended in the 1987 Jones & Carter Master Drainage Plan.
- The City should consider expanding the Willow Waterhole Detention Site to the ultimate size recommended in the 1987 Jones & Carter Master Drainage Plan.
- Consider constructing improvements in the Oyster Creek area as defined in Sugar Land's Sugar Creek Drainage Study.
- Consider constructing improvements in the Harris County Flood Control District D-140-00 area as defined in the Missouri City Estates Drainage Study.
- Require dedication of right-of-way in the Harris County Flood Control District Unit D-140-00 and construct the concrete liner as shown in the current Master Drainage Plan.
- Based on development patterns, prioritize and implement the Major Thoroughfare Plan

STRATEGIES

Proactively work closely with Fort Bend County Water Control & Improvement District No. 2 to develop and implement Stormwater Program Best Management Practices (BMPs).

- Encourage the most current Best Management Practices with Fort Bend County Water Control & Improvement District No. 2.

STRATEGIES

Address drainage concerns within older neighborhoods.

- Examine the potential for a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) to complete the drainage improvements recommended in the 1987 Jones & Carter Master Drainage Plan.

GOAL 6: Provide a balanced mix of land uses, in accordance with the vision of Stafford residents, which diversify the sales tax base, to attract people to live, work and shop in Stafford.

STRATEGIES

Maximize development along the frontage of U.S. 59, U.S. 90A, FM 1092, and the Island District by providing opportunities for mixed-use retail/ residential development.

- Coordinate with Fort Bend County Water Control & Improvement District No. 2 to ensure water and sewer infrastructure has adequate capacity to serve the desired intensity of redevelopment.

Chapter 7

Neighborhood and Community Livability

Introduction

Neighborhood and community livability may seem like broad jargon, but it is the essence of creating places people want to live, work and play. Livability refers to the characteristics, aesthetics, design and social aspects that make a city unique and establish a sense of community. Communities are much more than physical environments or people living in a geographic location; they are groups of people with commonality. These commonalities are often created through relationships, culture and concerns. Further, the physical attributes of a community are shaped and defined by the people living within. Where do people live? What types of housing are in demand? Where do people tend to congregate? What areas are important to the community members? The answers to these questions help to define the characteristics of the built environment of a community. Additionally, scaling a community down to its neighborhoods, provides a finer level of detail where more personal connections between neighbors and their physical environment exist.

The City of Stafford is a unique community with its own values and vision for the future. The following chapter describes tangible information that can help the City grow in a manner that supports community interests, enhances the quality of its neighborhoods and improves the visual characteristics of the City.

Design Character

Creating the spaces and places people are drawn to requires thoughtful, intuitive design. With the goal of attaining a recognizable, charming and unique look and feel, a community can define its character by implementing design standards for all development. There are many elements that play into character. These range from signage and building design to landscaping and street design. Although it may appear to be an inordinate task to plan and implement comprehensive design characteristics, with the proper tools a city can define their character and instill a sense of community pride. In that regard, Stafford is in an important transition. The existing built environment has many remarkable traits, and these assets should serve as the cornerstones of the vision for the future. However, there are also many areas that may be in need of attention. To achieve a cohesive design character, the City should work, where possible, to transform critical visual elements throughout the city. These improvements will meet the expectations of the citizens and visitors of Stafford. The following section provides design strategies that should be used as development decisions are made. These strategies are typically codified in the zoning and subdivision ordinance and will help guide citizens and decision makers through the process of revitalizing the design character of Stafford.

NON-RESIDENTIAL DESIGN STANDARDS

Achieving the goal of providing attractive, quality, commercial development requires considering both site design and architectural design. Effective site design must produce safe site circulation for both automobile and pedestrian traffic. This is achieved through strategic ingress and egress points, proper building orientation, parking design and adequate land dedication for landscaping. When these elements work in unison, a commercial development can accommodate high traffic businesses and remain functional. The key elements in non-residential design standards are:

- Building orientation
- Lot coverage
- Setbacks
- Pedestrian circulation and trail connections
- Number and location of access points
- Access easements
- Parking lot design and parking requirements
- Landscaping requirements
- Screening and buffering requirements
- Location of refuse enclosures

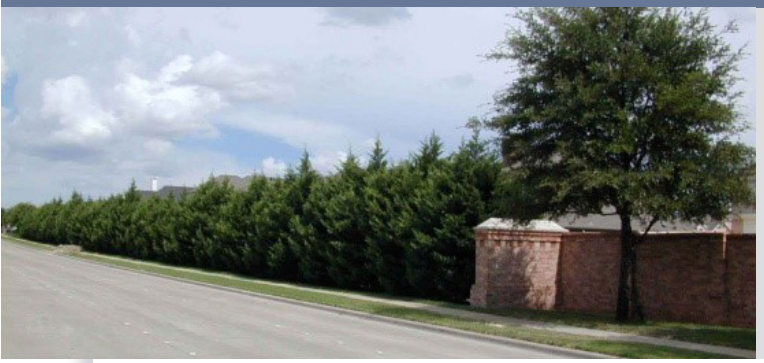
In addition to site design, architectural design guidelines establish continuity throughout the City and contribute to the positive image Stafford seeks to achieve. Architectural design guidelines direct future development and advance the community character established in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The development of non-residential design standards should be done with a clear vision of the future of Stafford. Design trends are important too and should be researched prior to establishing the standards. However, an emphasis on quality materials and clearly-defined and enforceable standards may prove to be of greater value. Quality-designed buildings will draw visitors to the area and create a sense of place for residents. City staff should define a list of approved building materials, percentages of masonry coverage, roofing materials and other design-related standards to help guide future development. The City should also consider the following factors when developing non-residential design standards:

- Building heights
- Vertical and horizontal articulations
- Entryway design and orientation
- 360-degree architecture
- Façade materials (such as masonry percentages, mixture of materials, color and prohibited materials)
- Façade requirements (such as awnings, canopies and parapets)

LANDSCAPING

Establishing landscape requirements for commercial properties and public right-of-ways can enhance the image of the City. Upgrading and ensuring future landscaping along major thoroughfares and high traffic areas such as, FM 1092 and West Airport Boulevard, will provide noticeable visual enhancements to both residents and visitors. The following are non-residential landscaping requirements that exist or should be considered:

- Minimum landscape buffer width of 10 feet along collector streets, 15 feet along all arterial streets, and 20 feet along Interstates
- Minimum of one 3–inch caliper tree every 35 feet of street frontage with 4–inch caliper preferred
- Minimum number of shrubs based on linear street frontage
- Maximum percentage of turf grass coverage
- The use of native, drought tolerant landscaping to reduce water use, when possible
- Low Impact Design (LID) landscaping techniques to retain and absorb a portion of a sites stormwater runoff
- Landscaped islands in parking areas over 30 spaces in size

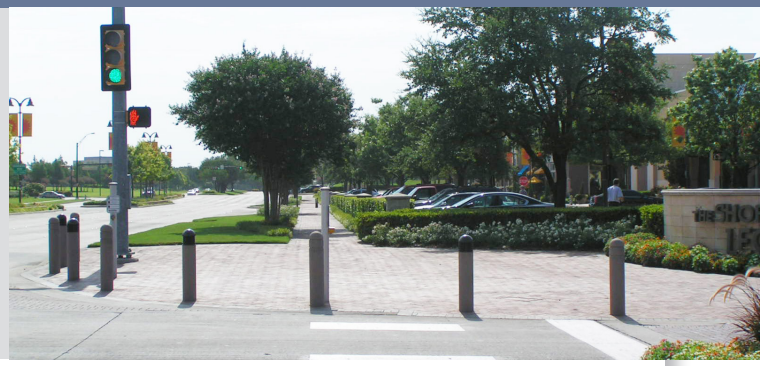


SCREENING AND BUFFERING

The purpose of screening and buffering is to enhance the visual appearance of the community by separating incompatible land uses, improving the appearance of parking areas and public right-of-ways, minimizing soil erosion, and reducing stormwater runoff. Screening typically focuses more on the visual impacts of the use while buffering focuses more on light and sounds. There are many techniques for screening and buffering (see example photos above). Types of screening solutions include fences, walls, trees, or large shrubs placed strategically to help blend a use into the surrounding environment or prevent unsightly items from being seen. Natural screening includes strips of land such as hills or berms, clumps of trees and shrubs, or other landscape features, which are used to reduce headlight glare and traffic noises. The following screening techniques that currently exist or should be considered:

- The use of 8-foot masonry walls where residential and non-residential areas abut. Masonry is more durable and requires less maintenance and replacement than wood fencing.
- Use of trees along the line between the residential and non-residential use, particularly if parking lighting is present, to help mitigate lighting impacts
- Screening of trash receptacles through a masonry or brick wall, an opaque gate enclosure or required landscaping materials
- Screening of loading docks, when present, through the use of walls, berms or landscaping
- Use of screening walls to hide commercial outside storage areas from the public view and for abutting residential areas

Buffering incompatible uses with a tiered system based on the adjacent use types can also help to reduce the negative impacts of development. A tiered system, with levels one through three, would establish screening and buffering requirements to help simplify the process for City staff and developers. Level One would represent the minimum requirements, and Level Three would represent the maximum requirements. More intense commercial uses adjacent to residential uses should have increased buffering and screening requirements (i.e Level Three) and less intensive uses, such as an office adjacent to multi-family would require Level One screening and buffering. The guidelines and requirements of each level can be established by the City based on staff recommendations.



STREET CHARACTER AND DESIGN

Median Treatments

The use of medians is recommended as a form of access management and to provide opportunities for increased visual quality. Medians should be used at roadway entrances and along major corridors. Signage, pavers, stone, lighting and plant materials may also enhance the overall appearance.

Intersection Enhancements

Intersection enhancements can be used to both increase aesthetics and contribute to community branding. Intersection enhancements, such as pavement treatments, corner plazas, landscaping and decorative lighting, may be utilized to improve the aesthetic appeal of a corridor, particularly at major intersections. The addition of the Stafford logo may help to brand the corridor. While such an addition may seem subtle, it may help to clearly delineate Stafford to visitors.

Sidewalks

Establishing a well-connected pedestrian network is an effective way to encourage people to travel short distances by walking. Sidewalks and pedestrian crossings are the most common approach to creating the sidewalk network. Sidewalks allow people to move freely and serve as a major mode of transportation for many people in Stafford. Their design and relationship to the street can either discourage or encourage use by appearing to be inviting with adequate tree cover and a buffer from the street, or not inviting by placing pedestrians in the direct sun and closer to moving vehicles.

A key strategy of the plan is to connect portions of the community to include neighborhoods, public facilities, and parks with a complete system of pedestrian facilities in order to provide a safe and comfortable grid of interconnectivity. It is recommended that streets and high-traffic pedestrian areas include sidewalks , shared use paths and other pedestrian-friendly amenities such as crosswalks, pedestrian countdown signals and updating current standards, as necessary.

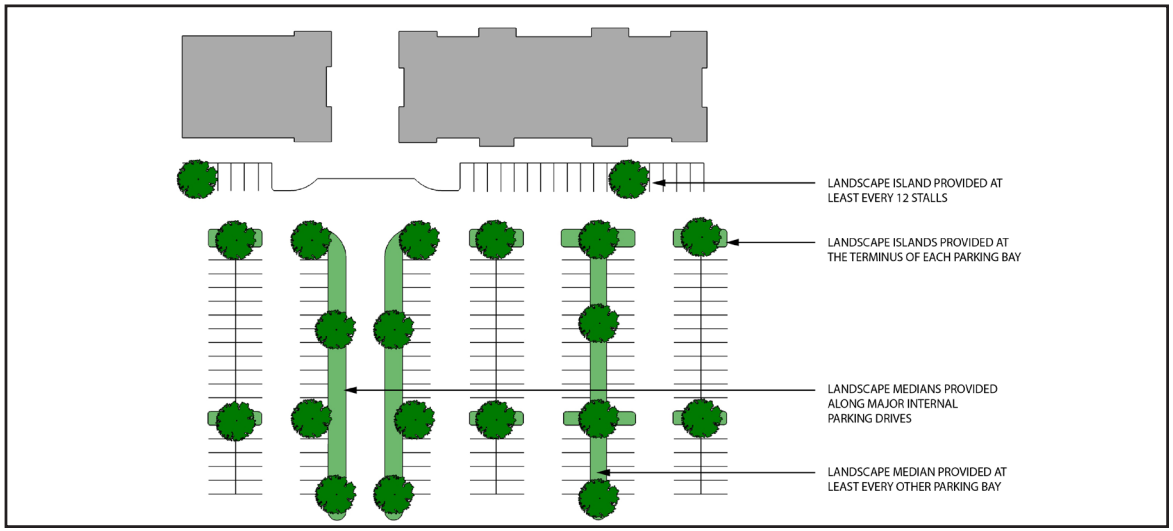
Corridor Landscaping

Landscaping should be utilized at key intersections and site entrances throughout the City. Landscaped areas should include not only large trees and shrubs, but also seasonal color, small trees and plants. Trees near buildings and pedestrian walkways should be pruned up to 9 feet in height to ensure safe clearance. Landscape beds and planters should be provided at building entrances and outdoor seating areas. Shrubs, landscape berms and enhanced landscaping, in addition to turf grass, should be used to buffer parking lots from the public view and may also be used to screen loading docks and other visually unattractive areas. Landscaping using Southeast Texas native plants should be encouraged to protect water resources and ensure drought tolerance.

Parking Standards and Design

Parking lots greater than 50 parking spaces should be broken up with a landscape median between every other parking bay. Landscape islands containing at least one 3–inch caliper tree should be provided at the terminus of each row of parking and additionally every twelve spaces. Parking lots greater than fifty parking stalls should provide a landscape median on each side of major internal parking drives. Parking aisles should be arranged perpendicular to building entrances, when possible. Surface parking in the front of businesses should be discouraged in pedestrian-oriented environments. In these areas parking should be encouraged on the side or at the back of a business. The City's current parking lot landscape requirements should be reviewed whether they are achieving the plan's vision.

Figure 7.1, *Parking Lot Landscaping*



Connectivity

New development within Stafford should focus on integration of land uses—ensuring that development contains connections, both vehicular and pedestrian in nature, to adjacent land uses. The following strategies will aid in improving overall community connectivity:

- Encourage multiple street connections between adjacent developments by encouraging a minimum of two street connections in new subdivisions
- Ensure that neighborhoods provide access to parks and trails, when present
- Working with developers to incorporate parks and trails as development occurs, either through easement, land dedication or purchase
- Provide sidewalks in all future residential subdivision developments
- Provide multi-modal facilities, such as trails and bike paths through floodplain areas or utility easements

Commercial Signage

One important component to enhancing the overall image of Stafford is sign regulation. Regulating commercial signage can reduce visual clutter, create a positive city image and even help to define corridors or districts. Since commercial signage is generally intended to be seen by the driving public, it is important to consider public safety in the regulation process. To achieve this goal, signs should be aesthetically pleasing and effective, but also sized appropriately. This requires context sensitive solutions. For example: along a freeway, signs may need to be larger to be seen from farther distances due to the high speeds of travel. However, in residential or pedestrian areas, effective signage may be much smaller in scale. Additionally, sign standards should encourage integration of signage with the surroundings. This may include scale, landscaping, materials and building design.

It should be noted that decisions related to sign regulations must follow the rules set forth in Chapter 216 of the Texas Local Government Code. Chapter 216 establishes the means by which a municipality may regulate the removal, relocation or reconstruction of a sign.

Stafford has a sign ordinance, but should consider the creation of sign districts along major road corridors. These sign districts would allow for additional, targeted sign regulation defining the character of the corridors and providing small wins for the city. The impacts of the sign districts will be noticeable in the short term helping to gain support and momentum for additional improvements.

Sign standards for other areas of the community should reflect the image and character the city hopes to achieve. These goals can be achieved with increased design and material standards for ground signs, the requirement of unified multi-tenant ground signs for retail shopping centers, and the prohibition of unsightly sign types.

Finally, any new sign regulations must be balanced between the public interest and the needs and rights of the business community. For instance, sign regulations should enhance the roadway by improving the visual appearance and safety, but regulations should allow for businesses to advertise enough to entice customers or clients to stop.

Neighborhoods

A neighborhood is the setting in which residents develop a sense of belonging. These social ties are developed through everyday interactions, common interests and simply by being neighbors. It is therefore in the public interest to maintain neighborhood conditions and also enhance existing neighborhoods. The goal is for Stafford to retain lifelong residents to strengthen community bonds while also attracting new families.

Thriving neighborhoods increase quality of life, support excellence in the education system and help to meet employment center needs. As an established city, Stafford must continue to reinvest in its existing neighborhoods to promote their long-term vitality. Limited space is left for new neighborhoods to be developed in Stafford. The defining characteristics of a thriving neighborhood are generally quality housing amongst compatible land uses, with actively engaged residents, who take pride in their homes and neighborhood. Building successful neighborhoods requires housing strategies utilizing a variety of techniques, both public and private, and the cooperative actions by property owners, tenants, the City, local organizations and volunteer groups. While personal investment in property is a key component for attractive neighborhoods, the City too may positively impact and encourage private investment by creating and maintaining livable neighborhoods. Livable neighborhoods are those that may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Opportunities for neighborhood interaction
- Access to public amenities
- Well-maintained infrastructure
- Compatible land uses
- A sense of community, identity or belonging
- Access to conveniences such as retail, schools and neighborhood services
- Well-maintained housing
- Life-cycle housing

MIX OF LAND USES

A variety of land-use types contributes to a neighborhood's walkability and vibrancy. Providing a mix of land uses increases pedestrian activity and helps to create a sense of place within the community. Mixed land uses may be vertical mixed-use (typically retail at ground level and office and/or residential on upper levels), or horizontal mixed-use (each use is contained within its own structure but planned into a single development). Mixed-use development should be encouraged at key locations within Stafford, as shown on *Figure 3.2, Future Land Use Map*.

ZONING

It is important to note the intricate roll zoning has in defining neighborhoods within a city. A variety of residential zoning designations codified within the zoning ordinance allows for an appropriate mix of housing options and neighborhood forms to be developed. Stafford's current zoning ordinance designates one zoning district to detached single-family residential. Within this district the minimum lot size

is required to be 7,150 square feet (with exceptions for residential subdivisions). To accomplish an appropriate mix of housing, a range of lot sizes and residential housing density should be considered. The range of size and density may be determined by City staff, however, typical lot sizes range from approximately 4,000 square feet to one acre depending on the location and context. Residential densities typically range from approximately one dwelling-unit per acre (DUA) to six DUA for detached single-family residential. Attached and multi-family residential typically range from ten to 24 DUA.

In addition to residential zoning, lot size and density, a key component of successful neighborhoods are the compatible surrounding and adjacent land uses. Siting of residential zoning should take into consideration the impacts of adjacent land uses. Living in close proximity to industrial uses may pose health and safety risks to residents, as well as noise and light pollution which may be considered a nuisance. Ideally, zoning will allow for a less intense uses to be located near residential zoning districts.

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN STANDARDS

Maintaining consistency and compatibility, and preserving the visual character of residential development and renovations is critical to the integrity of Stafford's neighborhoods. Allowing homes to be built out of scale or character with the surroundings in one area that can be detrimental to the identity of the neighborhood, and if left unchecked the entire city.

Residential design standards establish expectations for residential development and provide a cohesive set of tools to ensure neighborhoods retain their intended character. The City should consider or continue to promote the following factors when developing residential design standards:

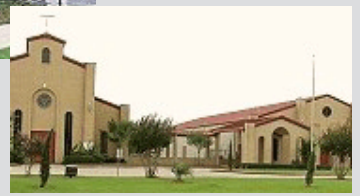
- Roof pitch requirements
- Varied roof heights
- Approved roofing materials
- Building materials (such as masonry percentages, mixture of materials, color and prohibited materials)
- Garage orientation
- Design elements (such as decorative garage doors, accented exterior doors, window treatments and decorative lighting)
- Windows on all facades
- Minimum landscaping requirements
- Maximum lot coverage
- Flexible setback requirements in appropriate zoning districts.

Diversity

The citizens of Stafford provide a rich fabric of diverse cultures and heritages from around the world. In 2000, the Census data showed that the City was made up of an equal number of Caucasian, Asian, African-American, and Hispanic residents. The 2010 Census, as discussed in ***Chapter 1, Community Snapshot***, shows an even more expanded diversification with 36 percent of the population identifying themselves as Caucasian, 27 percent African-American, 26 percent Hispanic and 23 percent Asian.

Diversity is also reflected through the variety of religious faiths and denominations present within Stafford. There are over 45 places of worship, including:

- a Buddhist Temple,
- a Hindu Temple,
- a Muslim Mosque,
- an Orthodox Church,
- an Arabic Evangelical Church,
- a Chinese Baptist Church, and
- many other Christian denominations.



Existing Housing Conditions

Understanding the City's existing housing stock plays an important role in developing strategies to preserve and improve Stafford's neighborhoods. Additionally, knowledge of the existing housing stock is useful to identify strengths and weaknesses of the existing conditions and areas of focus for future planning efforts. Based on condition assessments, the following issues should be targeted:

- Infill housing
- Mix of housing options
- Additional lot sizes and varied housing densities
- Proactive housing maintenance

HOUSING MAINTENANCE

Housing maintenance is critical to neighborhood safety, viability and sustainability.

The maintenance of single-family homes within neighborhoods also affects the larger community. In areas where housing maintenance is neglected neighborhoods become blighted and a ripple effect may occur, impeding other civic objectives, including economic development and private investment.

The City adopted the International Property Maintenance Code in 2007. The intent of this initiative is to hold property owners responsible for minimum property maintenance standards. Having an ordinance in place gives the City the tools necessary to enforce and protect neighborhood integrity while maintaining quality housing. The property maintenance code continue to be enforced.

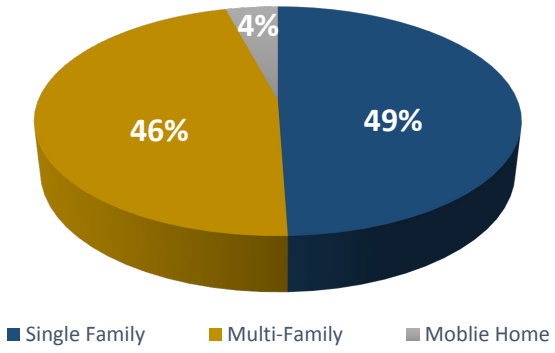
An additional tool for promoting housing maintenance in Stafford is a Recognition/ Reward Program to encourage homeowners and landlords to enhance or maintain their properties. This program can be tailored to fit the needs of Stafford and can serve as an opportunity for City staff to connect with residents in a positive and supportive way.

HOUSING MIX

Stafford's current mix of housing is fairly balanced between detached single-family residences and multi-family at 49 percent and 46 percent respectively, with four percent of housing being mobile homes. Stafford has approximately 7,200 total housing units within its city limits with 3,550 single-family units and 3,331 attached or multi-family housing units (*Source: American Community Survey*).

Stafford is fortunate to have fairly young housing stock (as illustrated in Figure 1.9 of the Community Snapshot chapter). Of the total existing housing stock, approximately 77.3 percent was built after 1980. This is a positive factor for Stafford's ability to provide quality, attractive housing to all of its population.

Figure 7.2, *Housing Mix*



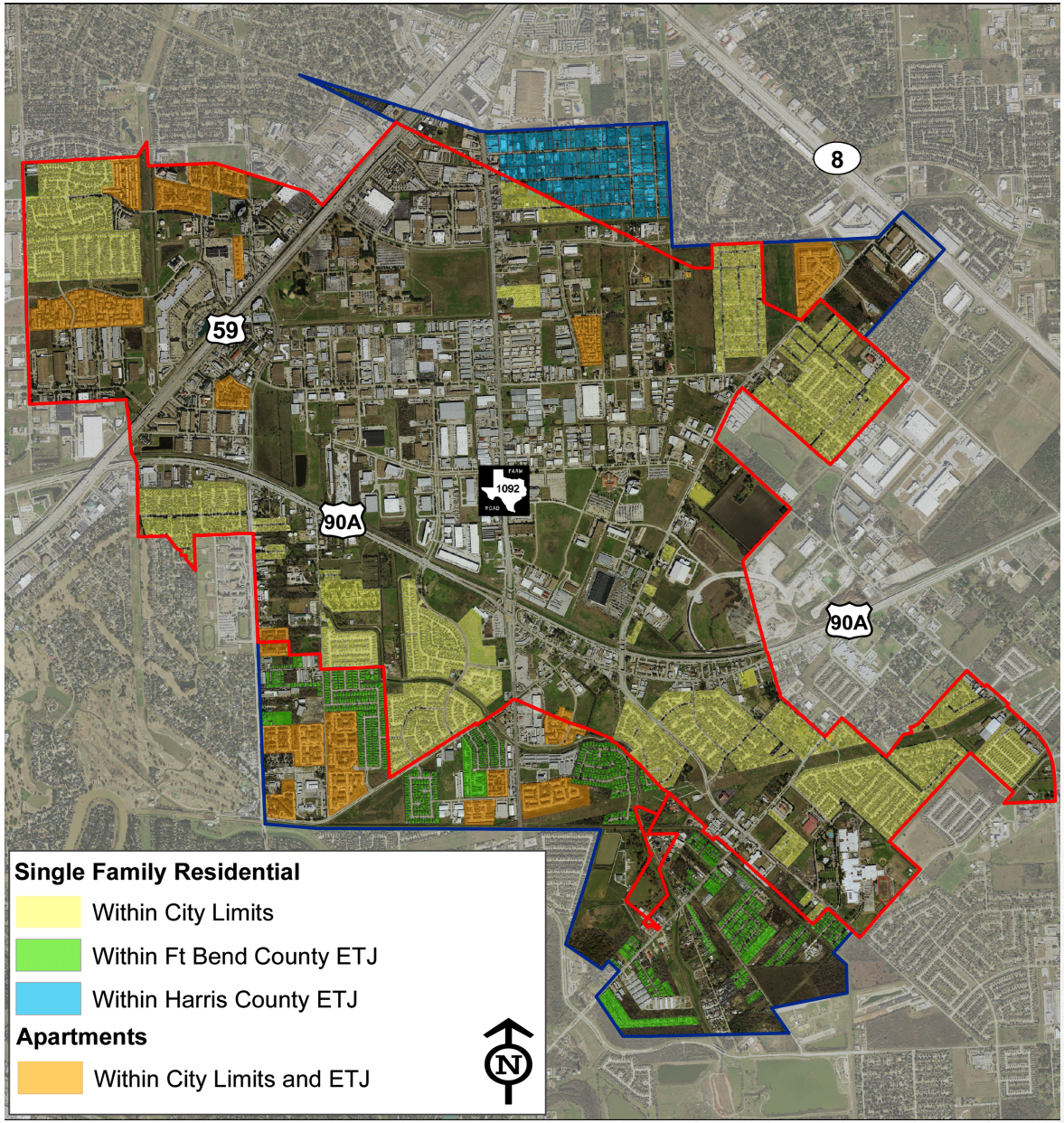


Figure 7.3, *Housing Mix Map*

Source: City of Stafford

Life Cycle Housing

Life cycle housing serves the needs of individuals, families, and different segments of the population through all stages of their lives—young singles, professionals, families with children, families without children, empty-nester's, retirees and seniors. When an adequate mix of housing options are available, a person has the opportunity to live their entire life in or around the same community. As an individual moves through the different stages of life, life-cycle housing provides suitable options along the way. An example of this cycle may be renters who move into the starter home market, families who move into larger homes, and seniors who move into smaller units requiring less upkeep.

Rather than following the model of traditional suburban design, where housing types are segregated, a distinct benefit of life-cycle housing is the ability of families to put down roots in their neighborhood, children to remain in the same schools, social networks and bonds to remain in place, and seniors to live close to family and friends. To achieve these benefits, the appropriate mix of housing options is critical. The following information outlines the key components of successful life-cycle housing.

APARTMENTS

The range of apartment options is very broad in an effort to meet the needs and desires of a diverse rental market. The traditional apartment is located in a multi-story building, within an apartment community, and arranged in a garden or courtyard style configuration. In recent years, a trend in mixed-use apartments has emerged. Now some apartments are also located in multi-story buildings, most frequently in an urban-style setting. Apartments located in mixed-use developments are typically located on the upper floors with retail uses occupying the ground floor. Regardless of the location or configuration, apartments serve an immediate need in a community. Apartments provide affordable housing options for residents in all stages of life, as well as upgraded facilities and amenities in appropriate markets. This housing type can serve the needs of the entire life-cycle throughout various stages.

SINGLE-FAMILY SMALL

Small single-family homes are often referred to as starter homes and are generally the most affordable option for single-family housing. Families or individuals looking for housing options with more space and privacy, or moving into the home-ownership market find the starter home as a great option. They are typically located in a single-family neighborhood environment.

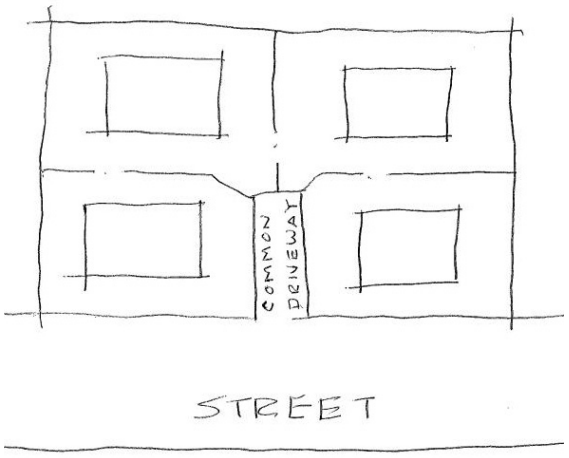


Figure 7.4, *Suggested Single-Family Small Lot Layout*

SINGLE-FAMILY MEDIUM

Medium sized single-family homes are generally larger in square footage than the small starter home. These homes typically include additional bedrooms and bathrooms with upgraded amenities. Often times, medium-sized single-family homes are located on larger lots. This housing segment is ideal for a growing family or an individual who may be progressing in their career and seeking upgraded housing options.

DUPLEX HOMES

A duplex is a house divided into two separate dwelling units, each with its own entrance. Duplex housing serves a segment of the community who may want to live in an increasingly dense setting while having the look and feel of a single-family home. This housing type is important for residents and a community due to its affordability, range of amenities available, and the transitional nature of the housing itself.

TOWNHOMES

Townhomes are attached single and multi-story dwelling units. Similar to apartments and duplexes, townhomes serve as an alternative to apartment living, and meet a demand in the rental market. One key difference is the fact that townhomes also meet a need for home ownership. Many segments of a community find townhomes appealing, from young professionals to small families. This housing options can also serve the needs of seniors seeking a simplistic home-ownership experience.

LOFT HOUSING

Young professionals have been migrating into more urban regions of cities in the past decade. This migratory pattern has created a demand for housing options in the City's core. Loft housing meets this need by providing a lively, walkable environment with ample amenities. This segment of the housing mix is often more expensive than the previously mentioned housing types, but regulatory components of these types of development have included accommodations for affordable units.

SENIOR

An integral part of retirement is the connection to family, friends and the community in which a senior has grown to call home. To allow a senior or retiree to age in place, housing options must be available. The need for decreased maintenance, increased access to transportation options and accessibility to amenities such as fresh food and medical facilities are critical. Many of the aforementioned housing options can meet these needs. Apartments, duplexes and townhomes may provide the necessary housing options. However, there may also be a need for smaller single-family homes on small lots or zero lot-line units to accommodate seniors.

CONCLUSION

Based on the current housing conditions within Stafford, the most beneficial housing types to be considered are Single-Family Small, Townhomes, and Senior housing. Currently, there is a gap in Single-Family Small or starter homes for those entering the housing market in Stafford for the first time. Providing additional housing for this

market segment will increase opportunities for families aspiring to own their own home, settle into the community and put down roots in Stafford.

The need for additional housing choice also extends into the Townhome and Senior housing segments of the market. Stafford should strive to retain its young professionals and allow seniors to age in place. This may be accomplished by introducing more townhomes and senior housing where appropriate. A truly diverse mix of housing is critical to a thriving housing market and the community of Stafford as a whole.

Community Branding

The City of Stafford is situated in a large metropolitan landscape sharing city boundaries with cities on all sides. This can create an environment where visual monotony is often inherent, and communities appear to be just like their neighbors. For example, the visual appearance of Stafford to a traveler along U.S. 69 or U.S. 90A may be very similar to the appearance of any other nearby community. A lack of design variety, especially along major corridors, tends to create anonymity, and it becomes difficult for people to know when they have left one community and entered another. Gateways can provide a strong sense of arrival to, as well as a sense of departure from, the community. These features are the first thing visitors see when they arrive and the last impression visitors have when they leave.

It is important for Stafford to continue distinguishing itself from the surrounding communities by improving the overall visual landscape of the city. Gateway features are a simple first step in this direction. The City of Stafford has done an exceptional job of creating gateway monuments along US 69 and SH 90A. These monuments serve as a template for smaller-scale Secondary Gateways, and it is recommended this theme be continued at key locations.

Priority for funding entry features, both in terms of total dollars spent per entry and in terms of the timing of expenditures, should be directly related to the number of people using a particular entry point.

An important factor in the design of gateways is to develop an entryway that provides a sense of identity for the community while projecting a desirable image for the city. Consideration should be given to establishing a uniform design concept for all gateway areas, and hierarchical distinction between primary and secondary gateways can be achieved through design modification for each type of entry feature. Minor gateways can be specific to the individual neighborhood, reflecting the distinct character of each area. Such enhancements may consist of signage, landscaping elements, median improvements, paving treatments and intersection upgrades. Increased landscape enhancements and cleanup efforts will also create a new look for these target areas. Street trees, plantings along business fronts and at major intersections will also provide year round visual interest.

SECONDARY GATEWAYS

Secondary gateways are typically located at major intersections and secondary entry points into the city and are intended to create identity and assist in community branding at the city street level. These features should be designed with a unified theme to enhance continuity and link elements to primary gateway features thus creating a recognizable community identity. Along FM 1092, secondary gateway monuments may be more appropriate due to the slower speeds of traffic. These gateways may include the use of monument columns with the City's name in a matching typeface and color as well as similar design treatments as the existing primary gateway monument signage. In addition to monument signage, these gateway areas may include enhanced medians utilizing masonry columns or low walls, enhanced landscaping, decorative street lighting, street trees, decorative pavement treatments or other identifiers that signify arrival into the city. Key locations for secondary gateway enhancements in Stafford include, see ***Figure 7.5, Community Branding, Gateways and Corridor Enhancement Areas,*** which can be found on Page 7.15.

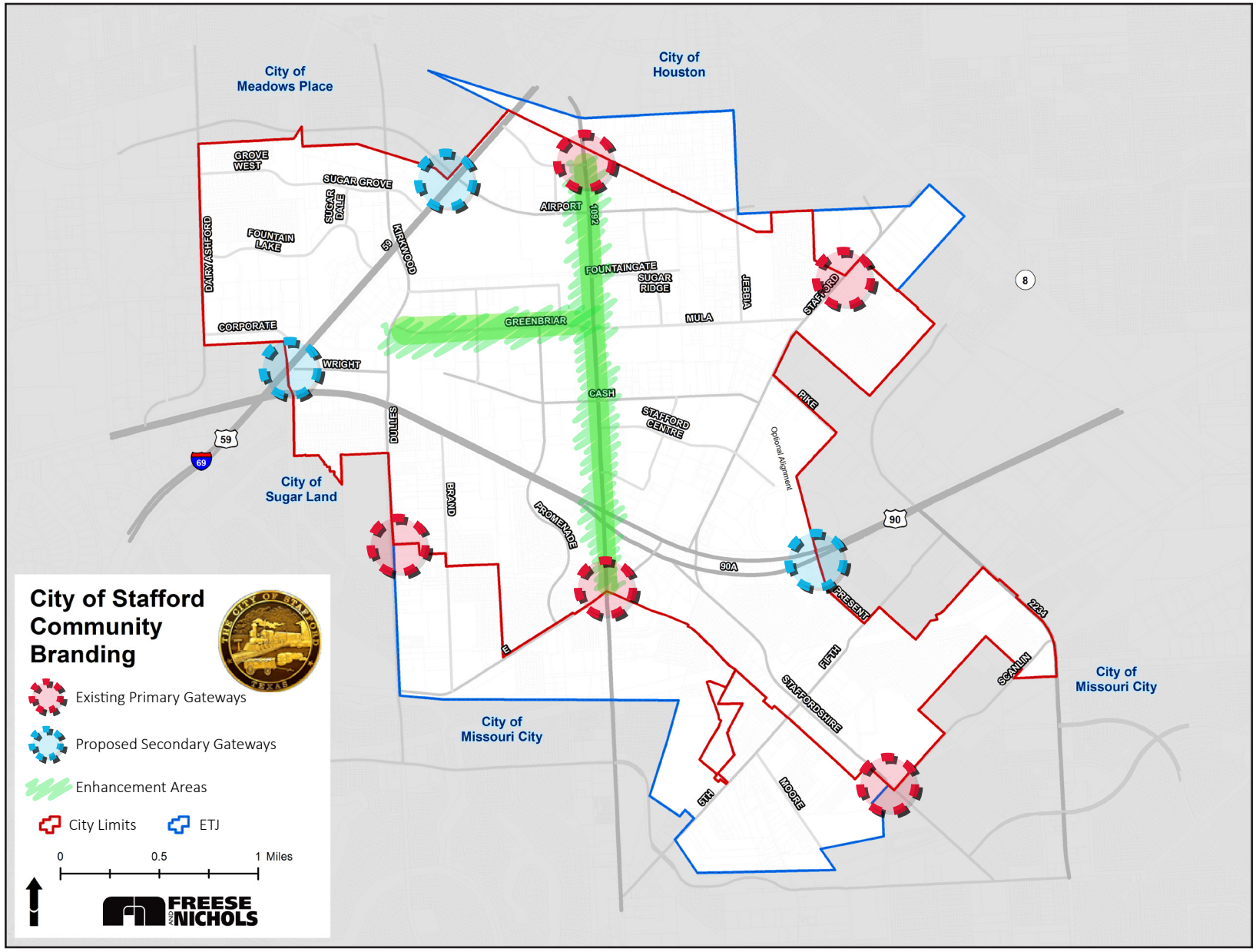


Figure 7.5, *Community Branding, Gateways and Corridor Enhancement Areas*

Corridor Enhancement Areas

An additional element to successful community branding is strategic corridor enhancement. *Figure 7.5* identifies two key corridors for the City to consider for future improvement. These corridors were selected because they serve as gateways, are the most highly visible areas, and most traveled by visitors to the City. These efforts are strategically smaller in scale and will require less investment by the City, while providing a substantial visual impact. Focusing development efforts on these corridors will also advance the branding and community image of Stafford.

Corridor enhancements are created through the use of key design elements. These elements are intended to improve the aesthetics of the area as well as increasing pedestrian activity, and overall beautification. The inclusion of median enhancements are critical to corridor enhancement. Median treatments generally consist of street trees, increased landscaping, raised masonry planter boxes and decorative street lighting with banner flags. Excellent examples of these treatments can be seen along SH 90A. Additionally, intersection enhancements improve the look and feel of an intersection within the corridor. These improvements assist in raising awareness of pedestrian traffic and providing visual enhancements to the corridor. The most appropriate elements to include in intersection enhancement are generally decorative pavement treatments identifying the boundaries of the intersection, pedestrian refuge areas, bollards, corner enhancements such as brick pavers or stamped concrete, low masonry planter boxes, landscape enhancements, and decorative lighting.

The elements described above provide the general ingredients necessary to create effective corridor enhancement. While all elements may not be utilized at each location, the City should consider the most appropriate elements for each designated corridor.

The following locations have been identified for future corridor enhancements:

FM 1092 (Murphy Road)

The boundaries of the enhancement area are Avenue E to the south and West Airport Boulevard at the north. This corridor serves as a key north/south artery for the City of Stafford. FM 1092 is utilized by both residents and visitors of Stafford on a daily basis. Enhancements along this corridor will have a positive impact on the image of the area, and will provide obvious results for minimal investment.

Greenbriar Drive

The corridor along Greenbriar Drive identified for enhancement begins at South Kirkwood Road at the west and ends at FM 1092 to the east. This east/west connection is highly traveled and has room for enhancement. This corridor currently lacks medians and continuous sidewalks. Although these elements are important components of enhancement, they are also more costly and are larger in scale than much of the previously described enhancement elements. It is recommended that future infrastructure improvements along this corridor consider inclusion of these items.

WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

As mentioned throughout the Community branding section, wayfinding signage serves a great purpose in a city by creating brand identity and directing residents and visitors to a city's main attractions while also allowing them to discover new attractions or events. Wayfinding should be designed in stages while always maintaining consistency. Stage one wayfinding should be utilized at entry points to the city to direct visitors and residents to attractions. Stage two should be located at the point of destination and serves to identify parking. Stage three should be focused on the pedestrian realm and indicate entry points at the destination. The City has made considerable strides in providing effective wayfinding signage and these efforts should be continued. For the Stafford to maintain a successful and effective wayfinding system, the signage must feature consistent and recognizable graphics and placement standards. The City should also consider incorporating existing branding elements taken from gateway monuments into all wayfinding signage.

Additional Neighborhood and Community Livability Recommendations

The following are action items related to neighborhood and community livability.

GOAL 1: Foster a strong and diverse economy, through unique and innovative policies with a full range of employment and economic opportunities underscored by a zero city property tax.

STRATEGIES

Preserve the City's culture of limiting debt and expenditures in order to attract future residents and businesses.

- Develop an Expenditures Review Committee to ensure the preservation of the City's culture of limiting debt.
- Educate citizens on the City's budget in order to promote and preserve fiscal responsibility.

STRATEGIES

Create partnerships with SMSD, Houston Community College, and businesses to provide technical and career development.

- Continue to work with the SMSD on educational planning efforts.
- Develop an educational task force with representatives from SMSD, Houston Community College (HCC) and local businesses to focus on technical and career development of students and citizens of Stafford.
- Partner with Houston Community College and the Texas Workforce Commission to develop a job training program for citizens.

GOAL 2: Create a thriving city, with emphasis on education through SMSD that attracts people of all ages, welcomes diversity and fosters a family-friendly atmosphere.

STRATEGIES

Elevate SMSD and utilize Houston Community College to assist with the education of SMSD students.

- Organize a committee consisting of local government, school district, HCC, community groups, and residents to discuss and explore ideas for collaborative efforts in sharing educational and maximizing resources. The committee should develop one to three achievable goals each year to accomplish.
- Encourage SMSD to develop a strategic plan to help guide and coordinate future district planning efforts.

STRATEGIES

Encourage programs, events, amenities and land uses that benefit the populous.

- Encourage more complete neighborhoods where residents have access to amenities and resources.
- Coordinate with community groups, neighborhood associations, and local businesses to identify and develop other annual community events like the Spring Clean Up.
- Make a commitment to be a welcoming and supporting community that values diversity through continual and constant dialogue with diverse population groups in Stafford.

STRATEGIES

Seek development of and promote existing entertainment venues, the arts, and recreational amenities.

- Help to provide promotional and financial assistance to art and cultural venues and events enhancing Stafford's uniqueness as a destination for local residents and cultural tourism.
- Analyze and evaluate facilities available to accommodate arts and entertainment events. A list of attributes should be created for the type of event to determine appropriateness of facility. The list of

attributes could include: type of space, number of seats or square footage, outdoor or indoor, and types of entertainment it can accommodate, to name a few. This will help to identify any entertainment and recreational facility deficiencies.

STRATEGIES

Develop annual health and wellness fair to promote healthy living and activities.

- Partner with local medical centers and providers to host an annual wellness and health festival.
- Create a partnership and working relationship with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide opportunities to Stafford's citizens regarding their health. CDC's Healthy Communities Program works with communities through local, state and territory, and national partnerships to improve community leaders and stakeholders' skills and commitments for establishing, advancing, and maintaining effective population-based strategies that reduce the burden of chronic disease and achieve health equity. Currently, 331 communities and 52 state and territorial health departments have been funded through this program.

GOAL 3: Ensure adequate facilities and services to maintain the safety and well-being of Stafford's residents, workers and visitors.

STRATEGIES

Provide street lighting to ensure the public's safety in commercial, retail and residential neighborhoods.

- Improve street lighting conditions and identify areas where additional lighting is needed in order to promote safer environments.
- Establish a framework for assessing the need and priority of new street lighting.

GOAL 4: Strengthen Stafford's image, identity, and character to foster a distinctive and appealing place to live, work, and visit.

STRATEGIES

Establish a community image theme with participation of residents, business owners and property owners.

- Develop design guidelines to ensure neighborhood and corridor integrity.

STRATEGIES

Enhance and design gateway and main corridor standards and themes that generate a positive first impression.

- Enhance signage through the use of simple, but effective landscaping. Landscaping will help draw attention to the sign, but a simple layout will ensure that the sign is the focal point.
- Utilize landscaping to screen parking lots from view of the identified gateway corridors.
- Review existing logo design for effectiveness in presenting the City goals and strategies.

STRATEGIES

Encourage business owners, through the Beautification Award Program, to use landscaping and other design aesthetics to beautify their buildings, entrances and parking lots.

- Continue to promote business owners to improve their properties through the Beautification Award Program.
- Educate businesses owners on the pros and cons to landscaping, as well as, market the Beautification Award Program and its benefits to the business owner and the community.

STRATEGIES

Identify city entryways lacking strong identity to implement branding.

- At gateway locations, use lighting only for the illumination of signage or special features such as public art.
- Conduct a branding study to reinforce the City's community character and marketing approach.
- Incorporate City logo into entrance sign designs.

STRATEGIES

Improve signage along main corridors to direct residents and visitors to activity areas.

- Conduct a wayfinding signage master plan to explore potential thematic signs unique to the City to include street signs, directional and facility signs and implement.
- Develop commercial signage guidelines to encourage existing business to follow, as well as, control future commercial development application.

GOAL 5: Facilitate development and redevelopment to create an urban mixed-use environment to attract people and foster a sense of place.

STRATEGIES

Support development of unique restaurants and entertainment that reflect the City's diversity.

- Organize a committee of a diverse, cultural representation in Stafford to develop ideas for social, cultural events and desire development. The City should offer resources to assist the committee when available.

GOAL 6: Provide a balanced mix of land uses, in accordance with the vision of Stafford residents, which diversify the sales tax base, to attract people to live, work, and shop in Stafford.

STRATEGIES

Provide a range of housing types in Stafford to encourage a diverse population.

- Stimulate the production of new housing for all incomes, ages, and family types.

GOAL 7: Protect the quality and integrity of Stafford's neighborhoods.

STRATEGIES

Ensure that there are provisions for meeting the housing type and satisfy needs of families with children, single parents with children, young adults just leaving home, young professionals, empty-nesters retirees and the elderly.

- Promote unique housing choices in Stafford, featuring a variety of lot sizes, type and building materials for all people regardless of the current life cycle they are in.
- Encourage programs which allow seniors to remain in their homes as long as possible (e.g. home maintenance and repair, home health care, special mortgage programs, meal programs).
- Consider creative housing options, such as lofts, especially in mixed-use areas and rehabilitated structures.

STRATEGIES

Encourage housing maintenance to maintain neighborhood integrity.

- Develop a recognition/reward program to encourage homeowners to enhance or maintain their properties through lawn maintenance, and exterior upgrades and upkeep.
- Provide and coordinate programs to prevent the deterioration of homes.
- Create a property maintenance ordinance that hold owners of all existing structures responsible for the minimum property maintenance standards such as roofs, exterior walls, and accessory structures.

STRATEGIES

Ensure that all homes comply with the City's building standards and ordinances to maintain desirability, value and reinvestment.

- Conduct proactive residential code enforcement.
- Institute an annual program for assessing quality and useful life of existing housing stock, and allocate funds for replacement, additions, or remodels as needed.
- Consider enforcing building codes with change of occupancy permits for residential rentals.
- Consider requiring strong Home Owner Associations with every residential development.

STRATEGIES

Require the use of long-lasting/durable building materials, such as stone or brick, and encourage the use of high-pitched roofs to enhance the overall housing appearance.

- Update the Subdivision Ordinance with new design standards and layouts for housing.

STRATEGIES

Ensure that single-family residential neighborhoods are protected from intensive areas of development by using screening and buffering techniques.

- Provide for adequate transitions between land uses using buffering and screening and other site design techniques to promote compatibility between uses.

Chapter 8

Economic Development

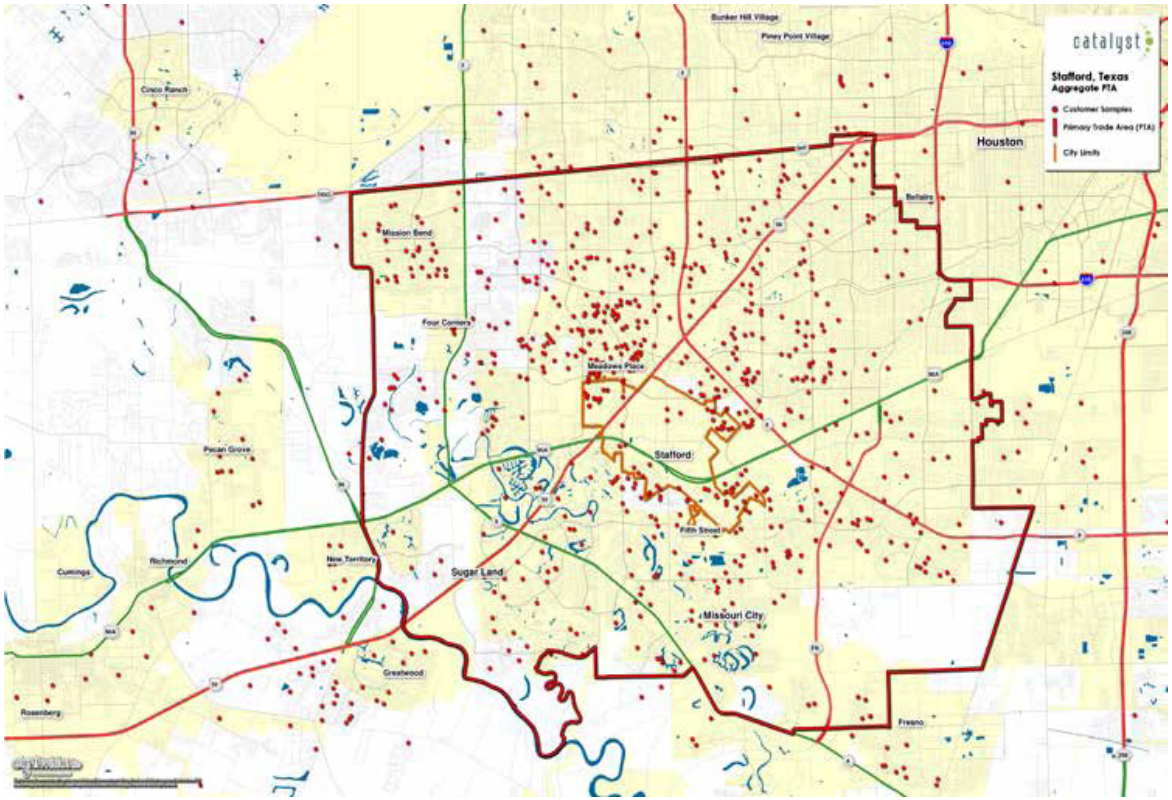
Overview

Over the last four decades, Stafford has been promoting economic development across the Texas Gulf Coast. Economic development is more than just the recruitment of new business, it is also the redevelopment of lagging business. The development of place is creating an environment that welcomes new industry, attracts new residents to want to live in Stafford and creates an incentive package that makes Stafford competitive to similar cities. In other words, economic development is far more than the responsibilities of a local chamber or economic development corporation, but it also lays the foundation for a thriving, economically-sustainable city.

For Stafford, much of the economic responsibilities lie with the Stafford Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), which is funded by 4A sales tax. The SEDC in conjunction with Catalyst Commercial, Inc. completed a Market Analysis for the City in March 2014. The plan includes stakeholder interviews, trade area delineation, demographic analysis, psychographic analysis, market demand, target area redevelopment strategy, drive time analysis, merchant matrix, and tenant profiling. A number of stakeholder interviews were conducted representing area employers, City and County officials and staff, education and workforce development, and key players in the commercial and retail industry. SEDC's plan involved benchmarking competitor communities and defining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The input and analysis derived during the Comprehensive Plan aligned with many of the recommendations made in the SEDC's Market Analysis report. Many of the same factors and needs were noted during the comprehensive planning process. Because of the fine-grained and expert information presented in the SEDC's Market Analysis, this chapter simply summarizes the plan (the full draft of the report can be downloaded from the Stafford Economic Development website at *www.staffordtxedc.com*) and highlights a key areas worth noting.

Figure 8.1, *Primary Trade Area*



Source: Catalyst Commercial Inc.

Primary Trade Area

The City of Stafford's primary trade area (PTA) is very big and reaches as far east as the 610 Loop on the west side of Houston. The PTA is home to over 746,543 people and is expected to increase by 76,797 people to a total of 826,430 residents by 2018. This projected increase reflects a10.7 percent total growth within the specified area. The Stafford PTA encompasses portions of a number of surrounding cities, including Bellaire, Houston, Sugar Land, Missouri City, and Meadows Place.

Demographic Overview of PTA

Population 2013 : 746,543

Population 2018 : 826,340

Daytime Population : 222,266

Average Household Size : 3.03

Median Age : 33.0

Median Household Income : $48,242

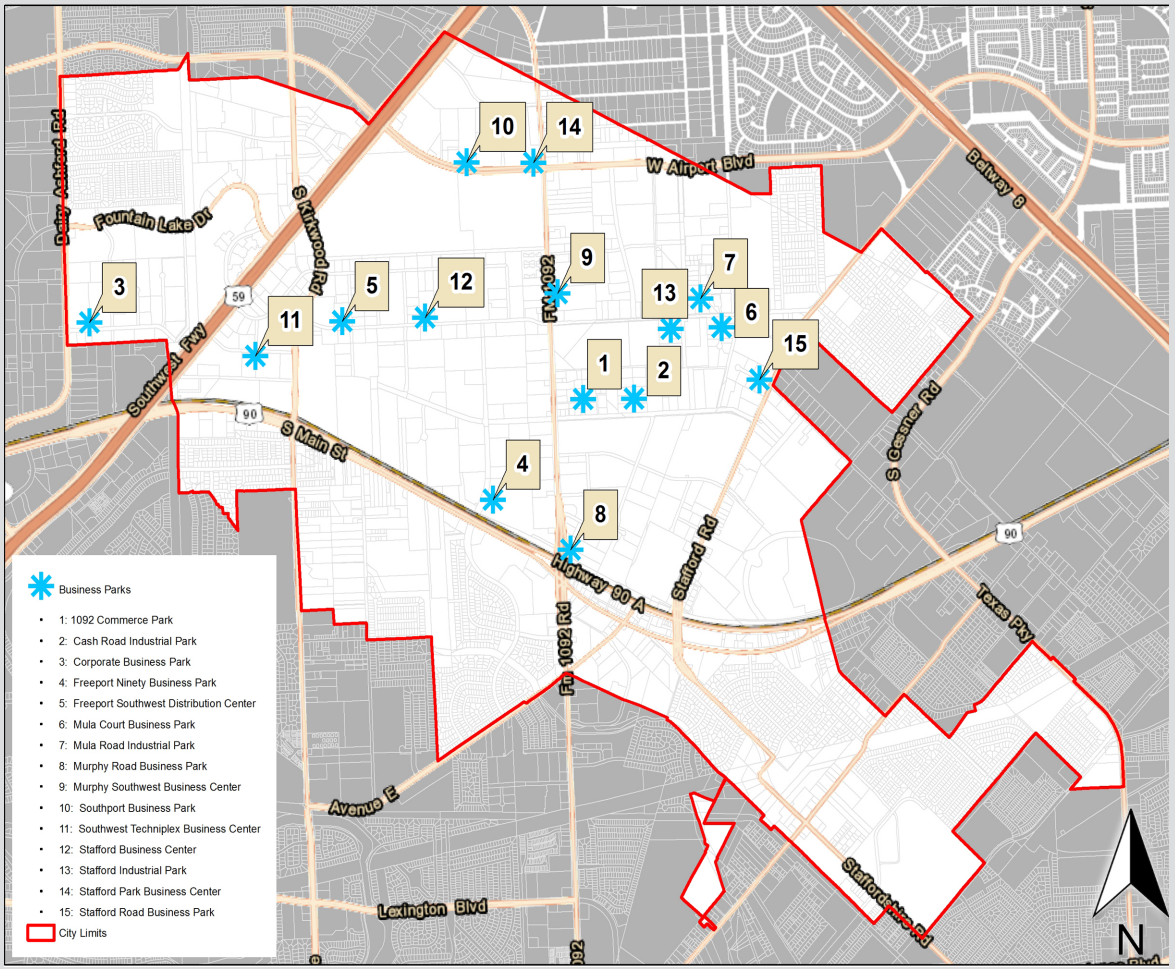
Average Household Income : $60,765

Source: Stafford Economic Development Corporation, www.staffordtxedc.com

Highlight: Business Climate

Numerous national and multi-national corporations and businesses are located in the City of Stafford. Names like Pentair Valves & Controls, Input-Output, Inc., Puffer-Swieven, Seamar Divers, Newmans Valve, Sandvik, Cardinal Health, General Technologies, Inc., United Parcel Service, Lone Star Medical Products, OMB Valves, Satake, and Forum Energy Technologies are just a few of the businesses that reside in the city limits and represent the variety of industries that call Stafford home.

Figure 8.2, *Business Parks*



With over 2,000 businesses, there are a variety of goods and services being provided, served, or manufactured in Stafford—including 18 major retail stores, over 50 restaurants and 16 hotels/motels. Stafford is an attractive destination to locate businesses because of the distinctive master-planned business parks and easily accessible offices, warehouses and plant sites. See ***Figure 8.2, Business Parks***, for the location of these parks within Stafford. The City's remaining vacant land) is primarily zoned for commercial and industrial development, which affords the City with opportunities for quality, commercial development. However, it will be critical that the City address any regulatory obstacles and challenges that may hinder or deter businesses from locating in these districts (see ***Chapter 3, Future Land Use***, for more detailed discussion and analysis of the City's current ordinances).

Stafford gives businesses major visibility and accessibility along major corridors like the U.S. Highway 59/I-69 corridor and U.S. 90A, which was recently expanded to hold more users and landscaped to enhance community character and aesthetics. In addition, the Sam Houston Tollway is only minutes from Stafford and gives the access to populations and visitors from the greater Houston area, as well as the entire region.

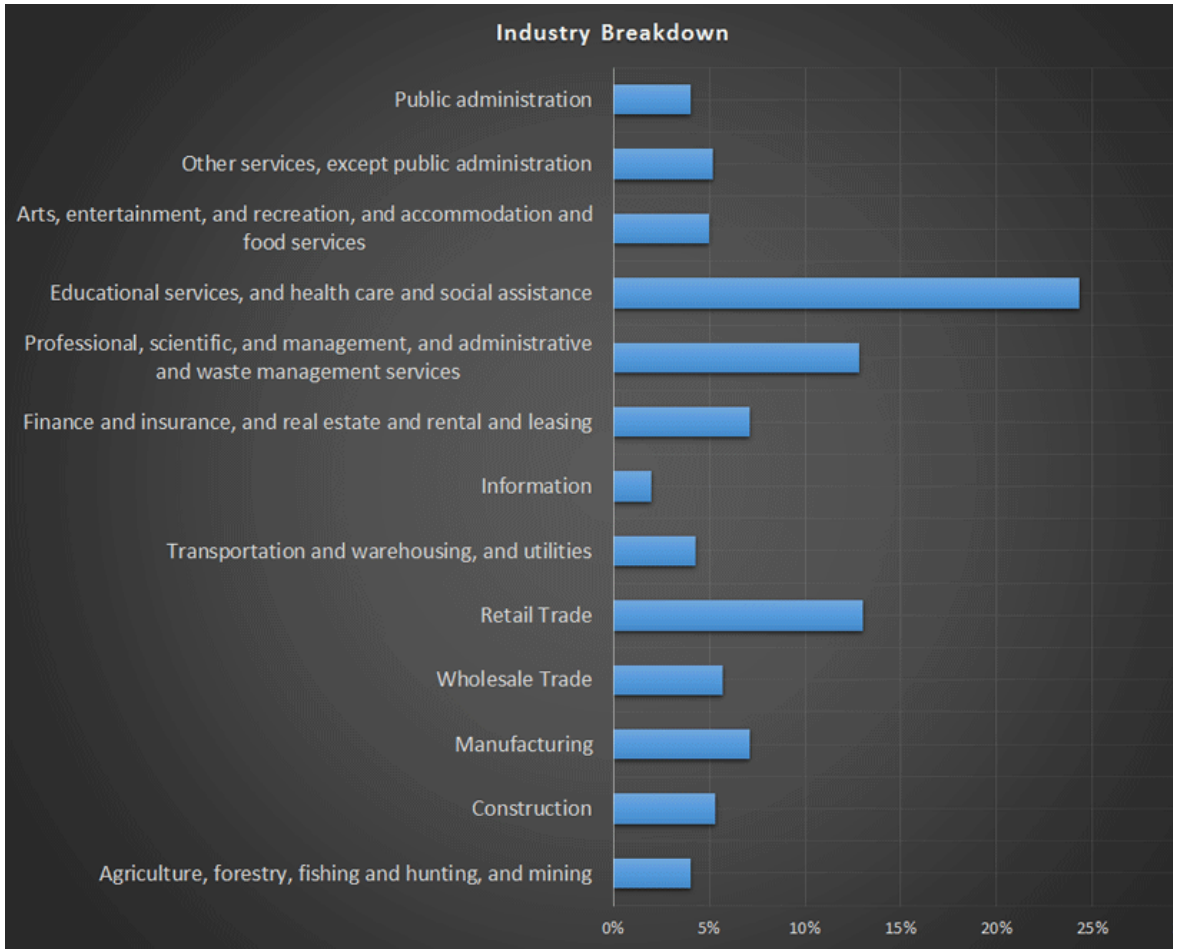
Picture Source: City of Stafford

Major Employers

- Puffer-Sweiven
- Baker Hughes, Inc.
- Pentair Valves and Controls
- Fiserv, Inc.
- COOPER Valves, LP
- Cardinal Health
- OMB Valves, Inc.
- Flextronics International
- Sandvik Coromant

Key Findings of the 2014 Market Analysis

- Drive time analysis is useful when understanding impact from one region or store to another, but is not as accurate in identifying the constraints of the actual Primary Trade Area (PTA) for the City of Stafford. Drive time based trade areas are often used to analyze trade area characteristics and are useful for comparison of proposed sites and against both existing store locations, as well as, other prospective site locations. Using a drive time geography, a 19 minute drive time captures approximately 65.5% of the customer samples. The 19-minute drive time trade area encompasses parts of Piney Point Village, Bunker Hill Village, Bellaire, Houston, Sugar Land, Richmond, Pearland, Missouri City, and Meadows Place.
- Stafford had a 2010 population of 17,693, 2013 population of 18,285, and 2018 population of 21,265. When compared to eight cites in the region (Sugar Land, The Woodlands, Spring, Katy, Missouri City, Cinco Ranch, Jersey Village, and Pearland) Stafford was smaller than six of the eight cities. Only Katy and Jersey Village had lower 2010, 2013, and 2018 populations. Residential population is the largest factor in locating retail sites. Stafford is forecasted to be tied with Sugar Land with the largest annual population growth out of the sample cities. Stafford is expected to grow to a population of 21,265, a 3.3% annual growth.
- Stafford has strong retail sales per capita ($23,892) that are well above the average ($18,221) and median ($15,386). Katy ($25,425) and Jersey Village ($45,165) have more sales per capita than Stafford ($23,892).
- The City of Stafford has 242,417 square feet of vacant retail space, which is approximately 6.3% of the total number of retail square feet that are vacant. The average retail vacancy amongst Stafford and the sample cities is 4.3%.
- Stafford has a lower amount of retail gross leasable area (GLA) or retail space for rent), but this can be attributed to the fact that the City of Stafford is smaller in size when compared to the sample cities. Stafford also has a larger emphasis on industrial property than the other cities.
- The City of Stafford has lower retail rent than all of the sample cities. This may attract retailers that might not be able to pay higher rents in competing communities. Even when the retailer can afford higher rents, it might make more financial sense to locate in Stafford where rents are cheaper if projected sales are comparable. Jersey Village has no retail properties currently available, therefore there is no data on asking rent.



Highlight: Stafford Economic Development Corporation (SEDC)

The SEDC was created in 1999 to serve as a nonprofit entity organized under Section 4B of the State's Development Corporation Act. It is authorized to issue bonds, has the power of eminent domain and can condemn property, but only with City Council approval.

Prior to establishing the SEDC, business development was pursued through the Stafford Economic Development Commission. The Commission helped to recruit national and international businesses to Stafford and to implement the Freeport Tax Exemption and a tax abatement program. In January 1999, the citizens of Stafford voted to approve an additional 0.5–percent sales tax to expand economic development in the City. The following month, City Council appointed seven individuals to serve as the Corporation's first Board of Directors.

- Catalyst estimates that the City of Stafford has the potential to capture approximately 933,452 square feet of retail demand.
- Catalyst's recommended strategy for the Island District Redevelopment Area would be to cluster multiple restaurants on one property as a restaurant will generate $300 to $550+ in sales per square foot whereas a traditional retailer will usually generate $300 in sales per square foot. Restaurants are a good economic strategy when aggregating land for a larger property is impractical. Another option for this district would be a small format grocer, such as an Aldi, or another small box retailer around 15,000 square feet. To aggregate properties in this area with multiple owners is a very large task and if the city were to try a mixed use district it would require form based code and strong political will.
- As expected, the U.S. Highway 59/I-69 corridor has the highest counts in Stafford. The counts increase when traveling southwest to northeast along this roadway. A count of 219,640 vehicles per day (VPD) is west of Alpine Road and at the northeast end of this roadway in Stafford is a count of 245,168 VPD east of Nations Boulevard.
- The next highest count roadway in Stafford is Highway 90A/Main Street. Just east of the U.S. Highway 59/I-69 corridor is a count of 57,000 VPD. Traffic flows remain consistent while moving through this corridor. 52,000 VPD were counted east of Dulles Avenue and the same count number of vehicles were counted east of Avenue H on the east side of The Island.
- Murphy Road had a traffic count of 40,026 VPD, south of Mula Road in central Stafford. Murphy Road, W Airport Boulevard, and FM 1092 all had multiple counts above 30,000 VPD ranging from 32,000 VPD on Murphy Road north of Nations Boulevard to 37,703 on W Airport Boulevard west of the U.S. Highway 59/I-69 corridor.

Citizen Input for Market Analysis

- Stafford's strengths are its regionality, highways, commercial tax base, great employment. You can travel to anywhere in Houston within 15 to 20 minutes.
- Residents need more grocery options.
- Stafford has too many hotels.
- Stafford residents need a place for senior citizens to retire.
- The elimination of property tax places a disadvantage to residents because city investment in its neighborhoods does not have a direct return on investment. The city is disincentivized to promote residential. You need the residential to attract quality retail and amenitize workforce.
- Stafford should pursue strategic industries
- The biggest issues are the TI property, redevelopment sites and in-fill development.
- Address rental property issues.

The City of Stafford was voted in the 100 Best Places to Live and Launch by *Fortune Small Business.*

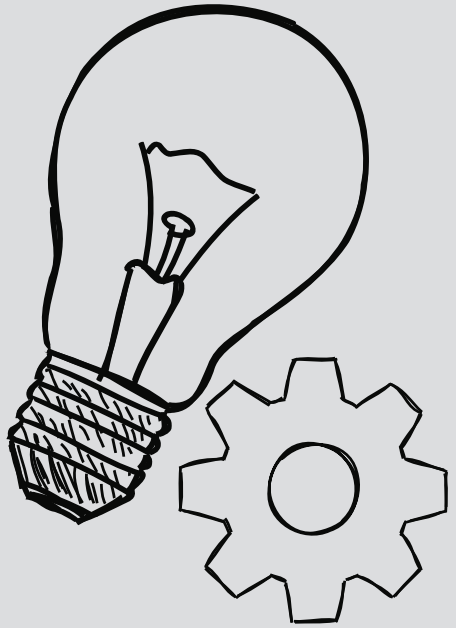
Note: The preceding information was taken directly from the Market Analysis prepared for the Stafford Economic Development Corporation, March 2014. (Catalyst Commercial, Inc.).

Highlight: Stafford Community Energy Stewardship

The use of energy is fundamental to our daily lives and livelihoods—from heating and cooling to food preservation, healthcare, entertainment and transportation. Being so dependent on energy sources (some finite) can leave cities vulnerable to a number of risks, some of which include:

- The burning of fossil fuels is a major contributor to climate change around the world, which could ultimately impact local economies and quality of life
- Severe weather often causes electrical power outages
- Rising demand for electricity that accompanies new growth is beginning to tax our regional power grid as it runs at capacity
- International affairs can have serious influences on the market prices of electricity, oil and other resources
- Rising global demand and dwindling availability of finite resources, like fossil fuels, could potentially dictate long-term energy prices

In Stafford, the Energy Committee is considering the development of a Community Energy Plan (CEP) for the express purpose of incorporating sustainability into all phases of the City's development processes. The CEP would aim to mitigate the aforementioned risks by (a) improving the reliability of energy resources by localizing sources of energy generation, (b) reducing price irregularity and the long-term costs of energy through efficiency and diversification, and (c) reducing the environmental impacts of energy usage through efficient and cleaner sources of energy. It is the Energy Committee's hope that a strategic CEP will serve as a catalyst for economic development, since many new businesses are rooted in the energy sector. Potential CEP implementation recommendations and projects are intended to provide Stafford with a competitive development environment, lower operating costs, enhanced energy reliability and decreased service disruption for both businesses and residents.



It is ideas such as this that will keep Stafford vibrant, innovative and continuously improving from within. Being on the leading edge of global trends and addressing critical issues like resource conservation, economic development and energy alternatives, may be what draws innovative businesses and proactive citizens to the City of Stafford.

Conclusion

The most significant impact the City can have on economic development is developing a sense of place. Defining locations for new business, providing infrastructure, and assisting with redevelopment strategies are all within the City's capabilities to support economic development. As part of the Future Land Use Plan in ***Chapter 3***, mixed-use areas and office areas are reserved for potential community destination centers and business parks. Additionally, attention is given to plan for long-term expansion. However, specific emphasis is placed on redevelopment of existing corridors and key areas.

Continued development of areas adjacent to the Stafford Centre and Houston Community College is an important element of the Comprehensive Plan for more reasons than being the entertainment and education draw for all walks of life. As stated in ***Chapter 7, Neighborhood and Community Livability***, cultural and arts/entertainment centers and destinations are increasingly becoming the hub of new talent and the millennial generation's neighborhood of choice. Attracting and maintaining young talent is an important issue for future goals and having vibrant developments has a lot to do with attracting talent.

When attracting new industry and business, the three most important factors are neighborhoods, school districts, and the availability of land and talent. The City should consider the current state of neighborhoods and corridors not just for the sake of current residents, but as a key approach to attracting new businesses. Façade enhancement programs are needed, especially along these key corridors—for both residential and non-residential uses.

The SEDC should consider acquisition strategies of purchasing underutilized properties and demolishing dilapidated structures. This program offers public-private-partnerships by attracting developers to non-traditional development formats through the use of land donation or write-downs. The city must also position itself for the next "big thing" or potential exciting new development opportunities. All too many cities have failed to adequately plan for the future and therefore have been bypassed for significant new development. Stafford thrives off its big businesses and major employers. Future efforts must continue to be coordinated with the SEDC to attract large employers, large developments and key redevelopment in underutilized locations.

As a continued partnership, key strategies for economic development must include a variety of development incentives. Financial incentives should be utilized by the City to attract the desired development. In most cases, funding could include City funds, Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones funds, low interest loans, tax exempt financing, improvement districts, tax abatements and state and federal grants. As a whole, the City should work with the SEDC to put in place funding mechanisms to sustain on-going financing tools (ex. TIF, PID, BID), review the current incentive packages, and monitor and seek out grant and funding sources for public improvements and property consolidation.

It is recommended that the SEDC conduct detailed and strategic small area plans to identify more specific development opportunities and key properties based on market assessments. These small area plans should include detail parcel assessments based on block-by-block analysis of land uses, urban forms and redevelopment potential. The small area plans should be focused on the redevelopment areas identified in ***Chapter 3, Future Land Use***—Mixed-use development, FM 1092 and West Airport Boulevard Corridor, Arts and Entertainment District, the Island District, and Industrial District. Results of the area planning should identify specific catalytic projects that in turn can be marketed to targeted regional developers or investors.

Highlight: Potential Businesses List

It is recommended that the City develop, in concert with the 2014 market analysis report, a business list comprised of targeted companies that Stafford residents are demanding, as well as which will bring in additional revenue to support the City's functions. According to Catalyst Commercial Inc.'s findings, the City of Stafford has the potential to capture approximately 933,452 square feet of demand. This demand is broken out into 25 different industries, as seen in ***Table 8.1, Industry Capture Rate***, at right. The industries with the largest demand are: general merchandise stores, grocery stores, and limited service eating places. Details about each industry's growth and trends, refer to the full report found online at the Stafford Economic Development website at *www.staffordtxedc.com*.

Growth in the general merchandise industry continues to grow as consumers watch their dollar and spent more at one-stop shops, rather than specialty retailers. This industry capitalized on the recession by offering goods at discounted prices. From 2008 to 2013, the annual revenue growth for this industry was 4.7 percent.

The Grocery industry is still slowly growing and recovering from the recent economic downturn, as consumers with disposable income begin to buy brand-name items again. From 2008 to 2013, the annual revenue growth for the Grocery industry was -0.4 percent.

Limited-service eating places are essentially coffee shops and fast food restaurants. As consumer spending increases, limited-service food spending will also increase. From 2008 to 2013, the annual growth for this industry was 1.0 percent.

The market analysis profiles the demand by distances--from zero to three miles, from three to five miles, and from five to ten miles. There is 344, 281 square feet of demand within three miles of Stafford. There is 74,197 square feet of demand within five miles; and 514,973 square feet within ten miles of the City. This information allows the City to target recruitment and economic development efforts in strategic parts of the City where there is the most demand.

Table 8.1, *Industry Capture Rate*

Industry	Total (SF)
Auto Parks, Accessories and Tire Stores	18,924
Home Furnishings Stores	8,359
Electronics and Appliance Stores	3,598
Building Material and Supplies Dealers	50,628
Lawn and Garden Equipment and Supply Stores	14,808
Grocery Stores	140,661
Specialty FoodStores	10,571
Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores	6,874
Health and Personal Care Stores	7,929
Gasoline Stations	33,703
Clothing Stores	65,503
Shoe Stores	30,734
Jewelry, Luggage and Leather Goods Stores	2,313
Sporting Goods/ Hobby/ Musical Instrument Stores	7,896
Book, Periodical and Music Stores	15,152
Department Stores Excluding Leased Departments	66,361
Other General Merchandise Stores	246,109
Florists	3,329
Office Supplies, Stationery and Gift Stores	5,185
Used Merchandise Stores	34,440
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	34,768
Full-Service Restaurants	29,088
Limited Service Eating Places	88,963
Special Food Services	945
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	6,610
Source: 2014 Market Analysis, Catalyst Commercial, Inc.	

Additional Economic Development Recommendations

The following are action items related to economic development.

GOAL 1: Foster a strong and diverse economy, through unique and innovative policies with a full range of employment and economic opportunities underscored by a zero city property tax.

STRATEGIES

Target redevelopment in strategic areas to accommodate increases in population or employment.

- Encourage and promote the redevelopment of the Island District.
- Identify strategies to attract new businesses to occupy existing office and industrial spaces within the City.
- Ensure new industries locate in designated development areas that have the infrastructure to support industrial development, while not degrading water and air quality.
- Enforce growth management by encouraging infill development within the city.

STRATEGIES

Encourage a range of quality amenities for Stafford residents in order to attract and retain a stable and diversified population.

- Promote the development of and participate in public/private partnerships.

STRATEGIES

Coordinate strategic planning efforts, led by the Stafford Economic Development Corporation, with the community.

- Coordinate with the Stafford Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) to help implement the 2014 Market Analysis developed by Catalyst Commercial.
- Encourage SEDC to host an annual open house to showcase community projects and future plans.
- Encourage SEDC to become a member of the Texas Economic Development Council to utilize resources and training that benefits small businesses.
- Create a current list of businesses located in Stafford for the purpose of creating business partnerships, retention, attraction and promotion. The list should be updated every two years.
- Develop a comprehensive list of industries and businesses for target economic development initiatives to encourage development in Stafford.
- Create a partnership between the City, SEDC and private developers for the sole purpose of attracting and developing unique restaurants and entertainment.

GOAL 5: Facilitate development and redevelopment to create an urban mixed-use environment to attract people and foster a sense of place.

STRATEGIES

Strengthen the existing land uses located in the Island District, and encourage reuse of vacant building spaces for new and complementary uses.

- Identify vacant buildings and promote development opportunities through SEDC.

GOAL 6: Provide a balanced mix of land uses, in accordance with the vision of Stafford residents, which diversify the sales tax base, to attract people to live, work and shop in Stafford.

STRATEGIES

Maximize development along the frontage of the U.S. Highway 59/I-69 corridor, U.S. 90A, FM 1092, and the Island District by providing opportunities for mixed-use retail/residential development.

- Consider creation of a municipal management district (MMD) to fund corridor enhancements and on-going maintenance.
- Consider the creation of a Public Improvement District (PID) as a financing mechanism for upgraded public improvements in partnership with redeveloping properties.
- Encourage development of desired office, retail, service and entertainment venues through the use of tax abatement, PID or 380 agreements.
- Identify and target underserved retail market segments.
- Adopt guidelines regarding the appropriate use and amount of public investment for the various categories of redevelopment desired by the city.

STRATEGIES

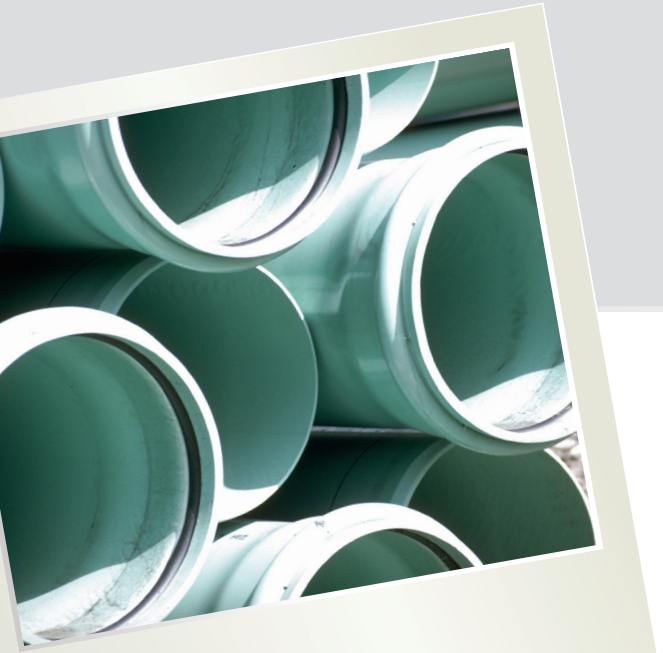
Revitalize areas of opportunities to attract new investment and activity.

- Identify areas ripe for redevelopment and coordinate with Stafford Economic Development Corporation to help attract investment.

STRATEGIES

Encourage redevelopment and investment near Houston Community College, Stafford Centre and surrounding areas.

- Consider promoting city-owned land just south of the Stafford Centre for mixed use and community entertainment uses.
- Seek and encourage hotel and transit oriented development near Houston Community College and Stafford Centre areas.



Chapter 9

Implementation

Overview

This final section of the Comprehensive Plan describes specific ways in which the CIty of Stafford can take the recommendations within this Plan from vision to reality.

The importance of city planning can never be overstated—planning provides for the protection of private property and ensures future development occurs in a coordinated and organized fashion. The future of Stafford will be shaped with the policies and recommendations developed in this Plan. Based on this Plan, decisions will be made that will influence many aspects of the City's built and social environments.

Stafford has taken an important leadership role in defining its future with the adoption of this Plan. The Plan will provide a very important tool for City staff and civic leaders to use in making sound planning decisions regarding the long-term growth, development, and redevelopment of Stafford. The future quality of life in Stafford will be substantially influenced by the manner in which Comprehensive Plan recommendations are administered and maintained.

Planning for the City's future should be a continuous process, and this Plan is designed to be a tool that can be modified and periodically updated to keep it in tune with changing conditions and trends. Plan policies and recommendations may be put into effect through adopted development regulations, such as zoning and subdivision, and through capital improvement programs. Many recommendations within the Plan can be implemented through simple refinement of existing City regulations or processes, while others may require the establishment of new regulations, programs, or processes. There are also recommendations that will involve community involvement.

IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITY

Perhaps the most important method of implementing the Comprehensive Plan comes in the day-to-day commitment by elected and appointed officials, staff, and citizens. The Comprehensive Plan must be understood as a useful and capable tool to direct the City's future. The Plan in its entirety along with individual components such as the Future Land Use Plan should be available for reference by officials, staff, and citizens. The Comprehensive Plan should continually be referenced in planning studies and zoning case reports as well as informal discussion situations. High visibility will make the Plan successful, dynamic, and a powerful tool for guiding Stafford's future growth.

The responsibilities for actually initiating and monitoring the goals, strategies and actions of the Comprehensive Plan are multi-tiered:

City Council

The City Council will:

- Establish overall action priorities and timeframes by which the strategic recommendations will be initiated and completed.
- Appropriate funds, consider and set the funding commitments for this plan's implementation measures.
- Offer final approval of projects/ activities and associated costs during the budget process.
- Provide policy direction to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City staff.

Planning and Zoning Commission

The Planning and Zoning Commission will:

- Recommend to City staff an annual program of actions to be implemented, including guidance as to the timeframes and priorities.
- Prepare an Annual Progress Report for submittal and presentation to the City Council (see Annual Review Process later in this chapter for more detail).
- Ensure decisions and recommendations presented to the City Council are consistent with this plan's policies, strategies, and recommendations.
- Help to ensure the plan is considered in the decisions and actions of other entities.
- Amend, extend, or add plan revisions as necessary and appropriate.

City Staff

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

- Managing day-to-day action items relating to plan implementation, including coordination with and solicitation of community partners.

- Supporting and carrying out a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).
- Managing the drafting of new or amended land development regulations in partnership with the appropriate boards and commissions.
- Conducting studies and developing additional plans (including management of consultant efforts, as necessary).
- Negotiating the specifics of development agreements.
- Administering collaborative programs and ensuring open channels of communication with various private, public, and non-profit implementation partners.
- Providing briefings on plan implementation progress and activities to the Planning and Zoning Commission no less than once annually.
- 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.

Coordination and Partnerships

Increasingly, jurisdictions are acknowledging that issues are regional, rather than local, in nature. Watersheds and other ecosystems, economic conditions, land use, transportation patterns, housing, and the effects of growth and change are issues that cross municipal boundaries, impacting not only the City, but also neighboring municipalities, unincorporated places, Harris County, and surrounding counties in the Houston-Galveston region. As a result, the economic health of Stafford is partly reliant upon its various regional neighbors.

CITY COUNCIL

As the director of plan implementation, the key responsibilities of the City Council are to decide and establish priorities, set timeframes by which each action will be initiated and completed, and determine the budget to be made available for implementation efforts.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

The Planning and Zoning Commission makes recommendations to the City Council based on principles laid out in the Plan. The Commission should prepare an Annual Progress Report to ensure plan relevance.

CITY STAFF

City staff manages the everyday implementation of the plan. Particularly, City staff is responsible for supporting the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council.

Given Stafford's size, some initiatives or community needs identified in this Comprehensive Plan may not be accomplished by the City on its own. They may require direct coordination, intergovernmental agreements, or funding support from other public entities or levels of government. Additionally, the ability 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 public/private financing of community improvements.

Proactive and Reactive Implementation

There are two primary methods of plan implementation: *proactive* and *reactive* methods. To successfully implement the plan and fully realize its benefits, both methods must be used in an effective manner. Both proactive and reactive actions that could be used by Stafford are described within this chapter.

Examples of proactive methods include:

- Developing a capital improvements program (CIP), by which the City expends funds to finance public improvements to meet strategies cited within the Plan;
- Updating zoning regulations; and
- Updating subdivision regulations.

Examples of reactive methods include:

- Approving a rezoning application submitted by a property owner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan;
- Site plan review; and
- Subdivision review.

Education and Training

A necessary first step is to conduct individual training workshops with the Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council, and key staff members, as well as others who have a role in plan implementation. These are the groups who, individually and collectively, will be responsible for implementation. The importance of their collaboration, coordination, and communication cannot be overstated. The training initiative should include:

- Discussion of the roles and responsibilities of each individual entity, and its function as to plan implementation.
- A thorough overview of the entire plan, with particular emphasis on the segments that most directly relate to their charge.
- Implementation tasking and priority-setting, allowing each group to establish their own one-, two-, and five-year agendas, in coordination with the strategic agenda of the City.
- Facilitation of a mock meeting to exhibit effective use of this plan's policies and recommendations.
- A concluding question-and-answer session.

Roles of the Comprehensive Plan

GUIDE FOR DAILY DECISION-MAKING

The current physical layout of the City is a product of previous efforts put forth by many diverse individuals and groups. In the future, each new development that takes place, whether a subdivision that is platted, a home that is built, or a new school, church or shopping center that is

constructed, represents an addition to Stafford's physical form. The composite of all such efforts and facilities creates the City as it is seen and experienced by its citizens and visitors. If planning is to be effective, it must guide each and every individual development decision. The City, in its daily decisions pertaining to whether to surface a street, to approve a residential plat, to amend a zoning ordinance provision, to enforce the building codes, or to construct a new utility line, should always refer to the basic proposals outlined within the Comprehensive Plan. The private builder or investor, likewise, should recognize the broad concepts and policies of the Plan so that their efforts become part of a meaningful whole in planning the City.

Flexible and Alterable Guide

This Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a dynamic planning document for Stafford—one that responds to changing needs and conditions. Plan amendments should not be made without thorough analysis of immediate needs, as well as consideration for long-term effects of proposed amendments. The City Council and other Stafford officials should consider each proposed amendment carefully to determine whether it is consistent with the Plan's goals and policies, and whether it will be beneficial for the long-term health and vitality of Stafford. In addition, flexibility is paramount for the city. As opportunities arise, the City must have the ability to adjust focus or change direction to capitalize on existing opportunities. While implementation strategies must remain in line with the overall goal and vision of the Plan, the need to recalibrate is also an important component of a successful implementation strategy.

Annual Review

Although it is recommended the Comprehensive Plan is reviewed every five years, at one-year intervals, a periodic review of the Plan with respect to current conditions and trends should be performed. Such on-going, scheduled evaluations will provide a basis for adjusting capital expenditures and priorities, and will reveal changes and additions that should be made to the Plan in order to keep it current and applicable long-term. It would be appropriate to devote one annual meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission to reviewing the status and continued applicability of the Plan in light of current conditions. Those items that appear to need specific attention should be examined in more detail, and changes and/or additions should be made accordingly. By such periodic evaluations, the Plan will remain functional, and will continue to give civic leaders effective guidance in decision-making. Periodic reviews of the Plan should include consideration of the following:

- The City's progress in implementing the Plan;
- Changes in conditions that form the basis of the Plan;
- Community support for the Plan's goals, strategies, and actions; and
- Changes in State laws.

The full benefits of the Plan for Stafford can only be realized by maintaining it as a vital, up-to-date document. As changes occur and new issues within the City become apparent, the Plan should be revised rather than ignored. By such action, the Plan will remain current and effective in meeting the City's decision-making needs.

Top Priorities

The efforts conducted to complete the Comprehensive Plan generated a wealth of information and direction for Stafford. In order to refine and focus future efforts, the CPAC worked to identify the top priorities of the Plan. A review of approximately 247 goals, strategies, and recommendations yielded 20 action items to be considered the City's top priorities for implementation. It should be noted that priority items should have flexibility in their implementation.

Table 9.1 contains the highest scoring action items identified by the CPAC. A number of the individual priorities are focused on similar concepts or focus areas. These items may be implemented concurrently achieving multiple goals within the scope of a single project.

The highest scoring action items are centered around creating or updating ordinances, and zoning and subdivision regulations.

With a focus on the revitalization of key corridor revitalization and aesthetic improvements within the City, the CPAC prioritized special and small areas plans to help create an identity for Stafford; identifying areas that can have a negative impact on community character if not addressed. The priority recommendations also identify opportunities to coordinate and partner with other cities and agencies, helping to spur development in Stafford. Additional priority action items were identified through the process and a continued effort will be made to revise priorities as needed.

Table 9.1, *Priority Recommendations*

Priority Recommendations		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	RECOMMENDATION TYPE
Preserve the City's culture of limiting debt and expenditures in order to attract future residents and businesses.	Consider developing an ordinance for Low Impact Development (LID) and for incorporating greywater or water reuse where possible.	Policy/Ordinance
Promote Stafford as a major regional employment center through public policies that encourage expanded opportunity for jobs.	Create a special zoning district that allows commercial, retail, and industrial uses that help promote Stafford as a major employment center.	Policy/Ordinance
Target redevelopment in strategic areas to accommodate increases in population or employment.	Encourage and promote the redevelopment of the Island District.	Economic Development
Coordinate strategic planning efforts, led by the Stafford Economic Development Corporation, with the community.	Create a current list of businesses located in Stafford for the purpose of creating business partnerships, retention, attraction, and promotion. The list should be updated every two years.	Economic Development

Priority Recommendations (cont.)		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	RECOMMENDATION TYPE
Create partnerships with Stafford Municipal School District, Houston Community College, and businesses to provide technical and career development.	Develop an educational taskforce with representatives from SMSD, Houston Community College (HCC), and local businesses to focus on technical and career development of students and citizens of Stafford.	Coordination/ Partnerships
Encourage programs, events, amenities, and land uses that benefit the populous.	Coordinate with community groups, neighborhood associations, and local businesses to identify and develop other annual community events like the Spring Clean Up.	Coordination/ Partnerships
Provide plans and studies to investigate deficiencies in infrastructure City-maintained and operated infrastructure.	Create a Capital Improvement Program for streets, utilities, drainage, parks, and public facilities.	Administrative
Provide plans and studies to investigate deficiencies in City-maintained and operated infrastructure, reviewing and revising, as appropriate, engineering technical design and construction standards to meet current practices (i.e. roadway, drainage, and water/wastewater facilities).	Review and amend the Comprehensive Plan every five years to confirm it is accurate to address future needs. An annual cursory review is also suggested.	Administrative
Ensure that infrastructure is sufficient to support future development in key development areas, such as updating the Master Drainage Plan to ensure new development and redevelopment drainage facilities are properly sized and constructed.	The City should continue acquiring right-of-way along ditches to complete the ditch improvements recommended in the 1987 Jones & Carter Master Drainage Plan.	Capital Improvements

Priority Recommendations (cont.)		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	RECOMMENDATION TYPE
Establish a community image theme with participation of residents, business owners and property owners.	Identify and develop special area plans for key corridors and activity nodes. Special area plans will provide a detailed study of corridors and activity nodes, and visually display how they should develop and redevelop.	Plan/Study
Strengthen the existing land uses located in the Island District, and encourage reuse of vacant building spaces for new and complementary uses.	The City should develop a small area plan to determine specific steps for revitalization of the Island District. The small area plan should consist of a conceptual plan showing the area at build out.	Plan/Study
Provide a range of housing types in Stafford to encourage a diverse population.	Update zoning ordinance to include a variety of housing types, lot sizes, and expand the single family and/or multifamily residential types in the city.	Policy/Ordinance
Seek development of quality food stores.	Through coordination with the Market Analysis, help attract a quality food store.	Coordination/ Partnerships
Encourage housing maintenance to maintain neighborhood integrity.	Enforce the property maintenance ordinance that hold homeowners of all existing structures responsible for the minimum property maintenance standards such as roofs, exterior walls, and accessory structures.	Policy/Ordinance
Ensure that all homes comply with the City's building standards and ordinances to maintain desirability, value and reinvestment.	Consider enforcing building codes with change of occupancy permits for residential rentals.	Policy/Ordinance
Require the use of long-lasting/ durable building materials, such as stone or brick, and encourage the use of high-pitched roofs to enhance the overall housing appearance.	Update the Subdivision Ordinance with new design standards and layouts for housing.	Policy/Ordinance

Priority Recommendations (cont.)		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	RECOMMENDATION TYPE
Update the existing zoning ordinance in order to promote the development and redevelopment of properties for the highest and best use.	Remove residential uses from zoning districts that are primarily non-residential in the city.	Policy/Ordinance
Ensure that Stafford's thoroughfare network is coordinated with neighboring communities and work to negotiate and resolve any conflicting issues.	Meet with Fort Bend County, Harris County and HGAC staff to confer on Draft master thoroughfare plan alignments and classifications to elicit input.	Coordination/ Partnerships
Utilize shared access easements and cross-access to provide connectivity between adjacent non-residential uses, limiting the number of driveways along major corridors and allowing for continuous landscaping.	Work with partner and regional agencies to implement sections of access management, such as portions of the FM 1092 corridor, that are prioritized for the greatest safety and traffic benefit.	Coordination/ Partnerships
Monitor regional rail initiatives for changes or updates to potential Commuter Rail Line, particularly how such changes impact Stafford, and identify potential locations for Commuter Rail stop(s) within Stafford's city limits.	Partner with other regional interests to conduct review of Rail District analysis of potential ridership for a commuter line along U.S. 90A connecting to central Houston.	Coordination/ Partnerships

Implementation Matrix

Implementation is one of the most important, yet most difficult, aspects of the comprehensive planning process. Without viable, realistic strategies for implementation, the recommendations contained within this Comprehensive Plan will be difficult to realize. It is important to note that the strategies and action items are derived from the goals and vision established previously within this Plan.

Few cities have the ability to implement every recommendation or policy within their comprehensive planning document immediately following adoption—Stafford is no exception. Plan implementation, therefore, must be prioritized to guide short-term priorities, mid-term priorities and long term/on-going priorities. These priorities must be balanced with timing, funding, and City Staff resources. While all the recommendations share some level of importance, they cannot all be targeted for implementation within a short time period; some must be carried out over a longer period of time.

The following matrix is a summary of the recommendations within this Comprehensive Plan and is intended to provide the City with specific tasks to work toward implementing the vision of this Plan. The individual tables are organized by goals and strategies, and action items established in previous chapters. Action items are assigned a recommended time frame for implementation actions to commence. The approximate established time frames and general budget assumptions are as follows:

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Implementation of these action items should begin following plan adoption.
- Approximate timeline: zero to five years following plan adoption.

MID-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Implementation of these action items will likely follow short term recommendations. Approximate timeline: five to ten years following plan adoption.

LONG TERM / ON-GOING RECOMMENDATIONS:

These actions items should be continually addressed by City leaders (i.e. no specific time frame is applicable).

BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS:

Small ticket items ($0 - $200,000) that have minimal costs associated:

- Examples include: administrative policy items that can be accomplished with grant, general funds, or relocation of resources, regulations, plans or studies.

Medium ticket items ($200,000 - $2 Million):

- Examples include: minor parks improvements, neighborhood improvements, aesthetic enhancements.

Large ticket items ($2 Million +) that will require bond or major capital investment:

- Examples include: capital improvement project items.

Table 9.2, *Implementation Matrix*

Future Land Use Recommendations				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Create a special zoning districts that allows commercial, retail, and industrial uses that help promote Stafford as a major employment center.				$
Consider using city-owned properties for future sales tax generating projects, especially in the Arts and Entertainment area and the Island District.				$$$
Reduce energy consumption by requiring the use of more energy efficient lighting fixtures as part of any new development and redevelopment.				$
Promote land strategies that foster creation of walkable and pedestrian friendly places.				$
Consider relocating City Hall and other city departments to a location that is easily accessible to residents of Stafford.				$$$
As population increases, evaluate which city service departments may need to increase staff.				$
Obtain control of public facility sites that will be required by future growth and development.				$$
Review and amend the Comprehensive Plan every five years to confirm it is accurate to address future needs. An annual cursory review may also be appropriate.				$
Determine if right-of-way is needed to construct commuter rail in Stafford in relation to a Transit Oriented Development site and park-and-ride service.				$

Future Land Use Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Determine if the Fort Bend County or Harris County extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) should be annexed and what annexed property future land uses would be.				$
Identify and develop special area plans for key corridors and activity nodes. Special area plans will provide a detailed study of corridors and activity nodes, and visually display how they should develop and redevelop.				$-$$
Enhance and develop building standards for commercial and retail development by creating a list of desired aesthetics and materials list.				$
Perform diagnostic and update zoning ordinances to include building standards appropriate to zoning districts.				$
Update the city's Sign Ordinance to help with rebranding Stafford.				$
The City should develop a small area plan to determine specific steps for revitalization of the Island District. The small area plan should consist of a conceptual plan showing the area at build out.				$
Promote the Activity Nodes concept that will help to connect various high-activity areas within the city, encouraging entertainment, shopping, and living at each node.				$
Provide site design guidelines in the zoning ordinance to ensure developments are constructed to the city's development standards.				$
Coordinate with and reference the Future Land Use and Thoroughfare maps when meeting with outside parties regarding development opportunities.				$
Update zoning ordinance to include a variety of housing types, lot sizes, and expand the single family and/or multifamily residential types in the city.				$

Future Land Use Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Identify impediments for creation of a greater range of housing.				$
Stimulate the production of new housing for all incomes, ages, and family types.				$
Locate uses adjacent to each other that are compatible and complimentary, such as residential and some nonresidential development. Offices and small (neighborhood) retail establishment should be adjacent to residential uses.				$
Encourage neighborhood retail nodes to develop at key intersections in order to serve the needs of adjacent neighborhood areas within an approximate one-mile radius.				$
Identify areas ripe for redevelopment and coordinate with Stafford Economic Development Corporation to help attract investment.				$
Remove any impediments in zoning ordinance to redevelopment to ensure new investments are made within the city.				$
Consider promoting city-owned land just south of the Stafford Centre for mixed use and community entertainment uses.				$
Seek and encourage hotel and transit oriented development near Houston Community College and Stafford Centre areas.				$
Promote unique housing choices in Stafford, featuring a variety of lot sizes, type and building materials for all people regardless of the current life cycle they are in.				$
Consider creative housing options, such as lofts, especially in mixed use areas and rehabilitated structures.				$

Future Land Use Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Create and establish minimum and maximum densities for various single and multifamily areas in the city other than SFR, SFR-1, and MFR.				$
Update the Subdivision Ordinance with new design standards and layouts for housing.				$
Limit single family and multifamily to specific areas in the city. Refer to the Future Land Use Plan.				$
Update the existing zoning ordinance.				$
Remove residential uses from zoning districts that are primarily non-residential in the city.				$
Consider rezoning the Island District to Mix Use to help facilitate unique redevelopment opportunities.				$
Prepare a visual assessment survey of City corridors to identify problem areas that negatively impact community character				$
Revise sign ordinances to reduce signage inconsistencies along major corridors.				$
Create overlay districts to encourage the creation of nodal, master planned retail center development.				$
Create design guidelines to address aesthetics and building materials of non-residential construction.				$
Create a Development Prototype or pattern book that visually shows the types of building materials, housing types, site design, decorative lighting, etc. that are desired in new developments and redevelopments in the city.				$

Future Land Use Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Update zoning ordinance to require all parking rows to contain landscape islands.				$
Update zoning ordinance to require tree planting within parking lots to create shade canopies.				$
Update zoning ordinance to require parking lots, over one acre, to contain a shaded pedestrian way.				$
Update landscape ordinance to allow Stormwater Best Management Practices to count toward a portion of landscape requirements.				$
Designate appropriate zoning districts to encourage the use of thematic, decorative and enhanced lighting features within public right-of-way (i.e. Island District).				$
Examine city code to update and allow for shared use easements to facilitate private agreements between adjacent property owners to allow for shared access.				$$

Transportation and Circulation Recommendations				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Prioritize sidewalk improvement areas based upon propensity to generate pedestrian traffic. Solicit available funding for these types of pedestrian mobility accommodations.				$
Maintain implementation priorities for all street improvements through a capital improvements planning process.				$
Identify funding alternatives and resources available for roadway maintenance implementation.				$
Develop a policy and programs for City consideration of public/private partnerships and donations to fund transportation infrastructure, amenities and aesthetics.				$
Create a Capital Improvement Program for streets, utilities, drainage, parks, and public facilities.				$
Coordinate and incorporate the Thoroughfare Plan with development decisions.				$
Determine if right-of-way is needed to construct commuter rail in Stafford in relation to a Transit Oriented Development site and park-and-ride service.				$
Based on development patterns, prioritize and implement the Major Thoroughfare Plan.				$$$
Identify and develop special area plans for key corridors and activity nodes. Special area plans will provide a detailed study of corridors and activity nodes, and visually display how they should develop and redevelop.				$-$$

Transportation and Circulation Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Develop design guidelines to ensure neighborhood and corridor integrity.				$
Conduct a trails master plan to recommend potential trail routes and expansion to include potential funding options. Consider developing a trail system in the utility and/or drainage easements throughout the city.				$
Establish a recreational trail hierarchy that specifies width, material, use, and location criteria. Sidewalks should be inventoried to identify broken links, and the local system should be tied to regional networks.				$
Promote the use of easements, utility corridors, drainage ways, and greenbelts as private trail locations.				$
Create corridor overlays in selected areas in order to require a higher standard of landscaping and thematic design.				$
Establish Entry and Corridor Maintenance Plan to ensure high quality visual aesthetics of major entry points and key corridors.				$$
Maintain a hierarchy of thoroughfare classifications that will provide for safe and convenient flow of traffic throughout the community. Maintain a thoroughfare planning process to ensure efficient and desirable connections between major thoroughfares, neighborhoods and community facilities.				$
Utilize the collector network of streets to supplement the major roadway network, connect neighborhoods with commercial corridors.				$
Require dedicated ROW from redeveloping properties to finish out the major and minor thoroughfare network and construction of linkages serving contributing properties.				$

Transportation and Circulation Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Participate in acquisition of and construction of key links in the thoroughfare network that cannot be provided through redevelopment process.				$$-$$$
Require a linkage and alignment study for eastward extension of Cash Road to connect with Gessner Road in the City of Houston at the time of the redevelopment of the former Texas Instruments property.				$
Meet with adjacent cities public works staff to confer on Draft master thoroughfare plan alignments and classifications to elicit input.				$
Meet with Fort Bend County, Harris County and H-GAC staff to confer on Draft master thoroughfare plan alignments and classifications to elicit input.				$
Ongoing coordination with neighboring cities, the County, and regional agencies on construction and maintenance of the roadway network and infrastructure.				$
Examine city code to update and allow for shared use easements to facilitate private agreements between adjacent property owners to allow for shared access.				$$
Offer incentives for reducing number of driveway access points along major thoroughfares - such as city partnered landscaping, sidewalk, or shared use path construction.				$$
Work with partner and regional agencies to implement sections of access management, such as portions of the FM 1092 corridor, that are prioritized for the greatest safety and traffic benefit.				$$-$$$

Transportation and Circulation Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Conduct a pedestrian crossing audit of specific pedestrian generators, such as schools, to ensure safe access exists, and document needed facilities in order to prioritize and communicate needs.				$$
Partner with TxDOT, Ft Bend County, Harris County, and H-GAC to construct pedestrian accommodation along roadways in proximity to pedestrian generators such as schools, parks, and neighborhoods, with a priority of connecting to existing pedestrian connections.				$$-$$$
Require developments to include Shared-Use Paths and sidewalks along their properties to connect to existing and planned facilities, particularly with an eye toward pedestrian generators and attractors.				$
Investigate and pursue grant funding to provide linkages along roadways where space currently allows for the provision of safe non-motorized transportation alternatives in the ROW, and pursue design and construction of linkages that connect neighborhoods, parks, public facilities and other pedestrian attractors and generators.				$
Partner with regional agencies and the County to implement within existing access easements of linear stormwater facilities and bayous to provide more direct non-auto connections between destinations in areas not prioritized for automobiles.				$$-$$$
Use roadway striping techniques to test out innovative median configurations, bike accommodations, lane widths before investing in full capital programs.				$-$$
Ensure design speeds of roadways match posted speeds.				$

Transportation and Circulation Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Incorporate public participation and stakeholder participation comments in roadway designs as roadway projects are designed for implementation.				$
Create design guidelines to be referenced by the City code that include design guidelines for roadway landscape treatment.				$
Identify sponsors to develop individual corridor streetscape design with a dedicated focus assessment and make improvements to streetscaping.				$
Participate in H-GAC technical advisory committee (TAC) and policy council meetings and encourage the TAC to reflect the modeling of express transit from Fort Bend County for policy discussions.				$
Support Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) expansion of a second track through Stafford, as dual track also allows for the higher probability for rail implementation.				$
Partner with other regional interests to conduct review of Rail District analysis of potential ridership for a commuter line along U.S. 90A connecting to central Houston.				$
Participate in H-GAC process to identify roadway project candidates for implementation and encourage projects that support local and regional return on their investment.				$
Identify top priority transportation projects from this plan and communicate them to regional partners as priorities for implementation consideration.				$
Conduct independent research of literature on project types to determine cost effectiveness or "return on investment" for select projects to then seek partnership funding from regional partners.				$

Transportation and Circulation Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Sponsor project design for prioritized projects as a way to accelerate implementation of Stafford prioritized projects for consideration in regional funding project discussions.				$$
Partner with Missouri City to encourage TxDOT and H-GAC on the benefit and need for FM 1092 access management improvements.				$
Consider sponsoring project design for a prioritized section of FM 1092 as a way to accelerate consideration by partner regional funding agencies.				$$-$$$
Constructively participate in HGAC policy council meetings, including seriously considering H-GAC guidance and recommendations into account for City policies and local share of implementation.				$
Constructively participate in HGAC policy council meetings and technical advisory committee (TAC) meetings and encourage the TAC to reflect the modeling of regionally relevant transportation alternatives in the Regional transportation demand model.				$
Encourage land use densities and diverse land use types that are effective uses of commuter rail and intra-city transit.				$
Encourage and embrace rail and other higher frequency, regional and intra-regional transit as supportive of the economic vitality of Stafford.				$
Support structured parking and shared parking arrangements proximate to transit corridors that provide park and ride service, as a first step in developing ridership patterns that can then progress to higher order transit service when critical ridership levels and land uses are achieved.				$

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Recommendations				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Implement a parkland dedication ordinance.				$
Identify location and purchase property for a future park in the southwest portion of the city to service under-served residential neighborhoods in Stafford.				$$-$$$
Target park grant funding sources.				$
Use the National Program and Playground Safety guidelines and/or the United States Consumer Products Safety Commission standards in the design and replacement of playground equipment, all surface areas, and other recreational facilities and improvements.				$$
Create a Capital Improvement Program for streets, utilities, drainage, parks, and public facilities.				$
Complete a thorough physical conditions review and needs assessment to confirm and prioritize necessary improvements to the City's park system and related amenities and programs to maintain sound operations and appealing, competitive facilities.				$
Fund and implement a Parks and Open Space and Trails Master Plan in order to qualify for funding.				$
Conduct a trails master plan to recommend potential trail routes and expansion to include potential funding options. Consider developing a trail system in the utility and/or drainage easements throughout the city.				$
Establish a recreational trail hierarchy that specifies width, material, use, and location criteria. Sidewalks should be inventoried to identify broken links, and the local system should be tied to regional networks.				$
Promote the use of easements, utility corridors, drainage ways, and greenbelts as private trail locations.				$

Infrastructure Recommendations				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Consider developing an ordinance for Low Impact Development (LID) and for incorporating greywater or water reuse where possible.				$
Develop a capital improvement program in order to rank the importance of projects to ensure they are constructed based on need. Add public facilities to be constructed or renovated to the capital improvements program in order to plan for future availability of funding.				$
Obtain control of public facility sites that will be required by future growth and development.				$$
Develop a long-term maintenance program to ensure adequate maintenance of existing and proposed facilities.				$
Integrate technology systems such as phone applications, information kiosks, e-newsletters, etc., to facilitate awareness of Stafford's special events, amenities, recreational opportunities, and history. Technological upgrades are a current priority in many communities given the evolving technical expectations and sophistication of facility users.				$$
Utilize tools such as value engineering (as applicable) to develop the most cost effective facilities.				$
Create a Capital Improvement Program for streets, utilities, drainage, parks, and public facilities.				$
Update the Master Drainage Plan.				$
Partner with Fort Bend County to determine status of completing the regional detention pond in Stafford Run.				$

Infrastructure Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
The City should continue acquiring right-of-way along ditches to complete the ditch improvements recommended in the 1987 Jones & Carter Master Drainage Plan.				$$
The City should consider expanding the Willow Waterhole Detention Site to the ultimate size recommended in the 1987 Jones & Carter Master Drainage Plan.				$$$
Consider constructing improvements in the Oyster Creek area as defined in Sugar Land's Sugar Creek Drainage Study.				$$-$$$
Consider constructing improvements in the Harris County Flood Control District D-140-00 area as defined in the Missouri City Estates Drainage Study.				$$-$$$
Require dedication of right-of-way in the Harris County Flood Control District Unit D-140-00 and construct the concrete liner as shown in the current Master Drainage Plan.				$$-$$$
Based on development patterns, prioritize and implement the Major Thoroughfare Plan				$$$
Encourage the most current Best Management Practices with Fort Bend County Water Control & Improvement District No. 2.				$
Examine the potential for a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) to complete the drainage improvements recommended in the 1987 Jones & Carter Master Drainage Plan.				$
Coordinate with Fort Bend County Water Control & Improvement District No. 2 to ensure water and sewer infrastructure has adequate capacity to serve the desired intensity of redevelopment.				$

Neighborhood and Community Livability Recommendations				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Develop a Expenditures Review Committee to ensure the preservation of the City's culture of limiting debt.				$
Educate citizens on the City's budget in order to promote and preserve fiscal responsibility.				$
Develop and conduct a community survey that inquires and focuses on community amenities desired in Stafford.				$
Encourage residential developers to create amenities with new development such as, clubhouses, swimming pools, splash pads, and trails.				$$
Continue to work with the Stafford Municipal School District on educational planning efforts.				$
Develop an educational taskforce with representatives from SMSD, Houston Community College (HCC), and local businesses to focus on technical and career development of students and citizens of Stafford.				$
Partner with Houston Community College and the Texas Workforce Commission to develop a job training program for citizens.				$
Organize a committee consisting of local government, school district, HCC, community groups, and residents to discuss and explore ideas for collaborative efforts in sharing educational and maximizing resources. The committee should develop one to three achievable goals each year to accomplish.				$
Encourage SMSD to develop a strategic plan to help guide and coordinate future district planning efforts.				$

Neighborhood and Community Livability Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Encourage more complete neighborhoods where residents have access to amenities and resources.	■			$
Coordinate with community groups, neighborhood associations, and local businesses to identify and develop other annual community events like the Spring Clean Up.	■			$
Make a commitment to be a welcoming and supporting community that values diversity through continual and constant dialogue with diverse population groups in Stafford.			■	$
During City Council meetings, recognize citizens for outstanding contributions to diversity initiatives.	■			$
Help to provide promotional and financial assistance to art and cultural venues and events enhancing Stafford's uniqueness as a destination for local residents and cultural tourism.		■		$$
Analyze and evaluate facilities available to accommodate arts and entertainment events. A list of attributes should be created for the type of event in order to determine appropriateness of facility. The list of attributes could include: type of space, number of seats or square footage, outdoor or indoor, and types of entertainment it can accommodate, to name a few. This will help to identify any entertainment and recreational facility deficiencies.	■			$
Partner with local medical centers and providers to host an annual wellness and health festival.			■	$
Provide for adequate transitions between land uses using buffering and screening and other site design techniques to promote compatibility between uses.		■		$

Neighborhood and Community Livability Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Create a partnership and working relationship with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide opportunities to Stafford's citizens regarding their health. CDC's Healthy Communities Program works with communities through local, state and territory, and national partnerships to improve community leaders and stakeholders' skills and commitments for establishing, advancing, and maintaining effective population-based strategies that reduce the burden of chronic disease and achieve health equity. Currently, 331 communities and 52 state and territorial health departments have been funded through this program.				$
Improve street lighting conditions and identify areas where additional lighting is needed in order to promote safer environments.				$$
Establish a framework for assessing the need and priority of new street lighting.				$
Develop design guidelines to ensure neighborhood and corridor integrity.				$
Enhance signage through the use of simple, but effective landscaping. Landscaping will help draw attention to the sign, but a simple layout will ensure that the sign is the focal point.				$
Utilize landscaping to screen parking lots from view of the identified gateway corridors.				$
Review existing logo design for effectiveness in presenting the City goals and strategies.				$

Neighborhood and Community Livability Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Continue to promote business owners to improve their properties through the Beautification Award Program.				$
Educate businesses owners on the pros and cons to landscaping, as well as, market the Beautification Award Program and its benefits to the business owner and the community.				$
At gateway locations, use lighting only for the illumination of signage or special features such as public art.				$-$$
Conduct a branding study to reinforce the City's community character and marketing approach.				$
Incorporate City logo into entrance sign designs.				$
Conduct a wayfinding signage master plan to explore potential thematic signs unique to the City to include street signs, directional, and facility signs and implement.				$
Develop commercial signage guidelines to encourage existing business to follow, as well as, control future commercial development application.				$
Organize a committee of a diverse, cultural representation in Stafford to develop ideas for social, cultural events, and desire development. The City should offer resources to assist the committee when available.				$
Stimulate the production of new housing for all incomes, ages, and family types.				$
Promote unique housing choices in Stafford, featuring a variety of lot sizes, type and building materials for all people regardless of the current life cycle they are in.				$

Neighborhood and Community Livability Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Encourage programs which allow seniors to remain in their homes as long as possible (e.g. home maintenance and repair, home health care, special mortgage programs, meal programs).				$
Consider creative housing options, such as lofts, especially in mixed use areas and rehabilitated structures.				$
Develop a recognition/reward program to encourage homeowners to enhance or maintain their properties through lawn maintenance, and exterior upgrades and upkeep.				$
Provide and coordinate programs to prevent the deterioration of homes.				$
Create a property maintenance ordinance that hold owners of all existing structures responsible for the minimum property maintenance standards such as roofs, exterior walls, and accessory structures.				$
Conduct proactive residential code enforcement.				$
Institute an annual program for assessing quality and useful life of existing housing stock, and allocate funds for replacement, additions, or remodels as needed.				$
Consider enforcing building codes with change of occupancy permits for residential rentals.				$
Consider requiring strong Home Owner Associations with every residential development.				$
Update the Subdivision Ordinance with new design standards and layouts for housing.				$

Economic Development Recommendations				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Develop marketing and branding of Stafford that targets desired industries to be located in Stafford.				$
Encourage and promote the redevelopment of the Island District.				$
Identify strategies to attract new businesses to occupy existing office and industrial spaces within the City.				$
Ensure new industries locate in designated development areas that have the infrastructure to support industrial development, while not degrading water and air quality.				$
Enforce growth management by encouraging infill development within the city.				$
Promote the development of and participate in public/private partnerships.				$
Coordinate with the Stafford Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) to help implement the 2014 Market Analysis developed by Catalyst Commercial.				$
Encourage SEDC to host an annual open house to showcase community projects and future plans.				$
Encourage SEDC to become a member of the Texas Economic Development Council to utilize resources and training that benefits small businesses.				$
Create a current list of businesses located in Stafford for the purpose of creating business partnerships, retention, attraction, and promotion. The list should be updated every two years.				$

Economic Development Recommendations (cont.)				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Create a partnership between the City, Stafford Economic Development Corporation, and private developers for the sole purpose of attracting and developing unique restaurants and entertainment.				$
Hold an annual Comprehensive Plan review meeting, led by Planning and Zoning and SEDC, in which actions items are analyzed to determine implementation status.				$
Identify vacant buildings and promote development opportunities through SEDC.				$
Through coordination with the Market Analysis, help attract a quality food store.				$
Consider creation of a municipal management district (MMD) to fund corridor enhancements and on-going maintenance				$
Consider the creation of a Public Improvement District(PID) as a financing mechanism for upgraded public improvements in partnership with redeveloping properties.				$
Encourage development of desired office, retail, service, and entertainment venues through the use of tax abatement, PID, or 380 agreements.				$$-$$$
Identify and target underserved retail market segments.				$
Adopt guidelines regarding the appropriate use and amount of public investment for the various categories of redevelopment desired by the city.				$

Economic Development Recommendations				
DESCRIPTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM /ON GOING	BUDGET
Identify areas ripe for redevelopment and coordinate with Stafford Economic Development Corporation to help attract investment.				$
Consider promoting city-owned land just south of the Stafford Centre for mixed use and community entertainment uses.				$
Seek and encourage hotel and transit oriented development near Houston Community College and Stafford Centre areas.				$

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ORDINANCE NO. 1053

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF STAFFORD, TEXAS, ADOPTING THE CITY OF STAFFORD'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; AND PROVIDING A SEVERABILITY CLAUSE.

WHEREAS, the City may adopt a comprehensive plan for the long-range development of the City;

WHEREAS, a City may define the content and design of a comprehensive plan;

WHEREAS, the comprehensive plan may:

(1) include but is not limited to provisions on land use, transportation, and public facilities;

(2) consist of a single plan or a coordinated set of plans organized by subject and geographic area; and

(3) be used to coordinate and guide the establishment of development regulations; and

WHEREAS, the City Council held a public hearing on the adoption of the comprehensive plan on November 18, 2015. Now Therefore,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF STAFFORD:

SECTION 1. That the findings set forth in the preamble above are found to be true and correct and are adopted into this ordinance for all purposes.

SECTION 2. The City Council hereby adopts and incorporates the document attached hereto as Exhibit A into this ordinance for all purposes. Said attached document shall be the City of Stafford's Comprehensive Plan.

SECTION 3. The adoption of the attached Comprehensive Plan does not limit the ability of the City to prepare other plans, policies, or strategies as required. A copy of this ordinance shall be included in or attached to the Comprehensive Plan.

SECTION 4. The following statement shall be included on the Comprehensive Plan:

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

SECTION 5. It is the intention of the City Council that this ordinance, and every provision hereof, shall be considered severable, and the invalidity or unconstitutionality of any section, clause, provision or portion of this ordinance shall not affect the validity or unconstitutionality of any other portion of this ordinance.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED this 2nd day of December, 2015.

Leonard Scarcella, Mayor

ATTEST:

Bonnie Baiamonte, City Secretary

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FREESE AND NICHOLS