2019 City of Rowlett Comprehensive Plan Update

After over a year of citizen engagement, research and analysis, Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee appointments and meetings, City Council updates and staff reviews - the 2019 Comprehensive Plan Update was formally adopted by the Rowlett City Council on March 19. A Comprehensive Plan is one of several guiding documents that communicates the City’s vision and sets its policy focus regarding land use and development goals for the future. Although the State of Texas does not require a city to have a comprehensive plan, it does require an update every five years for those who choose to adopt such a plan.

Our community has realized many components of Realize Rowlett 2020, which was adopted in 2011 and updated in 2014. Growth and development is changing the Metroplex, and has definitely impacted Rowlett. Land use is critical, especially during this high-growth period we are currently experiencing. Rather than simply updating Realize Rowlett 2020, the more extensive 2019 Comprehensive Plan Update was a strategic move on the City’s part to ensure we are addressing the current and future wants and needs of Rowlett citizens.

Thank you to the citizens who provided their time and input to the process, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee for their leadership, and City staff for their hard work and commitment to the Rowlett community. The plan truly reflects the needs and desires of our resident!

Mayor Tammy Dana-Bashian

I had a great time at the Pup-a-Palooza event held recently at Scentral Bark, Rowlett’s off-leash dog park!

Mayor Tammy Dana-Bashian
What is a Comprehensive Plan?
A Land Use Framework for Future Growth

A comprehensive plan creates a framework for future growth. It reflects the vision of the community by establishing goals and creating initiatives for the City to achieve their goals. Just as a community grows and evolves, so should the comprehensive plan. What was appropriate in the past may not still be true today. Therefore, a comprehensive plan should be updated every five to ten years to ensure consistency with the changing views and conditions of the community.

A city’s comprehensive plan can be defined as a long-range planning tool that is intended to be used by City staff, decision-makers, and citizens to guide the growth and physical development of a community for 10 to 20 years. The State of Texas has established laws governing the way incorporated communities can ensure the health, safety and welfare of their citizens. State law gives communities the power to regulate the use of land, but only if such regulations are based on a plan.

In basic terms, the primary objectives of a comprehensive plan are to accomplish the following:
- Efficient delivery of public services,
- Coordination of public and private investment,
- Minimization of potential conflicts between land uses,
- Management of growth in an orderly manner,
- Cost-effective public investments, and
- A rational and reasonable basis for making decisions about the community.

There are two interrelated purposes of a comprehensive plan. First, it allows the citizens of a community to create a shared vision of the future. Second, it establishes the goals and strategies the community can use to effectively realize the shared vision.

It is important to note that a Comprehensive Plan does not establish zoning regulations or zoning boundaries. It is a high-level overview that establishes a vision and provides implementation strategies that are used to create zoning regulations and boundaries in the future. It provides a measure of predictability and clarity in the primary step of the development process.

Read the 2019 Comprehensive Plan Update HERE

Rowlett is primarily developed with few remaining vacant areas in the City, so providing for the orderly and efficient use of land is critically important for future development. Our Comprehensive Plan Update is the first step in proactively planning for the next phase of the City’s future.
Citizen-led Process

In January 2018, the City Council appointed the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.

The committee was tasked with the responsibilities to guide the planning process, encourage community input, approve document drafts, and form recommendations to influence Council decisions. I appreciate their hard work and commend their dedication to make the future promising for every Rowlett resident.

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was comprised of: chair Stanley Pollard; Rowlett residents Tim Plunk and Richard Kull; Chamber of Commerce representative Michael Gallops; Garland ISD representative Larry Glick; Parks and Recreation Advisory Board representative Ken Romaine; Planning and Zoning Commission representatives James Moseley and Kevin Moore; Senior Advisory Board representative Rob Rose; and City Council representatives Matt Grubisich and Pam Bell.

The Community’s Plan

A comprehensive plan is a tool meant to be used by elected and appointed decision makers, staff, property owners, and developers to understand how the public wants their community to look in the following decades.

This means that understanding the public’s interests is the primary factor in the formulation of any comprehensive plan.

For this reason, the public input process for the City of Rowlett’s Comprehensive Plan Update was extensive. A concerted effort was made by all parties to obtain input from everyone in Rowlett who wished to participate in the formulation of the community’s vision and goals.

Citizen Participation and Public Involvement

Public engagement and significant community input was a major City Council priority throughout the Comprehensive Plan development process.

To that end, citizen feedback was garnered through online surveys, public meetings, instant polling devices, social media, community events, meetings in-a-box and charrettes.

The large-scale stakeholder outreach and engagement effort, held in tandem with the development of the City’s Strategic Plan, resulted in 1,170 respondents from the community at large, and included:

- An online community survey;
- Two open community meetings;
- Three community focus groups, including homeowner and neighborhood watch groups, faith and not-for-profit representatives and seniors;
- A presentation to the Rowlett Chamber of Commerce;
- A visioning workshop with the joint membership of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee and Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee;
- Collection of citizen input through visioning comment boards at the Rowlett Community Centre, Library and the City Hall Annex.
Updating Realize Rowlett 2020

Adopted in 2011, Realize Rowlett 2020 (RR2020) created a vision of our community’s future and a set of action items to make that vision a reality. It provided direction for future decisions on land use, economic development and public capital investments. RR2020 defined important catalyst areas within Rowlett and used market research and other tools to craft a practical approach to investment in these areas. RR2020 allowed Rowlett to take advantage of opportunities available at the time, while enhancing the attractions that already make this community special and unique.

This Comprehensive Plan update builds upon the successes of RR2020 and provides further direction for how Rowlett should develop in the future. Realize Rowlett 2020 built a framework for future development in the City and established guiding principles to direct policy, land use, and implementation. Since much of Rowlett is developed, the previous comprehensive plan focused on 13 of the largest remaining developable areas of the City, designated as Strategic Opportunity Areas.

Seven years later, many of the Strategic Opportunity Areas have experienced development activity. This plan update primarily focuses on six of the Strategic Opportunity Areas* with remaining development potential.

As this plan is an update to the City’s Comprehensive Plan, Realize Rowlett 2020 will still be referenced as a guiding document for the community. The vision, character, and guiding principles remain relevant and still effectively guide development. The two documents will be used in concert with one another to achieve the community’s goals.

The scope of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan Update included five Strategic Opportunity Areas:

1. North Shore
   A major employment hub that capitalizes on its access to President George Bush Turnpike – with a mix of office, commercial, retail and mixed-use development located along the turnpike frontage. This area will become a key destination for employment and an ideal location for those who desire urban center living.

2. Active Living
   A waterfront neighborhood with a mix of single-family residential development and limited commercial uses as this waterfront location is more appropriate for passive lakeside recreation and open space.

3. Signature Gateway
   A mixed neighborhood with a focus on trails and open-space gathering areas along the lake, with limited neighborhood commercial/retail development along the Turnpike frontage.

4. Lakeside Center
   A civic gathering space that supports City facilities, provides a commercial/retail destination, and capitalizes on the lake front. Development will build on the existing public space in the area and provide a place that integrates civic services in a mixed-use setting with retail and entertainment.

5. Business Beltway*
   A business and employment hub that offers office, commercial, entertainment, and retail development for daytime and nighttime populations to create a successful and vibrant commercial corridor within the City.

*After consideration of the geographic location and general development character of the area, the Strategic Opportunity Areas known as Business Beltway and Southshore in Realize Rowlett 2020 were combined to serve as one area in this update.

Goals of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan Update

- Ensure orderly growth and supportive infrastructure.
- Diversify and strengthen Rowlett’s economy.
- Preserve the character of Rowlett.
- Foster development that provides premiere regional destinations.
- Provide housing that supports various lifestyles and populations within the community.

Read the 2019 Comprehensive Plan Update HERE