



Introduction

The City of Webster, a municipality located midway between downtown Houston and Galveston, within Harris County, features a small footprint but robust economic base. While the City encompasses just 6.7 square miles and touts a residential population under 11,000, the daytime population of Webster exceeds 200,000, and the number of businesses surpasses 2,500. As there are opportunities to plan and guide future growth and development, capitalize on strengths, eradicate weaknesses, and augment the City, Webster's Comprehensive Plan Update has been generated.

The City's Comprehensive Plan reflects the municipality's analysis of its footprint, brand, characteristics, and attributes, goals for enhancing many elements, and direction to achieve those aims. The necessity for planning is timely, as Webster seeks to facilitate positive growth, development, and redevelopment. The Comprehensive Plan, just as its name connotes, articulates an encompassing analysis and review of the City's composition and recommends long-term goals and objectives in myriad areas, such as Webster's vision, community profile, land use, transportation, community enhancement, safety, and implementation.

1.1 — What is Planning within the Comprehensive Plan?

Within the context of the Comprehensive Plan, planning can be defined as a process to assess past and current conditions, project and direct future growth, articulate vision, establish priorities, and set goals and objectives that foster implementation. Just as a municipality and its conditions or characteristics are never stagnant, they are constantly in flux, the same premise holds true for the Comprehensive Plan. Planning is a dynamic process that is continuously monitored, updated, and revised as change transpires. As the Comprehensive Plan is a living, dynamic document, Webster's City Charter mandates that the Plan be updated every five years.

The Comprehensive Plan, which is predicated on planning, is a long-range, general plan that focuses on the physical development or built environment—current and future—of the City. Webster's Comprehensive Plan guides growth and development of the City and influences policies and procedures. While the Comprehensive Plan is fluid, it is weighty in that the direction for the City has been meticulously articulated and endorsed.

1.2 — Citizens Advisory Committee and the Comprehensive Plan Update

The City of Webster's Comprehensive Plan Update is the work of the Citizens Advisory Committee who was appointed by City Council in July 2013 to perform the vital task of charting the City's course. During a period of nine months—from August 2013 to June 2014—the 17-member Citizens Advisory Committee convened for six meetings to tackle each segment of the Comprehensive Plan. As each meeting spanned several hours, the Committee Members are to be commended for their leadership, dedication, and insight.

FIGURE 1.1: CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMPOSITION



As depicted in the chart below, the Citizens Advisory Committee, appointed by City Council, included members of the Planning and Zoning Commission, Webster Economic Development Corporation, Parks Board, and City Council, along with business and community representatives. During each session, Webster's City Planner presented a new chapter or segment for discussion, analysis, review, and consensus. Exercises that included maps, renderings, photographs, and relevant materials were utilized to formulate the future vision of the Webster community. The Comprehensive Plan represents the meticulous, arduous efforts of the Citizens Advisory Committee who was tasked with defining, articulating, and directing the City's future growth and development. (Figure 1.1)

1.3 — Zoning and the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan, defined as the City's all-encompassing vision or guide for future growth and development, is not synonymous with zoning, which is one of the most powerful tools that the City has to classify land according to specific uses. Whereas the Comprehensive Plan articulates the vision, goals, and objectives of the desired urban form, zoning represents the legal mechanism used by the City to influence and realize that plan. While both the Comprehensive Plan and Official Zoning Map are discrete, they are tied together by statutory law that requires zoning regulations to be adopted in accordance with a Comprehensive Plan and designed to

- promote public health, safety, and welfare
- enhance quality of life objectives through an integrated approach to planning and execution
- provide clean drinking water and sanitary removal of wastewater
- regulate mobility infrastructure
- conduct urban planning to prevent overcrowding, ensure air quality, and provide adequate light
- advance development of public utilities and institutions

1.4 — Continuous Planning Process

The Comprehensive Plan is a fluid plan, as it reflects and guides a dynamic, evolving municipality that is continuously changing. Since the Comprehensive Plan is fluid, it is intended to be reviewed internally at periodic intervals to achieve viability, accuracy, and relevance, as Webster’s City Charter mandates that the Comprehensive Plan be updated, at a minimum, every five years to ensure that the plan reflects the vision and direction of the municipality and accords with changing conditions.

The time and labor-intensive planning process that comprises the Comprehensive Plan represents more than a nine-month investment by elected and appointed officials, stakeholders, and staff. Throughout the planning process, extensive interactive activities, lively debate, and group consensus characterized the sessions that resulted in the final product—a plan that contains a comprehensive assessment of the City, including opportunities and challenges, strengths and weaknesses, and a vision for Webster with specific goals, objectives, and action items.

1.5 — Relationship to Other Plans and Studies

While the City has various plans, in addition to the Comprehensive Plan, more often than not, these plans relate to the Comprehensive Plan and are referenced in that document. As its name connotes, the Comprehensive Plan is the master planning document for the City and references or incorporates individual, focused plans. The NASA Parkway Revitalization Plan, for example, which was generated to guide and facilitate the redevelopment of the NASA Parkway corridor, is integrated in the Comprehensive Plan in multiple chapters. The Master Parks Plan, which guides and facilitates park enhancements and future planning, is also tied to the Comprehensive Plan. The same premise holds true with the Sidewalk Plan, Future Land Use Plan, and Thoroughfare Plan, in that each of these plans represents segments or focused sectors of the City.



MEMBERS OF THE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE, INCLUDING MARLENE EAKMAN-HERBST, FRANK MORENO, KEITH TUCKER, AND MARTY GRAVES, WORK IN A SMALL GROUP FORUM TO ANALYZE THE CITY’S THROUGHFARE PLAN.