

SECTION 1. OVERVIEW

Purpose and Intent

A city's comprehensive plan can be defined as a long-range planning tool that is intended to be used by City staff, decision-makers and citizens to direct the growth and physical development of a community for ten years, twenty years or an even longer period of time. It is a vision of what the community can become and is a long-range statement of public policy.

The primary objectives of a comprehensive plan are to:

- Ensure efficient delivery of public services
- Coordinate public and private investment
- Minimize conflict between land uses
- Manage growth in an orderly manner
- Increase the cost-effectiveness of public investments
- Provide a rational and reasonable basis for making decisions about the community

As a vision of the City's future physical form, the Comprehensive Plan sets forth a generalized pattern of land use areas and transportation corridors. It represents a long-range statement of public policy with respect to how the community should grow, develop and mature over time. It includes policies and recommendations relative to the development of various physical elements within the community such as transportation, land use, housing, parks and recreation, and urban design. It provides for the distribution and interrelationships of various land uses, as well as a basis for future development recommendations. These aspects of the Plan are supported by a set of goals and objectives drawn from the desires and aspirations of citizens and business leaders, and are intended to help Levelland create an attractive living and working environment.

Importance of Planning

It is clear to the citizens and civic leaders of Levelland that improvement of their community and its quality of life does not happen by chance and instead requires strategic planning. By adopting policies and guidelines set forth in the Comprehensive Plan, Levelland can implement a strategy to shape its desired future to the benefit of its citizenry. The Comprehensive Plan is a guide for decision-makers and a tool for managing community change to achieve this desired quality of life.

Advance, or comprehensive, planning helps to ensure that, as size and population characteristics grow and change over time, the community continues to develop in a manner which reflects the objectives and values of the community's property owners, decision-makers and citizenry. The

Levelland recognizes that offering a high quality of life does not happen by chance and instead requires strategic planning for the future.

product of a municipal planning program is generally a Comprehensive Plan document (and associated maps), which is sometimes referred to as the community's "Master Plan". The Comprehensive Plan should function as a long-range guide for the future growth, development and, in some cases, redevelopment of the community over ten years, twenty years, or an even longer period of time. It should accurately reflect what is in the best interest for the City of Levelland, as perceived by citizens and property owners within the community. It should illustrate and represent a comprehensive "vision" of what the community can become, and it should be utilized as a long-range statement of public policy.

The Comprehensive Plan serves several important roles in the City's decision-making process. Its primary purpose is to permit the City to consciously consider and shape its own future. It serves as a response to existing problems, which have been identified within the community, and as a means to address future issues in a more proactive way. It can be used to identify areas or features that need to be protected or preserved, and it can establish a framework for establishing priorities. Although the Comprehensive Plan focuses primarily upon the community's physical form and environment, it is closely tied to socioeconomic factors, as well. In many ways, the physical layout and design of the community affects the daily lives of those who live and work within it.

The Comprehensive Plan, once adopted, becomes the official policy of the City. It will help guide zoning and development decisions, and it will serve as a basis for future capital expenditures for public facilities. It is important to emphasize that the Comprehensive Plan is not a rigid policy, but rather a guide. It is intended to be flexible and to provide latitude for more detailed analyses that are commonly a part of zoning and development decisions; however, these decisions should be consistent with policies established within the Comprehensive Plan.

Planning is a continuous and ever-changing process. The City will undoubtedly encounter future development proposals that are inconsistent with the Plan. Some of these proposals may well be in the best interest of the City and worth further consideration. As community conditions and priorities change over time, the City's Comprehensive Plan should be amended to take advantage of new opportunities and to respond to new needs and circumstances. Thus, the Comprehensive

Plan itself is not intended to be a static document; it is intended to be a dynamic, adaptable guide to help citizens and officials shape Levelland's future.