

## **Sense of Community Recap Plano Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan**

On August 4, 2014, the Planning & Zoning Commission completed a work session for the Sense of Community component for the Plano Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan. The Commission recommended the following five policy statements:

### **Placemaking and Public Spaces:**

Recommended Policy: Plano will create public spaces that enhance community character, create memorable and unique experiences, and build neighborhood identity.

### **Arts and Culture:**

Recommended Policy: Plano will promote the advancement of arts and cultural amenities through private and nonprofit partnerships to enhance quality of life and enrich community culture.

### **Heritage Preservation:**

Recommended Policy: Plano will embrace its unique historical character and authenticity by identifying and preserving historic and cultural resources that promote the understanding of the city's history and enrich the city's sense of place.

### **Community Building:**

Recommended Policy: Plano will pursue community building efforts and initiatives and provide the tools needed to strengthen community cohesion and sense of belonging among residents.

### **Community Involvement and Participation:**

Recommended Policy: Plano will proactively seek civic participation from all ages, ethnicities and cultures and provide residents with information, education and opportunities for involvement.

## **Plano Tomorrow Vision**

**Plano is a global leader, excelling in exceptional education, abounding with world class businesses and vibrant neighborhoods.**

### **SENSE OF COMMUNITY**

Sense of community is a concept in the social and urban psychology research discipline, which focuses on the experience and emotional connection to community. It is an individual's perception, understanding and feeling about community and their relationship to it. Sense of community builds strong neighborhoods and creates social equity and a sense of belonging for Plano residents.

In the Plano Tomorrow Survey, participants were asked to rank eight quality of life aspects, including sense of community, with 1 indicating "excellent" and 5 indicating "poor". Sense of community had an average ranking of 2.38, which was the lowest quality of life aspect identified by participants. Households with children often have a stronger connection to the community because of school and sports activities. However, as Plano's average age continues to increase and children grow up and move out, households may find it increasingly difficult to retain the connection to the community. In addition, with the increase in diversity, new families moving to Plano from other areas of the world may encounter barriers, which would prevent them from communicating and connecting to their neighborhoods.

As the city's population continues to age and diversify, Plano will be faced with new challenges that must be addressed in order for the city to retain a strong sense of community.

The Sense of Community component of Plano Tomorrow will include five topics as illustrated below:

- Placemaking and Public Spaces
- Arts and Culture
- Heritage Preservation
- Community Building
- Community Involvement and Participation

## PLACEMAKING AND PUBLIC SPACES

### **Current Comprehensive Plan Strategies**

- Continue to expand and enhance Plano's park system as a major urban design asset.
- Encourage visually distinctive yet functional private sector designs.
- Use both public and private development projects as opportunities to create gathering places.
- Establish zoning provisions for commercial development that encourage the creation of plazas, courtyards, and other attractive environments where people can congregate.
- Develop a plan for enhancing Chisolm Trail as a major gathering place.

### **Plano Tomorrow Environment P&Z Direction from March 17<sup>th</sup> Work Session**

Open Space and Natural Resource Preservation - Plano should pursue additional open space and trail connections to improve the quality of life for its citizens. This would include purchasing vacant and underutilized land for parks and open space and/or purchasing floodplain for trail connections.

### **Plano Tomorrow Quality of Life P&Z Direction from May 5<sup>th</sup> Work Session**

Active Living and Citizen Well-Being-Plano will make active living and citizen well-being a priority.

Placemaking is an urban design technique that cities across the United States are using to improve and modernize the city's appearance. It is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking capitalizes on a community's assets with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being.

Incorporating placemaking techniques into building and site designs creates a sense of place for cities. Placemaking not only enhances the public realm, it encourages social interaction by bringing people out of their private homes and into the community. There are a number of ways that cities today are implementing placemaking techniques in their communities, including:

1. Creating squares and parks as multi-use destinations;
2. Improving streets as public spaces;
3. Building local economies through markets and festivals;
4. Linking public health to public space;
5. Designing buildings to support public places; and
6. Building on the historic fabric.

### ***Plano Tomorrow Survey***

There were no questions regarding placemaking and public spaces on the Plano Tomorrow Survey. However, there were two questions that relate to public and open space.

1. Survey participants were asked to rank eight options (in order of preference) as their most favorite places in Plano. The Shops at Legacy, Downtown Plano, Oak Point Park and Nature Preserve, and Arbor Hills Nature Preserve were selected as the four most favorite places in Plano by survey respondents. All four places offer unique public space characteristics and encourage pedestrian activity.
2. Survey participants were asked to rank seven options (in order of preference) that contribute to the improvement of the living and working environment in the city. "Enhancing open space areas to encourage neighborhood interaction and pedestrian friendly activity" ranked third out of the seven options.

### ***Council and Commission Direction***

At the Council and Commission's joint use work session on June 30, groups were presented information on placemaking and public spaces and were asked to identify potential placemaking initiatives around the city.

Several potential placemaking improvements were identified in the joint work session map exercise. Some of the more popular initiatives included:

- Multi-use park (similar to Klyde Warren Park) over the Dallas North Tollway
- More programming/movie nights/food truck nights at Oak Point Park
- Entertainment/events at Collin Creek Mall urban center site
- Food truck park in Downtown Plano
- Health/Dog/Skate/Splash Parks in various areas of the city

One policy statement that addressed placemaking and public spaces was evaluated by the Council and Commission members as follows:

*"Urbanization - Urbanization not only provides expanded opportunity for housing and employment, it offers great opportunity for creating rich, walkable mixed use centers enriching the community's visual character and quality of life."*  
**Agree 14-3**

The consensus was agreement for the statement; however, the individuals in disagreement recognized that not all dense, urban places are positive. Based on the joint work session survey and map exercise, staff has drafted a proposed policy statement for the Commission's review.

### **Proposed Plano Tomorrow Policy:**

**Plano will create public spaces that enhance community character, create memorable and unique experiences, and build neighborhood identity.**

## Arts and Culture

### Current Comprehensive Plan Strategies

- Study the needs of different cultures living in Plano and the possible impacts on municipal service content and delivery and make adjustments where needed.
- Develop a policy framework that can be consistently applied to requests for the city's involvement in the development and operation of cultural facilities.
- Use cultural amenities and facilities to enhance the city's quality of life and attract people to Plano.

Plano's arts and culture contribute greatly to its sense of place and overall livability. This includes the natural and built environments, the city's multifaceted history, diverse populations, performance venues and festivals, and educational opportunities. As Plano becomes more diverse, it will be important for the city to encourage and develop activities that serve Plano's changing population and embrace unique cultural experiences. Arts and culture are essential characteristics for Plano's identity as an attractive and desirable place for living, conducting business, learning, and visiting, as well as for cultural and historic tourism.

### **Plano Tomorrow Survey**

There were three questions that addressed arts and culture in the Plano Tomorrow Survey.

- 69% of the respondents stated they leave Plano for arts/culture/museums and 53% of the respondents stated they leave Plano for entertainment.
- When rating the existing opportunities in Plano, cultural activities ranked eighth out of nine options. Entertainment ranked sixth.
- "Openness and acceptance toward people of diverse backgrounds" ranked sixth out of eight options when respondents were asked to rank existing quality of life aspects.

### **Council and Commission Direction**

Two policy statements that addressed cultural and private amenities were evaluated by the Council and Commission members as follows:

*"Cultural Amenities – The city should assume significant responsibility directly, or through public/private partnership, to provide cultural amenities (theaters, amphitheater, plaza, meeting/event space, galleries, etc.) that enrich quality of life in the city." Agree 10-7*

*"Private Amenities – The development of cultural amenities (theaters, amphitheaters, plazas, meeting/event space etc.) is primarily a private and non-profit sector responsibility consistent with community desire and market demand." Agree 11-6*

Neither of the two policies received a consensus. However, the comments from individuals who disagreed with the policies were comparable and stated:

- The city should lead but expect private participation;
- The city should open facilities on a financially limited basis;
- Cultural and private amenity uses do not benefit all citizens equally;

With the information from the survey, staff has determined that there is a desire for the city to provide arts and cultural amenities; however, these facilities should be provided through private and nonprofit partnerships. Staff has drafted a proposed policy statement for the Commission's review.

**Proposed Plano Tomorrow Policy:**

**Plano will promote the advancement of arts and cultural amenities through private and nonprofit partnerships to enhance quality of life and enrich community culture.**

## HERITAGE PRESERVATION

### Current Comprehensive Plan Strategies

- None

In the 1970s, Plano was growing and changing rapidly. The city recognized that the increase in population, the changes in Plano's land use and the overall change in Plano's economy were significantly threatening Plano's heritage resources. In 1979, Plano's City Council adopted the first heritage preservation ordinance. Heritage preservation has become much more than saving bricks and mortar. It is a social, economic, sustainable and cultural endeavor. In 2011, City Council adopted a new Preservation Plan to help direct a coordinated and effective preservation effort in Plano.

Today, Plano has two heritage districts (Downtown and Haggard Park) and two potential conservation districts (Haggard Addition and Old Town). There are 32 individually designated heritage resources within the city including the Bowman Cemetery. Plano's heritage and historical character provides a sense of authenticity for residents and business owners to embrace. Many factors will help shape a city's identity, but one of the most important factors is the city's history.

To strengthen Plano's heritage preservation efforts, the city provides two financial incentive programs. The city provides a Heritage Preservation Grant to local non-profit organizations that support heritage preservation and tourism. Funding from the Heritage Preservation Grant are to be used for historic programming, historic preservation advocacy and some historic restoration projects. The city also provides Heritage Tax Exemptions for the purpose of providing tax relief to encourage preservation and maintenance of the historical structures in the city.

### ***Plano Tomorrow Survey***

There were no questions regarding heritage preservation on the Plano Tomorrow Survey. However, Downtown Plano ranked as third favorite place in Plano by survey respondents.

### ***Council and Commission Direction***

Though there was no heritage preservation draft policies for discussion at the joint work session on June 30, a few items from the map exercise were provided that relate to heritage preservation:

- A desire for a "Bishop Arts" type of development in Downtown Plano
- The expansion of Downtown Plano as a regional destination

With the information gathered from the joint work session and from Plano's existing heritage preservation efforts, staff has determined that Plano's historical character and distinctiveness should be preserved and embraced. Staff has drafted a proposed policy statement for the Commission's review.

**Proposed Plano Tomorrow Policy:**

**Plano will embrace its unique historical character and authenticity by identifying and preserving historic and cultural resources that promote the understanding of the city's history and enrich the city's sense of place.**

## COMMUNITY BUILDING

### Current Comprehensive Plan Strategies

- None

The emotional relationship and sense of belonging to a community is important to an individual's quality of life and to a city's vitality. In a maturing and diversifying city like Plano, residents may become less active or may be unable to communicate due to language barriers. It is important for the city to promote community cohesion among citizens and build relationships. By increasing community building efforts, the city can encourage a united and close-knit population that is proud to live and work in Plano.

One example of a community building initiative is the Love Where You Live program. Love Where You Live (LWYL) was created to encourage social and physical transformation of maturing Plano neighborhoods. With the success of LWYL, the city has seen the development of Neighborhood Associations, Crime Watch Groups, and other community building efforts. Additionally, the program has helped to build relationships and trust between residents and the city. Plano's Police Department is also involved with National Night Out, which is a community event that is meant to increase awareness about police programs in communities, such as crime watch groups.

Social media has also transformed how individuals communicate. Nextdoor, a private social network community for neighborhoods, has helped adjust to the evolution of communication and bridge the gap between neighborhood associations and social media. The city encourages residents to join Nextdoor as a way to build community, discuss neighborhood issues, and promote social events.

As Plano continues to diversify in age, ethnicity, and culture, it is important for the city to have an active role in strengthening community cohesion and promoting community pride.

### ***Plano Tomorrow Survey***

There were no questions regarding community building on the Plano Tomorrow Survey.

### ***Council and Commission Direction***

There were no draft policies regarding community building at the joint work session on June 30. However, with the information gathered from Plano's existing citizen programs, staff has drafted a policy statement for the Commission's review.

### **Proposed Plano Tomorrow Policy:**

**Plano will pursue community building efforts and initiatives and provide the tools needed to strengthen community cohesion and sense of belonging among residents.**

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

### **Current Comprehensive Plan Strategies**

- Explore techniques such as visualization of development plans, on-line surveys, and online permit applications to improve participation and information sharing with the City. The Internet and/or other communications systems should provide information about upcoming meetings, pending projects and activities, and opportunities for citizens to express their views on certain matters. This would increase the public's understanding of how the City functions in one's day-to-day life and strengthen the sense of "community".

City government derives its legitimacy from the citizens it serves. To effectively determine citizen needs and acceptable ways to meet those needs, city government must interact with residents, businesses, non-governmental organizations and other governmental agencies. The City of Plano has encouraged citizen input through a number of efforts including development public hearings; neighborhood meetings; police and fire citizen programs; Plano Town Hall general meetings; electronic newsletters; and social media. Encouraging citizen input has dramatically changed the past ten years. Before the modern era, mailing notices was sufficient to get information out to the public. However, with the constant advances in technology, communication techniques will need to be expanded to meet the needs of all generations.

A particular challenge in public participation is the inclusion of underserved populations. Some issues with involving underserved populations include: meeting locations, times, access to daycare, and language barriers. Plano has made efforts to address these challenges at neighborhood meetings and will continue to seek involvement from underserved populations.

In addition to citizen input, citizen involvement is also an important factor to Plano's sense of community. Plano has several committees and programs that involve the public in the day-to-day activities of city government including the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), fire and police programs (i.e. Citizen's Police Academy), and Live Green in Plano. There are also opportunities for members of the public to volunteer for the city through the Volunteers in Plano (VIP) program. In addition, the public can participate in the governance process through appointment to a city board, commission or committee. Each year, the city solicits applications for boards and commissions and receives approximately 100 applications from the public for the city's 15 boards and commissions. As Plano becomes more diverse, it will be important to seek and encourage individuals from all demographics to represent the city on boards and commissions.

### ***Plano Tomorrow Survey***

There were no questions regarding community involvement and participation on the Plano Tomorrow Survey.

***Council and Commission Direction***

There were no draft policies regarding community involvement and participation at the joint work session on June 30. However, with the information gathered from Plano's existing citizen programs and the current Comprehensive Plan's Strategy, staff has drafted a policy statement for the Commission's review.

**Proposed Plano Tomorrow Policy:**

**Plano will proactively seek civic participation from all ages, ethnicities and cultures and provide residents with information, education and opportunities for involvement.**