

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Flatonia Comprehensive Plan 2010 is the City's 10-year master plan and is intended to serve as a policy guide for City elected officials and staff on decisions affecting the physical development of the community. It is an ambitious plan that has been put together with a significant amount of public input gathered from workshops, surveys, and Steering and Parks/Open Space Committees involvement. It provides a Vision for what the community wants to achieve in Flatonia over the next ten years and it provides a clear direction on how some of that vision can be realized.

The City embarked on this endeavor with the intention of developing tools they can use to guide the growth of their city and provide a quality of life and economic prosperity to their citizens. This is a plan and as such can be left on the shelf and never looked at again - as does often happen with such a document. Therefore, it is imperative (in order to meet the desires of the citizens of Flatonia) that the City continue the planning process by developing implementation tools such as a Capital Improvements Plan and Zoning Ordinance, including elements to address Building Design and Historic Building Preservation. A comprehensive plan remains only a policy document without these implementation tools.

The plan includes eight major elements, each addressing a particular facet of the community, which include:

- Community Vision
- Baseline Analysis
- Citizen Survey/Input
- Land Use
- Economic Development
- Parks
- Housing
- Utility Infrastructure (Water, Wastewater, Electricity)

Chapter 1 identifies the **Vision** for Flatonia that was developed by Community participants at a Visioning Workshop. The primary purpose of the Visioning Workshop was to allow the community to provide the initial direction for the comprehensive plan. The Vision reads:

"In 2010, Flatonia will be a community that retains its old fashion charm through managed growth and development while providing quality education and economic opportunity".

Also in Chapter 1, the **Goals and Objectives** are presented which were developed to achieve the Vision. The primary goals for the community are:

1. Promote business opportunities and economic growth,
2. Preserve architectural integrity of the community and develop a beautification program for all of Flatonia,
3. Ensure quality infrastructure,
4. Provide educational opportunities that meet the needs of the entire community, and
5. Increase affordable housing within Flatonia's City Limits and Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

These Goals, and corresponding Objectives found also in Chapter 1, are interspersed throughout the comprehensive plan, and form the focus for other plan components (eg. Economic Development or Housing). These Goals should be reviewed by the City throughout the next ten years as a reminder of the priorities of the community. The Comprehensive Plan is built around the Goals and Objectives that were developed at the initial Visioning Workshop, and although not all Objectives have been addressed in this Comprehensive Plan, the City intends to address all issues and concerns of the citizens.

The **Baseline Analysis** in **Chapter 2** presents past, present and future data and information on demographics, economics, and land use. Flatonia has experienced a steady population growth over the past 10-20 years and the current population (1,455) is expected to increase by approximately 200 people over the next 10 years. Demographic changes expected to occur throughout Texas over the next 20 years will present challenges to city leaders as they prioritize their community and economic development initiatives.

The current land use in Flatonia is also discussed in this Chapter. Flatonia currently has approximately 1,066 acres within the City Limits and 1,338 acres within the ETJ. Approximately 72 percent of the land within the City Limits is developed. Of this developed land, 50 percent is residential, 20 percent is Agricultural. In addition, 10 percent of all land within the City Limits is vacant. There is a tremendous opportunity for the City to utilize vacant and agricultural lands to their best potential based on citizen interests. Chapter 4 discusses the Future Land Use Plan.

Chapter 3 presents the findings of the **Citizen Survey** and discusses interesting and relevant correlations. This portion of the comprehensive plan is perhaps one of the most important aspects of the plan since citizen input provides the basis for most decision-making that has been undertaken on this plan during the planning process. Of the Surveys sent to City utility customers (over 1000), 450 were returned completed. In addition, Flatonia high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors were asked to complete a survey, similar to the general citizen survey, but that was designed with the high school student perspective in mind. The most important issue raised by the survey was the perceived need for additional businesses and jobs. Protecting property values, providing affordable housing, preserving the small town character, and expanding school facilities all ranked as equally important issues facing Flatonia in the upcoming years. Respondents felt the City Council should act to encourage new businesses, develop zoning, enhance local parks, and increase the availability of new housing and affordable housing.

High School students feel that the most important challenge facing Flatonia is the need for more recreational opportunities. They chose this because they feel that kids are more likely to get into trouble without "things to do."

Chapter 4 addresses the **Future Land Use Plan**, which is one of the most important aspects of a Comprehensive Plan. The Land Use Plan is developed in relation to current and future constraints, needs and opportunities. Although a Land Use Plan does not constitute zoning, the Land Use Plan forms the basis for a future Zoning Map.

The City of Flatonia Future Land Use Plan was developed by the City Council, Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and the Parks Committee who gathered at a planning session and were presented information about the current land use patterns in Flatonia, the primary goals and interests of the citizens, as well as other pertinent information such as population projections, and land use constraints (e.g., floodplains). The workshop participants developed a Future Land Use Plan based on all of this information which has been reviewed by the Parks and Steering Committees as well as the City Council.

The major changes in the envisioned future land use from the current land use include: a historic district designation for historic buildings; more dedicated parks and open space; more commercial, industrial, retail and office space; less agricultural land; and higher density residential growth. However, the most salient designation was the participants need for distinct areas of use protecting, for example, areas used for residential from areas used for industrial purposes.

The **Economic Development** Plan presented in **Chapter 5** identifies business and community needs/issues as they pertain to job growth and the economy of Flatonia. This section also provides strategies that will help the City and community leaders in addressing these needs and issues while achieving the Vision for the community. Interviews were conducted with eight of the largest businesses in Flatonia and a focus group was held with twenty-five small to medium-sized business owners participating. Although the small and large business owners have different issues as they pertain to operation, they share the same concerns for improved job opportunities and quality of life for their themselves and employees. Two of the primary issues addressed by the existing businesses are 1) the need for more affordable housing and 2) that focusing on improving quality of life will result in greatest impact for economic prosperity. Based on the existing business input as well as citizen input from the Visioning Workshop and Citizen Survey, the economic development focus for the City and the Chamber of Commerce will be on:

- Helping Existing Business Expand

- Improving the Quality of Life in Flatonia
- Improving Quality and Quantity of Housing
- Marketing Flatonia as a Place to do Business and a Place to Visit
- Attracting New Businesses

Parks and Open Space needs and desires of the community are discussed in **Chapter 6**. This Parks Master Plan outlines a set of community park and recreation priorities, identifies specific park development projects, and includes a schedule for carrying out the identified park projects. The primary goal of the park plan is to greatly enhance the quality of life enjoyed by the citizens of Flatonia, thereby making Flatonia a great place to live, work, and raise a family. This chapter presents an inventory of existing park, recreational and open space facilities and then presents similarly identified needs and projects of the community.

The **Housing** Plan is presented in **Chapter 7**. Residential Land Use currently comprises approximately 48 percent of current land use. Single-family housing comprises 78 percent of the Flatonia housing units. Manufactured Housing makes up 17 percent, followed by Multi-family housing at 5 percent. Approximately 77 percent of all housing types in Flatonia are considered standard while nearly 14 percent is substandard. Flatonia has a relatively high percentage of dilapidated housing units compared to other cities.

An aggressive program for improving existing housing stock as well as developing vacant properties will lead to an overall improvement in the quality of housing in the City. The maintenance and quality of housing is a good reflection of the citizen attitudes towards their community. Property owner neglect and community disinterest are two of the major factors that cause poor housing conditions. One of the most effective actions that the City can take to improve housing conditions is to improve the look and feel of the City by focusing on beautification projects and infrastructure improvements. Residents living in a city that prides itself on the condition of its own buildings, streets and community facilities often follow suit with their upkeep of their personal housing.

In addition to housing conditions, Multi-family Housing, Manufactured Housing, and Affordable Housing are the major housing issues currently affecting Flatonia. The Housing Market Study (see Appendix) suggests a need for affordable rental and owner-occupied housing, so the City will be considering their options to have developers build more housing options in the city. This would include multi-family and single family housing.

Manufactured housing is considered by some to be a good choice for affordable housing. Many other cities develop separate zoning categories for manufactured housing or for a manufactured housing park. These are issues that the City will be considering in their discussions on zoning after the completion of the Comprehensive Plan.

The **Water/Wastewater Plan** (provided by BEFCO Engineering, Inc.) and **Electric Plan** (provided by the LCRA's Customer Engineering Department) are found in the Appendix. Both of these utility infrastructure plans present specific needs for the city over the next ten years based on population projections for this time period. Information from both of these plans will be integrated into the Capital Improvements Plan.

To reiterate, the 2010 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Flatonia is only as good as the implementation of the plan. A significant amount of time and energy has been contributed toward the development of this plan by City Council, City Staff, Steering and Parks Committee members, LCRA planning staff, as well as citizens who have participated in the surveys or workshops. The City of Flatonia wishes to acknowledge the following individuals involved in this important process:

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