

Magnolia

ON THE
MOVE





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COLLABORATIVE

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May 10, 2013

Mr. Paul Mendes
City Administrator
City of Magnolia
18111 Buddy Riley Boulevard
Magnolia, Texas 77354

Dear Mr. Mendes:

We are pleased to submit the City of Magnolia's Comprehensive Plan as unanimously adopted by City Council on April 9, 2013. The plan development process and final set of deliverables were completed in accordance with our Professional Services Agreement with the City.

As the tagline, "Magnolia on the Move," suggests, this Comprehensive Plan is only a snapshot in time for one of the fastest growing communities and regions in the country. Yet it serves as an overarching policy guide that is designed to influence growth and development for the next 20 years. The year-long planning process garnered widespread participation and support of community stakeholders. In addition to City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and 4A/4B Community Development Corporation Board directives, this plan reflects guidance from stakeholder interviews and focus groups; five work sessions with a Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee; a joint elected and appointed official workshop; and a public hearing.

As a result of community input, we were able to define Magnolia's vision and identify specific implementation strategies. This plan describes the community's needs and aspirations related to land use and community character; growth management; transportation and utility infrastructure; parks and amenities; housing and neighborhoods; and revitalization of the Magnolia Town Center. As the City moves forward, implementation will require the commitment of the entire community – especially its City officials and staff – to champion the plan's vision and action agenda.

On behalf of my firm, it has been a pleasure working with residents, business owners, and City staff. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to lend our comprehensive planning and implementation experience to this process. We look forward to witnessing Magnolia's continued success and enhancement in the years ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

Bret C. Keast, AICP
President

Performance Concepts in Planning
www.kendigkeast.com



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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THE CITY OF MAGNOLIA'S FOOTPRINT IS A FRACTION OF ITS REGIONAL INFLUENCE, WHICH SERVICES MORE THAN 138,000 RESIDENTS IN A 12-MILE RADIUS. LOCATED IN ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING COUNTIES IN TEXAS, MAGNOLIA BENEFITS FROM THE REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT CENTERS AND MIXED-USE AMENITIES OF THE WOODLANDS, CONROE, AND TOMBALL. THIS PROXIMITY HAS TRANSLATED TO LOCAL GROWTH AS MAGNOLIA HAS EXPERIENCED A 25 PERCENT POPULATION INCREASE OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS, AND A 50 PERCENT INCREASE IN COMMERCIAL PERMITS OVER THE LAST YEAR.* IN THE NEXT TWO DECADES, THE REGION'S FAST-PACED AND COMPETITIVE ANNEXATION CLIMATE WILL LEAD TO UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CITY – IF A STRATEGIC PLAN AND COMMUNITY VISION ARE IN PLACE.

*City of Magnolia, Economic Development

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

“ Amidst an expected trend of substantial growth during the 20-year horizon of this plan, the City of Magnolia will seize its economic opportunities and grow in a deliberate, well-planned manner while being mindful of the endearing qualities of our community and the reasons why we’ve chosen to call it home. We will insist on preserving the values and assets that make our community unique, and we will hold our special way of life above the forces and influences that may threaten our resources and environment or compromise our highly-valued small-town character. ”

- **Community Vision Statement**

INTRODUCTION

In the face of growth, one of City’s primary challenges will be to preserve the community’s identity. With a large trade area offset by limited jurisdictional authority, many residents and visitors already ask – what is Magnolia? As one civic leader expressed, “People associate Magnolia with lots of things – many things that aren’t Magnolia.” In part, this is due to the City’s transformation from rural pastures and undeveloped pine forests to a bedroom community in which residents live in Magnolia but often work in another city. The boundaries for the Magnolia Independent School District and Magnolia postal zone contribute to this ambiguity, as they both encompass a much larger area than the corporate limits.

Magnolia on the Move was a year-long planning process that resulted in this Comprehensive Plan. It presents a 20-year planning strategy for protecting Magnolia’s identity, while anticipating new demands on the City’s infrastructure and natural resources over a 30-year growth horizon. This document is written for everyday citizens that make private decisions, as well as civic-minded leaders and institutions that make altruistic decisions which must reflect the best interest and political will of the community. The process helped to identify what makes Magnolia, Magnolia, while developing strategies that preserve its small-town charm, retain multi-generational families, and attract prospective businesses and residents to the area.

PLAN OBJECTIVES

In today’s transient society, how can we plan more than five years into the future – let alone 20 years?

Rather than documenting every seen and unforeseen challenge, this plan is written as a strategy document with overarching policies and recommendations that are to inform decision-makers. Once adopted, it must still function as a “work in progress” that can – and should – be updated and amended to reflect inevitable changes in the demographic composition and economic climate of the community and the area surrounding it.

Both the planning process and adopted plan have the end result of:

- garnering the participation and support of Magnolia’s stakeholders and leadership;
- establishing a community-supported vision and guiding principles that steer future growth and enhancement of the community;
- providing short-, mid-, and long-term growth strategies that influence annexation and development patterns;
- defining realistic goals and implementation strategies that are achievable over the next 20 years;
- providing greater predictability for residents, land owners, developers, and potential investors; and
- fulfilling a legal requirement should the community decide to establish development standards and regulations (see the *Plan Authorization* inset on the next page).

PLAN OUTCOMES

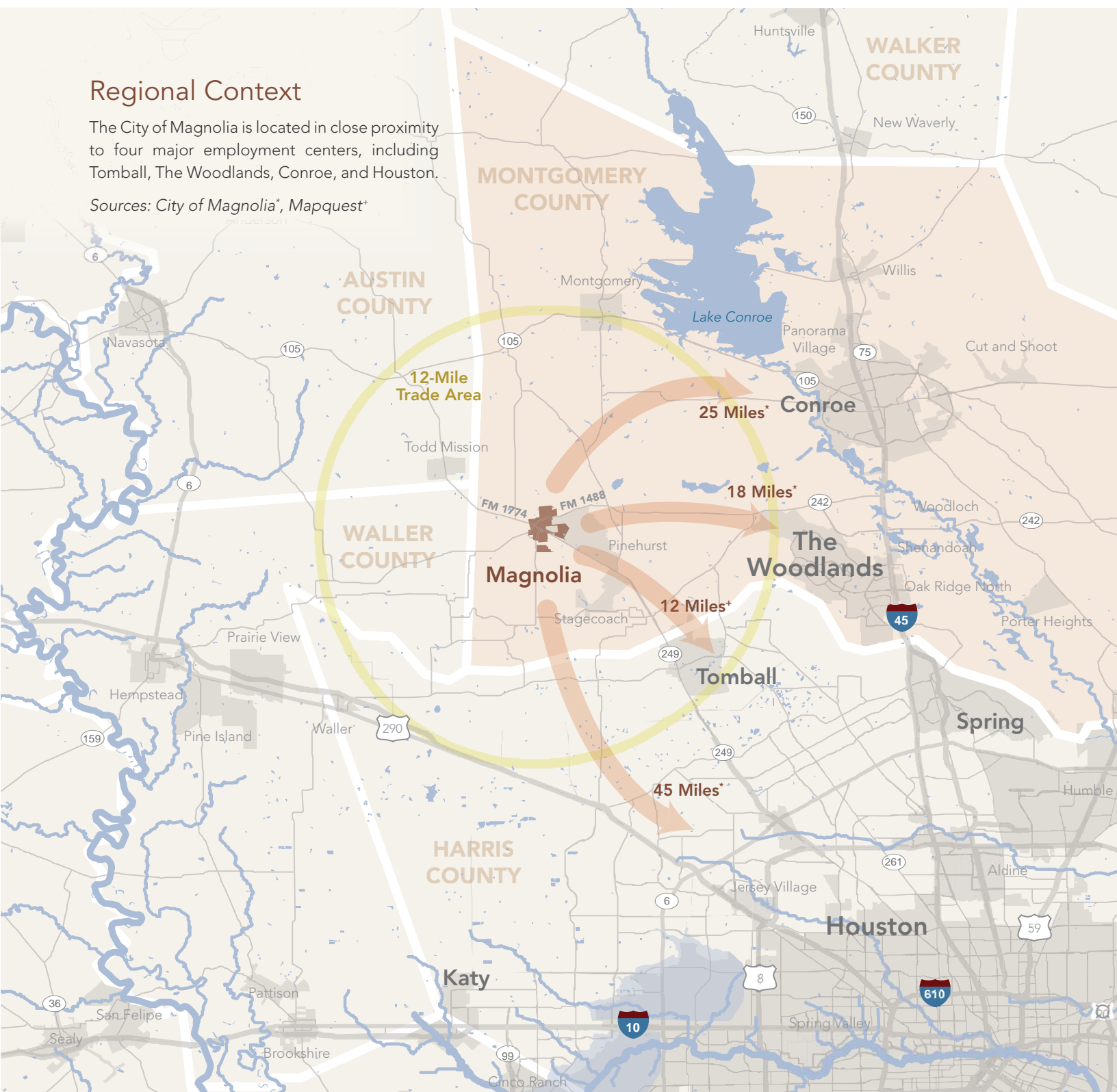
While this plan maintains a level of generality to account for change, it identifies policy directives and initiatives that can be adopted and implemented upon the recommendation of City staff and the Planning and

According to Section 213 of the Texas Local Government Code, the City of Magnolia is authorized to adopt a comprehensive plan for the purposes of promoting sound development and promoting public health, safety and welfare. A comprehensive plan may:

- consist of a single plan or a coordinated set of plans organized by subject and geographic area; and
- be used to coordinate and guide the establishment of development regulations.

Regional Context

Sources: City of Magnolia*, Mapquest⁺



Citizen Involvement

This plan's vision, policies, and recommendations are based on the community's collective input – rather than a select group of interests – to ensure present-day and future stakeholders are equitably represented. Out of necessity, this Comprehensive Plan was derived from a year-long plan development process, which was characterized by frequent check-in points with City staff, appointed and elected officials, and a citizen-led Advisory Committee to gather and disseminate information, fact check, prioritize goals and objectives, and establish implementation initiatives. Community engagement activities included:

- Four, one-hour **listening sessions** with more than 40 participants, representing a cross-section of Magnolia realtors, civic leaders, neighborhood residents, and land and business owners.
- Five bi-monthly **workshop sessions** with the Advisory Committee, which included a mixed composition of long-time residents, business owners, and public officials. Topics included:
 - » Issues and Needs
 - » Land Use and Character
 - » Community Growth
 - » Infrastructure and Amenities
 - » Housing
- A **joint workshop** with the City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and 4A/4B Boards to accommodate final plan review and prioritization.
- A **public hearing** with the Planning and Zoning Commission prior to City Council consideration and adoption of this Comprehensive Plan.
- **Community presentations** with the Rotary Club, Lions Club, Greater Magnolia Chamber of Commerce, and local realtors.
- Periodic **updates and postings** of interim deliverables on the City's website.
- Associated **media coverage** of the planning process, particularly through the Community Impact Newspaper and other media outlets.

Early History

Magnolia grew into the City we know today when the International-Great Northern Railroad first stopped in town at the turn of the 20th Century. Today, the Magnolia Historical Society maintains and operates The Depot, which serves as a reminder of the community's railroad heritage.

Sources: City of Magnolia^a, Greater Magnolia Chamber of Commerce^b, Texas Escapes^c

Zoning Commission and approval of City Council. This Comprehensive Plan articulates these outcomes in the form of:

- targeted programs and expenditures prioritized through the City's annual budgeting process, including routine but essential functions such as code enforcement;
- major public improvements and land acquisition financed through the City's capital improvement program and related bond initiatives;
- new and amended City ordinances and regulations closely linked to this Comprehensive Plan objectives;
- departmental work plans and staffing in key areas;
- ongoing planning studies that will further clarify needs, costs, benefits, and strategies;
- pursuit of external grant funding to supplement local budgets and/or expedite certain projects; and
- joint initiatives pursued in conjunction with other public and private partners.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

This Comprehensive Plan is organized into chapters according to key themes, which inherently overlap and cross-reference one another. Meanwhile, essential community functions, such as economic development, implicitly and explicitly influence policies and recommendations throughout the entire document. Each chapter addresses the following content:

CHAPTER 1, INTRODUCTION

The first chapter sets the context for long-range and strategic planning by presenting the purpose and function of this Comprehensive Plan; documenting community participation; and identifying key issues. This chapter includes a community snapshot, which illustrates pertinent demographic and socioeconomic trends that will guide future decision-making.



- 1840** The Montgomery County boundary extended to Spring Creek, and the community was referred to as Mink's Prairie after one of its early settlers, Joseph Mink.^a
- 1858** The first post office was established.^b
- 1900** The community had 25 residents.^c
- 1901** The original train depot was constructed to support the local sawmill industry, which attracted new residents, churches, and commercial businesses.^b

- 1903** The City was officially renamed Magnolia.^a
- 1915** The community had 150 residents.^c
- 1924** The community offered a full range of services, including a bank, hotel, doctors office, general stores, and saloons.^a
- 1940** The community had 400 residents.^c
- 1968** The City of Magnolia was incorporated.^c

CHAPTER 2, LAND USE AND CHARACTER

The second chapter assesses the community's long-range development outlook and establishes the necessary policy guidance for individual developments and community destinations (e.g., The Stroll, Historic Depot area). The *Future Land Use and Character Plan* will serve as the City's policy for directing ongoing development and managing future growth, preserving valued areas and lands, and protecting the integrity of neighborhoods. Additionally, this chapter will include potential development code adjustments and other action strategies to protect and enhance Magnolia's character and livability. The community identified the following key issues:

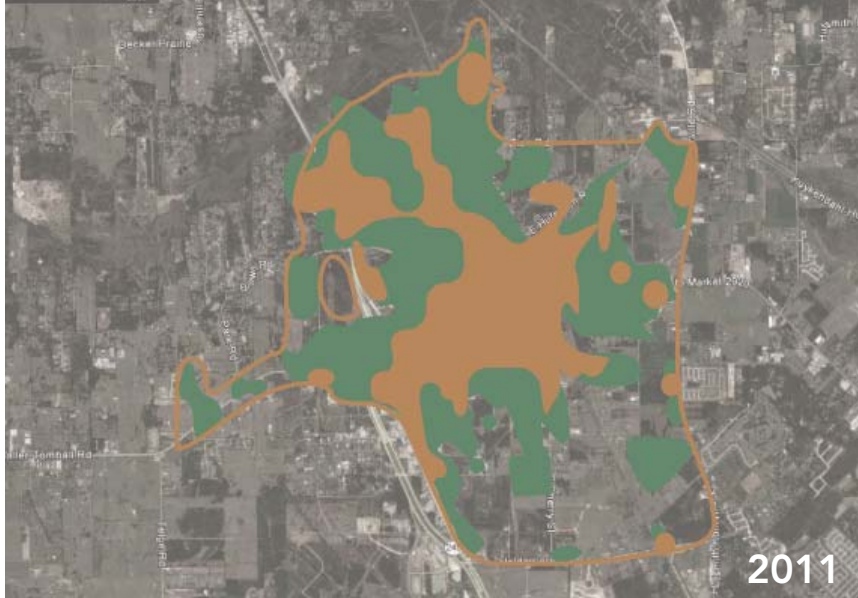
- **Influence.** What are the tools and avenues available for the community to best plan for and directly influence the type, pattern, and character of its future development?
- **Neighborhood Protection.** What can be done to preserve the quality and integrity of neighborhoods, and to defend them from the encroachment of larger, more intensive land uses?
- **Community Definition.** What is the ultimate area of Magnolia for which the City has the ability, capacity, and interest to serve?
- **Identity.** How do we protect the rural and natural character of the community (e.g., pine forests, rolling topography, and undeveloped pastures), without inhibiting economic development?
- **Amenities.** How can we retain more daytime traffic to attract a new grocery store, more healthcare providers, and entertainment venues that improve the quality of life for Magnolia citizens?
- **Development Guidelines and Regulations.** What land development regulations, design standards, ordinances, and other tools will ensure new and existing developments are compatible with the character of the community?

- **Corridor Appearance.** How can we incentivize property owners to improve the appearance of older commercial buildings, particularly along FM 1774 and FM 1488?
- **Magnolia Town Center.** What part of Magnolia is considered the "Magnolia Town Center," and how can it be enhanced to function as a genuine gathering space to accommodate civic, retail, recreational, and housing uses?
- **Business-Friendly Climate.** What economic development tools are available to attract high-quality industrial and commercial businesses, which increase the number of daytime business patrons and contribute to the tax base?

CHAPTER 3, GROWTH CAPACITY AND MANAGEMENT

The third chapter addresses the City's intent and policy regarding how growth and new development will be accommodated. This will entail an evaluation of existing infrastructure capacities and "planning-level" improvements to water supply and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, and storm drainage. The community identified the following key issues:

- **Annexation.** In context of the growth and annexation of surrounding communities, where and when should the City expand its corporate limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)?
- **Expanded Authority.** At what point might Magnolia become home rule, and how should the community plan in advance for the expanded authority that comes with it?
- **Infrastructure.** How will the City fund and maintain major infrastructure improvements (e.g., undersized water lines, storage capacity) to support its future development?



Development Patterns

The before and after images above depict the scattered growth pattern of the City of Tomball between 1989 to 2011.

- **Marketing.** How can the City capitalize economically on the growing employment centers in neighboring communities (e.g., new 385-acre Exxon complex in Spring) without compromising the highly valued community character and way of life?
- **Regional Detention.** In what ways can the community better manage stormwater to achieve low-impact developments that add to small-town character?
- **Congestion.** How can the City develop in an orderly fashion and build on its network of streets to better convey traffic within and through the community?
- **Alternative Transportation.** What planning can and must Magnolia do in the near-term in light of regional transportation improvements like the proposed SH 249 Aggie Expressway and the prospect of future commuter rail?

CHAPTER 4, COMMUNITY MOBILITY

The fourth chapter identifies a strategy for the orderly development of the transportation system, including non-automobile modes of travel. This chapter includes a *Thoroughfare Plan*, which corresponds with community character objectives and transportation initiatives of other regional entities (e.g., Montgomery County, Texas Department of Transportation, etc.). It also provides guidance to: specific corridor planning considerations for FM 1774, FM 1488, and the proposed SH 249 Aggie Expressway; potential development code adjustments; and other action strategies to enhance development outcomes, preserve roadway capacity, and improve aesthetics and community image. The community identified the following key issues:

- **Traffic Barriers.** What tools are available to mitigate traffic barriers (e.g., railroad crossings, school zones, construction zones), which deter business patrons and prospective residents?
- **Regional Planning.** How can the community prepare for and increase its influence over regional transportation projects, including overpasses, extensions, widening, and new construction?

CHAPTER 5, PARKS AND AMENITIES

The fifth chapter is designed to supplement the existing *Comprehensive Plan for Parks, Recreational Facilities, and Open Space*. Magnolia's park system is linked to community growth and other physical planning elements addressed throughout this Comprehensive Plan. The chapter includes a park inventory, present-day and future needs assessment, and design and facility standards. The community identified the following key issues:

- **Connectivity.** How can we enhance the existing infrastructure to accommodate walking and biking, and how can we ensure future developments seamlessly connect to existing pedestrian and bikeway paths?
- **Regional Detention.** What public-private partnerships and funding resources are needed to pair recreational amenities with regional detention facilities?
- **First-Class System.** What needs to be done to grow and improve the parks, recreation, and open space system to ensure a system that is convenient, accessible, and of inheritable quality?

Community members want to protect the visual and functional appeal of their community. According to one resident, “We don’t want to look like (FM) 1960.” As the City prepares for rapid growth, this Comprehensive Plan forms a collective vision that promotes quality design and beautification.



- **Preservation.** What role will new development have in preserving resources and open spaces in a way that contributes to community character and adds recreational value and opportunities?

CHAPTER 6, HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

The sixth chapter evaluates the design of neighborhoods within the framework of the City’s current development regulations and the resulting impact on housing construction, community character, and community connectivity. A key issue is the adequate supply of housing with a desired level of quality and affordability. This chapter ties in with the City’s subdivision regulations and other development standards to ensure that development will occur in a manner that is compatible with the City’s vision. The community identified the following key issues:

- **Availability and Diversity of Housing.** How can the City increase its availability and diversity of housing stock to meet the needs of young professionals, families, and retirees.
- **Community of Neighborhoods.** What measures can be taken to ensure that Magnolia is a community of highly livable neighborhoods, rather than a collection of subdivisions?

CHAPTER 7, IMPLEMENTATION

The final chapter uses the recommendations of each individual plan element to consolidate an overall strategy for executing this Comprehensive Plan. The

Action Agenda identifies the highest-priority initiatives that should be implemented first following plan adoption.

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

The following profile summarizes Magnolia’s demographic and socioeconomic data. These characteristics and trends pertain to income, age, race and ethnicity, education, employment, and housing opportunities. Although this summary is only a snapshot in time, it provides insight into the current issues and validates many community perceptions.

Eight Texas communities were selected as “comparables” based on several variables, including growth projections, population size, demographic composition, and proximity to Magnolia. In addition to Texas and Montgomery County, the following cities (and their 2010 population count) were evaluated:

- Fulshear (1,134 residents);
- Giddings (4,881 residents);
- Liberty Hill (967 residents);
- **Magnolia (1,393 residents);**
- Montgomery (621 residents);
- Navasota (7,049 residents);
- Smithville (3,817 residents);
- Waller (2,326 residents); and
- Woodville (2,586 residents).

Figure 1.1, Household Income

(Right) The City's median household income (\$53,224) is above the State average (\$49,595), while its median housing value is 99 percent of the State average. When compared to similar cities, Magnolia has the third highest median income and housing value. Source: US Census

Table 1.1, Median Age and Average Household Income

(Below) The City has a higher median age (37.8) than most comparison communities, giving greater importance to improvements and projects that accommodate the lifestyles of older adults, middle-aged professionals, and families. The City's average household size is within the middle range for the region. Source: US Census

	Median Age	Average Household Size
Texas	33.6	2.75
Montgomery County	36.1	2.78
Fulshear	38.2	2.95
Giddings	33.7	2.86
Liberty Hill	34.2	2.55
MAGNOLIA	37.8	2.63
Montgomery	38.6	2.62
Navasota	32.9	2.81
Smithville	41	2.51
Waller	30.1	2.66
Woodville	42.2	2.26

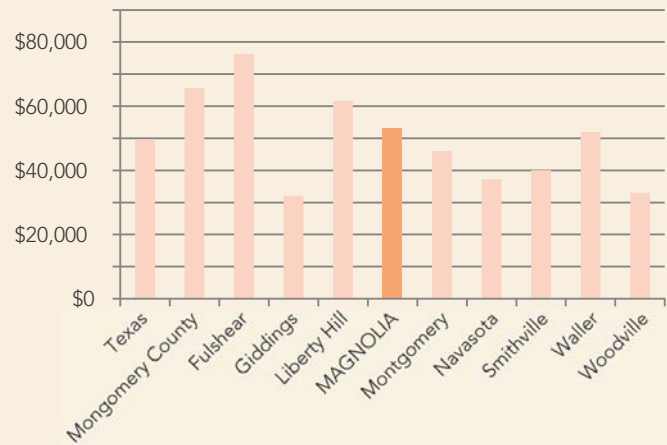


Figure 1.2, Race and Ethnicity

(Below) Texas and the United States have experienced an increased diversification of cultures among its citizens. The City of Magnolia's demographics reflect this trend over the last ten years, and the community will continue to change its composition over the next 20 years, bringing forth more cultural, educational, and economic opportunities. Source: US Census

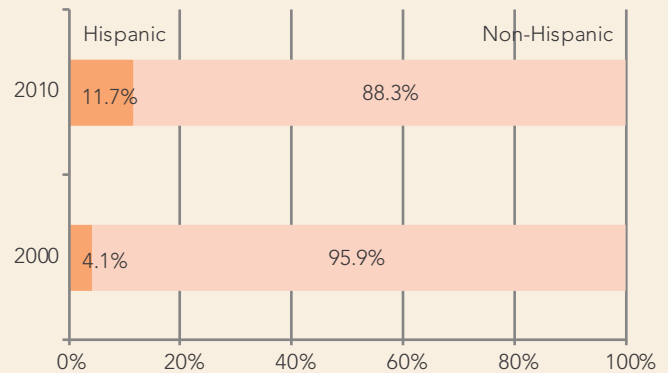
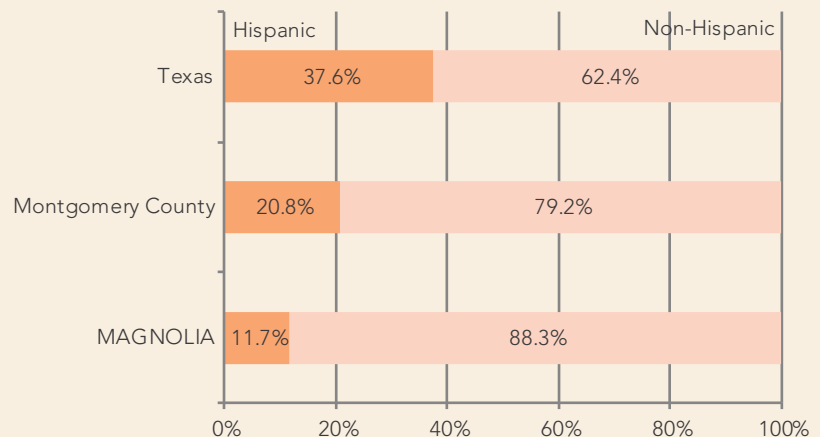
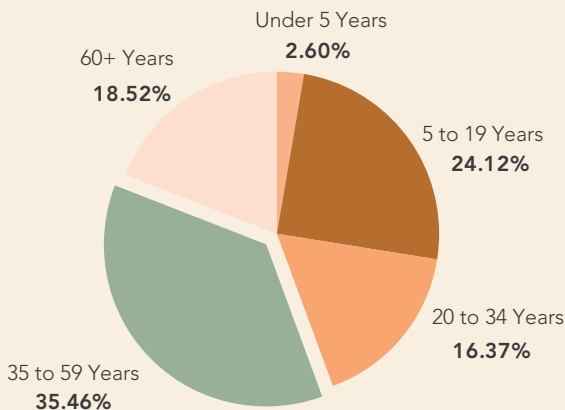


Figure 1.3, Age Groups Distribution

(Below) The community is oriented toward families and retirees. The close proximity of Lonestar Community College (Tomball Campus) and numerous corporate headquarters in The Woodlands, Conroe, and Spring afford opportunities for more young professionals. Source: US Census



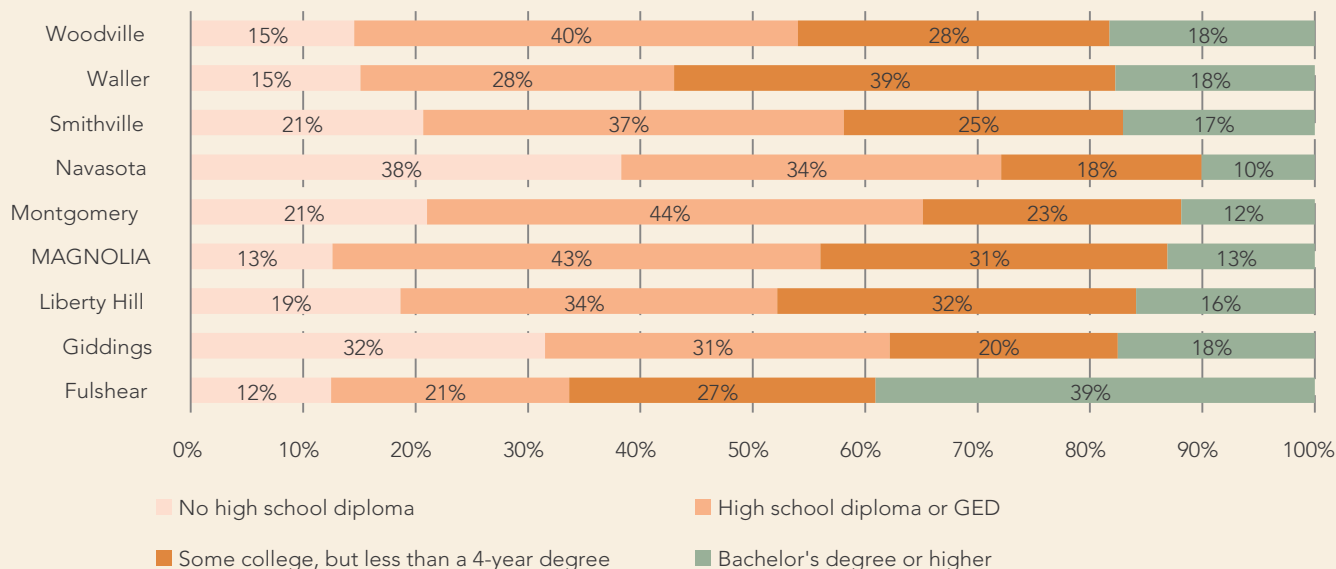


Figure 1.4, Educational Attainment

(Above) Approximately 13 percent of residents in Magnolia have earned a bachelor's degree or higher, which is the second lowest among comparison communities. This is offset by the fact that 31 percent of residents have some college, which indicates that many have earned associate's degrees and received other forms of higher education. Source: US Census

Figure 1.5, School Enrollment

(Left) Collectively, Magnolia Independent School District has a relatively even balance of high school and elementary school students. Source: US Census

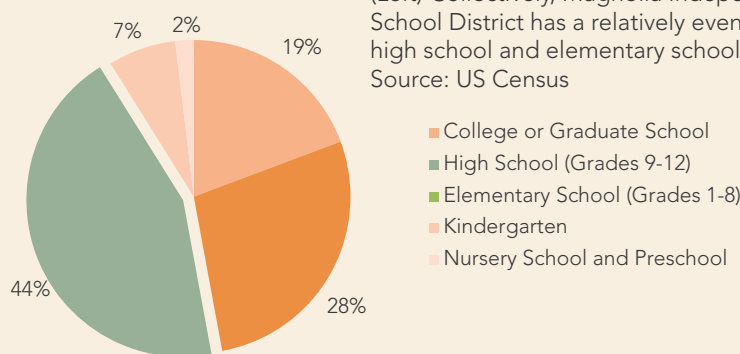


Figure 1.6, Local Industries

(Right) Like many small towns, the Educational Services and Health Care sector is the largest industry in Magnolia. The number of employees and amount of land owned by Magnolia Independent School District makes a significant impact on the local economy. Source: US Census

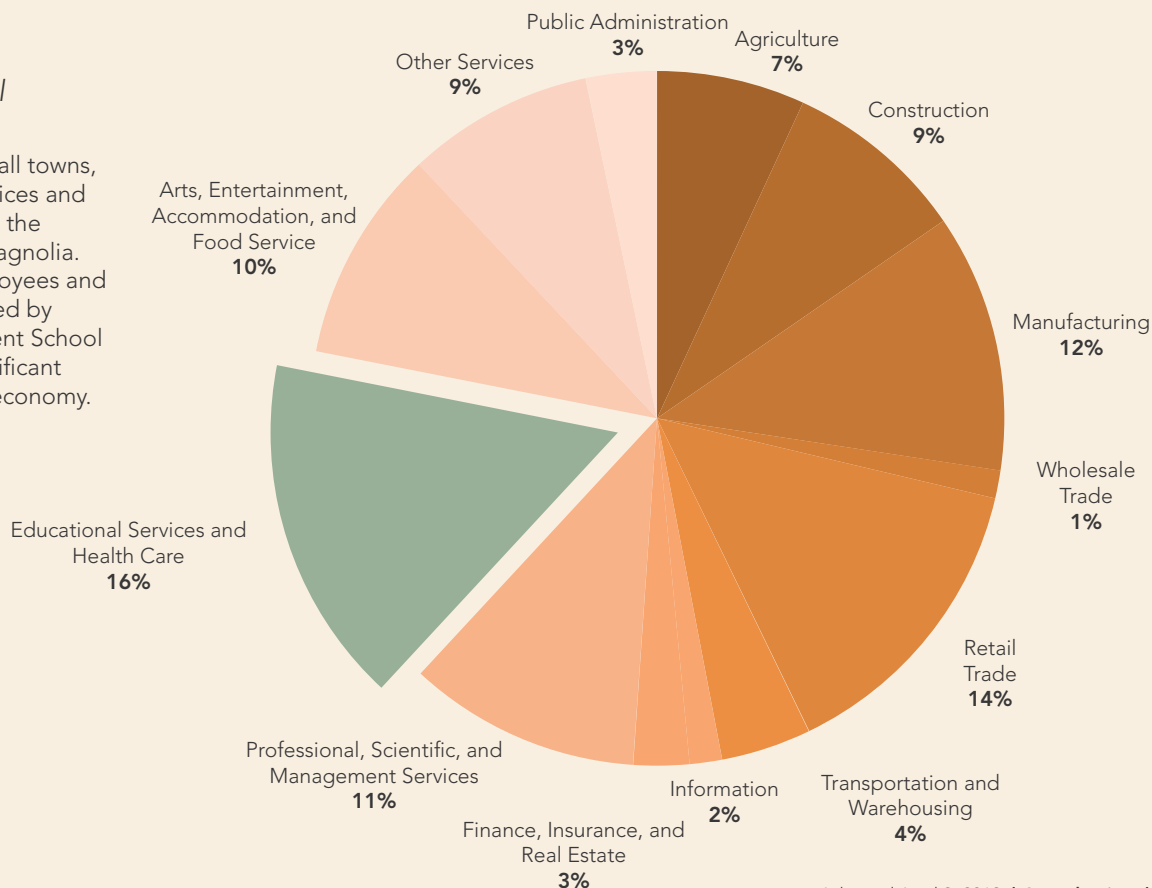


Figure 1.7, Financial Assistance

(Below) Magnolia, when compared to similar cities, has the fourth largest population (11 percent) receiving food stamps. The median family income and unemployment rate are higher among comparison cities, indicating that there is a discrepancy between low- and high-income residents. Source: US Census

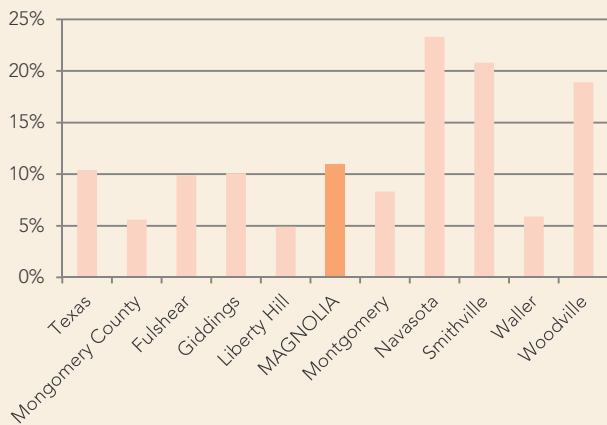


Figure 1.9, Home Values

(Below) The median home value in Magnolia (\$123,100) is 0.3 percent less than the median value for the State (\$123,500). The value of land (price per sq. ft.) will play an integral role in attracting new housing types and developers.

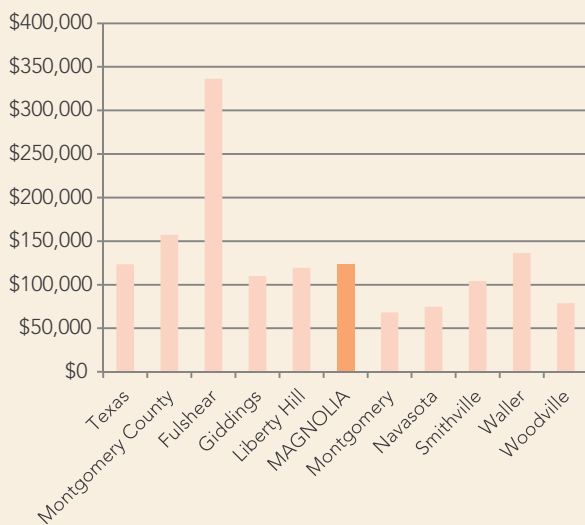
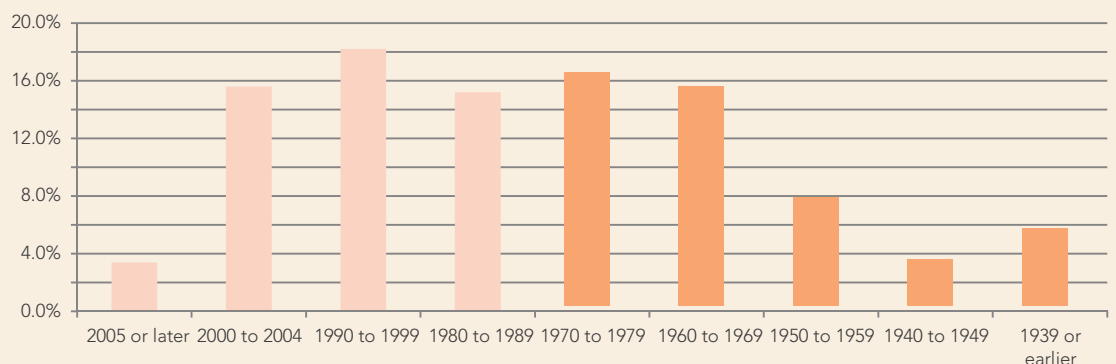


Figure 1.10, Age of Housing Stock

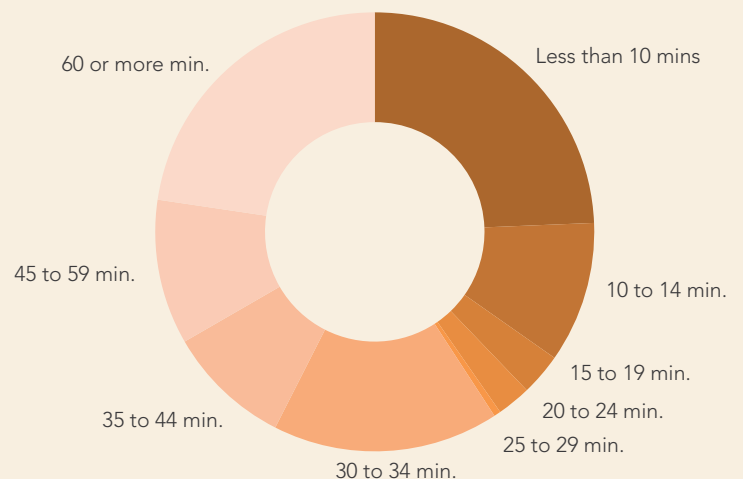
(Right) Approximately half of the City's housing stock is more than 30 years old, which will require significant maintenance and upgrades over the horizon of this plan.



46.2 percent of residents live in Magnolia but are employed outside of Montgomery County.

Figure 1.8, Commute Times

(Below) Magnolia residents have a longer than average commute time (32.7 minutes), indicating that local residents are commuting to nearby employment centers. This disparity in local employment opportunities within the City needs to be addressed in order to encourage local investment of time and money. Source: US Census



MAGNOLIA'S RURAL CHARACTER IS A RESULT OF AND INFUSED INTO THE COMMUNITY'S ARCHITECTURE, VALUES, AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERN. THE CITY MUST PLAY TO ITS STRENGTHS BY MAINTAINING A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE AND NICHE APPEAL THAT COMPLEMENT THE "BIG CITY" AMENITIES OF NEIGHBORING JURISDICTIONS. AS THE COMMUNITY GROWS AND MATURES, LAND USE PLANNING WILL BE CENTRAL TO PROTECTING ITS HIGHLY VALUED IDENTITY WHILE GUIDING THE PATTERN, APPEARANCE, AND QUALITY OF NEW GROWTH. THE POLICIES AND INITIATIVES IN THIS CHAPTER USE A COMMUNITY CHARACTER APPROACH TO DEVELOP A FINE-GRAINED STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING PRESENT-DAY AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS.

Chapter 2

LAND USE AND
CHARACTER



How does Chapter 2 relate to other plan elements?

Given the all-encompassing nature of Magnolia's development strategy, there are a number of crossover and interdependent relationships between Chapter 2 and the other plan elements. The type, pattern, and scale of development will influence and be influenced by the following:

CHAPTER 3, GROWTH CAPACITY AND MANAGEMENT

- Areas of Influence Plan
- Provision of adequate public facilities and services
- Timing and sequencing of future growth
- Reinvestment in existing infrastructure
- Utility extension policy

CHAPTER 4, COMMUNITY MOBILITY

- Thoroughfare Plan
- Access management
- Trails, bikeways, and walkability
- Street and streetscape design standards
- Land use intensity and trip generation

CHAPTER 5, PARKS AND AMENITIES

- Recreation facilities and programs
- Locations and accessibility
- Neighborhood amenities
- Open space preservation and environmental conservation

CHAPTER 6, HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

- Conservation of existing neighborhoods
- Housing rehabilitation
- Neighborhood protection from encroaching development
- Demands for housing and living types

INTRODUCTION

Every fall season, half a million Houston-area and Gulf Coast residents and visitors pass through Magnolia to visit the Renaissance Festival, the nation's largest and most acclaimed event of its kind. The City's lasting impression along FM 1774 and FM 1488 is characterized by an eclectic mix of older and newer commercial buildings that lack visual cohesion. This disparity between physical appearance and self-identification is one of several key issues in this chapter.

The purpose of this plan element is to lay a foundation for the City's development policy for the next 20 to 30 years. Equally important to the analysis of existing conditions is the ability to identify opportunities for future development. This guidance comes in the form of policies and recommendations, as well as a *Future Land Use and Character Plan* that specifies the intended use, character, and function of developed and undeveloped land. These land use and character classifications account for density, building setbacks and height, pervious and impervious lot coverage, levels of open space, and the amount of vegetation. Finally, the chapter outlines tools and programs that will guide and provide incentives for compatible and attractive development. These will help preserve the unique and marketable qualities that give Magnolia its sense of place.

HOW DO LAND USE AND CHARACTER COMPARE?

This plan elaborates on the common definition of land use to address the "look and feel" of development. Instead of only identifying how land is used, such as single or multifamily residential, commercial, or industrial designations, a land use and character classification system also defines the intensity of development and the design features that contribute to its specific nature and appeal. For instance, The Stroll is organized as a grid street pattern with smaller-sized lots, narrow setbacks, limited areas for parking, and the scale of these lots and uses is a distinctly different character from the commercial centers along FM 1488. While both areas are of commercial use, their character is quite different. The latter area is characterized by expansive parking areas, towering signage aimed at passing automobiles, and large building footprints. It is this combination of land use and the site and building design attributes that determine the character of development.

This approach offers many benefits, including:

- assurance as to the compatibility of adjacent development;

Existing Development Regulations and Standards

Over the years, City Council has adopted a set of land development, specific use, and nuisance ordinances that influence the appearance, function, and character of existing and new development. These regulations place requirements and restrictions on development, ranging from landscaping standards to outdoor sales restrictions. This plan development process compares the community's vision with the overall effectiveness of these implementing regulations.



- design flexibility to protect natural resources and valued open space;
- certainty in the development process;
- ability to better plan for infrastructure needs;
- planned development by right;
- streamlined development process; and
- buffering that is commensurate with the level of impact on adjacent and abutting properties.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Since the last Comprehensive Plan in 1999, Magnolia has significantly expanded its City Limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), which encompasses an area that is 65.1 percent undeveloped. As residents expressed concern for sprawling commercial corridors, there is a need to increase the quality of proposed developments so that future conditions meet - and

preferably exceed - the standards and expectations of the community. In preparing a road map for future development, civic leaders will need to achieve consensus on how best to accomplish a well-planned and highly attractive community that balances both public and private interests. Without this consensus or a plan to achieve it, development will be left solely to market forces, which is unlikely to preserve Magnolia's special qualities. Many other communities have missed the opportunity that is available to Magnolia today (and for a short period of time).

Reflected in *Map 2.1, Existing Land Use and Character*, is the current land use and character pattern in the Planning Area, which is defined by the City Limits and future extraterritorial jurisdiction once the City surpasses 5,000 inhabitants. This boundary, which extends generally one mile from the City limits, has been expanded to the northeast along FM 1488 to include tracts of previously unincorporated land. Private property owners entered into mutually beneficial ETJ agreements with the City to cede future municipal authority to Magnolia. A quantification of this land use and character map is listed in *Table 2.1, Existing Land Use and Character Inventory*.

FINDINGS

- Magnolia is comprised of approximately 2,313.4 acres (3.6 square miles) within the City limits and 10,790.6 acres (16.9 square miles) within the Planning Area. As shown in *Figure 2.1, General Development Types in the City Limits*, nearly half of the land within the City limits is undeveloped (i.e., classified as "Rural" or "Vacant").
- "Auto-Urban Commercial" development contributes 4.3 percent of the land use, which is mostly located along FM 1488. The Magnolia Town Center commercial development contributes a much smaller fraction (nearly one-half percent) and is primarily located along FM 1774 and Commerce Street, which encompasses The Stroll.
- The industrial base represents 1.6 percent, which is lightly dispersed throughout the community. The City has 22.4 acres of "shovel-ready" sites at the industrial park near Magnolia West High School.
- "Public and Institutional" uses, such as City Hall, Montgomery County Malcolm Purvis Library, and West Montgomery County Community Development Center, contribute 173.3 acres, or 7.5 percent, of the City's land area. Most building stock is high-quality and in excellent condition.

- While "Rural Residential" is the dominant residential land use and character type, as illustrated in *Figure 2.2, Residential Character Types in the City Limits*, the vacant lots of Magnolia Ridge and other master-planned subdivisions will help to diversify the housing configurations and price points.

FUTURE LAND USE AND CHARACTER TYPES

Land use planning equips community leaders with proactive tools for influencing growth. Common pitfalls, which often lead to costly infrastructure upgrades or permanent impediments to development, can be avoided with the coordinated application of *Map 2.2, Future Land Use and Character Plan*. This general reference map shall function as a "living document" that gives physical form to the City's vision, values, and development course over the next three decades. If continually reviewed and updated, the *Future Land Use Plan* will adapt to market demands while maintaining a high-quality development standard and unified growth pattern.

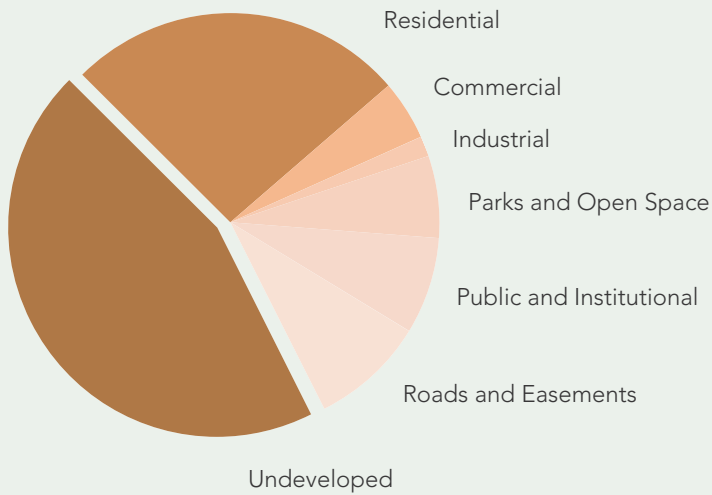
It must be noted that this Comprehensive Plan and the *Future Land Use and Character Plan* are policy documents, unlike zoning regulations, that do not carry the legal authority to regulate the use of land. However, the findings and recommendations contained in these documents provide the rationale and justification for:

- Land development ordinances;
- Annexation and ETJ expansion;
- Development agreements;
- Street and utility planning;
- Parks and recreation planning; and
- Economic development.

As such, development decisions must be coordinated across all City departments to ensure capital investments are in sync. The map generalizes the use of land at a citywide "planning" level, meaning property owners should contact City officials for site-specific applications of the plan.

The following land use and character profiles, starting on Page 6, detail the location, development types, and characteristics of each classification of the *Future Land Use and Character Plan*. A discussion of the guiding principles, policies, and recommendations for implementing future land use and character begins on Page 19.

Figure 2.1, General Development Types in the City Limits



45% OF LAND WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS IS UNDEVELOPED.

Figure 2.2, Residential Character Types in the City Limits

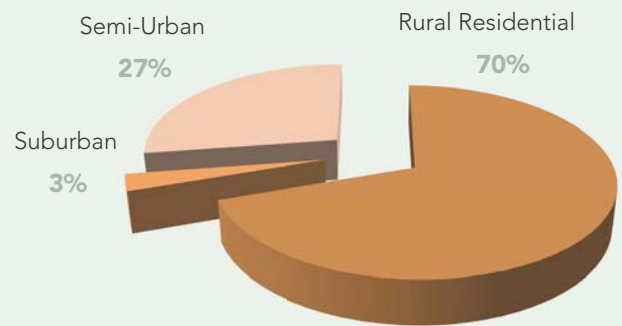


Table 2.1, Existing Land Use and Character Inventory

Land Use and Character Types	Planning Area		City Limits	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Rural	6,105.4	56.6%	702.9	30.4%
Vacant	915.4	8.5%	335.9	14.5%
Rural Residential	1,632.6	15.1%	421.9	18.2%
Suburban Residential	477.0	4.4%	17.6	0.8%
Semi-Urban Residential	289.9	2.7%	106.1	4.6%
Semi-Urban Residential, Mixed	44.0	0.4%	27.8	1.2%
Semi-Urban Manufactured Homes	49.5	0.5%	14.5	0.6%
Semi-Urban Multifamily	17.4	0.2%	17.4	0.8%
Auto-Urban Commercial	133.9	1.2%	98.8	4.3%
Magnolia Town Center	8.8	0.1%	8.8	0.4%
Auto-Urban Industrial	105.3	1.0%	36.1	1.6%
Parks and Open Space	200.9	1.9%	146.9	6.3%
Public and Institutional	267.7	2.5%	173.3	7.5%
Roads and Easements	542.9	5.0%	205.5	8.9%
Total	10,790.6 ACRES		2,313.4 ACRES	



This nursery and tree farm complement the rural landscape of Old Hockley Road.



Many residents move to Magnolia for its large tracts of land that can accommodate equestrian operations and hobby farms.



RURAL (R)

Magnolia is predominantly known throughout the Houston metroplex as a rural bedroom community with large, developed and undeveloped tracts of land. Most property within the Rural (R) classification is heavily forested or has been cultivated as farmlands and ranchlands. To preserve a rural character, this land should be protected from urban encroachment by a defined boundary identified on the *Future Land Use and Character Plan*.

Typical Locations

Near the City limits and extending into the half-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction

Development Types

- Individual residences and farmsteads
- Agricultural and agribusiness uses
- Equestrian acreages

Characteristics

- Scattered residential development on large acreages, resulting in very high open space and very low site coverage and density
- Typically, no centralized water or sanitary sewer services (and much greater reliance on natural drainage systems, except where altered by agricultural operations)
- Potential for conservation developments that further concentrate the overall development footprint through cluster designs, with increased open space set aside to maintain the rural character and to buffer adjacent properties and roads
- Potential location for regional detention facilities that mitigate the need for individual, on-site detention basins
- Extension of urban services is unlikely and undesirable during the plan horizon

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE (POS)

The City has 146.9 acres of land designated as Parks and Open Space (POS), which includes public and private greenspace. These areas enhance surrounding land uses, capitalize on natural assets, and provide common gathering spaces. Parks are formally developed recreation areas, sometimes containing manicured lawns, sidewalks, playgrounds, and active space for courts and fields. Open spaces are undeveloped natural areas characterized by sensitive or unique environmental features.

Typical Locations

- Community-wide

Development Types

- Public parks and open spaces
- Existing and planned, single- and multi-use trails (e.g., bikeways)
- Joint park areas, like the baseball fields at the West Montgomery County Community Development Center
- Public and private recreation areas (e.g., Windmill Estates' pool and clubhouse)
- Cemeteries
- Undeveloped natural areas
- Multi-use facilities, like the baseball fields for Glen Oaks subdivision which also function as a stormwater detention basin

Characteristics

- Public parkland will remain in perpetuity with future parkland acquired to fill gaps and support new development
- Park design, intensity of development, and planned uses/activities should match area character (e.g., public squares/plazas along The Stroll, nature parks for passive recreation in neighborhoods)



Unity Park is a regional destination that services a wide range of recreational and entertainment uses.



The recreation center for Glen and Grand Oaks is centrally located within the subdivision for maximum access and connectivity.





While this property is not part of a larger subdivision, the high-quality design and layout embody a premium Residential Estate lot.



**5.1
ACRES**



Due to the dense tree coverage and large tracts of land, select properties along Little Twig Road are characteristic of Rural Estate sites.



**1+
ACRES
(APPROX.)**

RESIDENTIAL ESTATE (RE)

As development occurs around the City's periphery, both within and outside the ETJ, a low-density Rural Estate (RE) development type would help to transition between rural and semi-urban development. Many of these high-value subdivisions are located in the unincorporated parts of Montgomery and Harris Counties.

Typical Locations

- Magnolia exhibits only a few individual sites; this character type typically occurs as part of an estate subdivision or master-planned community

Development Types

- Individual residences on small acreages or large lots
- Subdivided farmsteads

Characteristics

- High degree of open space maintained on the site (compared to predominance of building and parking lot coverage in semi-urban areas)
- Larger lot sizes allow for deep front yards, large building setbacks, and accessory structures (e.g., barns, sheds, garages, etc.)
- In addition to homes, many of these properties also accommodate equestrian fields and agricultural facilities
- Preservation of natural vegetation promotes a sense of inclusion and provides separation from adjoining properties, contributing to the estate character

SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL (SR)

Suburban Residential (SR) development meets the expectation of what a “typical” Magnolia home looks like. The larger lots allow for adequate separation between homes, while preserving the natural character of the region’s topography and vegetation. Unlike Rural Estate (RE) properties, these homes are exclusively located in subdivisions given the importance of common open space and clustered development.

Typical Locations

- Lakefront properties in Windmill Estates
- Magnolia Crossing

Development Types

- Detached residential dwellings
- Planned developments to provide other housing types (e.g., attached residential) with increased open space to preserve a suburban character setting

Characteristics

- Less noticeable accommodation of the automobile on sites compared to more intensive semi-urban residential areas, especially where driveways are on the side of homes rather than occupying a portion of the front yard space, and where garages are situated to the side or rear of the main dwelling
- Can establish development options which allow for smaller lot sizes in exchange for greater open space, with the additional open space devoted to maintaining the suburban character and buffering adjacent properties and roads



The lakes of Windmill Estates offer a high-quality recreation amenity while preserving the area’s natural beauty.



The large lots and dense forest of Magnolia Crossing maintain a secluded atmosphere in a master-planned subdivision.





Given its high-quality architecture and landscaping, Magnolia Trails is a premium example of Semi-Urban Residential Multifamily (SUR-MF).



Glen Oaks is good prototype of Semi-Urban Residential Manufactured and Mobile Homes (SUR-MMH). Although the homes are sited on smaller lots with large driveways and car ports, there are a number of common recreational amenities and tree preserves.



SEMI-URBAN RESIDENTIAL / NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION (SUR / SUR-MMH / SUR-MF / NC)

Approximately one-quarter of the City's housing stock is classified as Semi-Urban Residential (SUR), Semi-Urban Manufactured and Mobile Homes (SUR-MMH), and Semi-Urban Multifamily (SUR-MF). These properties are characterized by consistent lot widths and building setbacks, a regular pattern of driveways, greater proportions of floor area to lot area, and a more uniform home design and scale. Existing SUR housing will be classified as Neighborhood Conservation (NC) in order to protect the existing character of these areas. New development areas will be classified as a form of Semi-Urban Residential (SUR, SUR-MMH, SUR-MF) for the purposes of promoting this type of development.

Typical Locations

- Community-wide

Development Types

- Detached residential dwellings
- Attached housing types subject to compatibility and open space standards (e.g., duplexes, townhomes, patio homes)
- Planned developments, potentially with a mix of housing types and varying densities, subject to compatibility and open space standards
- Manufactured and mobile homes
- Multifamily complexes

Characteristics

- Residential areas with less openness and separation between dwellings compared to suburban areas
- Auto-oriented character (especially where driveways and front-loading garages dominate the front yard and facades of homes), which may be offset by "anti-monotony" standards, landscaping, and limitations on subdivision layouts characterized by straight streets and uniform lot sizes and arrangement
- Uniform front setbacks (and, in some cases, minimal variation in individual house design) can create a monotonous street environment

NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION MIXED (NCM)

These areas are characterized by a grid street pattern, intermittent alleys, and less emphasis on the automobile than Semi-Urban Residential (SUR). Neighborhood Conservation Mixed (NCM) serves the purpose of protecting and preserving the heritage and uniqueness of well-established home lots. Doing so will require unique standards that match the circumstances at the time of development, as well as present conditions. No new development will be classified as Neighborhood Conservation Mixed (NCM).

Typical Locations

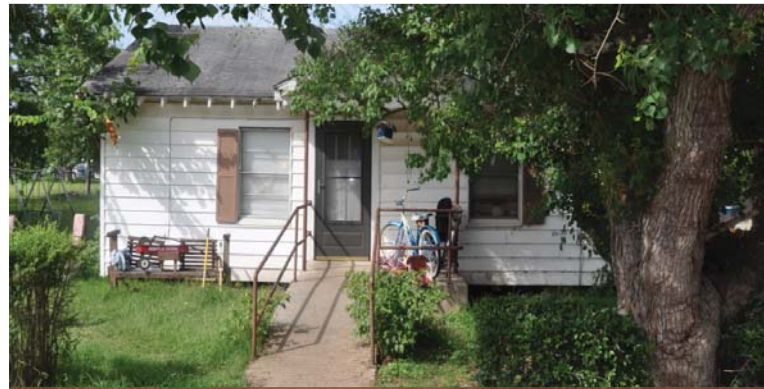
- Near the Magnolia Town Center (MTC).

Development Types

- Detached residential dwellings mixed with smaller commercial buildings, and public/institutional uses

Characteristics

- Integrity of older, intact neighborhoods with protections from significant change in the development type or pattern and reinforcement of existing physical conditions (e.g., prevailing lot sizes, building setbacks, etc.)
- Designed to preserve existing housing stock and govern infill and redevelopment activity within the neighborhood to ensure compatibility
- This area is a transition between the SUR and MTC designations, which is designed to reflect the unique character of Magnolia's historic development pattern



Residential properties along Commerce Street are integral to the character and mixed-use attributes of The Stroll.



Older homes along Melton and Acker Streets warrant preservation and potential conversion to mixed residential and commercial uses.





Suburban Village Prototypes



SUBURBAN VILLAGE (SV)

Outside of the Magnolia Town Center (MTC) area and along the major corridors, Magnolia's commercial uses should be designed at a neighborhood scale in Suburban Village (SV) configurations. Rather than designing linear strips, these commercial centers occupy much smaller building footprints than typical businesses found on FM 1488. They tend to cater to pedestrian rather than auto-oriented neighborhood conveniences such as drug stores, professional services, and boutique retail uses.

Typical Locations

- Proposed locations include smaller commercial centers adjacent to and surrounded by neighborhoods

Development Types

- Mixed residential and commercial uses on single sites and within individual structures
- Attached residential dwellings
- Homes that have been converted to commercial uses, but arranged in clustered nodes
- Commercial retail
- Office
- Public/institutional
- Parks, plazas, and civic spaces

Characteristics

- Pedestrian-oriented setting
- Maximum two-story structures encouraged
- Reliance on on-street parking and centralized public parking
- High degree of landscape surface
- Neighborhood-scale commercial uses are expected to emerge over time and should be encouraged on sites near the edges of Semi-Urban Residential (SUR) areas, which are best suited to accommodate such uses while ensuring compatibility with nearby residential uses

AUTO-URBAN COMMERCIAL (AUC)

Most of the commercial development in Magnolia is characterized as Auto-Urban Commercial (AUC). These properties are designed for automobile use (rather than pedestrians), with buildings set back from the streets and surface parking lots along the frontage and often to the side and rear.

Typical Locations

- Community-wide, but principally located along FM 1488 and FM 1774

Development Types

- Wide range of commercial retail and service uses, at varying scales and intensities depending on the site
- Office (both large and/or multi-story buildings and small-scale office uses depending on the site)
- Public/institutional
- Civic and public spaces

Characteristics

- A very open environment, but mainly to accommodate extensive surface parking versus the more prominent green spaces found in suburban areas
- Largely horizontal development pattern
- Significant portions of development sites are devoted to vehicular access drives, circulation routes, surface parking, and loading/delivery areas, making pavement the most prominent visual feature versus green or open areas
- May be enhanced with better building and site design

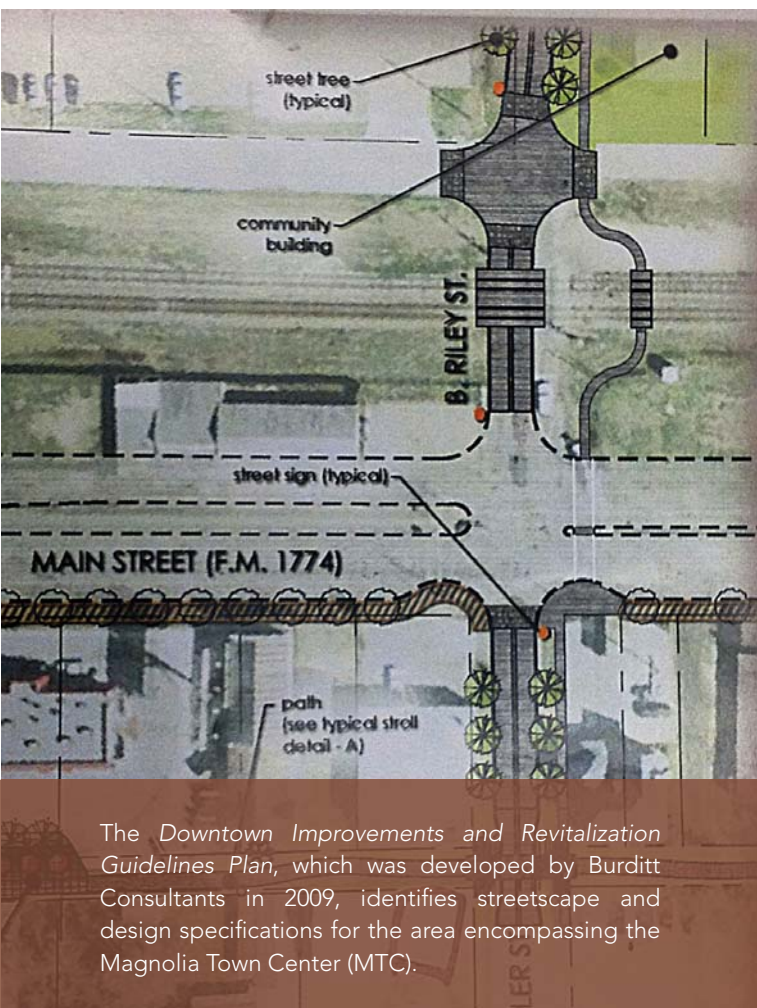


Jack in a Box offers a number of attractive and innovative features that address screening, buffering, and stormwater management.



Regions Bank benefits from building placement along the roadway corridor, while parking is located to the back and sides of the lot.





MAGNOLIA TOWN CENTER AND UNITY PLAZA (MTC) and (UP)

The Magnolia Town Center (MTC) and Unity Plaza (UP) retain the historic fabric and design of Magnolia's grid street pattern. This more traditional environment is located near the crossroads of FM 1488 and FM 1774. While the Union Pacific Railroad divides the City into an east and west half, the original street pattern continues on both sides. Pathways and sidewalks should be scaled for pedestrian rather than automobile use, and original buildings should be restored and enhanced. This area preserves and honors the historic character of Magnolia, as embodied by the Historic Magnolia Depot and accompanying community complex.

Typical Location

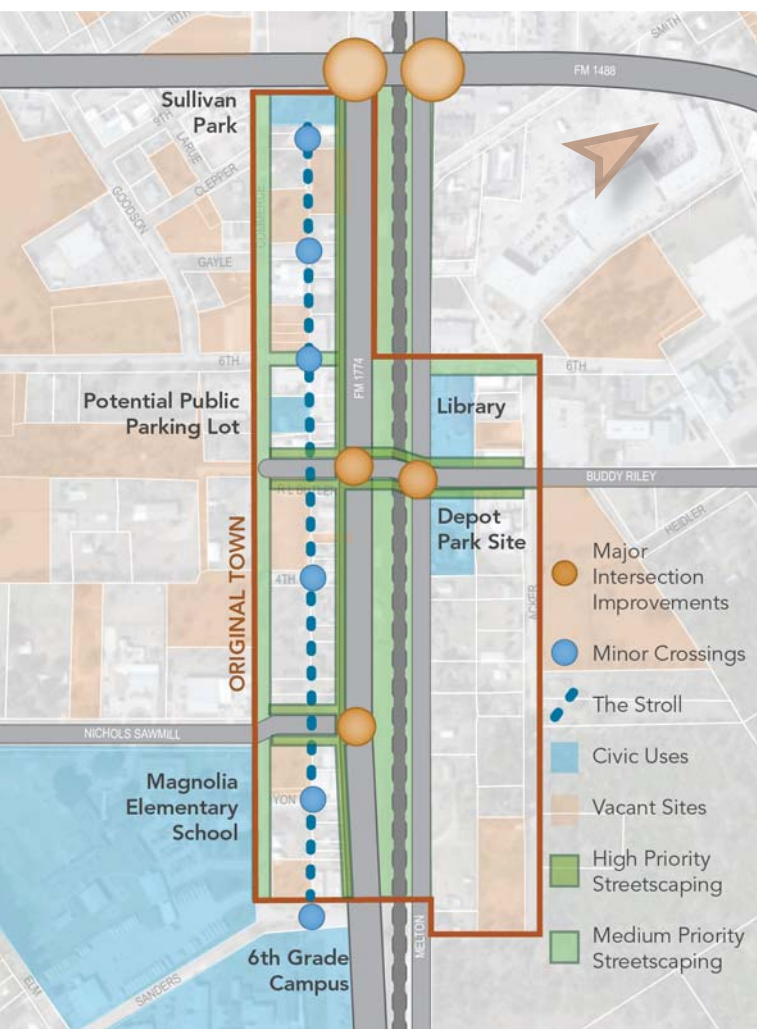
- The Magnolia Town Center is approximately bounded by Commerce to Acker Streets, from the intersection of Sanders Street to FM 1488
- Unity Plaza is proposed near City Hall and the Volunteer Fire Department (see inset on Page 27)

Development Types

- Mixed commercial, civic, and residential uses
- Attached residential
- Live/work units
- Commercial retail and office
- Public/institutional
- Entertainment
- Civic and public spaces

Characteristics

- Most intensive development in City
- Streets framed by buildings with minimal front setbacks
- Greater site coverage
- Maximum of two-story structures
- Reliance on on-street parking and potentially centralized public parking
- Preservation of historic character



BUSINESS PARK (SUBURBAN) (BP)

The prototypical Business Park (BP) is suburban in character, typically in a campus-style setting that features reduced site coverage and increased open space. As the City seeks to attract more light industrial and professional office uses, this type of setting will be an attractive alternative to auto-urban office space or a more traditional industrial park. The Woodlands and Spring have a number of high-quality business parks.

Typical Locations

- Potential areas include undeveloped properties along the proposed Aggie Expressway
- FM 1774 adjacent to the current industrial park

Development Types

- Primarily office, medical, and technology/research uses
- Possibility of light industrial uses (including warehousing/distribution), but well screened and in buildings with upgraded facade treatments
- Commercial retail uses (secondary to primary office focus, to serve local workers and visitors)
- Public/institutional
- Common green spaces

Characteristics

- Typically a minimum open space ratio of 20 to 30 percent, which allows for sizable building footprints since most developments involve large sites
- Extensive landscaping of business park perimeter, and special streetscaping and design treatments at entries, key intersections, and internal focal points
- Development outcomes often controlled by private covenants and restrictions that exceed City ordinances and development standards
- Intended to create a highly attractive business investment environment
- Site operations are conducted indoors with no (or very limited) outdoor storage or display



This local example is located off of Old Hockley Road in the ETJ. The high-quality landscaping and architecture differentiate it from typical industrial sites.



Business Park Prototypes





The industrial site for Hapeco Inc. is buffered from surrounding uses by dense vegetation.



9.1
ACRES



Magnolia's only industrial park offers 22.4 acres of vacant property, which can be infilled to complement the existing uses.



3.0
ACRES

INDUSTRIAL (AUTO-URBAN) (IND)

Magnolia's Industrial (IND) developments have an auto-urban character, predominantly characterized by large parking and storage areas and minimal greenspace. These areas can be enhanced through landscaping and buffering standards, master-planning via "business parks," and optimal site selection. The City's existing industrial buildings are primarily that of metal buildings lightly scattered throughout the City.

Typical Locations

- Industrial park near West Magnolia High School
- Small cluster along Yancey Drive

Development Types

- Heavy and light industrial
- Heavy commercial (building materials, auto repair, etc.)
- Office uses (as an accessory to an industrial use)
- Public/institutional

Characteristics

- Typically auto-oriented character, although industrial park developments may feature more open space and landscaping, regulated signage, screening, etc.
- Outdoor activity and storage, which should be screened where visible from public ways and extensively buffered from residential areas
- Larger tracts of land suitable to accommodate a range of business and industrial needs
- Must be equipped with modern infrastructure (e.g., fiber networks)

PUBLIC / INSTITUTIONAL (AUTO-URBAN) (PI)

The City has a diversity of high-quality Public and Institutional (PI) structures that vary in character, function, and scale. Due to the unique nature of their design, layout, and use, these facilities tend to be site-specific.

Typical Locations

- Community-wide
- City buildings are clustered along Buddy Riley Road, which is a potential location for other civic functions and complementary uses

Development Types

- City-owned buildings and facilities, such as City Hall and the Magnolia Fire Station
- County-owned buildings, such as the Montgomery County Malcolm Purvis Library and Montgomery County Community Center
- Buildings and facilities of Magnolia Independent School District (MISD)
- Places of worship
- Public parking lots
- Historic Magnolia Depot

Characteristics

- Customer service functions of the City should be located close to the Magnolia Town Center for easy access and visibility
- Extensive landscaping of site perimeter, and special streetscaping and design treatments at entries, key intersections, and internal focal points
- Outdoor activity and storage should be screened when visible from public roadways and buffered from residential areas
- Certain publicly owned uses (e.g., public works facilities, fleet maintenance, treatment plants) are best sited within industrial areas



The Historic Magnolia Depot is located along the railroad tracks where the original street grid has been preserved. This museum is highly visible to residents and visitors.



STRATEGIES FOR LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Due to the overarching influence of land use and community character, this chapter encapsulates a broad spectrum of implementation strategies ranging from appearance (e.g., signage guidelines) to infill programming (e.g., tax and administrative incentives). In addition to studies, programs, and capital improvement projects, a number of management and regulatory options are available to influence the quality, character, and pattern of land development. The City's strategy, whether on a piecemeal (individual ordinances) or comprehensive (unified development ordinance) basis will directly influence the next 30 years of growth. The following list summarizes the proposed recommendations, which are described in more detail on the following pages.

Additional Study

- Citywide Corridor and Landscape Plan
- Identification of Infill Development Zones for Incentives
- Transit Feasibility Study
- Trail and Pedestrian Evaluation and Master Plan
- Business and Technology Park Feasibility Study
- Unity Plaza Feasibility Study

Management and Regulation

OR
COMBINED
AS A

Individual Ordinances

- Landscape Ordinance Amendments
- Signage Ordinance Amendments
- Access Management Development Standards Amendments
- Sidewalk Development Standards Amendments
- Outdoor Sales Ordinance Amendment
- Bulk and Scale Standards
- Nonconforming Site Improvements
- Land Use Regulation
- Natural Resource Protection Standards

Unified Development Ordinance

Guidelines

- Corridor Design Standards
- Business Park and Industrial Design Standards
- Building Guidelines and Design Standards
- Suburban Village and Business Park Design Guidelines
- Future Land Use and Character Plan (see Map 2.2)
- Area of Influence Plan (see Map 3.1)

Coordination

- Interjurisdictional
- Development Agreements
- Staff Coordination with Community Organizations

Programming

- Facade Grant Program
- Infill Incentive Program
- Strategic Land Banking
- Walkable Neighborhoods Initiative
- Regional Trail System
- Comprehensive Wayfinding System
- Weekend and Nightlife Programming
- Magnolia Town Center Branding
- Technical Support for Private Deed Restrictions and Covenants

Funding

- Infill Grants and Incentives
- Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Fund
- Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund
- H-GAC Livable Centers Funding Program
- Mixed-Use Housing Incentives
- Trail Grants

Capital Investments

- Gateways and Landmarks
- Street and Drainage Buffering
- Trails and Sidewalks
- Regional Detention
- Streetscape Improvements
- Additional Recreational Facilities
- Unity Plaza Infrastructure Investments

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

In the process of developing this plan, three principal land use and character approaches were derived from community input:

- Quality Appearance and Function
- Preservation of Community Character
- Destination for Housing, Entertainment, and Jobs

These policies reflect the vision of the community, which may be achieved through a number of additional studies, management and regulation, funding, programming, and capital investments. It is important to note that these general statements of policy may be cited when reviewing development proposals and can be used in making important community investment decisions regarding the provision and timing of public services.

QUALITY APPEARANCE AND FUNCTION

Corridor Appearance

Policy 2.1. Residents and visitors will be protected from visual clutter, light pollution, deteriorated buildings, and other public nuisances.

Policy 2.2. FM 1774, FM 1488, and Nichols Sawmill Road are designated as priority infrastructure and public investment areas given their high visibility and overall influence on the community.

- **Landscape Ordinance Amendments.** Consider increasing landscape standards to specify:

- » Landscaping requirements based on a ratio of islands per parking spaces instead of 15 percent of the building site (which is now required). This will allow a better distribution of landscaping, while also reducing the heat island effect of the paving area.
- » Landscaping provisions for the Magnolia Town Center, which is currently excluded from the Landscape Ordinance (No. 2005-366). These would complement the *Downtown Improvements and Revitalization Guidelines Plan (2009)* for The Stroll, which specifies pedestrian and landscaping zones, edging, pavement material, and maintenance requirements.
- » Higher intensity screening and development standards for drive-ins, drive-thrus, auto-related uses, and outdoor storage (in conjunction with the Outdoor Sales Ordinance, which is noted on the next page).

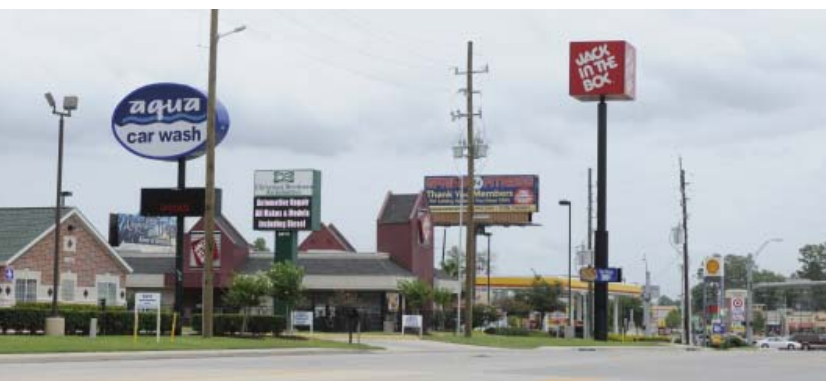
- **Signage Ordinance Amendments.** Consider increasing restrictions on signage, including:

- » Decreasing the permitted height of signage from 30 feet above finished grade to a height continuum based on roadway speeds and classifications (local, collector, arterial).
- » Compliance provisions and a timetable to improve the appearance of non-conforming signs that are currently protected from the grandfather clause.



Outdoor Sales and Storage

The City must protect itself from unsightly outdoor storage and sales items, which are illustrated on the left, that deter from the attractiveness of Magnolia's corridors. The row of evergreens on the right forms an opaque screen which helps to block outdoor objects from view.



Signage

The community has a number of signs that are unnecessarily tall and large in proportion to the scale of roadways and buildings, as seen on the left. The City should encourage shorter and more attractive signage, as illustrated on the right, which will improve visual clutter and provide more attractive gateways to the community. The current standard allows signage up to 30 feet tall.



Parking Lot Landscaping

Due to the size and prominent location of parking lots, their landscaping makes a strong visual impact throughout the community. Revised standards based on the ratio of islands per parking spaces (rather than overall site coverage) will help to distribute landscaping improvements and reduce the heat island effect.

- **Corridor Design Standards.** Use the proposed Citywide Corridor and Landscape Plan, as proposed in *Chapter 4, Community Mobility*, in combination with the *Downtown Improvements and Revitalization Guidelines Plan (2009)*, to develop corridor design standards along FM 1488, FM 1774, and Nichols Sawmill Road. These will guide the construction of new buildings and improvement of existing buildings and sites to ensure compatibility of the architecture and visual cohesiveness. For example, landscape surface area and build-to line requirements should be adjusted to promote Suburban Village (SV) and Auto-Urban Commercial (AUC) designs.
- **Facade Grant Program.** Consider funding a mini-grant program for existing commercial businesses to help finance building façade improvements, enhance landscaping, and construct other site upgrades that might not otherwise occur. These grants should be targeted on properties where no construction or expansion activities are planned, with the intent to trigger compliance with higher development standards.
- **Gateways and Landmarks.** Enhance or newly construct signature gateway and streetscape treatments at high-profile entry points, as well as at key intersections and locations within the community. The gateway improvements (e.g., monument signage, flags/banners, landscaping, special lighting, public art, etc.) should be carefully sited and of sufficient scale and quality design to stand out from other corridor signage and visual elements. For instance, the monument signage near Magnolia West High School along FM 1774 needs to be enlarged and brought closer the street. New gateway construction may require the acquisition of natural areas and open space in coordination with TxDOT.
- **Business Park and Industrial Design Standards.** Consider adopting design standards relating to large-scale commercial and/or industrial development (over 40,000 square feet). Standards can address the building size, roof, and skyline; materials and design elements; loading and storage placement and screening; open space, streetscape areas, and landscaping; and signage. Industrial district standards can differentiate between outer (those with street frontage and visibility to the public) and interior (those shielded or screened from public view via building orientation, location, or design) elevations. Truck loading and exterior storage areas should be effectively screened and buffered if near residential uses or public rights-of-way.

“Not Another FM 1960”

Throughout the plan development process and in the local press, Magnolia area residents proclaimed they do not want FM 1488 and FM 1774 to turn into FM 1960.

“In that area, what happened was without any restrictions on what types of businesses could come in, residents experienced quickly diminishing property values because of smoke shops, adult video entertainment stores and bars opening up,” explained Brian Gremminger of the Magnolia Parkway Chamber of Commerce. “It didn’t help the area as far as creating a consistent image or sending a message that this is a place for families.”

The unincorporated areas just outside of Magnolia are without regulations to influence the types of businesses coming in, which has been a reoccurring problem for Magnolia Parkway. This area is part of a five-mile radius surrounding the FM 1488/FM 2978 intersection, which is located between Magnolia’s ETJ and I-45. While the City of Magnolia’s influence is limited to its corporate limits and ETJ, it has the authority (but presently limited standards) to protect itself from FM 1960-style growth.

Source: Community Impact News (June 1, 2012)

- **Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Fund.** Work with foundations and charitable organizations to establish a revolving loan fund or interest forgiveness program for building rehabilitation and adaptive reuse. This may be funded by 4A/4B taxes if it attracts more primary jobs.
- **Public Infrastructure Investments.** Use street and drainage improvements as an opportunity to install landscaping and screening that can address nearby compatibility concerns. Such projects also provide an opportunity to clarify the extent of existing rights-of-way and the potential availability of some right-of-way areas for these types of enhancements. This will require continued coordination with TxDOT.

Congestion

Policy 2.3. High-use areas, such as commercial and employment centers, will be designed to reduce automobile congestion and minimize traffic impacts on neighborhoods.

- **Interjurisdictional Coordination.** Continue coordination and long-range planning initiatives with Montgomery County and the Magnolia

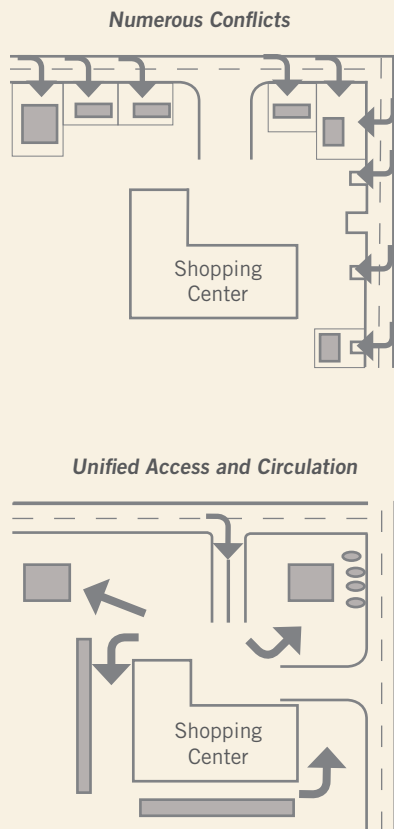
Independent School District to ensure buildings and facilities are placed in optimal locations that do not restrict traffic flow along FM 1488, FM 1774, and Nichols Sawmill Road.

- **Development Standards Amendments.** Consider integrating more stringent access management principles into the Development Standards. This includes (but is not limited to):
 - » More specific provisions and requirements (number, location, width, design) for shared

Access Management of Driveways

As traffic along FM 1488 and 1774 increases in proportion to more commercial activity, the number and design of driveways will directly influence the intensity of congestion and safety of drivers and pedestrians. Section 802.1 of the Development Standards should be evaluated for more strict access management standards. The current provisions provide an incentive bonus for combined driveways (15% reduction in lot width) and shared parking (15% reduction in spaces).

Source: H-GAC and Kendig Keast Collaborative



driveways, cross-access easements, and site ingress/egress.

- **Thoroughfare Planning.** Use the *Thoroughfare Plan* in *Chapter 4, Community Mobility*, as a policy directive to promote a comprehensive approach to infrastructure-supported development patterns. An effective plan will prevent cut-through traffic in neighborhoods, while distributing local and collector traffic through multiple routes.
- **Develop Compatible Land Uses.** Consider incentives and regulations that promote higher density and mixed uses in certain, appropriate areas, such as the intersection of FM 1488 and FM 1774, along Buddy Riley Road, and nearby the proposed Aggie Expressway. These types of developments would encourage residents and visitors to park their car and walk to multiple destinations, which results in fewer vehicle trips.
- **Transit Feasibility Study.** In collaboration with TxDOT, H-GAC, METRO, and/or the Gulf Coast Rail District, along with other SH 249, FM 1774, and FM 1488 stakeholders, evaluate the feasibility of commuter rail or bus rapid transit. These public modes of travel would reduce automobile reliance and commute times to major employment centers and other metro-area destinations.

Lack of Connectivity

Policy 2.4. Neighborhoods, recreation facilities, commercial centers, and industrial parks will be connected by efficient and multi-modal transportation networks.

- **Development Standards Amendments.** Consider the following amendments to the Development Standards:
 - » Increased sidewalk requirements to eight- or 10-foot widths (as recommended by the *Downtown Improvements and Revitalization Guidelines Plan*) in the Magnolia Town Center. The current requirement in this area is four-foot wide sidewalks for new construction.
 - » Required construction of bike lanes along new and upgraded arterial and collector roads.
 - » Added sidewalk, pedestrian zone, and bike-lane cross-sections to provide sufficient detail for travel lanes, street furniture, and landscaping.
 - » Requirements for trails in lieu of sidewalks in Residential Estate (RE) and Suburban Residential (SR) neighborhoods.
 - » Requirements for public access easements that can be used for trail connections throughout the community.

- **Trail and Sidewalk Evaluation.** Conduct an inventory of sidewalk and trail deficiencies, including areas with poor conditions. This is especially important in the Magnolia Town Center (MTC) and between neighborhoods and community destinations. This will provide background information for the *Trail Master Plan* proposed in *Chapter 5, Parks and Amenities*.
- **Walkable Neighborhoods Initiative.** Develop a program encouraging businesses, civic clubs, organizations, and individuals to adopt, beautify, and maintain various parcels of land for pedestrian use.
- **Public Infrastructure Investments.** Construct new sidewalks and trails based on:
 - » Recommended deficiencies from the proposed *Trail and Sidewalk Evaluation*;
 - » High-profile intersections and connections along major corridors; and
 - » Locations within and nearby school zones and park facilities.

PRESERVATION OF CHARACTER

Infill

Policy 2.5. The City prioritizes compact and contiguous growth over less efficient, scattered growth throughout and around the City and ETJ.

- **Identification of Development Areas.** Using *Map 2.3, Infill and Redevelopment Areas*, as a reference, create Infill Development Zones that warrant incentives. Subsequently, work with landowners in these areas to prepare a development plan that determines the type and character of development, which may serve as a basis for design and implementation.
- **Strategic Infrastructure Investment.** The City's capital improvement program (CIP) should be aligned with a strategy for the timing and sequencing of infill development, which is reflected in the *Future Land Use and Character Plan* and *Areas of Influence Plan*. This entails:
 - » City Council adoption of plan amendments that address any inconsistencies with the plans before proceeding with public investment projects.
 - » Establishment of capital project prioritization criteria to score and evaluate projects relative to the plans and community objectives.
- **Infill Incentive Program.** Evaluate resources for supporting and funding an Infill Incentive Program for eligible properties within the proposed Infill Development Zone. Incentives may entail:

- » **Fee Waivers.** Consider amending the Subdivision Ordinance (No. No. 2007-106) to include infill incentives whereby development, building fees, and utility costs may be waived or reduced for permits and other regulatory processes.

- » **Tax Incentives.** Consider funding infill projects through a tax increment reinvestment zone (TIRZ), which will help to finance the cost of new development in areas that would otherwise not redevelop on their own. Over a given time period, the tax increment (difference between old and new rates) is set aside to pay off front-end improvements. Another alternative is to develop a tax freeze, which will maintain tax rates at the pre-improvement property value over a specific time frame.

- **Infill Grants.** Consider developing a gap financing program to fund infrastructure improvements that support infill development projects. Typical projects may include parks or open space; water, sewer or other utility service improvements; streets, roads, and parking structures; traffic mitigation features; and sidewalks and streetscape improvements.
- **Strategic Land Banking.** Consider using 4A/4B funds to assemble small, individual lots that can be combined and sold to primary jobs employers. Other financing mechanisms can be used to assemble properties for infill housing and mixed-use developments.

Land Use Compatibility

Policy 2.6. New commercial and mixed-use developments will be designed at a scale and in a manner that is compatible with the community.

Policy 2.7. Infill development will be compatible with the character of surrounding development.

Policy 2.8. The quality and integrity of neighborhoods will be protected from the encroachment of larger-scaled, more intensive land uses.

- **Outdoor Sales Ordinance Amendment.** Amend the Outdoor Sales Ordinance (No. 258) to require all materials stored outdoors to be screened from public view - not just used and second-hand material. Furthermore, specify the percentage of site area that may be used for the display of outdoor merchandise, as well as its location on the site, enclosure separating it from other use areas, and the height of stacked materials, among other applicable requirements.
- **Bulk, Scale, and Building Location Standards.** Consider adopting building height, bulk, scale, and building location standards that are compatible with adjacent streets and surrounding land uses.

This may include specific guidelines for setbacks, lot coverage, building height, and lot dimensions, among other specifications.

- **Building Guidelines and Design Standards.** Consider adopting building guidelines or design standards that may address building shape, blank walls and articulation, rooflines, building materials, and architectural treatments. This would help to make new development compatible with the intended character of the community. These standards should apply throughout the planning areas designated as Suburban Village (SV) and the Magnolia Town Center (MTC).
- **Public Infrastructure Investments.** Consider funding retroactive screening/buffering improvements in partnership with private property owners. For nonconforming sites, these improvements will trigger compliance requirements with higher development standards.
- **Nonconforming Site Improvements.** Amend the development ordinances to establish provisions for nonconforming site improvements whereby certain time periods are established by which improvements must be made to comply with new standards (e.g., landscaping, screening, buffering, fencing, outdoor storage, parking surface, etc.).
- **Unified Development Ordinance.** Consider developing a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), which consolidates Magnolia's development regulations into one user-friendly document. Similar to this Comprehensive Plan, a UDO is a living document that is continually updated to reflect the community's vision and objectives. The process of developing a UDO requires a thorough review of existing ordinances for inconsistencies and necessary updates, with the objective of providing clear direction for the development community and City staff.
- **Regional Detention.** Consider revising the City's Stormwater Management Ordinance (No. 338) to provide a streamlined fee-in-lieu process for funding regional off-site storage facilities. The fee system is currently targeted to sites of 16,000 square feet or less, but this process could be amended to more broadly include larger tracts. Larger facilities tend to be more cost effective and more reliable. Similar to the baseball fields near Grand Oaks, larger detention systems can be paired with recreational amenities to optimize land use.
- **Deed Restrictions and Covenants.** Provide technical support to help neighborhoods prepare

deed restrictions and covenants for the purpose of protecting the value and integrity of their neighborhood and to prevent inappropriate uses.

Character Preservation

Policy 2.9. Land will be preserved for parks, open space, and nature reserves in order to protect the rural and natural beauty of the community.

- **Growth Directives.** Use the following long-range planning documents as policy guidance to inform development decisions and public investments.
 - » The *Future Land Use and Character Plan* identifies the character of new development and redevelopment, as determined by the community. This plan may inform design guidelines and ordinances that regulate the appearance and function of sites and buildings.
 - » The *Areas of Influence Plan* which is referenced in *Chapter 3, Growth Capacity and Management*, provides guidance for the sequencing and direction of growth. This plan shall guide the location and timing of infrastructure development (e.g., streets, utilities) and placement of other public investments (e.g., gateways, parks and open space).
- **Preservation of Natural Areas.** Amend the development ordinances to establish resource protection standards (e.g., preservation of woodlands, wetlands, riparian areas along streams, floodplains). Also, create incentives for open space protection by way of development clustering, lot size adjustments, and provisions for other housing types.
- **ETJ Development Agreements.** As the City enters into ETJ agreements with private landowners, these contracts should be contingent on compliance with the City's development standards. The purpose is to ensure future annexed land will be compatible with the community.
- **Land Use Regulation.** The adoption of land use regulations would aid the City in pursuit of defending its rural, small-town character and safeguarding the land use types and patterns along its corridors. Such regulations would enable the City to protect its neighborhoods from encroaching, incompatible land uses. They would also allow the City to determine the appropriateness of certain development types and to coordinate the timing and pattern of development in concert with a capital infrastructure plan. Without such regulations, the City may address the design and appearance of individual sites, but it would have little influence over the pattern of development.

DESTINATION FOR HOUSING, ENTERTAINMENT, AND JOBS

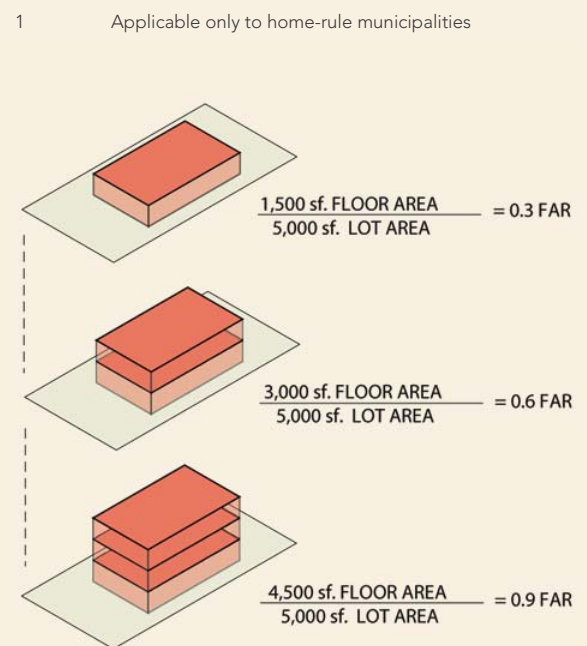
Business and Industries

Policy 2.10. The City will leverage its financial resources to recruit new businesses and expand existing ones.

- **Industrial Park Infill Incentives.** Consider using 4A and 4B funds to develop a financial incentive package for vacant properties in the existing industrial park next to Magnolia West High School. The economic development funds can support the purchase of land, buildings, equipment, and facilities, so long as the businesses create primary jobs.
- **Stakeholder Coordination.** Continue City staff coordination with the Greater Magnolia Chamber of Commerce, Magnolia Parkway Chamber of Commerce, and the chambers of adjacent communities to attract new businesses and support existing ones. As recently demonstrated along Magnolia Parkway, the political support or opposition of these entities carries political leverage, which will be necessary to ensure new developments are compatible with Magnolia's vision.
- **Business and Technology Park Feasibility Study.** Identify the feasibility of new business and technology parks that corresponds to the proposed SH Aggie Expressway alignment and fall within the City's ETJ. Identify initiatives and leadership for implementing a long-range strategy, which includes:
 - » Purchasing and annexing land;
 - » Funding infrastructure;
 - » Developing restrictive deeds and covenants;
 - » Evaluating financial incentives; and
 - » Marketing to prospective land owners.

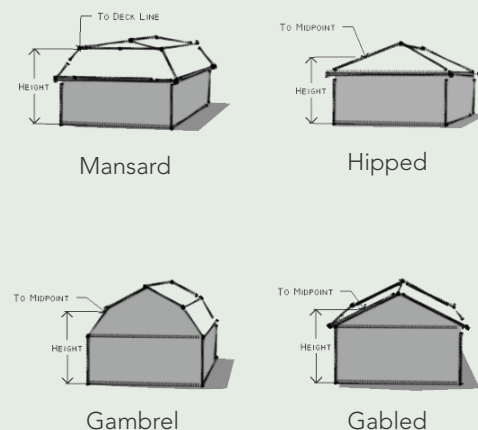
Bulk, Scale, and Building Location Standards

As new programs and funding mechanisms are identified for infill development, as well as greenfield sites, the City will want to protect itself from incompatible buildings and site designs that conflict with the existing character. These types of regulations can influence building size, scale, coverage, design, location (setbacks), bulk or floor area, density, and height. The following diagram illustrates floor area ratio (FAR),¹ which is used to measure the intensity of a site being developed. This regulation tool is typically used to set a limit for the amount of construction.



Building Architecture

The City of Magnolia can influence the shape, form, and architectural features of buildings through design standards that function as an architectural aid, or pattern book, for renovation and new construction of buildings. This level of detail would be most appropriate along The Stroll, or more generally, in the Magnolia Town Center. For example, the City can identify prevailing roof types and encourage compatible building form.





One- and two-story commercial buildings



Elaborate landscaping and outdoor furniture



Townhomes and mixed-use housing



Plazas and gathering spaces

- **Suburban Village and Business Park Design Guidelines.** Develop design guidelines for areas that are designated as Suburban Village (SV) and Business Park (BP) on the *Future Land Use and Character Plan*. This will ensure the quality and appearance of non-residential growth matches the expectations of the community.
- **Strategic Land Banking and Infrastructure Improvements.** Based on the findings of the proposed Business and Technology Park Feasibility Study, set aside 4A and 4B funds to provide land, buildings, equipment, facilities, and targeted infrastructure construction to support a new businesses and technology park, which will create primary jobs and generate tax revenues.
- **Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund.** Consider financing an Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund Program to support businesses that want to relocate or expand in the City. Prospective loan candidates should be evaluated on:
 - » Consistency with this Comprehensive Plan;
 - » Number of new primary jobs;
 - » Number of employees retained;
 - » Value of building constructed; and
 - » Type of business or industry.

Entertainment and Service Amenities

Policy 2.11. New retail, entertainment, and professional services will be attracted to support all ages and lifestyles.

- **Weekend and Nightlife Programming.** Incorporate additional weekend and nighttime community events, like the Love Bug Fest, that can bring life to commercial businesses after the typical work week, thereby encouraging a vibrant “after hours” scene. This type of community buzz will help to attract Lone Star Community College students, young professionals, and families who seek more cultural and community attractions.

The proposed Unity Plaza, which is tentatively planned near City Hall and the Volunteer Fire Department, will offer a number of small-scale commercial and housing amenities.

Photo Sources: 1-2. Mashpee, FL Chamber of Commerce, 3. Kendig Keast Collaborative, 4. National Arts Program

- **Comprehensive Wayfinding System.** Implement a signage and wayfinding system to increase awareness of local attractions, historic points of interest, shopping and restaurants, and special events. Design details and recommendations are documented on Page 3 of the *Downtown Improvements and Revitalization Guidelines (2009)*.
- **Mixed-Use Housing Incentives.** Consider financial, regulatory, and administrative incentives to promote walkable and mixed use housing in the Magnolia Town Center. This would help to attract a demographic that would support more entertainment and retail services.
- **Public Infrastructure Investments.** Based on the findings of the proposed Unity Plaza Feasibility Study, fund strategic infrastructure investments that will entice commercial and residential developers to build in this area. New gathering spaces, such as a public plaza, open market with indoor/outdoor stalls, and pocket park should tie into a citywide trail system that connects existing community destinations.

Gathering Spaces

Policy 2.12. The City will explore options for a new “Unity Plaza” that accommodates civic, retail, recreational, and housing uses.

Policy 2.13. Existing landmarks and community destinations, such as The Stroll and Historic Magnolia Depot, will be enhanced and tied into new public investments.

Policy 2.14. The parks system will be developed as a regional amenity to attract and retain residents, business patrons, and employers.

- **New Unity Plaza Feasibility Study.** Form an exploratory committee and develop a marketing study that evaluates community interest, market viability, and site selection of a new Unity Plaza. Among other locations, this study should assess the feasibility of a mixed-use, livable center along Buddy Riley Road, which conveniently ties in City Hall and the Magnolia Fire Station.
- **H-GAC Livable Centers Program.** Pursue planning funds through H-GAC’s Livable Centers Program, which promotes walkable, mixed-use places that provide multi-modal transportation options, improve environmental quality, and promote economic development.
- **Streetscape Improvements.** Use the *Downtown Improvement and Revitalization Guidelines (2009)* as a basis for street rehabilitation, sidewalk/crosswalk installation, park/plaza, and streetscape projects. These improvements would create a mixed-use and walkable environment in areas designated by the *Future Land Use and Character Plan* as the Magnolia Town Center (MTC) and Unity Plaza (UP).
- **Expanded Design Theme.** Expand the branding of Magnolia Town Center to a larger area on both sides of the railroad tracks. This may include enhancements to signage, lighting, streetscaping, public art, and other amenities. The theme should

tie in the ongoing design features of The Stroll, while addressing a broader community identity.

LIKE MANY SMALL, BEDROOM COMMUNITIES, MAGNOLIA LACKS A CRITICAL MASS OF TAX PAYERS THAT WHOLLY FUND THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SOCIAL SERVICES THAT ARE EXPECTED OF A METROPOLITAN SUBURB. AS THE CITY PURSUES AN AGGRESSIVE GROWTH TRAJECTORY TO OVERCOME THIS IMBALANCE AND TO GAIN HOME RULE AUTHORITY, ITS LONG-TERM FINANCIAL HEALTH WILL BE CONTINGENT ON ITS RESTRAINT - AS MUCH AS ITS OPPORTUNISM. NEW GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT MUST BE MADE IN A STRATEGIC AND COMPREHENSIVE MANNER, WEIGHING THE SHORT-TERM BENEFITS WITH LONG-TERM COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH MAINTAINING AND UPGRADING ADDITIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEMANDS ON THE CITY. THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OUTLINED IN THIS CHAPTER WILL GUIDE THE SEQUENCING OF ANNEXATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND INFRASTRUCTURE BY WAY OF FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE AND SCALABLE PRACTICES.

Chapter 3

GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY

INTRODUCTION

Magnolia's rapidly upgrading roadway system, availability of home lots, and proximity to regional employers position the community for unprecedented growth. If properly channeled, this development potential could set forth a 20- to 30-year course that maintains the community's "small town" charm while gaining additional retail amenities, a larger tax base, and more regional influence. Magnolia is projected to increase more than four times its current size by 2040. To a large degree, this formula for growth will hinge on the City's commitment to its quality of life. How can Magnolia maintain the standard of living that first attracted present-day residents, while maturing into a more diversified and full-service community?

The purpose of this chapter is to assess the City's readiness to accommodate new residents and businesses; guide the pattern of land development and redevelopment; establish the priority and timing of public improvements; and form an annexation strategy that aligns with the City's financial and staffing capacities. This requires assertive leadership by City officials to agree on and implement short-, mid-,

and long-range strategies. While *Chapter 2, Land Use and Character*, focuses on the type, pattern, and scale of future development (i.e. community character), this chapter addresses growth from the perspective of management tools, sequencing, and provision of infrastructure and social services.

GROWTH CONTEXT

The number one factor in creating a positive growth outlook will be the community's ability to attract new residents and businesses. The City is growing at a modest pace, but development of cleared greenfield sites already incorporated in the City could more than double the population. The City has a number of opportunities and constraints that will influence the direction, pattern, and pace of growth. These include:

- **Regional Influence.** Magnolia is located within a 30-mile commute to a number of thriving employment centers (e.g., The Woodlands, Conroe, Tomball, Spring), as illustrated on the inset map on Page 1.3. As these areas attract new employers, such as the 385-acre Exxon complex currently under construction in Spring, Magnolia can market itself as a rural housing alternative within a short driving distance. The City must capitalize on its 12-mile trade area, which includes 138,000 inhabitants, in order to attract more residents, employers, and commerce.
- **Roadway improvements.** The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has been expanding and modernizing the City's roadway network to accommodate larger traffic volumes. These improvements will help decrease congestion, increase safety, and improve access to neighboring communities. Walgreens picked up on the value of these improvements and developed a new store at the intersection of FM 1488 and FM 1774. This intersection is planned to undergo major improvements to include a new flyover that crosses the Union Pacific railroad tracks.
- **S.H. 249 Aggie Expressway.** This proposed state highway positions Magnolia to gain valuable frontage along a major regional corridor between Houston and College Station. The improved accessibility of this land would provide valuable opportunities for industrial and commercial uses, as well as the potential for added housing.
- **Land Availability.** In Magnolia Ridge and a handful of smaller subdivisions, the City has a number of shovel-ready sites that are connected to street and utility networks. On the other hand, one of the current impediments to growth is a lack of already built homes. With an improvement in the economy, but a hesitance - at least in the short-term - on the



Magnolia Ridge is a 580-acre master-planned community with one phase of development constructed. Once fully built out, the community will accommodate approximately 1,500 homes.

Community Directives

Current residents and business owners offered insights to the historic growth and future of Magnolia. As part of a long-range planning exercise, they identified a number of guiding principles and trends that directly influenced the development of *Map 2.2, Future Land Use and Character Plan* and *Map 3.1, Areas of Influence Plan* (as discussed on Page 3.12).

As part of the Land Use Workshop, the Advisory Committee was divided into two groups and asked to distribute land uses onto infill and undeveloped tracts of land. At the end of exercise, the two groups convened and shared their results, which revealed a remarkable number of crossover trends. The findings from this exercise, coupled with the input of stakeholder interviews, resulted in the following growth patterns:

- Development of a new Unity Plaza located directly to the east of City Hall and the Volunteer Fire Department;
- Clustering of neighborhood commercial development at key collectors and thoroughfares;
- Corridor park system along the natural drainageways, which include Mill Creek, Sulphur Branch, Arnold Branch, and Mink Branch;
- Future residential and commercial development focused primarily to the north and east of the City's existing development pattern;
- Reinvestment and infill of the Magnolia Town Center, which generally encompasses the historic grid of the community, including areas such as The Stroll and Historic Magnolia Depot; and
- Commercial uses along the proposed alignment for the S.H. 249 Aggie Expressway.



The mapping exercise engaged community members in hand-on land use planning.

Magnolia's Projected Growth

In fast-growing markets like Montgomery County, long-range population projections are extremely difficult to assess given natural fluctuations in the marketplace and the influence of strategic annexations. For the purposes of this plan, Magnolia's population is assumed to grow at a three percent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) plus the addition of new residents through annexations, resulting in approximately 6,278 Magnolia residents by or before 2040. This projection needs to be re-assessed no less than every three years to evaluate new growth trends within the City and County.

COMPARISON OF GROWTH RATES

The City's pace of growth was determined to be three percent, a mid-range rate when taking into consideration historic growth patterns, regional context, and activity of comparable municipalities. In this assessment, for instance, the Woodlands six-year projection* from 2012 was weighted more heavily than the 2007 projections for the City of Conroe and City of Tomball.

- 1% CAGR, Magnolia Independent School District (anecdotal)
- 1.5% CAGR, Recent Building Activity (anecdotal)
- 2.3% CAGR, City of Magnolia, Historical Growth (2000 – 2010)
- 3.1% CAGR, The Woodlands, 6-Year Projection (2012)*
- 3.4% CAGR, Texas Water Board, 60-Year Projection (2011, using 2000 Census)
- 3.7% CAGR, City of Conroe, 25-Year Projection (2007)
- 7.0% CAGR, City of Tomball, 10-Year Projection (2007 Infrastructure Plan)

STRATEGIC ANNEXATION

The projected population is also based on the assumption that the City will undergo significant annexations within the next one and one-half year timeframe, which is estimated to add 1,266 additional residents to the total population. The proposed Annexation Policy on Page 3.12 of this chapter identifies considerations for ongoing and future decision-making.

LAND USE DEMAND

Projected growth will occur in established areas of the City in the form of infill and redevelopment, as well as undeveloped or rural areas at the edges of the community. If Magnolia continues to annex neighboring subdivisions and maintains a three percent CAGR over the next 30 years, it will need to accommodate the infrastructure needs of an additional 4,843 new residents. This number increases to 6,296 new residents when adding an additional 30 percent to account for market fluctuations. If these numbers hold constant, the projected growth will require the City to expand its infrastructure system by more than four times its current capacity over the next 30 years.

Table 3.1, Residential Land Development Demand, 2040

Land Use Category	Population		New Residents + 30 %	Distribution		PPH	Dwelling Units	Dwelling Units/Acre	New Growth	
	2011	2040		Percent	Persons				Percent	Acres
Rural Estate	1,435	6,278	6,296	10 %	630	2.82	223	.75	24 %	298
Suburban Residential				20 %	1,259	2.82	447	1	37 %	447
Semi-Urban Residential				60 %	3,778	2.82	1,340	3	37 %	447
Semi-Urban Multifamily				10 %	630	2.36	267	9.5	2 %	28

side of the banks, the development community lacks an inventory of speculative and used homes for sale.

- **Infrastructure Availability and Condition.** Many subdivisions that were developed in the ETJ lack adequate infrastructure capacity (i.e., undersized and poorly constructed streets, water lines, and wastewater lines). In order to support existing and potentially annexed subdivisions, the City would need to significantly increase its utility capacities.
- **Unincorporated Development.** Land is generally less expensive outside the City limits due primarily to the absence of public infrastructure and improvements, which equates to lower development costs and the lack of ad valorem (property) taxes. Therefore, residents and businesses outside the City limits benefit from access to municipal facilities and services, such as parks and other community facilities, but do not share equitably in the tax burden associated with constructing and maintaining these facilities and services.
- **Tourism.** Magnolia is branded as the gateway to the Renaissance Festival, which attracts more than half a million annual visitors. The City must draw from this revenue stream, which passes through the community for two months every year.

QUANTIFICATION OF LAND USE DEMAND

Magnolia is projected to grow from 1,435 residents in 2012 to approximately 6,278 residents in 2040, as explained in the sidebar to the left. This projected population change can be transformed into a land development/redevelopment demand forecast by applying generalized dwelling units per acre. Estimates of future development are presented in *Table 3.1, Residential Land Development Demand, 2040*, which identifies the residential acres needed to ensure a healthy land market for the 2040 projected population. Based on the U.S. Census, the table assumes an average household size of 2.82 persons for owner-occupied homes and 2.36 persons for renter-occupied units. Given Magnolia's small size, the "New Growth" column represents a 30 percent land increase (over what is needed in the next 30 years) to allow for market flexibility.

As seen in *Table 2.1, Existing Land Use and Character Inventory*, only 55 percent of the corporate limits are now developed. Vacant, undeveloped land accounts for 14.5 percent and land classified as rural amounts to 30.4 percent of the corporate limits, for a total of 44.9 percent. If infill and contiguous patterns of development take hold, the City could accommodate the next 30 years of growth within its existing ETJ once

the City acquires home rule authority and extends its boundaries to a one-mile radius.

TOOLS FOR INFLUENCING GROWTH

The City is equipped with a number of strategies for influencing the pattern and timing of development. While there is no unilateral approach, a combination of planning, regulatory, and financing mechanisms are available to influence what is built on the ground. Given the limitations of Texas law governing City and County governments, there are few, if any, mechanisms currently available to entirely prevent haphazard growth patterns, particularly within the City's ETJ. Instead, Magnolia is faced with a complex set of rules regarding its ability to manage development. While there are some mechanisms available to better manage peripheral development, there are also factors over which the City has little control (e.g., no building permit requirements or building code enforcement in the ETJ) as identified in §212.003 of the Local Government Code.

Within this context, it is wise for Magnolia to consider ways in which it can exert more influence over the direction, timing, pattern, and quality of fringe development that it ultimately may serve. The intent is not to stop or slow growth in the area, but to guide growth toward areas that can best be served with public utilities and services in a cost-efficient manner.

The following tools are available:

- **Long-range planning** identifies locations in the City that are targeted for the gradual expansion of its urbanized area—versus areas that are less conducive for intensive development because of terrain, existing patterns of use and ownership, environmental, or service provision constraints.
- **Annexation** brings key growth areas and areas intended for limited development into the City limits well before any significant development activity begins. Therefore, appropriate land use and development standards should be established early on. Annexation is a mechanism to expand the City's tax base, especially to incorporate the pool of tax and fee payers who benefit from municipal infrastructure and services.
- **Subdivision regulations** can be used to carry out growth strategies, particularly in terms of the quality of new development. Clear infrastructure standards in the subdivision regulations, and associated City specifications and criteria, shall establish minimum improvements required of private development.
- **Development agreements**, where appropriate, require that ETJ projects comply with certain

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision regulations are the most readily available means for minimizing the impacts of peripheral growth in the ETJ (as authorized by §212.003 of the Local Government Code). Subdivision review and approval is an administrative function by statute, meaning that a plat must be approved if all City requirements are met. Therefore, the key to linking these regulations to growth management efforts is to establish clear, definitive development standards (e.g., water, sewer, and street infrastructure) that must be met by City and ETJ properties to receive subdivision approval.

As stated in §212.003, this administrative authority is restricted from regulating ETJ properties on the basis of:

- the use of any building or property;
- bulk, height, or number of buildings;
- size of a building; and
- the number of residential units per acre of land.

While these restrictions prevent the City from directly regulating residential density on a unit-per-acre basis, density may be influenced, as a practical matter, by authorized rules like minimum lot size, minimum lot width, and right-of-way dimensions. For example, a larger minimum lot size could be required based on inadequate capacity of area roadways and/or where there are not public water and sewer systems available. This would effectively establish a relationship between lot size, infrastructure demands, and the availability of adequate public facilities, which is a legitimate “health and safety” concern for the municipality.

aspects of in-City development regulations and standards prior to their annexation into the City (§212.172). Development agreements can be negotiated with private interests that request extension of the City’s utility infrastructure to fringe and/or ETJ locations, especially to clarify the timing of future planned improvements and any conditions in exchange for the City’s infrastructure and service commitments.

They can also be used to establish levels of participation in public/private cost-sharing arrangements for infrastructure improvements, as well as reimbursement provisions for infrastructure oversizing or other special circumstances.

- **Impact fees** assessed on new residential and non-residential development provide earmarked funding for particular capital improvements that are specifically needed to serve the new development (as authorized in Texas for water, sanitary sewer, and drainage).
- **Multi-year capital improvements programming** clearly establishes the City’s intentions for extending its primary arterial streets, trunk water mains, and wastewater collection lines to targeted growth areas.
- **Joint Powers Agreements (JPA)** are a means for the City and other units of government to coordinate on the provision of infrastructure (as well as public services and administrative functions), as regulated in Chapter 163 of the Texas Utilities Code.
- **Public Improvement Districts** take advantage of state-authorized mechanisms for infrastructure financing and private participation.
- **City-County coordination** facilitates synchronization of development policies and procedures in rural parts of Montgomery County and helps to improve regulatory enforcement in Magnolia’s ETJ.

COORDINATED GROWTH AND ANNEXATION

CONTEXT

The City is projected to increase from a 2012 population of 1,435 persons to 6,278 persons by 2040, which equates to an annual average of 47 new dwelling units over a 30-year period. This growth is partly contingent on strategic annexation decisions which will absorb existing subdivisions. Careful thought must be given to the appropriate locations

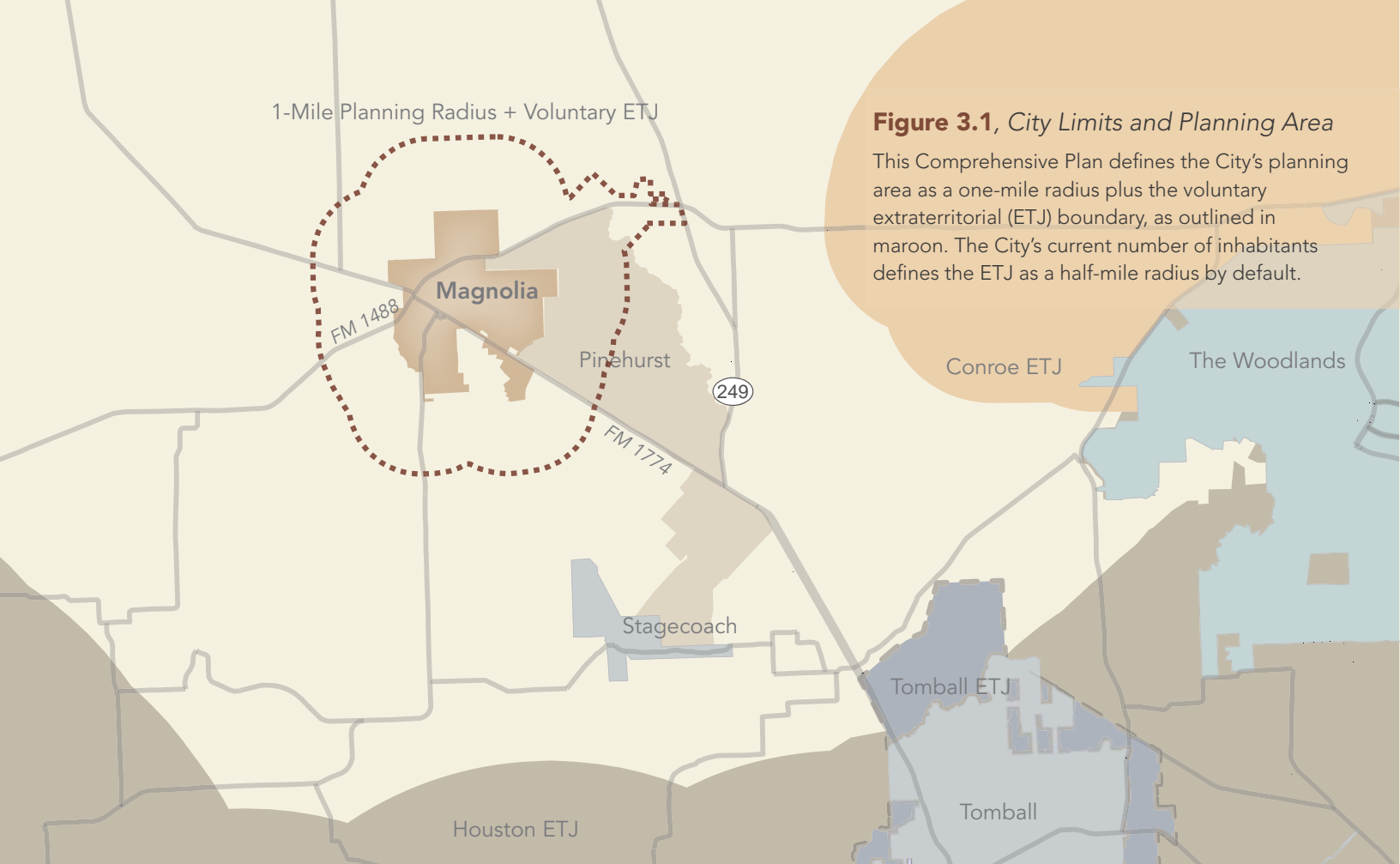


Figure 3.1, City Limits and Planning Area

This Comprehensive Plan defines the City's planning area as a one-mile radius plus the voluntary extraterritorial (ETJ) boundary, as outlined in maroon. The City's current number of inhabitants defines the ETJ as a half-mile radius by default.

and timing of these policy decisions given their short- and long-term financial implications.

Annexation is a state-regulated mechanism used to promote orderly growth and urbanization by coordinating private development with the provision of public infrastructure and services through phased expansion of the City limits. In Montgomery County, annexation and ETJ petitions are common tools used to prevent encroachment from neighboring communities. As Magnolia considers adding new territory into its City limits and ETJ boundary, it will be important to examine the authority, requirements, and considerations for annexation.¹

AUTHORITY

The legal authority and procedure for annexation is dependent on the size and classification of the City. With a population under 5,000 inhabitants, Magnolia operates as a General Law municipality that may only exercise powers that are specifically granted or implied by statute. In other words, annexation must be voluntary at the request of voters (§43.024) or landowners (§43.028) from the proposed area, with

only a few exceptions. One of the incentives for the City to increase its population beyond 5,000 inhabitants is that the City can adopt a Home Rule Charter and gain unilateral annexation authority (§43.021).

Extraterritorial Jurisdiction

As a General Law municipality, Magnolia has some authority over a larger unincorporated planning area beyond its current City limits, which is known in Texas as the extraterritorial jurisdiction or "ETJ." The designation enables municipal governments to "promote and protect the general health, safety, and welfare of persons residing in and adjacent to" the City limits.

Land within Magnolia's ETJ cannot be annexed by another City (see *Figure 3.1, City Limits and ETJ Boundaries*). Many smaller cities have used their ETJ authority as a strategic planning tool to expand their area of influence, while protecting the rural landowners from being annexed from much larger cities. While the ETJ's default boundary is contingent on the number of inhabitants in the City limits (§42.021), there is no statutory limit to its size. Magnolia has already expanded its one-half mile ETJ boundary by accepting petitions from landowners to the northeast along FM 1488. This tactic prevents Conroe from absorbing FM 1488 frontage. Once the City exceeds 5,000 inhabitants,

¹ This section shall not constitute as legal advice. Consult the City Attorney for specific details and interpretation of the Texas Local Government Code.

Growth Strategies

Magnolia's growth pattern will strongly influence the City's costs and capacity of providing municipal services. This is particularly relevant when the community is confronted by limited resources and increasing demands. In addition to its financial implications, unplanned growth often degrades environmental resources by prematurely committing rural areas to the impacts of urban development. Phased and orderly growth mitigates this situation by comprehensively addressing the impacts of development on the natural systems. There are five potential patterns for Magnolia, four of which are considered acceptable. These patterns include: scattered development, contiguous development, clustered development, corridor development, and infill and redevelopment.

Consequences of Poorly Planned Growth

While Magnolia's recent growth has brought great opportunity, without adequate foresight and preparedness it may involve long-term consequences. Some of the following implications of sprawl have already taken shape:

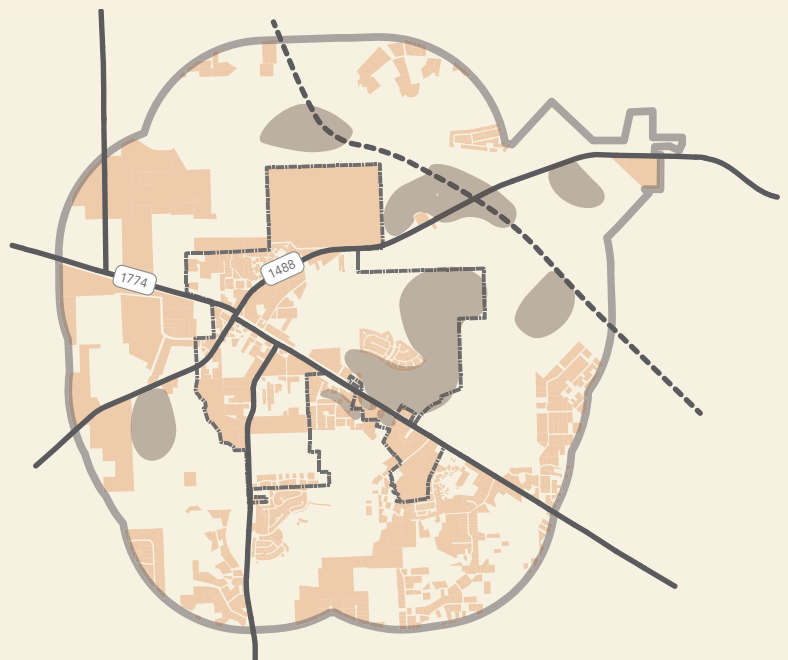
- Erosion of a defined community edge, thereby blurring its boundaries and contributing to a loss of community identity.
- Degradation of environmental resources such as floodplains, wetlands, habitat, vegetated areas, etc.
- Overwhelmed public infrastructure (e.g., roads, water, and wastewater systems) and services (e.g.,

police and fire protection, parks, libraries, and schools), in some cases, leading to inadequate staffing and facilities.

- A lack of coordinated planning between individual developments, leading to a discontinuous and disjointed street system and inability to achieve linear linkages and greenways.
- Premature and unexpected shifts in traffic patterns, causing congestion and environmental impacts as development occurs in an uncoordinated fashion before adequate road infrastructure is in place.
- The private provision of streets and infrastructure systems, such as package treatment plants for which the burden may shift to the City in future years without the requisite funding to pay for it.
- Inefficient provision of services, meaning a larger investment in infrastructure systems with fewer than the optimal number of connections/users to pay for them.
- Increased traffic as residents have to traverse relatively longer distances to reach places of work, shopping, services, education, recreation, and entertainment. This means that more public dollars must be expended on road building, expansion, maintenance, street lighting, and traffic enforcement (plus the associated drainage and environmental impacts of more widespread road surfaces).
- Declining rural character and agricultural operations as formerly large, contiguous farm and ranch properties are broken up by scattered development and the proliferation of "exurban", five-plus acre lots.

Scattered Development

Often referred to as "leapfrog" development, this growth form represents the unacceptable pattern of random development in which development skips over empty land to build in a remote location. It is a major cause of another common term, "urban sprawl." Leapfrogging often occurs in areas where there are few land use regulations or development standards that properly assign infrastructure costs to the developer. In other cases, developers attempt to move beyond city boundaries to avoid their land use and development regulations. This was also illustrated in the figure on Page 1.6.



it will automatically extend its ETJ authority from one-half to one mile beyond the corporate limits.

In addition to annexation protection, the ETJ authority allows the City to approve subdivision plats and enter into development agreements. Subdivision authority is a significant influence in terms of the function and quality of the community. These standards, which have been vetted and enforced for municipal development, helps to prevent the City from inheriting substandard infrastructure and development (see inset on Page 3.6).

Development agreements can also influence the character of ETJ development. According to §212.172, these agreements can:

- guarantee the land's immunity from annexation for a period of up to 45 years;
- extend certain aspects of the City's land use and environmental authority over the land;
- authorize enforcement of land use regulations other than those that apply within the City;
- provide infrastructure for the land; and
- provide for the annexation of land as a whole or in parts and to provide for the terms of annexation, if annexation is agreed to by the parties.

These types of development agreements are commonly used in lieu of annexing land where new residential development is planned. They allow the City to control the character of development, such as lot size, density, and infrastructure quality, while not directly assuming all the cost.

REQUIREMENTS

Once the City annexes a new subdivision or tract of land into the City, it will be required to provide municipal services in a timely manner, as regulated by §43.056 of the Local Government Code:

- Immediately, the City must provide any of the following services to the newly annexed area if it already provides these services within its corporate boundaries:
 - » police protection;
 - » fire protection;²
 - » emergency medical services;³
 - » solid waste collection;⁴
 - » operation and maintenance of water and wastewater facilities in the annexed area that are not within the service area of another water or wastewater utility;
 - » operation and maintenance of roads and streets, including road and street lighting;
 - » operation and maintenance of parks, playgrounds, and swimming pools; and
 - » operation and maintenance of any other publicly-owned facility, building, or service.
- Within a two and one-half year period, the City must provide full municipal services (e.g., water, wastewater) unless there are similar areas within the City that are not provided services, or unless certain

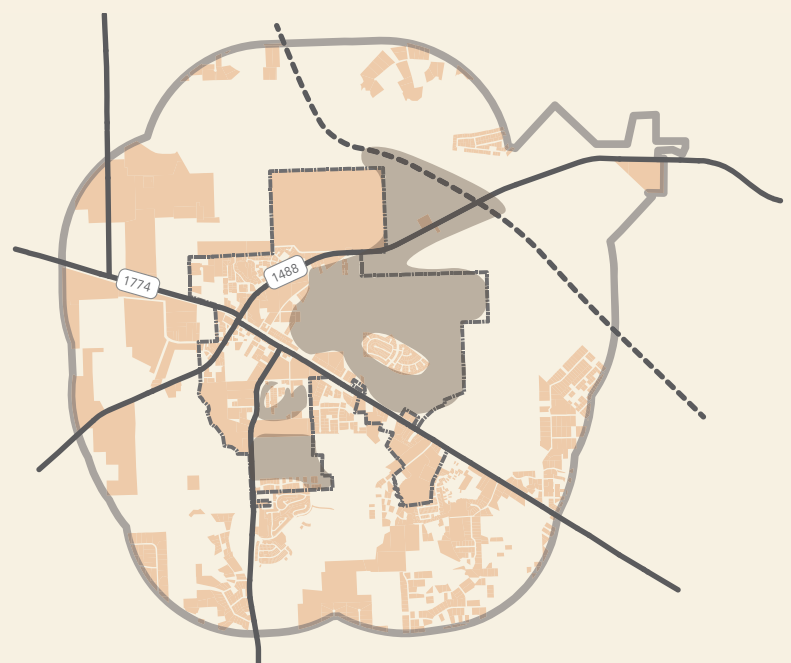
2 This service is provided by the Magnolia Volunteer Fire Department.

3 This service is provided by the Montgomery County Hospital District.

4 See §43.056(o) for exceptions.

Contiguous Development

This form of new development provides for gradual outward growth adjacent or in very close proximity to existing development. When carefully planned, this development form is highly efficient and the least obtrusive to existing neighborhoods or businesses. Under real-world circumstances, perfectly staged contiguous development rarely occurs – especially in Texas. Land ownership patterns or natural features usually result in small amounts of short-distance skipping, occasional leapfrogging, or checkerboard patterns of development.



services cannot be reasonably provided within that time.

- Within a four and one-half year period, the City must provide all the services that it could not accommodate within the initial two and one-half years. Capital improvements must only be substantially completed within that four and one-half year period.

CONSIDERATIONS

Given the infrastructure requirements of newly annexed land, the policies of this plan are intended to direct development to areas that are either currently served or may be readily and efficiently provided with municipal facilities and services. This approach observes the objective of growing in a fiscally responsible manner, while also protecting rural and agricultural land from unwarranted or premature conversion to urban development.

As illustrated in *Figure 3.2, Annexation History* (on the following page) Magnolia's growth has been defined by incremental expansions outward by developers and businesses that chose to enter the corporate limits through voluntary annexation. While these decisions occurred on a case-by-case basis, future annexations must support a larger and more comprehensive vision. In some areas, the City's outward expansion has been physically blocked by the presence of long-established rural subdivisions, which were originally built with minimal development standards. City officials have resisted annexing these areas because of the high costs and limited financial returns.

If an unbalanced development pattern takes hold at the edge of the community, with a predominance of residential rooftops and minimal commercial development, then annexation will prove increasingly difficult for the City.

Large-scale incorporation of residential development areas will rarely make fiscal sense when the cost of serving them is weighed against projected new revenue to the City. This scenario would become even more problematic if "starter homes" are the predominant housing type.

In the process of developing an annexation strategy, the City must factor the opportunities with the constraints in order to make prudent and fiscally responsible decisions.

Opportunities

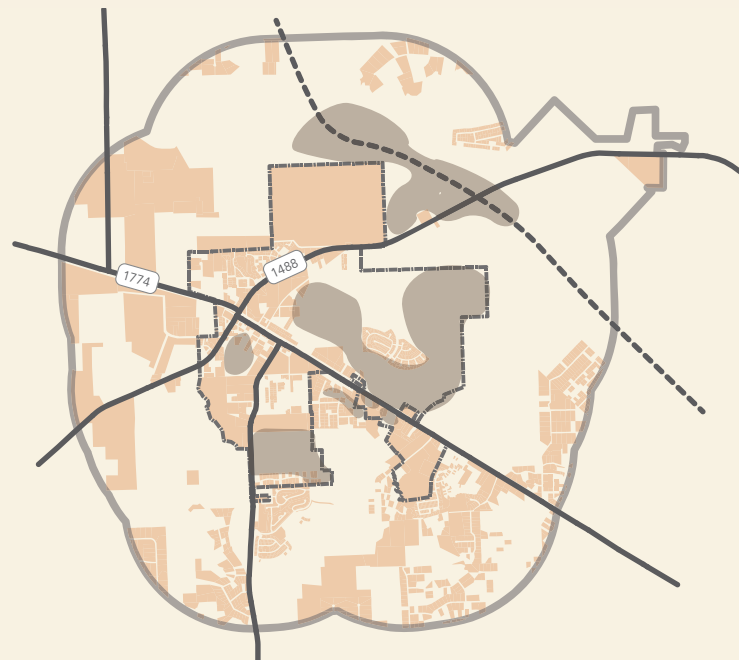
- Increased population with the intent of reaching 5,000 inhabitants, which would allow the City to establish a Home Rule Charter and gain expanded authority (e.g., structure of government, city finances, unilateral annexations).
- Control of the type, pattern, and scale of development;
- Increased tax revenue, with particular focus on commercial uses that produce sales tax;
- Protection of natural resources; and
- Securement of prime land for future growth areas that otherwise might be annexed by neighboring communities.

Constraints

- Maintenance and upgrades to deteriorated public facilities;
- Provision of public services to areas that are isolated or have indirect access to the City's street system;

Cluster Development

Clustering is a form of contiguous development that results in better land utilization. This practice preserves natural assets while still allowing some degree of development on smaller, constrained building sites. In the best examples, natural features are preserved and incorporated as development focal points and amenities. They add value for both the developer and homeowners over time, especially when homes and/or other uses are arranged and oriented to take advantage of open space views. By setting aside natural areas, ponds, and open space, cluster designs are also effective at reducing both storm water runoff and water quality impairment. Better drainage practices can reduce site infrastructure costs, and more compact development generally requires less linear feet of streets, water and sewer lines, sidewalks, utilities, and other infrastructure components.



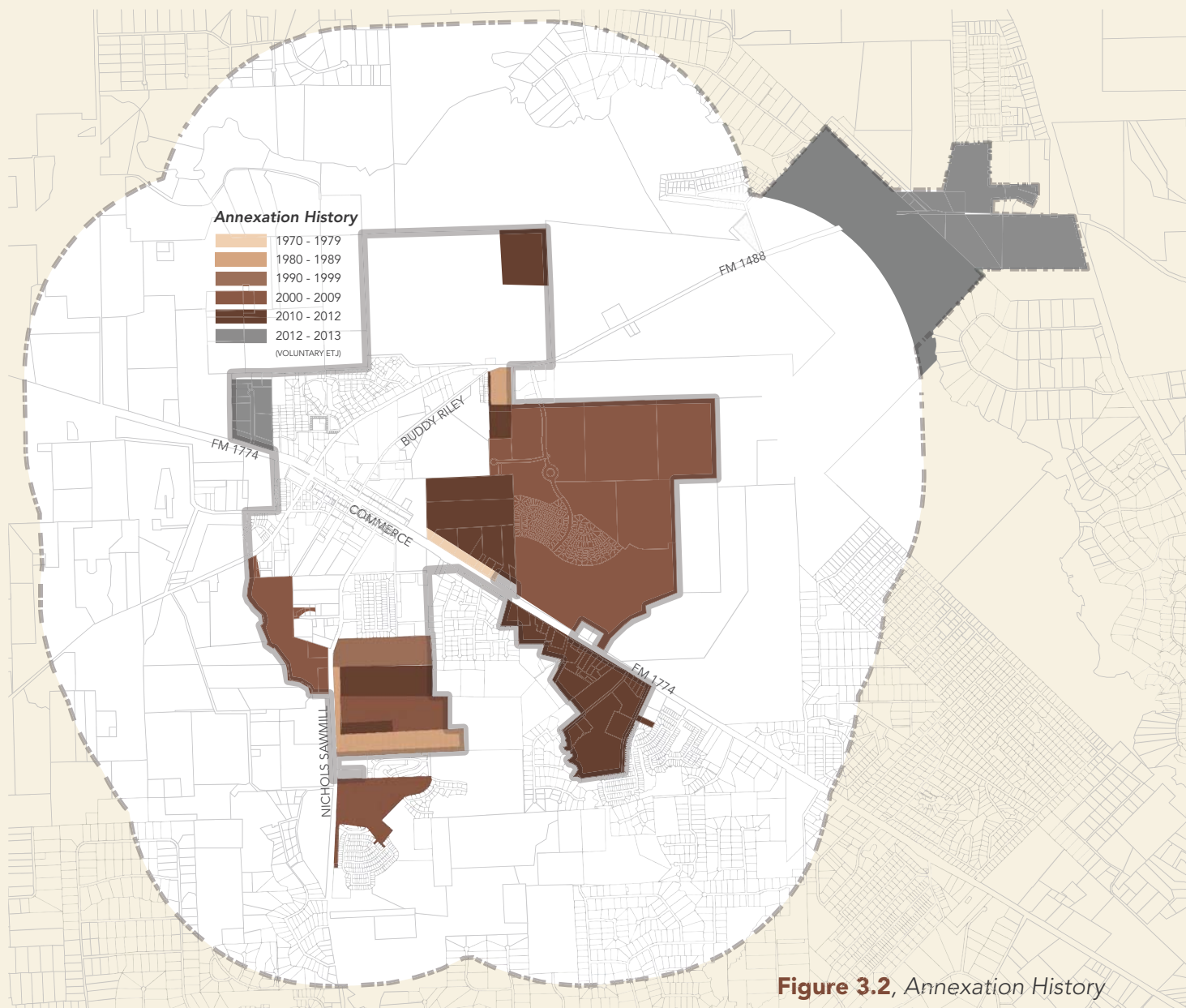
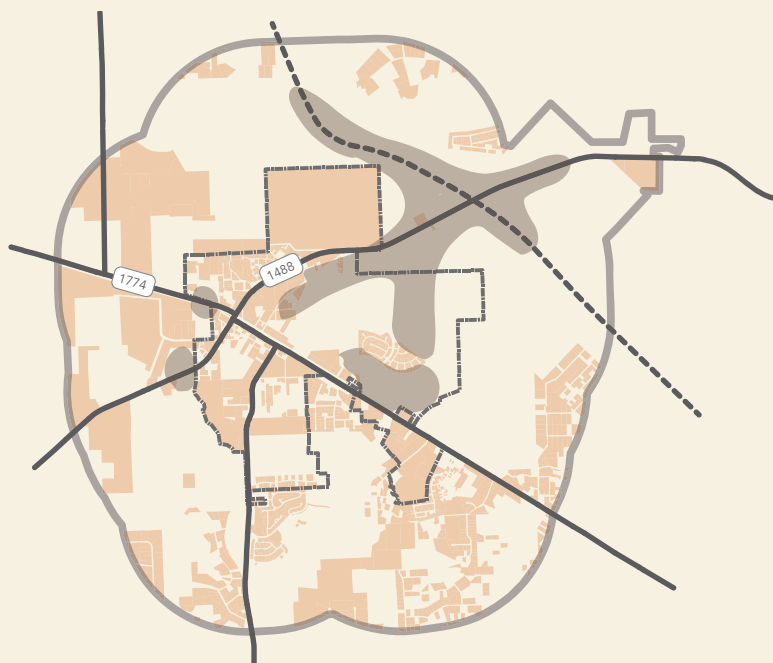


Figure 3.2, Annexion History

Corridor Development

This common form of development occurs along major highways, taking advantage of the access afforded by an existing highway and its accompanying utility services. Corridor development, if developed to a standard that is compatible with the community, provides infrastructure cost savings and contiguous growth patterns. Care must be taken, however, to avoid the "FM 1960 effect" by managing the intensity and quality of development and avoiding overbuilding, which can place undue stress on the infrastructure.



- Costs of connecting residences into City sewer and water systems; and
- Costs of upgrading the streets, drainage, and utilities comparable to City standards.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic, Political, and Strategic Planning

Policy 3.1. The City will weigh the economic, political, and strategic planning implications of every annexation decision before soliciting petitions from landowners.

- **Fiscal Impact Model.** Develop a fiscal impact model that may be used to judge the costs and revenues of proposed annexations, with a particular emphasis on utility and roadway extensions and absorption of municipal utility districts (the City is currently evaluating the potential annexation of one subdivision with an existing MUD). Commission a professional study to evaluate recent and projected development patterns from a fiscal impact standpoint. Relevant considerations include the relationship between development location, densities, public infrastructure costs, return on municipal investment under varying development scenarios, and the City's up-front capital costs compared to the near-term and projected revenue streams. This can lead to adjustments in a range of municipal programs and practices, including future land use and thoroughfare planning, capital improvements programming, annexation planning, and annual and multi-year budgeting (including revenue mechanisms and levels of service).

- **ETJ Expansion.** Continue using ETJ petitions as a strategic planning tool to gain access and authority over critical land development areas, such as major transportation corridors, as defined by *Map 3.1, Areas of Influence Plan*, which is described in detail on the following page. These decisions to expand the ETJ and eventually annex new territory shall be in strict adherence with this Comprehensive Plan and the *Future Land Use and Character Plan*. Only property within or immediately contiguous to the existing water and sewer services areas and City limits should be considered for annexation.

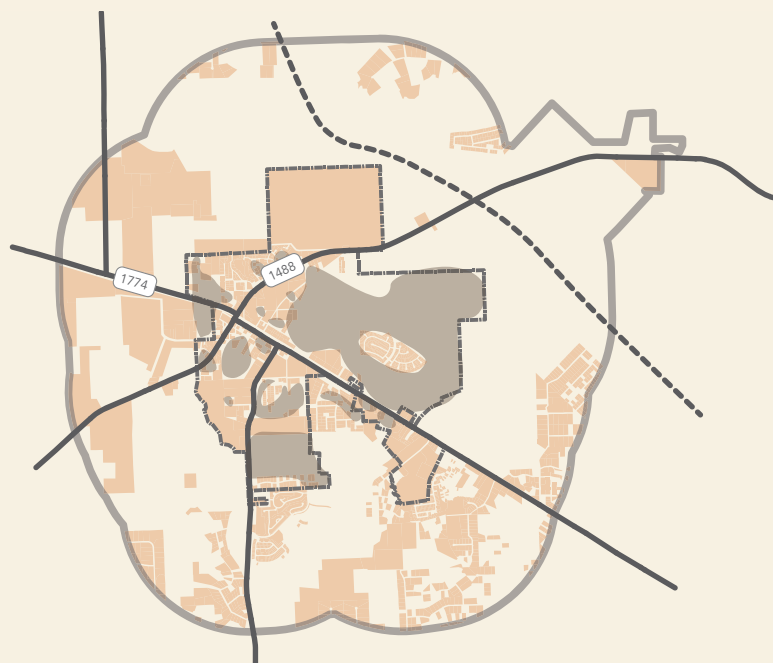
Contiguous and Predictable Patterns

Policy 3.2. The City will adhere to a managed growth strategy so development will occur in a contiguous and predictable pattern that minimizes sprawl.

- **Annexation Policy.** Adopt an Annexation Policy to guide City officials in determining annexation decisions. Consider the following criteria:
 - » Land must abut the corporate limits and be contiguous to existing infrastructure thereby allowing efficient and ready extension of streets, utilities, and police services. Avoid piecemeal peninsular annexations unless requests are accompanied by long-term development plans that include contiguous infill growth outward to the area of initial development.
 - » Proposed land uses must correspond with the *Future Land Use and Character Plan*; or the plan must be amended before moving forward with the annexation.

Infill and Redevelopment

Infill is a highly desirable form of growth which occurs when leftover land gets developed - often years after development has passed by. The advantages of infill are that significant investments in additional infrastructure are rarely needed to support this growth form. Also, public services such as parks and neighborhood schools are already in place and immediately available. Potential infill locations in Magnolia are identified on *Map 2.3, Infill and Redevelopment Areas*. A few redevelopment opportunities have arisen from the presence of deteriorating or obsolete homes, older strip centers, and large stand-alone commercial buildings. These lots are typically located in the older part of town and can be combined with vacant lots to create a larger redevelopment project.





Infill lots along Commerce Street are fully serviced by the existing utilities and transportation network.



In order to protect Magnolia's rural character, some areas should remain undeveloped if not along the City's growth path.

- » The City can readily assume the fiscal responsibility for the maintenance of existing utilities, roads, street lights, parks, and any publicly-owned facility, for which the impact fee structure, as applicable and appropriate, will net a fiscal benefit to the City.
- » Any exceptions to the Annexation Policy must be vetted by the City Council.
- **Areas of Influence Plan.** Use *Map 3.1, Areas of Influence Plan*, to strategize long-range development opportunities and constraints for the next 30 years. The map is not intended to function as a rigid regulatory mechanism, but instead, as a planning tool to guide growth patterns. It is very likely that some development will be built outside the areas of influence and cause no difficulties from a public service or fiscal impact standpoint within the 30-year timeframe. Likewise, some locations included within the Areas of Influence boundary may not be conducive for near-term development even though they are already serviced by City utilities and services. This map delineates the following five areas:
 - » **Developed Areas**, which includes land that is currently used for residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, or civic uses;
 - » **Infill Areas**, which are currently vacant parcels within the City's infrastructure network that are ready for immediate development;
 - » **Protected Areas**, which are not developable due to environmentally sensitive development constraints, such as floodplain limitations;
 - » **Major and Secondary Growth Areas**, which are strategically selected sites for future growth in the next 30-year period, assuming they are developed in a contiguous manner; and

- » **Holding Areas**, which encompass the remainder of the ETJ and are intended to accommodate future growth beyond the 30-year plan horizon.

For this mapping tool to be an effective part of the City's ongoing growth management efforts, the various boundaries must be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to reflect market conditions, economic development opportunities, ongoing capital improvements, and annexation activity.

- **Promotion of Infill.** As discussed in *Chapter 2, Land Use and Character*, promote infill development and redevelopment through incentives (e.g., fee waivers, tax incentives), grants, and strategic land banking with the intent of promoting contiguous development patterns and maximizing the efficiency of existing infrastructure. This involves infill policies that promote reuse and/or redevelopment of obsolete, vacant buildings, or underutilized properties in a cohesive and compatible manner with the character of adjacent development.
- **Rural Preservation.** Application of *Map 2.2, Future Land Use and Character Plan*, should be used as a growth tool to protect outlying and peripheral areas, which are designated and shall be preserved as prime undeveloped lands and protected from the encroachment of development.

FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURE

CONTEXT

Orderly growth within the current corporate limits (and ultimately into strategic unincorporated areas) is critical to the City's long-term viability. The City

“The Evangeline aquifer is one of the two primary aquifers in the Houston-Galveston region. The aquifer provides groundwater to many communities and industries in the area. Over the years, the Evangeline aquifer has proven to be a good source of high-quality water. The depth of wells ranges from 170 to 1,715 feet deep.”

Source: Westlake MUD 1

has a responsibility to its residents and taxpayers to ensure a growth pattern that makes good fiscal sense, particularly in terms of the infrastructure investments needed to keep pace with growth. Within the Public Works Department, the City provides water, wastewater, and drainage services by using revenue bonds to pay for these services (and the infrastructure that supports them), both within existing neighborhoods and in newly developing parts of town. In context of budgetary constraints, an ongoing challenge is to balance the replacement of older, deteriorated infrastructure with facility expansion to serve new development.

WATER SYSTEM

Facilities and Infrastructure

The water system offers a combined storage capacity of approximately 820,000 gallons, which is distributed among two water treatment plants located at the intersection of Elm Street and Michaels Road (Water Plant No. 1) and near the end of Kelly Road (Water Plant No. 2). The City owns three operating wells with a capacity of 1,959 GPM, two ground storage tanks, and two elevated storage tanks. The City is equipped with emergency storage and backup capabilities, which include a power generator, pump station, and lift station. Over the last 10 years, the majority of the City's water lines have been upgraded, including the addition of a 12" trunk line along FM 1774. The City also constructed

Water Plant No. 2 in 2007, which supports the business park and nearby housing.

Service Area

City limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)

Natural Source

The City uses groundwater from the Evangeline Aquifer. The water is filtered to remove sediment and other contaminants, and a small amount of chlorine and polyphosphate (an iron inhibitor) are added for minimal treatment.

Service Indicators

The system serves approximately 960 customers (residential, commercial, and industrial), with an average of 0.37 gallons per minute (GPM) per capita. With an average daily use of 525 GPM, and a total operating capacity of 1,959 GPM, the plant operates at 27 percent capacity on an average day. Peak use ranges from 500 to 600 GPM (31 percent) during the summer months.

Fire Protection

Fire hydrants are of sufficient pressure and capacity to meet the safety needs of properties within the City limits. Many subdivisions under consideration for annexation do not have them. These areas and other rural tracts of land that lack sufficient water pressure or capacity are protected by the Montgomery County Emergency Services District's fleet of mobile water tankers (see the inset on Page 3.19 for more details).

Funding

Infrastructure for the water system is primarily funded by revenue bonds. It was purchased from a developer in 1986 for \$790,000, which has led to the City carrying a significant amount of debt and resulting in higher than average water costs.

WASTEWATER SYSTEM

Facilities and Infrastructure

The City's two wastewater treatment plants (North Plant and South Plant) are located on Nichols Sawmill Road. The wastewater system includes 16 lift stations and numerous force mains. In 2005, the South Plant received several upgrades, including repairs to the water well, new lines, added booster, and additional ground and elevated storage.

Service Area

City limits

Service Indicators

The system serves approximately 625 customers (residential, commercial, and industrial). With an average daily use of 250,000 gallons per day (GPD), and a total operating capacity of 650,000 GPD, the wastewater treatment plant currently operates at 38 percent capacity on an average day.

Based on the current usage, the sewer plant will reach 75 percent capacity with 1,234 customers (or an approximate population of 2,833) and 90 percent capacity with 1,480 customers (or an approximate population of 3,398). At 75 percent capacity cities typically start designing new facilities, and at 90 percent capacity the new plant should be ready for use. Refer to the recommendation regarding the “75-90 Rule” on Page 3.17.

Funding

Infrastructure for the wastewater system is primarily funded by revenue bonds.

STORM DRAINAGE⁵

Facilities and Infrastructure

The major drainage features of Magnolia include natural drainageways, ditches, and underground culverts. The drainage system has numerous major structures that allow water to flow under streets and railroad tracks throughout the City. The majority are comprised of corrugated metal pipe (CMP), reinforced concrete pipe (RCP), and concrete box culverts.

Jurisdiction

The City’s drainage needs are met by four different groups: Montgomery County, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), and the City of Magnolia. The City is responsible for minor roadside ditch and culvert maintenance and major structures that primarily serve those within the City limits. Montgomery County maintains facilities in the extraterritorial jurisdiction and facilities in the City limits that channel drainage from areas outside of Magnolia. TxDOT maintains the roadside drainage system along FM 1774 and FM 1488. Spot clean-out of bar ditches and culverts has occurred, but is not routinely scheduled or recorded by the City crew. Because the City’s drainage needs are

⁵ This subsection on storm drainage is entirely derived from the 1999 Comprehensive Plan.



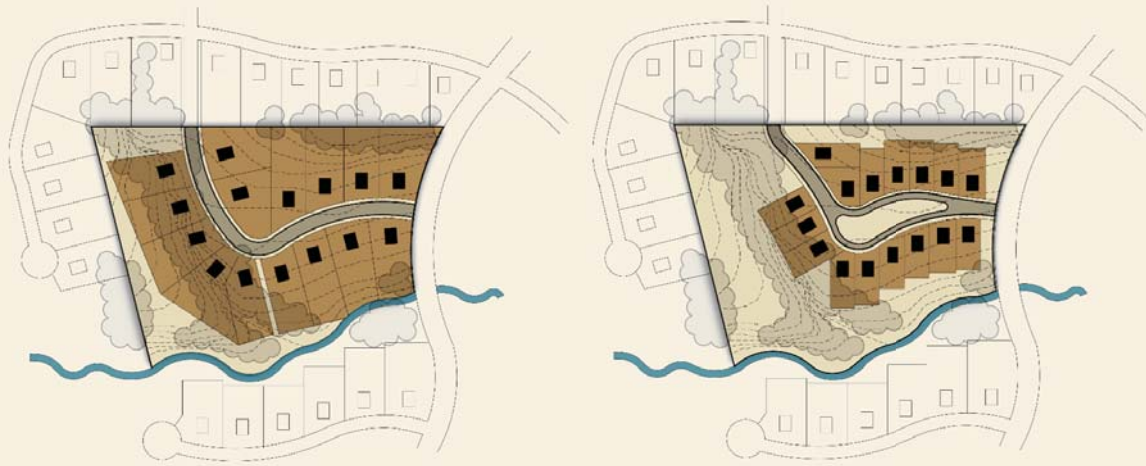
Parking Lot Drainage System



On-Site Drainage System



Regional Detention System



Clustered Patterns of Growth

In comparison to traditional subdivisions, clustered development patterns offer smaller lots but gain economic value through the preservation of natural features (e.g., water amenities, heavy vegetation), conservation of environmental resources, and/or buffering from incompatible uses. These designs typically require less infrastructure investments due to their compact and efficient form.

met by several entities, it does not control many of the decisions relating to the type, location, or timing of drainage system improvements.

Floodplain

Magnolia is located almost entirely at a high elevation with the various watersheds originating near the center of the City. At the present time, water is diverted by roadside ditches to small ravines and eventually to three creeks that ultimately feed into the San Jacinto River. The 100-year floodplain covers land adjacent to major drainageways in several parts of Magnolia. These floodplains cover those areas that would most likely be inundated by the largest storm events that typically occur in the area once every one hundred years.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Economically Beneficial Decision-Making

Policy 3.3. The City will influence the quality and direction of growth by applying policies and entering into agreements that are economically beneficial to the City.

- **Utility Development Policy.** Adopt a Utility Development Policy whereby utility lines are not extended to the subject parcel unless it meets the following criteria:
 - » The land is located within the *Areas of Influence Plan* and corresponds with the *Future Land Use and Character Plan*;

- » The land in the ETJ is either proposed for annexation or subject to requirements of a development agreement;
- » The land abuts the City's existing utility service areas, and it can be immediately and efficiently served – or readily served with manageable and affordable capital improvements;
- » The City can readily assume the fiscal responsibility for the maintenance of existing utilities and municipal utility districts;
- » All utilities, easements, and other public improvements necessary to serve the area proposed for service extension will be constructed in accordance with the City's Standard Specifications and Standard Details, which serves as an appendix to the Subdivision Ordinance.

- **Development Agreements.** Pursue development agreements in the ETJ to influence development activity and patterns to the extent possible, especially in targeted long-range growth areas. When and where appropriate, the City could allow a certain amount of desirable development to occur by way of utility extensions (or other interim service arrangements), but it should negotiate potential cost-sharing and also push for voluntary or contractual compliance with development regulations and standards that apply within the City limits. The City can also offer a guarantee not to annex the property for a stated period of time, providing leverage for other negotiable items.

- **Clustering.** As discussed in the insets on Page 3.10 and above, consider allowing and creating incentives via bonuses for clustered development patterns in subdivisions, which more efficiently use infrastructure than typical subdivision design. This would require an amendment to subsection 205 of the Subdivision Ordinance, allowing for smaller lots, reduced setback requirements, and provisions for open space. This form of development has the added benefit of preserving rural character and protecting natural resources.
- **Regional Detention.** Consider revising the City's Stormwater Management Ordinance (No. 338) to provide a streamlined fee-in-lieu process for funding regional off-site storage facilities. The fee system is currently targeted to sites of 16,000 square feet or less, but this process could be amended to more broadly include larger tracts. Larger facilities tend to be more cost effective and more reliable. Similar to the baseball fields near Grand Oaks, larger detention systems can be paired with recreational amenities to optimize land use. The next step in preparing for regional detention facilities will be acquiring land for detention basin sites and right-of-ways for channels leading to the basin.

Incremental and Strategic Improvements

Policy 3.4. The City will address long-term expansion and rehabilitation needs through incremental and strategic capital improvements.

- **Water Plant Updates.** Renovate Water Plant No. 1 (Elm Street and Michaels Road) in 2013 to include improvements valued at approximately \$250,000, which will include repainting the water tank on the inside and replacing the hatch on the ladder. Develop a long-range replacement and upgrade plan that will accommodate more than four times the existing population in 2040.
- **Wastewater Plant Upgrades.** Renovate the North Wastewater Plant in 2013 with the following improvements:
 - » Replace the main gear box;
 - » Recast inside of the plant and upgrade the air distribution system; and
 - » Paint the outside of the facility.
- **Sewer Lift Station Upgrades.** Assess the long-term capacity for the sewer plant's main lift station to accommodate future growth up to 2040. A second plant could be built next to the existing one, or a much larger facility could be designed and constructed on a different site to accommodate larger-scale operations.
- **Water Line Updates.** Evaluate the financial costs associated with installing larger water lines in the following locations, as well as other potential problem areas:
 - » Wisteria Farms, Magnolia Crossing, Arnold Estates, and Dogwood Patches.
- **Storage Capacity.** Increase storage capacity from 820,000 gallons to 1,020,000 gallon by purchasing a 200-gallon elevated storage tank and booster pump to address future capacity and pressure needs.
- **Drainage Study.** In accordance with the 2005 Master Drainage Plan, repair or mitigate the following problem areas:
 - » Windmill Estates near FM 1488;
 - » Smith Street;
 - » Melton Street near Acker Street;
 - » Railroad trestle at Melton Street;
 - » Pecan Drive and Magnolia Boulevard; and
 - » Buddy Riley Road.
- **Stormwater Maintenance.** Provide for on-going, semi-annual routine maintenance of all culverts and roadside ditches by removing silt and vegetation that impede the flow of water.
- **Joint Powers Agency.** Evaluate the pros and cons of forming a Joint Powers Agency (JPA) to centrally manage water distribution, wastewater collection, and storm drainage for developers and municipal utility districts.
- **Industrial Park Demands.** Evaluate the future demand to treat industrial waste from the proposed business and industrial parks indicated on *Map 2.2, Future Land Use and Character Plan*. Given the limited industrial use on the ground today, the City lacks adequate infrastructure to support larger scale and more waste-intensive operations.
- **Utility Planning.** Apply the "75/90 Rule" for capital improvement programming of the wastewater plants. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) regulations require that a wastewater permittee commence engineering design and financial planning for expansion when a plant reaches 75 percent of permitted average daily flow for a consecutive three-month period. The rule further requires that the permittee gain regulatory approval and begin construction of expanded facilities when a plant reaches 90 percent of permitted average daily flow for a consecutive three-month period.
- **GIS Utility Mapping.** Consider developing a geographic information system (GIS) mapping database that comprehensively inventories

Table 3.2, *Total Crimes for City of Magnolia, 2008-2011*

Crimes	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Criminal Homicide	0	0	0	0	0
Forcible Rape	0	1	0	0	0
Robbery	0	0	0	1	3
Assault	22	19	24	27	17
Burglary	7	7	9	3	8
Larceny-Theft	48	36	37	19	11
Motor Vehicle Theft	4	4	3	2	0
Law Enforcement Officers Killed or Assaulted	0	0	1	0	1

Source: City of Magnolia Police Department

and assesses the condition of all public utilities (water, sewage, and drainage), as well as the transportation network. This system can keep records on main breaks, types and sizes of piping, dates of improvements and repairs, and other information relevant to an asset management system. Data should be used as a prioritization tool in the preparation of annual budgets and capital improvement programs.

QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICE

CONTEXT

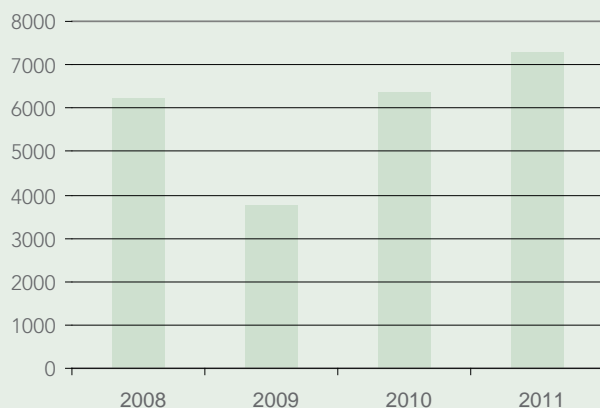
Magnolia residents have access to a wide range of public services that are designed to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community. While the City operates the Police Department out of City Hall, residents rely on independently funded fire protection and emergency medical services from the Magnolia Volunteer Fire Department and the Montgomery County Hospital District. These agencies are briefly addressed in this chapter due to the City's lack of authority over their funding streams and operations.

The Magnolia Police Department aspires to be “a modern, progressive organization collaborating with [the] community to provide a safe and caring environment that enhances the quality of life in Magnolia.” The effectiveness of the Department is dependent on staffing of well-trained police officers and administrative personnel; equipment such as vehicles, firearms, and storage; training and continuing education; and adequate building facilities. The capacity of these essential functions is necessary to evaluate the impacts and needs warranted by community growth.

FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Police Department is located in City Hall, a one-story masonry and glass building. Accommodations within the building include a public waiting area, administrative offices, property/evidence room, lockers, and an interview room. The garage is located off-site at the Public Works lot. The Department operates and maintains seven primary cruisers (nine

Figure 3.3, *Police Department Call Volume*



Source: City of Magnolia Police Department

total vehicles) and three bicycles in accordance with the Fleet Management Strategy.

SERVICE AREA

City limits, which is divided into six areas of responsibility

AGREEMENTS

The Department has an interlocal agreement with the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department, which allows Magnolia officers to work with the Sheriff's office on calls for service and investigations. The Department also has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the District Attorney's Office for officer-involved shootings and in-custody death investigations. These are supplemented by numerous other agreements relating to public safety issues.

STAFFING

The Department employs one chief, nine regular officers (three sergeants, six patrol officers), one part-time detective, six reserve officers, and a K-9 unit. The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office serves as dispatch. The Precinct 5 Constable has a contract with the school district.

TRAINING

New recruits are mandated to participate in a 16-week Field Training Program. Every officer meets the state-mandated minimum of forty (40) hours of ongoing education and training biennially. The Department tracks training information through the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Data Distribution System (TCLEDDS). Last year, the Department had a 232 percent increase in training and a 58 percent decrease in accidents.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAMS

Programs include National Night Out, Community Area of Responsibility, Bicycle Rodeo, Distracted Driving Campaign, Child is Missing Alert Program, CASA Blue Ribbon Ceremony, Christmas Parade, Citizen's Police Academy, Volunteers in Police Service, Crime Prevention Presentations, Explorer Post, Fingerprinting Services, National Day of Prayer, Harris County Mounted Jr. Posse Event, Chief's Articles in Potpourri, Business Security Surveys, Criminal Trespass Agreement Program, Citizen Advisory Councils, and miscellaneous special projects and programs.

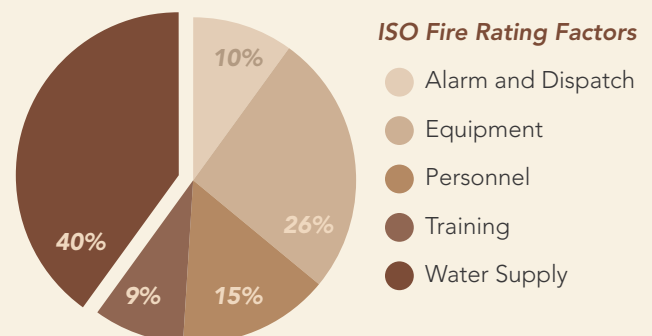
Volunteer Fire Department

The Magnolia Volunteer Fire Department is funded by the Montgomery County Emergency Services District #10, which operates independently from the City of Magnolia. The Department owns six fire stations (with three more under construction), six engines, six water tankers, five grass trucks, a ladder truck, three cascade trucks, a rehab truck, six chief trucks, three medical response units, and two rescue boats.

In order to service the rural parts of the County lacking sufficient water pressure or fire hydrant access, the Department is equipped with a fleet of tanker and pumper trucks totaling 26,000 gallons of water on wheels. Additional vehicles are on order, which will add 13,000 gallons more capacity.

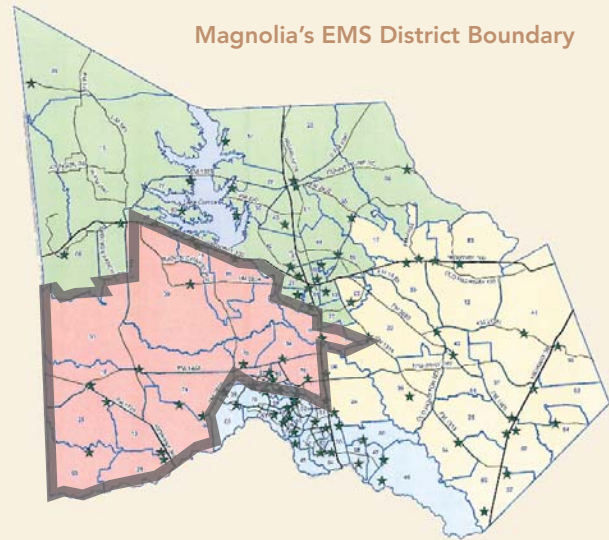
The Department has been issued an ISO class 3 rating, which measures the quality of public fire protection on which insurance premiums are based. The Insurance Services Office (ISO) collects information on public fire protection and analyzes the data using a Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS). The ISO assigns a Public Protection Classification (PPCTM) from 1 to 10. Class 1 represents the best public protection and Class 10 indicates less than the minimum recognized

protection. By classifying a community's ability to suppress fires, ISO ratings help communities evaluate their public fire protection services. The program provides an objective, country-wide standard that helps fire departments in planning and budgeting for facilities, equipment, and training. By securing lower fire insurance premiums for communities with better public protection, the PPC program provides incentives and rewards for communities that choose to improve their fire fighting services.



Hospital District

The Montgomery County Hospital District provides emergency medical services (EMS), emergency management, health care funding assistance, and public health education to the citizens of Montgomery County, a 1,100-square mile jurisdiction. The District employs 160 field/dispatch staff and 100 office staff. It currently operates 18, 24-hour ambulances with up to five peak units and four 24-hour supervisor trucks each day. The average response time in 2012 for Magnolia's district was 9.93 minutes; the County average was 9.23 minutes. In addition to emergency assistance, the District also provides a number of educational programs (e.g., CPR training, car seat safety, water safety, baby sitting) and social services (e.g., health care funding mechanisms, public health clinics) for eligible residents. As the cost of emergency room visits increases, the District will play a much larger role in primary community wellness.



Source: Montgomery County Hospital District (approximate boundaries)

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Public Service Coordination

Policy 3.5. The Police Department will continue to leverage partnerships and interlocal agreements in an effort to maximize its capacity and effectiveness.

- **CERT.** Coordinate with Montgomery County, Magnolia Volunteer Fire Department, Montgomery County Hospital District, and other regional entities to establish a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), which will provide a coordinated communication and service system for emergencies and natural disasters. In the event of an emergency such as a hurricane or wildfire, the City Police Department is at risk of losing communication with other emergency service providers.

- **Crime Patrol and Prevent District.** Under the authority of the Crime Control and Prevention District Act, consider establishing a Montgomery County Crime Patrol and Prevention District, which imposes a sales and use tax of one-eighth of one percent that can be used toward crime prevention, as regulated by Chapter 363 of the Texas Local Government Code.
- **All-American City Designation.** Pursue "All-American City" status by the National Civic League. The program recognizes communities whose citizens work together to identify and tackle community-wide challenges and achieve uncommon results. A good example of this type of project was the demolition efforts of the Magnolia Police Academy Alumni Association and numerous other organizations in 2012. Through collaboration and donations, an abandoned and dilapidated building was demolished at 158 Roy Street at no cost to the City or the property owners.
- **Community Projects.** Lead the efforts in identifying additional projects for students and graduates of the Citizen's Police Academy, which will benefit community residents and increase community visibility of the Academy.

What is Nixle?

Nixle is a citizen notification service that will deliver important and time-sensitive emergency and general information to the City's residents. Notices generally pertain to emergency weather events, road closings, public safety advisories, natural and man-made disasters, and general City information through e-mail and text messaging. In 2011, Nixle served more than 4,600 government agencies and organizations.

Adequate Support and Resources

Policy 3.6. The City will provide personnel with support and resources that promote excellence in protection and services.

- **Multi-year Staffing Program.** In anticipation of significant growth over the next 30 years, the Police Department should develop a long-term, multi-year staffing program, similar to the Fleet Management Strategy, to ensure adequate City funds are set aside to support the increased personnel needs for basic operating standards and police officer safety.
- **New Facilities.** In coordination with upgrades and expansions to City Hall and other administrative functions, develop a long-range strategy for constructing new or expanding existing police facilities, to include a/an:
 - » Training room, in lieu of retrofitting Council Chambers or using the Fire Department's training facilities;
 - » Armory room to secure weapons;
 - » County holding facility at the Montgomery County Building (19100 Unity Park Drive) to reduce travel time (police officers currently travel 40 minutes away for impounding and booking); and
 - » On-site garage at the Public Works lot, which will provide indoor storage for vehicles and equipment.
- **New Equipment.** For use by police officers and other public safety personnel, evaluate the need, timing, and availability of funding to purchase a satellite telephone for emergency use and two motorcycles for traffic control.

Public Safety

Policy 3.7. The Police Department will provide the highest level of professional services to promote public safety and reduce criminal activity.

- **Community Survey.** Develop a community survey to assess public safety needs through fair and equitable participation of residents. This survey can be a joint collaboration with other City departments to focus on specific community issues and opportunities.
- **Notification Service.** Establish Nixle notification services across multiple municipal functions (and other public agencies) to alert local residents of public announcements. These can be sent via phone, e-mail, and web (see inset on the previous page).

THE COMMUNITY'S TRANSPORTATION POLICIES AND IMPROVEMENTS ARE SOME OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL GROWTH STRATEGIES AT THE CITY'S DISPOSAL. PROJECTED POPULATION INCREASES, WITHIN AND AROUND MAGNOLIA'S EXTRATERRITORIAL JURISDICTION, HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO COMPROMISE LOCAL ROADWAYS IF THE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK DOES NOT DEVELOP IN ADVANCE OF ENSUING DEVELOPMENT. WHILE CONTINUED PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION WITH THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (TXDOT) AND MONTGOMERY COUNTY ARE ESSENTIAL TO INCREASING CARRYING CAPACITY AND IMPROVING TRAFFIC FLOW, THE CITY IS TASKED WITH GUIDING THE INCREMENTAL DEVELOPMENT OF AN EFFICIENT AND WELL-BALANCED SYSTEM OF COLLECTOR AND LOCAL ROADS. LONG-RANGE PLANNING AND PUBLIC INVESTMENTS AMONG MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL ENTITIES WILL DIRECTLY INFLUENCE THE PATTERN AND TIMING OF MAGNOLIA'S DEVELOPMENT.

Chapter 4

COMMUNITY MOBILITY

INTRODUCTION

At the onset of this plan development process, residents identified traffic congestion as a major deterrent to Magnolia's quality of life. Most residents do their best to dodge the intersection of FM 1488 and FM 1774 - only to be slowed by a series of school zones, railroad crossings, and other traffic barriers. While ongoing and proposed Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) improvements will help alleviate congestion at critical intersections, the issue of traffic flow is even more pervasive. Ultimately, without a contiguous network of collector and arterial streets, the anticipated growth will overwhelm these roadway and intersection improvements, causing the excess traffic to flow into and through neighborhoods.

In coordination with future land use and utility infrastructure planning, this chapter sets forth a long-range and systematic approach to mobility planning. Simply, an integrated and connected system with multiple travel routes will help keep traffic flowing. Options should apply not only in terms of offering route choices, but also in ways to move around the City

(e.g., driving, walking, bicycling, and eventually, public transit). With escalating infrastructure costs, higher gas prices, and impacts to air quality and the environment, planning for future travel needs in the City must involve looking at transportation as an interconnected network of roadways, trails, and sidewalks.

Much of the emphasis of this chapter is placed on addressing the roadway system in concert with recent and forthcoming development and, particularly, servicing new growth areas such as Magnolia Ridge and both Grand and Glen Oaks. New roadways can open available land that was otherwise inaccessible for residential or commercial uses. It can also promote new development patterns that facilitate shorter trips - such as mixed-use developments and well-designed neighborhood commercial centers within close proximity to neighborhoods. In order to maintain Magnolia's highly regarded quality of life, local and regional transportation improvements will be a strategic tool in Magnolia's playbook. Mobility system expansion is inherent to population growth. This growth, however, does not and should not come at the expense of the City and loss of its neighborhood and community character. Efforts must be made to ensure that new roads are properly planned and executed in coordination with future development and the principles and policies of this plan.

MOBILITY CONTEXT

- **Roadway Improvements.** TxDOT has been expanding and modernizing the City's roadway network to accommodate larger traffic volumes. These improvements will help decrease congestion, increase safety, and improve access to neighboring communities. Walgreens picked up on the value of these improvements and developed a new store at the intersection of FM 1488 and FM 1774. This intersection is planned to undergo major improvements to include a new flyover that crosses the Union Pacific Railroad tracks.
- **S.H. 249 Aggie Expressway.** This proposed state highway positions Magnolia to gain valuable frontage along a major regional corridor between Houston and College Station. The improved accessibility of this land would provide valuable opportunities for industrial and commercial uses, as well as the potential for added housing.
- **Interjurisdictional Coordination.** Given the funding realities and fiscal challenges of Magnolia, partnerships are as important as ever in mobility planning and project implementation. Fortunately, Magnolia has a long history of partnerships with Montgomery County and TxDOT. TxDOT is responsible for maintaining FM 1488 and FM 1774.

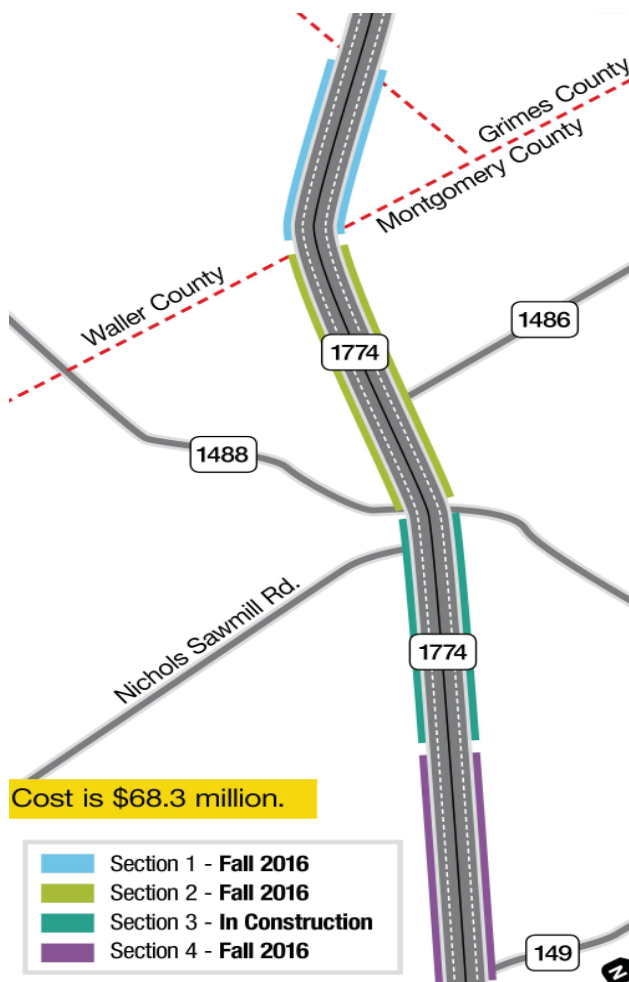


Image Source: Texas Department of Transportation and Community Impact

Montgomery County maintains Magnolia-Conroe Road and Nichols Sawmill Road. This requires close communication and cooperation between these agencies and City staff to ensure mutually beneficial goals are achieved.

- **Spoke-Hub Street Pattern.** Magnolia's basic street pattern is not the traditional grid found in many American towns. It is presently organized as a spoke-hub system in which vehicles must pass through the center of the community to get from one side of town to the other. Since all vehicles are funneled through a few key intersections, this street pattern results in major congestion at the intersections of FM 1448 and FM 1774 and at FM 1448 and Nichols Sawmill Road, for instance. Another by-product of this system is that most subdivisions have few entrances or exits, causing emergency access and congestion problems. Although the older parts of the community (e.g., Magnolia Town Center) are on a traditional grid street system, the community-wide influence of these relatively small areas is minimal.
- **Railroad Corridors.** The Union Pacific Railroad tracks run parallel with FM 1774 and divide the City into east and west halves. The Southern Pacific Railroad tracks at FM 149 and FM 1488 divide the ETJ into two sections as well. As the community continues to develop additional collector and arterial streets, railroad crossings will be a major asset or impediment for growth. This influence will depend on the number and location of crossings, as well as the continuity of the street system.
- **School Coordination.** The Magnolia Independent School District (MISD) has schools of varying types and campus sizes located along all the major corridors in Magnolia. Together with churches, school campuses are also among the community's most significant traffic generators, including bus traffic and pick-up/drop-off queuing. This includes: Magnolia West High School (FM 1774), Magnolia Sixth Grade Campus (FM 1774), Williams Elementary (FM 1448), and Magnolia Jr. High School (Nichols Sawmill Road).
- **Regional Growth.** Long-range transportation planning conducted by the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) for the eight-county metropolitan area (encompassing Harris and Montgomery Counties) presumes that, by 2035, 3.5 million more residents will live in the region. This population growth is equivalent to adding the City of Los Angeles' (proper) population to the area. The clear implication of this rate and magnitude of growth is that Magnolia's traffic volumes and congestion challenges will continue to increase in proportion to, or at a potentially faster rate than, the



The City's existing roadway network funnels traffic through a few central intersections due to limited route choice.



The first phase of roadway development should increase the number of interior connections.



The second phase of roadway development should develop an outer loop and grid pattern.

Table 4.1 *Street Rights-of-Way*

Street Classification	Travel Lanes	Parking Lanes	Minimum ROW / Pavement Width (Feet)
Arterial			
Principal	5	2	110 / 85
Minor	5	0	80 / 61
Collector			
Major	2	2	70 / 41
Minor	2	2	60 / 39
Local			
Local (Residential)	2	1	60 / 31
Local (Commercial/Industrial)	2	1	60 / 37
Alternative Local Residential	2	0	60 / 24
Private			
Private Streets/Emergency Access Easements	2	0	28 / 28

Source: City of Magnolia Design Standards

region - given its close proximity to The Woodlands, Tomball, Conroe, and Spring employment centers.

THOROUGHFARE PLANNING

The City's *Thoroughfare Plan*, as illustrated in **Map 4.1, *Thoroughfare Plan***, is designed to anticipate future travel needs. Similar to the *Future Land Use and Character Plan*, which is intended to guide growth through the year 2040, the *Thoroughfare Plan* represents a long-term vision for the surface transportation system of the community. Some of the proposed arterial and collector streets identified on the plan, particularly in the outlying portions of the planning area, will likely not be needed or constructed during the 20-year vision (and 30-year land use projection) of this plan. Nonetheless, the purpose of this plan is to preserve the rights-of-way needed for future transportation corridors so that, as development occurs in the future, the City will have the ability to develop appropriately sized transportation facilities, as detailed in **Table 4.1, *Street Rights-of-Way***.

Future thoroughfare development must achieve continuity and connectivity to be functionally efficient. To do so, the City's plan, development ordinances, and approval procedures must stipulate applicable standards so as to avoid discontinuous and irregular street patterns. This is particularly significant in the fringe and outlying areas, where the City is likely to annex land to accommodate its future growth. In these areas, development has and continues to occur in a non-contiguous manner, resulting in discontinuous

streets and lost opportunities for good thoroughfare planning. It is, therefore, vital for the City, Montgomery County, and TxDOT to coordinate their transportation planning functions. Aside from the planning process, there must be a commitment and diligence in the coordinated review and approval of subdivision development to ensure it occurs in an orderly manner in the context of future transportation infrastructure.

The following planning principles and design guidelines are to aid in transportation planning decisions during the horizon of this plan.

PRINCIPAL AND MINOR ARTERIAL STREETS

Arterial streets form an interconnecting network for broad movement of traffic. Although they usually represent only five to 10 percent of the total roadway network, arterials typically accommodate between 30 and 40 percent of an area's travel volume. Since traffic movement, not land access, is the primary function of arterials, access management is essential to avoid traffic congestion and delays caused by turning movements for vehicles entering and exiting driveways. Likewise, intersections of arterials with other public streets and private access drives should be designed to limit speed differentials between turning vehicles and other traffic to no more than 10 to 15 miles per hour. Signalized intersection spacing should be long enough to allow a variety of signal cycle lengths and timing plans that can be adjusted to meet changes in traffic volumes and maintain traffic progression.

- The maximum distance between streets intersecting with arterial streets should be 1,600 feet; the minimum distance should be 800 feet.
- Access to high-intensity land uses should be limited by way of cross- and joint-access agreements and use of marginal access or reverse frontage roads.
- Local streets should not access principal arterial roadways. Rather, they should access a collector roadway to preserve the design capacity of the arterial street.
- Residential driveway access should not be allowed onto an arterial street.
- Acceleration and deceleration lanes should be provided at all intersections to facilitate safe turning movements, as warranted by a traffic impact study.
- Pedestrian crossing improvements should be limited to signalized intersection locations. Such improvements may include crosswalk delineation via reflective paint, pavement texturing, or in-pavement LED lighting, as well as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements, pedestrian and bicycle-actuated traffic signals, pavement markings, and signage.
- The maximum distance between streets intersecting with collector streets should be 1,600 feet; the minimum distance should be 800 feet.
- Minor collector streets, as applicable, should be determined by a development plan or a local circulation plan prepared by the subdivider and approved by the City.
- Collector roadways should not be designated as truck routes unless special precautions are taken with respect to design (e.g., curb return radii, minimum tangent lengths between reverse curves, construction specifications, etc.) and the abutting land uses.
- Collectors should extend continuously between arterial streets, crossing creeks, drainage channels, and other barriers to provide adequate system continuity.
- Traffic calming techniques should be used to slow traffic along continuous sections of collector roadways.
- Sidewalks should be located on both sides of all collector streets (e.g., horizontal curves, street jogs or offsets, pavement narrowing, on-street parking, etc.).

COLLECTOR STREETS

Subdivision street layout plans and commercial and industrial districts must include collector streets in order to provide efficient traffic ingress/egress and circulation. Since collectors generally carry higher traffic volumes than local streets, they require a wider roadway cross-section and added lanes at intersections with arterial streets to provide adequate capacity for both through-traffic and turning movements. However, since speeds are slower and more turn movements are expected on collectors versus arterials, a higher speed differential and much closer intersection/access spacing can be used than on arterials.

LOCAL STREETS

Local streets allow direct property access within residential and non-residential areas. Through-traffic and excessive speeds should be discouraged by using appropriate geometric designs, traffic control devices, and traffic calming techniques. Local streets typically comprise about 65 to 80 percent of the total street system.

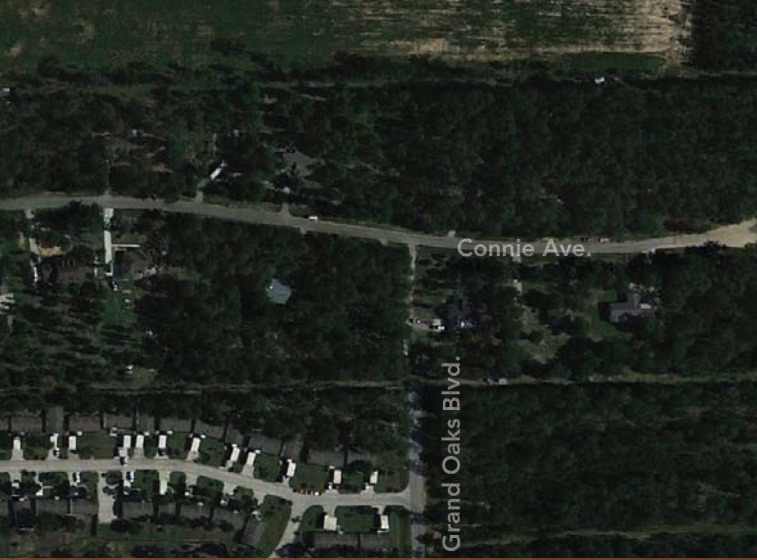
- The maximum distance between streets intersecting with arterial streets should be 1,200 feet; the minimum distance should be 600 feet.



Magnolia Ridge Boulevard was constructed as a minor arterial with a raised median. The road was designed to accommodate the subdivision's build-out capacity.



FM 1488 (also known as Magnolia Parkway) transitions from a rural highway to an active commercial corridor with a center lane to accommodate the increase in turning movements.



Roads should connect between adjacent subdivisions, unlike the barrier between Connie Avenue and Grand Oaks Boulevard.



Residential development to the west will increase traffic activity along Old Hockley Road, a proposed minor arterial.



Once fully constructed, the Magnolia Ridge subdivision will benefit from multiple access points across the railroad tracks, including connection points at the N. Cripple Creek Drive intersection.

- Performance standards should apply to local streets, where the type of access, number of dwelling units served, and the units' average frontages determine the right-of-way, pavement width, parking lanes, curb width, parkways, and sidewalks. In this way, the right-of-way and street design are directly tied to development density and traffic volumes.
- Traffic calming techniques should be used to slow traffic, particularly adjacent to schools, parks, and public buildings.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

A well-managed and maintained transportation system is important for ensuring a safe system that is enjoyable by all users. With the City's limited resources, roadways and other transportation improvements should be carefully balanced with basic maintenance of the existing systems of travel.

Mobility issues will continue to be a challenge for Magnolia, especially as the City expands development into areas that are sparsely settled today. Based on the concerns and hopes expressed by residents, public and private leaders, and key community stakeholders and investors — Magnolia should consider adhering to the following basic principles.

EFFICIENT AND SAFE THOROUGHFARE NETWORK

Policy 4.1. The City will develop a continuous system of collector and arterial streets to distribute and convey traffic.

- **Magnolia Loop.** Construct an outer "loop" of secondary arterials and collectors that accommodates continuous travel around the City. Similar in function to metropolitan Houston's 610 loop, Beltway 8, and Grand Parkway, this loop would allow for residents and visitors to get from one quadrant of the community to another without necessarily crossing through the Magnolia Town Center. Residents of Magnolia Ridge, for instance, would gain access to FM 1774 without needing to use FM 1448. Parts of the proposed loop are already in place, such as Old Hempstead, FM 1486, and Magnolia Ridge. Central congestion will only increase as the community grows, thus, a system of collectors and arterials will provide a more balanced roadway network and even traffic flow.
- **Roadway Continuity.** Optimize connectivity between arterials, collectors, and local streets within the community, whether City-, County-, or State-owned. Existing streets adjacent to land proposed for a subdivision should be connected to meet the

continuity objectives of the *Thoroughfare Plan*. The arrangement of streets in a new subdivision must make provision for continuation of the existing arterial and collector streets in the adjacent areas. If possible, this effort should be extended to local roads to improve the system's overall circulation and access. The City's history with dead-ends and cul-de-sacs has led to a number of missed opportunities, like the connection between Grand Oaks Boulevard and Connie Avenue (see top left image on Page 4.6).

- **Land Acquisition for Offset Roadways.** Consider acquiring land and realigning roads where arterial and collector roads are offset. The intersections of Buddy Riley Boulevard, Little Twig Lane, Rolling Hills Drive, and FM 1488 are good examples where a realignment of Buddy Riley Boulevard would improve the traffic flow, reduce the offset, and eliminate one of the intersecting roads. Right now, there is only a 200-foot distance between Little Twig Lane and Rolling Hills Drive intersections, which violate §704.1 of the Development Standards. The maximum distance between streets intersecting with arterial streets should be 1,600 feet; the minimum distance should be 800 feet. This causes unnecessary confusion (due to multiple turning movements) along a major arterial. Although this type of investment is not the community's first priority, it will improve the overall circulation and safety of the street network.
- **Consistency and Variances to the *Thoroughfare Plan*.** Locate and align arterial and collector roads in conformance with the *Thoroughfare Plan*. Any thoroughfare alignment that is inconsistent with the plan should require approval of the Planning and Zoning Commission through a public hearing process. A change includes any proposal that adds or deletes a thoroughfare designation or changes the alignment that would affect adjacent lands. Variances from the *Thoroughfare Plan* should not be approved unless there is substantial evidence through a qualified traffic circulation and impacts study establishing a need for such amendment. It should show how an alternative alignment or area street plan will provide improved circulation and an equal or improved level of service on all affected roadways.

Policy 4.2. Land development patterns and infrastructure improvements will aim to alleviate the negative impacts of railroad and school crossings.

- **Capitalize on Existing Rail Crossings.** Connect new arterial roads to existing railroad crossings to ensure adequate access to FM 1774. Current TxDOT practices require that construction of a

new railroad crossing results in the closing of two other crossings, according to Janelle Gbur of TxDOT. In Magnolia, this is not a viable option to accommodate new development patterns; therefore, the existing crossings must be enhanced to accommodate greater volumes of traffic and to increase safety measures. The current crossing near the intersection of David Lane and FM 1774 will be a critical access point to Magnolia Ridge, which could eventually accommodate up to 1,500 homes (or nearly 4,000 new residents). Another important crossing is the North Cripple Creek Drive and FM 1774 crossing to the southeast of the community, which is presently located outside of the City limits but within Magnolia's planning area. While this crossing currently feeds the Pinehurst neighborhood to the east, it has the potential to provide a direct connection to FM 1488 (without the need to travel through the Magnolia Town Center).

- **Alternative Routes to Avoid Schools.** Develop a stronger grid network, which will provide alternative collectors and secondary arterials to avoid school zones. With an MISD school located on every major corridor, the accompanying school zones are unavoidable and cause morning and afternoon traffic delays. Stronger road connections will help residents circumvent associated traffic barriers, such as school speed zones, traffic queuing, and pedestrian crossings. Roadway extensions, like the proposed connection linking Sugar Bend Drive to Sugar Maple Circle for instance, will allow Grand and Glen Oaks residents access to FM 1774 without passing through two school zones: Magnolia Sixth Grade Campus on FM 1774 and Magnolia Jr. High School on Nichols Sawmill Road.
- **Coordination with MISD.** Partner with MISD and private developers to avoid locating new schools on arterial roads. While it is unrealistic to re-locate existing campuses, new schools should be strategically placed to avoid compounding congestion problems. This is especially relevant to master planned communities like Magnolia Ridge and Legacy Trust since developers commonly dedicate land for institutional uses. The location must be safe and convenient for families with school-aged children, but it should not compromise the functionality of the entire transportation network.

Policy 4.3. Incrementally plan and invest in roadway and sidewalk improvements to improve the safety of automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian conditions.



The central location of MISD's Sixth Grade Campus increases the degree of congestion along FM 1774 and Nichols Sawmill Road.



Existing roadways require maintenance and upkeep to prevent permanent deterioration.



The block sizes and building patterns of The Stroll naturally promote pedestrian activity.

- **Access Management.** Consider integrating more stringent access management principles into the Development Standards, which is further detailed in the *Access Management* inset on Page 4.9. This includes (but is not limited to) more specific provisions and requirements (e.g., number, location, width, design) for shared driveways, cross-access easements, and site ingress/egress. Access management strategies aim to reduce conflict points and accident potential along heavily traveled corridors.
- **Street Maintenance.** In conjunction with other neighborhood enhancement and capital improvement projects, identify and improve deteriorating streets and establish a regular program for long-term rehabilitation. This involves maintenance and repair of deteriorated street surfaces in a timely fashion, removal of debris from ditches and culverts to reduce flooding and pooling of water on street surfaces, providing legible traffic signage where appropriate, enforcing traffic laws, and promoting drainage and weed control at street edges on an annual basis.
- **Sidewalk and Trail Maintenance.** Provide regular maintenance to pedestrian amenities including crosswalks and signals, replacing obsolete traffic signs, and synchronizing traffic signals. This includes the reconstruction of sidewalks where they do not exist or are in poor condition (particularly adjacent to schools, parks, and public buildings).

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE AS A TOOL FOR GROWTH

Policy 4.4. Uphold the policies and strategies of the *Future Land Use and Character Plan* to ensure that the mobility system reinforces community, corridor, and neighborhood character.

- **Protect Future Land Uses.** Use policy (e.g., *Future Land Use and Character Plan*) and potential management strategies to help protect optimal land uses surrounding proposed major roads. Given the tax-base implications and retail, entertainment, and industrial potential associated with highway and interstate frontage, land surrounding these roadways and intersections is valued at a premium. One of the challenges of this process is to ensure the land is protected from incompatible uses that would compromise its optimal use, or worse yet, render the transportation investment unfeasible. While right-of-way acquisition will protect the roadway's alignment, it will not specify how the surrounding land is to be used.
- **Citywide Corridor and Landscape Plan.** Develop a corridor and landscape plan along FM 1488,

Access Management

Access management is the coordination between land access and traffic flow. Its basic premise is to preserve and enhance the performance and safety of the major street system. It manages congestion on existing transportation facilities and protects the capacity of future transportation systems by controlling access from adjacent development. If properly utilized, access management improvements can eliminate or minimize the need for street widening or right-of-way acquisition.

Techniques to accomplish access management include limiting and separating vehicle (and pedestrian) conflict points, reducing locations that require vehicle deceleration, removing vehicle turning movements, creating intersection spacing that facilitates signal progression, and providing on-site ingress and egress capacity. In addition, regulation focuses on the spacing and design of driveways, street connections, medians and median openings, auxiliary lanes and transit facilities, on-street parking and parking facilities, on-site storage aisles, traffic signals, turn lanes, freeway interchanges, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, bus stops, and loading zones.

The following access management strategies may be used to coordinate the access needs of adjacent land uses with the function of the transportation system:

- **Intergovernmental coordination.** Access management is most effective as a regional strategy that would involve Montgomery County and TxDOT in the design and construction of area roadways. Through coordinated efforts, access management can even further add to the efficiency of local thoroughfares (refer to the TxDOT Access Management Manual for more information).
- **Separate conflict points.** Two common conflict points are driveways and adjacent intersections.

Spacing driveways so they are not located within the area of influence of intersections or other driveways is a method to achieve access management objectives.

- **Restrict turning movements at non-signalized driveways and intersections.** Full movement intersections can serve multiple developments through the use of joint driveways or cross access easements. Turning movements can be restricted by designing accesses to limit movements or by the construction of raised medians that can be used to provide turn lanes.
- **Review design standards.** Design standards within the Subdivision Ordinance addressing the spacing of access points, driveway dimensions and radii, sight distance, and the length of turn lanes and tapers are effective mechanisms for managing the balance between the movement of traffic and site access.
- **Locate and design traffic signals to enhance traffic movement.** Interconnecting and spacing traffic signals to enhance the progressive movement of traffic is another strategy for managing mobility needs. Keeping the number of signal phases to a minimum can improve the capacity of a corridor by increasing green bandwidth by 20 seconds.
- **Remove turning vehicles from through travel lanes.** Left- and right-turn speed change lanes provide for the deceleration of vehicles turning into driveways or other major streets and for the acceleration of vehicles exiting driveways and entering major highways.
- **Encourage shared driveways, unified site plans, and cross access easements.** Joint use of driveways reduces the proliferation of driveways and preserves the capacity of major transportation corridors. Such driveway arrangements also encourage sharing of parking and internal circulation among businesses that are in close proximity.

FM 1774, and Nichols Sawmill Road that extends to the extraterritorial jurisdiction boundary and complements the existing *Downtown Improvements and Revitalization Guidelines Plan (2009)*. The plan should document the physical elements that contribute to its appearance (e.g., use types and activities, outdoor storage and display, pavement and other surface types, fencing and screening, landscaping, building scales and setbacks, and signage) and supplement the City's existing Landscaping Ordinance (Chapter 46, Article 11, Landscaping). The plan should consider any gaps in

the current regulations, and it should offer a new strategy for bringing nonconforming sites into compliance.

- **Corridor Design Standards.** Use the proposed Citywide Corridor and Landscape Plan, in combination with the *Downtown Improvements and Revitalization Guidelines Plan (2009)*, to develop corridor site and building design standards along FM 1488, FM 1774, and Nichols Sawmill Road. These will guide the construction of new buildings and improvement of existing buildings and sites to ensure compatibility of the architecture and

visual cohesiveness. For example, landscape surface area and build-to line requirements should be adjusted to promote Suburban Village and Semi-Urban Commercial designs.

Policy 4.5. Preserve land for the future roadway network.

- **Street Rights-of-Way Acquisition.** Preserve rights-of-way in accordance with the City's Development Standards (§701.3). Future linkages can largely fail or succeed before the initial construction begins since so much of the corridor potential is derived from long-term rights-of-way planning and acquisition. This is done through dedications by plat or deed to the City, or the anticipated right-of-way area shall be reserved for future acquisition. If held in reserve for future acquisition, no physical improvements such as buildings, landscaping, or stormwater retention facilities should be allowed within the area. Roadway classifications and dedication requirements are documented in *Table 4.1, Street Rights-of-Way*. Properties proposed for subdivisions that include or are adjacent to an existing thoroughfare with insufficient right-of-way should be required to dedicate land to compensate for any deficiency. The total width of street rights-of-way must be dedicated at the time of development. The dedication of one-half of the required right-of-way should not be accepted unless the other half already exists or there is a plat on file for the adjacent land.
- **Pedestrian Rights-of-Way Acquisition.** If land is being dedicated for roadways and falls within the proposed trail system identified in *Chapter 5, Parks and Amenities*, set aside additional land to account for the proposed on- or off-street trail system that would encircle the community. While this circuit is a long-term vision – similar to the build-out plan of the *Thoroughfare Plan* – it requires adequate rights-of-way or easements to guarantee the availability of land.
- **Non-City Roadways.** Continue partnering with Montgomery County, TxDOT, and private landowners to ensure adequate rights-of-way are dedicated for new construction and rehabilitation projects. The City has a long history of working with regional and state partners to facilitate roadway expansion, as demonstrated in the recent widening projects along FM 1488 and FM 1774. This is further evidenced by Sullivan Park, for instance, which was developed by the City as a temporary public facility. It was agreed that TxDOT would resume use of the property once it was ready to widen the roadway.

COMMUNITY WALKABILITY

Policy 4.6. Promote land use patterns that result in a more walkable community.

- **Township Development Patterns.** In conformance with the *Future Land Use and Character Plan*, encourage compact and urbanized development patterns near the Magnolia Town Center. This combination of a highly efficient street grid, sidewalk connectivity, shorter block lengths, and mixed land uses promotes walkability – to and from retail stores and for nearby residents. Potential development of a new Unity Plaza would enhance this opportunity, strategically placing residential, commercial, civic, and recreational uses within close proximity to one another. These development patterns decrease the need for parking, and they also minimize the costs of utility infrastructure.
- **Development Requirements.** Consider adding specific pedestrian and bicycle criteria to the site plan review process when large commercial and multi-use sites are proposed. These criteria may include designation of pedestrian connections to surrounding developments, internal pedestrian and bicycle circulation, bicycle parking and transit stop locations (as applicable), and parking lot safety. To a lesser degree, pedestrian and bicycle requirements can be applied to new residential areas or be concurrently integrated into new street construction or rehabilitation projects, ensuring such improvements reflect the character of development. This includes consideration of the following amendments to the Development Standards:
 - » Increased sidewalk requirements to eight- or 10-foot widths (as recommended by the *Downtown Improvements and Revitalization Guidelines Plan*) within the Magnolia Town Center. The current requirement in this area is four-foot wide sidewalks for new construction. See the *Sidewalk Widths* inset on the following page.
 - » Added sidewalk, pedestrian zone, and bike-lane cross-sections to provide sufficient detail for travel lanes, street furniture, and landscaping.
 - » Requirements for trails in lieu of sidewalks in Rural Estate (RE) and Suburban Residential (SR) neighborhoods.
 - » Requirements for public access easements that can be used for trail connections throughout the community.
- **Complete Streets Design.** Consider adopting a complete streets approach to new roadway design, which accommodates all modes of travel and is

typically characterized by wider sidewalks, trails, pedestrian-scale street lighting, tree preservation, landscaping, and open space. At the collector street level, narrowing the pavement width in appropriate situations would allow the extra right-of-way area to be used for complete streets amenities. This is particularly relevant in more urban areas that would benefit from increased pedestrian amenities and community gathering spaces, such as the Magnolia Town Center and a potential new Unity Plaza.

- **Intersection Improvements.** Prioritize intersections in the community that are heavily used by pedestrians and implement safety improvements at these intersections. Intersections should be prioritized based on propensity of use and pedestrian risk. Improvements may include installing accessible ramps for persons with disabilities; marked, signed, and/or signaled pedestrian crossings; and pedestrian-actuated signal detectors. These areas will be typically found within the Magnolia Town Center, as well as areas near schools, parks, and other public places.

Policy 4.7. Similar to the *Thoroughfare Plan*, develop a plan that includes a network of pedestrian and bike paths.

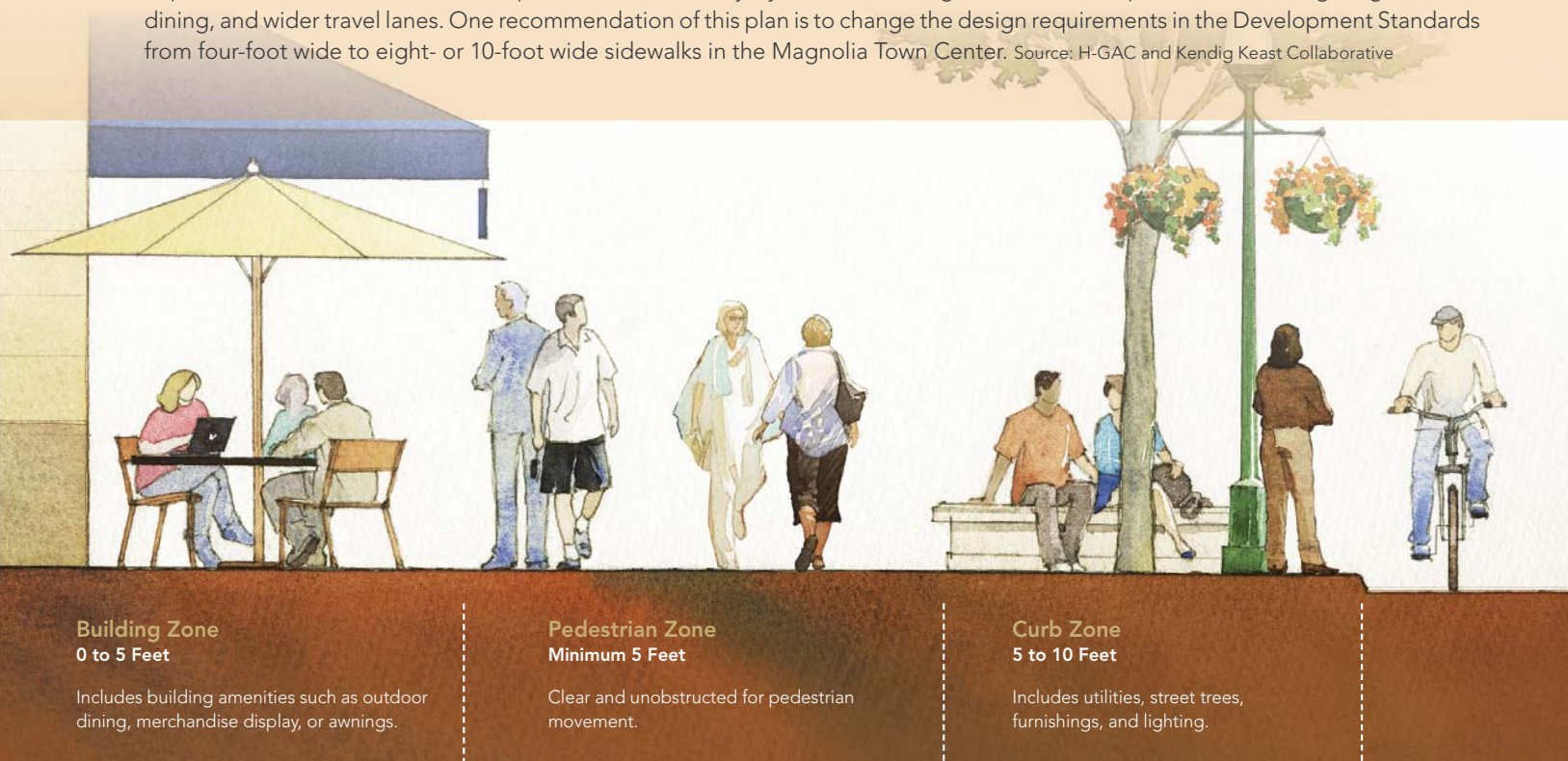
- **Trail Master Plan.** Develop a *Trail Master Plan*, as first recommended in *Chapter 4, Parks and Amenities*, targeted to pedestrians and bicyclists throughout

the planning area that will supplement the City's *Master Plan for Parks and Recreation Facilities* (2002). This would first involve conducting an inventory of sidewalk and trail deficiencies, including areas with poor conditions. This is especially important in the Magnolia Town Center and between neighborhoods and community destinations.

- **Bicycle Network.** As part the *Trail Master Plan*, identify and stripe roadways appropriate for bicycle lanes as part of an on- and off-street bicycle trail system. A preliminary trail alignment plan is included in *Figure 5.1, Trail System Alignment* in *Chapter 5, Parks and Amenities*. While many trails may be located along quiet neighborhood streets that do not require lane dedication, routes on busier collector streets should have dedicated, striped, and signed bicycle lanes.
- **Regional Trail System.** Partner with neighboring jurisdictions and public agencies (such as the Houston-Galveston Area Council and Houston Wilderness) to develop connections to the developing regional trail system. This will require collaboration, land acquisition, and new construction, especially along major corridors.
- **Trail Grants.** Explore financing sources for trail development and maintenance, including transportation improvement and grant funding through the Recreational Trails Program of the

Sidewalk Widths

In pedestrian areas, wide sidewalks promote more activity by accommodating street furniture, pedestrian-scale lighting, outdoor dining, and wider travel lanes. One recommendation of this plan is to change the design requirements in the Development Standards from four-foot wide to eight- or 10-foot wide sidewalks in the Magnolia Town Center. Source: H-GAC and Kendig Keast Collaborative





Sidewalks are ineffective if they do not create a continuous path to nearby destinations.



The community trail system should connect neighborhoods to nearby destinations.

Federal Highway Administration; Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program through the National Parks Service; and Safe Routes to School Program.

- **Public Infrastructure Investments.** Develop a metric for assessing the priority and timing of sidewalk and trail improvements based on the following criteria:
 - » Level of deficiency based on the proposed *Trail and Sidewalk Evaluation* (on Page 2.23);
 - » Proximity to schools, parks, and other community destinations; and
 - » Activity level of intersections and connections along major corridors.

THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARK SYSTEMS COLLECTIVELY OFFER A BALANCED MIX OF TRAILS, PLAYGROUNDS, ATHLETIC FIELDS, INDOOR FACILITIES, AND NATURE PRESERVES. WHETHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, THESE GATHERING SPACES HELP TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN RESIDENTS, PROMOTE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES, AND ELEVATE MAGNOLIA'S VISIBILITY WITHIN THE REGION. GIVEN THE CITY'S SIZE AND LIMITED FUNDING CAPACITY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS WITH MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MAGNOLIA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT, AND PRIVATE DEVELOPERS ARE NECESSARY TO MEET LOCAL RECREATION DEMANDS. THE NEXT GENERATION OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES WILL REQUIRE CONTINUED FORESIGHT AND INCREASED RELIANCE ON THE CITY TO ENSURE THE PARK SYSTEM GROWS IN PROPORTION TO POPULATION AND DENSITY INCREASES.

Chapter 5

PARKS AND AMENITIES

Disclaimer

This chapter has been uniquely organized as a supplement to the existing *Comprehensive Plan for Parks, Recreational Facilities, and Open Space* (adopted 2002-2008, amended 2007-2012).

INTRODUCTION

For generations, the City of Magnolia focused on basic community services like utilities and police protection. Local officials and other community stakeholders regularly discussed the need to expand its influence and authority into quality-of-life amenities, like a park system. In 1999, the City received a Texas Community Development Program grant to prepare its first-ever *Recreation and Open Space Study*. Mayor Frank M. Parker III used this momentum to form an ad hoc park planning committee.

Over the last decade, the City has brought a substantial portion of this vision to life through strategic planning, budgeting, and partnerships to develop and/or update Unity Park, Sullivan Park, and The Stroll. These public investments are signature landmarks that expand the community's area of influence. Most importantly, they improve the quality of life for Magnolia residents by offering recreational, scenic, historic, and cultural amenities. In order to uphold the high quality and appearance that is expected of community residents, the park system warrants a commitment of resources to be adequately acquired, constructed, operated, and maintained.



Sullivan Park is located within the right-of-way on Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) land. Future roadway expansion will replace the park's footprint in the next few years.

This chapter is derived and updated from the two previous parks plans.¹ Since the last plan update, the City has witnessed population growth, significant roadway improvements, and the construction of Unity Park. These innovative changes establish the foundation for developing a multi-generational park system. This chapter lays out the goals and objectives; the process used to develop this chapter; area and facility concepts and standards; an inventory of parks and facilities; the needs assessment and identification; and implementation strategies with a prioritization of needs.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals express needs and priorities through broad statements of policy. Without goals, it may be difficult for Magnolia – a community with a diversity of backgrounds and interests – to agree on a common direction to achieve its stated mission for the parks and recreation system. They also enhance awareness as to broad interests and encourage communication and collaboration toward successful implementation. On the other hand, objectives are actionable strategies to attain the envisioned outcomes that are represented by the goals. They provide direction as to “how” to achieve the stated ends.

The following goals and objectives represent the input from the general public and provide guidance to City staff. They are intended to influence future decisions regarding ongoing development of the parks and recreation system.

GOAL 1: BALANCED, CONVENIENT, AND ACCESSIBLE PARKS

A genuine park system offers small- and large-scale facilities to serve a variety of users and uses. Park sites and facilities should provide a combination of indoor and outdoor recreation amenities, as well as an adequate assortment of activity types (both passive and active) to meet the individual and collective needs of a diverse residential population. For this reason, it is essential to include users in the planning and design phases of park development.

Objective 5.1. The City of Magnolia will partner with other public agencies to develop a balanced system of public parks, recreation facilities, and open space to meet locally adopted standards.

GOAL 2: INTERCONNECTED TRAIL NETWORK

Multi-use trails, greenbelts, and other linear parkways are essential community elements that tie together

¹ 2002-2008, City of Magnolia Comprehensive Master Plan for Development, Operation, and Maintenance of Parks, Recreation Facilities, and Open Space (original completed in 2002) and the 2007-2012, City of Magnolia Comprehensive Plan for Parks, Recreation Facilities, and Open Space (update completed in 2007).

Magnolia's neighborhoods, parks, schools, commercial nodes, and other public spaces. The recreational value of parks dramatically increases when they are linked through a series of greenbelts along natural watercourses and drainage ways, trail and walkway/bikeway corridors, and other internal connections. If roadways are already in place, land acquisition and construction of new facilities can oftentimes be cost prohibitive, especially when environmental constraints limit design options (e.g., topography, drainage). However, long-range system planning helps to ensure this form of green infrastructure efficiently grows in coordination with new development patterns.

Objective 5.2. Parks, schools, commercial nodes, and neighborhoods will be connected with a citywide trail system.

GOAL 3: RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION

The City contains and is surrounded by several creeks and drainage channels. Although many of these tracts are under private ownership, they can be acquired and developed into open space, greenbelts, and in some cases, low-impact recreational facilities. The baseball fields associated with Grand and Glen Oaks are an excellent example of a privately constructed, multi-use recreation facility that also functions as a regional detention basin (see inset on Page 5.5). Preservation of these sites will require sound environmental conservation and responsible land development practices.

Objective 5.3. The City will weigh the economic and recreational benefits before acquiring nature preserves and sensitive environmental sites for open space and trail amenities.

GOAL 4: JOINT USE AND FUNDING

Over the last decade, County, City, school, and private recreation amenities have collectively operated as an interconnected system that meets the needs of Magnolia residents. If these functions are not coordinated among public agencies, duplication and geographic overlap may lead to inefficiencies and service area gaps. Rapid community growth and development will strain the existing park system unless new construction is borne by a collaboration of public and private stakeholders. These continued partnerships require strategic planning and funding mechanisms.

Objective 5.4: The City of Magnolia will continue to pursue intergovernmental and public-private partnerships to leverage park and recreation investments.

Demographics

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the population of Magnolia is **1,393**. By 2040, it is projected that the population of Magnolia will reach **6,278**. Magnolia's population is becoming increasingly more diverse, with **11.7 percent** of the population Hispanic or Latino (up from just 4.1 percent in 2000). The median household income in Magnolia is **\$53,224**. For additional information on the demographics and population projections for Magnolia, see *Chapter 1, Introduction* and *Chapter 3, Growth Management and Capacity*.

Figure 5.1, Median Household Income

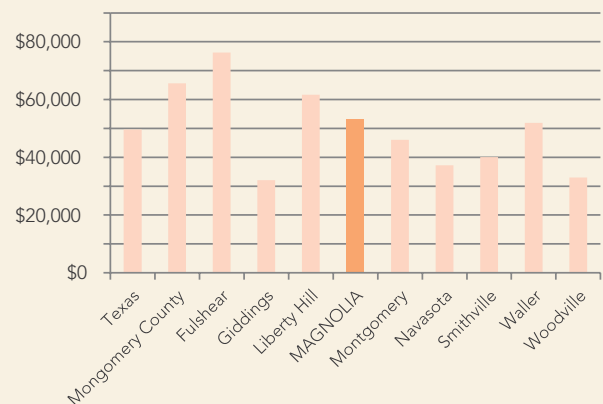
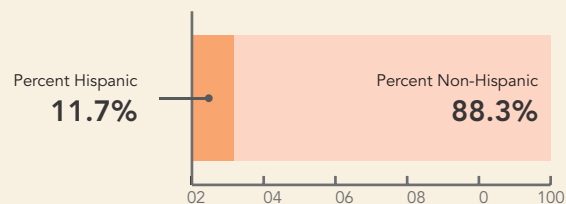


Figure 5.2, Ethnicity



PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Magnolia residents participate in both passive and active forms of recreation, such as organized athletics, jogging, or bicycling, among other activities. These diverse interests should encourage all residents to contribute to the community's vision for its parks and amenities. Their involvement may be to identify broad or individual needs, offer suggestions as to desirable enhancements, or respond to improvement plans and proposed initiatives. This input helped identify the needs and corresponding area and facility concepts and standards outlined in this chapter.

Magnolia residents were broadly engaged as a part of a year-long comprehensive planning process through several listening sessions, workshops sessions, joint sessions, and public hearings, as well as through extensive media coverage and periodic City website updates. These steps were taken in order to:

- Ensure consideration of diverse, individual views in park planning and decision-making;
- Create a mutually accepted vision for the future of the City's parks and amenities that balances community interests; and
- Solicit direct resident input to form the plan's goals and objectives, identify needs and desires, and establish implementation directives and priorities.

Above all, citizen involvement is intended to inspire people to take an active role in enriching the livability of their community. Doing so will help strengthen the ability to work together for a healthier and more vibrant community. For additional information on how citizen involvement contributed to the creation of this chapter, as well as the overall Comprehensive Plan, see the inset on Page 1.4 in *Chapter 1, Introduction*.

INVENTORY OF EXISTING PARKS AND FACILITIES

The foundation for establishing an adequate parks and recreation system begins with the availability, location, and condition of the existing park and recreation areas. Currently, the City of Magnolia maintains and operates three recreation sites - Unity Park, Sullivan Park, and The Stroll. The locations of these parks are displayed in *Map 5.1, Parks System*.

Additional parks and amenities are documented on the map to emphasize the importance of intergovernmental and public-private collaboration. The City's park system is integrally tied to and reliant on facilities owned

and operated by Montgomery County, Magnolia Independent School District (MISD), and the YMCA. Without these supplements, the City would not meet the specific needs of Magnolia's equestrian community (horse arena) or youth sports teams (ball fields, pool), among other examples. Although subdivision amenities were not included in the inventory, private parks like the one in Grand and Glen Oaks neighborhood play an important role in the overall community system.

The following section describes public recreation sites and facilities (see *Table 5.1, Recreational Facility Inventory*) within Magnolia's planning area.

UNITY PARK

In 2004, the City purchased 30 acres of land from Montgomery County and MISD to develop Unity Park, the City's first recreation facility to service the entire community. As a local and regional destination, the park offers a covered pavilion with seating for 250, kitchen and restroom facilities, a zero-depth splash pad, volleyball courts, skateboard facilities, and internal trail sections, among many other amenities. Several proposed recreation projects are planned within or adjacent to Unity Park given its availability of land and concentration of recreational amenities. For example, the Gullo Family Tennis Center is scheduled for completion by the summer of 2013.

SULLIVAN PARK AND THE STROLL

Sullivan Park is a mini-park located at the intersection of FM 1488 and FM 1774. Within a few years, this park will become unusable due to Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) widening projects, warranting future land acquisition and park development to replace this amenity. In 2009, the City developed a one-mile linear park that connects Sullivan Park to MISD's Sixth Grade Campus. This trail has enhanced pedestrian and bicyclist mobility within the Magnolia Town Center.



The private swimming pool for Grand and Glen Oaks subdivisions also accommodates YMCA swim lessons. Magnolia residents currently have limited access to "community" pools.



Once constructed, the Magnolia Ridge subdivision will include a privately funded trail and park network that supplements public amenities.

MAGNOLIA YOUTH SPORTS COMPLEX, LITTLE LEAGUE COMPLEX, AND HORSE ARENA

Montgomery County owns and operates these athletic areas located southeast of the City on FM 1774. The original 15-acre tract contains various playing fields (baseball, softball, football), batting cages, a covered pavilion with basketball goals, restrooms, lighting, and parking for approximately 250 cars. The County has added an additional complex adjacent to the 50-acre tract, which includes a/an equestrian arena, community center, community garden, and six additional fields. The on-site Montgomery County Community Center is primarily a social service facility, but it also accommodates the Friendship Center for senior citizens. These facilities are open to the public to varying degrees. Use of the athletic fields requires permission of the County and the affiliated sports associations (e.g., Little League, Girls Softball, and Youth Football). The horse arena is open to the public when not otherwise in use.

MAGNOLIA COMMUNITY CENTER AND DEPOT PARK

The Magnolia Historic Society owns and operates the Historic Depot Complex, which consists of a museum; the historic office (and barbershop) of the late Dr. Ware; an antique sawmill; the Houston Area Blacksmith Association facility; and a red caboose. The site is also home to the Magnolia Community Center, which is owned and operated by Montgomery County. The meeting facility contains a kitchen and large community room with several tables to accommodate meetings and community events.

MAGNOLIA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

MISD maintains the most extensive recreational facilities in Magnolia and allows public use of most of its outdoor facilities. Collectively, the junior high and two high school grounds offer three football stadiums, two tracks, and one indoor pool. Every elementary school site offers open space and playground equipment such as swings and playscapes, which are available for public use after school hours. MISD added a natatorium in 2002, which is centrally located and serves MISD and the community. Plans are currently being reviewed to add an outdoor facility.

The City of Magnolia represents half of MISD's boundary. Additional MISD facilities are tentatively planned if the pattern and intensity of development continues on the eastern half of the City's planning area. This eastward growth trend along FM 1488 (Magnolia Parkway) will likely result in several school campuses beyond the City's reach but within MISD's boundary.

Regional Detention

The Houston-Galveston Area Council defines a detention basin as a "facility where water can be temporarily stored during and after a heavy rain event. Its purpose is to reduce the risk of flooding for a large portion of a watershed by extending the time that is available to manage floodwaters. Basins can often be designed to meet water quality, aesthetic, or recreation objectives, in addition to flood management objectives."

Currently, the baseball fields associated with Grand and Glen Oaks serve as a regional detention basin. The City should pursue policies requiring detention basins for development in areas most susceptible to flooding (e.g., development regulations, impact fees).

MAGNOLIA / TOMBALL YMCA

The YMCA owns and operates approximately 14 acres of athletic fields near High Meadow Ranch, just south of the City of Magnolia along FM 1774. As a "Y without Walls," the site offers athletic fields for youth sports (e.g., soccer, flag football, baseball) but it does not accommodate indoor recreation. YMCA swim classes are held at local pools in Grand Oaks and Tomball. As the region continues to grow, this branch will pursue fundraising avenues to construct an indoor athletic facility on site.

As part of the Houston metropolitan area, Magnolia's local facilities are supplemented by an even wider range of public recreational amenities within Montgomery, Waller, and Harris Counties. With Lake Conroe to the northeast and W. Goodrich Jones State Forest next door, area residents have access to nearly unlimited outdoor recreation spaces, indoor community facilities, and nature preserves. Recreation is further enhanced by private recreational amenities, like Indigo Lake Estates. This development is located a few miles south on Nichols Sawmill Road and offers a 160-acre lake for boating, fishing, and swimming, as well as a six-mile scenic horse and nature trail.

AREA AND FACILITY CONCEPTS AND STANDARDS

To properly assess existing conditions and future needs, the City utilizes specific park classifications and standards to develop a balanced park system. A variety of types and sizes of parks and recreation facilities are recommended to:

Table 5.1, Recreational Facility Inventory

	Community Park	Mini-Park	Athletic Complexes	
Feature	Unity Park	Sullivan Park	Magnolia Youth Sports Complex	Little League Complex
Service Area	City	City	Magnolia area	Magnolia area
Acreage	25 acres	0.1 acre	15 acres	50 acres
Ownership	City	TxDOT	County	County
RECREATION FACILITIES				
Baseball			2	
Basketball Court			1	
Batting Cage Facility			1	
Benches	8	4		
Football Field			2	
Football Stadium				
Group Pavilion	1		1	1
Horse Arena				
Indoor Meeting Facility	1			
Natatorium (Indoor Pool)				
Picnic Tables	11	4		
Playground Equipment	1	1		
Playscape	1	1		
Practice Field / Backstop				
Practice Football Field				
Practice Soccer Field				
Skate Park	1			
Softball / Little League			3	6
Splash Station	1			
Tennis Court				
Track				
SUPPORT FACILITIES				
Concession Building	X		X	X
Gazebo	X	X		
Parking	X	X	X	X
Restrooms	X	X	X	X
Security Lights	X	X	X	X

(#) - Not available to the general public.

* School Facilities tallied at 1/2 of value since they are not fully available to the general public.

Special Facilities	School							Total*
Magnolia Community Center	Magnolia Elementary	Williams Elementary	Magnolia 6th Grade	Junior High School	Magnolia West High School	Magnolia High School	Alpha Academy	
City	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
0.5 acre	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	95.6 acres
County	MISD	MISD	MISD	MISD	MISD	MISD	MISD	
					(1)	(1)		2
	1/2	1/2	1				1/2	2
								1
								12
								2
				(1)	(1)	(1)		0
								3
1								1
1								2
						1		0.5
	3	3						18
	4	4						6
	2	2						4
	3	2			1	1		3.5
			1	1	3	3		4
	4		1		1	1		3.5
								1
				(1)	(1)	(1)		9
								1
				6	6	6		9
				1				.5
X		X			X	X	X	
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
X								
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	



The Stroll functions as a linear parkway that connects commercial and civic buildings to parking and recreation areas.



The horse arena is a special use facility that meets the unique recreational needs of Magnolia residents.



Magnolia has the greatest demand for athletic fields distributed throughout the City (and County) to accommodate youth athletic leagues.

- Satisfy the diverse interests of the population;
- Ensure adequate and equal opportunity for all persons; and
- Encourage use by all population groups.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) establishes recommended criteria in *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*. The park and recreation standards serve as a minimum baseline, which is derived from a national survey that targets municipalities of all sizes and geographic regions. These guidelines have been calibrated to reflect regional trends, user characteristics, demographics, climate, natural environment, and other factors unique to Magnolia.

FACILITY STANDARDS

The standards in *Table 5.2, NRPA Suggested Outdoor Facility Development Standards* (Pages 5.10 and 5.11), have been taken into account when evaluating Magnolia's system. However, the NRPA Standards do not set guidelines for playground equipment, picnic uses, horseshoe pits, shuffleboard courts, skateboarding, and/or rollerblading. The following facility standards have been incorporated into this chapter from the two previous parks plans²:

- 1 playground area per mini-park, neighborhood park, and/or community park;
- 1 picnic table per 100 residents clustered in dedicated parks (some covered to shield users from rain and sun);
- 1 skateboard/roller blade facility per community park;
- 1 horseshoe pit per 500 residents;
- 1 shuffleboard court per 500 residents; and
- At least 1 water feature per community park.

PARK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

In the two previous parks plans, the City classified the parks based on the NRPA's *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*. *Table 5.3, Park Classification System* on Page 5.12), categorize the parks based on the their type, use, service area, desirable size, acres per 1,000 residents, and desirable site. This section describes the characteristics and standards of the different park types in the City of Magnolia's planning area.

² 2002-2008, City of Magnolia Comprehensive Master Plan for Development, Operation, and Maintenance of Parks, Recreation Facilities, and Open Space (original completed in 2002) and the 2007-2012, City of Magnolia Comprehensive Plan for Parks, Recreation Facilities, and Open Space (update completed in 2007).

Community Parks

The City owns and operates Unity Park, which occupies 25 acres of land on the south side of town. Community parks are intended to meet the needs of several neighborhoods or larger population groups in the community. These parks are typically larger and include facilities and improvements for area-wide activities and assembly events such as picnic areas, walking/jogging trails, athletic fields, and other large-scale activities. Where feasible, community parks should be located adjacent or connected to a greenway to provide an off-street linear linkage with other areas. They are usually greater than 15 acres in size with a service area ranging from two to five miles.

Community parks usually display natural characteristics that are appropriate for both active and passive recreation. Suitable soils, efficient drainage systems, and local plant species are key features desired in these areas. Additionally, these parks can preserve unique landscapes and open spaces. Adjacent features providing additional natural resources, recreational activities, and trail linkages are strongly desired and should be utilized when possible.

Community Parks Standards

Community parks should be centrally located for the convenience of all residents. They should have direct access to collector or arterial streets to handle special event traffic while avoiding neighborhood disruption. Community parks should include adequate off-street parking, which is a present-day concern at Unity Park.

Neighborhood Parks

Magnolia does not own any neighborhood parks, but school facilities and private parks within subdivisions fill a similar role. Neighborhood parks are the foundation of a well-balanced park system and typically occupy less than 10 acres. Access points from adjacent neighborhoods, central locations, and pedestrian/bicycle linkages are key considerations when developing neighborhood parks. They should be within a short walking distance (typically one-quarter mile or less) for the residents of one or more neighborhoods, thereby encouraging use and promoting convenience, ease of access, and walking safety for children.

Neighborhood Parks Standards

Whenever possible, neighborhood parks should be located in the center of residential subdivisions and should not require any major street crossings for access to contiguous neighborhoods. Furthermore, neighborhood parks must be located in areas that provide adequate drainage and desirable aesthetic

qualities. Thus, floodways and drainage easements should be avoided as primary park space, although such areas can serve supplemental roles such as trail linkages to greenways and local schools, thereby creating a network of off-street trails.

Mini-Parks

Sullivan Park functions as the City's only mini-park, totaling 0.1 acres at the terminus of The Stroll. Mini-parks are the smallest park type and typically occupy less than one acre in size. They serve the community within a one-quarter mile radius. These parks are limited in purpose and serve residential areas or commercial districts, such as the proposed Unity Plaza.

Mini-Parks Standards

Mini-parks should be developed for passive recreation that can be enjoyed by persons of all ages. Picnic tables, park benches, trails, and small pavilions are amenities that can be included in a mini-park.

Linear Parks

The Stroll functions as a linear park in Magnolia. Linear parks serve a variety of functions throughout a community. Often located along utility easements, drainageways, rivers, creeks, bayous, levees, and expansive boulevards, these features serve a primary function of linking recreational attractions, creating buffers to residential communities, preserving natural resources for recreational and flood control purposes, and promoting alternative modes of transportation.

While linear parks primarily serve the local community, there is no minimum or maximum size. Thus, depending on the specific uses of these parks, they may encourage a regional appeal. The amount and size of linear parks depend more on the resources available and resident desires at the time of development.

Linear Parks Standards

Generally, linear parks are easily accessed via public streets. Linear parks are often a result of local utility installation, drainage systems, and landscape reserves provided by a developer. Natural drainage corridors (such as local rivers, creeks, and bayous) provide ideal locations for these types of parks. Due to the characteristics of linear parks, particular attention must be paid to providing access points that are both aesthetically pleasing and recognizable.

Special Use Parks

The County owns and operates a number of special use parks in the form of athletic fields and community

Table 5.2, NRPA Suggested Outdoor Facility Development Standards

This table is derived from the previous plan. Exceptions to the facility standards are noted in *Table 5.5, Outdoor Recreation Facilities - Capacity Analysis*.

Activity/Facility	Space Reqs.	Size and Dimensions	Orientation	Units per Capita	Service Radius	Notes
Basketball Court	2,400 - 3,036 SF	46' - 50' x 84'	Long axis N-S	1 per 500	1/4 - 1/2 mile	Usually in school, recreation, or church facility. Safe walking or bike access. Outdoor courts in neighborhoods and community parks and active recreation areas in other parks.
Tennis Court	Minimum of 7,200 SF per court; 2 acres for complex	36' x 78' with 12' clearance on both sides	Long axis N-S	1 per 2,000	1/4 - 1/2 mile	Best in sets of 2 to 4. Located in community or neighborhood park or near schools.
Volleyball Court	Minimum of 4,000 SF	30' x 60' with 6' clearance on all sides	Long axis N-S	1 per 1,000	1/4 - 1/2 mile	Same as other court activities.
Adult Baseball	3.0 to 3.85 acres	Baselines - 90' Pitching distance - 60% Foul lines - 320' Center field - 400'	Locate home plate so pitcher throws across sun and batter not facing sun. Line from home plate to pitcher's mound runs east northeast.	1 per 1,000	1/4 - 1/2 mile for informal play; 2-10 miles for organized play.	Park of neighborhood park. Lighted field part of community park or athletic complex.
Little League	1.2 acres	Baselines - 60' Pitching distance - 46' Foul lines - 200' Center field - 200 - 250'				
Football	1.5 acres	160' x 360' with 6' clearance on all sides	Fall season, long axis NW-SE; for longer periods, N-S	1 per 20,000	15-30 minutes travel time	Usually part of a baseball, football, soccer complex in a community park or near high school.
Soccer	1.7 to 2.1 acres	195 - 225' x 330 - 360'	Same as football	1 per 500	1-2 miles	Number of units depends on popularity. Youth soccer on smaller fields near schools.
1/4-Mile Running Track	4.3 acres	Overall width - 276' Length - 600' Track width for 8 lanes is 32'	Long axis in sector from N-S to NW-SE with finish line at northerly end	1 per 20,000	15-30 minutes travel time	Usually part of a high school or in community park complex.

Activity/Facility	Space Reqs.	Size and Dimensions	Orientation	Units per Capita	Service Radius	Notes
Softball	1.5 to 2.0 acres	Baselines - 60' Pitching distance - 46' or 40' for women; fast pitch field radius from plate - 225' between foul lines; slow pitch - 275' or 250' for women	Same as baseball	1 per 1,000 if also used for youth baseball	1/4 - 1/2 mile for informal play; 2-10 miles for organized play	Slight difference in dimensions for 16" slow pitch. May also be used for youth baseball.
Multiple Recreation Court	9,984 SF	120' x 80'	Long axis of courts with primary use is N-S	1 per 10,000	1-2 miles	Use for basketball, volleyball, and tennis.
Trails	N/A	Well-defined trailhead; maximum 10' wide; maximum average grade of 5% not to exceed 15%	N/A	1 system per region	N/A	Capacity: rural trail - 40 hikers per day per mile; urban trail - 90 hikers per day per mile.
9-Hole Golf	50 acres min.	Avg. length - 2,250 yds.	Majority of holes on N-S axis	1 per 25,000	1/2 - 1 hour travel time	Accommodates 350 people per day.
18-Hole Golf	110 acres min.	Avg. length - 6,500 yds.		1 per 50,000		Accommodates 500 - 550 people per day.
Swimming Pool	Varies with size of pool and amenities; usually 1/2 to 2 acres	Teaching - min. of 25 yards x 45' even depth of 3-4 feet; competitive - minimum of 25 x 16 m, minimum of 27 SF of water surface per swimmer; deck to water ratio 2:1	None, although care should be taken in locating lifeguard stations relative to afternoon sun	1 per 20,000 (pools should accommodate 3-5% of the total population at a time)	15 - 30 minutes travel time	Pools for general community use should be planned for teaching, competitive, and recreational purposes with enough depth (3.4m) to accommodate 1m and 3m diving boards. Located in community parks or school sites.

centers. They typically include a broad range of parks and recreational facilities focused toward single purpose uses such as aquatic centers, decorative gardens, stages, senior centers, golf courses, and sports complexes.

Special Use Parks Standards

There are no specific design guidelines or requirements for these types of parks and recreation facilities. Instead,

development planning is based upon specific uses and site considerations for the intended use.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION

This needs assessment was conducted with the objective of determining whether the City's parks are

Table 5.3, Park Classification System

Type	Use	Service Area	Desirable Size	Acres per 1,000 residents	Desirable Site
Mini-Park	Address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs (pocket park, tot lot, historic marker).	1/4-mile radius	2,500 square feet to 1 acre	Varies	Commercial areas, civic areas, neighborhoods.
Neighborhood	Serve a specific area of housing development for intense recreation (field games, court games, playground, picnicking).	1/4-mile radius	10 acres or less	2 acres	In neighborhoods, near apartment complexes. Suited for intense development. May be developed as school park facility.
Community	Diverse environmental quality. Areas suited for intense recreation uses such as pools or ball fields. May highlight natural qualities for outdoor recreation such as walking, viewing, or picnicking.	2- to 5-mile radius	15 acres or more	8 acres	May include natural features, such as water bodies and areas suited for intense development. Easily accessible to neighborhoods served.
Athletic Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities to larger and fewer sites.	2- to 10-mile radius	25 acre minimum; 40-80 acres optimum; determined by demand.	Varies by local demand	Strategically located in the community or region. Accessibility and traffic considerations important.
Open Space, Trails	Open Space - Undeveloped land or natural feature. Trails - Developed for one or more modes of recreational travel, such as hiking, biking, or walking. May include active play areas.	N/A	Open Space - Large enough to protect the resource. Trails - large enough to provide maximum use; variable acreage per 1,000.		Open Space - Depends on resource or available land. Trails - Build natural corridors such as rights-of-way, creeks, roads, or vegetation patterns that link other recreational areas or community facilities.
Special Park	Areas for specialized or single-purpose activities, such as indoor recreation centers, golf courses, nature centers, arenas, athletic complexes, buildings, or historic sites.	N/A	Variable depending on desirable size and use type. Acreage per 1,000 also varies.		Within the community, dependent on specific use.

in sufficient supply and appropriately located to meet the community's current and long-range recreation needs. By applying the area and facility concepts and standards to the current and projected populations, the existing acreage of parks, acres of parks needed by 2040, and the degree of sufficiency/deficiency have been determined.

DETERMINING NEED

The most common approach for assessing needs is the use of a two-pronged assessment involving both community-and standard-based methods. Application of these methods results in a determination of the service level of the existing parks and recreation system. The degree of sufficiency or deficiency is determined by applying standards (i.e., standard-based) and

soliciting community input (i.e., community-based) to identify the existing needs and future priorities of the community.

The standards-based approach is based on the area and facility concepts and standards. The community-based approach accounts for citizen input during the public meetings conducted as a part of the comprehensive planning process. The combination of approaches was applied to the current and future populations to assess the current and long-range needs of Magnolia.

CURRENT AND FUTURE PARK NEEDS

The NRPA sets forth standards for recommended acreage of parks per 1,000 persons. The standards include 0.25 to 0.50 acres per 1,000 persons for pocket parks, 1.0 to 2.0 acres per 1,000 persons for neighborhood parks, and 5.0 to 8.0 acres per 1,000 persons for community parks. In concert with the estimated current and projected future populations, the standards were calibrated to reflect Magnolia's level of need.

- Mini-Park: 0.25 acres per 1,000 persons
- Neighborhood Park: 2 acres or less per 1,000 persons
- Community Park: 5 to 8 acres per 1,000 persons

Current Needs

Given that the planning period is 2012 to 2040, the Year 2012 population estimate of 1,435 persons was used to determine current need. To summarize *Table 5.4, Needs Assessment* (see page 5.14), the total recommended acreage of parks and recreation areas for a Year 2012 population of 1,435 persons is 14.71 acres. This need is calculated to include 0.36 acres of mini-parks, 2.87 acres of neighborhood parks, and 11.48 acres of community parks. These recommended acreages are based on localized standards. A comparison of existing acreage of developed parks to the recommended acreage of parks and recreation areas reveals that, overall, the City is currently meeting 174 percent of the recommended acres of parkland. This is largely due to the addition of Unity Park.

Future Needs

As noted in *Chapter 3, Growth Management and Capacity*, Magnolia is projected to reach an approximate population of 6,278 persons by the Year 2040. With this increase will come an increase in demand for parks and recreation facilities. Displayed in *Table 5.4, Needs Assessment*, is the amount of park acreage required to meet the projected future demand. The assessment bases the needs calculations on the established

standards. The results reveal a total recommended acreage of 64.35 acres. Of this total, an additional 0.97 acres of mini-parks, 12.56 acres of neighborhood parks, and 25.22 acres of community parks are recommended for acquisition and development to meet the needs of future residents. *Table 5.5, Outdoor Recreation Facilities - Capacity Analysis*, identifies the number of new facilities needed throughout the planning area.

PRIORITIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NEEDS

This plan is to be implemented in three different phases: 1 to 2 years, 3 to 5 years, and 6 or more years. The following action items were determined through the needs assessment and extensive public input throughout the plan development process:

- **Action Item 1: Joint Use Agreements.** Continue forming interlocal agreements with Montgomery County, MISD, state agencies, local organizations, and private developers to allow joint use of facilities and shared maintenance agreements, when feasible. The City has a number of these agreements in place, such as MISD's natatorium, which accommodates limited public use, and the County's athletic complex, which allows joint use by the City and youth sports leagues.
- **Action Item 2: Outside Funding.** Seek grants, in-kind donations, and corporate sponsorships to construct recreational facilities that meet community needs. This includes transportation improvement and grant funds for trails and sidewalks, as well as voluntary gifts, bequests, or negotiated sales to be dedicated as parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces. A recent example is the proposed tennis facility, which was substantially funded by a private donation from the Gullo family. The Magnolia Community Foundation leads the fundraising campaign to gain additional financial support. This form of private investment in public amenities will be necessary to acquire substantial community assets, especially single use ones, that the City cannot otherwise afford.
- **Action Item 3: Parkland Dedication Review.** Evaluate the ongoing parkland dedication requirement, as described in the *City of Magnolia's Development Standards*, to determine if the land and/or fee is effective and efficient in developing and maintaining a well-balanced park system. This land and/or fee requirement sets aside funding to develop future parks or open spaces in new residential developments within the City and its extraterritorial jurisdiction.

Table 5.4, Needs Assessment

Park Type	Standard/1,000	Existing Supply	Recommended Acreage		Deficit/Surplus	
			Current	2040	Current	2040
Mini-Parks	0.25 acres per 1,000 residents	0.6 acres	0.36 acres	1.57 acres	0.24 acres	-0.97 acres
Neighborhood Parks	2 acres or less per 1,000 residents	No City-owned parks in this category	2.87 acres	12.56 acres	-2.87 acres	-12.56 acres
Community Parks	8 acres or more per 1,000 residents	25 acres	11.48 acres	50.22 acres	13.52 acres	-25.22 acres
Total	N/A	25.6 acres	14.71 acres	64.35	10.89	-38.75

Table 5.5, Outdoor Recreation Facilities - Capacity Analysis

Activities	Facility Standard	Existing Supply			Needed Facilities	Notes
		P	S / PE*	T		
Soccer Fields	12	0	7	3.5	-8.5	*Localized standard unusually high at 1 per 500 persons. Can be raised up to 1 per 3,000 persons, which the City complies with.
Baseball Fields	6	2	(2)	2	-4	Geographically distributed baseball fields have been identified as a top facility need.
Basketball Courts	6	1	2.5	2.25	-3.75	*Localized standard unusually high at 1 per 500 persons. Can be raised up to 1 per 5,000 persons, which the City complies with.
Tennis Courts	3	0	18	9	0	A proposed facility will improve public access to tennis.
Swimming Pool	0	0	1	.5	0	Residents have limited access to MISD's facility.
Football Fields	0	2	(3)	2	0	Adequate offerings.
Softball Fields	6	9	0	9	0	Adequate offering.

Facility standards are generally derived from *Table 5.2, NRPA Suggested Outdoor Facility Development Standards*.

*School Facilities tallied at 1/2 of value since they are not fully available to the general public.

- **Action Item 4: Park System Expansion.** Based on *Table 5.4, Needs Assessment* on Page 5.14, the City will need to develop 12.56 acres of neighborhood parks and 25.22 acres of community parks by 2040. These park acreages should be incrementally constructed in concurrence with the pace of development to ensure tax revenue and land and fee dedications can adequately support associated park costs. Part of this system growth could include expansion to the existing Unity Park, which would entail acquiring vacant acreage that is located in the floodplain

and could be used for stormwater management, ecological restoration, or outdoor environmental education, among other passive uses.

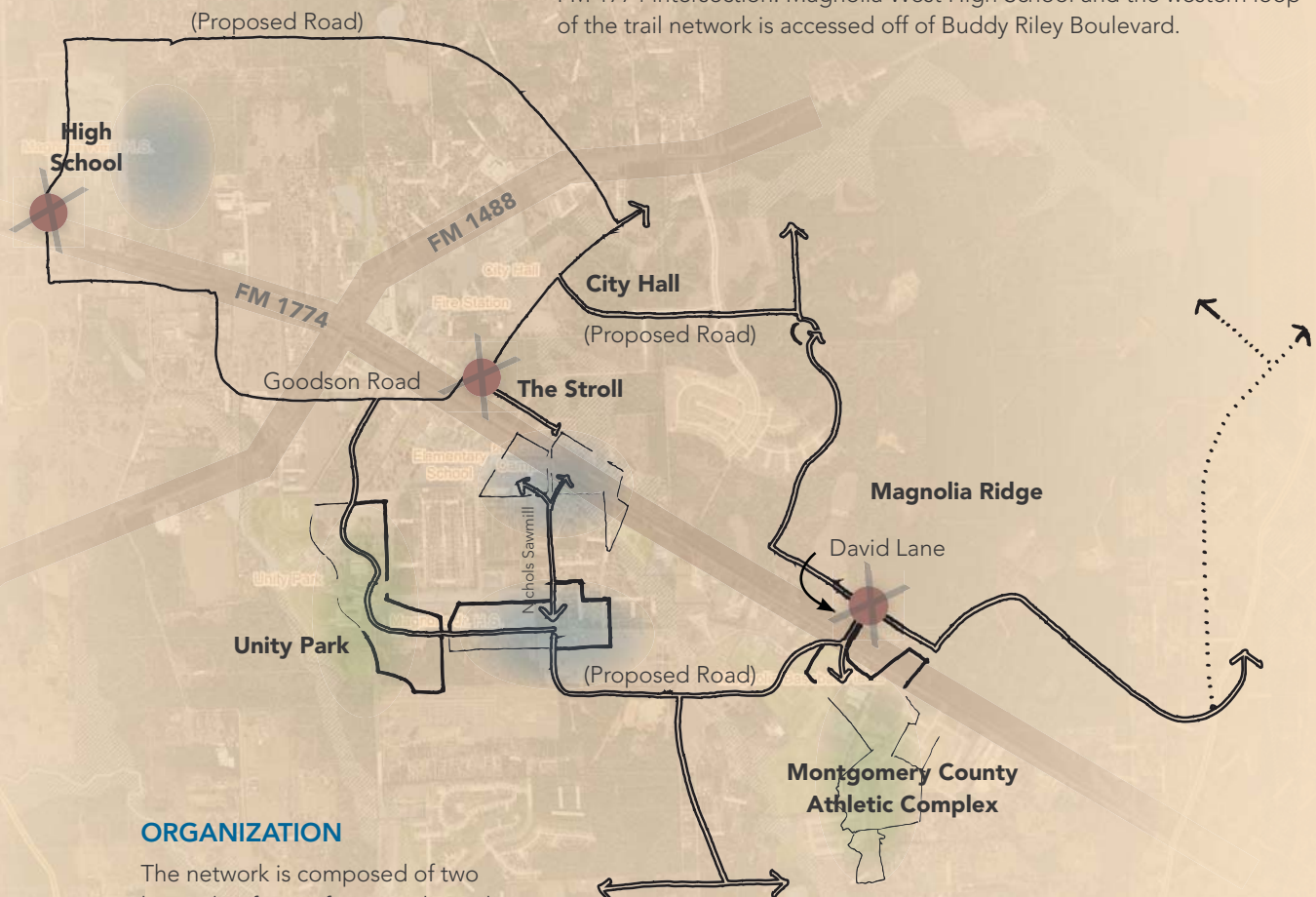
- **Action Item 5: Open Space and Trail Dedication.** If the City aspires to preserve open space, natural areas, and greenbelts (along with active recreation sites), it can establish procedures for acquiring traditionally “undevelopable” land. Along with low-impact recreation fields, these flood-prone and environmentally sensitive areas can be used to develop a citywide trail system, as described in *Figure*

Figure 5.3, Proposed Pedestrian and Bicyclist Trail System

CONNECTIVITY

The pedestrian and bicyclist network of recreational trails safely links the neighborhoods with the Magnolia baseball fields, Magnolia Junior High School, and Unity Park. An ancillary bike lane utilizes Michael Street as a primary spine to access the Elementary School and Sixth Grade Campus.

Buddy Riley Boulevard provides connectivity to the major commercial and institutional buildings along FM 1488 while effectively avoiding the FM 1774 intersection. Magnolia West High School and the western loop of the trail network is accessed off of Buddy Riley Boulevard.



ORGANIZATION

The network is composed of two loops that form a figure eight, with the principal routes converging midway along The Stroll. By utilizing three existing railroad crossings and several existing and proposed collector and local roads, the Magnolia recreational trails network circumvents FM 1774 and FM 1488 to safely transport cyclists and other pedestrian traffic throughout the City of Magnolia and beyond.

AMENITIES

Streetscape furnishings that cater to the cycling enthusiast, such as bicycle racks, water fountains, directional and traffic signage, and benches, will be required at key nodes and trailheads along the network. Where appropriate, interpretive signage and maps can further illuminate Magnolia's rich history and natural environment. As the recreational trail becomes increasingly utilized, it can be expanded outward toward The Woodlands and Tomball, as funding becomes available.

Table 5.6, Parks and Amenities Planning Framework

Action Item	Specific Staffing and Funding Needs		Proposed Timeframe (Years)		
			1-2	3-5	6+
Joint Use Agreements					
Outside Funding					
Parkland Dedication Review					
Park System Expansion					
Open Space and Trail Dedication					
Diverse Users and Uses					
Trail Master Plan					
New Construction					
Low-Impact Design					

5.3, Proposed Pedestrian and Bicyclist Trail System

(on the previous page), if provisions are made for linear and corridor tracts. Otherwise, unbuildable areas of a site may be divided among several parcels, resulting in ownership barriers to future corridor development.

- **Action Item 6: Diverse Users and Uses.** Invest in a broad range of public amenities to meet the current and future needs of young children, teenagers, adults, and seniors. The City's decision criteria should be partly based on national standards and partly based on specific community needs. The park system already includes a number of single use facilities that are unique to Magnolia, such as the horse arena and its ties to the equestrian community. Similarly, the County's athletic complex accommodates the large number of young families that participate in youth sports. As the City wants to attract retirees, senior recreation facilities should also be developed to market a broader age range. These targeted uses must be counter balanced by passive recreation amenities that accommodate multiple user groups within the same area. While Unity Park is a prime candidate for passive and active recreation, new mini-park or neighborhood park locations would increase the geographic distribution of the system.

- **Action Item 7: Trail Master Plan.** Based on the conceptual trail system illustrated in *Figure 5.3, Proposed Pedestrian and Bicyclist Trail System*, develop an independent *Trail Master Plan* to identify pedestrian and bicyclist opportunities and constraints pertaining to cost, land ownership, and site conditions. This plan will establish a 30-year vision that complements the *Future Land Use and Character Plan* and guides infrastructure investments, specifically land acquisition and sidewalk/trail construction. The proposed system is organized by two trail loops that form a figure eight, with the principal routes converging mid-way along The Stroll. Further investigation is required to establish a trail hierarchy that specifies width, material, use, and location criteria. Sidewalks should be inventoried to identify broken links, and the local system should be tied to regional networks.
- **Action Item 8: New Construction.** Once a *Trail Master Plan* is adopted by the community, new roadway construction along proposed trail routes will require additional land acquisition to accommodate on- or off-street travel lanes. The proposed system avoids FM 1774 and FM 1488 given the current status of roadway projects and safety considerations associated with heavy traffic.

New trails should be constructed in accordance with the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and TxDOT standards and criteria. Once built, travel lanes must be routinely cleaned and maintained to ensure safe passageway.

- **Action Item 9: Low-Impact Design.** If the City or private developers choose to build parks in environmentally sensitive areas, the project should take into consideration low-impact park design, construction techniques, and project implementation as recommended by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and allied professionals (e.g., landscape architects, engineers) to minimize negative impacts on the environment. Restrictions might be enforced through a tree preservation ordinance, which would require the preservation or replacement of existing trees of certain species. Another approach is to develop “best practice” manuals and other informational literature to educate developers on conservation practices.

Table 5.6, Parks and Amenities Planning Framework (on the previous page), is a tool for elected and appointed officials, in conjunction with City staff, to evaluate and apply a timeframe for each of the aforementioned action items as well as their specific acreage and facility needs.

IN RESPONSE TO CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND PERIODIC ECONOMIC DOWNTURNS, MAGNOLIA'S HOUSING INVENTORY IS IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSITIONING FROM A COMMUNITY OF SINGLE-FAMILY DETACHED HOMES TO A DIVERSE COLLECTION OF RURAL, SUBURBAN, AND SEMI-URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS. LONG-RANGE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES WILL HELP GUIDE THE PLACEMENT, QUALITY, CHARACTER, AND VALUE OF NEW AND EXISTING HOUSING ACCOMMODATIONS IN ORDER TO MEET THE NEEDS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS, YOUNG PROFESSIONALS, FAMILIES, EMPTY NESTERS, AND RETIREES. THIS LIFE-CYCLE APPROACH TO COMMUNITY BUILDING WILL HELP MAGNOLIA MAINTAIN A BALANCED INVENTORY OF HOUSING TYPES AND AMENITIES DESPITE INEVITABLE MARKETPLACE FLUCTUATIONS.

Chapter 6

HOUSING AND
NEIGHBORHOODS

INTRODUCTION

Magnolia's housing selection will directly influence the community's ability to capitalize on Montgomery County's positive growth outlook. While the City should concurrently strengthen its industrial, commercial, and entertainment markets to increase its tax base, housing is essential to preserving Magnolia's unique identity, quality of life, and regional competitiveness. The purpose of this chapter is to assess current and future housing trends based on a review of demographic changes and the existing housing inventory. This chapter also builds on previous sections of this Comprehensive Plan by tying in the *Future Land Use and Character Plan*. It highlights the various planning and design elements that contribute to quality neighborhoods and are necessary to meet the community's dynamic needs.

While the development of new homes and rehabilitation of older housing occurs primarily through the private sector, City government and other public and non-profit partners have an essential role to play in protecting the local economy and tax base. These variables directly impact the appearance, functionality, and value of the community's residential investments. Through planning and management strategies, the City can also help to influence the diversity of Magnolia's housing, which is essential to providing choice and meeting the individual needs of all households - regardless of economic conditions.

HOUSING CONTEXT

- **Employment.** The City must capitalize on regional employment trends within its 12-mile trade area encompassing 138,000 inhabitants, as referenced in *Chapter 3*. The quality of availability of Magnolia homes will be critical in competing with neighboring communities to attract residents - especially as new corporate campuses are constructed in The

Woodlands, Tomball, Conroe, and Spring. For instance, Exxon Mobil will begin relocating 8,000 employees to its new, 385-acre campus in 2014. Sited near the intersection of Interstate 45 and the Hardy Toll Road, it will be located within convenient driving distance to Magnolia.

- **Higher Education.** The Lone Star College System tentatively plans to construct a new, 84,000-square-foot educational facility on 15 acres of land alongside FM 1486 near Magnolia West High School. While still in the planning and fundraising stages, the proposed satellite campus would be part of a \$498 million bond referendum in April and May of 2013. The presence of a community college would help to increase the number of 18- to 24-year-olds in Magnolia, while boosting the demand for affordable housing types such as multifamily complexes and duplexes.
- **Increase in Multifamily Housing.** Over the last 10 years, the City has increased its percentage of renter-occupied housing by 9.6 percent, the highest of all comparison communities, as seen in *Figure 6.1, Change in Percentage of Renter-Occupied Housing*. This can be attributed to the development of Magnolia Trails (80 units, 100 percent occupied), Walker Landing (64 units, 98 percent occupied), and Grand Oaks, a manufactured home subdivision totaling more than 100 dwelling units. This trend has been occurring within the region and will only increase as the City attracts more residents.
- **Phased Development Patterns.** The recession forced local developers to construct master planned communities in smaller and more incremental phases, a strategy that has carried over to current development practices. A recent example is Magnolia Ridge, in which the first phase of single-family homes were built on compact, 0.2-acre lots. Ultimately, this neighborhood will include mixed commercial, residential, and civic uses, ranging from assisted living to single-family housing types.
- **Smaller Lot and Home Sizes.** Over the last 10 years, the City has become increasingly urbanized as the size of Magnolia's homes have decreased by eight percent while the size of homes in comparable communities has increased by up to 24 percent, as documented in *Figure 6.2, Percent Change in Median Number of Rooms*. This trend is confirmed by the declining average lot size of new developments, as illustrated in the *Neighborhood Profiles* on Page 6.4. New developments like Glen and Grand Oaks average 0.2-acre lots, whereas Magnolia Crossing averages 0.8-acre lots. This is partly in response to the recent economic downturn and increasing need for affordable housing. Between 2000 and 2011, there was an increasing percentage of homes

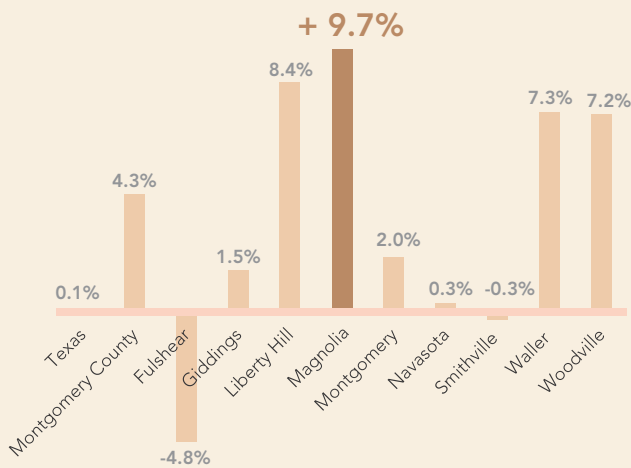
A NATION OF RENTERS

Renting is on the rise across the country as families struggle to afford homes. The percentage of households on housing lease has increased from 31.6 to 33.6 percent across the country since 1998, and this number is predicted to continue increasing until 2015. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of renter-occupied housing units in Magnolia increased by 9.7 percent.

Source: Houston Chronicle, May 25, 2011, U.S. Census

Figure 6.1, Change in Percentage of Renter-Occupied Housing, 2000 - 2010

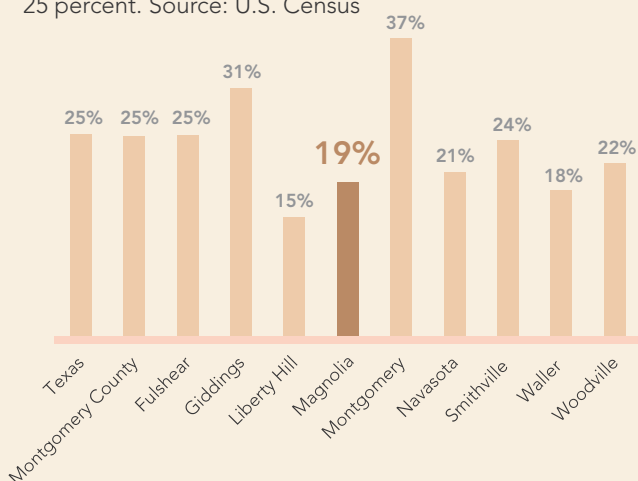
(Below) The percentage of renter-occupied housing units in Magnolia has increased from 30.4 percent in 2000 to 40 percent in 2010, an increase of 9.6 percent.
Source: U.S. Census



The median housing value increased by **32 percent** between 2000 and 2010, increasing from **\$94,600** to **\$124,700**.

Figure 6.3, Percent of Households Contributing More than 30 Percent of Monthly Income to Home Ownership, 2011 5-Year Estimate

(Below) An estimated 19 percent of owner-occupied households contribute more than 30 percent of their monthly income to home ownership. This is below the State and County average of 25 percent. Source: U.S. Census



89 percent of Magnolia's housing is occupied, a rate that remains unchanged since **2000**.

Figure 6.2, Percent Change in Median Number of Rooms, 2000-2010

(Below) The average size of homes in Magnolia shrunk between 2000 and 2010, decreasing from 5.3 to 4.9 average rooms. This is the opposite trend in relation to most comparison cities. For instance, the average numbers of rooms increased from 5.9 to 7.3 in Fulshear. Source: U.S. Census

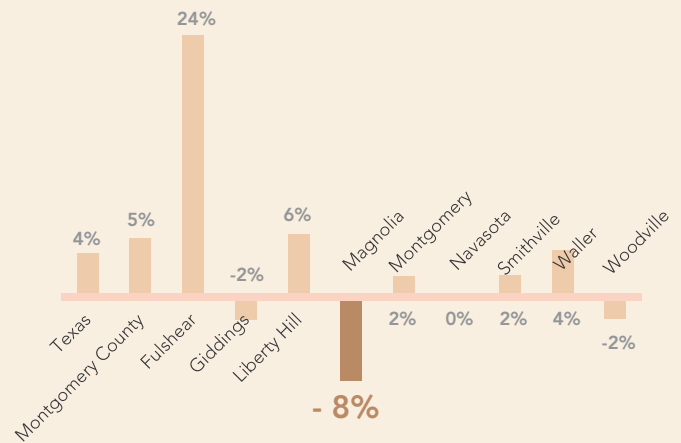
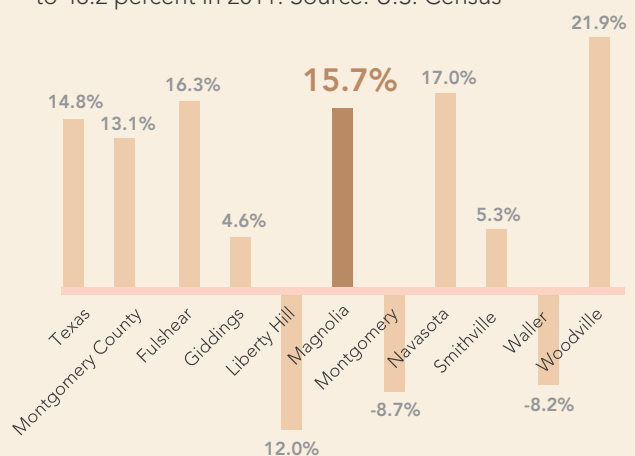


Figure 6.4, Change in Percentage of Households Contributing More than 30 Percent of Monthly Income to Rent, 2000-2011

(Below) The percentage of renter-occupied households contributing more than 30 percent of their monthly income towards rent climbed by 15.7 percent from 32.5 percent in 2000 to 48.2 percent in 2011. Source: U.S. Census



contributing 30 percent or more of their monthly income to housing, as demonstrated in *Figure 6.3, Percent of Households Contributing More than 30 Percent of Monthly Income to Home Ownership*, and *Figure 6.4, Change in Percentage of Households Contributing More than 30 Percent of Monthly Income to Rent*.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

ATTRACTIVE AND FUNCTIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN

Providing a high-quality living environment is essential to maintaining Magnolia's positive reputation in the Houston-Galveston region. In fact, residents supported this premise through their comments during the initial listening sessions. They specified their desire for attractive, landscaped, and well-connected neighborhoods. A key element of new housing is the interrelationship between desired outcomes and existing regulations. Despite residents' desire for high-quality developments, the City's current ordinances do not have adequate provisions to ensure minimum standards are met. For instance, most new residential areas are developed as independent subdivisions rather than as dynamic neighborhoods that are connected to other destinations. Based on citizen concerns and comments about existing developments, it is essential to recognize that high quality development will require additional planning tools and improved management strategies.

Policy 6.1. The City will ensure new development is compatible with the existing character and neighborhood patterns.

- **Higher-Density Residential Compatibility.** Consider adopting design standards and management strategies that promote compatible quality and placement of high-density residential development. As southwest Montgomery County experiences an increase in new apartment complexes, particularly along Magnolia Parkway, these protections will help to ensure new Magnolia developments complement surrounding uses. Potential strategies include:
 - » **Site Selection and Buffering.** Use the *Future Land Use and Character Plan*, which is most effectively reinforced with management strategies, to strategically locate high-density housing close to key intersections, arterials, integrated land uses, and recreational facilities. Adequate provisions for bufferyards, setbacks, screening, and height restrictions will help ensure different intensities of use are sufficiently spaced apart and visually screened from one another.

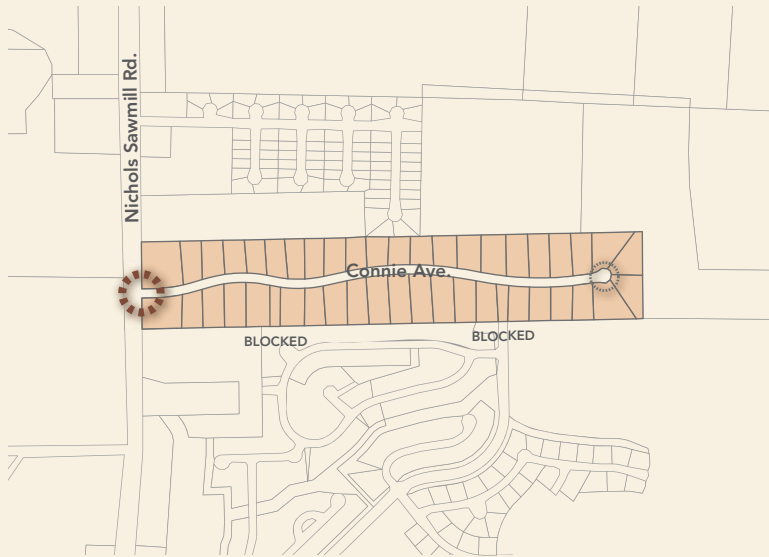
Neighborhood Profiles

The community's existing housing inventory has been profiled to identify prevailing design characteristics, including the character types, average lot sizes, setbacks, presence or absence of sidewalks, and level of connectivity. Nine subdivisions were selected based on their location within or in proximity to the City, inferring some of these homes will ultimately be annexed into the City.

This collection of neighborhoods underscores Magnolia's existing housing diversity. Although the community identifies itself as a rural or suburban community, most new construction has been located on quarter-acre lots or smaller, like the ones in Glen and Grand Oaks and Lakes of Magnolia. While the decreasing lot size is partly a function of recent market downturns, as evidenced by the Phase I lot sizes in Magnolia Ridge, it may also indicate a community need for more strategic land use planning and management strategies to protect Magnolia's rural identity.

This analysis also highlights a lack of connectivity between existing neighborhoods. Most new residential areas are developed as enclaves rather than as a dynamic network of streets, trails, and open space amenities. As discussed in *Chapter 4, Community Mobility*, the City has a number of subdivisions with cul-de-sacs that prohibit future connections. As a good alternative, master planned subdivisions like Magnolia Ridge and Glen and Grand Oaks have used "stub outs," which dead-end roads at the property line but allow for future extensions in concurrence with subsequent development phases.

- » **Traffic Impact Analysis.** Consider requirements for traffic impact analyses and parking studies when assessing the compatibility of proposed apartments or commercial projects. Higher intensity uses will contribute to congestion along FM 1488 and FM 1774 unless adequately supported by an interconnected thoroughfare network of local, collector, and arterials streets.
- » **Design Standards.** Consider the development of multifamily housing design standards, which may include provisions for building form and scale, articulated building walls, building orientation, architectural detailing, roof types and materials, façade enhancements, and acceptable building materials. Given every community's need for a diverse mix of housing types, these standards



Connie Avenue

Character Type: Residential Estate

Number of Lots: 43

Average Lot Size: 39,204 sq. ft. / 0.9 ac.

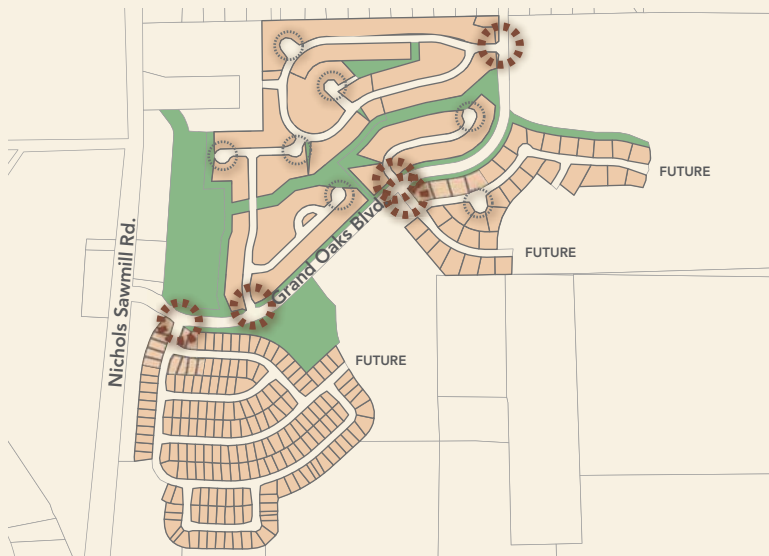
Front Setback: 80-130 ft.

Sidewalks: No

Number of Entrances: 1

Number of Cul-de-Sacs: 1

Access Ratio: 0.023



Glen and Grand Oaks

Character Type: Semi-Urban Residential

Number of Lots: 242

Average Lot Size: 8,712 sq. ft. / 0.2 ac.

Front Setback: 35 ft.

Sidewalks: Partial

Number of Entrances: 5

Number of Cul-de-Sacs: 7

Access Ratio: 0.021



Lakes of Magnolia

Character Type: Semi-Urban Residential

Number of Lots: 297

Average Lot Size: 8,712 sq. ft. / 0.2 ac.

Front Setback: 35 ft.

Sidewalks: No

Number of Entrances: 2

Number of Cul-de-Sacs: 4

Access Ratio: 0.007



Entrance/Exit



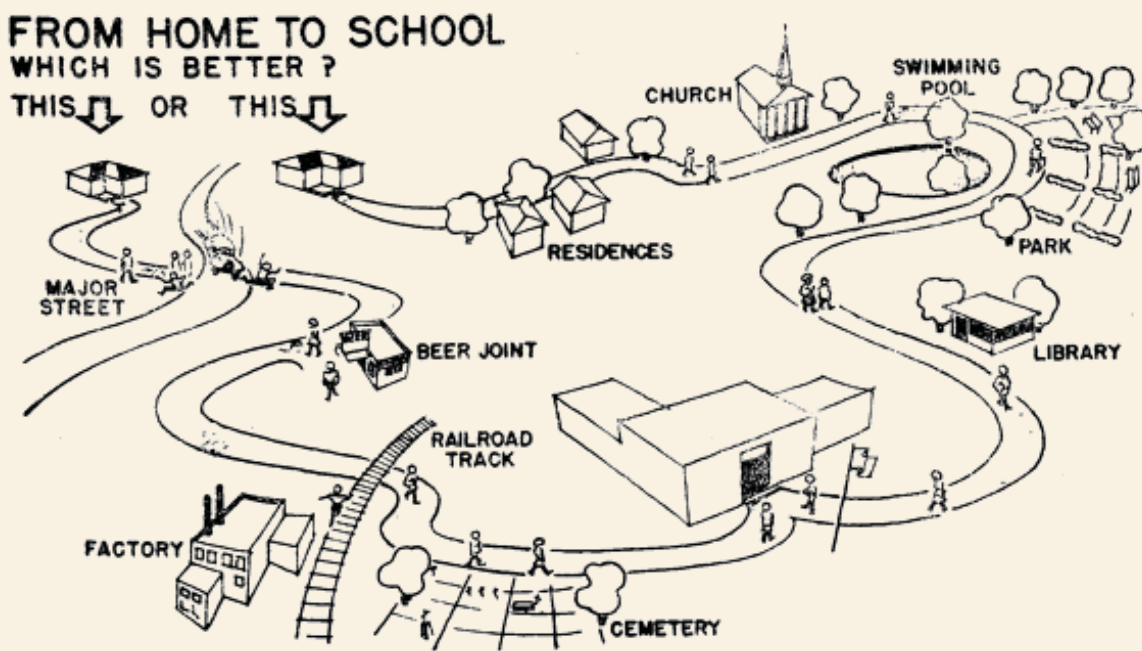
Cul-de-Sac



Parks/Open Space/Recreation Facilities

School Site Selection

Site selection is critical to the functionality and safety of Magnolia's schools. The City should continue to partner with the Magnolia Independent School District to identify opportune school locations in and around Magnolia. Special consideration should be given to traffic congestion; automobile and pedestrian safety; and infrastructure barriers. Image Source: Planning Advisory Service, Information Report No. 175, August 1963



will establish the minimum functional and aesthetic standards, which will help differentiate Magnolia's apartment inventory from undesirable examples outside of the City limits.

- Subdivision Points of Access and Connectivity.** Consider revising the Subdivision Ordinance to require separate points of access to every subdivision. The current ordinance allows for one point of access when a subdivision contains less than 150 dwelling units (§702.3 and §711.3, Development Standards). Neighborhoods like Magnolia Crossing and Sugar Bend, although located outside of the City limits, only have one entrance, which has caused safety and congestion concerns during emergency situations. These subdivisions are further hindered by streets that end in cul-de-sacs (i.e., prohibit future extension) rather than "stub out" roads that can later be extended into adjoining subdivisions. An effective street layout optimizes connectivity by providing multiple paths to external destinations and critical access for emergency vehicles. It also discourages cut-through traffic.

- Development Agreements.** Continue to enter into development agreements with contiguous landowners to ensure private land planning efforts just outside the City limits are compatible with the this Comprehensive Plan and development standards. Given regional market trends, many of these communities have exceeded the City's minimal standards – as seen in Magnolia Ridge's landscaping and open space plan, for instance. Positive examples should be used as models for guiding future development within the City.

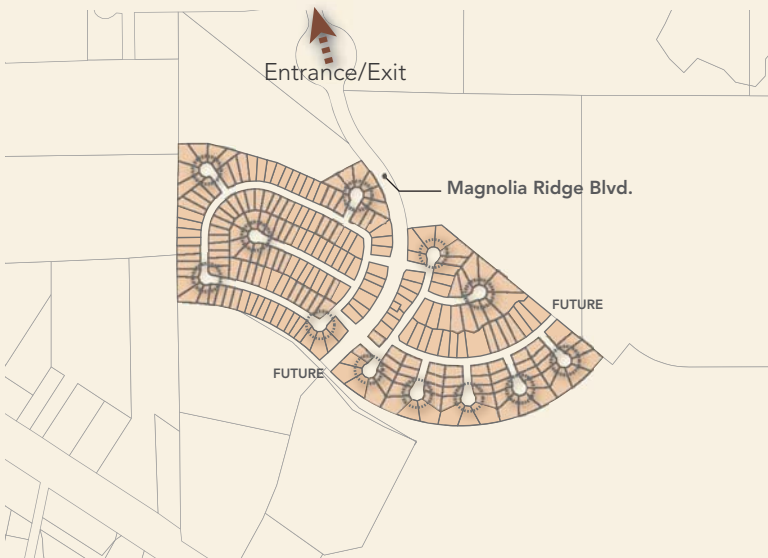
Policy 6.2. Neighborhoods will be designed with complementary civic, recreational, and commercial uses to support the surrounding residences.

- MISD Partnerships.** Continue to partner with the Magnolia Independent School District (MISD) to select opportune school sites based on traffic impacts; pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile safety; land acquisition and development costs; availability of infrastructure; spatial and environmental qualities; and compatibility with this Comprehensive



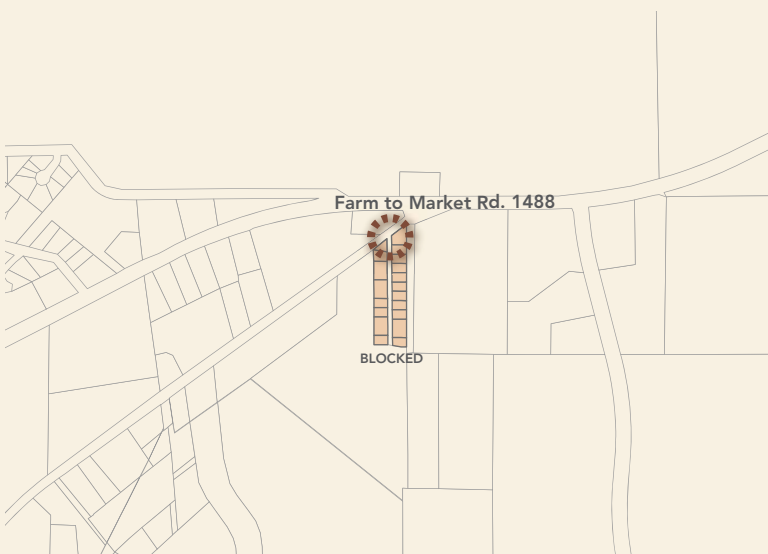
Magnolia Crossing

Character Type: Suburban Residential
Number of Lots: 83
Average Lot Size: 34,858 sq. ft. / 0.8 ac.
Front Setback: 70-100 ft.
Sidewalks: No
Number of Entrances: 1
Number of Cul-de-Sacs: 10
Access Ratio: 0.012



Magnolia Ridge

Character Type: Semi-Urban Residential
Number of Lots: 243
Average Lot Size: 8,712 sq. ft. / 0.2 ac.
Front Setback: 40 ft.
Sidewalks: No
Number of Entrances: 1
Number of Cul-de-Sacs: 12
Access Ratio: 0.004



Rolling Hills

Character Type: Semi-Urban Residential
Number of Lots: 19
Average Lot Size: 8,712 sq. ft. / 0.2 ac.
Front Setback: 30 ft.
Sidewalks: No
Number of Entrances: 1
Number of Cul-de-Sacs: 0
Access Ratio: 0.053



Entrance/Exit



Cul-de-Sac



Parks/Open Space/Recreation Facilities

Plan. Given the lot size requirements for elementary and secondary schools, land must be set aside long before residential development occurs. Elementary schools, in particular, should be integrated within neighborhoods with minimal barriers, such as railroad crossings, heavy-volume intersections, or noxious industries. The transportation aspect is of particular concern in Magnolia, especially as MISD anticipates the site selection and development of a new elementary school for the Magnolia Ridge area. Historically, schools have been located on major arterials, such as FM 1774, FM 1488, and Nichols Sawmill Road. The central location of these sites has caused traffic congestion and safety concerns for the community – not just the students and parents who use them.

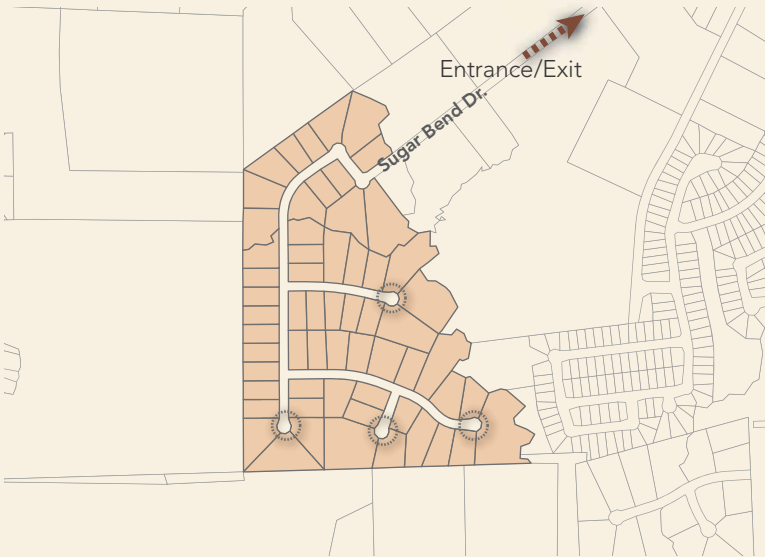
- **Subdivision Ordinance Review.** Review the Subdivision Ordinance in concert with, or as a subsequent step to, an evaluation of potential new management strategies to ensure the City’s land development regulations promote good design principles, which include:

- » Street design principles and standards that promote safety for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation.
- » A network of on- and off-street sidewalks and trails, with the intent to accommodate pedestrian and bicyclist circulation and promote interconnectivity of adjacent neighborhoods.
- » Attractive streetscapes and neighborhood entrances, whether achieved through landscaping or other design elements, which “soften” an otherwise urban atmosphere and encourage residents to enjoy common areas of their neighborhood.
- » Community design features that promote public safety and attractive streetscapes, including architectural or landscape elements such as pedestrian lighting, front porches, meandering sidewalks, and recessed garages (versus snout-home garages which dominate the street façade).
- » Conservation areas, greenbelts, or other open space amenities to encourage leisure

Connectivity Indexes

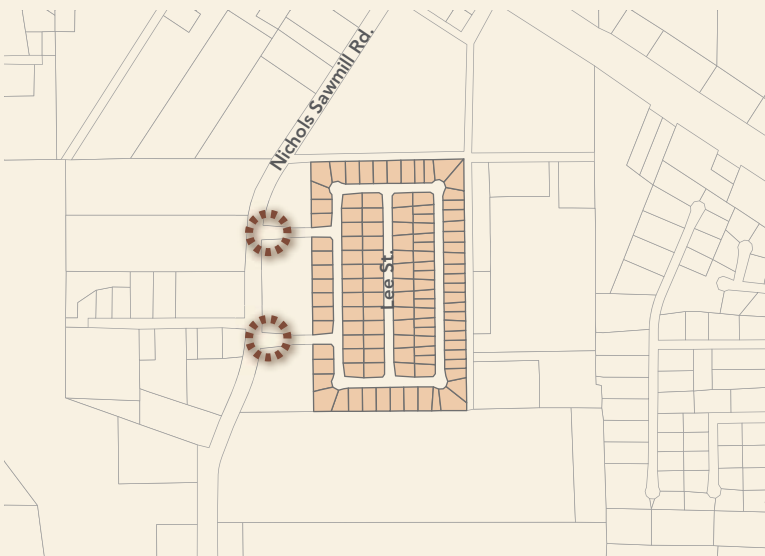
Some communities adopt connectivity indexes, by ordinance or as a best management practice, to evaluate the effectiveness of local street systems. In Magnolia, this type of metric can be an effective tool in comparing the circulation of one neighborhood from another, as seen in the *Neighborhood Profiles* starting on page 6.4. The following illustration compares a positive and negative example of two alternative subdivision designs. Image Source: Houston-Galveston Area Council, Pedestrian Pathways, 2012.





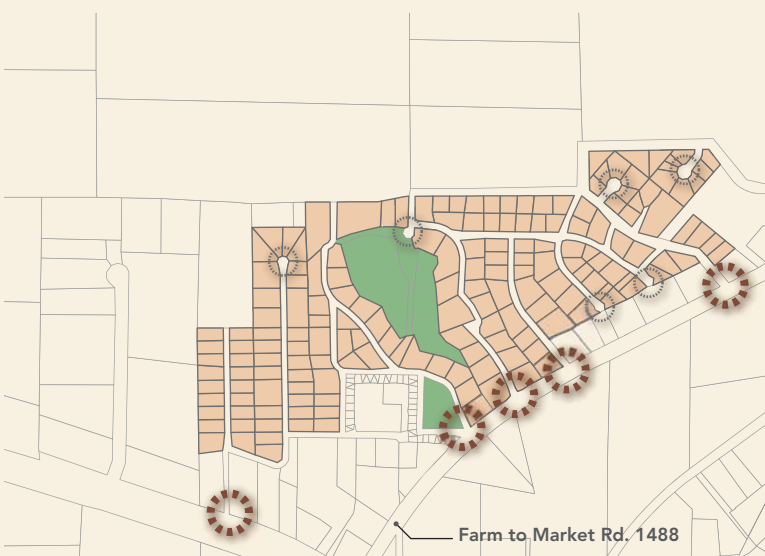
Sugar Bend

Character Type: Residential Estate
Number of Lots: 60
Average Lot Size: 43,560 sq. ft. / 1.0 ac.
Front Setback: 75-120 ft.
Sidewalks: No
Number of Entrances: 1
Number of Cul-de-Sacs: 4
Access Ratio: 0.017



Timber Ridge

Character Type: Suburban Residential
Number of Lots: 112
Average Lot Size: 13,068 sq. ft. / 0.3 ac.
Front Setback: 80 ft.
Sidewalks: No
Number of Entrances: 2
Number of Cul-de-Sacs: 0
Access Ratio: 0.018



Windmill Estates

Character Type: Suburban Residential
Number of Lots: 170
Average Lot Size: 17,424 sq. ft. / 0.4 Acres
Front Setback: 50 ft.
Sidewalks: No
Number of Entrances: 5
Number of Cul-de-Sacs: 6
Access Ratio: 0.029



Housing Design

A “snout home” is typically characterized by residential architecture that places the garage at the front of the home. Most often, the garage floor occupies more than 50 percent of the front facade. This practice is often used as a space-saving technique that results in little to no front yard. The homes in Lakes of Magnolia, for instance, are designed with snout-home garages given their smaller and narrower lot sizes (i.e., averaging 0.20 acres), as illustrated below. Some communities have adopted design standards to discourage this type of architecture. They may have ordinance provisions that:

- Require no more than 50 percent of the home's front to be occupied by the garage;
- Prohibit the garage from projecting beyond the front of the house; and/or
- Require 15 percent of a home's front-facing wall to be composed of windows or doors.

In contrast, many homes throughout Magnolia include: (1) recessed garages that are obscured behind the home or (2) side-facing garages that blend into the architectural façade (as seen in the Windmill Estates example below). These alternative design patterns are typically sited on larger lots and result in a more desirable street appearance.



LAKES OF MAGNOLIA



WINDMILL ESTATES

and healthful living, and to contribute to neighborhood buffering and definition.

- » Respect for unique environmental conditions, and incorporation of such assets into neighborhood design.

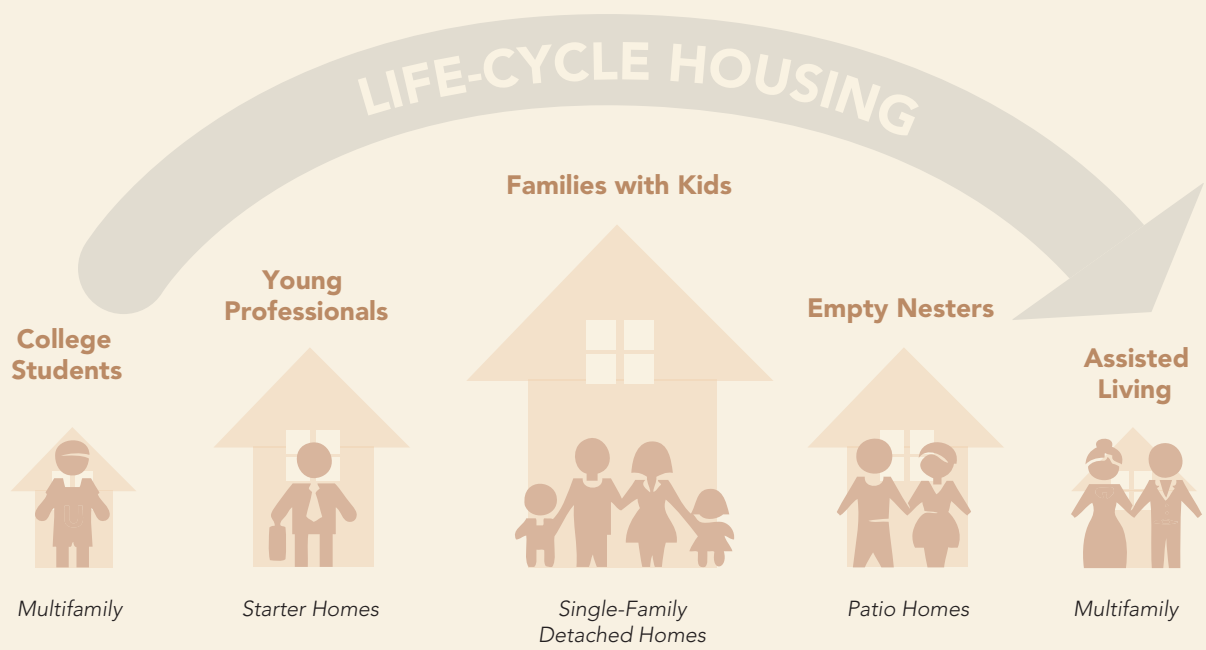
- **Neighborhood Commercial Development.** Use the *Future Land Use and Character Plan*, which is most effectively reinforced with management strategies, to set aside land for neighborhood commercial areas. Unlike the big box retailers that are located along FM 1488 and FM 1774, these smaller-scale, retail and office buildings provide convenience goods and services within close proximity to surrounding residents. They typically include convenience stores, coffee shops, and medical/dental facilities up to but no larger than 17,000 square feet.

LIFE-CYCLE HOUSING ACCOMMODATIONS

Magnolia's composition of housing types should accommodate the whole spectrum of life-cycle stages: college students, young professionals, families, empty nesters, and seniors. While single-family, detached homes are the predominant housing type, the community should offer a number of alternative designs and price points. These should range from senior apartments like those at Magnolia Trails to the high-quality manufactured homes at Glen and Grand Oaks. These and other housing options must meet the needs of different ages, incomes, and rural-urban preferences in order to increase the overall community attractiveness to a broader base of potential residents.

Policy 6.3 The community will provide a diverse selection of housing choices to meet the needs of existing and prospective residents.

- **Mixture of Housing Types.** Use the *Future Land Use and Character Plan*, which is most effectively reinforced with management strategies, to guide the location, character, quality, lot size, and pattern of diverse housing types in Magnolia. The community's continued population increase will inherently lead to a more widespread mix of incomes, ages, and ethnicities that will ultimately require more housing prototypes. This trend has already begun to take shape as the City has increased its number of rental households by 32 percent between 2000 and 2010.
- **Urban Housing in the Magnolia Town Center.** In accordance with the *Future Land Use*



and Character Plan, promote walkable, compact development patterns in the Magnolia Town Center, with a targeted effort to develop a “Unity Plaza” mixed-use complex that accommodates retail, office, and housing.

- » **Diverse Housing Palette.** Unlike traditional Magnolia subdivisions, which tend to accommodate single-family detached dwellings, this development would offer a more diverse housing palette that includes townhomes, condominiums, lofts, multi-plexes, multifamily dwellings, vertical mixed use buildings (i.e., residential-over-retail), live/work units, and senior living complexes. This combination of smaller homes would help to attract prospective Lone Star College students, young professionals, and seniors.
- » **Solicit Developer Interest.** Monitor investor interest in more compact residential products that are being constructed in the surrounding region. Partner with private interests to help reduce any barriers to new development and redevelopment in and around what could become a new mixed-use district within the community.
- **Preservation of Rural Character.** Consider using management strategies to preserve land for low-density housing, which will help to protect the rural and spacious character of Magnolia. In contrast to recent subdivision activity in Magnolia Ridge and Lakes of Magnolia, which both average 0.20-

acre lots, this type of development pattern is seen in older subdivisions like Magnolia Crossing and Connie Avenue, which average 0.80 acres and 0.90 acres per lot, respectively. If these types of premium home sites are not available within the City limits, regional homebuyers will pursue opportunities in unincorporated areas, which will contribute to sprawl and reduce the City’s long-term tax base.

- **Senior Housing and Amenities.** Encourage senior housing and amenities in clustered, mixed land use areas near other senior and recreational facilities to facilitate convenient mobility. Nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and senior apartments should be located within close proximity to one another, and within a convenient distance to shopping (e.g., Magnolia Town Center), recreation (e.g., Unity Park), senior activities (e.g., Montgomery County Community Center), and healthcare services (e.g., Magnolia Landmark Building). Magnolia Trails is a model example of site planning and high-quality architecture for seniors, given the facility’s internal connectivity to Unity Park and attractive build quality. The complex opened in November 2011 and has had a wait list ever since. It was developed with tax credits, meaning it offers affordable options for targeted income levels.

NEIGHBORHOOD PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION

While partnering with developers to elevate the design and development of new neighborhoods, Magnolia



Magnolia Trails is a high-quality, senior apartment complex (55+ years old) with tiered income requirements. Individuals' gross income cannot exceed \$28,140, and the income of two-person households cannot exceed \$32,160.

should also work to safeguard the long-term integrity of its older housing areas. Established neighborhoods often lack the size, design, and amenities of new housing developments. However, many communities are beginning to understand that, in return, older neighborhoods tend to offer a stronger base of community support and mature landscaping - two qualities that cannot be reproduced overnight. In Magnolia, some older areas have been well maintained while others require infill development, infrastructure improvements, and further revitalization efforts.

Policy 6.4 The City will invest in planning and capital improvement strategies to enhance and preserve existing neighborhoods.

- **Sub-Area Planning Studies.** Pursue regional, state, and federal grants; public-private partnerships; and other funding resources to sponsor sub-area plans for targeted residential and mixed-use opportunities within the community. The *Downtown Improvements and Revitalization Guidelines (2009)* is one type of sub-area plan that evaluates issues and opportunities in a more detailed and tactical manner than this Comprehensive Plan. The recommendation for a Unity Plaza development within the Magnolia Town Center warrants consideration of a mixed-use master plan, or "Livable Center" study, which analyzes retail, office and housing market demand; multi-modal transportation considerations such as parking, pedestrian paths, and bikeways; and open space amenities. If the study includes a focus on housing, elements that would normally be required for a housing grant submittal, such as potential development/ redevelopment sites and prioritized infrastructure improvements, may also be used to pursue funding sources.
- **PR Boost for Magnolia Homes.** Continue partnering with community organizations to develop a public relations campaign that elevates the prestige of homes located within Magnolia proper (in contrast to unincorporated homes with a Magnolia postal address). City staff should continue educating realtors, developers, and other housing professionals on the benefits of Magnolia. In part, this higher level of publicity should be reinforced by highly visible and strategically placed capital investments, such as gateways, landmarks, subdivision monumentation, and/or unique street signage that differentiate neighborhoods within Magnolia's City limits. It should also be reinforced with management strategies that ensure the quality and compatibility of surrounding uses – protections that unincorporated subdivisions do not offer.
- **Parks and Recreation Enhancement.** As the City anticipates construction of master planned communities with elaborate open space plans, consider public park investments in existing neighborhoods lacking recreational features. Using *Chapter 5, Parks and Amenities*, as a guide, these facilities can help to revive the quality of life of older neighborhoods and increase market demand. The relocation of Sullivan Park is a perfect example of a smaller-scale park that could be relocated to an established subdivision without recreation amenities. Houston-area residents favor park spaces with shade and water features, as demonstrated by the success of Unity Park's splash pad and pavilion. Another related consideration is the development of community gardens, which should be strategically located near multifamily housing and smaller lots that lack sufficient space for growing herbs and vegetables. Consider partnering with local organizations to sponsor, advertise, maintain, and mutually benefit from these communal spaces.
- **Prioritization of Infrastructure Improvements.** Work with neighborhood leaders on prioritizing

capital improvements in existing neighborhoods. Preference should be given to select infill areas that would enhance the surrounding uses to the benefit of the entire community, such as the residential properties along Melton Street within the Magnolia Town Center. Such improvements may include street repairs, parking restrictions, shielded street lighting, improved pedestrian lighting, added green space, improved public landscaping, and new signage. In part, this prioritization may also include the demolition of dilapidated structures with the intent of putting the lot back onto the market. This neighborhood improvement list will also be a source of site-specific information for any future grant applications that involve that area.

Policy 6.5 The community will continue to equip citizens with the leadership and crime prevention skills necessary to safeguard the community.

Neighborhood Crime Watch. Continue organizing and soliciting a broad base of support for citizen-led programs to mitigate crime. Local crime prevention efforts may be initiated at the neighborhood scale that corresponds with homeowners association and subdivision boundaries, or they could be organized at a community-wide scale through the City. With the advent of the Magnolia Police Academy, the City of Magnolia's Police Department already has an established program to equip everyday citizens with crime prevention techniques, policies, and procedures – tangible skills that could easily translate to neighborhood watch programs. Furthermore, the City may want to consider partnering with Montgomery County in establishing a Crime Patrol and Prevention District, which imposes a sales and use tax of one-eighth of one percent that can be used toward crime prevention, as regulated by Chapter 363 of the Texas Local Government Code. Both citizen-led and tax-funded initiatives will increase the community's overall safety and quality of life.

- **Community Volunteerism.** Continue to support and facilitate volunteerism in neighborhood cleanup and revitalization. The City of Magnolia's Police Department has taken the lead in educating and training citizens in community outreach through the Magnolia Police Academy. A recent model example was the demolition efforts of the Magnolia Police Academy Alumni Association (MPAAA) and numerous other organizations in 2012. Through collaboration and donations, an abandoned and dilapidated building was demolished at 158 Roy Street at no cost to the City or to the property owners. Future plans of the MPAAA have been made to assist senior and disabled residents with structural repair and yard maintenance to bring their homes into City code compliance.



In 2012, the Magnolia Police Academy Alumni Association led neighborhood revitalization efforts to demolish a dilapidated home at 158 Roy Street. This effort was supported by a team of volunteers and businesses, including Waste Corporation of America, Magnolia Food Basket, Magnolia Party Depot, Signs of Magnolia, DLG Timber, and attorney Steve Crews. Image Source: MPAAA

MAGNOLIA'S FUTURE COURSE IS PAVED WITH NEAR-TERM OPPORTUNITIES AND CONTINUED SUCCESS. THIS PLAN SETS FORTH A COMMUNITY VISION AND ACTION AGENDA THAT AIM TO PRESERVE THE UNIQUE QUALITIES THAT MAKE MAGNOLIA, MAGNOLIA, WHILE PROMOTING BALANCED AND COST-EFFICIENT GROWTH. THE YEAR-LONG, PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS WAS NECESSARY TO GARNER COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND ASSESS THE CITY'S CURRENT AND ANTICIPATED CAPACITIES FOR ENACTING SPECIFIC INITIATIVES. THIS CHAPTER OUTLINES THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION, INCLUDING ONGOING AND ANNUAL AMENDMENT PROCESSES FOR MAINTAINING THIS PLAN'S RELEVANCE AS A "LIVING" DOCUMENT.

Chapter 7 IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

With the completion of a new Comprehensive Plan, the City is equipped with strategies and directives for the ongoing development, redevelopment, and enhancement of the community over the next 20 to 30 years. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: (1) to establish priorities and set out a process for implementation and periodic plan revisions, and (2) to integrate the elements of this plan together to provide a clear path for sound decision-making.

Implementation is an essential step in the planning process. It requires the commitment of the City's leadership, including the Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, 4A Economic Development Corporation Board, 4B Community Development Corporation Board, other City boards and commissions, and City staff.

Plan implementation also requires close coordination with and joint commitment from other entities that significantly influence the City and its growth, including:

- Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT);
- Montgomery County;
- Magnolia Independent School District;
- Lone Star College System;
- Greater Magnolia Chamber of Commerce and Magnolia Parkway Chamber of Commerce;
- Magnolia Police Academy Alumni Association; and
- Residents, businesses, churches, and civic organizations.

Each chapter of this plan outlines specific issues and strategic recommendations to achieve the City's vision. A large number of actions that are recommended relate to regulatory changes, program initiatives, and capital projects. While these recommendations are comprehensive and intended to be accomplished over the full horizon of this plan, near-term strategies must also be put in place to take the first step toward implementation.

The near-term strategies must then be prioritized based on the sequencing of activities, the capacity to fulfill each initiative, and the resources and ability to obligate necessary funding. In addition to implementing the specific recommendations, the City should use the broader policies of this plan's text and maps when making decisions related to the physical and economic development of the community.

METHODS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

To be successful, the City must utilize this plan constantly and consistently, and it must be integrated into ongoing governmental practices and programs. The policies and recommendations must be referenced to make decisions pertaining to the timing and availability of infrastructure improvements; proposed development/redevelopment applications; expansion of public facilities, services, and programs; and annual capital budgeting, among other considerations.

This plan is designed to guide the growth and economic development of the community. The Mayor, each City Council member, staff person, and member of boards, commissions, and/or committees must consider this plan when making decisions related to growth and economic development.

There are three interrelated methods for plan implementation:

- Planning and programming strategies;
- Management strategies; and
- Public investment and funding.

PLAN ADMINISTRATION

Community leaders must take ownership of this plan and maintain their commitment to its ongoing, successful implementation. City officials, including the Mayor, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, other boards and commissions, and staff – as well as local committees and organizations – have essential roles in the implementation of this plan. The strategic recommendations put everyone “on the same page” with respect to what should be achieved. Education, networking, communication, and coordination will be key to ensuring everyone involved is working in the same direction.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

A necessary first step is to conduct individual training workshops with the Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council, and key staff members, as well as others who have a role in plan implementation. These are the groups who, individually and collectively, will be responsible for implementation. The importance of their collaboration, coordination, and communication cannot be overstated. The training initiative should include:

- Discussion of the roles and responsibilities of each individual entity, and its function as to plan implementation.
- A thorough overview of the entire plan, with particular emphasis on the segments that most directly relate to their charge.
- Implementation tasking and priority-setting, allowing each group to establish their own one-, two-, and five-year agendas, in coordination with the strategic agenda of the City.
- Facilitation of a mock meeting to exhibit effective use of this plan's policies and recommendations.
- A concluding question-and-answer session.

ROLE DEFINITION

The City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission will assume the lead roles in implementing this plan. Their chief responsibility is to decide and establish the priorities and timeframes by which each action will be initiated and completed. Although this plan will be recommended by the Planning and Zoning Commission, the City Council must decide which programs require capital outlay, budget for expanded services, additional staffing, further studies, programmatic or procedural changes, and/or regulatory changes.

The hierarchy and roles of implementation are as follows:

CITY COUNCIL

The City Council will:

- Establish overall action priorities and timeframes by which the strategic recommendations will be initiated and completed.
- Appropriate funds and consider and set the funding commitments for this plan's implementation measures.
- Offer final approval of projects/activities and associated costs during the budget process.
- Provide policy direction to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City staff.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

The Planning and Zoning Commission will:

- Recommend to City staff an annual program of actions to be implemented, including guidance as to the timeframes and priorities.
- Prepare an Annual Progress Report for submittal and presentation to the City Council (see Annual Amendment Process later in this chapter for more detail).

- Ensure decisions and recommendations presented to the City Council are consistent with this plan's policies, objectives, and recommendations.
- Help to ensure that this plan is considered in the decisions and actions of other entities.
- Amend, extend, or add plan revisions as necessary and appropriate.

CITY STAFF

City Staff should take the lead in the following general areas:

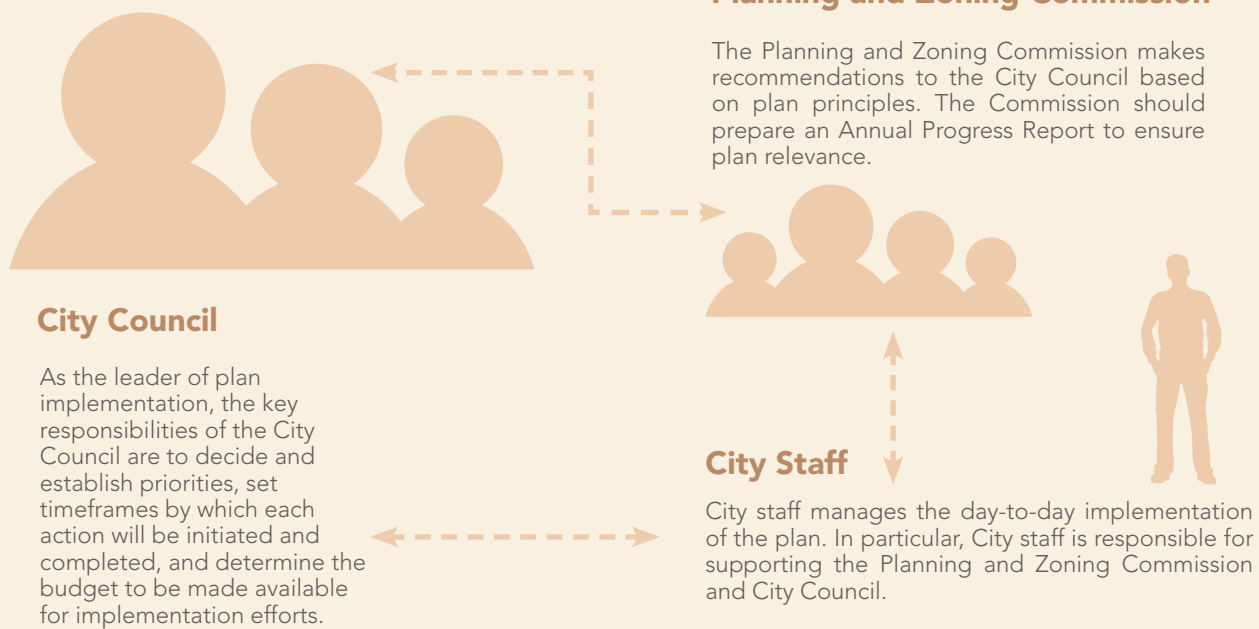
- Managing day-to-day action items relating to plan implementation, including coordination with and solicitation of community partners.
- Supporting and carrying out a capital improvements plan (CIP).
- Managing the drafting of new or amended land development regulations in partnership with the appropriate boards and commissions.
- Conducting studies and developing additional plans (including management of consultant efforts, as necessary).
- Negotiating the specifics of development agreements.
- Administering collaborative programs and ensuring open channels of communication with various private, public, and non-profit implementation partners.
- Providing briefings on plan implementation progress and activities to the Planning and Zoning Commission no less than once annually.
- Maintaining an inventory of potential plan amendments, as suggested by City staff and others, for consideration during annual and periodic plan review and update processes.

COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Increasingly, jurisdictions are acknowledging that issues are regional, rather than local, in nature. Watersheds and other ecosystems, economic conditions, land use, transportation patterns, housing, and the effects of growth and change are issues that cross municipal boundaries, impacting not only the City, but also neighboring municipalities, unincorporated places, Montgomery County, and surrounding counties in the Houston-Galveston region. As a result, the economic health of Magnolia is partly reliant upon its various regional neighbors.

Given Magnolia's relatively small size, some initiatives or community needs identified in this Comprehensive Plan cannot be accomplished by the City on its own. They

Table 7.1, Roles and Responsibilities



may require direct coordination, intergovernmental agreements, or funding support from other public entities or levels of government. Additionally, the ability of potential private and non-profit partners to advance the community's action agenda should not be underestimated. This may occur through cooperative efforts, volunteer activities and in-kind services (which can count toward the local match requirements for various grant opportunities), and public/private financing of community improvements.

PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS

This Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a flexible document allowing for adjustments to changing conditions over time. Shifts in political, economic, physical, technological, and social conditions may influence and change the priorities and fiscal outlook of the community.

As the City evolves, new issues will emerge while others will no longer be as relevant. Some action statements will be found impractical or outdated while new solutions will arise. To ensure that it continues to reflect the overall goals of the community and remains relevant and resourceful over time, this plan must be revisited on a regular basis to confirm that the goals, policies, and action statements are still appropriate.

Two types of revisions to this plan may occur: (1) minor amendments, and (2) major updates. Minor plan amendments may be proposed at any time such as specific adjustments to the *Future Land Use*

and *Character Plan* or the *Thoroughfare Plan* related to particular land development applications or public improvement projects. Minor amendments can be addressed by the City in short order or, if not pressing, be documented and compiled for a more holistic evaluation through an annual plan review process. For example, this is how and when the results of another specialized plan or study can be incorporated into relevant sections of the Comprehensive Plan. More significant plan modifications and updates should occur no less than every five years. Major updates will involve reviewing the base conditions and anticipated growth trends; re-evaluating this plan's goals, policies, and recommendations – and formulating new ones as necessary; and adding, revising, or removing action statements based on implementation progress.

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

The Planning and Zoning Commission, with the assistance of staff (or a consultant), should prepare an Annual Progress Report for presentation to the Mayor and City Council. This report will help to ensure that this plan is consistently reviewed and that any needed modifications or clarifications are identified for the annual minor plan amendment process. Ongoing checks for consistency between this plan and the City's ordinances and regulations should be an essential part of this effort.

The Annual Progress Report should include and highlight:

- Significant actions and accomplishments during the past year, including the status of implementation for each programmed task in this Comprehensive Plan.
- Obstacles or problems in plan implementation, including those encountered in administering the *Future Land Use and Character Plan* and *Thoroughfare Plan* (or any other plan policies).
- Proposed amendments that have come forward during the course of the year, which may include revisions to the individual plan maps or text changes.
- Recommendations for needed actions, programs, and procedures to be developed and implemented in the coming year, including project recommendations to be included in a CIP, other programs/projects to be funded, and priority coordination needs with public and private implementation partners.

ANNUAL AMENDMENT PROCESS

Most substantive amendments to this Comprehensive Plan should be considered and acted on annually, allowing for proposed changes to be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect may be understood. However, some interim amendments during the year may be straightforward as the City's *Future Land Use and Character Plan*, which may require refinement in conjunction with specific land development approvals. When considering a plan amendment, the City should ensure the proposed amendment is consistent with the goals and policies set forth in this plan regarding character protection, development compatibility, infrastructure availability, annexation, conservation of environmentally sensitive areas, and other community priorities. Careful consideration should also be given to guard against site-specific plan changes that could negatively impact adjacent areas and uses or detract from the overall character of the area. Factors that should be considered in deciding on a proposed plan amendment include:

- Consistency with the goals and policies set forth in this plan.
- Adherence with the *Future Land Use and Character Plan* and *Thoroughfare Plan*.
- Compatibility with the surrounding area.
- Impacts on infrastructure provision relating to the water, wastewater, drainage, and transportation systems.
- Impact on the City's ability to provide, fund, and maintain services.
- Impact on environmentally sensitive and natural areas.

- Whether the proposed amendment contributes to the overall direction and character of the community as captured in this plan's vision and principles (and ongoing public input).

FIVE-YEAR UPDATE / EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL REPORT

An evaluation and appraisal report should be prepared every five years. This report should be prepared by City staff (or a consultant), the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Mayor and City Council, and other boards and commissions. The report process involves evaluating the existing plan and assessing how successful it has been in achieving the community's goals. The purpose of the report is to identify successes and shortcomings; evaluate what has changed over the last five years; and make recommendations on how this plan should be modified in light of those changes.

The report should review baseline conditions and assumptions about trends and growth indicators. It should also evaluate implementation potential and/or obstacles related to any unmet goals, policies, and recommendations. The evaluation report and process should result in an amended Comprehensive Plan, including identification of new or revised information that may lead to updated goals, policies, and/or action recommendations.

More specifically, the report should identify and evaluate the following:

1. Summary of major actions and interim plan amendments undertaken over the last five years.
2. Major issues in the community and how these issues have changed over time.
3. Changes in the assumptions, trends, and base studies data, including the following:
 - » The rate at which growth and development is occurring relative to the projections put forward in this plan.
 - » Shifts in demographics and other growth trends.
 - » City-wide attitudes and whether apparent shifts, if significant, necessitate amendments to the stated goals or strategies.
 - » Other changes in political, social, economic, technological, or environmental conditions that indicate a need for plan amendments.
4. Ability of this plan to continue to support progress toward achieving the community's goals. The following should be evaluated and revised as needed:
 - » Individual statements or sections must be reviewed and rewritten, as necessary, to ensure

that it provides sufficient information and direction to achieve the intended outcome.

- » Conflicts between principles and policies that have been discovered in the implementation and administration of this plan must be pointed out and resolved.
- » The Action Agenda must be reviewed and major accomplishments highlighted. Those not completed by the specified timeframe should be re-evaluated to ensure their continued relevance and/or to revise them appropriately.
- » As conditions change, the timeframes for implementing the individual actions of this plan should be re-evaluated where necessary. Some actions may emerge as a higher priority given new or changed circumstances while others may become less important to achieving the goals and development objectives of the community.
- » Based upon organizational, programmatic, and procedural factors, as well as the status of previously assigned tasks, the implementation task assignments must be reviewed and altered, as needed, to ensure timely accomplishment of this plan's recommended actions.
- » Changes in laws, procedures, and missions may impact the ability of the community to achieve its goals. The review must assess these changes and their impacts on the success of implementation, leading to any suggested revisions in strategies or priorities.

ONGOING COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

All review and updates processes related to this plan should emphasize and incorporate ongoing public input. The annual and continual plan evaluation and reporting process should also incorporate specific performance measures and quantitative indicators that can be compiled and communicated both internally and to elected officials and citizens in a "report card" fashion. Examples might include:

- Acres of new development (plus number of residential units and square footage of commercial and other non-residential space) approved and constructed in conformance with this plan and related City codes.
- Various measures of service capacity (e.g., gallons, acre-feet, etc.) added to the City's major utility systems as indicated in this plan and associated utility master plans—and the millions of dollars allocated to fund the necessary capital projects.
- Acres of parkland and miles of trail developed or improved in accordance with this plan and related recreation and development standards.
- Indicators of City efforts to ensure neighborhood integrity as emphasized in this plan.
- Miles of new pedestrian and bicyclist routes added to the City's transportation system to provide alternative mobility options as recommended in this plan.
- New and expanded businesses and associated tax revenue gains through the economic development initiatives and priorities identified in this plan.
- Indicators of the benefits of redeveloped sites and structures (e.g., appraised value, increased property and/or sales tax revenue, new residential units, and retail and office spaces in mixed-use settings) as envisioned through this plan.
- The numbers of residents and other stakeholders engaged through City-sponsored education and outreach events related to Comprehensive Plan implementation and periodic review and updating, as outlined in this plan.

ACTION AGENDA

The vision and goals in this Comprehensive Plan are attained through a multitude of specific actions. Many of the action initiatives highlighted in this section cut across – and are supported by – multiple chapters within this plan.

For progress to be achieved in any of these areas, it is essential that both long- and short-range implementation strategies be identified along with an action timeframe and an assignment of responsibilities to specific entities, as illustrated in **Table 7.1, Action Agenda**, after the following tab. The table includes the following elements and implementation considerations:

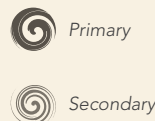
- **Ranking.** Each initiative is listed in order of importance (e.g., first, second, and third priority), which was determined by widespread community input.
- **Core Strategies.** This section relates to the three types of implementation methods noted earlier in this chapter (e.g., planning and programming, management, and public investment and funding).
- **Partners.** This portion of the action agenda highlights public and private partners that might have a role to play in certain initiatives via cost-sharing, technical assistance, direct cooperation (potentially through an interlocal agreement),

or simply by providing input on an issue in which they have some mutual interest. In particular, whenever potential management strategies or revised development standards are to be considered, participation of the development community is essential for building consensus.

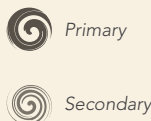
- **Community Themes.** This section relates to the overarching themes discussed in the previous chapters (e.g., land use and character, growth capacity and management, community mobility, parks and amenities, and housing and neighborhoods).

It is essential that implementation priorities be revisited annually to recognize accomplishments; highlight areas where further attention and effort is needed; and determine whether the priority list should be revised given changing circumstances and emerging needs. This review and discussion should occur in conjunction with the City's annual budget process, CIP preparation, and departmental planning.

Once the necessary funding is committed and roles are defined, City Staff should initiate a first-year work program and any public or private implementation partners.



Planning and Programming Strategies		PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING	MANAGEMENT	PUBLIC INVESTMENT AND FUNDING	CITY OF MAGNOLIA	INTERGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS	COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS	PRIVATE SECTOR	LAND USE AND CHARACTER	GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY	COMMUNITY MOBILITY	PARKS AND AMENITIES	HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS
		Core Strategies			Partners			Community Themes					
FIRST PRIORITY	Thoroughfare Planning. Use the Thoroughfare Plan to promote a comprehensive approach to infrastructure-supported development patterns. This involves the preservation of rights-of-way; intergovernmental coordination; and identification of priority road, sidewalk, trail, and intersection improvements in accordance with the Thoroughfare Plan and any related strategic planning documents.												
	New Unity Plaza Study. Form an exploratory committee and develop a marketing study that evaluates community interest, market viability, and site selection of a new Unity Plaza. This study would include identification of financial, regulatory, and administrative incentives to promote walkable and mixed-use housing in a designated area of the Magnolia Town Center.												
	Annexation, ETJ, and Infrastructure Extension Policy. Adopt an annexation, ETJ, and infrastructure policy to guide City officials in determining annexation and development agreement decisions. This would include a fiscal impact model to assess costs and revenues of proposed annexations. Using strategic annexation as one form of growth, the City strives to ultimately exceed 5,000 inhabitants in order to gain home rule authority.												
SECOND PRIORITY	Weekend and Nightlife Programming. Incorporate additional weekend and nighttime community events, like the Love Bug Fest, that can bring life to commercial businesses after the typical work week, thereby encouraging a vibrant “after hours” scene.												
	Regional Communication and Crime Prevention. Coordinate with regional partners to develop a communication and service system for emergencies and natural disasters or a crime patrol and prevention district.												
	Joint Powers Agency. Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of forming a Joint Powers Agency (JPA) to centrally manage water distribution, wastewater collection, and storm drainage for developers and municipal utility districts.												
	Citywide Corridor and Landscape Plan and Design Standards. Develop a Corridor and Landscape Plan and Design Standards along FM 1488, FM 1774, and Nichols Sawmill Road that extend to the extraterritorial jurisdiction boundary.												
	GIS Transportation and Utility Mapping. Consider developing a geographic information system (GIS) mapping database that comprehensively inventories and assesses the condition of all transportation networks and public utilities (water, sewage, and drainage).												
	Economic Development Coordination and Public Awareness. Continue City staff coordination with the Greater Magnolia Chamber of Commerce, Magnolia Parkway Chamber of Commerce, and other community partners to attract new businesses and residents and to support existing ones. This may involve pursuing additional regional and national recognition programs or offering incentive loan programs.												
THIRD PRIORITY	Neighborhood and Area Planning Studies. Pursue regional, state, and federal grants; public-private partnerships; and other funding resources to sponsor sub-area plans for targeted residential and mixed-use opportunities within the community.												
	Community Survey. Develop a community survey to assess public safety needs through fair and equitable participation of residents. This survey should be a joint collaboration with other City departments to focus on specific community issues and opportunities.												
	Neighborhood Crime Watch and Volunteerism. Continue organizing and soliciting a broad base of support for citizen-led programs to mitigate crime and promote neighborhood cleanup and revitalization.												
	Transit Feasibility Study. In collaboration with TxDOT, H-GAC, METRO, and/or the Gulf Coast Rail District, along with other SH 249, FM 1774, and FM 1488 stakeholders, evaluate the feasibility of commuter rail or bus rapid transit. These public modes of travel would reduce automobile reliance and commute times to major employment centers and other metro-area destinations.												
Management Strategies													
FIRST PRIORITY	Building Guidelines and Design Standards. Consider adopting building guidelines or design standards that may address building shape, blank walls and articulation, rooflines, building materials, and architectural treatments. This may apply to commercial, industrial, or high-density residential areas.												
	Regional Detention. Consider revising the City’s stormwater management regulations to provide a streamlined fee-in-lieu process for funding regional off-site storage facilities (that could also serve as recreational amenities).												
	Preservation of Natural Areas. Consider amending the development ordinances to establish resource protection standards (e.g., preservation of woodlands, wetlands, and riparian areas along floodplains).												



		PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING	MANAGEMENT	PUBLIC INVESTMENT AND FUNDING	CITY OF MAGNOLIA	INTERGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS	COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS	PRIVATE SECTOR	LAND USE AND CHARACTER	GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY	COMMUNITY MOBILITY	PARKS AND AMENITIES	HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS
Management Strategies (continued)		Core Strategies			Partners			Community Themes					
SECOND PRIORITY	Review of Land Development Regulations. Review and update existing subdivision and land development regulations so they are consistent with the principles and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.												
	Mixture of Housing Types. Apply management strategies to guide the location, character, quality, lot size, and pattern of development in Magnolia. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preservation of land for low-density housing, which will help to protect the rural and spacious character of Magnolia.• Higher density and mixed-use development patterns along major corridors; within the Magnolia Town Center (and proposed Unity Plaza); and nearby the proposed Aggie Expressway.• Clusters of neighborhood commercial dispersed throughout the community.• Senior housing and amenities in clustered, mixed land use areas near other senior and recreational facilities to facilitate convenient mobility.												
	Road Design Standards. Review the City's Development Standards to integrate more specific access management, connectivity, and safety standards in accordance with the principles of the Comprehensive Plan.												
	Development Agreements. Continue to enter into development agreements with contiguous landowners to ensure private land planning efforts near the City limits are compatible with the Comprehensive Plan and Development Standards.												
THIRD PRIORITY	Deed Restrictions and Covenants. Provide technical support to help neighborhoods prepare deed restrictions and covenants for the purpose of protecting the value and integrity of their homes.												
Public Investment and Funding Strategies													
FIRST PRIORITY	Magnolia Loop. Construct an outer "loop" of secondary arterials and collectors that accommodates continuous travel around the City.												
	Gateways and Landmarks. Enhance or newly construct signature gateway and streetscape treatments at high-profile entry points, as well as at key intersections and locations within the community.												
	Industrial Park Incentives. Consider using 4A and 4B funds to assemble land or develop a financial incentive package to promote industrial development. This may first involve a Business and Technology Park Feasibility Study to identify prime vacant properties warranting incentives.												
	Expanded Design Theme. Expand the branding of the Magnolia Town Center to include land on both sides of the railroad tracks, which may include officially renaming the area and decorative elements, street upgrades, and other outdoor amenities.												
	Sidewalk and Trail Investments. Develop an inventory and master plan identifying opportunities, strategic recommendations, and funding mechanisms to develop the City's network of pedestrian and bicycle routes. This plan would ultimately lead to the construction of new sidewalks and trails.												
SECOND PRIORITY	Facade Grant Program. Consider funding a mini-grant program for existing commercial businesses to help finance building façade improvements, enhance landscaping, and construct other site upgrades that might not otherwise occur. This may be complemented by a Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Fund or Interest Forgiveness Program that is funded by foundations or charitable organizations.												
	New Police Staff, Facilities, and Equipment. Develop a long-term, multi-year Police Department staffing, facilities, and equipment program (similar to the Fleet Management Strategy).												
	Parks and Recreation Enhancement. Consider public park investments in existing neighborhoods lacking recreational features, or expansion of existing facilities to increase the City's level of service.												
	Comprehensive Wayfinding System. Implement a signage and wayfinding system to increase awareness of local attractions, historic points of interest, shopping and restaurants, and special events.												
THIRD PRIORITY	Infill Incentives. Promote infill development and redevelopment through infrastructure investments, incentives (e.g., fee waivers, tax incentives), grants, and strategic land banking with the intent of promoting contiguous development patterns and maximizing the efficiency of existing infrastructure.												
	Beautification and Screening Investments. Use street and drainage improvements as an opportunity to install landscaping and screening that can address nearby compatibility concerns.												