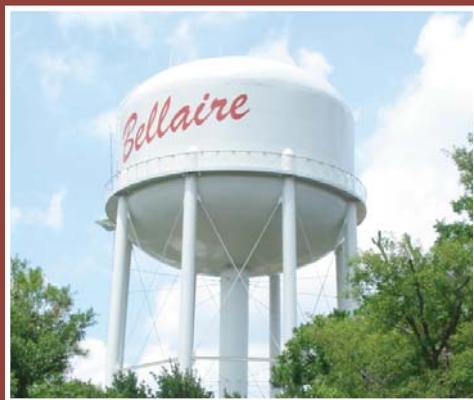


COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

# BELLAIRE

TEXAS



ADOPTED  
SEPTEMBER 21, 2015







**ORDINANCE NO. 15-062**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELLAIRE, TEXAS, APPROVING AND ADOPTING AN UPDATE TO THE 2009 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE CITY OF BELLAIRE, TEXAS, IN A FORM AS ATTACHED HERETO AND MARKED EXHIBIT "A".**

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELLAIRE, TEXAS:**

**THAT** the City Council of the City of Bellaire, Texas does hereby approve and adopt an update to the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Bellaire, Texas, originally approved and adopted by City Council on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2009, in a form as attached hereto and marked Exhibit "A".

**PASSED, APPROVED, and ADOPTED** this 21<sup>ST</sup> day of September, 2015.

(SEAL)



ATTEST:  
*Tracy L. Dutton*  
Tracy L. Dutton, TRMC  
City Clerk

SIGNED:

*Philip L. Nauert*  
Dr. Philip L. Nauert  
Mayor

**APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

*Alan P. Petrov*  
Alan P. Petrov  
City Attorney





October 16, 2015

Mr. John McDonald  
Director of Development Services  
City of Bellaire  
7008 South Rice Avenue  
Bellaire, Texas 77401-4195

Dear John:

We are pleased to submit this new edition of the **Bellaire Comprehensive Plan**, reflecting the results of the recently completed five-year interim update process and unanimous adoption by City Council on September 21, 2015. The City's newly updated **Parks Master Plan** is also now included as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan document was prepared in accordance with our Professional Services Agreement with the City.

The plan takes care of “the basics” by repeatedly reinforcing the fundamental importance of neighborhood integrity in the City of Homes, as well as the priority residents place on parks and recreation opportunities, safe streets, and preservation of a small-town atmosphere amid a vast metropolitan region. The plan also emphasizes necessary ongoing investment in basic infrastructure and public facilities. Continuing efforts to renew Bellaire's City Center and other commercial areas and high-profile corridors are also highlighted, building on the implementation successes of recent years. Finally, this plan elevates the concept of community character, which is a way of looking beyond just the use of land to the site and building design characteristics that influence the “look and feel” – and the true compatibility and quality – of development.

The five-year update process was completed through interaction with the Planning and Zoning Commission and City departments, followed by public hearings and consideration at the Commission and City Council levels. The entirety of the plan content continues to reflect more extensive community outreach efforts in support of the major plan update in 2008-09, which included informal listening sessions hosted in residents' homes, a City Hall forum, nine working sessions with a City-appointed Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, and multiple workshops and hearings prior to final adoption.

Now attention returns to the pursuit of near-term action initiatives while maintaining a focus on the longer-term vision and strategic directions set by the plan. Change is inevitable, but positive, beneficial change for Bellaire will require the ongoing commitment of all who contributed their time and ideas to this plan. On behalf of our firm, we sincerely appreciated this further opportunity to lend our professional skills and experience to ongoing community planning efforts in Bellaire. We look forward to seeing the city's continued enhancement.

Respectfully submitted,

KENDIG KEAST COLLABORATIVE

Gary Mitchell, AICP  
Vice President | Managing Director

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# Acknowledgments

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Council Member Jim Avioli, Sr. – Position 2  
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Michael Doyle  
Andrew Friedberg  
Donna Rickenbacker

### Thanks Also To ...

Individual residents, business owners, property owners, and others who participated in and contributed their insights and ideas to Bellaire's long-range planning process.



ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 21, 2015

Deborah Sharp  
Bruce Volkert

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# Table of Contents

## CHAPTER 1

### *Introduction*

Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan.....	1.3
Use of this Plan.....	1.3
Planning Authority.....	1.5
Why Plan?.....	1.5
Community Overview .....	1.7
Key Socioeconomic Trends and Factors .....	1.7
A History of Uneven Growth—Until the 1990s .....	1.7
Growth Outlook Through 2040 .....	1.8
Factors in Employability and Income Potential .....	1.9
Employment Profile .....	1.12
Shorter Commutes, but Automobile Dependence like much of the Region.....	1.12
Housing Stock in Continuing Flux.....	1.13
Plan Development .....	1.14
Additional Information.....	1.16

## CHAPTER 2

### *Land Use & Community Character*

Key Planning Considerations.....	2.1
Community Character .....	2.3
Existing Land Use and Character .....	2.4
Future Land Use and Character .....	2.5
Suburban Residential .....	2.6
General Residential .....	2.6
Small-Lot Residential .....	2.7
Residential-Office Mix .....	2.8
Corridor Mixed Use .....	2.8
Urban Village .....	2.9



Suburban Office.....2.10  
 Business Park.....2.11  
 Redevelopment.....2.11  
 Goals and Actions .....2.12  
 Goal 2.1 (Neighborhoods) and Guiding Principles .....2.13  
     Considerations:  
         1. Non-Residential Compatibility and Screening/Buffering  
         2. Compatibility at City Limits  
         3. Loss of Tree Canopy with Redevelopment  
         4. Institutional Impacts  
         5. Neighborhood Traffic  
         6. Neighborhood Security  
 Goal 2.2 (Life-Cycle Housing) and Guiding Principles .....2.16  
     Considerations:  
         1. Active Promotion  
         2. Mixed Use  
         3. Key Redevelopment Areas (City Center and UV-T Area)  
         4. Quality and Sustainability of any Future Apartment  
             Development or Redevelopment  
         5. Residential Redevelopment

### CHAPTER 3

#### *Mobility*

Key Planning Considerations .....3.2  
 Existing Traffic Conditions .....3.8  
 Future Outlook .....3.9  
 Goals and Actions ..... 3.9  
     Goal 3.1 (Multi-Modal, Safe Mobility) and Guiding Principles.....3.10  
         Considerations:  
             1. Citizen Involvement in Planning  
             2. Pedestrian and Bicycle Network  
             3. School Area Safety  
             4. Improvements to Key Corridors  
             5. Special Area Planning  
             6. Energy Savings and Pollution Reduction  
             7. Emergency Planning  
             8. Coordination on Regional Projects

### CHAPTER 4

#### *Public Infrastructure & Services*

Essential Capacity Issue .....4.2  
 Utility Infrastructure.....4.3  
     Water.....4.3  
     Wastewater .....4.4  
     Storm Drainage .....4.5  
 Streets.....4.7



Public Safety .....	4.9
Police .....	4.9
Fire and Emergency Response .....	4.11
City Facilities .....	4.13
City Hall and other Municipal Buildings .....	4.13
Library .....	4.14

## CHAPTER 5

### *Commercial Area Development & Enhancement*

Key Planning Considerations.....	5.2
Bellaire Urban Village at Westpark.....	5.2
City Center Area .....	5.3
Commercial Development in General .....	5.7
Goals and Actions.....	5.11
Goal 5.1 (UV-T) and Guiding Principles .....	5.12
Considerations:	
1. Transformation of the UV-T into a Mixed-Use, Pedestrian-Oriented Area	
Goal 5.2 (City Center) and Guiding Principles.....	5.14
Considerations:	
1. Renewal of City Center to Provide the Small-Town Downtown Atmosphere Sought by Bellaire Residents	
Goal 5.3 (Commercial Corridors) and Guiding Principles .....	5.16
Considerations:	
1. Upgraded Quality and Appearance of Bellaire’s Commercial Corridors to Match its Residential Neighborhoods and Major Office Developments	

## CHAPTER 6

### *Implementation*

Plan Implementation Methods .....	6.2
Policy-Based Decisions .....	6.2
Land Development Regulations and Engineering Standards .....	6.3
Capital Improvements Programming.....	6.3
Special Projects, Programs and Initiatives .....	6.3
Coordination and Partnerships .....	6.3
Ongoing Study and Planning .....	6.3
Plan Administration .....	6.4
Education.....	6.4
Role Definition .....	6.4
Action Agenda .....	6.6
Plan Amendment Process.....	6.9
Annual Progress Report .....	6.10
Annual Amendment Process .....	6.11
Five-Year Update / Evaluation and Appraisal Report .....	6.12
Ongoing Community Outreach and Engagement.....	6.13



**APPENDIX**

***City of Bellaire Parks Master Plan, 2015-2025***

*(Adopted September 21, 2015)*

**FIGURES**

Figure 1.1, Population Growth Comparison ..... 1.8  
 Figure 1.2, Bellaire Population Projection..... 1.9  
 Figure 1.3, Educational Attainment Comparison ..... 1.10  
 Figure 1.4, Income Comparison ..... 1.10  
 Figure 1.5, Age and Gender Distribution..... 1.11  
 Figure 1.6, Employment of Bellaire Residents by Industry Type ..... 1.12  
 Figure 1.7, Age of Housing Structures in Bellaire..... 1.13  
 Figure 4.1, Streets Reconstructed during  
     Bellaire Millennium Renewal..... 4.8  
 Figure 4.2, Criteria for Rebuild Bellaire Priority Projects ..... 4.9  
 Figure 4.3, Police Service Call Trend, 2009-2014..... 4.10

**TABLES**

Table 1.1, Population History of Bellaire and Harris County ..... 1.7  
 Table 2.1, Future Land Use Allocation ..... 2.5  
 Table 4.1, Bellaire Library Circulation and Utilization ..... 4.15  
 Table 6.1, Priority Action Agenda..... 6.7

**MAPS**

Map 2.1, Existing Land Use & Character .....*after* 2.6  
 Map 2.2, Future Land Use & Character .....*after* 2.6



# INTRODUCTION

## ***Why this Comprehensive Plan chapter is Important for Bellaire:***

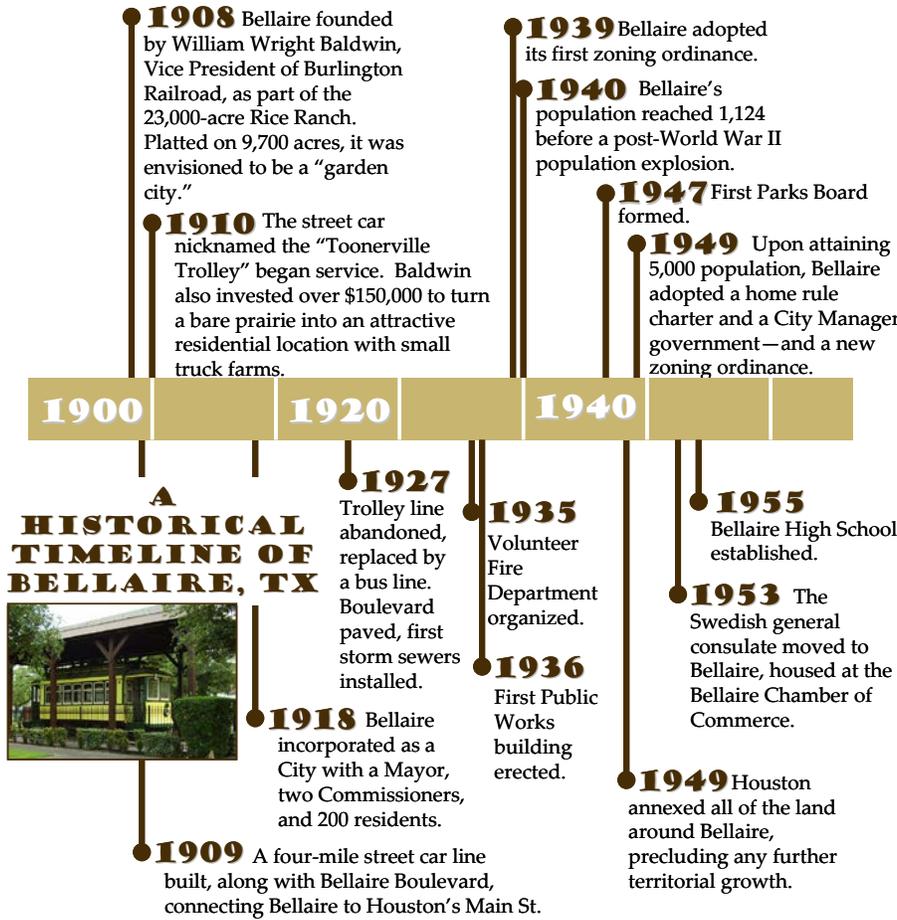
- ✓ *Highlights the significance of the Comprehensive Plan as an indication of community priorities and guide for decision-making, as well as providing the public policy basis for the City's development regulations.*
- ✓ *Provides a snapshot of Bellaire's socioeconomic status and outlook at the time this plan was updated in 2015 to reflect Census 2010 results and other newer data.*
- ✓ *Documents the community outreach activities that were conducted to publicize the long-range planning effort and obtain input on residents' hopes, concerns, and ideas for the future of Bellaire.*

## CHAPTER 1

The Bellaire Comprehensive Plan is designed as a framework for guiding future development, redevelopment, and community enhancement in the City over the next 20 years and beyond. The purpose of this plan is to establish a vision, along with realistic goals and achievable strategies, that residents, business and land owners, major institutions, civic groups, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and public officials prefer—and will support with action—in the years ahead.

In geographic terms, this Comprehensive Plan addresses the 3.6 square miles within the City limits of Bellaire. Bellaire's location seven miles southwest of downtown Houston makes it an "enclave" city, completely surrounded by Houston with West University Place to the east. Bellaire has been nicknamed "The City of Homes" because of its primary design as a residential community. Nearby activity centers, including the Texas Medical Center, Rice University, the Galleria and Uptown Houston, Greenway Plaza, and Houston's Central Business District, offer professional employment opportunities for Bellaire residents. Access to these jobs, exceptional educational offerings, and the ongoing transition to larger single-family





homes in Bellaire greatly appeals to adults with younger children, as well as "empty nesters."

Bellaire's quality of living is largely based upon residential conditions and how they can be improved. The appropriate business development, community services, public spaces, and quality of education must also be monitored continually and enhanced, as appropriate, to increase the quality of life for Bellaire citizens.

The comprehensive planning process is intended not only to celebrate accomplishments of the past, but also as an opportunity to anticipate and address challenges of the future. Land use and transportation changes in the area require attention to

ensure that current development efforts are true to the traditions of Bellaire. There are many policy and infrastructure decisions being made on a regular basis that relate to this plan. In some cases, this plan will offer guidance to decision makers for challenges only now emerging while other sections reinforce established policies that should be carried forward as a sure and sound basis for future development and redevelopment.

Whether an issue is a challenge or an opportunity, the utmost importance should be placed upon this plan as an opportunity for thoughtful public discussion of the issues facing Bellaire. As Bellaire looks forward to the coming years, the desires of residents are woven through all aspects of this plan. From parks to neighborhood integrity, there are many community assets that this plan strives to utilize to Bellaire's fullest advantage. Local residents have demonstrated their ability to manage and improve an appealing community for 100 years, and this plan seeks to continue that tradition.



## PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

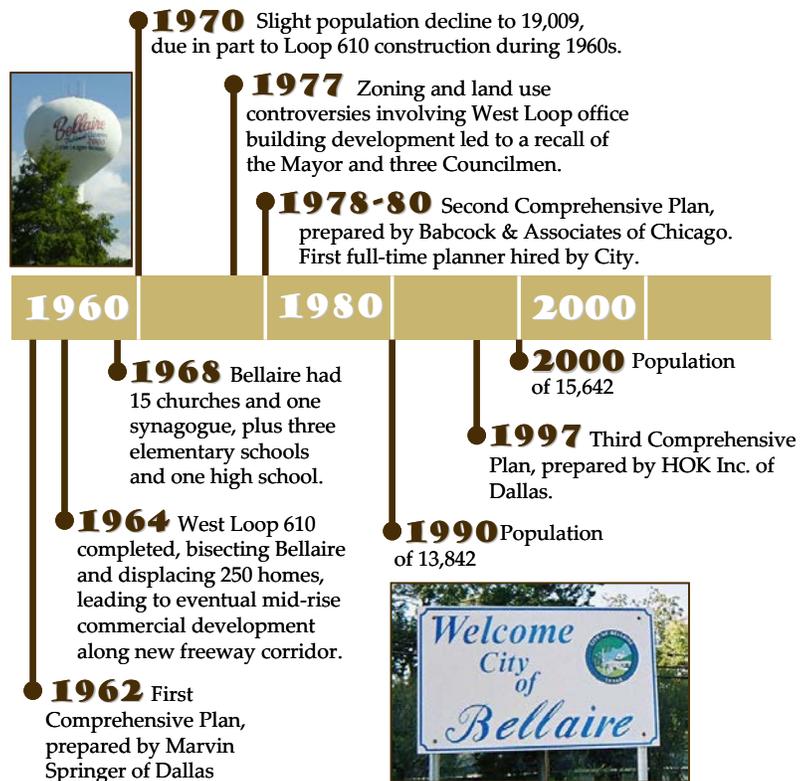
A comprehensive plan is usually the most important policy document a municipal government prepares and maintains. This is because the plan:

- ◆ lays out a “big picture” vision and associated goals regarding the future growth and enhancement of the community;
- ◆ considers at once the entire geographic area of the community, including areas where new development and redevelopment may occur; and
- ◆ assesses near- and longer-term needs and desires across a variety of inter-related topics that represent the key “building blocks” of a community (e.g., land use, transportation, urban design, commercial development, redevelopment, neighborhoods, parks and recreation, utility infrastructure, public facilities and services, etc.).

Through a comprehensive plan, a community determines how best to accommodate and manage its projected growth, as well as the redevelopment of older neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas. Like most similar plans, this Comprehensive Plan is aimed at ensuring that ongoing development and redevelopment will proceed in an orderly, well planned manner so that public facilities and services can keep pace and residents’ quality of life will be enhanced. Significantly, by clarifying and stating the City’s intentions regarding the area’s physical development and infrastructure investment, the plan also creates greater predictability for residents, land owners, developers, and potential investors.

## USE OF THIS PLAN

A comprehensive plan, if prepared well and embraced by the City and its leadership, has the potential to take a community to a whole new level in terms of livability and tangible accomplishments. Based on this Plan, in Bellaire this may include a revitalized City Center, more and safer opportunities for biking and walking in the community, more attractive commercial areas and corridors, an “urban village” atmosphere in northwest Bellaire near a planned METRO transit center along Westpark just outside



**PLANNING is ...**  
 the process of identifying issues and needs, establishing goals and objectives, and determining the most effective means by which these ends may be achieved.



Bellaire, and more varied housing styles, especially for seniors and others desiring a smaller home. However, comprehensive plans are only words and images on paper if their action recommendations are not pursued and effectively implemented.

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

- ◆ targeted programs and expenditures prioritized through the City’s annual budget process, including routine but essential functions such as code enforcement;
- ◆ major public improvements and land acquisitions financed through the City’s capital improvement program and related bond initiatives;
- ◆ new and amended City ordinances and regulations closely linked to comprehensive plan objectives (and associated review and approval procedures in the case of land development, subdivisions, and zoning matters);
- ◆ departmental work plans and staffing in key areas;
- ◆ support for ongoing planning and studies that will further clarify needs and strategies, including the City Council’s own strategic planning (e.g., for redevelopment and enhancement of commercial areas);
- ◆ pursuit of external grant funding to supplement local budgets and/or expedite certain projects; and
- ◆ initiatives pursued in conjunction with other public and private partners to leverage resources and achieve successes neither could accomplish alone.

Despite these many avenues for action, a comprehensive plan should not be considered a “cure all” for every tough problem a community faces. On the one hand, such plans tend to focus on the responsibilities of City government in the physical planning arena, where cities normally have a more direct and extensive role than in other areas that residents value, such as education, social services, and arts and culture. Of necessity, comprehensive plans, as vision and policy documents, also must remain relatively general and conceptual. The resulting plan may not touch on every challenge before the community, but it is meant to set a tone and motivate concerted efforts to move the community forward in coming years.

It is also important to distinguish between the function of the comprehensive plan relative to the City’s development regulations, such as the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. The plan establishes overall policy for future land use, road improvements, utilities, and other aspects of community

**Local Government Planning**

The success of the plan depends upon how it is integrated with the operation of local government (planning, policy development, regulation, and programming through City departments).



growth and enhancement. The City's zoning ordinance and official zoning district map then implement the plan in terms of specific land uses and building and site development standards. The City's subdivision regulations also establish standards in conformance with the plan for the physical subdivision of land, the layout of new or redeveloped streets and building sites, and the design and construction of roads, water and sewer lines, storm drainage, and other infrastructure that will be dedicated to the City for long term maintenance.

## PLANNING AUTHORITY

### *State Support for Community Planning – Section 213 of the Texas Local Government Code*

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

- (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.

The Comprehensive Plan will serve as a guide for the ongoing development and redevelopment of the community with respect to land use, thoroughfares and streets, and other matters affecting development within the City.

## WHY PLAN?

Local planning allows the City of Bellaire to have a greater measure of control over its destiny rather than simply reacting to change. Planning enables the

### **Planning & Zoning Commission**

Section 2-104 of the Bellaire Code of Ordinances establishes the Commission. As stated in subsection B, "The commission is created for the purpose of fulfilling, in a manner consistent with the laws of the State of Texas, those planning and zoning responsibilities delegated to it by the Charter and ordinances of the city. One of its dominant purposes shall be to accomplish the following:

- (1) To identify community needs and to advise the city council of the short-range and long-range implications of such needs for the total development of the city.
- (2) To recommend to the city council achievable community goals for planning and development programs.
- (3) To recommend to the city council plans, programs and policies calculated to aid the community in achieving its defined goals.
- (4) To explain to and explore with concerned citizens those plans and programs adopted by the city council in an effort to ensure that private activities and desires may be accomplished in harmony with public needs and policies.

Then, subsection I, Duties and Powers, further provides that the Commission "is hereby charged with the responsibility and vested with the authority to formulate and recommend to the city council, for its adoption, such plans, programs and policies related to the future growth and development of the city as the commission deems appropriate and necessary."

### **Planning Charge**

Section 24-401 of the Bellaire Code of Ordinances references the City's Comprehensive Plan and its use by City government. As stated in subsection B, Effect, "All decisions made by the City implementing the terms of this chapter [Chapter 24, Planning and Zoning] shall be consistent with the policies adopted in the plan. Any action on any application for amendment to this chapter shall be in accordance with the adopted policies of the plan except where the policy itself is the subject of the proposed change."



City to manage future growth and development actively as opposed to reacting to development proposals on a case-by-case basis without adequate and necessary consideration of community wide issues.

The process required to update the Bellaire Comprehensive Plan may prove more valuable to the community than the plan itself since the document is ultimately only a snapshot in time. The planning process involves major community decisions about how much and where development and redevelopment will occur, the nature of future development, and the community's capability to provide the necessary public services and facilities to support this development. This leads to pivotal discussions about what is "best" for the community and how everything from taxes to "quality of life" will be affected.

**CHOICES and PRIORITIES**

For the plan to be effective, community issues must be researched and analyzed, solutions and alternatives evaluated, and a realistic and feasible plan of action put in place to overcome the problem. The evaluation of alternatives for resolving issues—and the selection of one or more strategies that are both reasonable and acceptable—are essential elements of the community planning process.

Long range planning also provides an opportunity for the City's elected and appointed officials to step back from pressing, day-to-day issues and clarify their ideas on the kind of community they are trying to create and maintain. Through the plan development process, they can look broadly at programs for neighborhoods, housing, commercial redevelopment, and provision of public

infrastructure and facilities and how these efforts may relate to one another. The Bellaire Comprehensive Plan represents a "big picture" of the city, one that can be related to the trends and interests of the broader region as well as the State of Texas.

Local planning is often the most direct and efficient way to involve members of the general public in determining the future of their community. The process of plan preparation provides a rare opportunity for two-way communication between citizens and local government officials as to their vision of the community and the details of how that vision is to be achieved. The plan results in a series of goals and policies that, ideally, will assist the City in administering development regulations; in determining the location, sequencing, and financing of public improvements; and, in guiding reinvestment and redevelopment efforts. The plan also provides a means of coordinating the actions of many different departments and divisions within municipal government.

**Getting to ACTION**

The plan must go beyond general and lofty sounding goals. While everybody may agree with such goals, true progress will only occur if the plan establishes a policy framework and provides guidance as to how particular opportunities and challenges are to be tackled.

In summary, important reasons for long range planning in Bellaire include:

- ◆ To ensure adequate public facilities to meet the demands of future development and redevelopment.
- ◆ To achieve an efficient development pattern that reflects the values of the community.
- ◆ To ensure the long term protection and enhancement of the image and visual appearance of the community.



- ◆ To provide a balance of land uses and services throughout the community to meet the needs and desires of its population.
- ◆ To involve local citizens in the decision making process and reach consensus on the future vision for Bellaire and its ongoing development.
- ◆ To develop annual work programs and prioritize improvements consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The City of Bellaire is a relatively affluent community. It is largely a “bedroom” community in terms of many residents commuting outside of the City to work. Since its incorporation in 1918, Bellaire has experienced both population growth and decline, especially after introduction of the Loop 610 corridor removed a significant number of housing units. Housing, public services, employment, and economic opportunities must be assessed to accommodate current and future Bellaire residents. Before looking at the future, however, it is important to consider past and current conditions through a brief socioeconomic assessment.

### KEY SOCIOECONOMIC TRENDS AND FACTORS

#### *A History of Uneven Growth – Until the 1990s*

While Harris County has seen consistent growth over many decades, Bellaire has experienced a dynamic growth pattern which has led the community to what it is today. Although there have been decades in which Bellaire lost population, it has more recently experienced population growth with ongoing residential redevelopment activity as shown in **Table 1.1, Population History of Bellaire and Harris County**.

From 1930 to 1960, Bellaire grew dramatically from fewer than 400 to almost 20,000 residents. This trend averaged to over a 36 percent increase in population annually. During the 1940s in particular, the City was growing by almost 100 percent per year. Harris County was growing between 1930 and 1960 at an average of 5.1 percent per year, expanding its population steadily while Bellaire was becoming a greater proportion of the County – although always a very minor share (less than two percent).

**TABLE 1.1, Population History of Bellaire and Harris County**

Year	BELLAIRE Population	Percent Change	City Share of County Population	Harris County Population	Percent Change
1930	390	--	0.11%	359,328	--
1940	1,124	188.2%	0.21%	528,961	47.2%
1950	10,173	805.1%	1.26%	806,701	52.5%
1960	19,872	95.3%	1.60%	1,243,158	54.1%
1970	19,009	-4.3%	1.09%	1,741,912	40.1%
1980	14,950	-21.4%	0.62%	2,409,547	38.3%
1990	13,842	-7.4%	0.49%	2,818,199	17.0%
2000	15,642	13.0%	0.46%	3,400,578	20.7%
2010	16,855	7.8%	0.41%	4,092,459	20.3%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2010)



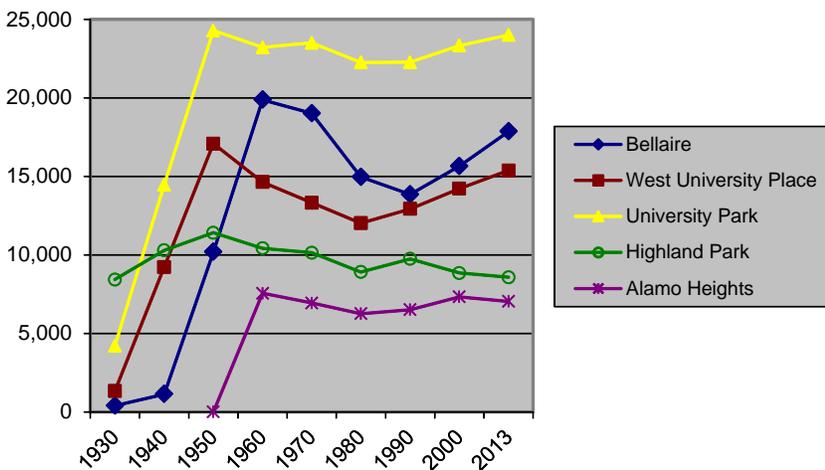
After 1960, the City began losing residents and Bellaire’s population fell from 19,872 to 13,842 in 1990. This loss was partly due to the removal of housing for the construction of Loop 610 and the office and commercial developments that followed along some of the new freeway frontage. An aging population with fewer children also contributed to a reduced population count. Harris County’s population growth rate also slowed from the 1970s onward as the sheer size of the countywide population grew so large, surpassing three million during the 1990s. Compared to the pre-1960 average annual growth rate of 5.1 percent, the rate per year from 1960 to 2000 was just over three percent. Census 2010 data shows that Harris County nearly matched its 1990s growth rate (just over 20 percent) during the 2000s while Bellaire’s population increased by 7.8 percent from 2000 to 2010 compared to 13 percent during the 1990s.

The most recent U.S. Census Bureau estimate of population in Bellaire is 17,849, which was as of July 2013. The Texas State Data Center had a more conservative estimate of 17,186 at January 2013. This continuing growth trend since 2000 reflects ongoing residential redevelopment activity, as well as the renewed presence of younger families in Bellaire, with the average household size increasing from 2.58 persons in 2000 to 2.78 in 2010.

**Growth Outlook Through 2040**

Displayed in **Figure 1.1, Population Growth Comparison**, is the historical growth of the City of Bellaire compared to the enclave cities of West University Place, University Park and Highland Park in the Dallas area, and Alamo Heights in the San Antonio area. Between 1930 and 1960, West University Place, University Park, and Alamo Heights each experienced rapid growth along with Bellaire. By 1960, University Park and Bellaire had both surpassed Highland Park and West University Place to become the two largest cities among the comparisons. By 1970, however, all comparison cities saw a decline in population for at least the next decade. From 1990 to 2000, all comparison cities except Highland Park experienced renewed population growth, with Bellaire having the highest growth rate. This comparative trend has continued through 2013 except that Alamo Heights has joined Highland Park in experiencing some population loss.

**FIGURE 1.1, Population Growth Comparison**



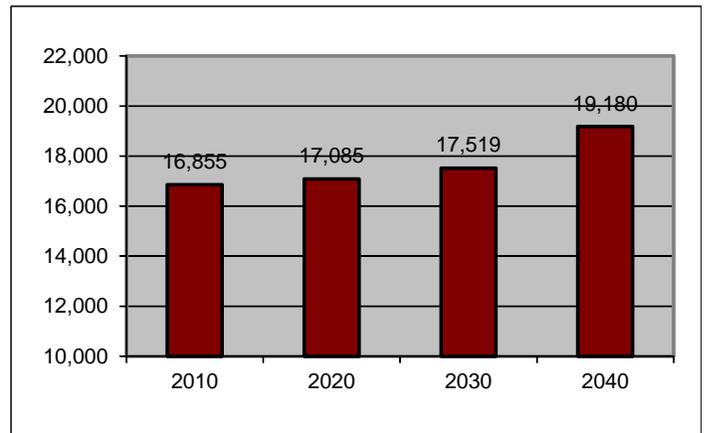
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2013)

By 1960, University Park and Bellaire had both surpassed Highland Park and West University Place to become the two largest cities among the comparisons. By 1970, however, all comparison cities saw a decline in population for at least the next decade. From 1990 to 2000, all comparison cities except Highland Park experienced renewed population growth, with Bellaire having the highest growth rate. This comparative trend has continued through 2013 except that Alamo Heights has joined Highland Park in experiencing some population loss.



The newest available Regional Growth Forecast from the Houston-Galveston Area Council, as of fourth quarter 2014, shows Bellaire surpassing the 19,000 population mark by 2040 as illustrated in **Figure 1.2, Bellaire Population Projection**. Under any forecast scenario, Bellaire will remain a small city (less than 50,000). Given its enclave status and the extent of developed land in Bellaire, any significant growth would have to come through higher density housing, replacement of former commercial sites with residential development, and/or a higher rate of family formation or increase in average household size—which could also reflect some seniors moving in with their families or others.

**FIGURE 1.2, Bellaire Population Projection**



SOURCE: Houston-Galveston Area Council (2014)

### ***Factors in Employability and Income Potential***

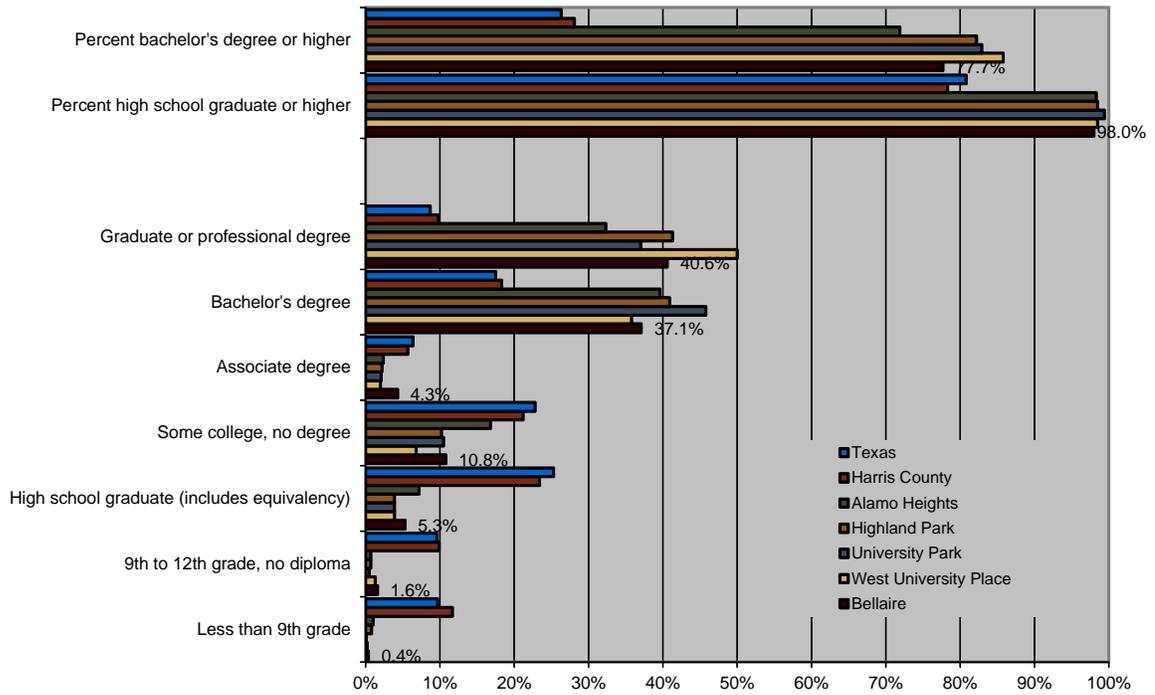
The level of education within a community determines the capabilities of the area labor force. This, in turn, influences the types of businesses that come to or remain in a community, as well as the success certain businesses will have at finding the types of labor skills they require. (As noted earlier, many Bellaire residents commute to employment centers in the central Houston area where professional occupations are prominent). **Figure 1.3, Educational Attainment Comparison**, shows that Bellaire residents compare relatively closely with those in the other enclave cities while attaining far greater education overall in comparison to Harris County and the State of Texas. Just over three-quarters of all residents in Bellaire have a bachelor’s degree or better compared to West University Place (85.8 percent), University Park (82.9 percent), Highland Park (82.2 percent), and Alamo Heights (71.9 percent). The City of Bellaire, however, almost triples the state (26.3 percent) and more than doubles the county (28.1 percent) averages of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

#### **Household Size**

As of Census 2010, the average household size in Bellaire was 2.78 persons, which compared to 2.82 for all of Harris County, 2.75 statewide, and 2.58 nationally.

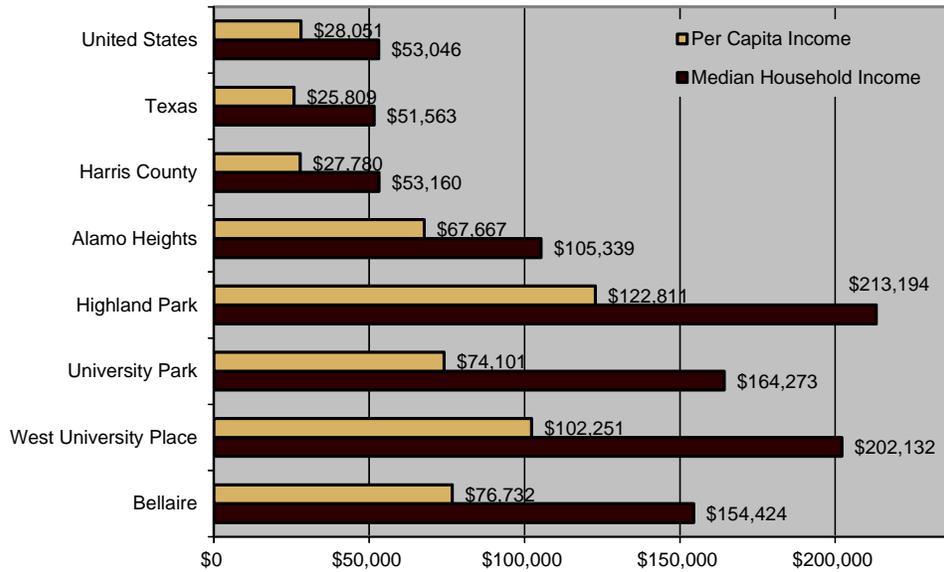


**FIGURE 1.3, Educational Attainment Comparison**



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2012)

**FIGURE 1.4, Income Comparison**



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2012)

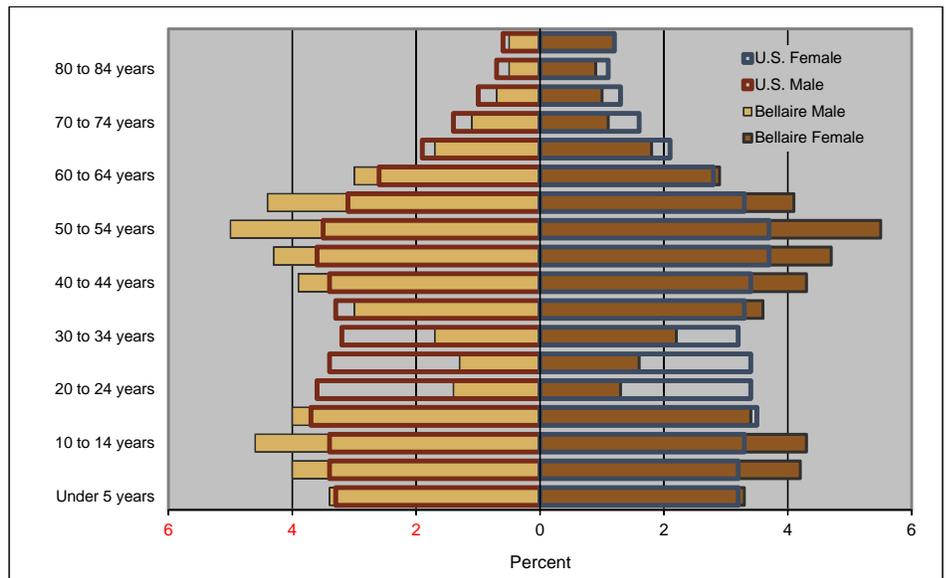


Level of education, skills, and transportation access all factor into the “employability” of individuals, which, in turn, determines one’s income earning potential. Displayed in **Figure 1.4, Income Comparison**, are the median household and per capita income levels of Bellaire residents based on U.S. Census Bureau estimates through 2012 relative to the comparison enclave cities, Harris County, the State of Texas, and the nation. Bellaire’s per capita income (\$76,732) is third among the five comparison cities and its median household income (\$154,424) is fourth, but Bellaire’s income levels far exceed the county, state, and national amounts.

The age distribution of the local population is another key factor that shapes an area’s labor force, as well as the particular outlook and service needs of residents. The age distribution in Bellaire as of Census 2010 indicated a significantly older population (median age of 41.6 years) than the rest of Texas (33.6 years). Most evident from **Figure 1.5, Age and Gender Distribution**, are the relatively low percentages of individuals in the young adult years from ages 20 to 34 as well as those in the age 65-84 cohorts. On the other hand, the proportion of Bellaire’s population in their prime earning years, including age cohorts between 40 and 64 years, exceeded national rates as of Census 2010. Similarly, the percentage of children in age cohorts 14 years and younger is also greater in Bellaire compared to national rates. With Bellaire’s ongoing residential redevelopment activity, ready access to professional employment, and quality of local schools, the community particularly draws families with young children. Shifting age patterns in Bellaire can raise certain concerns such as older residents possibly having to leave Bellaire due to a lack of appropriate and affordable housing options to suit their needs.

It will be interesting—and essential—to monitor, in coming years, whether individuals within the current middle-age population cohorts choose to remain in Bellaire into retirement versus relocating elsewhere. If they do stay, then this continued “graying” of the population, as is occurring nationwide, will require even greater attention to the housing, transportation, recreation, and health care needs of older residents.

**FIGURE 1.5, Age and Gender Distribution**



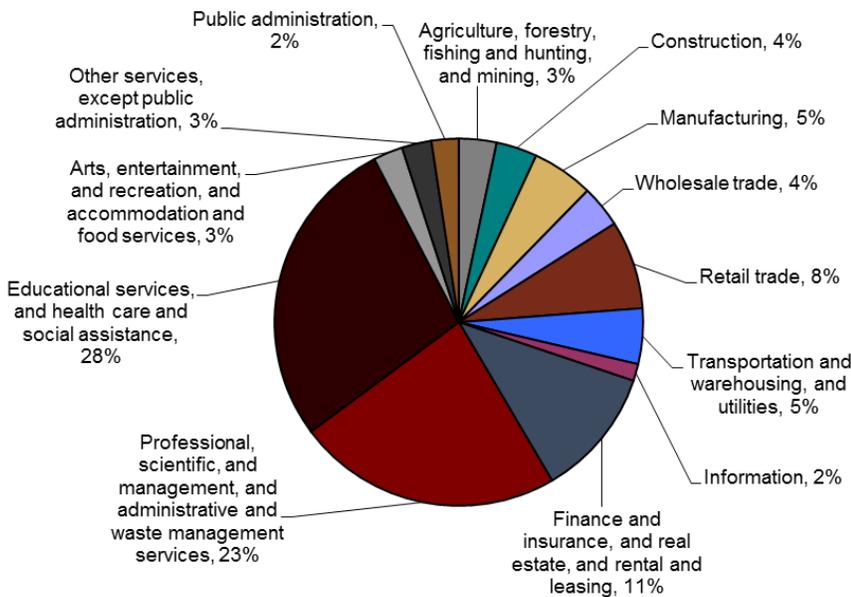
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2010)



*Employment Profile*

The distribution displayed in **Figure 1.6, Employment of Bellaire Residents by Industry Type**, confirms that educational, health, and social services (28 percent); professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management services (23 percent); and finance and insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing services (11 percent) offered the most significant employment opportunities to local residents among all industry types based on U.S. Census Bureau estimates through 2012. Of the 13 industry sectors, these three constituted 62 percent of the total employment of the local population.

**FIGURE 1.6, Employment of Bellaire Residents by Industry Type**



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2012)

Other occupational data from the Census Bureau show that 72 percent of these positions were management, business, science and arts occupations while another 19 percent were sales and office. Taken together, these occupation types accounted for just over 90 percent of the workforce.

Most of Bellaire’s employment needs are met outside of the City, specifically in Houston. This has fueled ongoing discussion of the respective need for—and appropriate type and extent of—business development within Bellaire. This is partly a land use and community character issue.

But, it also involves tax base considerations since City property taxes are a factor in the affordability of residential living in Bellaire as the City works to maintain and upgrade infrastructure and also offer its citizens a range of amenities.

*Shorter Commutes, but Automobile Dependence like much of the Region*

When comparing the mean travel time to work of Bellaire residents with those in the comparison cities, based on U.S. Census Bureau estimates through 2012, the common denominator is that all are enclave cities in which most residents commute elsewhere in a larger metropolitan area for work. With 86 percent of its employed residents commuting outside the city, Bellaire has the highest mean travel time to work (18.6 minutes)—although



this was down from 21.7 minutes in Census 2000, and only 5.5 percent of residents in 2012 reported commuting 35+ minutes. Adjacent West University Place has a mean travel time of 17.7 minutes. University Park residents in the Dallas area take an average of 17.1 minutes to reach their commuting destinations, and 18.2 minutes is the Highland Park average. Alamo Heights residents average 18.1 minutes within the San Antonio region. Likely given its central location and proximity to multiple major employment centers, Bellaire still has a shorter mean commute time compared to all of Harris County (27.4 minutes) and Texas (24.9 minutes), as well as the United States average (25.4 minutes).

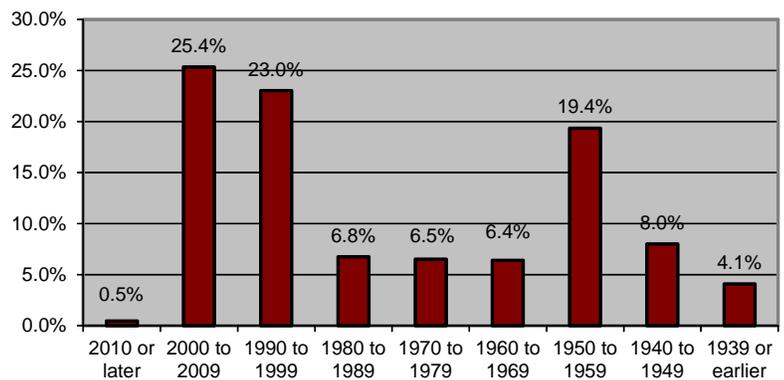
Related journey-to-work data show that the vast majority of Bellaire’s working population (84.7 percent) traveled alone to work by automobile, while 7.9 percent carpooled. Not surprisingly, given the limited options, only 0.4 percent of Bellaire residents used public transportation (which excludes taxicabs). Another 5.1 percent of residents said they worked from home, while 0.9 percent reported that they walked to work. A METRO bus transit center is expected to be built in coming years adjacent to Bellaire on the north side along Westpark, which will provide another transportation link to Houston.

***Housing Stock in Continuing Flux***

**Figure 1.7, Age of Housing Structures in Bellaire**, illustrates how housing construction increased greatly in the 1990s and 2000s as compared to previous decades. This construction was primarily replacing older housing stock more than expanding the overall supply, as has continued to date. Bellaire has limited space available for additional new housing development, but the amount of housing that has been replaced over the last several decades is substantial. The data in Figure 1.7, which is based on Census Bureau estimates through 2012, suggests that Bellaire has likely already passed the point since 2012 where more than 50 percent of its housing was built since 1990 or later (was estimated at 48.9 percent in 2012).

Most homes in Bellaire are built on lots of one-third of an acre or less. Although some lots have been combined to accommodate much larger residential structures, building larger homes on the same established lots tends to reduce open space in the community. This, in turn, can change the character of neighborhood streets and blocks. More recent residential construction has also had to respond to flooding risk in the area through foundation design and elevation. New housing must also

**FIGURE 1.7, Age of Housing Structures in Bellaire**



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2012)



**Community Engagement**

The following outreach activities were completed to make residents aware of the 2009 comprehensive planning process and gain their input regarding opportunities and challenges facing Bellaire in the years ahead:

- 5 informal “living room” issue discussions hosted by CPAC members and members of the City’s Planning & Zoning Commission from December 2008 through February 2009, in which 49 residents participated.
- A Community Forum held at City Hall on January 29, 2009, and attended by approximately 60 residents, including various City officials.
- 9 workshop meetings with a City-appointed Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, which met from August 2008 through April 2009, and was comprised of a mix of 16 residents, including three Planning & Zoning Commissioners.
- Periodic updates and posting of plan-related documents, presentations, and other materials on a special Comprehensive Plan page on the City’s website.
- Associated media coverage of the planning process, particularly through the *Bellaire Examiner* and the *Houston Chronicle’s* “This Week” special section.

accommodate the floodplain in Bellaire and the possibility of potential flooding.

According to Census Bureau estimates through 2012, 95.5 percent of Bellaire’s housing stock was single-family while only 4.5 percent was multi-family, including duplexes and apartments. This single-family proportion exceeding 90 percent is much higher than state (70.2 percent) and U.S. (69.1 percent) averages. Harris County’s overall housing stock consists of 64.6 percent single-family and 35.4 percent multi-family, which reflects the extent of urbanized area within the county. As of 2012, the Census Bureau estimated that 89.3 percent of dwelling units in Bellaire were owner occupied and 10.7 percent were renter occupied. It will be important to continue evaluating the proper quantity, quality, and variety of housing needed at appropriate price points for the existing and future demographics of Bellaire.

Another interesting data item from the Census Bureau involves the infusion of new residents into the local population, which is determined by asking where people lived one year earlier. In Bellaire’s case, the Bureau estimated that 89 percent of residents in 2012 had lived in the same house one year earlier. Of the nearly 11 percent who had lived elsewhere, eight percent were still in Harris County, 1.7 percent were elsewhere in Texas, and one percent lived in another state, while another 0.5 percent were living abroad one year earlier.

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## PLAN DEVELOPMENT

To facilitate the process of updating this Comprehensive Plan in 2009, the City engaged Kendig Keast Collaborative, community planning consultants, and appointed a Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee to work with City officials, staff, residents, and the consultants. Over the course of a one-year period, public outreach and involvement activities were conducted, background studies were completed, and individual elements of the plan were drafted, reviewed, and refined to produce a document for public and official consideration. The plan contains and is organized in the following manner:

### *Chapter 1, Introduction*

This chapter explains the purpose of long range and strategic community planning and the value that will accrue from undertaking this comprehensive planning process in Bellaire. The chapter also focuses on compiling and summarizing meaningful information on key community indicators, trends/shifts and context, and similar data compilations already available through other area entities and websites. The chapter also documents the public participation activities that served as the foundation of the planning process.



## ***Chapter 2, Land Use and Community Character***

This chapter provides an assessment of the community's long-range development outlook and establishes the necessary policy guidance that will be used in making decisions about the compatibility and appropriateness of individual developments—and proposed redevelopment and infill projects—within the context of the larger community. The land use and community design plans will serve as the City's policy for directing ongoing development and preserving valued areas and lands. The chapter also emphasizes protecting the integrity of neighborhoods while also safeguarding and enhancing community image and aesthetics. All of these strategies are intended to achieve and maintain an envisioned community character for the City of Bellaire.

## ***Chapter 3, Mobility***

This chapter addresses community-wide mobility needs on all levels, from sidewalks and trails to local streets and neighborhood access, to arterial roadways and highways, and to public transit. The purpose is to ensure orderly development and improvement of the transportation system, considering not only facilities for automobiles but other modes of circulation as well. The Land Use & Community Character chapter and the Commercial Area Development & Enhancement chapter are closely coordinated with this chapter to ensure that the implications of transportation investment options are taken into account when pursuing future development and community character objectives.

## ***Chapter 4, Public Infrastructure and Services***

This chapter incorporates and summarizes the key findings, policy recommendations, and strategic priorities contained in Bellaire's existing utility plans/studies and capital improvement documents, particularly with regard to water, wastewater, and storm drainage systems in support of the Land Use & Community Character and Commercial Area Development & Enhancement chapters. Existing community facilities and associated public services were reviewed to determine how well they serve residents and others, both today and in coming years. Considerations include proximity to population and neighborhoods/districts to be served, convenience, accessibility, general condition, maintenance issues, design quality, and compatibility with nearby development, especially in neighborhood settings. Assets such as public libraries, community centers, and performing arts and cultural venues, among others, are all essential to local quality of life and economic vitality.

## ***Chapter 5, Commercial Area Development and Enhancement***

This chapter provides the near- and longer-term outlook for commercial development and redevelopment activity in the community, both in terms of local community-serving needs, as well as in the context of broader



Houston-area development trends. One important purpose is to clarify the community's commercial redevelopment needs and priorities. The balance of the chapter focuses on the City's role in encouraging and guiding desired development types and forms in terms of preferred location, scale and design, and supporting public infrastructure and services. Quality development outcomes are also emphasized, including consideration of aesthetic treatments on both private development sites and within the public realm that can improve image and appearance along the community's major corridors.

### *Chapter 6, Implementation*

This final chapter utilizes the recommendations of the individual plan elements, as well as the current City Council Goals & Objectives and other strategic plans and policies, to consolidate an overall strategy for implementing the comprehensive plan, particularly for the highest-priority initiatives that will be first on the community's action agenda. Specific tasks are cited which must be accomplished to achieve the community's vision and goals. Identification of expected action timeframes, assignment of responsibilities, and establishment of a monitoring and reporting function are all essential to provide a means of accountability for plan implementation.

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional indicator data and background information on Bellaire is available from the following online resources:

- ◆ City of Bellaire (and Bellaire Library):  
<http://www.ci.bellaire.tx.us/>
- ◆ The Handbook of Texas Online:  
<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online>
- ◆ Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC):  
<http://www.h-gac.com/>
- ◆ Texas State Data Center:  
<http://txsdc.utsa.edu/>
- ◆ Texas Workforce Commission, Labor Market Information:  
<http://www.tracer2.com/>
- ◆ U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder:  
<http://factfinder.census.gov/>



# LAND USE & COMMUNITY CHARACTER

## *Why this Comprehensive Plan chapter is Important for Bellaire:*

- ✓ *Communicates the desired character for the community and its neighborhoods, today and in the years ahead.*
- ✓ *Offers predictability to property owners and investors regarding the community's preferred development pattern and character.*
- ✓ *Clarifies ways the City can promote residents' quality of life, such as by providing attractive parks and trails and promoting greater housing variety.*
- ✓ *Establishes priorities for City programs and capital investments to support the desired development pattern and quality.*
- ✓ *Provides the public policy basis for the City's development regulations.*

## CHAPTER 2

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the necessary policy guidance to enable the City of Bellaire to plan effectively for future land development and redevelopment. Sound planning is essential to ensure that the community is prepared for anticipated land use transitions and new development, can serve it adequately with public services, and can manage its impacts to maintain compatibility of land uses and preserve community character.

### KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The following facts, assumptions, and considerations provide the context for the goals and action strategies presented in this chapter:

**City of Homes.** Bellaire is primarily a community of single-family detached residences.

**Non-Residential Compatibility.** Retail, service, office, institutional, and employment land uses are welcome in certain areas of Bellaire, but non-residential compatibility is a fundamental community priority.



**Built Out.** Bellaire is nearly built out, with only a few properties currently vacant and available for new development. This means the future focus will be almost entirely on redevelopment of land and existing structures and improvements.

**Residential Turnover.** Based on building permit statistics through late 2008, approximately 47 percent of Bellaire’s single-family detached housing stock had been rebuilt at that point since work had begun on the City’s last long-range plan in 1993. Since the initial “teardown” wave of the mid 1980s, the percentage was already above 60 percent through 2008.

**Land Use Outlook.** Much of the existing land use within Bellaire, especially within long-established single-family residential neighborhoods, will likely stay just as it is over the next several decades, with some transition and upgrading of uses via redevelopment activity. The most notable changes and transitions are expected where the City has adjusted its zoning strategy in recent years based on the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, including: (1) within the new Urban Village (UV) zoning districts for the core City Center area and the former Research, Development and Distribution (RDD) zoning district at the City’s northern boundary near Westpark; and (2) within the new Corridor Mixed Use (CMU) zoning district along the Bissonnet corridor and in the balance of the City Center area. In all of these cases, the new zoning provides more flexibility for desired mixed-use outcomes by means other than Planned Development (PD) applications while still retaining the PD option for applicants. Depending on the pace and extent of change, the overall land use allocation, as well as mix and compatibility issues, will remain relatively similar to what they have been across most of the community, enabling a focus on those areas most likely to undergo redevelopment and reinvestment as discussed within this plan.

**Residential Demand.** As discussed in Chapter 1, Introduction, it was anticipated in 2009 that no significant population growth would need to be accommodated within the community in coming years. This was based on recent trends at that time which did not involve any extensive areas of relatively dense single-family or multi-family residential development. However, given the rezoning initiatives completed since 2009, as described above under Land Use Outlook, the greatest likelihood for increased residential population will be in mixed-use areas depending on the dwelling types and sizes involved. For example, a multi-family component within a mixed-use project could introduce greater residential density, although many of the units could be studio and one-bedroom to cater to single young professionals and given a nationwide demographic shift toward smaller household sizes. On the other hand, the average household size in Bellaire rose from 2000 to 2010. To the extent that Bellaire attracts and retains more families with children in its single-family housing stock, this is another avenue to some increase in residential population. If more homes currently occupied by Bellaire’s most senior and “empty nester” residents gradually turn over to larger family households, this will also reinforce a trend toward



more people living within roughly the same number of single-family dwellings.

**Cost of Land.** The level of property valuations in Bellaire, given its central location within the Houston metropolitan area and the local development environment, makes it difficult to maintain an older generation of homes, especially given associated tax appraisals and the resulting property tax burden. This also encourages property owners to maximize the value gained from their property via the scale and quality of home construction.

**Residential Distinction.** The quality of the physical setting in many Bellaire neighborhoods is a key factor in residents' own quality of life. It is the community's attractive neighborhoods and parks which make Bellaire distinct.

**Traditional Neighborhood Design.** Many communities across the nation are trying to restore or re-create characteristics of "traditional" neighborhoods. As a planned community that has maintained its residential character over time, Bellaire continues to offer "the real thing."

**External Development Impacts.** Bellaire is an "enclave" community mostly surrounded by Houston—an unzoned city. The zoned community of West University Place abuts Bellaire along a portion of the east City limits. However, the Union Pacific railroad corridor provides some separation between the adjacent cities.

**Role of Zoning.** Development types and intensities seen just outside the Bellaire City limits, in places, indicate the area's market potential based on location, land costs, area population, and related factors. It also illustrates the benefits of zoning to the extent that Bellaire prefers to limit the type and intensity of development in particular locations to protect residential neighborhoods and control traffic and related development impacts.

**Opportunities with Redevelopment.** An active redevelopment environment means that Bellaire has the opportunity to address land use compatibility and quality and appearance issues from past development by applying newer standards as properties redevelop.

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Community character relates to the use of land, but, more importantly, translates to the design characteristics that influence the "look and feel" of development. Instead of simply identifying the land use, such as commercial, a determination of an area's character more distinctly defines the intensity of development and the design features that contribute to its specific nature and appeal. For instance, a traditional downtown with a grid street pattern, streets with sidewalks and street furniture, smaller-sized lots, and mature trees is distinctly different in character—even though both are commercial in use—from a contemporary highway commercial strip that features curvilinear streets with curb and gutter, large parking areas, towering signage aimed at passing automobiles, and smaller, newly planted trees.



It is this combination of basic land use and the physical characteristics of such use that more accurately determine the real compatibility and quality of development, as opposed to just land use alone. Aesthetic enhancements such as the design of buildings, landscaping and screening, sign control, and site amenities also contribute to enhanced community character.

The community character approach can be applied to the typical range of land use types. Examples include:

- a single-family home situated on a relatively large lot, with many mature trees and substantial separation from neighboring homes, versus a single-family bungalow on a small, narrow lot with rear-alley access and minimal yard space or vegetation;
- storefront shops and small cafes in a walkable, neighborhood commercial setting versus “big box” stores and associated pad-site restaurants and retailers in a large-scale shopping center with extensive surface parking and minimal landscaping;
- a master-planned business park in a campus-like setting versus an office building on a site dominated by surface parking; or
- a public library or community center that is designed to be compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood versus a municipal public works maintenance and storage site that is as intensive as most private industrial sites in a community.

Therefore, examined in this chapter is the basic use of land in Bellaire, along with the character of neighborhoods and commercial areas and corridors. This includes such factors as density (generally determined by lot and building size), building setbacks, building height, lot coverage, levels of open space, and the amount of vegetation or volume of landscaping. This approach allows the formulation of standards to achieve the desired character in both newly-developing areas and redevelopment and infill areas. Character districts better portray the intended outcomes of development, which offers assurance to neighboring property owners and allows quantification of the associated development impacts (population density, traffic generation, water and wastewater demands, etc.).

## EXISTING LAND USE AND CHARACTER

Displayed in **Map 2.1, Existing Land Use & Character**, are the results of field inventory work conducted in mid-2008 to document the land uses of all properties in Bellaire at that time, as well as the associated development character of the community’s neighborhoods, commercial areas, and main roadway corridors. In addition, the map also shows the existing use and character of the first ring of properties just outside the City limits in Houston and West University Place.



## FUTURE LAND USE AND CHARACTER

The following land use/character designations, which correspond with the categories depicted on **Map 2.2, Future Land Use & Character**, are for the purpose of establishing the pattern and intended character of future development and redevelopment. The associated acreages in each category are compiled in **Table 2.1, Future Land Use Allocation**. The descriptions express the general intent and rationale for the land use designations. Specific dimensional requirements and development and design standards associated with each land use designation are articulated through the City's implementing regulations (primarily the subdivision regulations and zoning ordinance) as they currently exist and may be amended based on this plan. Potential development code amendments should also involve further community dialogue to ensure consensus on the most appropriate and practical strategies for achieving the City's vision and objectives for its development outcomes and desired community character.

Existing places of worship and schools nearly all have a residential designation on the Future Land Use & Character map, reflecting their context and consistent with the City's zoning regulations. However, other government facilities are specifically identified on the Future Land Use & Character map since they are special uses, with unique attributes and impacts, within a community. From a character standpoint, all of these government and/or public assembly uses should be designed to match and complement the character of the areas in which they are situated, whether Urban, Suburban, or more auto-oriented. Appropriate buffering and screening measures should also be employed to ensure compatibility with adjacent and nearby uses of differing types and intensities, particularly residential uses.

**TABLE 2.1, Future Land Use Allocation**

Future Land Use & Character		
Designation	Acres	% of Total
Suburban Residential	301	17.5%
General Residential	988	57.7%
Small-Lot Residential	141	8.2%
Residential-Office Mix	3	0.2%
Corridor Mixed Use	78	4.5%
Urban Village	40	2.3%
Suburban Office	41	2.4%
Business Park	33	1.9%
Government	15	0.9%
Redevelopment Area	3	0.2%
Parks	46	2.7%
Transmission Lines	26	1.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,715</b>	<b>100%</b>

NOTE: All acreages are approximate.





Suburban Residential character

### Suburban Residential

This designation is intended to accommodate single-family detached homes and, through the City’s zoning policy, has typically resulted in approximately one-third acre lots or generally three units per acre. In comparison to General Residential areas, a Suburban character is provided by generally deeper and somewhat wider lots that allow for larger front yards and building setbacks and greater side separation between homes. As a result, driveways are often on the side of homes rather than occupying a portion of the front yard space, and garages are typically situated to the side or rear of the main dwelling. Suburban areas are notable for their balance between green/open space and buildings and other site improvements, with less noticeable accommodation of automobiles (driveways,

garages, on street parking, etc.) than in more dense residential areas. Examples of this character type are found in far southwest Bellaire (Braeburn, Pine, Valerie, Holly, and Maple streets west of South Rice Avenue) and between Mulberry and Newcastle north of Bellaire Boulevard.

The designation also encompasses a few locations in Bellaire where even larger lot sizes were platted, including a series of lots along Maple just west of Loop 610, along the east side of Mulberry north of Bellaire Boulevard (within the Mulberry Residential Estate zoning district), as well as within the Bellaire Boulevard Estate overlay zoning district. The sense of openness is even greater in these locations due to the estate-size lots (generally one acre or more), which are generally wider and especially deeper in Bellaire, have relatively low lot coverage by buildings and paved areas, and have relatively greater separation between homes.



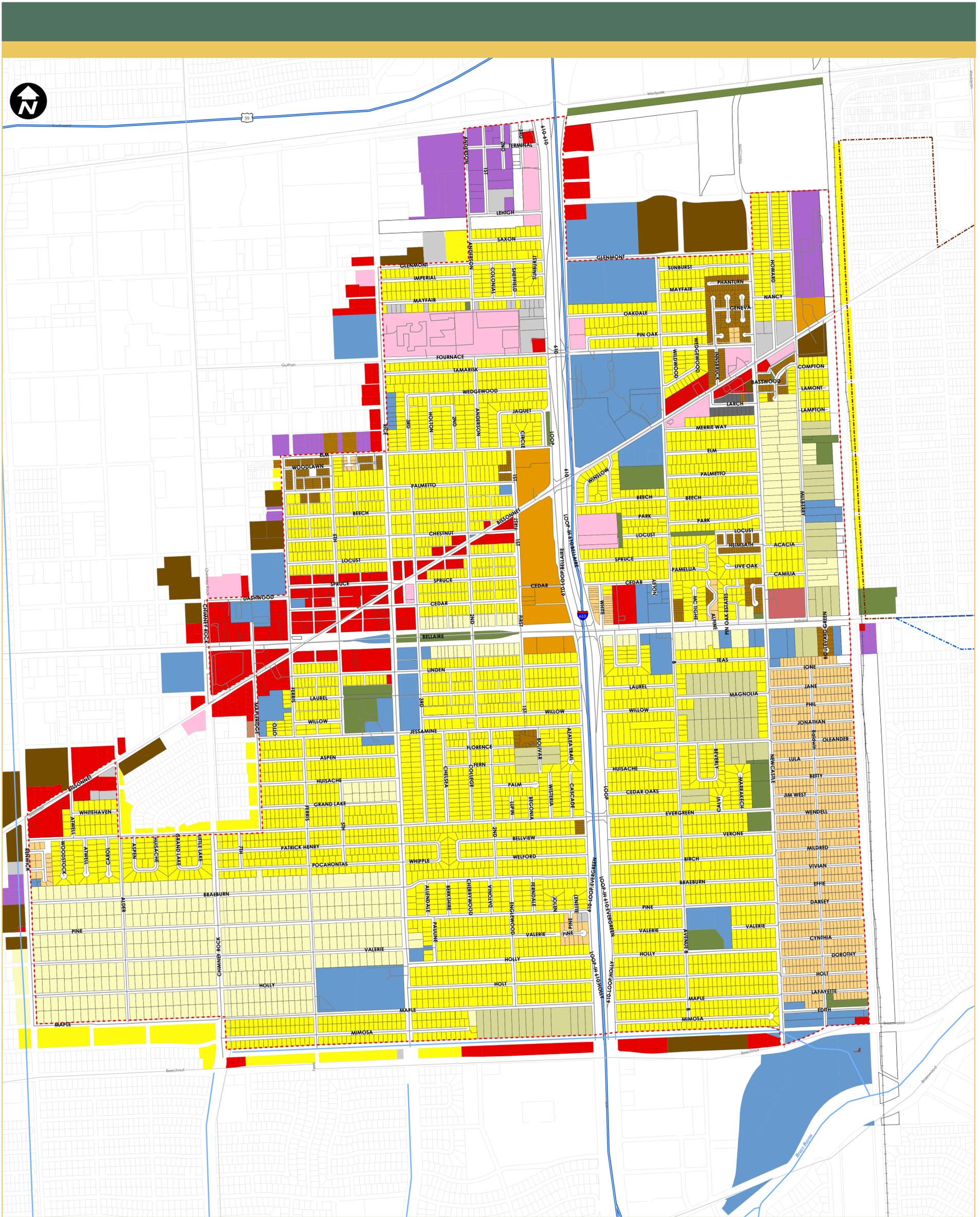
General Residential character

### General Residential

This designation covers many of the core single-family residential neighborhoods within the “City of Homes.” The prevailing lot size (allowing approximately five units per acre) allows for less openness and separation between homes than in Suburban and Estate residential areas. However, the extensive urban tree canopy in Bellaire and complementary landscaping on most homesites places these local neighborhood streets more toward the Suburban range of the character scale relative to more auto-oriented and less green housing areas. But the

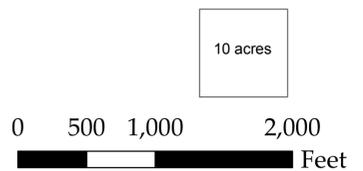
incremental increase in housing density, and the corresponding increase in lot coverage since lot size typically diminishes more than home size, distinguishes these areas from a fully Suburban “look and feel.” Examples of this residential character type are found in all quadrants of Bellaire, including nearly all properties between South Rice Avenue on the west and Newcastle on the east to the south of Bellaire Boulevard.





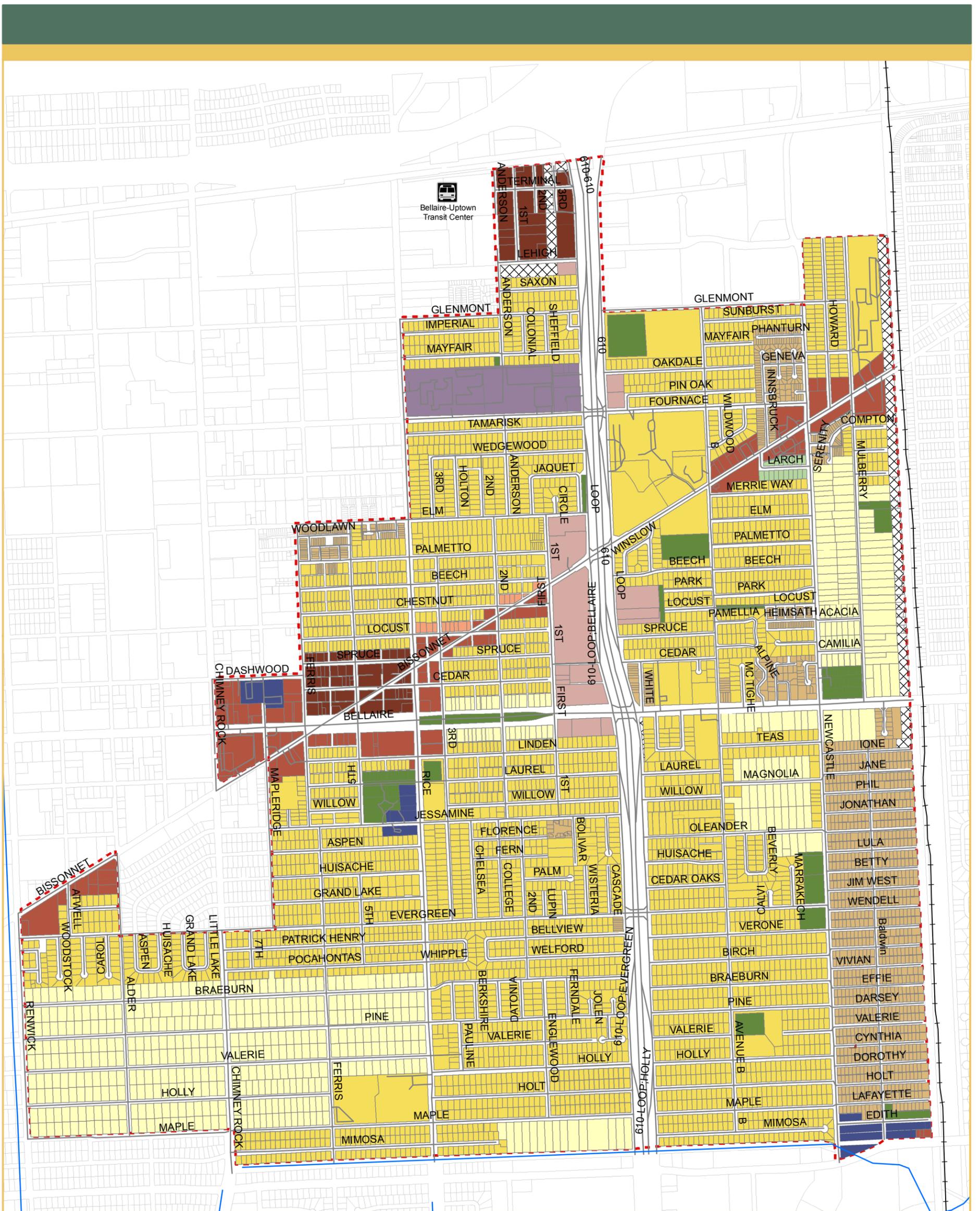
**MAP 2.1: EXISTING LAND USE AND CHARACTER (WITH CITY OF HOUSTON BUFFER) ADOPTED NOVEMBER 16, 2009**

- |                                   |                      |             |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Estate Single Family              | Suburban Office      | City Limits |
| Suburban Single Family            | Suburban Commercial  | Bayous      |
| Single Family                     | Industrial           | Railroad    |
| Auto-Urban Single Family          | Public/Institutional |             |
| Auto-Urban Single Family Attached | Parks & Recreation   |             |
| Auto-Urban Multi-Family           | Vacant               |             |
| Urban Single Family Attached      | Unclassified         |             |
| Auto-Urban Commercial             | Utility/Right-of-Way |             |
| Auto-Urban Office                 |                      |             |



Note: Based on aerial photography review and field inventory work completed by Kendig Keast Collaborative personnel during Summer 2008.





MAP 2.2: FUTURE LAND USE & CHARACTER

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

1 in = 1,250 ft



- Suburban Residential
- General Residential
- Small Lot Residential
- Residential-Office Mix
- Corridor Mixed Use
- Urban Village
- Suburban Office
- Business Park
- Government
- Redevelopment Area
- Parks
- Transmission Lines

- Water
- + Railroad
- Streets
- Parcels
- City Limits



## Small-Lot Residential

This designation provides for the smallest lot sizes on which single-family detached dwellings are typically permitted by right through the City's zoning regulations (i.e., without requiring a Planned Development review and approval process). A minimum lot of 5,000 square feet yields a gross density of roughly eight units per acre. This category also accommodates single-family attached housing types, such as townhomes and duplexes, as well as patio homes which may have some or no separation between units. All of these types are subject to specific development and design standards to ensure compatibility with the still predominant single-family detached housing pattern. The reduced width and depth of lots usually results in greater lot coverage than in General Residential areas. A corresponding design impact, especially to accommodate larger contemporary floor plans on such lots, is for the garage space to be internalized within the main structure and for front-loading garage doors to become part of the front façade of the home, with a driveway of equivalent width occupying that portion of the front yard area (also solidifying the two-story home trend to increase overall floor area). Along with the associated reduction in trees and overall landscape surface that typically results, this is a key contributor to such areas having reduced green space relative to the grey streets and driveways that must accommodate automobiles in a more dense residential setting. As in the General Residential category, Bellaire is fortunate that its mature tree canopy is evident even in many Small-Lot Residential areas, which helps to offset the more Urban-style development intensity. In fact, at such small lots sizes, an Urban character would be achieved if rear alleys were a part of neighborhood design, allowing dwellings to be placed closer to the public street.

The potential to pursue more creative and non-standard site designs in appropriate Small-Lot Residential areas (whether through Planned Development procedures or a "limited use" approach that allows for more in-depth site plan review) makes this category a prime focus for the community's life-cycle housing objectives in this plan. A certain minimum lot size could serve as the baseline for conventional single-family detached dwellings in Small-Lot Residential areas. Then, proposed lot sizes smaller than this baseline would require corresponding increases in open space on a Planned Development site to maintain area character and avoid crossing over into an Urban residential character. Bufferyard requirements would provide



Single-family detached example in far southeast Bellaire (between Newcastle and the railroad corridor along the eastern City limits)



Another single-family detached example, but with narrower lots and less side separation, along White Street near West Loop 610 and Bellaire Boulevard



An example of attached units, with periodic separation between buildings, in the Pin Oak Square townhome development in northeast Bellaire near Fournace and Innsbruck



separation and screening from other less intensive uses within the district, and, together with design standards, would ensure compatibility. At some point, clustered residential design involving patio homes or townhomes could be necessary for the required open space standard to be met on a site. A minimum site area could also be required as a condition for such clustering to ensure appropriate separation between housing clusters and adjacent uses. Floor area ratios (FARs) can also be used to ensure residential structures of a consistent scale and neighborhood character.

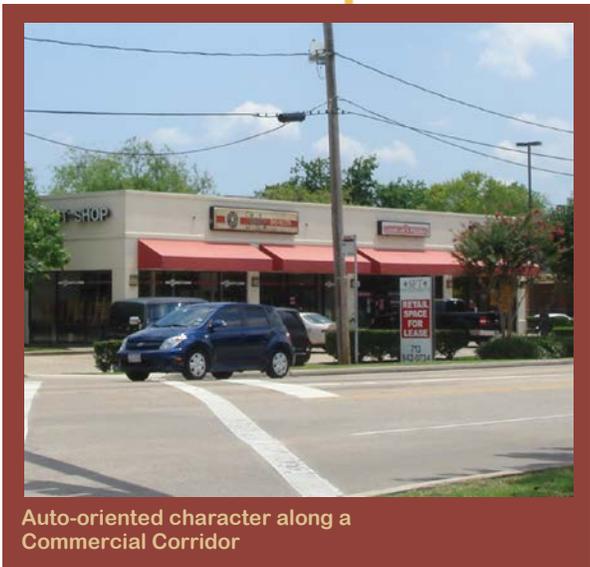
**Residential-Office Mix**

This designation is included primarily in support of the unique and very targeted Residential-Office Mixed-Use (R-M.2-O) district in the City’s zoning regulations. The zoning district encompasses only about 15 relatively small properties to the north of Bissonnet in the area between West Loop 610 and City Center. The R-M.2-O purpose statement in the zoning regulations describes it as “a medium density mixed residential and small-scale commercial area that serves as a buffer zone between retail/office and residential uses.” While the 2009 Comprehensive Plan contemplated that this zoning district would be folded into the new Corridor Mixed Use (CMU) district along Bissonnet, the R-M.2-O district was ultimately retained and kept separate to continue as a lesser-intensity buffer area between CMU and areas to the north designated for General Residential use on the Future Land Use & Character map.

**Corridor Mixed Use**

This designation is for properties in commercial retail, office and service uses along portions of Bellaire’s primary roadway corridors, including Bissonnet and South Rice Avenue. These areas are also appropriate for mixed-use development projects which can contribute to the City’s alternative housing objectives. Additionally, entirely residential developments with multi-unit housing types and styles (e.g., townhomes, condominiums, brownstones, lofts, and apartments) may still be considered through Planned Development applications within Corridor Mixed Use areas. Planned Development review would allow for more in-depth site plan evaluation to ensure compatibility with other nearby use types and intensities, and especially between varying housing styles and densities on corridor sites relative to single-family detached dwellings on properties just off the corridor. A Planned Development application also requires public notice and hearings as it is effectively a zone change request for the subject property.

It is recognized that such areas along busy corridors typically develop with an auto-oriented character. However, the application of a higher landscape surface ratio, better landscaping along frontages and around and within



Auto-oriented character along a Commercial Corridor



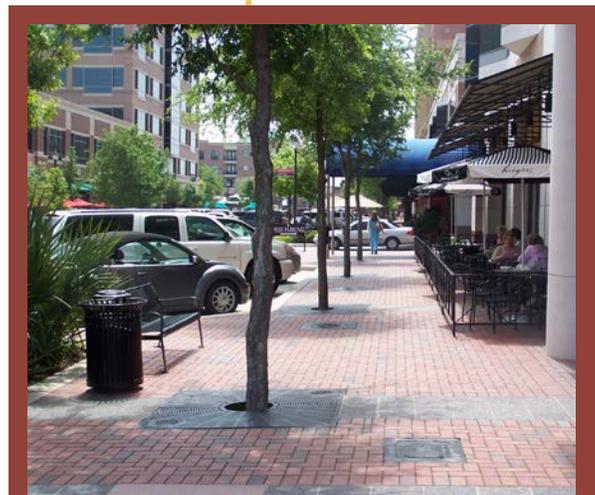
parking areas, sign regulations, access management standards, and other site and building design standards are intended to significantly enhance the appearance of these areas, especially as sites redevelop over time. A relatively low minimum area requirement provides for small business activity plus convenience-focused uses near residential areas, while larger-scale and more intensive uses will naturally require bigger sites to meet parking requirements and other development standards.

Where non-residential and mixed-use developments in Corridor Mixed Use areas are adjacent to residential neighborhoods, site and design standards involving building scale, placement and appearance should be triggered to ensure compatibility.

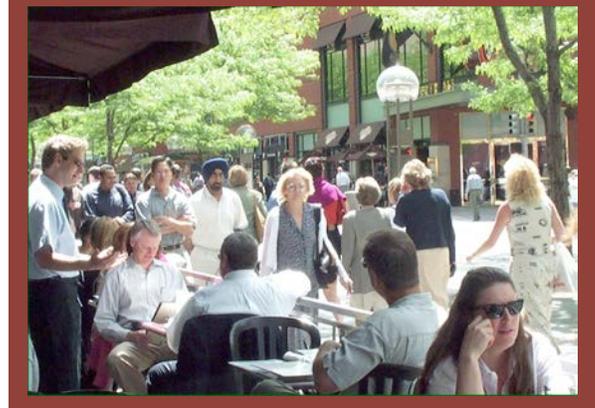
### Urban Village

This designation encompasses two areas intended for transformation over time—the City Center and the former “RDD” (Research, Development and Distribution) zoning district in north Bellaire near Westpark and West Loop 610. Both of these areas were the focus of City-initiated rezonings to new “Urban Village” (UV) districts based on this Future Land Use & Character designation recommended through the 2009 Comprehensive Plan. Urban Village provides for the most intensive site development within the community, although the City’s recent rezoning initiative ensures that the nature of redevelopment activity in City Center is somewhat less intense (in scale, height, etc.) to maintain more of a “small town” downtown feel for Bellaire residents. In addition to structures devoted entirely to office, commercial, or service uses, buildings are allowed—and encouraged—to include a mix of ground-floor retail or service uses with upper-floor residential use. Purely residential developments with housing types of an Urban character (e.g., townhomes, brownstones, etc.) were ultimately allowed only in the new Urban Village-Downtown (UV-D) zoning district and subject to certain conditions (e.g., minimum number of contiguous dwellings, located near the district boundary) to provide a transition to less intensive residential types just outside the Urban Village area.

A minimum, as well as a typical maximum building height helps to create and maintain the area’s urban character. This is also accomplished by requiring that buildings be placed close to public streets (with zero setback), which adds to “architectural enclosure” of streets and contributes to a pedestrian sidewalk setting (along with appropriate building entry and window design standards for street-level building facades). Increased building height also allows for higher floor area ratios (FARs) to be achieved.



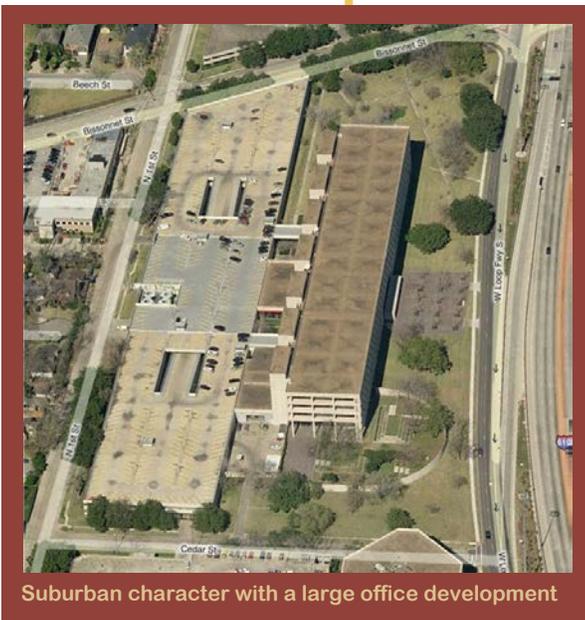
Urban character



Zoning standards can be included that effectively cause building heights and development intensity to “taper off” nearest the Urban Village interface with less intense districts.

Once an Urban development scale and character is achieved, all off-street parking requirements are typically eliminated in favor of on-street parking and/or structured parking (public or private). Structured parking is especially critical to Urban character since surface parking contributes to a more spread-out, auto-oriented atmosphere even when buildings are situated close to streets. Depending on market conditions, development bonuses (FAR and density) can sometimes be used to encourage structured parking. Finally, site and building design standards ensure that all new development and redevelopment maintains the area’s development quality and intended character.

It should be noted that the Urban Village designation in the City Center area is significantly smaller than the area previously within the “City Center” zoning districts (CCD-1 and CCD-2). This reflects the direction of this plan to focus on a core City Center revitalization area that has the greatest potential to transition to an Urban character over time as opposed to fringe “CCD” areas more oriented toward Bellaire Boulevard and Bissonnet that are likely to continue to have an auto-oriented character for the foreseeable future. For this reason, these areas are included in the Corridor Mixed Use designation rather than Urban Village.



### Suburban Office

This designation is similar to the Corridor Mixed Use category in that, while focused on larger office uses in this case, it aims to enhance development outcomes in areas that are primarily auto-oriented in nature. This is especially the case along the West Loop 610 frontage through Bellaire. A combination of higher landscape surface requirements, maximum lot coverage, sign regulations, and other site and building design standards—including criteria for building placement and orientation and the location of surface and/or structured parking on the site—is essential along such a high-profile corridor where Bellaire’s image is established every day with thousands of visitors and through commuters. The standards should also address buffering, screening and other measures to ensure compatibility with adjacent residential uses and neighborhoods.



## Business Park

This designation is for areas already developed as, or envisioned for office and research and technology-related uses in a campus-like environment. To create and maintain an attractive character, a minimum open space ratio of 30 percent is typically required, which still allows for a significant cumulative building footprint since most such developments involve large sites. The Chevron complex along Fournace in northwest Bellaire is included within this category based on the current use of this property. It is recognized that should this use ever leave its site, this type of property could transition to other long-term uses such as commercial activity along high-profile thoroughfare frontages and residential development on the balance of the site. While the Chevron site is under single ownership, the Business Park designation would also apply to properties with multiple buildings housing a variety of enterprises. Such areas are almost always governed by private covenants as well. Both the public and private standards are intended to create a highly attractive business environment that will encourage investors to build quality structures, which sets the tone to attract additional businesses. The exterior of the park should be heavily landscaped along with any major internal streets and intersections.



Business Park setting

## Redevelopment

This designation is shown only for the Larch Lane area, which this plan targets for concerted redevelopment efforts. An adjusted strategy for the Larch Lane Development District (LLDD) zone would encourage the area's transition to alternative housing uses (e.g., smaller minimum lot size for slight density increase, flexibility in parking standards, reduced setbacks where appropriate, height step-back approach to allow greater height where appropriate but maintain compatibility near adjacent single-family detached homes).



Redevelopment scenario on Larch Lane

Reinvestment in this or future designated Redevelopment areas may be initiated by individual landowners or, in some instances and under certain circumstances, may be assisted by the City or another public agency.



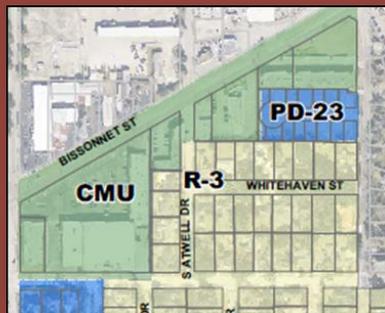
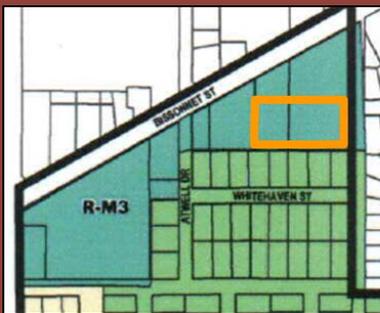
**Pathways to Additional Population in Bellaire**

Bellaire appears relatively built out today, suggesting limited potential for added population. However, the demographic summary in Chapter 1 of this Comprehensive Plan indicates that Bellaire could have some 1,500 additional residents and be approaching 19,000 total by 2040. Infill development on small remaining sites, and the potential for turnover and redevelopment of some larger non-residential properties for residential use, are the main avenues by which Bellaire might see some net gain in population.

Alder Circle, an infill development on the west side (under construction at the time of this Comprehensive Plan update in 2015), offers an example of a Planned Development approval, PD-23, that enabled new single-family dwellings at a higher density than nearby homes. The Alder Circle site was previously in the former R-M3 zoning district as shown in the lower left clip from the City's 2006 zoning map. The lower right clip from the 2015 zoning map illustrates how the approved PD site plan will yield 13 lots (plus some reserve area) relative to the eight lots along the north side of Whitehaven Street that must be at least 7,400 square feet in the R-3 zoning district.

Another scenario for illustration purposes, even if unlikely for this particular property, is the prospect of the CenterPoint site in northeast Bellaire at some point becoming available and transitioning to residential use. The graphic below shows that if the existing density of single-family residential development to the west of Mulberry Lane were duplicated east of Mulberry, then the CenterPoint property north of Nancy could accommodate just under 100 homes. At Bellaire's average persons per household rate of 2.78 persons, that would equate to 267 added residents.

Potential redevelopment of the nearby Pont Alba Apartments property on the south side of Bissonnet – the sole site in the city currently zoned for multi-family use (R-MF) – could also affect overall population depending on the housing types and densities involved (e.g., small-lot detached homes as at Alder Circle, attached townhomes, a more contemporary multi-family design, etc.). Limited multi-family use is also possible within several mixed-use zoning districts in Bellaire.



**GOALS AND ACTIONS**

The tables on the following pages present a set of goals and guiding principles for addressing the key issues identified in relation to land use and community character in Bellaire. Potential action strategies are then outlined to respond to particular opportunities and challenges associated with the overall goals. The action options are arranged in six categories that represent the main ways that comprehensive plans are implemented.



## GOAL 2.1:

### Protection of the residential atmosphere and desirability of Bellaire’s neighborhoods.

#### *Guiding Principles*

- A. *Maintain and enhance residential property values.*
- B. *Focus on the safety of residential streets.*
- C. *Maximize compatibility between older and newer (redeveloped) single-family detached homes, and with any nearby development of attached or higher-density housing types.*
- D. *Maintain the privacy of homes and rear yards.*
- E. *Ensure neighborhood security and crime prevention.*

#### **Consideration 1: Non-Residential Compatibility and Screening/Buffering**

<b>Policy</b>	n/a
<b>Regulation</b>	<p>✓ <b>[ACCOMPLISHED through standards for the new CMU, UV-D and UV-T zoning districts]</b>            Incorporate character-based zoning and development standards for non-residential and higher-density housing developments as this approach directly targets building and site design factors that determine compatibility (versus a primary focus on regulation of uses).</p>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Use City street and drainage improvements as an opportunity to install landscaping and screening that can address nearby compatibility concerns. Such projects are also a chance to clarify the extent of existing rights-of-way (where this is an issue) and the potential availability of some right-of-way area for these types of enhancements.</li> <li>▶ Recognize screening and buffering between differing land use types/intensities as a key contribution and design consideration for pocket and linear parks.</li> </ul>
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Use individual residential redevelopment projects near non-residential uses as an opportunity to encourage supplemental tree planting, landscaping, taller fences (up to 8 feet as permitted in City Code Section 24-512, Fence Regulations), and other buffering/screening measures near established non-residential uses.</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Pursue retroactive screening/buffering improvements in conjunction with private property owners in sensitive locations with long-standing compatibility issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Consider a flexible bufferyards approach for screening/buffering versus the current approach in City Code Section 24-513 of mandating installation of a wall or fence (this should apply between residential uses of differing intensities as well). In exploring this potential strategy, also recognize the land cost factor in Bellaire.</li> <li>▶ Consider requiring screening/buffering between non-residential and residential properties in all cases versus the current waiver in City Code Section 24-513.D if the non-residential structure is more than 50 feet away.</li> </ul>

#### **Consideration 2: Compatibility at City Limits**

<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Check the existing and potential land use on abutting properties just outside the City limits in Houston when evaluating zone change requests on fringe properties within Bellaire.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation</b>	n/a
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Monitor opportunities to include screening/buffering elements in capital improvement projects completed along the City limits.</li> </ul>
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	n/a

<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Coordinate, as appropriate, with the City of Houston District “C” Council Member regarding land use compatibility issues near the Bellaire City limits.</li> <li>▶ Communicate, as appropriate, with the City of Houston Planning Commission, and Planning &amp; Development Department staff, regarding development applications of concern along the City limits.</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Consider supplemental screening requirements for residential properties along the City limits that develop or redevelop at a time when they abut non-residential uses on properties in Houston.</li> </ul>
<b>Consideration 3: Loss of Tree Canopy with Redevelopment</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Commit the City to plant equivalent size trees in close proximity to the location of public improvement projects where tree removal cannot be practically avoided.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue careful enforcement of City Code Chapter 9, Article XI, Trees, particularly before and during residential redevelopment projects. Also focus on outreach and better awareness of the City’s requirements and standards.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	n/a
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Maintain a City staff position with appropriate certifications to oversee tree ordinance administration and assist homeowners and builders with compliance and tree planting and care. Also consider assigning this individual, or a contract Urban Forester, to conduct monitoring of mature trees along neighborhood streets and to provide information and recommendations to home owners regarding treatment of diseased trees and removal/replacement of dead trees.</li> <li>▶ Highlight unique and innovative design practices used to preserve mature trees on development sites.</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Partner with Trees for Bellaire and other civic improvement groups to plant trees in appropriate locations within neighborhood street rights-of-way community-wide, especially where mature trees have been lost to age, disease, or unavoidable construction impacts.</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explore potential enhancements to City Code Chapter 9, Article XI, Trees, based on model code provisions in similar communities.</li> <li>▶ Consider extending the Street Trees provisions in the existing code to residential as well as commercial properties—or at least to corner residential lots.</li> </ul>
<b>Consideration 4: Institutional Impacts</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	n/a
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Require greater setback of parking areas from residential property lines than the current two feet in City Code Section 24-154.C.3. Buffering/screening provisions should also apply where parking is situated near a property line with no other intervening site improvements or screening.</li> <li>▶ Use maximum lot coverage standards to limit the extent of parking areas on non-residential sites within or adjacent to residential neighborhoods.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	n/a
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue strict enforcement of parking regulations around Bellaire High School, in conjunction with HISD police, as well as crime prevention and incident response in the high school vicinity.</li> <li>▶ Take advantage of major construction and building expansion projects (e.g., school campus redevelopment) to explore potential relocation or reconfiguration of parking arrangements, as well as improved screening and buffering, to improve compatibility with nearby residences.</li> <li>▶ Develop a plan for managing or regulating the routine or frequent use of neighborhood streets for overflow parking from nearby non-residential uses.</li> </ul>

<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Coordinate with HISD and private schools, including early involvement in design considerations and plans for new or renovated buildings, play areas and athletic fields, parking and traffic circulation, and any other improvements that could have implications for nearby residential areas.</li> <li>▶ Maintain similar coordination with local churches, working to address any community concerns within the limitations of the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA).</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	n/a
<b>Consideration 5: Neighborhood Traffic</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	n/a
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Maintain tree preservation and landscaping requirements, which help to slow traffic through the visual/psychological effect of street enclosure.</li> <li>▶ Encourage use of on-street parking in appropriate areas as parked cars also help to slow traffic.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Install street design elements intended to slow traffic—other than speed humps (e.g., varied curb lines and chicane features, on-street parking bays, brick paver sections or other surface treatments, etc.).</li> <li>▶ Install traffic diverter improvements in additional locations to eliminate through traffic and particular turning movements at the end of targeted streets.</li> </ul>
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue routine police presence and traffic law enforcement on neighborhood streets.</li> <li>▶ Continue to place driver awareness signs at key locations.</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue coordination with HISD and its police department to maintain and closely enforce school zone restrictions.</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ As part of City-wide trail and sidewalk planning, identify key intersections and mid-block locations for installation of high-profile crosswalks and other bike/pedestrian safety amenities.</li> </ul>
<b>Consideration 6: Neighborhood Security</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue strong budget support for a well-staffed and responsive Police Department.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into the City’s development regulations.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Incorporate CPTED principles into capital project design and other public improvements.</li> </ul>
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue Neighborhood Watch efforts City-wide.</li> <li>▶ Monitor the latest technology applications for enhancing crime prevention and response capabilities.</li> <li>▶ Continue routine reporting of crime incidents and statistics to City Council and residents.</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue strong partnerships with police departments in Houston, West University Place, Southside Place, Harris County, and other area law enforcement agencies.</li> <li>▶ Continue to pursue grant funding opportunities that support enhanced staffing and facility/ equipment/technology upgrades.</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	n/a

**GOAL 2.2:**

**Greater housing choice in Bellaire to increase overall supply and accommodate “life cycle” needs for a more age-diverse community.**

***Guiding Principles***

- A. Respond to the need for smaller dwelling sizes and more affordable options for current and potential Bellaire residents at various “life cycle” stages (e.g., young adults who grew up in Bellaire, young professionals and families, empty nesters, seniors, etc.).
- B. Emphasize diversified home ownership opportunities in Bellaire.
- C. Ensure compatibility of smaller-lot homes or attached dwelling types with the predominant single-family detached housing form in Bellaire.
- D. Promote mixed-use development as one avenue to achieving life-cycle housing objectives in Bellaire.
- E. Focus on quality design and sustainability in any future apartment construction or redevelopment.
- F. Spur redevelopment in under-utilized areas of the community through promotion of alternative housing types.

**Consideration 1: Active Promotion**

<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Avoid re-zoning or non-residential use of properties currently zoned for residential use, especially where conducive for medium- and higher-density residential types.</li> <li>▶ Emphasize clarity versus vagueness in the City’s development regulations and standards to ensure that community expectations for the quality and compatibility of alternative housing forms are clearly communicated and spelled out.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ To protect the integrity of single-family detached neighborhoods, ensure adequate standards for building setbacks and placement, height limits (and step-back requirements for upper stories, where necessary), parking area placement and screening, landscaping, general screening/buffering, and architectural design where alternative housing forms may locate near existing single-family detached homes.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	n/a
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	n/a
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Identify and recruit development companies with a track record of building quality housing in small-lot, attached, and higher-density forms, as well as in mixed-use, downtown, and transit-oriented development settings.</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Consider financial, regulatory, and other types of incentives (e.g., land assembly/clearance) the City might employ to encourage life-cycle housing development and redevelopment.</li> </ul>

**Consideration 2: Mixed Use**

<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ [ACCOMPLISHED through standards for the new CMU, UV-D and UV-T zoning districts] Recognizing the scarcity and rising value of land in Bellaire, provide zoning to encourage mixed-use development that offers higher-density housing options, more efficient land use, and preservation of open space on sites.</li> <li>▶ In areas zoned for mixed use, encourage applicants not proposing a residential component to consider the viability and market appeal of a mixed residential-commercial product.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Rather than a change in zoning strategy in the RM-2 or RM-2-O zoning districts (since they are largely built out), encourage incorporation of remaining residual tracts into residential developments in adjacent districts, or explore opportunities to use such tracts for buffering purposes between different land use types or intensities.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>[ACCOMPLISHED, in large part, through standards for the new CMU, UV-D and UV-T zoning districts]</b> Provide more flexibility for Planned Developments within the R-M1 and R-M3 zoning districts by focusing on general criteria for such projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- allow private streets and drives (built to City standards);</li> <li>- permit lots to take access from private streets/drives;</li> <li>- reduce minimum size required for PD projects;</li> <li>- allow reduced lot sizes where appropriate;</li> <li>- allow flexibility with setbacks as appropriate;</li> <li>- step-back approach for increasing building height;</li> <li>- more flexible approach to accommodating parking;</li> <li>- raise site coverage limit, plus on-site detention;</li> <li>- open space tied to lot size;</li> <li>- sidewalk standards tied to project size/design.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Design street rehabilitation, sidewalk/crosswalk installation, park/plaza, and streetscape projects to complement a more urban, mixed-use, and walkable environment in locations planned and zoned for this development character.</li> <li>▶ Establish appropriate standards for private streets, if these are to be authorized, so they will meet City design criteria for public streets and be maintained appropriately over time.</li> </ul>
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide a density bonus to development and redevelopment projects that propose to include more than one housing type from a “housing palette” included in the City’s zoning regulations.</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	n/a
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	n/a
<b>Consideration 3: Key Redevelopment Areas (City Center and UV-T Area)</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>[ACCOMPLISHED through standards for the new UV-D zoning district]</b> Enable a wide variety of housing options in the City Center area as part of the overall revitalization strategy for this area.</li> <li>▶ Reserve the frontage along major streets in the City Center area (e.g., Bellaire, Bissonnet, South Rice) for permitted commercial and retail uses, including mixed retail and office potential (but not residential uses).</li> <li>▶ Contingent on improved east-west vehicular circulation through the area and anticipated construction of a METRO transit center along Westpark just outside of Bellaire, plan for the potential emergence of a transit-oriented development—or “TOD”—scenario in the UV-T zoning district (TOD areas often attract a mix of retail, office, civic, and medium- to high-density residential uses).</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>[ACCOMPLISHED, in large part, through standards for the new UV-D zoning district]</b> Amend the zoning regulations for the CCD-1 district to permit by right medium-density residential development (e.g., small-lot and attached forms such as townhouses) away from major streets and subject to appropriate design and development standards to ensure quality and compatibility.</li> <li>✓ <b>[ACCOMPLISHED, in large part, through standards for the new CMU and UV-D zoning districts]</b> Encourage more mixed-use Planned Developments (medium- or high-density residential combined with retail and/or office uses) within the CCD-2 district by reducing the minimum site area requirement, subject to appropriate design and development standards to ensure quality and compatibility (including the current six-story height limit).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ [ACCOMPLISHED, in large part, through standards for the new UV-T zoning district] Amend the zoning regulations for the RDD district to encourage a more urban and mixed-use development form, to permit by right a variety of alternative housing styles, and to restrict primarily auto-oriented uses.</li> <li>✓ [ACCOMPLISHED through standards for the new CMU, UV-D and UV-T zoning districts] Amend the zoning regulations to encourage and address more directly vertical mixed-use (residential use on upper floors above ground-level retail, office, or services) in both the CCD and RDD districts.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Design street rehabilitation, sidewalk/crosswalk installation, park/plaza, and streetscape projects to complement the desired development character for the City Center (small downtown) and UV-T areas, respectively.</li> </ul>
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	n/a
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	n/a
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explore whether Linden and Spruce are good candidate locations within the City Center area for potential encouragement of medium-density residential development. (With regard to Linden, this includes just one block between S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street and S. Rice Avenue.)</li> <li>✓ [ACCOMPLISHED through standards for the new CMU and UV-D zoning districts] Explore ways to simplify and provide greater flexibility in the Planned Development process within the CCD districts, particularly regarding mixed-use projects with a residential component, including the minimum site area, maximum building height, and maximum floor-area ratio (FAR) standards for such projects.</li> </ul>
<b>Consideration 4: Quality and Sustainability of any Future Apartment Development or Redevelopment</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	n/a
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ [ACCOMPLISHED through standards for the new CMU, UV-D and UV-T zoning districts] Adopt design standards for high-density residential development, which may include provisions for building form and scale, articulated building walls, building orientation, architectural detailing, roof types and materials, façade enhancements, and acceptable building materials.</li> <li>▶ Ensure that traffic impact analyses and parking studies are required and effectively utilized when assessing the compatibility of proposed new or redeveloping apartment projects.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	n/a
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	n/a
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	n/a
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	n/a
<b>Consideration 5: Residential Redevelopment</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Use zoning to encourage higher-density housing near major roadways, and as a buffer to single-family detached housing areas, while not adding to zoning complexity. This can be done within appropriate residential zoning districts by providing an incentive for increased housing density in transition areas near arterial streets. This allowance can be spelled out within the provisions of a particular district rather than needing to create new zoning districts or overlay districts in such areas to allow for the density variation.</li> </ul>

<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Adjust the zoning strategy for the Larch Lane (LLDD) district to encourage its revitalization for alternative housing uses (e.g., smaller minimum lot size for slight density increase, flexibility in parking standards, reduced setbacks where appropriate, height step-back approach to allow greater height where appropriate but maintain compatibility near adjacent single-family detached homes).</li> <li>▶ Establish an average, rather than minimum, lot size whereby lot sizes are allowed to vary in width and/or depth while maintaining the same overall development density. This approach can encourage a mix of housing styles within a single development.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Determine the appropriateness of alleys in the Larch Lane (LLDD) district, and whether the City should construct these to spur residential redevelopment activity.</li> </ul>
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	n/a
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	n/a
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explore a potential expansion of the Larch Lane (LLDD) zoning district to make this area more viable for alternative housing forms.</li> </ul>



# MOBILITY

## **Why this Comprehensive Plan chapter is Important for Bellaire:**

- ✓ *Communicates the importance of minimizing traffic congestion while also ensuring safe roadway conditions.*
- ✓ *Emphasizes the fundamental priority placed on neighborhood integrity in Bellaire, which is influenced by traffic conditions on residential streets and the safety of kids and adults when walking and biking in the community.*
- ✓ *Highlights the role of street design in establishing and reinforcing the desired character of an area, particularly in locations where walkability and an urban “feel” is desired more than accommodation of the automobile.*
- ✓ *Recognizes Bellaire’s position within the growing regional transit network and how the community will benefit from—and be impacted by—this reality.*
- ✓ *Provides the public policy basis for the City’s regulations and standards related to streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, parking, and other mobility-related infrastructure and physical improvements.*

## CHAPTER 3

The purpose of this chapter is to guide the ongoing development and ensure the orderly enhancement of Bellaire’s city-wide transportation system, within the context of the regional mobility network. Besides considering the circulation of automobiles within and through the community, this also involves the safety and viability of reaching destinations by bike and on foot, plus the outlook for regional transit services in and around Bellaire. This chapter is closely related to the Land Use & Community Character and Commercial Area Development & Enhancement chapters through recognition of how transportation investment decisions shape a community’s physical character and appearance and contribute to its future development and redevelopment potential. Ultimately, however, it is residents’ quality of life and safety that must factor into all mobility policies and strategies.



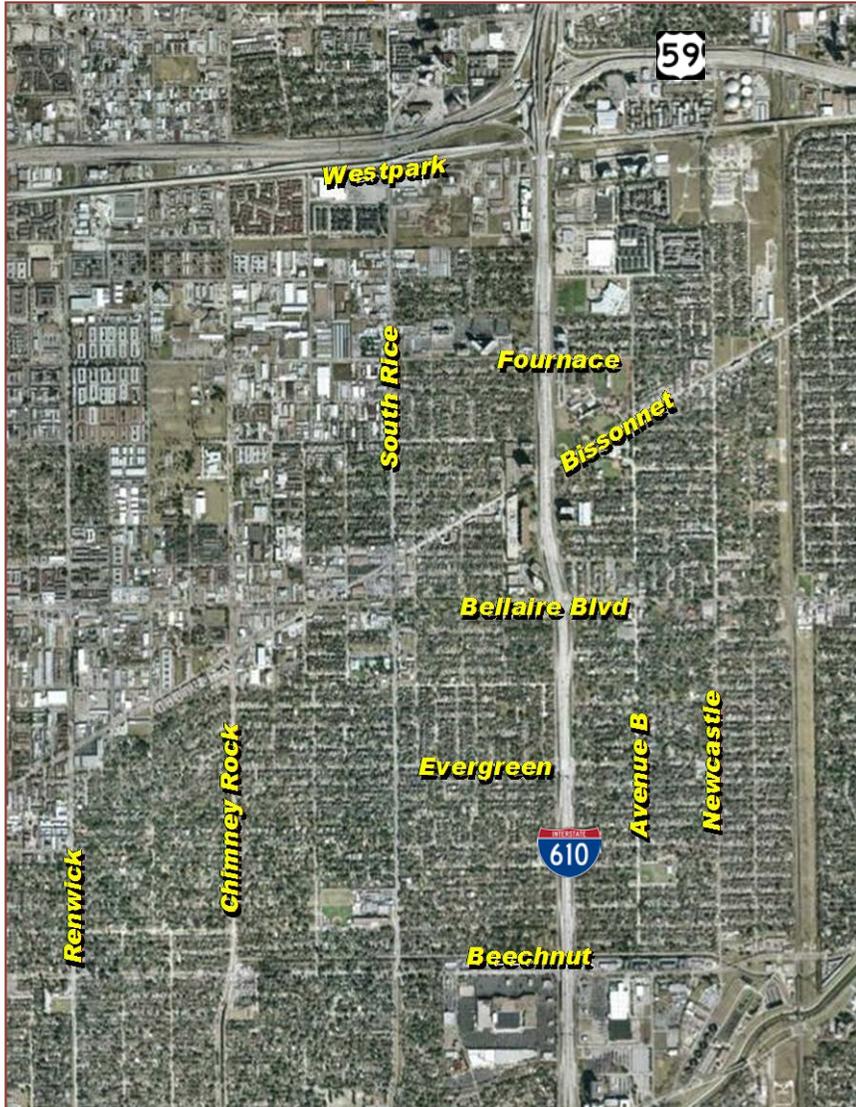
## KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The following facts, assumptions, and considerations provide the context for the goals and action strategies presented in this chapter:

**Grid Street System.** Much of Bellaire, especially its residential neighborhood areas, are on a traditional grid of east-west and north-south streets as opposed to a more curvilinear and discontinuous street pattern as found in

many suburban subdivisions. Grid street systems have the beneficial effect of dispersing traffic across an interconnected network that offers many circulation options versus concentrating most traffic on certain “primary” roadways. On the other hand, neighborhood residents in “grid” cities, including Bellaire, become concerned when they perceive limited ways to prevent speeding, cut-through traffic, and similar impacts on their local streets.

**Loop 610 Impact.** The introduction of a major north-south freeway corridor through Bellaire in the 1960s significantly disrupted the City’s grid street system by restricting east-west connectivity and circulation options. Ever since, Bellaire residents and all others passing through the community have been limited to four points for crossing the West Loop corridor, whether in vehicles or traveling by bike or on foot: Fournace, Bissonnet, Bellaire, and Evergreen. In addition, the interchange of Loop 610 with U.S. 59, while just outside Bellaire, is a major factor in area traffic flows, both on the freeway main lanes and



adjacent service roads, as well as the surface street network. This massive interchange remains the most congested crossroads in Texas according to the Texas A&M Transportation Institute. It was also the scene of a 1970s ammonia truck accident that caused a major emergency situation for surrounding areas, including portions of north Bellaire. Given the proximity of these freeway corridors, Bellaire’s police and fire departments must also bear the burden of periodic response to a variety of incidents.



**Bissonnet Exception.** Bissonnet is a striking example of one major street that departs from the gridiron street pattern of the rest of the City, traversing Bellaire on a diagonal from northeast to southwest (dating back to when it was the primary travel route between Houston and Richmond, before the existence of Bellaire Boulevard). This creates unusual angles at numerous intersections along this key corridor and affects sight distances for drivers at many locations, which can make turning movements more challenging. Where other major streets intersect with Bissonnet, the angle also causes intersections to cover a larger area than usual. A perfect example is the busy intersection of Bissonnet and Bellaire Boulevard in the City Center area, where a more expansive intersection also increases the distance that pedestrians and cyclists must cover to cross these major streets. A related impact, which clearly detracts from development potential in City Center, is how the diagonal street affects parcel shapes along the corridor, especially causing unusual triangular tracts at many intersections.

**Traffic “Hot Spots.”** From their own historical perspective and driving and commuting routines, residents consistently identified two locations in Bellaire as particular traffic concerns (1) the southbound service road along the West Loop approaching Fournace, and (2) just north of the intersection of Bissonnet and Newcastle, where Fournace terminates into Newcastle from the west. In the first case, it was noted how congested the Loop service road becomes during rush hour periods, and how this situation is exacerbated by vehicles attempting to cross multiple lanes in different directions over a short distance (motorists exiting the freeway attempting to maneuver across several lanes to turn right onto Fournace, and other drivers on the service road working their way through the exiting traffic to reach the U-turn lane under the freeway or to turn left onto Fournace). In the second location, the proximity of Fournace to the Bissonnet/ Newcastle intersection creates a complicated traffic scenario and various safety concerns during rush hour and peak school traffic periods. This is particularly true for northbound motorists on Newcastle attempting to turn left onto Fournace, as well as westbound drivers on Fournace attempting to turn left onto Newcastle, especially during peak traffic times when southbound vehicles on Newcastle are queued up at the Bissonnet traffic signal. This also makes this area a very inhospitable location for bicyclists and pedestrians attempting to navigate across these streets. It was also noted how the



Difficult traffic scenarios at Loop 610 and Fournace (above) and the Bissonnet-Newcastle-Fournace intersections (below).



narrowing of Newcastle from four lanes in Houston to two lanes in Bellaire adds to the traffic backup at Bissonnet.

**School Coordination.** Schools of varying types and campus sizes are a major part of the landscape in Bellaire. Along with large-scale office buildings along and near Loop 610, school campuses are also among the community’s most significant traffic generators, including bus traffic and pick-up/drop-off queuing. This ranges from elementary schools that create localized traffic impacts within neighborhoods (e.g., Horn Elementary) to high school campuses (Bellaire High School in the southwest with approximately 3,500 students, and Episcopal High School in the northeast with approximately 700 students) that impact traffic patterns on adjacent thoroughfares, as well as nearby neighborhood streets, during peak morning and afternoon times. In particular, streets and intersections in northeast Bellaire are routinely affected by a cluster of schools in the area, including an expanded Episcopal High School at Loop 610 and Bissonnet; Post Oak Montessori and HISD’s Mandarin Chinese Immersion School at Bissonnet and Avenue B (with HISD intending to relocate the Mandarin school at the time this Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2015); Pin Oak Middle School near Loop 610, at Glenmont and Avenue B; and the Houston Community College Southwest Campus just outside of Bellaire along Loop 610 at Glenmont.

The City of Bellaire coordinates with Houston Independent School District (HISD) officials and representatives of private schools in the community regarding campus-related access, parking, and safety issues, including the traffic and parking impacts associated with peak-hour pick-up/drop-off activity, as well as periodic special events. Various strategies have been implemented over time to help offset these impacts, including typical school zones with reduced speed limits; traffic restrictions and conversion to one-way traffic movement on certain adjoining streets during designated hours; parking restrictions and required permits for on-street parking (e.g., in the vicinity of Bellaire High School); and, assignment of Bellaire police officers to school areas during the peak morning and afternoon hours. The City also has lease agreements in place to govern shared community use of recreation facilities and associated parking areas at certain campuses. Most Bellaire residents expressed their strong support for the presence of quality public and private schools within the community and understand there will be times when special events and activities draw crowds to school campuses, resulting in additional traffic and overflow parking onto nearby public streets. But some also want the City to be more assertive in expecting the schools to do more to reduce their impacts on surrounding neighborhoods and ensure a safer environment for all. It was also noted that there appears to be uneven use of safety measures such as school crossing guards and school zones among the various campuses.

At the time that this Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2015, HISD was considering options for its Bellaire High School Campus and may proceed with a plan to reconstruct the school starting as early as 2016. Whatever the timing, this will undoubtedly remain a contentious issue in Bellaire.



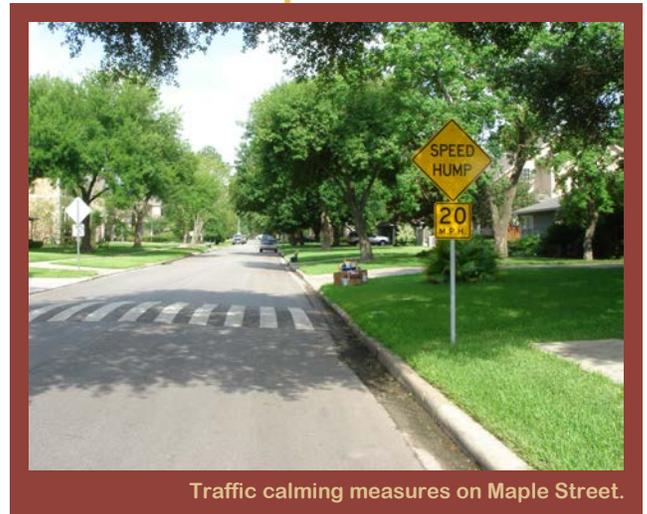
Therefore, traffic circulation and safety and parking management should remain core items on which the City and District must coordinate closely given the degree of community and neighborhood concern.

**Traffic Calming Experience.** The City of Bellaire instituted a Neighborhood Traffic Improvement Program in 1996-97. This established a typical municipal process for enabling property owners within a neighborhood to request that the City take steps to address traffic-related problems in a designated area or street segment, following necessary study and public review and input. In the intervening years, various mitigation measures have been installed in multiple locations, including speed “humps” (such as on Maple Street in southeast Bellaire), traffic diverters (a physical barrier to disallow certain turning movements to/from particular streets as done along portions of Renwick Drive in southwest Bellaire), and physical barriers to close permanently certain streets (e.g., Avenue B at Glenmont, Sunburst at Newcastle, and multiple streets along the West Loop 610 service road in northwest Bellaire).

The Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee discussed the analogy of flood prevention levees constructed by various communities along the Mississippi River, which provide some measure of local protection while simply shifting much of the problem to other communities upstream and downstream. Instead, given how typical calming measures can yield unintended consequences, Bellaire should focus on moving traffic along its major thoroughfares as efficiently and safely as possible as this is the best way to discourage drivers from seeking alternate routes along local neighborhood streets, backed by visible police presence and regular enforcement within neighborhoods.

**Enclave City.** Given the major freeway corridor and regional arterial streets that traverse the community, Bellaire must continue to coordinate with the City of Houston and other neighboring cities, Harris County, METRO, the Houston-Galveston Area Council, and the Texas Department of Transportation on ongoing management and improvement of this critical transportation infrastructure.

**Bellaire Input to H-GAC.** As of 2015, Bellaire had representation on the 28-member Transportation Policy Council (TPC) of the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC). A Bellaire City Council member was the alternate TPC member representing smaller cities in Harris County. H-GAC serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation planning and coordination across the eight-county Houston-Galveston area, including Harris County. In addition to providing overall policy guidance, the TPC has the important role of approving the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which allocates funding for priority transportation projects and services throughout the region. Naturally



Traffic calming measures on Maple Street.



this Bellaire role is only temporary as local elected officials change and the H-GAC positions rotate to other area cities.

**Bellaire Input to METRO.** Bellaire is among 14 cities within the METRO service area, other than the City of Houston, that are represented by two members on the agency's nine-person Board of Directors (the City of Houston appoints five Board members, Harris County appoints two members, and the mayors of the 14 other area cities agree on their two representatives). The two "Multi-Cities" representatives at the time this plan was updated in 2015 were former mayors of Bellaire and West University Place, with former Bellaire Mayor Cindy Siegel having served on the METRO Board since March 2012.

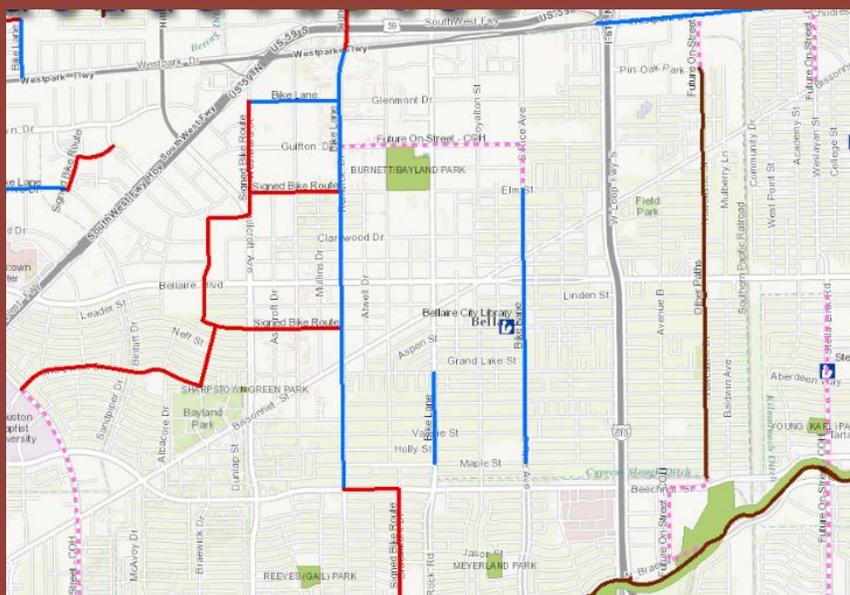
**Bike/Ped Emphasis.** Many Bellaire residents enjoy walking, jogging, skating, and biking for recreation purposes, but also to reach destinations close to home. The shared-use pathway along Newcastle is especially valued by residents of east Bellaire for this reason. On-street bike lanes are also provided along certain corridors. This is another area for coordination with the City of Houston since some bike routes within Bellaire, such as along Renwick on the far west side, provide connections to the much broader Houston Bikeway Network.

**Sidewalks.** Sidewalk-related issues and disagreements have been a lingering challenge for Bellaire. One particular aspect has involved implementation of a stated City policy, as part of the Rebuild Bellaire street rehabilitation program, that a sidewalk be incorporated on both sides of the street for major and minor arterials and collector streets, and on one side for local streets. The City Engineer uses criteria such as the percentage of completed sidewalks, extent of existing trees and landscaping, number of crossings, traffic patterns, and citizen involvement to design the sidewalks and decide the side of the street. More generally, the City no longer requires installation of a sidewalk in front of every new home as in the past. As individual homes are redeveloped, existing sidewalk segments are typically replaced. However, if no sidewalk existed previously, then the property owner is not responsible for installing a sidewalk.

A common theme among residents who provided input to this plan was their dissatisfaction with the status and discontinuity of the sidewalk network in some areas of Bellaire, including the level of maintenance of older sidewalks. It was also pointed out that sidewalks should be promoted as the naturally preferred way to reach various destinations in the community from Bellaire's neighborhoods. Through the 2015 update of this Comprehensive Plan, the Planning & Zoning Commission reaffirmed its position that a continuous sidewalk network is desirable for the entire community and should be a high priority of the City's elected officials, even in the face of vocal, localized opposition as particular segments are to be built or improved. While constrained and contentious locations will still be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, sidewalk installation generally should occur as streets are reconstructed.



**Truck Traffic.** Through Section 30-30 of the City Code, Bellaire restricts heavy trucks from using Bellaire streets for through trips, requiring that they “have a pre-determined, definite destination” within the community. This then becomes a matter of enforcement, and the City also posts “no truck” signs in various locations to discourage truck traffic on local neighborhood streets.



The clip above from the City of Houston Bikeways map shows several identified bike routes that are self-contained within Bellaire (Newcastle, South Rice, Chimney Rock), and the current direct links to the larger area system via Renwick on Bellaire’s west side and along Westpark on the north side. Future planned improvements will address the “missing link” between Bellaire’s Newcastle multi-use pathway and the Brays Bayou trail system. The map view below, while not entirely legible at this scale, does show the position of Bellaire within the larger area network. The complete Houston Bikeways map is available for better viewing online at: <http://www.gims.houstontx.gov/bikeway/default.aspx>



**Primary Arterial**

A major thoroughfare with limited at-grade access, which expands and links to the expressway system and is designed primarily for movement of through traffic.

(Examples: Chimney Rock Road, Bellaire Boulevard, Bissonnet Street, IH 610)

-- Section 24-202(139)  
Bellaire City Code

**Secondary Arterial**

A major thoroughfare with limited at-grade access, which supports the primary arterial system by providing essential system linkages to expressways, primary arterials and activity centers of medium intensity.

(Examples: Fournace Place and South Rice Avenue)

-- Section 24-202(155)

**Collector Street**

A roadway designed to provide direct access to residential, commercial, industrial and other activity areas with a primary function of collecting and distributing traffic between local access streets and the major thoroughfare system.

(Examples: Glenmont Drive, Newcastle Drive, Evergreen Street, and Avenue B)

-- Section 24-202(39)

**Local Street**

A residential or non-residential street designed to provide direct access to individual homes, shops, abutting land and similar traffic destinations, with no provision for through traffic.

(Examples: Little Lake Street, Spruce Street)

-- Section 24-202(99)

**Transit Contention.** At least among those Bellaire residents who provided input for this Comprehensive Plan update, a majority noted their desire to use transit if it connected them to the right destinations, in central Houston and elsewhere, more quickly and conveniently. The prospect of future METRO light rail service in close proximity to Bellaire was also welcomed by most. (Although, since 2009, METRO funding challenges have pushed back the timeline for constructing the planned east-west University light rail line and the north-south Uptown line, which were to converge at a Bellaire Rail Station along Westpark—and this also led the Uptown Houston District to turn its attention to dedicated bus lanes along Post Oak Boulevard.) However, some residents also worry about the real and/or perceived adverse impacts of transit services and facilities on their community. Some noted potential physical disruptions from transit-related capital improvements, plus the traffic and parking demand that would likely be attracted to a transit station vicinity.

An overarching concern related to public transit—expressed by a variety of residents—involves crime and security issues. In particular, most who provided input to this plan stated their desire to see the METRO Transit Center removed from Bellaire’s City Center area at Bellaire Boulevard and South Rice Avenue. This sentiment remained pertinent as of the 2015 update of this Comprehensive Plan. Though still under consideration, it is possible that the construction of a new METRO transit center along Westpark, just outside of Bellaire, plus other adjustments to METRO’s transit services, could lead to the removal of the current transit center on Bellaire Boulevard.

**EXISTING TRAFFIC CONDITIONS**

Traffic volume data for central Houston highlights the significant flows of traffic that pass through Bellaire daily, especially on West Loop 610 (more than 200,000 vehicles each day according to 2013 data from the Texas Department of Transportation), and also on major arterial streets such as Bellaire Boulevard, Bissonnet, and South Rice Boulevard.

Some primary roadways are within—or form a portion of—the Bellaire City limits for only a short distance but carry considerable traffic relative to local residential streets. Examples include Westpark at the north City limits, Chimney Rock in southwest Bellaire, Renwick along the western City limits, Newcastle in east Bellaire, and the portion of Fournace west of Loop 610 where Chevron’s major facility is located and where Fournace continues westward into Houston.

Significant pass-through traffic is a daily reality for Bellaire, as an enclave city. This situation is managed with transportation infrastructure, screening and noise reduction measures, provision for alternative travel modes (transit, bike/pedestrian routes), and regulation and enforcement of speeds and other traffic laws. Bellaire has only limited influence over traffic conditions in some



locations (i.e., Loop 610 and key regional arterials) versus corridors that are very much under the City's control in terms of design, traffic controls (signals, signage, speed limits), and traffic law enforcement.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

Long-range transportation planning conducted by the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) for the eight-county metropolitan area (encompassing Harris and all abutting counties) presumes that, by 2040, 3.8 million more residents will live in the region, for a total of 9.6 million people. This would represent 66 percent growth in population over 30 years. The clear implication of this rate and magnitude of growth is that area traffic volumes and congestion challenges will continue to increase. Traffic pressures will also intensify within the region's core, where Bellaire is located, since major employment centers such as downtown Houston, the Texas Medical Center, the Galleria area, and the Greenway Plaza area will remain key commuting destinations.

For Bellaire the issues will remain the same into the future, especially since the community's roadway infrastructure is well established, and will only grow in importance:

- dealing with significant daily pass-through traffic;
- aiming to maintain the efficiency of the major street network to deter non-local traffic from seeking alternate routes on local neighborhood streets; and
- promoting greater transit use, feasible bicycle commutes, walking or biking trips to destinations closer to home, and other mobility alternatives to the private automobile.

Smarter, multi-modal use of available street and highway rights-of-way will be increasingly emphasized going forward given the practical and financial constraints to adding further significant roadway capacity. New and expanded transit options will also play an increasing role in regional and cross-town mobility. A potential new METRO transit center along Westpark, just outside of Bellaire, could provide a valuable new access point for residents to this growing regional system, but it might also introduce a new traffic generator near Bellaire's north City limits.

## GOALS AND ACTIONS

The tables on the following pages present a set of goals and guiding principles for addressing the key issues identified in relation to mobility in Bellaire. Potential action strategies are then outlined to respond to particular opportunities and challenges associated with the overall goal. The action options are arranged in six categories that represent the main ways that comprehensive plans are implemented.





### GOAL 3.1:

**A multi-modal transportation system that integrates Bellaire with the region and enhances the mobility and safety of residents within their own community.**

#### *Guiding Principles*

- A. *Ensure neighborhood integrity and the safety of adults and kids.*
- B. *Minimize traffic congestion and maximize the safety and efficiency of existing and new infrastructure for moving people and goods within and through Bellaire.*
- C. *Make transportation improvements that promote desired commercial development and redevelopment.*
- D. *Emphasize “context sensitive design” for all forms of mobility improvements.*
- E. *Support transit services and investments that are mutually beneficial to the region and to Bellaire.*
- F. *Promote investments and mobility choices that reduce vehicle trips in the City and region and support area-wide air quality goals.*

#### **Consideration 1: Citizen Involvement in Planning**

<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ensure that citizens are involved in defining the objectives of mobility projects and services and providing input on their design and execution. This is especially important for projects that may have very localized impacts on nearby residents, businesses, and/or schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue to require Traffic Impact Analyses (TIA) for significant new development and redevelopment projects when this information will help to clarify anticipated neighborhood impacts and indicate potential mitigation measures.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	n/a
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Take advantage of opportunities to educate residents about rights-of-way, particularly the area beyond the paved street section that is also reserved for public uses (i.e., utilities, sidewalks, landscaping, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Coordinate with METRO, H-GAC, Harris County, TxDOT and other agencies, as needed, to ensure opportunities for direct input by Bellaire officials, residents, and businesses early in the process of planning new mobility facilities and services.</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explore further specific criteria that would have to be addressed by citizen proposals for street closures or traffic calming measures on local neighborhood streets.</li> <li>▶ Explore the efficacy of possibly reducing speed limits on local residential streets, accompanied by strict and regular enforcement, as a preferred strategy versus street closures and physical calming devices.</li> </ul>

#### **Consideration 2: Pedestrian and Bicycle Network**

<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Pursue opportunities to upgrade certain streets to “exceptional pedestrian and bicycle environments” while still accommodating other transportation modes.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation</b>	n/a
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Redesign designated streets to emphasize pedestrian and bicycle movement and amenities (e.g., narrower or fewer traffic lanes, wider sidewalks and/or walking/jogging paths, lighting, benches, pedestrian shelters, street trees, landscaping, etc.). Coordinate these improvements with Safe Routes to Schools efforts.</li> <li>▶ Install bicycle racks at key locations and buildings throughout the community.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Prioritize intersections in the community that are heavily used by pedestrians and cyclists and implement safety improvements at intersections with the greatest safety concerns (e.g., marked, signed, and/or signaled pedestrian crossings; pedestrian-actuated signal detectors, bikeway signage).</li> </ul>
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Begin the phased implementation of a City-wide pedestrian and bicycle network to connect neighborhoods with parks, schools, other public facilities, transit services, and the City Center and other activity centers and destinations.</li> <li>▶ Maintain a community-wide sidewalk inventory to highlight gaps in the existing sidewalk system, areas with no sidewalks at all, areas where sidewalks are in need of repair or replacement, and areas with the most substantial pedestrian activity where sidewalks are most needed.</li> <li>▶ Continue to enhance the City-wide sidewalk network through the City’s ongoing street reconstruction program.</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue to explore, with the City of Houston and Harris County, options for linking the Newcastle Trail to the Brays Bayou trail system.</li> <li>▶ Coordinate with the City of Houston and the City of West University Place to implement sidewalk connections at the Bissonnet and Bellaire Boulevard crossings of the railroad corridor along Bellaire’s east City limits.</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explore, with TxDOT, potential enhancements to the West Loop 610 underpasses at Fournace, Bissonnet, Bellaire Boulevard, and Evergreen to respond to citizen desires for more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly links between east and west Bellaire and to the City Center area.</li> </ul>
<b>Consideration 3: School Area Safety</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	n/a
<b>Regulation</b>	n/a
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Prepare for future TxDOT Calls for Projects for the Texas Safe Routes to Schools (SR2S) program to secure external funding support for safety-related improvements.</li> </ul>
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Review existing safe school routes to ensure their adequacy and consistency and identify any improvement needs. Also promote specific routes as preferred so improvements and safety measures may be targeted appropriately.</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue coordination with HISD and private schools in Bellaire to ensure the safety of students and parents on foot and on bikes, manage bus traffic and vehicle queuing associated with peak-hour drop-off and pick-up activity (e.g., S. Rice afternoon situation at Bellaire High School), and to control on-street and overflow parking in campus areas (e.g., Post Oak School).</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	n/a
<b>Consideration 4: Improvements to Key Corridors</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	n/a
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Determine the need for more stringent access management policies and standards for new development and redeveloping sites to reduce conflict points, maintain traffic capacity, and enhance safety along the City’s major commercial corridors (e.g., Bissonnet)—and especially in the City Center area.</li> <li>▶ Correct the alignment of driveways with median openings as redevelopment of individual sites occurs.</li> </ul>

<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Install esplanades in place of continuous center turning lanes (e.g., on Bissonnet, South Rice) to control turning movements and increase safety, provide an intermediate refuge area for pedestrians crossing major streets, and enhance corridor aesthetics through landscaping of the new esplanades.</li> </ul>
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Evaluate traffic flow requirements for all modes and develop an implementation plan for improvements on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <i>Bellaire Boulevard (between S. Rice Avenue and Chimney Rock)</i>: the proximity of the METRO Transit Center to the S. Rice intersection creates challenges for pedestrian and vehicular traffic.</li> <li>(2) <i>South Rice Avenue (between Elm and Beechnut) and Chimney Rock Road (between Evergreen and Maple)</i>: consider improved intersection control, wider sidewalks, potential median installation, parking and bicycle accommodations, and streetscape enhancements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Coordinate with the City of Houston, METRO, and other entities as appropriate regarding the specific improvements cited under Program/Initiative.</li> <li>▶ Pursue, with neighboring cities and other involved agencies, opportunities for constructing grade separations where Bellaire Boulevard and Bissonnet cross the railroad corridor along the City's east City limits, as funding is available.</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	n/a
<b>Consideration 5: Special Area Planning</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Promote the City Center and Urban Village-Transit Oriented Development (UV-T) areas as key destinations in Bellaire particularly suited for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Add specific pedestrian and bicycle criteria to the site plan review process for commercial sites in key areas such as City Center and the UV-T area and along major roadways. These criteria may include designation of pedestrian connections to surrounding developments, internal pedestrian and bicycle circulation, bike parking locations, and parking lot safety.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Pursue east-west street continuity through the UV-T area, between the West Loop and South Rice, to improve access and circulation, support the area's redevelopment potential, and relieve traffic pressure on neighborhoods to the south.</li> </ul>
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	n/a
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue coordination with the City of Houston, METRO, Uptown Houston, and private property owners in the area just south of Westpark between West Loop 610 and S. Rice Avenue regarding access and east-west street connectivity improvements recommended for the area.</li> <li>▶ Investigate opportunities to relocate the Bellaire Transit Center from the City Center area to a more favorable location for both the City and METRO.</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Consider strategic removal of particular public street segments in the City Center area to support its redevelopment prospects (by creating more attractive site development configurations), reduce the area's automobile orientation in favor of a more bike- and pedestrian-friendly setting, and to reduce the number of awkwardly configured intersections along the Bissonnet corridor.</li> <li>▶ Complete a traffic access and circulation study of the City Center area that revisits previous concepts for reconfiguring the area street pattern and traffic flows (e.g., alternatives to the diagonal Bissonnet alignment); assesses alternate traffic management strategies linked to potential City Center redevelopment scenarios (e.g., one-way streets, new street cross sections/designs, targeted street abandonment); and considers pedestrian, bicycle, and transit accommodation and safety.</li> </ul>

<b>Consideration 6: Energy Savings and Pollution Reduction</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	▶ Promote bicycling and walking in the design of all new transportation projects as these are the quietest, cleanest, and most energy efficient transportation modes.
<b>Regulation</b>	n/a
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	▶ Upgrade the City’s vehicle fleet to hybrid technology vehicles, as practical and cost effective, to reduce the pollution and cost impacts of gasoline and diesel powered vehicles.
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	▶ Conduct regular reviews of City-maintained traffic signals and update signal timing as appropriate to reduce fuel consumption and pollution from improperly timed signals. Also evaluate low-volume intersections where potential signal removal may be warranted.
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	▶ Expand the City’s current effort to update traffic signal controls to advanced technology for improved performance and better traffic flow, especially in response to varying traffic volumes and conditions (initial focus on Bellaire and Bissonnet, with funding from H-GAC).
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	n/a
<b>Consideration 7: Emergency Planning</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	▶ Conduct emergency planning for the City – and encourage complementary private sector planning – to provide for movement to and from emergency and health care facilities.
<b>Regulation</b>	n/a
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	n/a
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	▶ Develop a multi-modal emergency transportation plan to ensure continued mobility and effective evacuation under a variety of natural and man-made catastrophe scenarios. The plan should consider the possible scarcity of energy and fuel and potential disruption to infrastructure and rights-of-way.
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	▶ Coordinate with the City of Houston, METRO, Harris County, H-GAC, TxDOT, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and other appropriate entities on local and regional emergency planning.
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	n/a
<b>Consideration 8: Coordination on Regional Projects</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	▶ Establish formal agreements and ensure clear and concise processes to achieve successful outcomes on joint projects with other public agencies.
<b>Regulation</b>	n/a
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	n/a
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	<p>▶ Pursue planning and improved coordination with TxDOT, H-GAC, and the City of Houston to increase safety conditions and decrease traffic incidents on West Loop 610. In addition to making roadways safer for the community, this would help to reduce the inordinate financial and logistical burden of frequent calls for Bellaire EMS and police response along this heavily traveled freeway corridor.</p> <p>▶ Conduct an origin/destination study to improve understanding of traffic flows within and through Bellaire.</p>

<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Review existing TxDOT maintenance agreements and propose revisions as necessary.</li> <li>▶ Pursue formal agreements with METRO regarding any potential transit routes in Bellaire—and any that would involve potential joint use of City rights-of-way—as well as to govern public improvements and other considerations related to any potential future light rail or other enhanced transit construction along Westpark.</li> <li>▶ Continue to explore, with the City of Houston and Harris County, options for linking the Newcastle Trail to the Brays Bayou trail system.</li> </ul>
<b>Further Study/ Planning</b>	n/a





# PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES

## *Why this Comprehensive Plan chapter is Important for Bellaire:*

- ✓ Documents current capacities in the City's primary utility infrastructure systems (water, wastewater, and storm drainage), as well as ongoing and future planned improvements to these systems to maintain their integrity and the City's compliance with applicable Federal and State regulations.
- ✓ Confirms the excellent coverage and responsiveness of the City's public safety services (police and fire), which were frequently cited by residents during the planning process as among the chief benefits of living in Bellaire.
- ✓ Highlights the infrastructure linkages between Bellaire, as an enclave city, and other jurisdictions (e.g., surface water supply from City of Houston, storm drainage outfalls to Harris County Flood Control drainage channels).
- ✓ Points out facility issues and needs involving City Hall, the library, and other municipal buildings.

## CHAPTER 4

The purpose of this chapter is to document the status and outlook for the City's basic utility infrastructure (water, wastewater, and storm drainage), key City buildings and facilities, and public safety services (police and fire). In particular, it is important to determine whether these facilities and services will have adequate capacity into the future for the potential development and redevelopment activity anticipated in Bellaire and envisioned through this Comprehensive Plan. Unlike the other plan chapters related to land use, development, parks, housing, and mobility, this chapter is intended more as a "facts and figures" reference, based on the latest available information from City departments and specialized studies and plans, rather than as a source of new initiatives or action recommendations.

Significantly, it should be remembered that Bellaire's infrastructure and key public services must respond not only to the demands of a resident population of nearly 18,000, but also a daytime population that is estimated by the Bellaire Police Department to double to about 35,000 persons as office



buildings, retail businesses, schools, and other places of employment and institutions reach their peak activity levels on weekdays.

## ESSENTIAL CAPACITY ISSUE

Since Bellaire is relatively built out, the only significant land use changes envisioned in this Comprehensive Plan that could potentially impact the City’s utility infrastructure capacities and/or public safety services and responsiveness involve the possibility of more intensive mixed-use development in the City Center area (Bissonnet/Bellaire commercial area) and the newly-rezoned Urban Village-Transit Oriented Development (UV-T) zoning district (current light industrial area on the north side) in the years ahead. This could include multi-story buildings, within the City’s zoning limits for each area, that are entirely office space, entirely residential (e.g., condos), or with retail or offices on first floors and residential units on upper floors. This could also include higher-density residential development (e.g., townhomes, condos, etc.) not currently found in these areas.

Directors of key City departments offered the following insights regarding these potential scenarios:

- ◆ **Utility Infrastructure.** Adequate water and sanitary sewer service can be provided to these areas at any time, and storm drainage could be upgraded as needed to handle additional drainage volumes. With regard to the north UV-T area, an existing water trunk line along Glenmont would address foreseeable water needs. A water storage tank would likely be needed, and the City already has property in the area that could accommodate such needs. The City’s sprinkler system requirements would help to address fire-related concerns for taller, higher-density residential construction.
- ◆ **Fire.** The Bellaire Fire Department would be capable of providing the needed response if building codes are stringently enforced and the department’s resources are adjusted accordingly (e.g., ladder truck and additional firefighting personnel for this apparatus). Taller building heights are not a concern if the necessary equipment and staffing changes are made. However, department operations would also have to change in terms of training practices for these new scenarios and occupancies, as well as increased collaboration with outside agencies. Access to the north UV-T area is another consideration since current access is through a neighborhood and on narrow streets. Accessibility by more and larger vehicles would have to be addressed.

A final consideration is the additional burden on the emergency medical response (EMS) system from an increased residential population. If the numbers increased significantly and EMS calls also increased in a corresponding manner, the City’s EMS capability would need to be bolstered to accommodate these new demands

### Water / Wastewater Planning

The City should continue to maintain water and wastewater master plans—and complete other special studies as needed—to document available system capacities and assess the extent of development and/or redevelopment the utility systems can accommodate.



(i.e., potentially two additional EMS personnel per shift, and the support services for these employees).

- ◆ **Police.** The quantity and type of development and resulting service demands (crime, traffic, etc.) would require monitoring and assessment to determine more accurately how staffing requirements or other Bellaire Police Department resource needs might be affected.

## UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

### Water

The City of Bellaire obtains public water supply from four ground water wells plus incorporation of surface water acquired from the City of Houston. This currently results in a 50/50 mix of ground and surface water to meet regional mandates for reduced ground water withdrawal from the Harris-Galveston Subsidence District. The City treats both surface and ground water with chlorine before the water is distributed to customers through the City's water system.

- ◆ **Capacity.** The City's current maximum well capacity is approximately 7.0 million gallons per day (MGD). Average water demand is approximately 3.0 MGD, so the City's ground water availability is well above current needs. However, as noted above, the City must incorporate 50 percent surface water (obtained from the City of Houston) into the water it supplies to households and other customers to comply with regional requirements. The Chevron complex on Fournace is the City's largest water user.
- ◆ **Water Conservation.** The City conducts typical public education and awareness activities, combined with metering and a conservation-oriented water rate structure, to reduce water demand and minimize water loss. Bellaire was also one of the first municipalities in the Houston area to require low-flow plumbing fixtures for new construction and substantial building modifications. The City maintains a Water Conservation and Drought Contingency Plan to guide these efforts and also be prepared for worst-case water scenarios. The 2014 plan identified current per capita water use in Bellaire of 180 gallons per day and set a target of 171 gallons per capita per day by 2019, although it was recognized that conservation benefits could take 5-10 years to be fully realized.

- ◆ **Current Issues:**

- Capital Improvements

- The City's Public Works Department is proceeding with identified current water system improvements through the City's Water/Wastewater Revitalization Program. This involves improvements at the Central and Feld Park water plants.

#### Harris-Galveston Subsidence District

The Harris-Galveston Subsidence District is a special purpose district created by the Texas Legislature in 1975. The District was created to provide for the regulation of ground-water withdrawal throughout Harris and Galveston counties for the purpose of preventing land subsidence, which leads to increased flooding. More information about the District and its plans and programs is available at <http://www.hgsubsidence.org/>



- Additional projected capital improvement needs for the City's water system have been identified for the next five to 10 fiscal years. This type of steady investment in ongoing maintenance and necessary upgrades is important to avoid facility degradation and operational problems, as well as much larger cost "hits" that can accrue due to deferred maintenance.



◆ **Future Needs:**

Surface Water Dependence

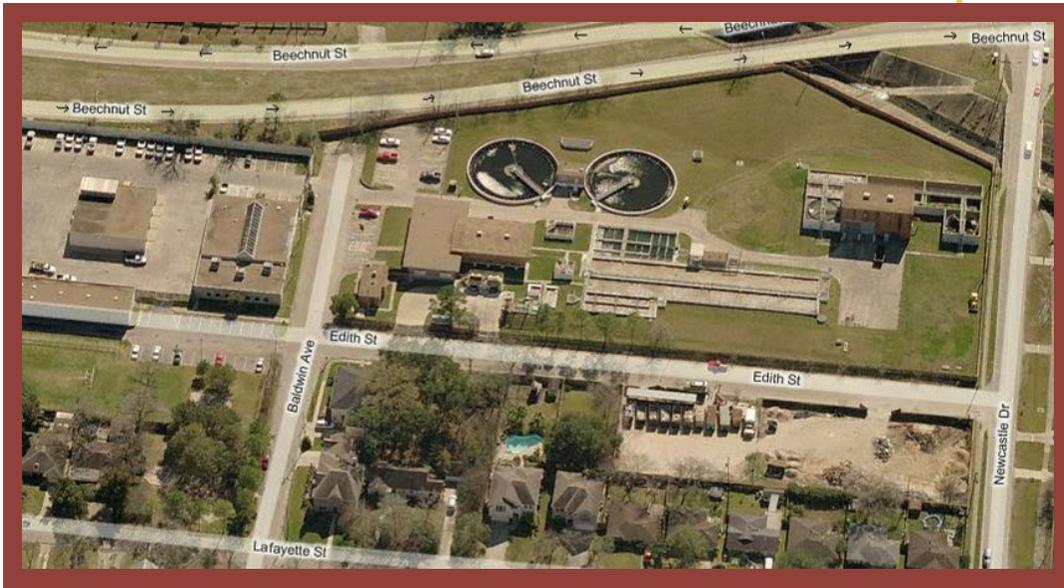
- Ground water production remains much cheaper than surface water, but the City must purchase surface water under the Subsidence District mandates. With the City of Houston having control of much of the area's surface water supply, it effectively acts as a water utility and has control over price.

**Wastewater**

The City of Bellaire operates a wastewater treatment plant which is located in the far southeast corner of the City between Edith Street and Beechnut Street. The associated collection system carries sewage to the plant, and, given the area's flat terrain, lift stations are also necessary in various locations to maintain flows within the collection network.

- ◆ **Capacity.** The City's current wastewater treatment capacity is 4.5 million gallons per day (MGD). The plant's average treatment flow is 1.6 MGD, meaning the City has considerable capacity available before any permitted limits would be reached or other regulatory thresholds that can trigger mandatory plant expansion or upgrades. The 1.6 MGD daily operating scenario has remained steady, and no significant flow increase or decrease is expected in the near future.
- ◆ **Collection System Status.** Bellaire has replaced 98 percent of its wastewater collection system since 1975. This is a remarkable accomplishment considering that failing collection systems are a major, costly and ongoing infrastructure headache for many municipalities. Public Works reports that, as of 2009, 92 percent of the system is in good condition with no repair needs.





◆ **Current Issues:**

Capital Improvements

- The City's Public Works Department is proceeding with identified current wastewater system improvements through the City's Water/Wastewater Revitalization Program. This involves various improvements at the treatment plant plus construction of a new lift station.
- Additional projected capital improvement needs for the City's wastewater system have been identified for the next five to 10 fiscal years.

◆ **Future Needs:**

Potential Treatment Plant Consolidation with City of Houston

- This possibility is discussed periodically in Bellaire, especially since the City of Houston has a large wastewater treatment facility just across Beechnut Street along Brays Bayou. However, this scenario is highly unlikely as the cost factors have been studied and a potential Bellaire system tie-in to the City of Houston system would not be cost effective for the City of Bellaire compared to rehabilitation and continued operation and maintenance of its own treatment plant. Aside from the philosophical issue of becoming completely dependent on another jurisdiction for wastewater treatment and service, Bellaire is also able to treat its wastewater at a lower cost than the City of Houston.

## Storm Drainage

Land within the City of Bellaire generally drains from northwest to southeast as is the case for the entire coastal plain in the Houston area. While the elevation change across the community is relatively minimal, the Public Works facilities in far southeast Bellaire are at the lowest point in the City.



As an enclave city, Bellaire’s drainage system is linked to the City of Houston’s storm sewer system, as well as the drainage channels in the area maintained by the Harris County Flood Control District. Bellaire’s storm sewer system directs drainage toward Brays Bayou at Renwick and Chimney Rock on the west side. Storm drainage from the rest of the City east of Chimney Rock is conveyed to the drainage channel that runs east-west near Bellaire’s south City limits and just north of Beechnut Street. Major discharge points to this drainage channel are at South Rice Avenue, Loop 610, and Newcastle, and storm water is also conveyed southward via an open drainage channel that runs along the east City limits. All of this storm drainage ultimately is carried to Brays Bayou.

Following the extensive damage caused by Tropical Storm Allison in 2001, the City adopted the *Floodplain Hazard Mitigation Report* (“Mitigation Report”) in 2004. The Mitigation Report outlines a 36-point Action Plan to be performed by the City. Items that remain to be addressed include the development of a Storm Drainage Design Criteria Manual and Detention Criteria to guide construction activity within the City. Targeted regulatory measures, as outlined in the Mitigation Report, are one way that a municipality can meet and exceed minimum requirements for local floodplain management activities under the National Flood Insurance Program, which can also lead to reduced flood insurance premium rates for the benefit of home and property owners.

The City also maintains a Storm Water Management Plan, which was last updated in August 2008. In response to Federal and State mandates under the Clean Water Act, this plan focuses on the quality of the City’s storm water discharges rather than dealing directly with the quantity of storm drainage. In addition to public education and outreach, other mandated activities include detection and elimination of illicit discharges to the storm sewer system; storm water controls for construction sites; post-construction storm water management for new development and redevelopment; and pollution prevention practices at municipal facilities.

◆ **Current Issues:**

Flood Risk

- Bellaire shares the challenges of the entire Southeast Texas coastal area in terms of vulnerability to flooding, especially from tropical storms, as well as intense rainfall events which can produce many inches of rain during a relatively short timeframe. Street flooding is possible at such times and, in fact, is part of the storm water management approach in flat locales such as the Houston area that take time to drain. More severe inundation, including flooding of homes and non-residential properties, is possible when downstream drainage is overloaded—especially the Brays Bayou channel in Bellaire’s case. Much work has been done across the Houston area in recent years in terms of more stringent floodplain



management and building standards, revised floodplain mapping using much more advanced technology (with interim map updates occurring in Harris County since the last comprehensive updates in 2007), and structural and non-structural physical improvements for storing and conveying storm water. At the local level, keeping storm sewers and inlets free of debris is very important to avoid immediate backup of storm drainage into nearby streets and yards.

#### TxDOT Coordination

- As discussed below, Bellaire is doing its part as a municipality to improve local street drainage. However, storm drainage associated with a freeway corridor as significant as West Loop 610 through Bellaire requires ongoing coordination between the City and the Texas Department of Transportation to ensure that Bellaire is protected from inordinate drainage impacts that it cannot directly control or influence.

#### ◆ **Future Needs:**

##### Ongoing Capital Improvements

- Drainage improvements around the community continue to be accomplished through the street reconstruction portion of the Rebuild Bellaire initiative. An initial eight-year program of street, water, and wastewater system improvements has already been completed. The City recently sold bonds for another 10-year round of projects, with several already under way.

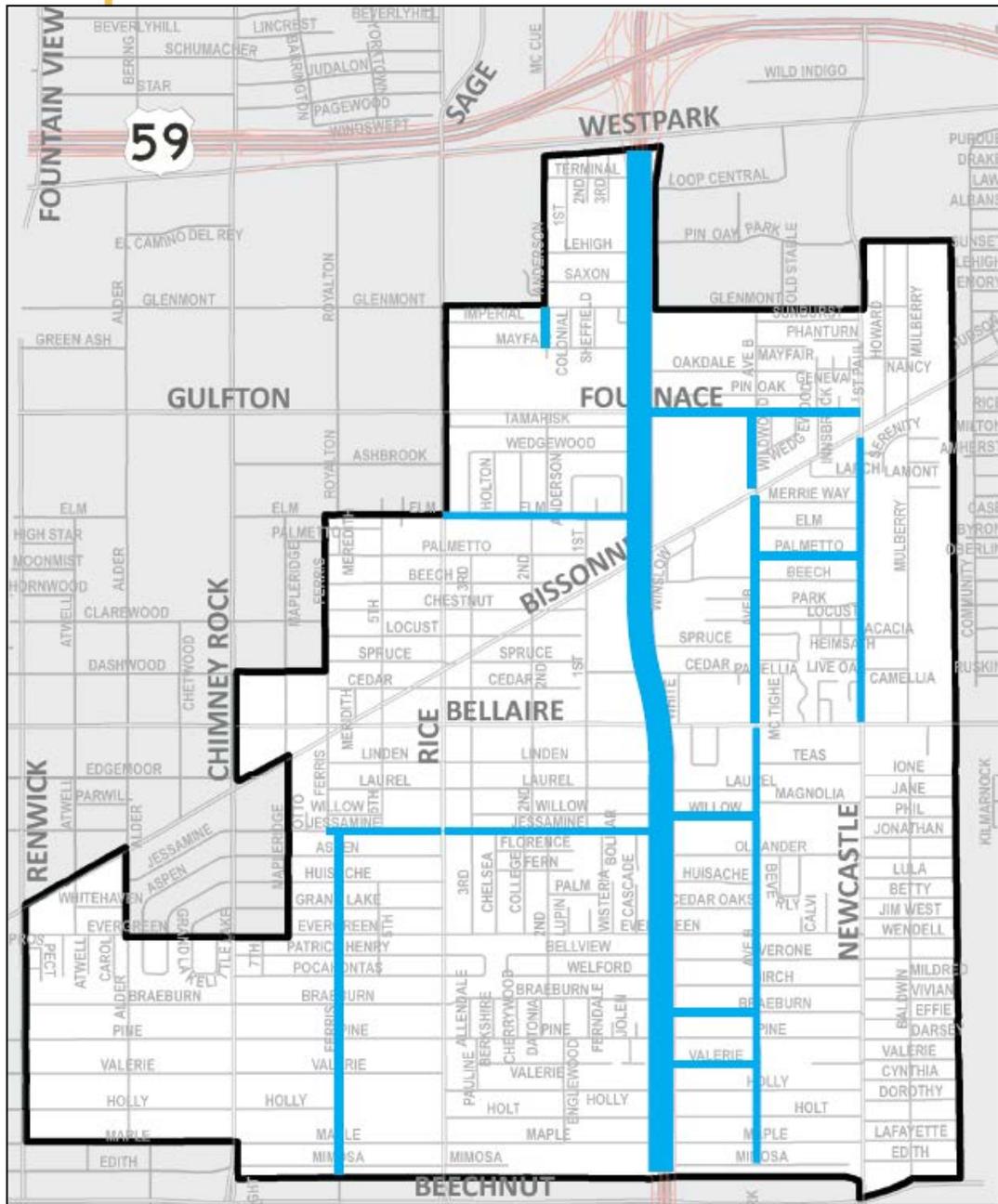
More information on the Public Works Department and its utility-related services and activities is available on the City website.

## STREETS

As part of a general focus on improving infrastructure throughout the City, Bellaire has seen improvements in its street system in the past decade. Through the Bellaire Millennium Renewal Project, approved by voters in 2000 and completed in 2008, approximately six miles of streets were totally reconstructed and more than 45 miles were resurfaced at a combined expense of \$28.7 million. Specific locations addressed are highlighted in **Figure 4.1, Streets Reconstructed during Bellaire Millennium Renewal.**



**FIGURE 4.1,  
Streets Reconstructed during Bellaire Millennium Renewal**

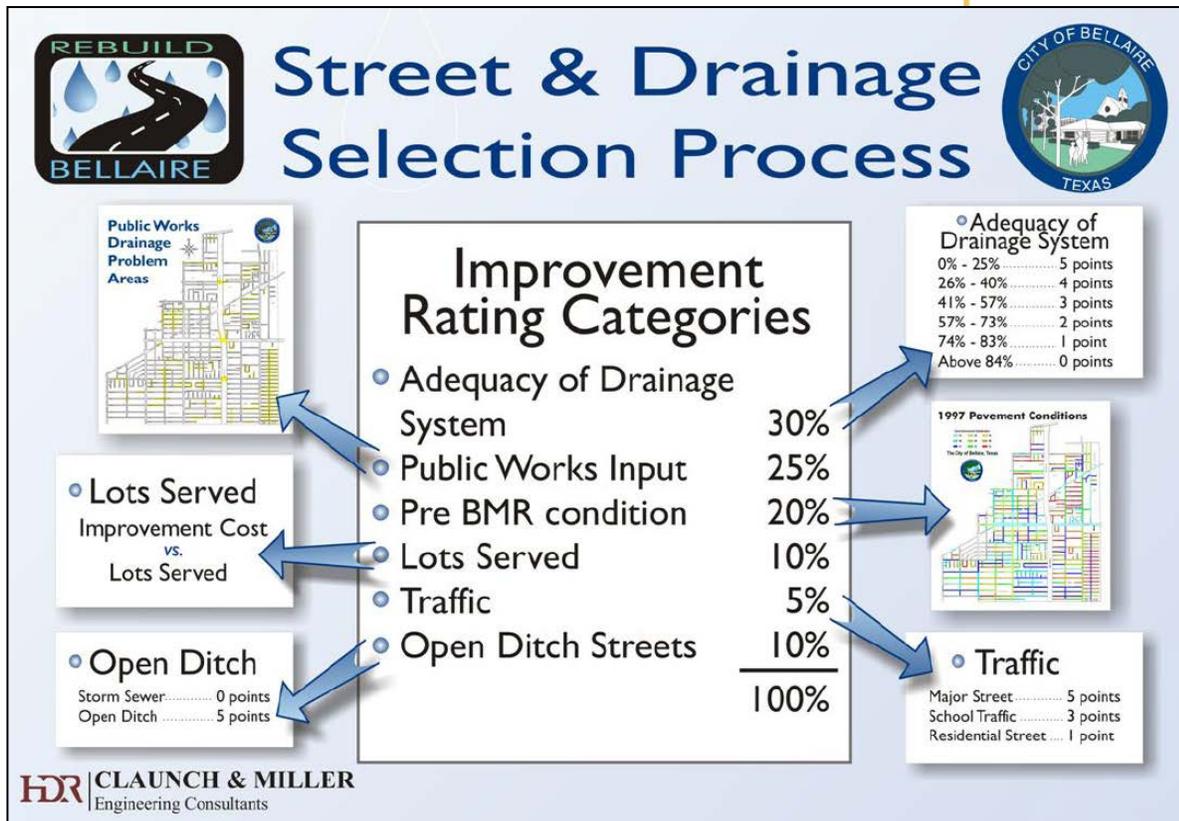


In 2005, Bellaire residents continued to support infrastructure repair and replacement through the Rebuild Bellaire program, which had entered its fifth phase at the time this Comprehensive Plan was updated in spring 2015. Rebuild Bellaire continues to focus on improving the overall quality of the roadway and drainage system by installing new storm sewers, inlets, streets and sidewalks. The newest program round, Phase 5A, was to begin in spring 2015 and be complete by early summer 2016, with a total construction cost of



\$10.25 million. Phase 5A involved particular blocks on 10 streets, and future Phase 5 projects were expected to address 10 more streets. The criteria used to prioritize projects for Rebuild Bellaire are illustrated in Figure 4.2. It is recommended that the City assess and establish a plan for further street improvements and/or reconstruction beyond the current program.

FIGURE 4.2,  
Criteria for Rebuild Bellaire Priority Projects



Additionally, the City has an agreement with the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) that provides funds annually for the repair and replacement of sidewalks and streets.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

### Police

The Bellaire Police Department (BPD) operates from a building at 5510 Jessamine Street which is part of the Bellaire Town Square municipal campus.

- ◆ **Staffing.** BPD currently has 42 sworn officers. The Communications Division employs 10 full-time and two part-time officers. Three



**Bellaire Police Department  
MISSION STATEMENT**

The dedicated professionals of the Bellaire Police Department, in cooperation with the citizens of Bellaire, shall strive to provide a secure and viable community through:

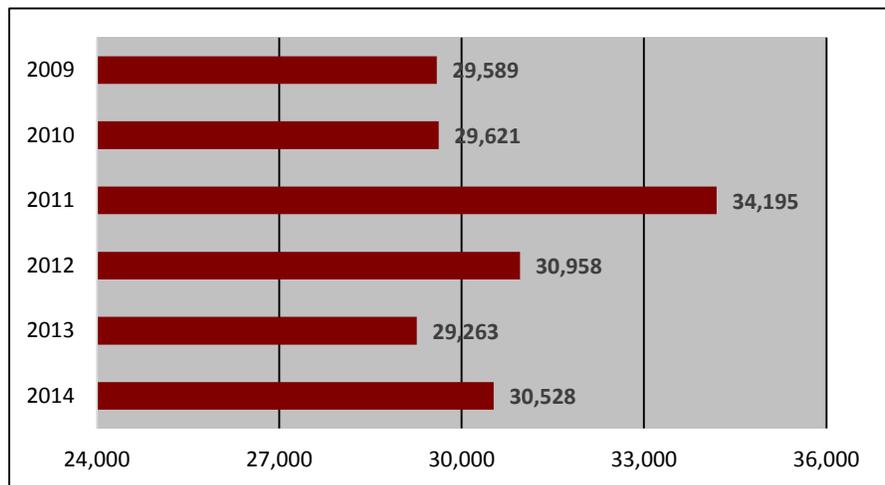
- The protection of the fundamental rights of all people.
- Open communication and alliance with citizens.
- The promotion of pride and trust through the continual performance of responsibility, honesty, integrity, and discipline.
- Active recruitment, development, and retention of quality personnel.
- Proactive innovation to anticipate and meet the challenge of our changing environment.

civilian employees provide administrative support. An Animal Control Officer is also based within BPD.

Police staffing is assessed and allocated based on a number of factors including service demands, community expectations, and incidence of crime. BPD uses the statewide average ratio of police officers per 1,000 residents as one way to evaluate its staffing. The current State of Texas average is 2.3 officers per 1,000 residents, and the current ratio in Bellaire is 2.685 officers per 1,000 residents. No staffing changes are planned in the immediate future.

- ◆ **Service Indicators.** BPD’s service call history over the last five years is displayed in **Figure 4.3, Police Service Call Trend, 2009-2014**, which shows a peak of more than 34,000 calls in 2011. The Department has an emergency response-time target of five minutes and averaged 4:10 in 2014.

**FIGURE 4.3, Police Service Call Trend, 2009-2014**



SOURCE: Bellaire Police Department (September 2015)

◆ **Current Issues:**

Space

- BPD currently operates with insufficient space for programmed functions. As a result of a successful bond election in November 2013, the Bellaire Police Station and Municipal Courts will be rebuilt. Once these new facilities are designed this project will move forward. The new facilities are intended to meet community needs for approximately 50 years.



◆ **Future Needs:**

Staffing

- BPD needs to increase its police officer staffing to meet demands for expanded police services in light of increases in criminal activity and traffic congestion.

Vehicles

- No change in future anticipated needs beyond scheduled replacements due to end of useful life of vehicles, or in case of future expansion of services.
- Need for continued monitoring and assessment of fuel cost, as well as implementation of strategies for minimizing the associated budgetary impact.

Equipment

- Scheduled replacement due to end of useful life of equipment, or other needs based on changes in technology or legislative mandates.

Technology and Communications

- Continued improvements in technology to comply with legislative mandates and Criminal Justice Information Systems system security requirements.
- BPD manages radio communications for police, fire and EMS. Like most area agencies, BPD has fully transitioned to the City of Houston 700 MHz Public Safety Radio system. BPD next needs to implement microwave transmission capabilities to ensure radio communications is maintained in emergency conditions. Microwave transmission is planned in the new facilities.



More information on the department and its services is available on the City website.

### Fire and Emergency Response

The Bellaire Fire Department (BFD) operates from a building at 5101 Jessamine Street which is part of the Bellaire Town Square municipal campus.

- ◆ **Staffing.** BFD currently has 21 full-time sworn firefighters and two sworn administrative officers, and they work in three shifts throughout the day at seven persons per shift. The City of Bellaire maintains mutual aid agreements with the City of Houston and

#### Bellaire Fire Department MISSION STATEMENT

The department is organized to provide emergency services to the citizens and visitors in the City of Bellaire. These services are provided through the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery. BFD's mission is to protect life and property through services in these areas.



**ISO Ratings**

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) collects information on public fire protection and analyzes the data using a Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS). ISO assigns a Public Protection Classification (PPC) from 1 to 10. Class 1 represents the best public protection, and Class 10 indicates less than the minimum recognized protection.

By classifying a community's ability to suppress fires, ISO helps communities evaluate their public fire protection services. The program provides an objective, nationwide standard that helps fire departments in planning and budgeting for facilities, equipment and training. Most importantly, by helping communities to secure lower fire insurance premiums based on better citizen and property protection, the PPC program provides incentives and rewards for communities that choose to improve their firefighting capabilities and services.



automatic aid agreements with the cities of West University Place and Southside Place (these agreements are for firefighting assistance, but the cities also assist each other with emergency medical service responses). The combination of Bellaire's own staffing and this inter-city support enables BFD to meet all current needs. However, this situation could evolve with demographic changes and future potential development activity in the community.

Key factors in BFD's staffing plans are standards promulgated by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). BFD meets these standards by having six firefighters on duty per shift, which also ensures compliance with the "two-in, two-out" rule for response to fire emergency scenes.

- ◆ **Service Indicators.** BFD also uses response-time guidance from the National Fire Protection Association and maintains a standard response time of less than four minutes.

A community's fire protection and response capabilities also influence local property insurance rates through the assignment of "ISO" ratings as explained in the sidebar. On the 1 to 10 ISO scale, where 1 is the highest possible rating, Bellaire currently has a 2 rating. According to BFD, a concern for past ratings involved water supply issues, but this problem has been overcome. Future ratings could depend, in part, on whether the City maintains adequate staffing and equipment in the face of any potential development and redevelopment activity in Bellaire that places significant new demands on the City's emergency response resources. The next ISO review for the Bellaire Fire Department is set to occur in 2016-17.

With the adoption of Ordinance 99-043 in August 1999, the City of Bellaire amended the community's building standards to require residential fire sprinkler systems in any new dwelling "with occupiable space (space capable of being made into a room) above the second floor," as well as in any remodeled areas above a second floor for which a building permit was issued after December 31, 1999. The sprinkler systems must also be designed, installed, and tested in accordance with NPFA standards. With the extent of new construction and residential redevelopment in Bellaire, this strategic regulatory change will be another key factor in maintaining the current high ISO rating.

- ◆ **Current Issues:**

Space

- Completion of the Fire Station reconstruction at its existing Jessamine Street location addressed BFD's previous space needs, and the new building was designed to provide for future expansion of the department should service demands increase.



### Technology and Communications

- BFD has transitioned to a digital format for radios based on the City of Houston making the same change. Technology changes were also factored into the design of the new Fire Station (e.g., use of open loft spaces, etc.). The department's primary communication assistance comes through police dispatch, and no change in this arrangement is expected.

#### ◆ **Future Needs:**

- Evaluate fire safety needs as future development plans are implemented.
- New frontline fire apparatus.
- Continued replacement of firefighting protective equipment.
- Advanced training for paramedics to keep up with EMS trends.
- Potential increase in staffing for increased needs.
- Consideration of a more encompassing residential and commercial building sprinkler ordinance.



More information on the department and its services is available on the City website.

## CITY FACILITIES

### City Hall and other Municipal Buildings

A City-appointed Facilities Committee was formed during 2007 to work with consultant PGAL on a study of municipal facility needs and possibilities at Bellaire Town Square. Through this process, a wide variety of options were considered for potentially renovating, moving, or otherwise altering the location and utilization of City facilities. No final decisions were made as to the future direction of City buildings aside from rebuilding the Fire Station in the same location. Demolition and reconstruction of the new Fire Station was completed in 2010. City Council voted in spring 2013 to replace City Hall, Civic Center, Municipal Courts and the Police Station. Then, in November 2013, Bellaire residents voted in support of an \$11 million general obligation bond to replace these facilities. Planning for these new facilities was under way at the time this Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2015, and PGAL will provide the necessary architectural and engineering services.

#### ◆ **Current Issues:**

##### Structural Needs

- City Hall is in poor condition from a structural standpoint. Issues include major foundation problems, sewer line breaks, needed roof



repairs, and old mechanical systems that will need replacement in the near future.

- The Library and Police Department buildings are also in questionable condition with old mechanical systems plus foundation leaks at BPD.
- The Public Works building in far southeast Bellaire is in overall good condition, as is the Recreation Center building at Town Square, although a new gym floor will be needed in the next five years or so (the floor is missing a moisture barrier at the foundation seams).
- The cosmetic appearance of some City buildings also needs attention. Interior cosmetic improvements to the Library and Police Department buildings were completed since the 2009 Comprehensive Plan.

Building Maintenance

- Maintenance is a constant challenge in older, aging buildings. All the buildings mentioned above have maintenance issues, which cause increased expenses, constant repairs, and poor operating efficiency. Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are in especially poor condition due to the age of equipment that has exceeded its life expectancy, except for the chiller which was replaced in 2013.
- Other than the Recreation Center and Public Works building, planning for potential future replacement needs to begin for the City Hall, Police Department, and Library buildings.
- Repairs to address all damage to City buildings resulting from Hurricane Ike have been completed since the 2009 Comprehensive Plan.

◆ **Future Needs:**

Redevelopment of City Property

- Given the age of many City facilities and the near build-out situation that makes available land scarce in Bellaire, it will be important to assess opportunities for redevelopment and/or re-use of existing City properties, sites, and rights-of way. Alternative uses include, but are not limited to, parks, utilities, drainage improvements, and facilities.

**Library**

The City of Bellaire Library facility is located at 5111 Jessamine Street, adjacent to the Fire Station and across from the Police Department and Municipal Court Building as part of the Town Square municipal campus.

- ◆ **Staffing.** The Library currently has seven employees—three professional librarians (Director, Reference Librarian, Children’s

**Bellaire Library  
MISSION STATEMENT**

To support residential quality of life with comprehensive library services by providing materials, programs, and reference service through available technology that meets the recreational, research and informational needs of Bellaire residents of all ages.



Librarian), one Library Support Technician (computer support), three Library Assistants, plus one part-time employee. No staffing changes are planned in the immediate future.

- ◆ **Building Area.** According to the City’s recent Town Square facilities study, the current Library building has 11,504 total gross square feet and 10,701 square feet of usable space. The building was also assessed through a 2004 effort, “Facilities Assessment and Architectural Programming: Study of City of Bellaire Buildings.” The building footprint has not changed since the last addition in 1974.
- ◆ **Service Indicators.** Various indicators of library use over the last two years are compiled in **Table 4.1, Bellaire Library Circulation and Utilization**. For comparison purposes, statistics are also provided for the October through March period as the summer months are the Library’s busiest time.

**TABLE 4.1, Bellaire Library Circulation and Utilization**

Annual Activity		
Indicator	Fiscal Year 2013	Fiscal Year 2014
Circulation	214,566	202,783
Number of Programs	517	310
Total Attendance	14,392	16,168
Gate Count	112,992	114,815
October through March Activity		
Indicator	First Half FY 2014	First Half FY 2015
Circulation	91,112	82,038
Number of Programs	233	141
Total Attendance	6,479	8,384
Gate Count (est. per week)	102,752 (1,976)	108,732 (2,091)
Internet Use (est. per week)	27,612 (531)	34,060 (655)

SOURCE: City of Bellaire Public Library (September 2015)

- ◆ **Funding Support.** Each year the Friends of the Bellaire Library considers a list of needs prepared by staff, in response to which the group may provide support primarily through funds raised through book sales each year. This typically involves sets of materials, equipment, and summer programming support.
- ◆ **Current Issues:**
  - Building Space and Condition
  - Various inadequate design elements of the existing Library building were addressed in 2012 including:
    - Installation of an additional storage shed behind the Library.



- A re-designed front entrance to properly accommodate all patrons.
- Correction of identified accessibility issues subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Enlarged restrooms for ADA compliance, although the restrooms are still undersized to meet overall Library needs.
- Installation of a small enclosed conference room on the second floor for meetings and to accommodate those needing a quiet space.
- Parking redesign for ADA compliance, although the number of available spaces is still inadequate during peak periods.
- Mold remediation.
- Installation of more electrical outlets to help meet increasing technological demands of patrons.
- Aesthetic upgrades to both the Library interior and exterior.

Foundation problems began to appear on both ends of the Library building in 2014. City Council allocated \$70,000 in the Fiscal Year 2015 budget for foundation repairs, under-slab plumbing repairs, and interior cosmetic repairs due to damage caused by the foundation issues. This work was complete at the time this Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2015.



◆ **Future Needs:**

Available Land

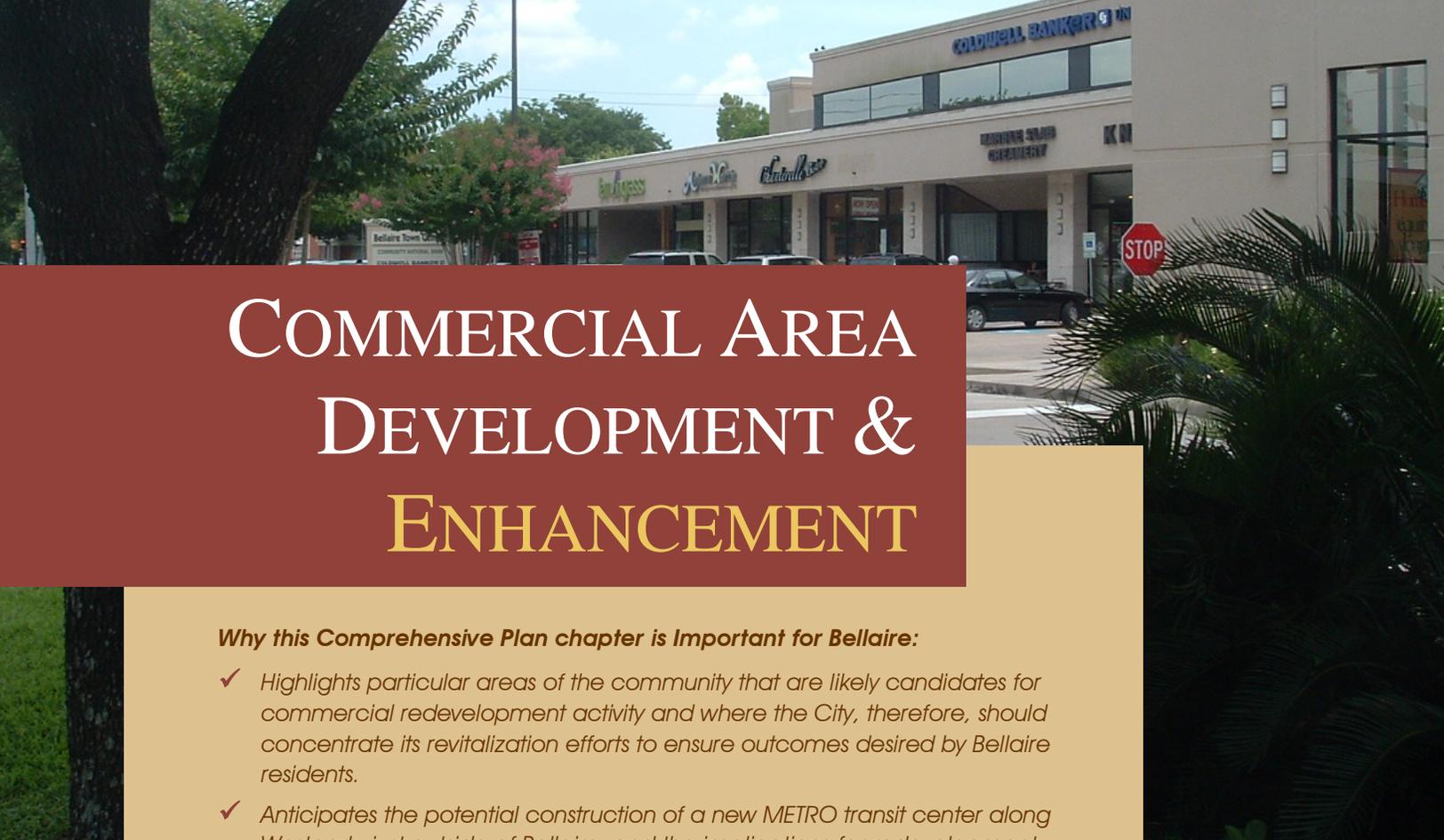
- City Council voted in support of purchasing a residential parcel adjacent to the west side of the Library. This property was acquired in May 2012 and could potentially be used for parking, building expansion, additional outdoor reading area or simply as green space.

Technology

- Keeping up with rapidly advancing technology—and associated patron expectations—will be an ongoing challenge. At the same time, the Library must continue to maintain its paper collections effectively and efficiently.

More information on the Bellaire Public Library and its services is available on the City website.





# COMMERCIAL AREA DEVELOPMENT & ENHANCEMENT

## **Why this Comprehensive Plan chapter is Important for Bellaire:**

- ✓ *Highlights particular areas of the community that are likely candidates for commercial redevelopment activity and where the City, therefore, should concentrate its revitalization efforts to ensure outcomes desired by Bellaire residents.*
- ✓ *Anticipates the potential construction of a new METRO transit center along Westpark, just outside of Bellaire, and the implications for redevelopment opportunities at Bellaire's north City limits closest to Uptown Houston.*
- ✓ *Emphasizes the importance of both commercial development quality and attractive design of public infrastructure and streetscapes along Bellaire's major corridors as this is where first and lasting impressions of the community are formed.*
- ✓ *In conjunction with Chapter 2, Land Use & Community Character, provides the basis for potential adjustments to the City's zoning strategy for its prime commercial areas and corridors.*

## CHAPTER 5

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the outlook for commercial development and redevelopment activity in Bellaire, both in terms of local community-serving needs, as well as in the context of broader Houston-area development trends. This includes consideration of strategic locations such as the “City Center” area (within new zoning districts CMU and UV-D) and the new UV-T zoning district in north Bellaire, plus key corridors where the City’s non-residential development has traditionally been focused. This chapter serves to reinforce Chapter 2, Land Use & Community Character, by documenting the types of commercial development residents anticipate and would like to see in their community in the future—and where such development and redevelopment activity should be focused to ensure compatibility and protect the character of the “City of Homes.”

This chapter also addresses the City’s role in encouraging and guiding desired development types and forms, in terms of preferred location, scale



and quality design. This includes consideration of aesthetic treatments on both private development sites and within the public realm that can improve image and appearance along the community’s major corridors (e.g., “context sensitive” roadway design, landscaping, signage, building and site design, and other amenities). Lastly, through the 2009 comprehensive planning process, this chapter pointed out the need for a dedicated City staff or contract position focusing on ongoing commercial redevelopment efforts in Bellaire and to interact with potential commercial development prospects. This was cited by noted Houston area development community representatives as one of various impediments to City Center redevelopment in a 2007 market study, which is also referenced further in this chapter. Since 2009 the City engaged a consultant to help assess Bellaire’s approach to and explore its priorities for commercial revitalization. Based on that effort and as part of updating this Comprehensive Plan in 2015, this plan recognizes that the City Manager and the Director of Development Services are primarily responsible for commercial redevelopment efforts as part of their overall duties and—in close collaboration with the Mayor and City Council—can speak on behalf of the City and advance its interests in this area.

## KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The following facts, assumptions, and considerations provide the context for the goals and action strategies presented in this chapter:

### Bellaire Urban Village at Westpark

In the Comprehensive Plan adopted in November 2009, this section included extensive discussion on the potential for a “transit-oriented development” (TOD) scenario near the north Bellaire City limits along Westpark, focused around an anticipated new Bellaire Rail Station. This was because it appeared, at the time, that METRO’s east-west University light rail line and a complementary north-south Uptown light rail line were proceeding toward near-term construction, with necessary funding lined up and final regulatory approvals pending. Updates to this Comprehensive Plan during 2015 highlight that the City, in 2011, adopted a new zoning strategy for the TOD area by replacing the former Research, Development and Distribution (RDD) zoning district with a new Urban Village-Transit Oriented Development (UV-T) district.

In the interim between the City’s 2009 and 2015 comprehensive planning efforts, METRO’s University and Uptown light rail lines were postponed indefinitely. More recently, Uptown Houston chose to proceed with broader mobility improvements for its area that include implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service along Post Oak Boulevard. The ultimate Uptown Houston vision, as presented to and discussed with City of Bellaire officials, is to tie the BRT service into a proposed new METRO transit center along Westpark. At the time of the 2015 update of this Comprehensive Plan, it appeared that the transit center would be located farther west, within the



City of Houston, versus at the earlier rail station location along Bellaire's northern City limits. It also appeared that Uptown Houston was pushing back the timeline for the transit center while focusing first on BRT design and construction.

The passage of time has also led to different market calculations and real estate decisions by owners of property within the City of Houston, just west of the UV-T area toward South Rice Avenue. Larger tracts on the Houston side that were once part of the TOD vision along Westpark have already developed in a more typical, auto-oriented fashion with large-footprint retail stores, associated pad sites along South Rice, and expansive areas devoted to parking. Properties conducive for redevelopment in Bellaire's UV-T district could still follow a different path, with a more mixed-use and walkable design. Developer inquiries to the City demonstrate this potential and also reflect build-out of the Uptown area and continued interest in strategic sites for upscale and mixed-use projects in areas west of River Oaks and Upper Kirby. As with the earlier RDD and TOD scenarios, the introduction of east-west traffic circulation across the UV-T district, all the way from Loop 610 to South Rice, could be an additional impetus to new real estate investment in the area. Uptown Houston has continued to recognize this critical element in its planning for the potential transit center, but recent development activity between South Rice and the Bellaire City limits impedes this connectivity.

Through the 2015 update of this Comprehensive Plan, the Goal 5.1 table is now annotated to indicate action items already accomplished since the 2009 plan update related to the Bellaire Urban Village area near Westpark.

### City Center Area

As a precursor to the 2009 Comprehensive Plan process, Bellaire's City Center area was the focus of a special study during 2007 that included a physical assessment and visioning process, led by Kendig Keast Collaborative (the City's consultant for this Comprehensive Plan), as well as a market analysis conducted by CDS Market Research. Besides assessing current conditions and the future outlook for City Center, this strategic planning process was also intended to yield a consensus vision and goals for the area as presented in the sidebar on this page. The vision and goals were crafted to suggest a balance between commercial redevelopment objectives and the community's desires for City Center.

The study process included review of previous plans and studies, dating back to significant "Town Center" planning and implementation efforts during the 1980s (including the creation and later dissolution of a tax increment financing district); a property ownership inventory and history; field inventories of the area; a series of stakeholder interviews; and a special workshop with members of all City-appointed Boards and Commissions. The study results were reviewed and finalized in coordination with the Strategic Planning & Development Committee of City Council, which also included the Chair and Vice Chair of the City's Planning & Zoning Commission. The study helped to confirm:

NOTE: The information in this City Center Area section, from the Comprehensive Plan update in 2009, is retained here as background. As noted at the end of the section, City-initiated zoning ordinance amendments based on these City Center priorities and guidance were adopted by City Council during 2014.



**City Center Vision and Goals**

*VISION:* A revitalized City Center that enhances the quality of residential life in Bellaire by providing attractive and convenient shops, services, entertainment and residential options.

*GOAL 1:* A City Center that is directly linked to Bellaire’s immediate and long-term well-being and is realistically achievable.

*GOAL 2:* A City Center that fills a local market niche that responds directly to the needs and desires of Bellaire residents.

*GOAL 3:* A City Center that attracts desirable commercial, retail, mixed use and residential development.

*GOAL 4:* A City Center that provides safe and convenient pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular mobility.

*GOAL 5:* A City Center that balances the space and parking needs of various commercial activities with the community’s desire for an appealing downtown. Key elements would include “pockets of green,” attractive site development and building design, signature corridors, and intersections with exceptional streetscapes.

*GOAL 6:* A City Center enlivened by the presence of residential options.

*GOAL 7:* A City Center that links municipal facilities to the community’s commercial core.

- ◆ The degree of development interest in Bellaire’s City Center, but with suggestions from local and regional development community representatives that the City of Bellaire needs to take a more active role to encourage significant reinvestment (e.g., by setting quality standards, establishing a more walkable setting, addressing area aesthetics in terms of streetscape and signage, providing public parking, and exploring public/private partnership opportunities).
- ◆ The economic and market reasons for limited property turnover or improvements in the area for an extended period.
- ◆ Receptiveness among Bellaire officials and residents to potential residential development in City Center (whether stand-alone or in mixed-use scenarios).
- ◆ The City’s two current “CCD” zoning districts do not allow a stand-alone residential development in City Center.
- ◆ Scenarios under consideration (through a concurrent Bellaire Town Square facilities study) in which some City facilities might be relocated to City Center.
- ◆ The fundamental desire to achieve some tangible improvement of the area and ensure that any revitalization effort enhances residents’ quality of life (versus a typical economic development focus on expanding commercial tax base and associated revenue).

A prioritization exercise involving members of City Council, the Planning & Zoning Commission, and members of other City Boards and Commissions resulted in the following items rising to the top as the desired focus for City Center revitalization:

1. Housing diversity and opportunities in City Center.
2. A comprehensive strategy for renewing the area.
3. Pedestrian mobility.
4. A more green and attractive setting.
5. Truly unique businesses (specialty stores, boutiques).

The Existing Physical Conditions element of the City Center study identified 10 key factors in considering how best to enhance the area, some of which mirror the prioritization results above. These are summarized as follows:

1. **Urban Character Without the Benefits of a True Downtown Setting:**
  - Urban feel from “intensity” of area (traffic, hardscape).
  - But spread out and auto-oriented.
  - Regional arterials pass through area.
  - Area lacks “critical mass.”





Bellaire City Center area, in yellow (as defined by the previous zoning districts CCD-1 and CCD-2), and the “Urban Village” area, in dark red (now the Urban Village-Downtown zoning district), to be a prime focus of ongoing revitalization efforts.

- No anchor use(s) or activities.
  - Some edges of area directly abut unzoned City of Houston properties.
2. **Difficult Building Sites:**
- Bissonnet diagonal the dominant physical feature.
  - Resulting street and block pattern.
  - Some unusually shaped and undersized parcels.
  - Minimal development potential on some sites (especially after setback and parking requirements applied).
3. **Parking Arrangements:**
- Extensive surface parking.
  - Adds to extent of “hardscape.”
  - Adds to spread-out nature of area.
  - Some under-utilized parking areas.



- Opportunities for:
  - shared parking
  - freed-up space for more productive use
  - green space and amenities

4. **Marginal Conditions:**

- Limited maintenance or upgrades in some locations (e.g., facades, pavement).
- Image of substandard property upkeep.
- Detracts from the area’s appeal.
- A mismatch with improvements to Bellaire’s residential stock.
- Undermines residents’ quality of life.

5. **Lack of Residential Presence:**

- Would create more foot traffic during evenings and on weekends.
- Also demand for retail, services, and entertainment.
- Residents living right in the area would expect a safe, inviting setting.
- Current CCD zoning only allows residential uses through “combined retail/residential,” which also requires navigating a Planned Development review and approval process.
- An urban residential renaissance is occurring in central Houston.

6. **Lack of Bicycle/Pedestrian “Friendliness” and Safe Neighborhood Access:**

- CCD-1 purpose statement in the zoning ordinance refers to “... a predominately retail commercial area ... easily accessible to city residents.”
- Lack of marked bike/pedestrian routes and walkways to/from and within the area.
- Traffic is a positive for retail, but most vibrant downtowns have a pedestrian orientation.

7. **Lack of Municipal Presence:**

- All Bellaire civic functions elsewhere.
- Another common generator of visitation and daytime (and evening) street activity.
- A potential means for adding more “green” and other amenities to the area (e.g., public squares, fountains), as well as public parking.
- Another potential anchor, including for a master-planned development approach (public/private mix).

**Other City Center Study Findings**

The Market Analysis portion of the study included the following findings:

- With a median parcel size of 0.3 acres, the area was divided among 73 property owners. The top eight landholders controlled about half of all private land.
- Of the roughly 81 acres within the CCD zoning districts, 28.5% of the area is within publicly owned streets and easements.
- The gross taxable value of area properties was \$54.2 million in 2006, which yielded approximately \$238,000 in property tax revenue for the City. Tax delinquencies totaled \$71,849.
- City Center rents ranged from \$9 to \$13 per square foot for older space to \$20 to \$28 per foot for newer space. Despite the lower rentals for older retail properties, the property owners appear to be satisfied with their current revenue streams given the low-cost environment and with their properties carrying low tax values relative to the highest-and-best-use values.
- At the time of this study, the City was planning \$3 million of infrastructure improvements, including upgraded traffic signals, sidewalks, and pedestrian street crossings.
- Also at the time of the study, retail businesses in the area appeared to be doing well, particularly “upscale” shops (e.g., Magpie’s, Starbuck’s, Lemongrass) that are most often mentioned as desired by Bellaire residents.
- The City of Bellaire has no program of developer incentives.
- Condemnation of land is also not available as a redevelopment tool following a November 2006 City Charter amendment prohibiting the use of eminent domain to acquire properties for economic development.



8. **Lack of “Green” Areas and Amenities – Despite the Extent of Public Space:**

- CCD-2 purpose statement in the zoning ordinance refers to the City Center area as “... the focal point of the City’s visual character.”
- Limited open space or vegetated areas.
- Excessive street sections.
- More streetscape and image/identity enhancements needed.
- Another benefit of residential uses in the area (private landscaping and visible flowers, plants on porches, in windows).

9. **Wide Range of Building Styles:**

- All types of architecture in area.
- Partly due to different eras, but also the level of sophistication in building types and quality in some cases.
- Contributes to area’s disjointed appearance.
- How far to go with potential design standards?
- Building orientation relative to streets is another consideration.

10. **Dramatic Retail Market “Drop-Off” and Change in Community Character to the West:**

- Definite change in housing, retail, and general physical conditions past Chimney Rock.
- A fundamental factor beyond an enclave community’s control.
- City “Center” is actually at west edge of community.

The goal, guiding principles, and associated action strategies in this chapter related to City Center (under Goal 5.2) are intended to build upon the results of the 2007 study and consensus-building effort. Through the 2015 update of this Comprehensive Plan, the Goal 5.2 table is now annotated to indicate action items already accomplished since the 2009 plan update. Further details on the market analysis phase of the earlier City Center study are available in the full CDS Market Research report, *Independent Market Analysis - City Center District - Bellaire, Texas* (June 2007).

### **Commercial Development in General**

Bellaire City Council periodically refines and agrees on a set of goals and objectives to focus its efforts and guide City staff functions. The City Council Goals and Objectives for January 2008 through January 2010—the timeframe when this Comprehensive Plan was previously updated—addressed commercial development issues most directly through Objective D3, as highlighted in the sidebar on the next page. Priority initiatives associated with this objective included ongoing coordination with the Greater Southwest Houston Chamber of Commerce and others “to identify and investigate potential development interest,” plus preparation of an Economic Development Plan for Bellaire’s commercial districts. (It should be noted that



business development and networking efforts in Bellaire previously supported by the Chamber now occur through the Bellaire Business Association, or BBA.) The list of considerations for this suggested plan was very much in line with the opportunities and challenges discussed within this chapter for the Bellaire Rail Station and City Center areas:

- ◆ more mixed use;
- ◆ revitalization of older buildings;
- ◆ better mix of retail offerings;
- ◆ traffic flow accommodation;
- ◆ new development possibilities;
- ◆ walkways;
- ◆ green areas with pedestrian seating;
- ◆ possible architectural standards that are uniform, but unique;
- ◆ mixed usage residential and commercial;
- ◆ connection to other surrounding urban centers;
- ◆ architectural and/or art features built into City rights-of-way and commercial businesses that identify “Bellaire” (i.e., gateways, pavers, special lighting, benches, landscaping, etc.); and
- ◆ easy access parking, such as underground parking.

**City Council Goals and Objectives**

The Council’s adopted Goals and Objectives for January 2008 through January 2010 included the following goal for the Strategic Plan and Development Focus Area:

*The City Council of the City of Bellaire, Texas, will take a proactive role in the long-term development of the commercial and residential areas to make Bellaire the most desirable city in Harris County.*

Then, the following objective focused specifically on commercial development considerations:

**OBJECTIVE 3:** *Encourage development of commercial areas.* There is a significant commercial value and potential in our extensive commercial districts within the City. Develop recommendations for a long-term economic vision plan.

Additionally, the other primary commercial area in Bellaire is the Bissonnet corridor, east of City Center between 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Loop 610, and then east of Loop 610 to the east City limits past Mulberry. As illustrated by the photo examples in this section, this commercial corridor, in its current state, also underperforms in terms of general aesthetics and contribution to community character. This is partly due to shallow lots along much of the corridor, but especially because of limited design-related standards in the City’s development regulations.

This situation was addressed through a key implementation step resulting from this chapter within the 2009 Comprehensive Plan update—the adoption by City Council, in 2014, of two new zoning districts, the Corridor Mixed Use (CMU) and Urban Village-Downtown (UV-D) districts. These districts encompass much of the Bissonnet corridor within Bellaire and, along with the new UV-T district in north Bellaire, are the mechanism for applying new site

and building design standards in these areas (as codified in Section 24-513a., Design Standards in Commercial and Mixed-Use Districts, within the City’s Code of Ordinances). As stated at the beginning of the new City Code section, “The purpose of this Section is to establish reasonable design standards and related guidance to address community desire for visually appealing non-residential and mixed-use development that enhances the overall quality and character of the City, while balancing the legitimate development and commercial needs of property owners.”



### Houston Urban Corridor Planning

The City of Houston Planning & Development Department in 2009 was proceeding with a multi-year initiative intended “to change the City’s land development regulations and infrastructure standards to accommodate a broad range of mobility options—walking, bicycling, public transit, and driving—in order to improve access to jobs, services, entertainment and recreation, now and in the future.”

The corridor planning effort was concentrating on areas near METRO’s expanding light rail system, with a special emphasis around the transit stations, to create a more transit-supportive built environment. While it is not surprising that this program was explicitly described as not involving zoning, it was a commendable effort by the City of Houston to explore ways to improve community appearance and residents’ quality of life as described in this brochure excerpt:

*The way the city grows is directly related to the rules that regulate land development and the standards for the infrastructure that supports development. These dictate things like the width of streets and sidewalks, the distance between buildings and the street, how many parking spaces a business must have, what type of landscaping must be added, and much more. Each of these items may seem like a minor issue on its own, but when taken as a whole, they create the world we live in and make the difference between having communities we can walk in or where we have to drive everywhere. Changes to regulations and standards can positively impact how growth is distributed, the way the city looks, and how we get around.*



This stretch of Bissonnet east of Avenue B exhibits many common features of a “strip development,” auto-oriented corridor: (1) stand-alone, single-use buildings surrounded by paved parking areas with minimal landscaping (although the structure is pulled close to the street in this case, with some parking to the rear); (2) entire site frontages devoted to paved parking areas, with no green space relief of any kind; and (3) commercial sites with extensive frontage area devoted to vehicle access, which further limits landscaping potential and leads to access management concerns through the cumulative impact of this situation along a roadway corridor.



From ground level, the typical outcome is an “Anytown, USA” appearance, with minimal attention to aesthetics or establishing a unique image for Bellaire. Indeed, there is little to distinguish this scene from a commercial corridor in many other communities. However, the office building site across Bissonnet (below) demonstrates the value of generous front yard landscaping, attractive signage, and skillful site design in which parking is placed under and behind the main structure.





These conceptual images illustrate how street redesign and added streetscape and site design features can dramatically transform corridor aesthetics and the community's overall image and appeal. Examples depicted include installation of landscaped esplanades, more extensive landscaping within public rights-of-way and on private sites, special street lighting and traffic signal fixtures, enhanced traffic signals and street signage, overhead utility wires moved underground, and distinctive designs for intersection crosswalks and widened sidewalks.



## GOALS AND ACTIONS

The tables on the following pages present a set of goals and guiding principles for addressing the key issues identified in relation to commercial area development and enhancement in Bellaire. Potential action strategies are then outlined to respond to particular opportunities and challenges associated with the overall goals. The action options are arranged in six categories that represent the main ways that comprehensive plans are implemented.



The City's wastewater treatment facility is a prominent visual element that shapes first impressions of Bellaire at one of the community's busiest gateway locations along Beechnut.



This example at the corner of Bissonnet and N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street illustrates the beneficial effect, in terms of neighborhood compatibility and corridor quality, of designing a small corner office use with residential-style architecture and scale. The restaurant example below (from another community) shows how attention to development character, as well as the particular use, can complement nearby neighborhood and corridor development.





**GOAL 5.1:  
Repositioning of the UV-T district in north Bellaire  
as a mixed-use area with an Urban character.**

***Guiding Principles***

- A. Brand the UV-T area as a focal point of new amenities for Bellaire residents and a unique and inviting destination for visitors.
- B. Pursue the community’s life-cycle housing objectives in the UV-T area by encouraging varied residential living options not found elsewhere in the community.
- C. Protect adjacent residential neighborhoods from incompatible non-residential development.
- D. Recognize the UV-T area as one of the community’s best opportunities for gaining new public green space.
- E. Ensure that the UV-T area is conveniently and safely accessible to Bellaire residents by bike and on foot.
- F. Have the City take a more direct role in spurring commercial area revitalization, including in the UV-T area.

**Consideration 1: Transformation of the UV-T into a Mixed-Use, Pedestrian-Oriented Area.**

<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Focus on attracting retail establishments, restaurants, and services desired by Bellaire residents and intended to serve local needs, but also appealing to visitors to Bellaire.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>[ACCOMPLISHED, in large part, through standards for the new UV-T zoning district]</b> Completely rework the current “RDD” zoning strategy to promote a transit-oriented, mixed-use station area district with an urban character. Code amendment priorities should include elimination of permitted uses not compatible with this vision (e.g., light industry, distribution, and typical horizontal uses such as auto dealerships); provision for attached housing types, as well as mid-rise residential structures (potentially with first-floor retail or service uses); zoning incentives for mixed-use projects (e.g., density/intensity bonuses), and an easier path to vertical mixed use buildings besides only the Planned Development process; and development standards specifically aimed at protection of adjacent, established residential neighborhoods. Also frame building height standards to allow for the tallest buildings in the core of the district, nearest the rail station, and then taper down the permitted heights in the southern portion of the district, closest to the adjacent existing residential neighborhood.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Pursue access and circulation improvements described in Chapter 3-Mobility, to open up east-west traffic movement across the UV-T area and support its redevelopment.</li> <li>▶ Through development proposals and potential City-provided improvements, ensure that a small-block urban street grid is established as a framework for redevelopment in the UV-T area. Also provide wide sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities throughout the district.</li> </ul>
<b>Program/ Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ As part of the special study recommended under Further Study/Planning, refine and establish a branding and marketing strategy for the UV-T area to ensure that, over time, it achieves a distinct image and unique appeal that is recognized across the Houston metropolitan area.</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue coordination with METRO, the City of Houston, Uptown Houston, the Harris County Toll Road Authority, private development interests, and others involved in planning for a potential new METRO transit center along Westpark, just outside of Bellaire.</li> <li>▶ In conjunction with the City of Houston and other potential partners, pursue the South Rice Avenue improvement and enhancement strategy depicted in the <i>Bellaire Town Center Vision Plan</i> (Ehrenkrantz Eckstut &amp; Kuhn Architects, July 2008).</li> <li>▶ Recruit development partners, for potential public/private ventures, with a track record of quality results, interest in redevelopment projects, and ability to take on complex projects and see them through to successful completion.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Further Study/ Planning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Complete a special strategic planning and market study of the UV-T area as was done in 2007 for the City Center area. This effort should help to clarify development and redevelopment potential in the UV-T area, especially given the indefinite postponement of any METRO light rail construction along Westpark since 2010.</li> <li>▶ <b>[Density bonuses ACCOMPLISHED through standards for the new UV-T zoning district]</b> Consider financial and/or non-financial incentives the City may be able to offer (fiscally, politically) to encourage desired development and redevelopment outcomes (e.g., land assembly, infrastructure and drainage support, density bonuses).</li> </ul>
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**GOAL 5.2:**

**A revitalized City Center area geared toward the shopping, service, and entertainment needs of Bellaire residents.**

***Guiding Principles***

- A. *Brand City Center as a convenient place for Bellaire residents to shop and dine, but also a comfortable place to meet and interact.*
- B. *Pursue the community’s life-cycle housing objectives in the City Center area by encouraging varied residential living options not found elsewhere in the community.*
- C. *Protect adjacent residential neighborhoods from incompatible non-residential development.*
- D. *Recognize the City Center area as one of the community’s best opportunities for gaining new public green space.*
- E. *Ensure that the City Center area is conveniently and safely accessible to Bellaire residents by bike and on foot.*
- F. *Improve safety and security—both real and perceived—in the City Center area.*
- G. *Have the City take a more direct role in spurring commercial area revitalization, especially in the City Center area.*

**Consideration 1: Renewal of City Center to Provide the Small-Town Downtown Atmosphere Sought by Bellaire Residents**

<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Focus on recruiting lifestyle amenities desired by Bellaire residents (e.g., “boutique”/niche retailers, quality restaurants, community theatre, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>[ACCOMPLISHED, in large part, through standards for the new CMU and UV-D zoning districts]</b> Rework the City Center zoning strategy, as discussed in Chapter 2-Land Use &amp; Community Character, to shift the focus toward residential development suited to the City Center environment (e.g., small-lot and attached forms such as townhouses) in the CCD-1 zoning district, and focus commercial revitalization efforts on major street frontages and within the higher-intensity CCD-2 district. Also allow for mid-rise residential structures, potentially with first-floor retail or service uses, in the CCD-2 district.</li> <li>▶ Incorporate into the City Center zoning provisions allowing a relaxation of specified standards that may prevent or add difficulty to the redevelopment process, so long as certain precautions and mitigation criteria can be met. Common regulatory constraints to redevelopment include site access and circulation standards, limited on-site area for parking and loading, nonconforming setbacks, and on-site drainage requirements.</li> <li>✓ <b>[ACCOMPLISHED through standards for the new CMU and UV-D zoning districts]</b> Add shared parking provisions within the CCD zoning framework to enable reduction of land-wasting surface parking, which detracts from a desired urban character.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Through ongoing facility planning, pursue the potential relocation of certain City functions with significant public interaction to a suitable location in the City Center area.</li> <li>▶ Expand the Rebuild Bellaire program to commercial areas, particularly the City Center area, not only to upgrade street surfaces and drainage, but also to improve street appearance and edges, convert excessive paved areas to sidewalks and green space (e.g., along Cedar and Spruce streets)—and to signal City commitment and public investment.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide physical improvements intended to present a unified image and visual definition of the City Center area. Examples include unified district identification and wayfinding signage (including a possible new logo and design/color scheme for “branding” purposes); special street lighting and/or traffic signal fixtures; consistent landscaping across the district, particularly at key entry points and intersections; special paver and crosswalk designs at major intersections; distinctive pole banners; and special district-wide street signs (unique color and/or style). A more ambitious step would be to coordinate with property and business owners to replace scattered, competing signage with coordinated/joint signs using a consistent design across the entire district (and a prototype of this approach could be implemented in the catalyst revitalization area).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Program/ Initiative</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide special outreach and attention to established “mom and pop” businesses long patronized by Bellaire residents in the City Center area to help them make the transition and maintain their presence in a revitalizing City Center.</li> <li>▶ Establish a more visible police/security presence in the City Center area, whether through horse/foot patrols, a high-profile police storefront location, or private contract security personnel.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Recruit development partners, for potential public/private ventures, with a track record of quality results, interest in redevelopment projects, and ability to take on complex projects and see them through to successful completion.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Further Study/ Planning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Identify candidate locations for possible catalyst projects aimed at concentrating revitalization efforts and associated public and private investments and demonstrating City Center redevelopment potential.</li> <li>✓ <b>[ACCOMPLISHED through standards for the new CMU and UV-D zoning districts]</b> Consider limiting the range of permitted uses in the CCD districts to focus on a use mix that better reflects the “small town atmosphere” consistently cited by Bellaire residents in various community discussions and studies (including the Rice University <i>Framework for Desirable Growth</i> report and the University of Houston <i>Quality of Life</i> report, both completed in 2005).</li> <li>▶ Consider financial and/or non-financial incentives the City may be able to offer—fiscally and politically—to encourage desired development and redevelopment outcomes. This should include reducing the extent of streets and hardscape in the City Center area, and the potential abandonment of certain street segments to support redevelopment, whether for land assembly, drainage needs, additional public/open space, etc.</li> <li>▶ Study the feasibility of structured parking as part of redevelopment efforts in the City Center area.</li> </ul>

**GOAL 5.3:  
Vibrant commercial corridors with improved aesthetics  
and public and private design quality.**

***Guiding Principles***

- A. *Elevate the quality of Bellaire’s commercial areas and corridors to match the level of residential investment across the community.*
- B. *Seek a balance in commercial area zoning and regulation that does not inhibit beneficial business development and expansion but also protects private investment and community interests from incompatible and/or unappealing development outcomes.*
- C. *Protect adjacent residential neighborhoods from incompatible non-residential development.*
- D. *Take advantage of opportunities to achieve design upgrades along commercial corridors as private redevelopment is proposed and public street and infrastructure rehabilitation occurs.*
- E. *Incorporate more green space and features into Bellaire’s commercial areas both on private sites and in public ways.*
- F. *Pursue strategic opportunities for City government to take a more direct role in spurring commercial development and reinvestment to balance the local tax base, provided the proposed activity meets the fundamental criterion of advancing residents’ quality of life.*

**Consideration 1: Upgraded Quality and Appearance of Bellaire’s Commercial Corridors to Match its Residential Neighborhoods and Major Office Developments**

<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Recognize the City’s major thoroughfares as the primary place—in a largely auto-oriented community— where Bellaire’s image is established in the eyes and minds of residents, visitors, and pass-through commuters.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>[ACCOMPLISHED, in large part, through standards for the new CMU, UV-D and UV-T zoning districts]</b> Supplement existing zoning for non-residential and mixed-use development with new site and building design standards aimed at enhancing architectural quality; increasing landscaping around buildings, site perimeters and frontages, and within parking areas; and ensuring compatibility with the character of nearby residential development (i.e., building scale and design reflective of adjacent residential uses where a commercial or service activity is situated at a neighborhood edge).</li> <li>▶ Conduct an in-depth evaluation of areas within the Suburban Office and Business Park designations on the Future Land Use &amp; Character map in this Comprehensive Plan to consider “what if” scenarios of their desired re-use if the current uses were discontinued at some future point. As with the new CMU, UV-D and UV-T districts, one consideration would be whether to shift to a zoning approach that provides more flexibility.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Capital Improvement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Design and construct signature gateway and streetscape treatments at high-profile entry points into Bellaire (e.g., Bellaire Boulevard, Bissonnet, Newcastle, South Rice, Chimney Rock), as well as at key intersections (e.g., Bellaire/Bissonnet, Bellaire/ Newcastle, Bissonnet/Newcastle, Bissonnet/Avenue B, Bellaire/ Avenue B, Bellaire/South Rice, Bellaire/Chimney Rock, Bissonnet/Chimney Rock, Bissonnet/Renwick, Evergreen/ South Rice, Bissonnet/South Rice, Elm/South Rice, Fournace/South Rice, and all major West Loop intersections). These improvements should include the types of features illustrated in the “before and after” corridor scenes in this chapter (installation of landscaped esplanades, more extensive landscaping within public rights-of-way and on private sites, special street lighting and traffic signal fixtures, enhanced traffic signals and street signage, overhead utility wires moved underground, and distinctive designs for intersection crosswalks and widened sidewalks).</li> <li>▶ Install esplanades in place of continuous center turning lanes (e.g., on Bissonnet, South Rice) to control turning movements and increase safety, provide an intermediate refuge area for pedestrians crossing major streets, and enhance corridor aesthetics through landscaping of the new esplanades.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Program/ Initiative</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Offer mini-grants to existing commercial property and business owners to help finance building façade improvements, enhanced landscaping, or other site upgrades that might not otherwise occur where no construction activities are planned that would trigger compliance with newer development standards.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Partnerships/ Coordination</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explore opportunities to partner with the City of Houston and/or the City of West University Place to implement gateway enhancements at shared boundary points that would benefit both parties.</li> <li>✓ <b>[ACCOMPLISHED through successful formation and ongoing networking through the Bellaire Business Association (BBA)]</b> Under the auspices of the Greater Southwest Houston Chamber of Commerce, establish a Bellaire-specific business network, especially as a forum for greater public/private interaction on issues of particular concern in Bellaire (recognizing that many area business owners do not live in the community). Also maintain connections through other local networks (e.g., Rotary Club).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Further Study/ Planning</b></p>	<p>n/a</p>

# IMPLEMENTATION

## CHAPTER 6

### *Why this Comprehensive Plan chapter is Important for Bellaire:*

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

With the completion of a new Comprehensive Plan, the City of Bellaire has goals and direction for the ongoing development, redevelopment, and enhancement of the community over the next 20 years. However, now comes the most challenging and important step in the planning process—implementing the plan by turning the community's aspirations into reality. This will take the efforts and commitment of the City's elected and appointed officials, staff, residents, business owners, institutions, other levels of government, and other organizations and individuals who will serve as champions of the plan and its particular direction and strategies. It will also require the City to make sound decisions, set priorities, and secure necessary resources to implement the action strategies set forth in this plan.

The Comprehensive Plan should be a "living document," that is, a document that is frequently referred to for guidance in community decision-making. Equally important are formal procedures for the ongoing monitoring and reporting of successes achieved, difficulties encountered, new opportunities



and challenges that have emerged, and any other change in circumstances which may require rethinking of plan priorities.

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION METHODS

Simply setting out an implementation framework in this chapter is not enough to ensure that the action items of this plan will be carried out and the community’s vision and goals ultimately achieved. The policies and action priorities in this plan should be consulted frequently and should be widely used by decision-makers as a basis for judgments regarding:

- The timing and availability of infrastructure improvements.
- Proposed development and redevelopment applications.
- Zone change requests and other zoning-related actions.
- Expansion of public facilities, services and programs.
- Annual capital budgeting.
- Potential re-writes and amendments to the City’s development ordinances and related code elements.
- Intergovernmental (including inter-City and City/County) coordination and agreements.
- Operations, capital improvements, and programming related to individual City departments.

There are six general methods for plan implementation:

- (1) policy-based decisions;
- (2) land development regulations and engineering standards;
- (3) capital improvements programming;
- (4) special projects, programs and initiatives;
- (5) coordination and partnerships, and
- (6) ongoing study and planning.

### Policy-Based Decisions

Land use and development decisions should be made based on the policies that are set out in this Comprehensive Plan. In some measure, the adoption of new or amended land development regulations (e.g., zoning, subdivision, landscaping, sign controls, etc.) will establish a specific framework for evaluating private development proposals against the City’s articulated policies. However, decisions regarding infrastructure investment and Future Land Use & Character map amendments are generally left to the broad discretion of the City Council. This plan provides the common policy threads that should connect those decisions.



## Land Development Regulations and Engineering Standards

Land development regulations and engineering standards are fundamentals for plan implementation. It is plain—but often underappreciated—that private investment decisions account for the vast majority of any City’s physical form. Consequently, zoning and subdivision regulations and associated development criteria and technical engineering standards are the basic keys to ensuring that the form, character and quality of development reflect the City’s planning objectives. These ordinances should reflect the community’s desire for quality development outcomes while recognizing economic factors. They should not delay or interfere unnecessarily with appropriate new development or redevelopment that is consistent with plan goals and policies.

## Capital Improvements Programming

A capital improvements program, or “CIP,” is a multi-year plan (typically five years) that identifies budgeted capital projects, including street infrastructure; water, wastewater and drainage facilities; parks, trails and recreation facility construction and upgrades; construction of public buildings; and purchase of major equipment. Identifying and budgeting for major capital improvements will be essential to implementing this plan. Decisions regarding the prioritization of proposed capital improvements should take into account the policy and management directives of this plan.

## Special Projects, Programs and Initiatives

Special projects and initiatives is another broad category of implementation measures. These may include initiating or adjusting City programs; expanding citizen participation programs; providing training; and other types of special projects.

## Coordination and Partnerships

Some initiatives or community needs identified in the Comprehensive Plan cannot be accomplished by City government on its own. They may require direct coordination, intergovernmental agreements, or funding support from other public entities or levels of government. Additionally, the unique role of potential private and non-profit partners to advance the community’s action agenda should not be underestimated. This may occur through cooperative efforts, volunteer activities and in-kind services (which can count toward the local match requirements for various grant opportunities), and public/private financing of community improvements.

## Ongoing Study and Planning

There are a number of areas where additional planning work is recommended, at a “finer grain” level of detail than is appropriate in a comprehensive plan. As such, some parts of this plan will be implemented only after some additional planning or special study.



## PLAN ADMINISTRATION

During the development of the plan, representatives of government, business, neighborhoods, civic groups, and others came together to inform the planning process. These community leaders, and new ones to emerge over the horizon of this plan, must maintain their commitment to the ongoing implementation of the plan's policies—and to the periodic updating of the plan to adapt to changing conditions or unforeseen events.

### Education

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

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

- A discussion of the individual roles and responsibilities of the Council, Commission (and other advisory bodies), and individual staff members.
- A thorough overview of the entire Comprehensive Plan, with emphasis on the parts of the plan that relate to each individual group.
- Implementation tasking and priority setting, which should lead to each group establishing a one-year and three-year implementation agenda.
- Facilitation of a mock meeting in which the use of the plan and its policies and recommendations is illustrated.
- An in-depth question and answer session, with support from planning personnel, the City Attorney, the City Engineer, and other key staff.

### Role Definition

As the community's elected officials, the City Council should assume the lead role in implementation of this plan. 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. In conjunction with the City Manager, City Council should also ensure effective coordination among the various groups that are responsible for carrying out the plan's recommendations.



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

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

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

- Hosting the education initiative described above.
- Periodically obtaining public input to keep the plan up to date, using a variety of community outreach and citizen and stakeholder involvement methods.
- Ensuring that recommendations forwarded to the City Council are reflective of the plan goals, policies and recommendations. This relates particularly to decisions involving development review and approval, zone change requests, and ordinance amendments.
- After holding one or more public hearings to discuss new or evolving community issues and needs, making recommendations to the City Council regarding plan updates and plan amendments.

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

- Managing day-to-day implementation of the plan, including coordination through an interdepartmental plan implementation committee.
- Supporting and carrying out capital improvements planning efforts.
- Managing the drafting of new or amended land development regulations, working with the appropriate Boards and Commissions.



- Conducting studies and developing additional plans (including management of consultant efforts, as necessary).
- Reviewing applications for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan as required by the City’s land development regulations.
- Negotiating the specifics of interlocal 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 & Zoning Commission no less than 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.

## ACTION AGENDA

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

For progress to be achieved in any of these areas, it is essential that both long- and short-range implementation strategies be identified along with an action timeframe and an assignment of responsibilities to specific entities. **Table 6.1, Priority Action Agenda**, includes the following elements and implementation considerations:

- ◆ **Action Type.** This relates back to the six types of implementation methods highlighted earlier in this chapter (policy focused, regulatory focused, capital focused, program/initiative focused, partnership focused, planning/study focused).
- ◆ **Implementation and Coordination Roles.** In addition to identifying which City department(s) or function(s) would likely lead a task, this portion of Table 6.1 also highlights a variety of local and regional agencies that might have a role to play in certain initiatives, perhaps through potential cost-sharing, technical assistance, direct cooperation (potentially through an interlocal agreement), or simply by providing input and feedback on a matter in which they have some mutual interest. In particular, whenever potential regulatory actions or revised development standards are to be considered, participation of the development community is essential to ensure adequate consensus building.
- ◆ **Funding Sources.** This final set of columns in Table 6.1 indicates typical ways to finance plan implementation efforts. An obvious source is through the City’s own annual operating budget, as well as multi-year capital budgeting which is not strictly for physical construction projects



but also for funding significant studies and plans (e.g., utility master plans) intended to lay the groundwork for long-term capital projects. An Other Governments column is included along with a Grants column because grants are often applied for and awarded through a competitive process. Also, the County or other government agencies might choose to commit funds directly to an initiative along with the City. On the other hand, grants can also come from foundations and other non-government sources. Finally, the Private/Other column underscores the potential for public/private initiatives, corporate outreach, faith-based efforts, and other community volunteer contributions (e.g., Scouts, civic and service groups, etc.). The early implementation of certain action items, while perhaps not the highest priority, may be expedited by the availability of related grant opportunities, by a State or Federal mandate, or the willingness of one or more partners to pursue an initiative with the City.

**TABLE 6.1  
Priority Action Agenda**

Action Type	Implementation and Coordination Roles			Funding Sources				
	City of Bellaire	Public Partners	Private/ Other Partners	City Budget	CIP Budget	Other Govts	Grants	Private/ Other
<b>A. City Center Revitalization</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>(Goal 2.2, Considerations 2-3; Goal 3.1, Considerations 2 and 5; Goal 5.2)</i></span> - Ongoing commercial redevelopment efforts - Public realm and aesthetic enhancements - Evaluation of UV-D and CMU zoning districts implementation								
Capital Projects Program / Initiative Partnerships	<b>City Manager</b> Development Services Public Works Parks, Recreation & Facilities P & Z Commission	METRO Houston-Galveston Area Council	Development community Bellaire Business Association Property owners Current businesses	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>City Center Accomplishments since 2009 Comprehensive Plan</b> ✓ Zoning ordinance amendments (more development options by right, mixed-use parameters, design standards, shared parking) ✓ Pending H-E-B reconstruction (catalyst redevelopment project)								
<b>B. UV-T District Development</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>(Goal 2.2, Considerations 2-3; Goal 3.1, Considerations 2 and 5; Goal 5.1)</i></span> - Ongoing commercial redevelopment efforts - Street and drainage upgrades - Potential new METRO transit center along Westpark near Bellaire - Public realm and aesthetic enhancements - Evaluation of UV-T zoning district implementation								
Capital Projects Program / Initiative Partnerships	<b>City Manager</b> Development Services Public Works Parks, Recreation & Facilities P & Z Commission	City of Houston METRO Houston-Galveston Area Council	Development community Property owners Current businesses Bellaire Business Association Uptown Houston Association	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>UV-T Accomplishments since 2009 Comprehensive Plan</b> ✓ Zoning ordinance amendments (more development options by right, mixed-use parameters, design standards, shared parking) ✓ Ongoing coordination with METRO and Uptown Houston on area improvements without light rail transit along Westpark								



**TABLE 6.1**  
**Priority Action Agenda** *(continued)*

Action Type	Implementation and Coordination Roles			Funding Sources				
	City of Bellaire	Public Partners	Private/ Other Partners	City Budget	CIP Budget	Other Govts	Grants	Private/ Other
<b>C. Life-Cycle Housing Initiatives</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>(Goal 2.2; Goals 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3)</i></span> - Ongoing promotion and development recruitment efforts - Potential for additional zoning flexibility for alternative forms of ownership housing - Potential multi-unit housing options in new UV-T, UV-D and CMU zoning districts								
Program / Initiative Regulation	<b>Development Services</b> City Attorney P & Z Commission		Development community Property owners	✓				✓
<b>Life-Cycle Housing Accomplishments since 2009 Comprehensive Plan</b> ✓ Ownership housing options in new UV-D zoning district								
<b>D. Municipal Facilities Reconstruction / Upgrades</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>(Chapter 4, Public Infrastructure &amp; Services)</i></span> - Associated Town Square and South Rice Boulevard enhancements								
Capital Projects Planning / Study	<b>Parks, Recreation &amp; Facilities</b> Public Works Police Department Municipal Courts Library Ad Hoc Municipal Facilities Committee		PATRONS for Bellaire Parks	✓	✓			✓
<b>Municipal Facilities Accomplishments since 2009 Comprehensive Plan</b> ✓ New Fire Station ✓ Facilities and financial planning for Town Square redevelopment								
<b>E. Parks Master Plan Implementation</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>(Goal 3.1, Consideration 2; Goals 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3; Parks Master Plan appendix)</i></span> - Evelyn's Park development - Upgrades to existing parks - Holly Street Trail enhancements - Potential Paseo Park westward expansion if METRO Transit Center relocated								
Capital Projects Program / Initiative Partnerships	<b>Parks, Recreation &amp; Facilities</b> Public Works Parks & Recreation Advisory Board	Texas Parks & Wildlife METRO Harris County Precinct 3	PATRONS for Bellaire Parks Evelyn's Park Conservancy Bellaire Optimist Club Youth/athletic organizations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Parks Accomplishments since 2009 Comprehensive Plan</b> ✓ Teas property acquisition for Evelyn's Park								

Besides the five broad areas identified for concerted action in Table 6.1, other anticipated near-term priorities at the time this Comprehensive Plan was updated in Spring 2015 included:

- Priority public investments, through the City's multi-year Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), including projects related to ongoing water and wastewater system rehabilitation, street and sidewalk maintenance, municipal facilities, parks and recreation upgrades, UV-T infrastructure, wayfinding signage, and funding of a water and wastewater needs assessment and a Trails Master Plan.



- Completion of currently planned phases of the Rebuild Bellaire drainage and street reconstruction program, and potential funding of additional future phases.
- Ongoing coordination with the Houston Independent School District on pending plans for Bellaire High School reconstruction and other campus relocations or improvements (e.g., Mandarin School).
- Any necessary advocacy efforts with the Texas Department of Transportation, with regard to Bellaire interests, related to the pending reconstruction of the Loop 610/U.S. 59 interchange, especially involving potential enlargement of the ramp connection from U.S. 59 to West Loop 610 South.
- Action measures resulting from a current City-initiated Mobility Study.
- Additional zoning issues needing in-depth study as recommended by the Planning & Zoning Commission (e.g., parking standards, Planned Development procedures, additional areas for potential flexibility provisions, etc.), as well as re-evaluation of the new UV-T, UV-D and CMU zoning districts at an appropriate time.
- Ongoing oversight of residential development and teardown/rebuilding activity across the community.

It is essential that implementation priorities be revisited annually to recognize accomplishments, highlight areas where further attention and effort is needed, and determine whether the priority list should be revised given changing circumstances and emerging needs. This review and discussion should occur in conjunction with the City's annual budget process, Capital Improvements Program (CIP) preparation, and departmental planning. Once the necessary funding is committed and roles are defined the City staff member designated as the Comprehensive Plan Administrator should initiate a first-year work program in conjunction with the City Manager, other departments, and any public/private implementation partners.

## PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS

The Bellaire Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a flexible document allowing for adjustment to changing conditions over time. Shifts in political, economic, physical, technological, and social conditions, and other unforeseen circumstances, may influence and change the priorities and fiscal outlook of the community.

As the City evolves, new issues will emerge while others will no longer be as relevant. Some action statements will be found impractical or outdated while other plausible solutions will arise. To ensure that it continues to reflect the overall goals of the community and remains relevant and resourceful over time, the plan must be revisited on a regular basis to confirm that the plan



elements are still on point and the associated goals, policies and action statements are still appropriate.

Two types of revisions to the Comprehensive Plan may occur: (1) minor amendments, and (2) major updates. Minor plan amendments may be proposed at any time such as specific adjustments to the future land use plan related to particular land development applications or public improvement projects. Minor amendments can be addressed by the City in short order or, if not pressing, be documented and compiled for more holistic evaluation through an annual plan review process. For example, this is how and when the results of another specialized plan or study can be incorporated into relevant sections of the Comprehensive Plan. More significant plan modifications and updates should occur every five years at most. Major updates will involve reviewing the base conditions and anticipated growth trends; re-evaluating the goals, policies and recommendations in the plan—and formulating new ones as necessary; and adding, revising or removing action statements in the plan based on implementation progress.

### **Annual Progress Report**

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

The Annual Progress Report should include and highlight:

- Significant actions and accomplishments during the past year, including the status of implementation for each programmed task in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Obstacles or problems in the implementation of the plan, including those encountered in administering the land use and transportation aspects, as well as any other policies of the plan.
- Proposed amendments that have come forward during the course of the year, which may include revisions to the individual plan maps or other recommendations or text changes.
- Recommendations for needed actions, programs and procedures to be developed and implemented in the coming year, including recommendation of projects to be included in the City’s CIP, other programs/projects to be funded, and priority coordination needs with public and private implementation partners.



## Annual Amendment Process

Most substantive amendments to the Comprehensive Plan should be considered and acted on annually, allowing for proposed changes to be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect may be understood (although some interim amendments during the year may be straight-forward as the City's future land use plan is refined in conjunction with specific land development approvals). When considering a plan amendment, the City should ensure the proposed amendment is consistent with the goals and policies set forth in the plan regarding character protection, development compatibility, infrastructure availability, conservation of environmentally sensitive areas, and other community priorities. Careful consideration should also be given to guard against site-specific plan changes that could negatively impact adjacent areas and uses or detract from the overall character of the area. Factors that should be considered in deciding on a proposed plan amendment include:

- Consistency with the goals and policies set forth in the plan.
- Adherence with the Future Land Use & Character map.
- Compatibility with the surrounding area.
- Impacts on infrastructure provision including water, wastewater, drainage, and the transportation network.
- Impact on the City's ability to provide, fund and maintain services.
- Impact on environmentally sensitive and natural areas.
- Whether the proposed amendment contributes to the overall direction and character of the community as captured in the plan vision and goals (and ongoing public input).

### Criteria for Proposed Amendments to Future Land Use & Character Map

In addition to the overall plan monitoring and amendment procedures and timing outlined in this chapter, a further and specific issue involves consideration of proposed amendments to the adopted Future Land Use & Character map. A first consideration is whether a map amendment is necessary immediately, such as in conjunction with a particular rezoning request, or if the map proposal can wait so it can be examined more comprehensively through the annual Comprehensive Plan review and amendment process?

The list of items under Annual Amendment Process provides initial criteria for considering any type of Comprehensive Plan amendment, whether to the plan text or a particular map. The items below should also be reviewed and addressed when a Future Land Use & Character map adjustment is proposed:

- **Scope of Amendment:** Is the proposed map change limited to one or a few parcels, or would it affect a much larger area?
- **Change in Circumstances:** What specific conditions (e.g., population size and/or characteristics, area character and building form, property/structure conditions, infrastructure or public services, market factors including need for more land in a particular designation, etc.) have changed sufficiently to render the current map designation(s) inappropriate or out-of-date?
- **Consistency with Other Plans:** In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, is the proposed map change consistent with the intent and policy direction of any applicable small area plans, utility or drainage plans, or other City plans?
- **Adequate Information:** Do City staff, the Planning & Zoning Commission, and/or City Council have enough and appropriate information to move ahead with a decision (e.g., utility capacity, potential traffic impacts, other public service implications, resident/stakeholder concerns and input)?
- **Stakeholder Input:** What points, concerns, and insights have been raised by area residents, property owners, business owners, or others?



### Five-Year Update / Evaluation and Appraisal Report

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

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

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

- (1) Summary of major actions and interim plan amendments undertaken over the last five years.
- (2) Major issues in the community and how these issues have changed over time.
- (3) Changes in the assumptions, trends and base studies data, including the following:
  - The rate at which growth and development is occurring relative to the projections put forward in the plan.
  - Shifts in demographics and other growth trends.
  - City-wide attitudes and whether apparent shifts, if significant, necessitate amendments to the stated goals or strategies of the plan.
  - Other changes in political, social, economic, technological or environmental conditions that indicate a need for plan amendments.
- (4) Ability of the plan to continue to support progress toward achieving the community's goals. The following should be evaluated and revised as needed:
  - Individual statements or sections of the plan must be reviewed and rewritten, as necessary, to ensure that the plan provides sufficient information and direction to achieve the intended outcome.



- Conflicts between goals and policies that have been discovered in the implementation and administration of the plan must be pointed out and resolved.
- The Action Agenda must be reviewed and major accomplishments highlighted. Those not completed by the specified timeframe should be re-evaluated to ensure their continued relevance and/or to revise them appropriately.
- As conditions change, the timeframes for implementing the individual actions of the plan should be re-evaluated where necessary. Some actions may emerge as a higher priority given new or changed circumstances while others may become less important to achieving the goals and development objectives of the community.
- Based upon organizational, programmatic and procedural factors, as well as the status of previously assigned tasks, the implementation task assignments must be reviewed and altered, as needed, to ensure timely accomplishment of the plan’s recommended actions.
- Changes in laws, procedures and missions may impact the ability of the community to achieve its goals. The plan review must assess these changes and their impacts on the success of implementation, leading to any suggested revisions in strategies or priorities.

### Ongoing Community Outreach and Engagement

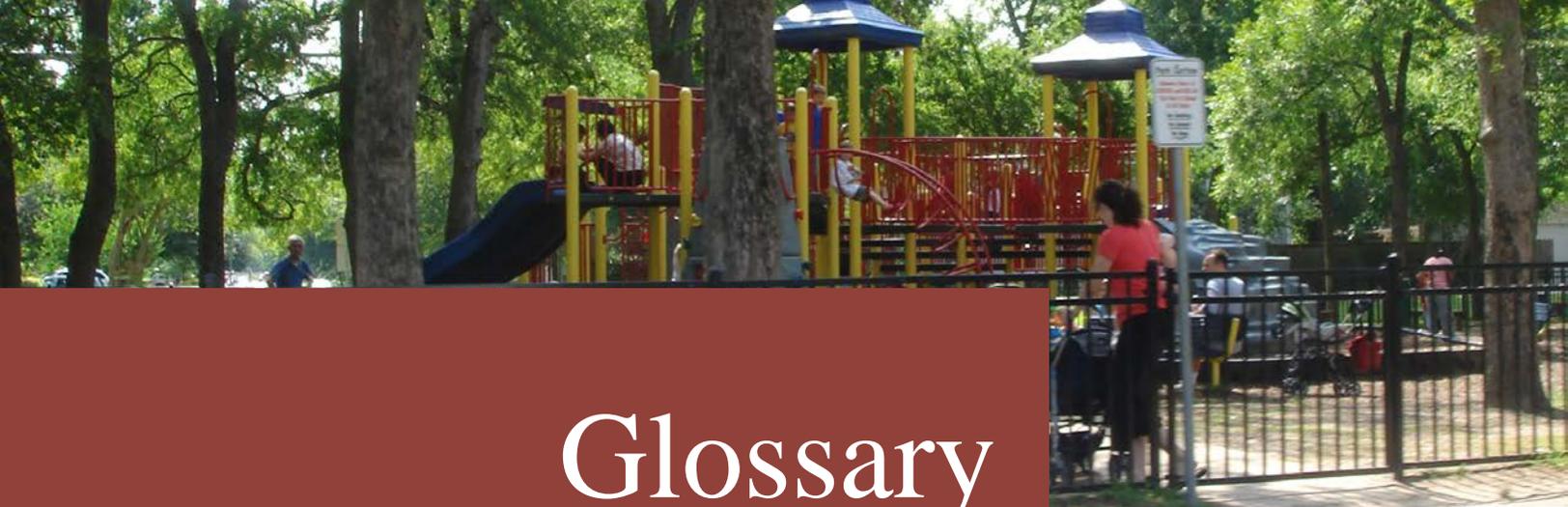
All review and updates processes related to the Comprehensive Plan should emphasize and incorporate ongoing public input. The annual and continual plan evaluation and reporting process should also incorporate specific performance measures and quantitative indicators that can be compiled and communicated both internally and to elected officials and citizens in a “report card” fashion. Examples might include:

- Acres of new development (plus number of residential units and square footage of commercial and other non-residential space) approved and constructed in conformance with this plan and related City codes.
- Various measures of service capacity (gallons, acre-feet, etc.) added to the City’s major utility systems as indicated in this plan and associated utility master plans—and the millions of dollars allocated to fund the necessary capital projects.
- Acres of parkland and miles of trail developed or improved in accordance with this plan and related parks, recreation and greenways plans.



- Indicators of City efforts to ensure neighborhood integrity as emphasized in this plan (e.g., code enforcement activity, results of neighborhood-focused policing, number of zone change and/or variance requests denied that were found to be contrary to neighborhood interests, etc.).
- Miles of new bike routes and transit routes added to the City's transportation system to provide alternative mobility options as recommended in this plan.
- New and expanded businesses and associated tax revenue gains through the commercial redevelopment initiatives and priorities identified in this plan.
- Indicators of the benefits of redeveloped sites and structures (appraised value, increased property and/or sales tax revenue, new residential units and retail and office spaces in urban mixed-use settings, etc.) as envisioned through this plan.
- The estimated dollar value of operating cost savings from reduced energy and water use, heating/cooling, etc., from green building practices and related conservation efforts in new and existing City facilities, as suggested in this plan.
- The numbers of residents and other stakeholders engaged through City-sponsored education and outreach events related to Comprehensive Plan implementation and periodic review and updating, as outlined in this chapter.





# Glossary

Access Management .....	G.1
Apartment.....	G.2
Brownstone.....	G.2
Bufferyard.....	G.2
Chicane.....	G.2
Condominium .....	G.2
Context-Sensitive Design (CSD) .....	G.2
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) .....	G.3
Duplex.....	G.3
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) .....	G.3
Grade Separation .....	G.3
Loft.....	G.3
Multi-Unit Housing.....	G.3
Planned Development .....	G.4
Structured Parking .....	G.4
Townhouse .....	G.4
Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) .....	G.4
Traffic Calming .....	G.4
Traffic Diverter.....	G.4
Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) .....	G.5
Zero Lot Line Development .....	G.5

## ACCESS MANAGEMENT

A set of policies and standards intended to improve vehicle and pedestrian circulation and safety. Regulations may include: (a) restrictions on the type, number, location, spacing, and design of access points (e.g., cross streets, driveways) to public roadways; and (b) the use of physical controls, such as raised medians, channelization, signals, and signage.



### APARTMENT

A self-contained housing unit that occupies only part of a building. Each unit has its own kitchen and bathroom accommodations. Apartments may be owner-occupied (commonly found in co-operatives or condominiums) or rented by tenants. An “apartment building” has three or more units designed for occupancy by individual households living independently of each other.

### BROWNSTONE

A residential building typically designed in “row house” fashion (attached on the side, although sometimes free-standing with some space in between), with a series of such houses situated along all or a portion of a block. Such dwellings may be a single-family home or split (originally or converted later) into multiple ownership (condo) or rental units. Now a long-established housing style in many cities, the literal term, “brownstone,” refers to a once popular sandstone building material.

### BUFFERYARD

A unit of land, between adjacent land uses or along a street or alley, devoted to plantings, berms, walls, and/or fences for screening and buffering purposes and to help mitigate incompatibilities between differing land uses and development intensities.

### CHICANE

A curb extension, especially along an otherwise straight roadway, that is intended to slow traffic and make drivers more attentive by forcing them to maneuver their vehicle rather than follow a straight path.



Source: City of Austin, Texas

### CONDOMINIUM

A single residential unit in a multi-unit development where the dwelling units are individually owned and the common space and facilities are jointly owned.

### CONTEXT-SENSITIVE DESIGN (CSD)

An interdisciplinary and creative approach to roadway design that aims to balance traffic movement needs with other community considerations, such as safety, bicycle and pedestrian circulation, environmental protection, and aesthetics. The CSD approach is characterized by early and ongoing stakeholder involvement, consideration of all modes of travel (i.e., potential road users), and the use of flexible standards and development practices to tailor a project to its particular setting.



## CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED)

An interdisciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior, especially through careful design of buildings and their entries/exits, other physical features (parking areas, fencing, landscaping, lighting, etc.), and intervening spaces to maximize visibility; create a sense of ownership by better delineating private, semi-public, and public spaces and circulation areas and so “intruders” are more obvious. The acronym is commonly pronounced as “sep-ted.”

## DUPLEX

A residential building designed as a single structure but containing two separate dwelling units, each of which is designed to be occupied by a single household.

## FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)

The numerical value obtained by dividing the total floor area of a building by the area of the site on which the building is to be constructed. “FAR” is a common device used in zoning ordinances to regulate the intensity of site development while providing some design flexibility. As a conceptual example, with an FAR of 1.0, a building could be one story and cover its entire site, or the building could be two stories and cover half of the site, etc.

## GRADE SEPARATION

The physical separation of two different travel paths (e.g., two intersecting roadways) or travel modes (e.g., automobiles from rail, or bikes/pedestrians from automobiles), typically by constructing an underpass or overpass.

## LOFT

Entire floors or subdivided units or spaces within a former non-residential building (especially a multi-story, former industrial or warehouse building) that has been rehabilitated for residential, office, or mixed uses, but often retaining the higher ceilings, exposed building infrastructure, and other features of the original structure. Given their popularity, some loft projects are now entirely new structures built with the features of converted buildings.

## MULTI-UNIT HOUSING

A broad term for any residential building with three or more attached dwelling units situated on a single property, with each unit occupied by an individual household living independently of the others. Examples include apartments and condominiums (attached townhomes are similar, but the land under each townhome unit is individually owned).



### PLANNED DEVELOPMENT

As in many other cities, an option provided within the City of Bellaire zoning ordinance that offers a development applicant the flexibility to propose certain variations from standard zoning provisions (e.g., residential lot sizes and overall project density, mixing of uses, building setbacks, street design, etc.) with the intent of achieving unique and/or superior development outcomes. A Planned Development proposal is considered through a site plan review process to establish and document the project-specific standards that ultimately are approved. A Planned Development also represents and is administered as a zoning amendment and is documented on the City's Official Zoning District map.

### STRUCTURED PARKING

A parking garage, parking deck, or under-building or underground parking area designed for the parking or storage of motor vehicles. The structure may be open or enclosed.

### TOWNHOUSE

A single-family dwelling unit that is attached to one or more contiguous units by the sharing of at least one common bearing wall between units, with this wall extending from the foundation through the roof. Each unit is located on, or capable of being located on, a separate ownership lot.

### TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN (TND)

A design approach that aims to incorporate characteristics of more compact and walkable neighborhoods, such as: grid street system (often with alleys), shorter block lengths (and smaller lot sizes in some cases, or a mix of lot and house sizes), buildings oriented toward the street, front porches on houses, side versus front driveways or rear alley access, recessed or rear garages, village squares and greens, and often with compatible mixing of retail, office, and/or civic uses.

### TRAFFIC CALMING

Street design approaches, physical retrofitting measures, and/or regulations intended to reduce the impacts of motor vehicles in neighborhoods, school zones, retail districts, downtown areas, etc. by lowering vehicle speeds, discouraging through traffic, and causing motorists to be more attentive to pedestrians, cyclists, and children at play in and near streets.

### TRAFFIC DIVERTER

A roadway design feature or installation that prohibits vehicular traffic from entering and/or exiting a street. Examples include restrictive curb extensions and medians/islands, street closures, and one-way traffic flow arrangements.



## TRAFFIC IMPACT ANALYSIS (TIA)

A study of how a land use or development will affect traffic in the surrounding area and how such impacts might be mitigated, as necessary, through on- and/or off-site measures. These documents are typically prepared by a licensed professional traffic engineer or civil engineer in connection with a specified proposed land use (including public uses) or subdivision or with a zone change application.

## ZERO LOT LINE DEVELOPMENT

Placement of a building on a lot in such a manner that one or more of the building's sidewalls rests directly on a lot line (and all associated fire code requirements for such placement are met, involving either the design of common walls or minimum spacing between structures). This approach allows site design flexibility while increasing the quantity of usable open space on the lot. This is a common practice in smaller lot, patio home developments. Additionally, in a downtown setting, "zero lot line" zoning may require zero or minimal building setback from front, side, and/or rear lot lines to maintain an urban architectural environment.



