

**Allen's Vision for the Future**

The 2002-2022 Comprehensive Plan developed during 2002 reflects the City's commitment to comprehensive, coordinated and continuous planning practice. The process provides for periodic updates at intervals of three years and a comprehensive reevaluation every five years. While the *2002-2022 Comprehensive Plan* is a new plan, it builds on the work of previous plans and the policies of the City Council. The dedication and hard work of the Planning & Zoning Commission, the City Council and many members of the public included articulating a vision for the future:

***“The City of Allen is dedicated to providing efficient quality services by working in partnership with its citizens, neighborhoods, and businesses to enhance the quality of life and to create a safe, healthy, vibrant community in which to live, work, play and visit.”***

The U.S. Census Bureau's decennial Census results in 2000 correspond closely with the estimates of the North Central Texas Council of Governments and the City's own estimates. During the period between Census counts (1990-2000) the City of Allen experienced unprecedented growth in its residential population as well as an expansion in its commercial base. An increase in the diversity of its population has accompanied its overall growth, and the population is more mature with a median age of 31.4 years. Household size has declined from 3.11 persons/household to 3.07 persons per household. An estimated population of 97,938 is projected for the City at the time of full development.

Median household income increased significantly since the 1990 Census to \$78,924 with per capita income increasing to \$28,575.

**Land Use**

The City continues its commitment to stable residential neighborhoods with residential development over 90% built-out during the next five years. During this period of rapid growth, the City has nevertheless acquired significant dedication of floodplain land and continues to maintain these properties in their natural state, while utilizing the areas as linear parks and greenbelts.

Land use planning has followed traditional planning theory in establishing single-family residential uses as the most protected category, buffered by increasingly intense uses of townhome, multi-family and garden office, while commercial activity is limited to areas along major transportation arterials, and concentrated at major intersections. Commercial development has remained stable, with increasing possibilities arising from imminent improvements along S.H. 121. In accordance with local priorities, residential development has not been permitted within 1,200 feet of S.H. 121.

Significant changes in the zoning in transitional areas should be accompanied by an amendment to the Future Land Use Plan.

**CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (CBD)**

Single-family residential uses have declined in number, and the quality of housing has deteriorated as a result of expansion of the regional roadway system (U.S. 75 and McDermott Drive) and policies forbidding new single-family residential development. Nevertheless, the condition of most residential properties ranges from fair to good.

New commercial development is generally limited to low-density single-story retail and office located on small tracts. The majority of this development is concentrated along Allen Drive north of Main Street and includes professional offices and medical supply and service.

Parking remains an issue for commercial and institutional uses on Main Street between the railroad tracks and Allen Drive. Off-street parking has generally been provided in all commercial development since the CBD was established in 1983.

Improving the street system in the CBD plays a significant role in the downtown revitalization process. Currently, McDermott Drive is the only access road from the east and the west sides of the City going to the CBD. Although Cedar Drive connects the CBD area north to Exchange Parkway, the capacity of Cedar Drive is limited because of the sharp curves, and improvements to Allen Drive will eliminate the unsafe curve. Internal circulation within the CBD area will be improved with the construction of St. Mary Drive from Allen Drive to SH 5.

Sidewalks should be constructed throughout the CBD of sufficient width to encourage pedestrian traffic and extension of the trail system utilized to improve access to other parts of the community. To improve the CBD experience, careful attention should be paid to design elements of sidewalks, street lighting and landscaping, as well as to the provision of amenities for the pedestrian, including benches, drinking fountains and trash receptacles.

To spur reinvestment in the CBD, it is anticipated that reconstruction of local streets and utilities needs to be a priority. The City's ability to plan for the financing and coordination of construction will improve the marketability and desirability of the CBD as a commercial destination.

### **Transportation**

The City has made significant progress in the implementation of the Thoroughfare Plan since 1998 with completion of McDermott Drive, Alma Drive, West Bethany Drive, West Stacy Road, and S.H. 5. The community's investment in its roadway system also requires that it protect roadway capacity to maintain a Level of Service (LOS) "C." The capacity of thoroughfares is reduced by poorly controlled intersecting roadways, driveways and alleys. Maintaining capacity is accomplished through median and marginal access control, requirements for mutual access easements on private property developed for non-residential purposes, through roadway design and intersection improvements.

The City has also made an additional commitment to developing alternative modes of transportation, including bicycle routes and recreational trails. The implications for a regional trail system have the potential of expanding access well beyond the corporate boundaries.

During the Citizen Survey conducted in the summer of 2002, over 60% of respondents supported rail transit, although less than 25% felt it "Likely" that they would ride a bus if provided. Over 70% of respondents reported that they would be "Very Likely" to "Somewhat Likely" to use transit for special events, while over 50% of respondents believed that the City should join DART, with 46.5% supporting the use of sales taxes (City, AEDC and ACDC) to support funding for transportation.

### **NEIGHBORHOODS & HOUSING**

Residential neighborhoods are the core of the community. The continued integrity of these neighborhoods is a very high priority. Homeownership is a key element in preserving older neighborhoods, as is a commitment to code enforcement and property maintenance.

Allen's older neighborhoods are generally 25 to 30 years old, with smaller residential units typical of a suburban bedroom community where housing was most affordable. More recent developments and increases in disposable income have resulted in low-density single-family detached housing catering to a relatively affluent population. Aesthetics, environmental preservation and neighborhood amenities are the most significant characteristics of new development in 2002. While this trend is generally antithetical to widely touted principles of "smart growth," examples of various new urbanism concepts are currently under development. Their form returns to the more traditional grid, incorporating public open space in a formal pattern, but carefully limiting undesirable traffic.

Allen's residential neighborhoods are generally centered around neighborhood elementary schools, and are combined with neighborhood parks where reasonable to do so. An important part of planning these neighborhoods has been the requirement to provide linkages between the neighborhoods by both local streets and a system of trails and greenbelts linking parks and schools. It is probably these amenities that are most lacking in the older subdivisions.

Allen's reputation as a prestige community, bolstered by an excellent public school system is, however, at odds with the community's desire to provide a wide range of housing types, including "affordable" housing. It is for this reason that the preservation of the older neighborhoods, characterized by smaller homes and lots, is considered a high priority. It will be necessary to continue to upgrade infrastructure in several of these neighborhoods. The City should evaluate options to increase the levels of homeownership and to encourage the establishment of homeowner associations in areas where none exist. Continued emphasis on code compliance and property maintenance is recommended.

Attached and multi-family housing is a clear alternative to expensive single-family detached housing where shared property maintenance may increase affordability. To the extent that the supply of this type

of housing is market-driven based on a regional demand, the City may encourage the preservation of existing units and the creation of new units in higher density mixed use developments.

The City should assist in the development of neighborhood associations in neighborhoods where none exist. A plan for the preservation of each neighborhood should be established in conjunction with that group. Even though older neighborhoods do not have common areas for maintenance that require fees, the formation of homeowner associations would create neighborhood cohesion and the mechanism for communication and assistance in resolving neighborhood issues. Homeownership should be encouraged. Two homeownership programs sponsored by the Department of Housing & Urban Development are directed toward assisting professional police officers and teachers, provided they remain in the home for at least three years. The City may wish to consider other forms of assistance for prospective purchasers in targeted residential redevelopment areas.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Recent years have seen the growth of economic development as a legitimate function of city government in partnership with the private sector. Economic development for jobs, for needed goods and services for residents, and for tax base to sustain the community have become so visible and important that communities can no longer afford to leave them to chance. Allen's efforts have been directed toward influencing the quality, mix and level of economic units and offering incentives to lure industry and commerce into Allen.

The strength of the Allen economy can be seen in the diversification that has occurred since 1990, and through the efforts of the Allen Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) and the Allen Community Development Corporation (ACDC). The city has benefited from 24 new major industries along with the development of major retail centers including the Allen Premium Outlets, Allen Central Market and Twin Creeks Village. The City's diversification has attracted other services including Presbyterian Hospital-Allen and the Hilton Hotel. Many improvements provided through the ACDC have resulted in an increase in the economic welfare of the City.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

Geological formations, topography, soils and climate define many of the communities characteristics, including plant and wildlife diversity. Preserving the sensitive ecological system through pollution prevention activities is a high priority.

### **URBAN DESIGN**

In a rapidly urbanizing area, it has been important for the City to retain its individual identity and character in a visual manner. The *Streetscape Image Study* provides a framework for utilizing transportation corridors as identity markers, guiding residents and visitors toward the City center to create a uniquely "Allen" experience. Both roadways and the many creeks are utilized to create an image through the use of plantings, pavement treatments, street lighting and public accoutrements.

### **COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES**

Government.

The City's many Boards and Commissions provide a diversity of ideas and the basis for participatory activity guiding the City's future and development. Providing responsive service and transparent policies continues to be of primary importance. Technology now provides additional avenues to provide service, disseminate information and solicit feedback from the community. A continued commitment to making full use of available technology will allow for effective and efficient local government operations.

#### Community Policing

The City has committed to the precepts of Community Policing as a philosophy and an organizational strategy that allows the police and residents to work closely together in new ways to solve the problems of crime, fear of crime, physical and social disorder, and neighborhood decay. The Police Department has met many new challenges resulting from the City's expansive growth, and continues to formulate positive responses to its community responsibilities and external threats. Its many programs have been successful in creating community awareness and active citizen participation in neighborhood safety.

### Fire

Advanced planning has left the Allen Fire Department well equipped to meet the challenges of growth. The regional growth in the area provides expanded opportunities for interlocal cooperation to ensure that present and future needs of the community are met, particularly in handling external threats and emergencies. Employee training and development continues to be a high priority.

### Parks & Recreation

Parks and open space is central to Allen as a unique place. The City currently exceeds lands to meet the needs of its current population, but has continued challenges to meet the needs of a build-out population and the standards of operational excellence already established in a sustainable manner. Cooperative partnerships with county and regional recreational interests are expected to provide opportunities for continued growth of the park system.

### Solid Waste Collection

The City should continue to contract with a reliable, efficient, environmentally-minded waste hauling firm for solid waste and recycling collection services. It is recommended that efforts continue to expand recycling, to provide educational opportunities to the citizens of the community through outreach programs, to eliminate illegal dumping and to divert household hazardous waste from the waste stream.

### Streets

The condition rating of the majority of streets in new subdivisions and arterial roadways constructed within the last ten years is excellent, although a few older neighborhoods should be reconstructed within the near future. A systematic means of maintenance should be established to retard deterioration in all roadways and maximize the community's investment in its infrastructure.

The City follows the national guidelines outlined in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices which includes traffic signs, pavement markings, and traffic signals.

### Drainage and Flood Control

A Drainage Utility Fee offsets the costs of gutter repair, street sweeping and regular mowing of low lying and detention areas and to correct drainage issues. These measures are expected to become increasingly important in the City's efforts to comply with the requirements of the Texas Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit. Heavily wooded areas along major streams are generally left in a natural state for environmental reasons, and the City's requirement for the dedication of the fully urbanized floodplain has avoided adverse impacts on local drainage with few exceptions.

### Potable Water

Water is supplied and wastewater treated by the North Texas Municipal Water District. The City is responsible for water distribution and wastewater collection. The City's goal is to maintain a Superior Water Supply rating from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The City should continue to seek alternatives to the use of potable water for irrigation in anticipation of future regional shortages.

### Wastewater

Wastewater treatment and trunk collection lines are provided by the North Texas Municipal Water District. The District's planning process provides for expansion of the system to meet the needs of the community at full development.

### Building & Code Compliance

The importance of building inspections in ensuring community safety will continue beyond the period of rapid growth. As the City reaches maturity, environmental health and code enforcement activities are expected to become increasingly important.

### Library

The new Allen Public Library is expected to meet the needs of the community at full development, although the traditional medium of books and periodicals will compete with electronic media with library patrons. Continued participation in the regional library system will be important if the volume and diversity of community interests is to be met, as well as increasing outreach activities.

### The Arts

Allen provides a venue for a surprising number of arts-related activities for its size, including the Allen Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra and the Allen Symphony Chorus,

The Allen Arts Alliance and Arts Guild provides financial support and volunteers for many arts organizations and events. The Arts of Collin County is a group of citizens representing the Cities of Plano, Allen, Frisco, and McKinney, working to provide an arts facility that would serve all four communities in Collin County. The study has indicated that a site of 80 to 100 acres would successfully isolate the facilities from adjacent land uses, provide ample parking and space for future facilities, and set the arts hall in a naturalistic setting befitting a centerpiece project for Collin County.

### Social Services

As the City matures, social services become more important in maintaining a high quality of life. The Ministerial Alliance, the Allen Community Outreach program, the Senior Citizen programs, and such State support services as the State Attorney General's Child Support Office and the Texas Workforce Commission provide services in Allen proper. Other services are provided through Collin County with programs such as Hope's Door (Women's Shelter) and the Samaritan Inn.

### EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES & SERVICES

The City of Allen is located within four school districts: the Allen Independent School District (AISD), McKinney Independent School District (MISD), Lovejoy Independent School District (LISDS) and the Plano Independent School District (PISD). School age children living within the boundaries of these districts attend schools provided by the Districts. Children living in LISD also attend grades 7-12 in AISD schools. There is no residential development located in the portion of MISD that is within the city of Allen.

The Collin County Community College District (CCCCD) includes all of Allen. The administrative office are located in the Spring Creek Campus and satellite campuses are located in Plano, McKinney, and Frisco. CCCC's Allen campus at the Allen High School is home of the Center for Teaching, Learning and Professional Development (CLTPD).

As the community matures, cooperation and joint planning for facilities and maintenance with all districts should be a high priority.

### IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

The *2002-2022 Comprehensive Plan* is a policy guide and the Allen City Council is primarily responsible for its implementation, either directly through Council action or through delegation to appointed Boards and Commissions or City Staff. Clearly the Council's ability to implement many strategies will be circumscribed by persons and events over which the City has little direct control. In this case, it is incumbent on community leaders to collaborate and coordinate its activities in the manner that serves the best interests of its citizens.