



**City of Georgetown 2030 Comprehensive Plan
Chapter 4. - Plan Administration**

4. Plan Administration

OVERVIEW

While the City of Georgetown 2030 Comprehensive Plan is fundamentally a “policy document,” the goals, policies, and actions identified in it will only become a reality by concerted, consistent attention to implementation. This requires that the City administration, departments, and present and future Planning and Zoning Commissions and City Councils actively and continuously use the 2030 Comprehensive Plan as a key reference for all decisions and actions, consistent with the strategic initiatives and policies contained in the Plan.

Texas law provides basic guidance to municipalities for developing and applying comprehensive plans. Chapter 219 of the Local Government Code grants powers to municipalities for promoting sound development and the public health, safety and welfare, with broad local government discretion to define the content and organization of a comprehensive plan. Further, Chapter 211.004 requires that zoning regulations (as well as rezonings) be adopted in accordance with a comprehensive plan, while Chapter 212.010 requires that the approval of development plats also must be consistent with an adopted comprehensive plan.

Consistent with this broad mandate of Texas state law for compliance with a comprehensive plan, the City of Georgetown Charter was amended in 1986 with the addition of Section 1.08, to articulate the City’s commitment to comprehensive planning, as excerpted below.

Purpose and Intent

...(to) establish comprehensive planning as a continuous and ongoing governmental function in order to promote and strengthen the existing role, processes and powers of the City of Georgetown to prepare, adopt and implement a comprehensive plan to guide, regulate, and manage the future development within the corporate limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction of the City to assure the most appropriate and beneficial use of land, water and other natural resources, consistent with the public interest.

Contents

The comprehensive plan shall contain the council’s policies for growth, development and beautification of the land within the corporate limits and the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the City...The comprehensive plan should include but not be limited to:

1. A future land use element
2. A traffic circulation and public transit element
3. A wastewater, electric, solid waste, drainage and potable water element
4. A conservation and environmental resources element
5. A recreation and open space element
6. A housing element
7. A public services and facilities element, which shall include but not be limited to a capital improvement program

8. A public building and related facilities element
9. An economic element for commercial and industrial development and re-development
10. Health and human service element
11. Historic preservation element
12. Citizen participation element
13. Urban design element
14. Public safety element

Legal Effect

Upon adoption of a comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof by the City Council, all land development regulations, including zoning and map, subdivision regulations, roadway plan, all public improvements, public facilities, public utilities projects and all City regulatory actions relating to land use, subdivision and development approval, should be consistent with the adopted plan or element.

Following the incorporation of Section 1.08 into the City Charter in 1986, the City commenced a planning process that led to the adoption of the award-winning Century Plan. In the accompanying Policy Plan, the City established an elaborate protocol for plan adoption, revision and amendment. Although the Policy Plan reflects positively on the City's commitment to faithfully carry out the Century Plan, some of its provisions lack clarity, as exemplified by the absence of distinction between a "plan revision" and a "plan amendment". Other provisions of the Policy Plan placed too great a burden on staff, with an ambitious, but often ill-defined, implementation work program that included such requirements as "...an annual operating plan...(to) include one and two year budgets and revenue projections, and one, two and five year project plans...(with) multiple time horizons to ensure that the activities, programs and projects required by the ends, means, and functional plan elements of the Century Plan are included with both the short and long range work programs of the appropriate City Division."

This chapter seeks to confirm the City's commitment to plan implementation by replacing the provisions for plan implementation contained in the Policy Plan with a simple, clear, and streamlined protocol for the comprehensive plan adoption, compliance, amendments, monitoring, and plan updating and revisions. First, the basic principles that determine plan compliance are established.

Principles of Comprehensive Plan Compliance

Principle 1: Zoning districts and related development standards in the Unified Development Code (UDC) shall be revised to maintain consistency with the 2030 Comprehensive Plan (Plan).

The various Plan elements identify both specific revisions to standards and ordinances, such as the need for new design standards and guidelines and incentives for mixed-use and conservation development. This principle does *not* suggest that, upon Plan adoption, the Zoning Map, UDC and its various zoning districts must undergo a wholesale revision. The Future Land Use Map is not intended to become or replace present zoning district designations on the Zoning Map. Rather, the Future Land Use Map conceptually depicts relatively broad categories of land use, and will serve as a guide for considering future rezonings. Because the Future Land Use Map depicts development patterns 20+ years into the future, in some areas of the city and the ETJ, land use designations are considerably greater in intensity than existing zoning and current land use. Except where necessary to reserve certain parcels for future employment use, “correct” clearly inappropriate prior zoning designations, or to otherwise make a legitimate policy determination based on the public interest—the City of Georgetown will not initiate changes in present zoning designations.

Principle 2: Requested rezonings shall be reviewed for consistency with the Plan and shall not be approved if found contrary to the Plan.

Because the Future Land Use Map and its policies are considerably broader than present zoning and development regulations, many development applications that are consistent with present zoning will also be consistent with the Plan. In many cases, particularly those involving rezoning, the Plan review process will provide additional flexibility in the development review process. This will be particularly true for those areas designated for mixed-use, where underlying zoning is more rigid or limited than that provided for in the Plan. However, in cases where a proposed development is in clear conflict with the Plan, such approvals may not be granted unless and until the Plan is amended. The City Council shall make such amendments upon findings of fact, based on designated criteria.

Specific Provisions

The following is a recommended “checklist” for the development of a more specific protocol for Plan compliance, to be established within three months of Plan adoption:

- ♦ Identify specific task schedules, resources, and responsibilities to enact revisions to the UDC and associated development standards to be in conformance with the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, consistent with the priorities and timeframes in the Future Land Use Element.
- ♦ Establish provisions for the review of all development applications, rezonings, and plats to be consistent with the 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

PLAN ADOPTION, AMENDMENTS, MONITORING AND REVISION

Completion of Plan Elements

No later than six months after the completion of the first element, the Planning and Development Department and/or the Planning and Zoning Commission shall recommend to the City Council a set of criteria for the preparation and adoption of the remaining Plan elements, including a prioritized sequence for completion.

Plan Adoption

The Plan shall be adopted by the City Council, either by individual Plan element, by groups of elements, or as a whole. Per the comprehensive plan terms of the City Charter, a Revision to the Plan shall require a super-majority of the City Council only if the revision occurs more than once every five (5) years. A Revision is defined as the adoption or deletion of Plan Element(s). An Amendment, as defined in the Charter, is a minor change to the comprehensive plan. For the purposes of this Plan, as further defined in this chapter, an Amendment shall be any non-Element change made by ordinance of the City Council.

Plan Adoption, Revision and Amendment shall follow the protocol below:

- ♦ Transmittal to Planning and Zoning Commission: The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, or staff of the appropriate City department, will transmit the entire Plan or individual Plan elements, as they are completed, to the Planning and Zoning Commission or to the appropriate City-appointed board or commission for their review.
- ♦ Recommendation to City Council: The Planning and Zoning Commission, or other appropriate board or commission, shall hold a public hearing to recommend, by a majority vote, the Plan or Plan element to the City Council for adoption, with specific reference to any maps and other descriptive material intended as a part of the Plan. The resolution must be recorded in the minutes of the Planning and Zoning Commission or other board or commission.
- ♦ Transmittal to City Council: The recommended Plan or Plan element must be transmitted to the City Council.
- ♦ Public Hearing: Before adopting the Plan or Plan element, the City Council must hold a public hearing, advertised at least 30 days in advance.
- ♦ Ordinance: City Council will adopt the Plan or Plan element by ordinance.

Plan Amendments

Plan amendments are periodic, substantive changes to the Plan and its associated goals, policies, and actions along with changes to the Future Land Use Map that are necessary to accommodate changed or unforeseen circumstances in a manner consistent with the public interest. While the Plan provides for reasonable flexibility in interpretation, to have relevance over time, it should not be permitted to be ignored, nor subject to continuous or arbitrary amendments to accommodate development applications, which are contrary to the Plan. Therefore, Plan amendments will not be made more than once per calendar year, except for the rare circumstance where the City Council feels it necessary to make a change with a super-majority vote. Plan amendments will be

processed as part of the Annual Update and require only a majority vote of the City Council at such update. Plan amendments shall be recommended by the Planning and Zoning Commission or other appropriate board or commission, and adopted by City Council in the same manner as per Plan adoption. However, the following deviations shall not be considered to require Plan amendments. As such, these exceptions may be considered administratively and are not subject to the public hearing process.

Emergency situations requiring immediate actions or development approvals necessary to protect public health, safety or welfare, as determined by the City Council;

- ♦ Small scale developments, involving minor deviations, interpretations or adjustments to the Future Land Use Map, generally 10 acres or less; or
- ♦ Corrections of errors, clarifications of intent, and updating of data that do not alter the substance or intent of Plan policies or actions.

Specific Provisions

The following is a recommended checklist for the development of a more specific protocol for Plan amendments, to be established within three months of Plan adoption:

1. Package proposed Plan amendments annually for review and recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Commission, and forward their recommendations to City Council for their consideration following a public hearing.
2. Specific amendments may be considered more often than once a year when approved by a super-majority vote of all members of City Council.
3. Plan amendments may include text modifications to goals, strategies, and actions, or modifications to the Future Land Use Map that will accommodate rezonings or development applications that are inconsistent with the adopted Plan.
4. Amendments should not be made without an analysis of immediate needs and consideration of the long-term effects. In considering amendments to the Plan, the City should be guided by the following:
 - ♦ The need for the proposed change;
 - ♦ The effect of the proposed change on the need for City services and facilities;
 - ♦ The implications, if any, that the amendment may have for other parts of the Plan; and
 - ♦ A description and analysis of unforeseen circumstances or the emergence of new information (such as a significant economic development opportunity in Tier 2 or 3).

The City's annual budget shall not be adopted as an element of the Plan. However, specific annual budget priorities, as may be adopted separately by the City Council, should be consistent with the 2030 Vision Statement and with existing policies in the adopted Plan or Plan elements.

Plan Monitoring and Updating

If a Plan is to have value and remain useful over time, it is important to develop ways of monitoring progress on the many initiatives it calls for, to evaluate its effectiveness, and to keep it current as new information becomes available and as circumstances change. For this reason, comprehensive planning should be thought of as an ongoing process and not as a one-time event. The Plan is not an end in itself, but rather the foundation that will guide ongoing, more detailed planning. Without the evaluation and feedback loop, the Plan can soon become irrelevant. For this reason, the Plan must be structured to respond to changing needs and conditions.

Due to the complexity of the many initiatives called for in the City of Georgetown 2030 Comprehensive Plan, as well as the accelerating rate of growth and change, provisions for Plan monitoring and updating should be made in a timely manner, as follows:

- ♦ City of Georgetown shall monitor and report upon Plan implementation progress annually.
- ♦ City of Georgetown shall conduct a thorough update, revision, and adoption of the Plan every five (5) years.

Specific Provisions

The following is a checklist for the development of a more specific protocol for Plan monitoring and updating, to be established within three months of the Plan adoption.

Annual Monitoring

- ♦ At the anniversary of Plan adoption, the Planning and Development Department shall submit to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council an annual report indicating actions taken and progress made toward Plan implementation, along with recommendations for Plan amendments due to altered circumstances or in response to citizen requests, proposed rezonings, or plats.
- ♦ Include policies to provide a process for monitoring implementation progress and adopting Plan amendments, including consideration of an ongoing role for the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.
- ♦ Develop benchmarks, as part of an overall Plan-monitoring program, to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation efforts and adherence to the Plan.
- ♦ Maintain dialogue with local citizens, municipalities, school districts, development interests, and other stakeholders and affected parties on a periodic, ongoing basis to monitor the effectiveness and continued relevance of the Plan.
- ♦ Before amendments are considered for adoption, citizens should be provided with effective ways for participating in the decision-making process, in addition to the required public hearing.

Updating / Plan Revision

Every five (5) years, the City of Georgetown shall initiate a process to revise and adopt an updated Plan or one or more Plan elements. The revision process shall include the following:

- ♦ Creation or continuation of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, as appropriate, depending on the Plan element or elements undergoing revision;
- ♦ Updating of the Plan statistical data documenting growth trends, completed projects and other factors experienced since the adoption of the current Plan;
- ♦ Preparation of an *Evaluation and Appraisal Report*, documenting Plan effectiveness and implementation efforts, identifying constraints upon implementation, and summarizing trends and challenges that have emerged or changed in the period since Plan adoption;
- ♦ Revision of goals, strategies, and actions to reflect changing circumstances, emerging needs and opportunities, and expressed citizen priorities; and
- ♦ Revisions to Future Land Use Map and other related maps.