

INTRODUCTION

Why this Comprehensive Plan chapter is Important for Bellaire:

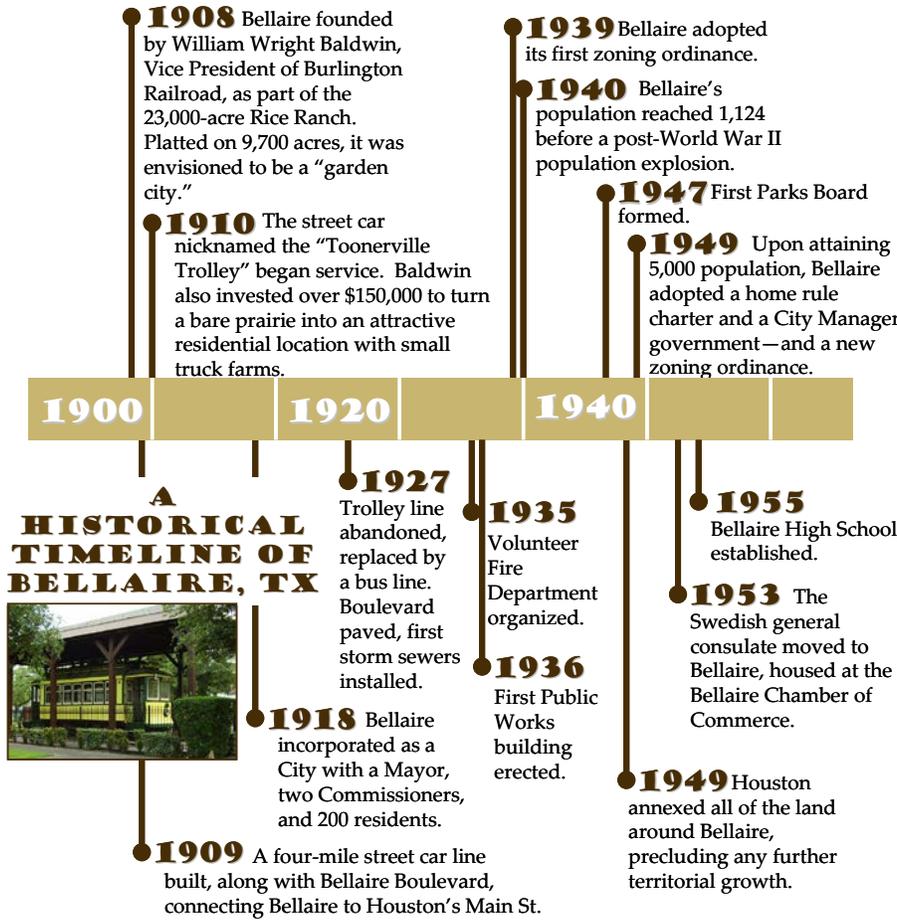
- ✓ *Highlights the significance of the Comprehensive Plan as an indication of community priorities and guide for decision-making, as well as providing the public policy basis for the City's development regulations.*
- ✓ *Provides a snapshot of Bellaire's socioeconomic status and outlook at the time 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

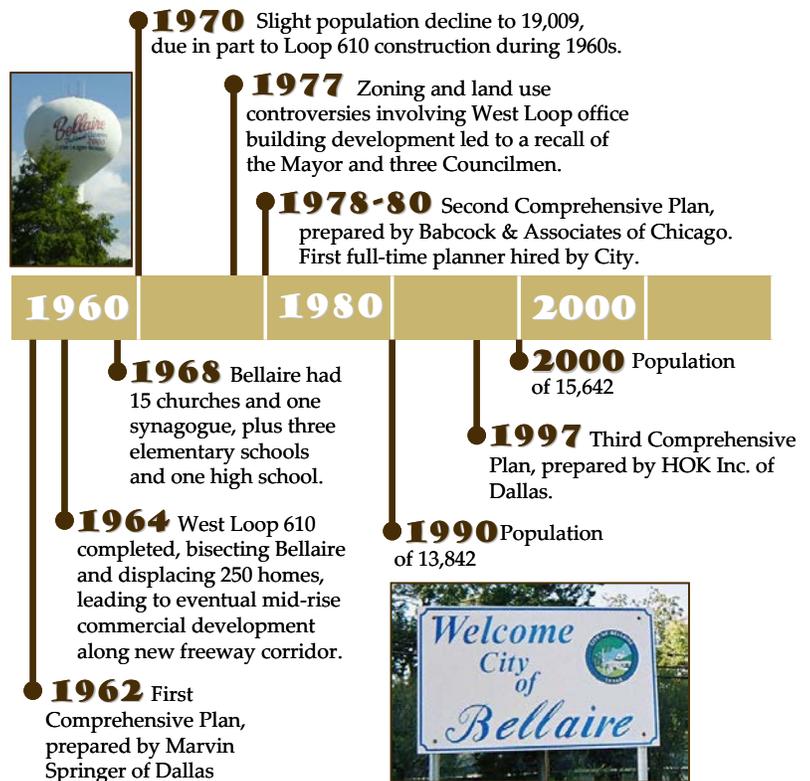
A comprehensive plan is usually the most important policy document a municipal government prepares and maintains. This is because the plan:

- ◆ 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)



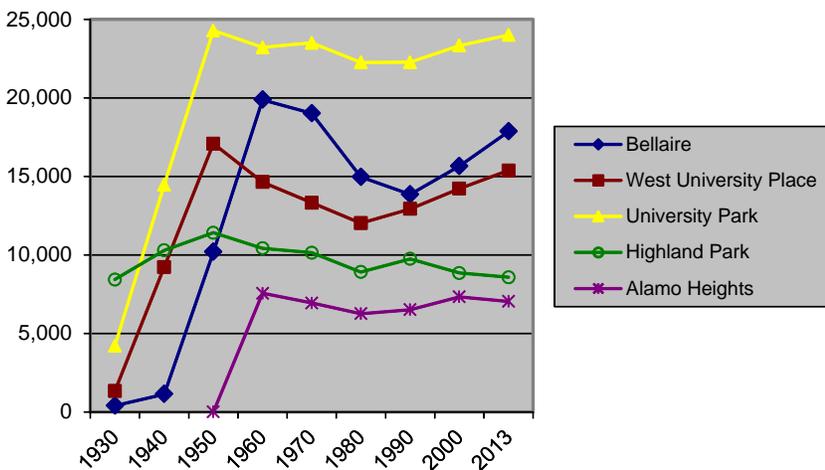
After 1960, the City began losing residents and Bellaire’s population fell from 19,872 to 13,842 in 1990. This loss was partly due to the removal of housing for the construction of Loop 610 and the office and commercial developments that followed along some of the new freeway frontage. An aging population 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

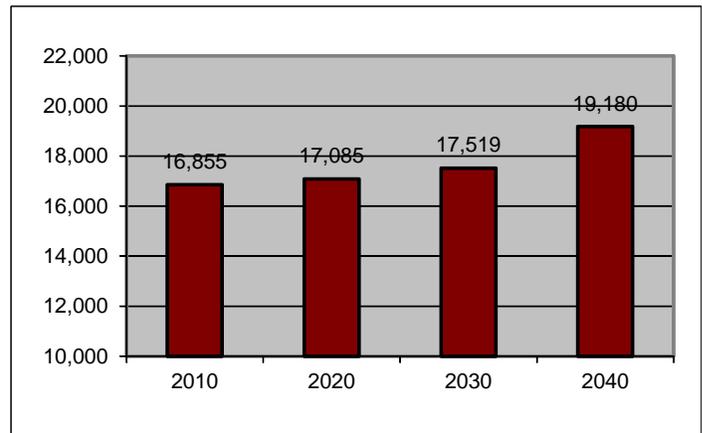


SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2013)



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

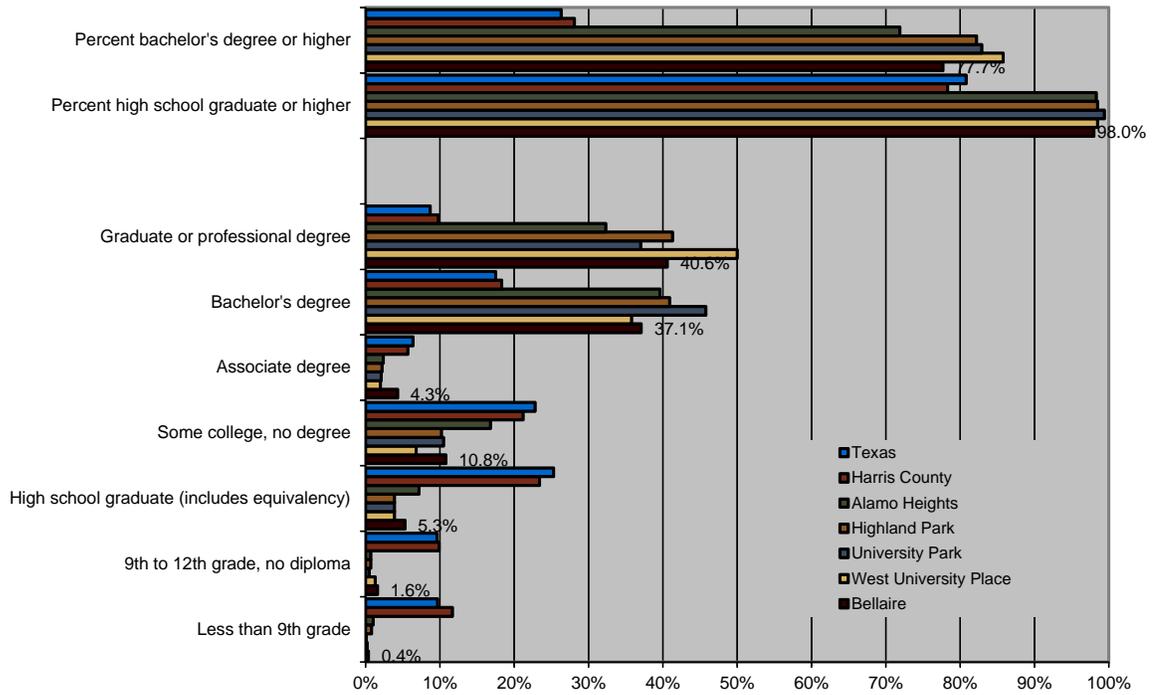
The level of education within a community determines the capabilities of the area labor force. This, in turn, influences the types of businesses that come to or remain in a community, as well as the success certain businesses will have at finding the types of labor skills they require. (As noted earlier, 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.

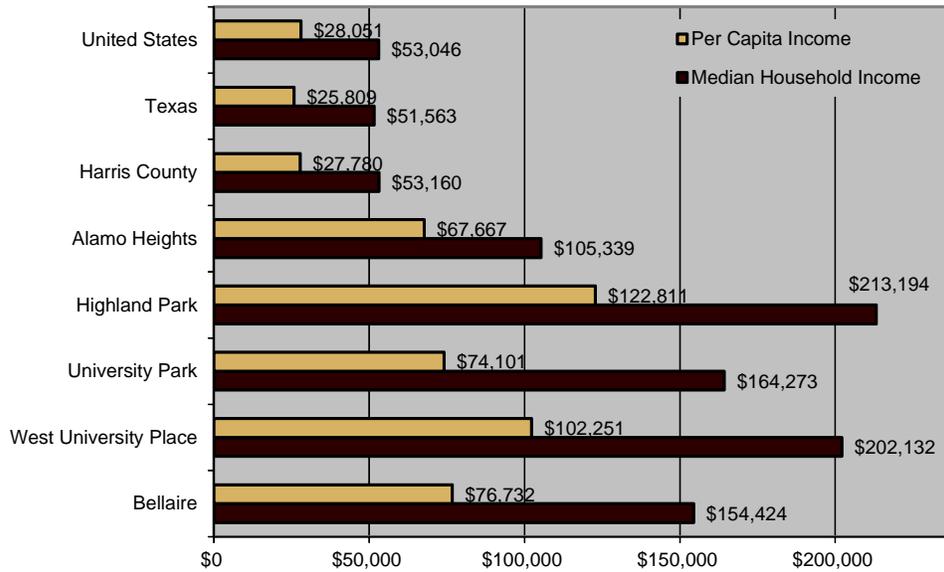


FIGURE 1.3, Educational Attainment Comparison



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2012)

FIGURE 1.4, Income Comparison



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2012)

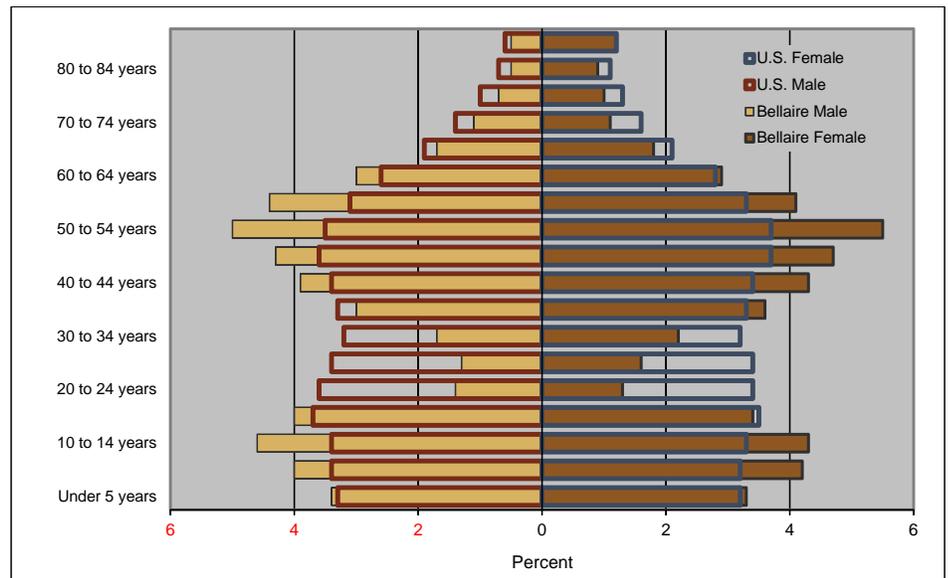


Level of education, skills, and transportation access all factor into the “employability” of individuals, which, in turn, determines one’s income earning potential. Displayed in **Figure 1.4, Income Comparison**, are the median household and per capita income levels of Bellaire residents based on U.S. 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



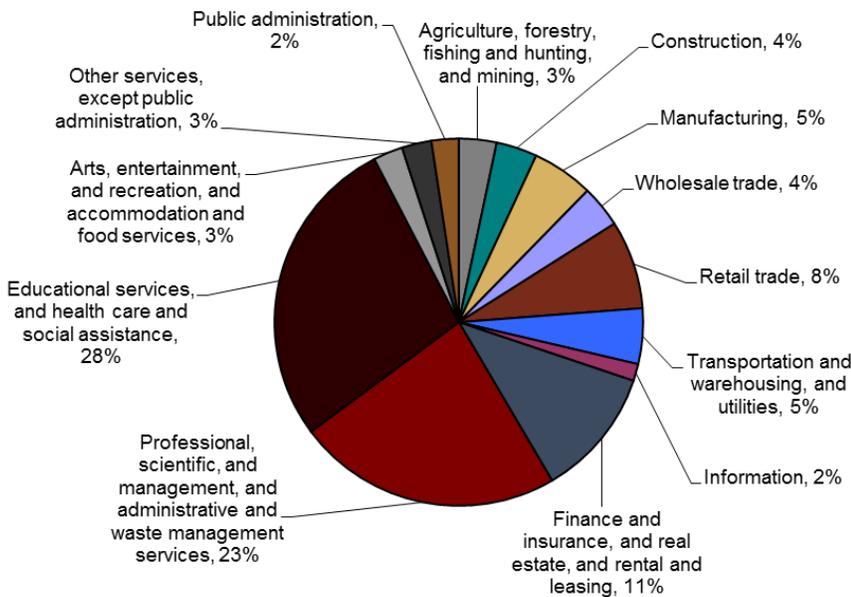
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2010)



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).

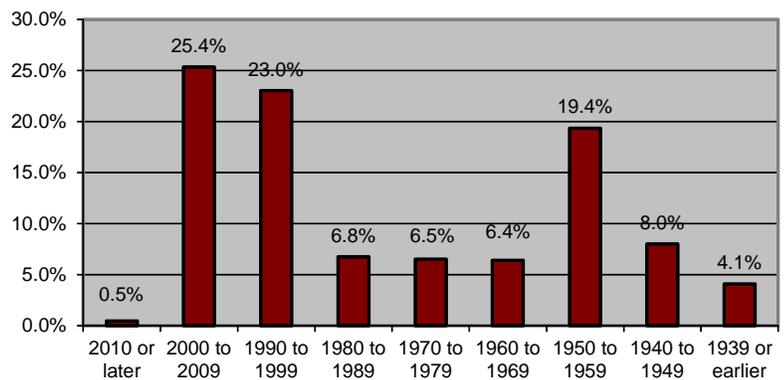
Related journey-to-work data show that the vast majority of Bellaire’s working population (84.7 percent) traveled alone to work by automobile, while 7.9 percent carpooled. Not surprisingly, given the limited options, only 0.4 percent of Bellaire residents used public transportation (which excludes taxicabs). 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.

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.

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/>

