

1 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Comprehensive Planning in Lancaster

Lancaster was founded in 1852 as one of the first outposts in the North-Texas region. Today it is a desirable place to live, work, and play in one of the largest and fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country. The rapid growth of the region puts tremendous developmental pressure on the community, while simultaneously offering great opportunities. Successful cities throughout Dallas-Fort Worth have used planning to leverage their resources to enhance their quality of life and create opportunities for their citizens; Lancaster is no stranger to the planning process.



The comprehensive plan is one of the most important tools that Lancaster can leverage to determine the future of the community. By establishing a community driven vision and offering a well-thought out implementation strategy, a comprehensive plan offers citizens the ability to guide growth in the direction the community would like to see, preserving and enhancing community character and creating new employment, housing, and recreational opportunities for residents.

Lancaster's 2002 comprehensive plan has had an impact on the development of the city and led to the creation of several other supporting plans for the community, including the adoption of a tree ordinance, the adoption of a Trails Master Plan, a Streetscape Master Plan, and a Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan in 2006, and the development of Overlay districts for various parts of the city. This Lancaster Vision Plan is an update of the 2002 Comprehensive Plan, and it recognizes that some of the supporting plans generated by the 2002 comprehensive plan are poised for updating as well. An updated comprehensive plan more clearly articulates the needs and desires of the citizens and stakeholders in Lancaster, enabling the community to assess what it has, decide what it wants, determine how best to achieve what it wants, and implement those decisions.

This updated comprehensive plan should serve as a guideline by elected officials, City boards, and commissions for public decisions regarding land use, capital improvements, zoning, and various other community decisions. It is an umbrella document that establishes a common vision for the community, making more efficient use of tax-payer dollars by ranking goals and coordinating community decisions so that they all work together to support that vision. While it is inevitable that opportunities will arise that were not initially foreseen during the development of the comprehensive plan, this document should still serve as an important reference for city officials as

they make decisions regarding these developments or special projects; how these opportunities fit into the future land use plan and the community's greater vision must be carefully considered. It should be revisited and updated frequently to remain valid.

As explosive growth continues in the Metroplex region, the comprehensive plan update will enable Lancaster to plan thoughtfully for that growth, maintaining a high quality of life and ensuring that Lancaster continues to be a great place to live, work, and play.

The Planning Process

Lancaster's Comprehensive Plan is an update to the city's current comprehensive plan, adopted in February of 2002. The comprehensive plan update process was guided throughout by the involvement of city officials, city staff, stakeholders, and dedicated citizens. The City Council appointed an Advisory Committee composed of diverse citizens to serve as community representatives throughout the planning process. Some of the functions of the committee included:

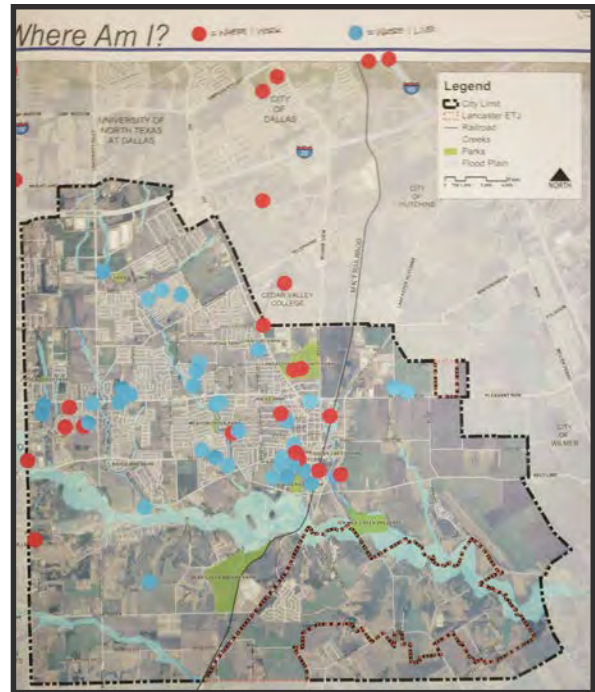
- Serving as the primary interface with the consultant team
- Providing input for visioning and update recommendations
- Providing input and recommendations for the development of key concepts, policies, and strategies
- Providing input and reviewing land use maps and policy direction for Lancaster's key focus areas

As a result of this process, the new Lancaster Comprehensive Plan was updated to reflect growth and change in the city since 2002. The new plan both updates and provides clarity to Lancaster's vision for itself as a community moving forward, as well as provides recommendations as a way for the city to realize this vision. However, this plan is just one step in the continual planning process that must occur for Lancaster to be successful. It is intended to serve as a flexible, adaptable guide for the community as citizens and city officials develop supporting plans, craft new public policies, and make decisions that build a sustainable, livable future.

The Importance of Public Participation

Lancaster's Comprehensive Plan update was accomplished through a series of six phases, beginning with a kick-off meeting and tour of the city in August 2013, and culminating with the final adoption of the plan in August of 2016. These six phases that directed the evolution of the plan include:

- Phase I: Project Initiation
- Phase II: State of the City
- Phase III: Community-Wide Vision
- Phase IV: Draft Vision Framework
- Phase V: Preferred Vision Framework
- Phase VI: Adoption



Each of these phases was essential in guiding the development of a comprehensive plan that reflects the vision and desires of the community, and they helped to allow maximum input from citizens and city officials. As with any effective community planning effort, public participation was a cornerstone of the planning process. Lancaster possesses strong city leadership that desires both to preserve the city's quality of life and to expand opportunities available to its citizens, and it has been highly involved in the development of a plan that will guide the city's future. The ultimate success of the plan, however, hinges on whether the public participation process translates into a plan that accurately addresses the needs and reflects the desires of the citizens. Additionally, the plan must contain strategies for implementing the community's vision, coupled with a commitment by city leaders to enact those implementation strategies.

Throughout the planning process, the city leadership and the public were engaged often and in numerous ways, including:

- Public Charrettes
- Key Stakeholder interviews
- Community Open Houses
- Community Work Sessions
- Advisory Committee meetings
- Public Polling
- Joint workshops with the City Council, the Planning & Zoning Committee, and Advisory Committee
- A community web page for the planning process
- Online questionnaires, online polling, and social media outreach

These engagement strategies provided citizens and stakeholders numerous opportunities both to provide input in the planning process, and to review and make comments on the draft plans as they were developed. This process made the plan responsive to the desires of citizens and city officials, and incorporated those desires into a unified community vision.

The Vision Process

A city's vision statement is the most basic description of what kind of community it wants to be, and should be used to guide community decision-making. Lancaster's vision statement represents the essence of the City's long-term vision for itself, and all planning and policy decisions should be made in accordance with this statement (also see Chapter 2, Principles & Actions).

Vision Statement

Our vision for Lancaster's future is based on success in four inter-related areas:

- It is built on our existing natural, cultural, and historic community assets
- It creates Lancaster as a destination community
- The community's educational excellence supports its people and businesses
- The diverse choices in Lancaster appeal to people of all ages and businesses in a variety of industries



Guiding Principles

Ten guiding principles have been identified as key concepts for ensuring that Lancaster remains a desirable place to live, work, and play in the future. These Guiding Principles were distilled from the direction received by the planning team from stakeholders in Lancaster during the planning process, (also see Chapter 2, Principles & Actions). The City should work to achieve these Guiding Principles as it implements the Lancaster Vision Plan, (see also Chapter 11, Implementation).

PRINCIPLE 1: Lancaster's quality of life attracts people of all ages.

PRINCIPLE 2: Natural and historic assets are the foundation for distinctive neighborhoods and business areas.

PRINCIPLE 3: The City's continued investments in Lancaster's existing neighborhoods offer desirable choices for current and future residents.

PRINCIPLE 4: New residential developments expand the range of neighborhood choices so Lancaster appeals to people throughout all stages of life.

PRINCIPLE 5: Lancaster's economic base is strong because it includes businesses in diverse and growing industries.

PRINCIPLE 6: The enhanced Medical District is a key reason Lancaster is the wellness center of southern Dallas County.

PRINCIPLE 7: Development and investment decisions support Lancaster's fiscal sustainability over time.

PRINCIPLE 8: Lancaster has great mobility choices – walking and biking routes to destinations within the community, public transportation connections to the DFW region, and street networks that link Lancaster residents to jobs and Lancaster businesses to their employees and customers.

PRINCIPLE 9: Lancaster residents of all ages can find the resources for success here in this community (resources for education, training, healthy living, job search, etc.).

PRINCIPLE 10: The Comprehensive Plan is the foundation for unified action to get things done. The City will lead a partnership including the Independent School District (ISD), the Chamber of Commerce and other groups that will work together to carry out this plan.

Future Land Use Plan

One of the most important elements of the Lancaster Vision Plan is the Future Land Use plan, which serves as the foundation for guiding future land use decisions in the City. The Future Land Use plan identifies 11 unique development styles for the city, presented here as Place Types, (see also Chapter 3, Land Use, pg. 22-27).

Three of the place types are residential in character, while five function as activity centers with varying mixtures of intensities and uses, including jobs, entertainment, retail, mixed-use residential, and live-work-play environments. Additionally, there are types corresponding to industrial and logistical uses, aviation uses related to the LanPort district, and place types corresponding to park/open space areas and floodplain areas. It is important to note that the Future Land Use Plan is an advisory document to guide development; the Lancaster Development Code (LDC) remains the official legal guide for development control. However, this Comprehensive Plan document should be used as a policy level tool for zoning change considerations by the council, boards, and commissions of Lancaster.



Implementation

The implementation strategy is a key component of the comprehensive plan that identifies the key actions and steps needed for the city to realize the vision of its preferred future. These actions are organized in a framework that prioritizes those actions and establishes a timeline for their completion. The implementation plan also emphasizes the importance of collaborative partnerships, and establishes accountability for the various parties and partners needed to implement the actions required for the success of the comprehensive plan.

	Rural Living
	Suburban Neighborhood
	Urban Neighborhood
	Mixed-Use Neighborhood
	Town Center
	Village Center
	Suburban Mixed Use Center
	Commercial Corridor
	University Research Center
	Logistics/Distribution
	Aviation

Implementation Strategy Development Process

Implementation strategies were identified throughout the entire planning process. Input from the community, the Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee, and various city officials were gathered by city staff and the consultants by various methods including:

- Input and brainstorming with the public via community events, online surveys and individual discussions;
- Stakeholder interviews;
- Planning team technical analysis and review of best practices from other communities;
- Coordination with concurrent planning efforts involving the City and other agencies;
- Discussion and direction from staff; and
- Discussion with the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC), the City of Lancaster Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Lancaster City Council.

The implementation strategies are organized by category into action item lists, which are then organized by time frame. These rankings of strategies by importance and time frame recognizes the resource availability in any community to implement them, as well as the importance of timing in order for certain strategies to build on each other.

The time frames identified in this plan include short term (0-2 years), medium term (3-10 years), long term (11+ years), and those that require continuous investment.

Key Implementation Strategies

The implementation strategy highlights key items that are considered the most pressing and essential strategies for the immediate execution of the comprehensive plan. This section identifies those key strategies, and organizes them into six broad categories so that similar actions can be better coordinated. These 6 categories include:

- Capital Investment
- Education and Engagement
- Financial Incentives
- Guidelines
- Programs and Partnerships
- Regulations