



# City of Dripping Springs Comprehensive Plan 2016

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## **Why Plan?**

The Comprehensive Plan is a document that provides a long term vision for the community. It presents the current conditions that exist as well as a vision for where the community wants to be in the future. To achieve that vision, the plan identifies key challenges and opportunities facing Dripping Springs. More importantly, it defines clear goals and objectives to address those challenges, providing a framework for decision making to community leaders. The plan is intended to be a working document, not a space holder on a shelf.

The plan is rooted in public engagement and reflects the priorities of Dripping Springs residents. It incorporates their expectations for action from city government and other entities to address these priorities. It is important for leaders to recognize that by implementing this plan, they will be serving their community and putting resources into projects identified as most needed by residents.

It is also important to recognize that this plan is intended to be reviewed and revised on a regular basis. Dripping Springs is growing rapidly, that growth will lead to unforeseen challenges and opportunities that require a response. While this plan provides a direction and clear actions to undertake, it is not intended to tie the hands of decision makers and prohibit them from responding to new issues that may arise. It is a framework for decision making, based on extensive public engagement to reflect the concerns of residents.

The key to successful implementation is to keep the plan in front of decision makers so they recognize it as a resource to guide their decisions, basing them on the priorities identified in the plan. When adjustments need to be made, or new priorities arise, they can be incorporated into the plan. The plan is a resource that serves to inform decision making, it is not intended to restrict action or responsiveness from city leadership.

Dripping Springs is a successful and well led community. Leaders are committed to making decisions that reflect the concerns of residents. This plan provides them a foundation for continued success, building on the success of past planning efforts. Implementation of this plan will ensure Dripping Springs continues to be a desirable place to live, work, and play.

## Introduction

### **Introduction**

Dripping Springs has been managing explosive growth for many years, and this growth is expected to continue. This has led to increased pressure on City infrastructure, recreational facilities, the school district, and the quality of life that has attracted, and continues to bring, new residents. The City has worked very hard to protect community values and quality of life in the face of this growth. The 2010 Comprehensive Plan explicitly identified community values and structured the plan goals around those values. Many of the goals identified in the 2010 plan have been accomplished, or are underway. The 2016 update is an opportunity to build on the success of the 2010 plan by identifying new goals and priorities that reflect the changes that have taken place in Dripping Springs over the last six years.

### Plan Process

The update process began with the appointment of a Steering Committee to serve as the community representatives and ensure the final product reflected the goals and values of Dripping Springs' residents. This committee met every two weeks throughout the plan development providing insight and revisions to the final product.

### *Public Engagement*

The first step of the public engagement was a community-wide survey. This survey was available on-line and as hard copies from the City. Well over 1,600 residents participated, providing insight into issues and challenges facing Dripping Springs. Results of the survey can be found in Appendix A. Not surprisingly, key issues identified in the survey included traffic and growth as significant challenges in Dripping Springs. There was also a desire for additional retail and restaurant providers, along with additional employment options for residents. While directly asking the question about new housing development resulted in a majority saying no, a different question about housing showed majority support for increasing housing diversity and opportunities for senior housing. Other key issues included expanding trail and park facilities, and protecting quality of life.

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Focus groups were conducted to gather information on specific issues. These included a group focused on housing, which was identified as a key challenge needing to be addressed in the Plan update. Participants discussed the impact a lack of housing options was having on Dripping Springs, especially the challenge for employers of finding quality employees. A second focus group discussed economic development. The discussion focused on how to expand the Dripping Springs economy by leveraging on the existing assets, like the wedding industry, as well as how to support local entrepreneurs and professionals through additional business services.

Using information from the survey and focus groups, a Town Hall meeting was conducted to develop further insight into the identified issues. The Town Hall had nearly 50 participants, which is typical for this type of meeting, and participants provided additional feedback about key challenges and opportunities facing Dripping Springs.

This input from the survey, focus groups, and Town Hall was reviewed by the Steering Committee and draft goals and recommendations were developed. These goals were then presented at an Open House, where participants voted to prioritize them. Each participant had five votes to use how they wanted to identify priorities. In addition, they had the opportunity to write in goals that were missing from the list. The results from this Open House were used to create the final list of goals and how they are prioritized in this plan update.

### *Future Land Use Workshop*

In addition to the public engagement, a Land Use Workshop was held to develop a vision for future growth in and around Dripping Springs. This workshop included the Planning and Zoning Commission, Steering Committee, and City Council, as well as developers, realtors, community leaders, and residents. The map produced from this workshop was further revised by the Steering Committee to create the Future Land Use map presented in this update. While a Future Land Use map is not zoning and has no regulatory authority, it does represent a starting

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point for revising the Zoning Ordinance and presents a vision that the City can use as it works with developers.

### Plan Goals

Instead of the values based organization of the 2010 plan, this update is organized topically into four sections with goals identified for each of the topics. The Implementation Guide provides specific action steps, timelines, and responsible parties for each of the identified goals to help decision makers know when and how to proceed with achieving plan objectives:

- Development / Growth Management
  - Review and update development and building ordinances
  - Support the expansion of business and professional services
  - Support tourism / wedding related businesses
  - Develop plan to address becoming a Home Rule City
  - Explore the potential for a co-working office space
  - Support expanded broadband internet access
  
- Livability / Quality of Life
  - Support housing options in Dripping Springs
  - Develop a plan for the Triangle Property
  - Implement road, drainage, sidewalk, and lighting improvements along Old Fitzhugh Rd
  - Expand parking options in downtown
  - Develop a Facilities Plan for City-owned properties
  - Bring City properties into compliance with Lighting Ordinance
  - Implement City-Wide Trails Plan
  - Encourage preservation and stewardship of historic springs

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- Infrastructure
  - Revise Wastewater Allocation Policy
  - Explore all options for wastewater reuse and disposal
  - Begin Emergency Management planning efforts
  - Identify unsafe intersections and make needed improvements
  - Develop a Mobility Plan that incorporates Transportation Plan, Trails Master Plan, Transit, and other modes
  - Ensure adequate long term water supply
- Goals from Previous Plans
  - Explore potential for facility consolidation with Hays County, Dripping Springs ISD (DSISD), others
  - Develop community water quality and drainage plans
  - Explore options for increased law enforcement presence
  - Continue discussions with Water Supply Corporation (WSC) regarding consolidation

The goals were also prioritized based on the public engagement process and input from the Steering Committee. This allows those projects identified as being the most important to be a focus of attention in the next year or two.

### Short Term:

- Review and update development and building ordinances
- Support housing options in Dripping Springs
- Revise Wastewater Allocation Policy
- Explore all options for wastewater reuse and disposal
- Begin Emergency Planning Efforts

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### Mid Term Goals

- Support the expansion of business and professional services
- Support tourism / wedding related businesses
- Develop a plan for the Triangle Property
- Implement road, drainage, sidewalk, and lighting improvements along Old Fitzhugh Rd.
- Expand parking options in downtown
- Develop a Facilities Plan for City-owned properties
- Bring City properties into compliance with Lighting Ordinance
- Implement City-Wide Trails Plan
- Identify unsafe intersections and make needed improvements
- Develop a Mobility Plan that incorporates Transportation Plan, Trails Master Plan, Transit, and other modes
- Explore potential for facility consolidation with Hays County, DSISD, others
- Develop plan to address becoming a Home Rule City

### Long Term

- Explore the potential for a co-working office space
- Support expanded broadband internet access
- Encourage preservation and stewardship of historic springs
- Ensure adequate long term water supply
- Develop community water quality and drainage plans
- Explore options for increased law enforcement presence
- Continue discussions with Water Supply Corporation (WSC) regarding consolidation

### Implementation

This plan provides a framework for decision making and clear direction to address the challenges and opportunities facing Dripping Springs. The real work comes in implementing the plan, and it will take support from the community to ensure the recommendations in this plan become reality.

## Chapter 1: Demographic Analysis

### 1.1 Population Estimates and Projections

Dripping Springs is located in one of the fastest growing regions of the country, and this growth is having a significant impact on the community. The City of Dripping Springs is still a small town, with an estimated population of approximately 1,900. However, this does not encompass the much larger area included in Dripping Springs' Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), which includes residents who identify as being from Dripping Springs, despite not being within the City Limits.

Table 1 – Population Estimate and Projection

	2015 (est.)	2020	2030 (TWDB)	2030 (Texas State Data Center)
<b>Dripping Springs</b>	1,905	2,154	2,311	
<b>ETJ</b>	22,860	28,212		
<b>ISD</b>	28,015	34,007		
<b>Hays County</b>	187,591	223,714	313,792	398,384

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, Texas Water Development Board, Texas State Data Center

There are limited population projections available for the City Limits, ETJ, and Dripping Springs Independent School District (DSISD), so the 5 year projection from ESRI Business Analyst is shown in Table 1. This indicates continued and significant growth for the area immediately surrounding Dripping Springs, as well as within the City Limits. The projection does not consider any annexations the City may undertake, which would lead to a larger population within the City Limits. The population of Hays County is expected to more than double in the next 15 years, and much of this growth is likely to be in the Dripping Springs area. This means the City must be prepared to manage significantly increased traffic and development. This will also impact DSISD, which will need to plan for additional students.

### 1.2 Population Characteristics

The survey indicated that many people choose to live in Dripping Springs because it is a good place for families. The school district is rated very highly and is a draw for residents wanting a quality

education for their children. This is reflected in the fact that approximately 25 percent of Dripping Springs residents are 19 years old or younger. This presents an opportunity for the community; however, it also means there is likely high demand for recreational amenities and programming and other community services for this population. It will be important to manage this as Dripping Springs continues to grow and attract families. Overall, the characteristics of the population living in the City Limits, ETJ, and DSISD were very similar in terms of age, race and ethnicity, education, etc. which indicates that the population within the City Limits is indicative of the larger population of this part of Hays County.

Approximately 45 percent is between the ages of 35 and 65 years, which is the prime working years. Many of these residents travel to Austin for work each day. Families choose to live in Dripping Springs because of the high quality of life and manage the commute into Austin.

Table 2 – Age

	<b>Dripping Springs</b>	<b>Hays County</b>
<b>0-4</b>	4.8%	6.5%
<b>5-9</b>	6.3%	6.8%
<b>10-14</b>	8.1%	6.8%
<b>15-19</b>	7.6%	8.5%
<b>20-24</b>	5.0%	12.9%
<b>25-34</b>	7.7%	13.3%
<b>35-44</b>	11.1%	12.6%
<b>45-54</b>	18.0%	11.7%
<b>55-64</b>	16.5%	10.8%
<b>65-74</b>	9.4%	6.6%
<b>75-84</b>	3.8%	2.7%
<b>85+</b>	1.6%	1.0%
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>44.5</b>	<b>31.2</b>

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

The City has a smaller minority population than the State of Texas and Hays County. Nearly 90 percent of City residents identify as White alone, and approximately 16% identify as Hispanic. Hispanic is considered an ethnicity by the Census, not a race, so respondents can identify as Hispanic and any race of their choosing. This means the numbers in Table 3 will not add up to 100% because Hispanic is counted separately. The data for the ETJ and DSISD boundaries were very similar to that for the City Limits. Hays County data was included for this statistic simply to show the comparison.

Table 3 – Race and Ethnicity

	<b>Dripping Springs</b>	<b>Hays County</b>
<b>White</b>	88.8%	78.9%
<b>Black</b>	0.8%	3.8%
<b>American Indian</b>	0.7%	0.8%
<b>Asian</b>	0.8%	1.4%
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	0.2%	0.1%
<b>Some Other Race</b>	6.4%	11.8%
<b>Two or More Races</b>	2.4%	3.1%
<b>Hispanic (Any Race)</b>	16.2%	37.8%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

The adult residents of Dripping Springs have high educational attainment. Over 45 percent have a Bachelors or Graduate degree, while only 6% have less than a high school diploma. This is an indication that Dripping Springs has a strong workforce that would be attractive to potential employers wanting to locate in the area. The opportunity to attract major employers is somewhat limited due to very high land costs and limited land for commercial development.

Table 4 – Educational Attainment Age 25+

	<b>Dripping Springs</b>
<b>&lt; 9<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	2.5%
<b>9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> no Diploma</b>	4.5%
<b>HS Grad / GED</b>	15.9%
<b>Some College</b>	21.6%
<b>Associates Degree</b>	7.3%
<b>Bachelors Degree</b>	32.8%
<b>Graduate Degree</b>	15.3%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

### 1.3 Income and Employment

The income of Dripping Springs reflects the high educational attainment of the residents. Dripping Springs and the area around it have a much higher income than the rest of Hays County. Less than 15 percent of the population within the City Limits makes less than \$35,000. While this is a fairly small population of very low income residents, this does not mean there is not a need for services for these individuals and families. With a relatively small population it can be easy to overlook the needs of these residents. There should be an awareness and outreach to ensure residents are not left behind and struggling without assistance.

Table 5 – Household Income

	<b>Dripping Springs</b>	<b>ETJ</b>	<b>ISD</b>	<b>Hays County</b>
<b>&lt;\$15,000</b>	3.6%	3.0%	3.3%	
<b>\$15,000-\$24,999</b>	4.5%	3.5%	3.9%	
<b>\$25,000-\$34,999</b>	4.8%	3.1%	3.5%	
<b>\$35,000-\$49,999</b>	5.6%	4.4%	5.0%	
<b>\$50,000-\$74,999</b>	16.7%	13.7%	13.9%	
<b>\$75,000-\$99,999</b>	17.2%	13.6%	13.2%	
<b>\$100,000-\$149,999</b>	19.9%	23.0%	22.3%	
<b>\$150,000-\$199,999</b>	12.5%	17.8%	18.8%	
<b>\$200,000+</b>	15.3%	17.9%	17.0%	
<b>Median Household</b>	\$95,556	\$113,854	\$111,876	

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Table 6 – Employment by Industry

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Ag / Mining</b>	0.9%
<b>Construction</b>	11.8%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	6.6%
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	2.6%
<b>Retail Trade</b>	13.0%
<b>Transportation / Utilities</b>	5.7%
<b>Information</b>	0.9%
<b>Finance/Insurance/Real Estate</b>	7.2%
<b>Services</b>	49.6%
<b>Public Administration</b>	1.8%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

### 1.4 Housing

Home prices reflect the high income of the Dripping Springs population. Approximately 65 percent of the homes within the City Limits are valued above \$300,000 and the median home value is \$369,919. This is indicative of the high quality of life and schools that attract residents to the area, as well as the high cost of land caused by explosive growth in the region. One of the biggest challenges facing Dripping Springs will be to support an adequate supply of housing suitable for residents at all incomes, including those just starting out, and seniors who may transition to a fixed income at retirement. In addition, the survey indicates residents want a greater diversity of retail and restaurant options, while current businesses are already struggling with staffing issues. Without adequate housing, it will be difficult to achieve community goals for more shopping and dining establishments because it will be impossible to find enough employees to work these jobs. Because these tend to be lower wage jobs, people are much less willing to drive to them, which they would have to do now because of a lack of workforce housing in and around Dripping Springs. The high home prices also make it difficult for many skilled workers and professionals to find suitable housing including teachers, nurses, police officers, and others who are unable to live in Dripping Springs because of the high home prices.

Another challenge is the lack of available housing. Homes on the market sell very quickly, and there is low inventory. This makes it difficult for potential residents to find an appropriate home. There is also a serious lack of multi-family units and rental options for prospective residents and those new to the community still looking for a permanent home. These are challenges that have been identified in previous plans and need continued attention to address.

Table 7 – Owner Occupied Housing Values

Value	Dripping Springs	ETJ	ISD	Hays County
<\$50,000	3.0%	2.1%	2.4%	6.0%
\$50,000-\$99,999	3.8%	2.6%	3.1%	7.1%
\$100,000-\$149,999	5.1%	2.9%	3.9%	9.3%
\$150,000-\$199,999	6.3%	3.7%	4.5%	18.7%
\$200,000-\$249,999	7.3%	5.4%	5.6%	17.0%
\$250,000-\$299,999	9.4%	9.6%	9.7%	11.3%
\$300,000-\$399,999	21.5%	26.0%	24.6%	13.1%
\$400,000-\$499,999	19.1%	21.4%	20.3%	7.6%
\$500,000-\$749,999	19.6%	21.7%	21.0%	7.7%
\$750,000-\$999,999	3.1%	3.1%	3.4%	1.4%
\$1,000,000+	1.7%	1.5%	1.5%	1.0%
Median Value	\$369,919	\$391,105	\$384,588	\$226,617

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Table 8 – Housing by Occupancy

Status	Dripping Springs	ETJ	ISD	Hays County
Occupied	91.6%	94.6%	93.4%	93.0%
Owner	58.8%	83.4%	81.7%	60.9%
Renter	32.8%	11.3%	11.7%	32.1%
Vacant	8.4%	5.4%	6.6%	7.0%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Detailed vacancy status is only available for 2010, but the overall pattern of limited home availability is unlikely to have changed significantly since that time. Anecdotal reports from realtors indicates that homes sell very quickly, and often for more than the asking price. This can

create a challenge for prospective homebuyers who may miss out on opportunities because homes sell so quickly.

Table 9 – Vacancy Status Count (2010)

Status	Dripping Springs	ETJ	ISD	Hays County
<b>For Rent</b>	17	37	56	1,375
<b>Rented Not Occupied</b>	0	2	3	65
<b>For Sale</b>	8	83	106	667
<b>Sold Not Occupied</b>	4	24	29	152
<b>Seasonal</b>	9	131	220	1,093
<b>Migrant Workers</b>	0	1	1	6
<b>Other</b>	23	96	148	814

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

### 1.5 Summary

Dripping Springs is a vibrant community with a variety of assets and attractions. This has led to explosive growth in the region as Dripping Springs has become one of the most desirable destinations in the Austin region. While this growth has benefitted property owners who have sold their land to developers, homeowners who have seen steady growth in their home values, and business owners who have profited from new customers, it is also creating significant challenges in terms of traffic, loss of open space, and loss of small town character. Dripping Springs has had some success in protecting its identity and character in the face of this growth, but it requires on-going work as development continues. The recommendations in this plan are an opportunity to build on the successful implementation of past projects and goals and to ensure Dripping Springs protects the values its residents hold dear and ensure future growth enhances the community rather than detracting from it.

## Chapter 2: Development / Growth Management

Dripping Springs has been dealing with rapid growth for the last several years, and there is no sign of it slowing down anytime soon. The City has seen the development of thousands of residential lots, primarily in the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), but also within the City Limits. While most of the development has occurred outside the City Limits, the City has been active in managing this growth, leveraging the limited authority it has to promote appropriate growth as much as it can. This has meant that City staff has been responsible for much more work than would be expected in a City with approximately 2,000 residents. Growth in the region has also led to significant demand on City services and facilities, particularly parks and recreation and roadways.

In addition to physical development, there is a need for economic development to diversify the local economy and support new and existing businesses. As Dripping Springs continues to grow, there will be businesses ‘following the rooftops’ and coming to the City; however, there is a need to ensure particular needs are met. The recommendations leverage strengths of the community, while promoting new opportunities. The goals for the Development / Growth Management section include:

- *Review and update Development and Building Ordinances*
- *Support the expansion of business and professional services*
- *Support Tourism / Wedding related businesses*
- *Develop plan to address becoming Home Rule City*
- *Explore the potential for a co-working office space*
- *Support expanded broadband internet access*

Implementation of these goals will promote quality growth in and around Dripping Springs, while helping to build local economic opportunity and vitality.

## Development / Growth Management Goals

### *2.1 Review and update Development and Building Ordinances*

Dripping Springs has utilized planned unit developments and development agreements as primary tools to managing growth. This is not the most efficient way to manage development, both for City Staff and for developers. Revising the development ordinances was a goal from the 2010 comprehensive plan that has not yet been fully accomplished, so there is a pressing need to move forward with this effort. The City should consider appointing an Ordinance Task Force that can own this process, then present draft ordinances to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council for adoption.

Updating the ordinances will provide several benefits for Dripping Springs. It will incorporate the goals from this update and the 2010 plan into the development process, which will ensure future development supports community values. It will make the development process more efficient and more consistent, which will be more cost effective for developers as well as less time consuming for staff. Revised ordinances are also an important piece of ensuring a diversity of housing options in Dripping Springs. By allowing for a variety of housing types, in locations where they are appropriate, the full spectrum of housing may be built, helping to solve one of the priority issues identified in this plan.

The first step is to review best practices from similar communities to identify policies that might be appropriate for Dripping Springs. Some cities are establishing conventional zoning for much of the City; however, in specific areas of town identified as activity nodes, more flexible form-based zoning will be used. This type of zoning focuses more on building appearance, size, and relationship to other buildings and the street rather than strictly controlling uses in that building. In the targeted nodes, the goal is to provide opportunity for a mix of uses that can meet community needs of lower cost housing along with additional retail, office, and commercial uses. The Steering Committee for this Plan update discussed this type of development as appropriate for Dripping Springs. Key intersections, like FM 150 and RR 12, along with US 290 on the east and west edges of town, can benefit from being defined as development nodes with the opportunity

for a variety of uses to occur within them. Since these locations also serve as gateways to Dripping Springs, it will be beneficial to have regulations in place that require high quality development.

The Ordinance Task Force can utilize information from this planning effort, particularly the Conceptual Future Land Use map (Figure 1) to develop recommendations for the ordinance revisions. The City Attorney can be an important resource in this effort, ensuring the ordinance adheres to legal standards and best practices. There is also a need for public engagement during the revision process. While there has been extensive public engagement during this update process, there will be a need to engage with residents to get their input and feedback on proposed ordinance changes. This is especially true if significant changes are made for the zoning in specific areas, those property owners should be involved in the process to ensure their support for recommended changes.

The Conceptual Future Land Use map presents a vision for future development that focuses on areas of undeveloped land within or very near to the current city limits. The defined land use types include:

- Low Density Residential – matches much of the development occurring around Dripping Springs
- Medium Density Residential – smaller lot single family homes
- Mixed Use – mixed retail, office, and residential uses, also appropriate for multi-family residential
- Retail / Office – shops, restaurants, and professional offices

In addition, several activity nodes have been identified. These represent areas for new development that should have more attention on factors of design because they are located at gateway points entering into Dripping Springs. These may represent opportunities for overlay

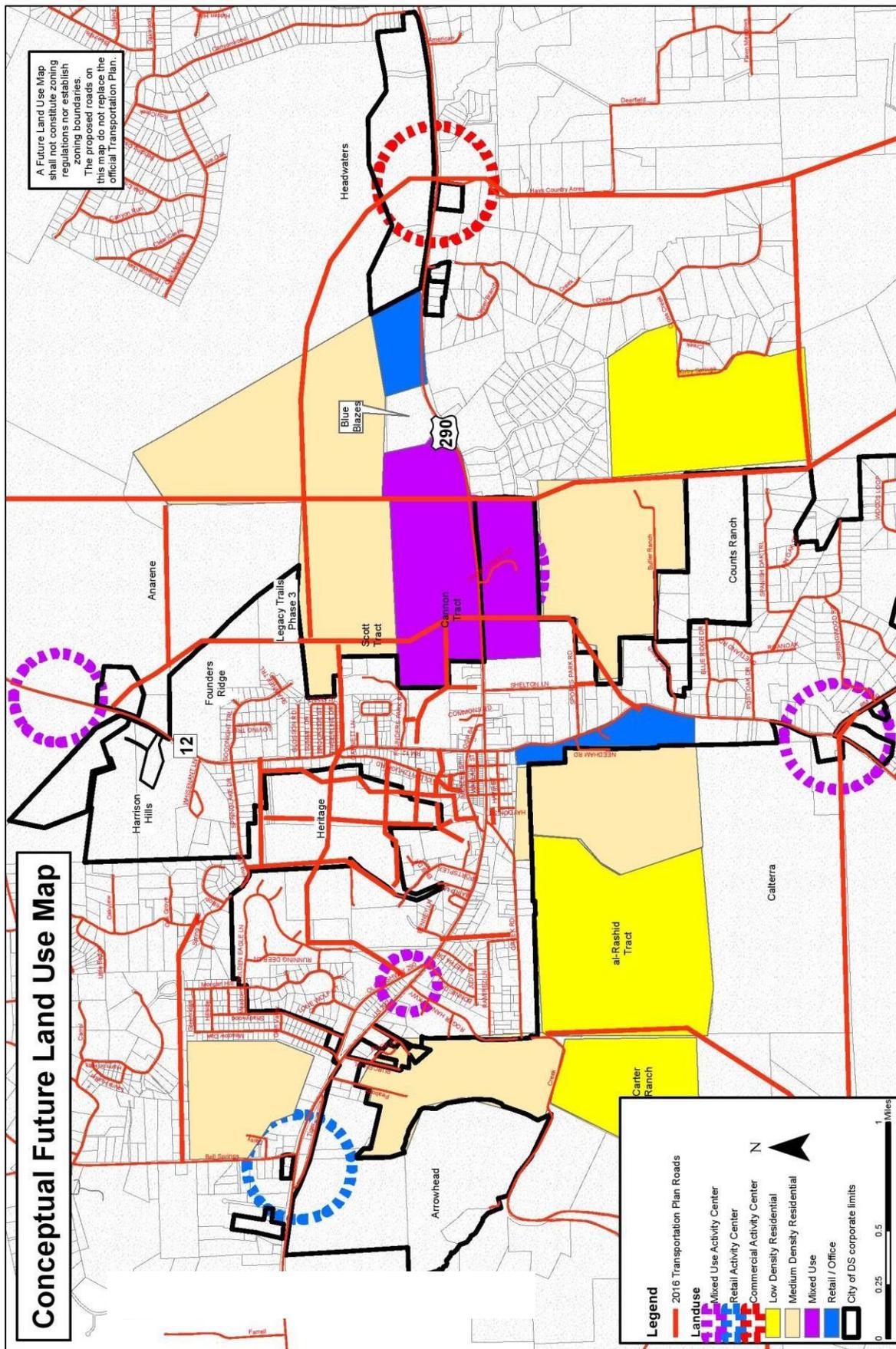


Figure 1: Conceptual Future Land Use Map

districts with higher standards for things like architecture and landscaping to create an appealing entry point into the City.

Revising ordinances is not a glamorous or fun activity, but it is vital to ensure that Dripping Springs can continue to manage growth in a way that protects community values and achieves community goals. It will also help City Staff by making the process less dependent on development agreements and other processes that require high investments of staff time.

### *2.2 Support the expansion of business and professional services*

Dripping Springs has a large number of professionals who either work from home full time, or have careers that allow them flexibility to work at home at least part time. There are also a number of small businesses in the area. Despite this, there are few professional and business services available locally to support this demand. Services like printing, computer repair, and others have limited availability in Dripping Springs, often requiring people to drive to Austin or Bee Cave to meet these needs. Addressing this missed opportunity will benefit existing businesses, help to diversify the local economy, and make Dripping Springs more attractive to prospective businesses that have need of locally available businesses support services.

This goal should be embraced by the Economic Development Committee and the Chamber of Commerce rather than being left to the City. The Chamber has a relationship with the existing businesses and can lead the development of the inventory of needed services. This inventory can become the basis for updating the 'gap analysis' developed by the Chamber of Commerce in the last 2 or 3 years. This can identify what services are missing from Dripping Springs that are needed. It can also help to quantify the demand for these services. Understanding the demand will be key in recruiting necessary businesses because it will show that there is money to be made offering professional and business services in the area. Once the need is defined, a marketing campaign can be done, targeting those types of businesses that are needed in the area.

### *2.3 Support Tourism / Wedding related businesses*

Dripping Springs has become the 'Wedding Capital of Texas', with a variety of wedding venues in and around the area. In addition, Dripping Springs Ranch Park hosts events and activities throughout the week and nearly every weekend. This means more visitors in Dripping Springs and more demand for hotels, bed and breakfast facilities, and short term rentals. New hotel growth is underway, with three hotels in the works in addition to the existing hotel. It is likely that more bed and breakfasts will also open to meet growing demand. Finally,



short term rentals are growing in popularity, with homeowners using on-line tools like AirBNB and others, to rent their homes to visitors.

As these trends continue, it will be important for the City to ensure proper regulation and oversight to protect community values and quality of life. Many cities have struggled with the issue of short term rentals, with neighbors complaining about noise and parking issues related to them. There is a need to balance property rights with protecting the rights of neighbors, and a well written short term rental policy can provide that balance. The City should consider developing this policy. The development ordinance review process would be an opportunity to do this, and the Ordinance Task Force can be tasked with this effort as part of their work.

Another opportunity with the development of new hotels is for Dripping Springs to become a destination for small group meetings and conferences. While there is not a facility for large conventions, many wedding venues host small meetings and events and new hotels will also

meeting space for smaller groups. The proximity to Austin and growing number of activities and amenities make Dripping Springs an attractive destination for this type of meeting. The Chamber of Commerce can create a marketing campaign built around this as new hotel facilities come on line. This would be a beneficial service for the community, but also for the new hotels to help generate business for them and help them be successful. This will also support local restaurants that can benefit from these groups.

#### *2.4 Develop plan to address becoming a Home Rule City*

With planned developments and annexations, it is expected that Dripping Springs will reach the 5,000 population needed to become a Home Rule City. Home Rule creates new opportunities for the City to be proactive in managing development, and also in the authority it has. A Home Rule city has much broader authority and flexibility in how it operates over a General Law city.

As the City approaches this threshold, it will be important to develop a full understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by becoming a Home Rule city. City Staff should work with the City Attorney to ensure they are fully educated on what the implications are, what it will mean for how business is conducted, and that the needed structure is in place to support this change. This includes understanding the regulatory capacity that comes with becoming a Home Rule city. This will ensure Dripping Springs is fully informed and prepared for this transition.

This includes creating a City Charter. The Charter acts as the Constitution for the City, and once adopted can only be revised through an election. It will be important to create a Charter based on community goals and priorities, which the City has done well in identifying. The Charter development should begin relatively soon, since this will be the foundational document for the City, this is not something to rush through. The City Attorney can provide insight into this process and help guide it to fruition.

Finally, becoming a Home Rule city requires an election to adopt the City Charter and make the transition. It will be important for there to be an outreach and education effort to inform residents of what the change will mean and how it can benefit them. This is important because if the vote fails, there is a significant time gap before another election can be held, so having

community support is vital. As with any election, providing good, reliable information is a challenge, so the City should leverage all its channels for informing and educating residents, while fostering their support for the transition.

### *2.5 Explore the potential for a co-working office space*

Another opportunity to support area businesses is through co-working. Co-working spaces are offices that are used on a part-time basis by local business people. They can provide needed equipment, like printers, etc. and conference space that is typically not available for at home workers. There is currently a space offering this service in Dripping Springs; however, it is not well known or publicized. Promoting this space could be an opportunity to support an existing business while meeting the needs of others.

Another benefit to this type of space is the opportunity for it to serve as incubator space for entrepreneurs. Because the space is shared with many types of business people, new business owners can begin to network and establish relationships with more established owners. These mentoring relationships can be very beneficial to new business owners, helping them to identify challenges and opportunities they may otherwise miss. This can help foster more economic vitality in the area as entrepreneurs are successful starting businesses to meet local demand.

The Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Committee should lead this effort, initially by reaching out to the existing co-working space to determine the challenges they are facing and opportunities for assistance. This may include helping to publicize the facility to local business people and help establish relationships with potential users. Exploring other co-working facilities in other communities can also provide insight into what makes them successful. Splash Coworking is located in the heart of downtown San Marcos and provides a range of services for local businesses as well as entrepreneurial support for start ups (<http://www.splashcoworking.com/>). Another example is the CoWork Factory in New Braunfels (<http://coworkfactorynb.com/>),



which offers shared space, conference rooms, and other facilities for reasonable rates. Because of the large number of independent business people in and around Dripping Springs, this type of facility could fill a gap in services in the area.

### *2.6 Support expanded broadband internet access*

Many areas of Dripping Springs have limited broadband access, which limits the opportunity for new businesses, those wanting to work from home, and families with multiple users from accessing quality service. State law has strict prohibitions on City provision of internet utilities, so there is limited opportunity for the City to play a major role in this effort; however, there are ways the City can help expand services. One option may be to encourage developers to provide connections to internet infrastructure being installed in new subdivisions. This can be an option that allows existing neighborhoods to connect to high speed infrastructure in adjoining development. The City should also be proactive in reviewing its policies to ensure they are not a barrier to service expansion.

### Chapter 3: Livability / Quality of Life

Dripping Springs has a very high quality of life, and has become a very desirable place for new residents because of the many amenities available, proximity to Austin, and excellent schools. The goals in this section will enhance the already high quality of life by leveraging assets in Dripping Springs, including the Triangle Property, Old Fitzhugh Rd. and others.

This section is one with a need for a strong commitment from the City, including Staff, City Council, and other appointed committees directly involved in oversight of these efforts. There are also a number of projects that will require allocation of resources to implement, and thus require outreach to build support for this spending. Because of the extensive public engagement in this planning effort, and the City's success in leveraging resources for community benefit, it is likely that support will be there as work is needed to accomplish the goals identified as the following:

- *Support housing options in Dripping Springs*
- *Develop a plan for the Triangle Property*
- *Implement road, drainage, sidewalk, and lighting improvements along Old Fitzhugh Rd.*
- *Expand parking options in downtown*
- *Bring City properties into compliance with Lighting Ordinance*
- *Develop a plan for other City-owned properties in downtown*
- *Implement Trails Master Plan*
- *Encourage preservation and stewardship of historic springs*

## Livability / Quality of Life Goals

### *3.1 Support housing options in Dripping Springs*



Rapid growth combined with high quality of life has pushed the median home price in Dripping Springs to over nearly \$370,000 in the City Limits and over \$390,000 in the ETJ. There is also minimal multi-family options, which means Dripping Springs is facing a serious issue with affordability challenge. This is seen in the struggle that many restaurant and retail businesses have in hiring and keeping employees, and even with a challenge for the ISD and other businesses to attract potential employees. There is a need to promote housing opportunities across the spectrum of price to ensure Dripping Springs can be home to residents at a variety of incomes, and not simply become an enclave for the wealthy.

There are several ways the City can encourage more housing options. The first is through the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. These regulations set the standard for what types of development are allowed and are vital in supporting community development goals. Zoning regulations identify areas of town where a variety of housing can be built, focusing development of higher densities in areas where it is most appropriate. With how rapidly Dripping Springs is developing, it is vital that the City identify suitable areas for different types of housing to ensure future development provides the full spectrum of needed housing. As the City goes through the process of revising its ordinances, it should ensure that housing diversity is a priority goal in developing the new regulations. The provision of adequate water and wastewater infrastructure is another key issue to ensuring housing diversity, especially higher density homes and senior facilities that require wastewater service.



This should include multi-family options. These do not have to be large apartment complexes, rather they can be smaller complexes that better fit the character of Dripping Springs. There may also be opportunities for mixed use developments, where residential units are built over retail and office spaces. Townhomes, garden homes, and

duplexes can be designed to complement single family development and be built in conjunction with single family homes. There are many ways to weave lower cost housing into existing and planned developments without negatively affecting home values and quality of life.

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are another opportunity to incorporate lower cost housing options into the existing fabric of the community. These units provide an option for older residents who want to downsize but remain in Dripping Springs or young couples just starting out. They also provide an option for homeowners who may want or need extra income, allowing them to remain in their homes by providing supplemental income. It will be important to explore best practices from other communities and establish a policy that reflects the values of Dripping Springs and protects neighborhood integrity for existing residents.

The City may determine there is a need for more proactive measures to encourage housing options. This may include fee waivers and infrastructure assistance for development that offers lower cost housing. This would require action by City Council to establish policies that reflect community priorities, ensure fiscal responsibility, and if there is expressed demand for this activity by residents.

### *3.2 Develop a plan for the Triangle Property*

The Triangle can become the front porch for Dripping Springs, welcoming visitors and serving as a gathering spot for residents. The Farmers Market and Veterans Memorial Park are already

attractions to the area, but there is a need for improvements to really make the area a destination. A sub-committee of the Parks and Recreation Committee has been appointed to lead the efforts to improve this space, and this has been identified as a high priority for action.

The plan for the property should address the appearance of the area, with recommendations for landscaping and other improvements that can enhance how the area works and its attractiveness. Once the plan is developed, a funding mechanism will need to be created. This should include funding for



identified improvements, but also for on-going maintenance of landscaping and facilities. Fundraising can include local sponsorships, 'Buy-a-Brick' program, as well as searching for grants. There is a successful roadmap in the fundraising efforts for Mercer St. improvements, and this model can be utilized for the Triangle. This effort will not just provide funding, it will build community engagement and ownership of the project, which can promote long term viability and sustainability for the effort.



Over the very long term, there should be a discussion about the relocation of the Water Supply Corporation (WSC) facilities on the property. This is not something to be undertaken lightly as it will be very expensive and create significant challenges. However, this will open up additional space

for added amenities at the site along with improving the appearance of the property. While not something to be done in the immediate future, the potential for this project should be explored and when (or if) it becomes appropriate, should be undertaken.

### *3.3 Implement road, drainage, sidewalk, and lighting improvements along Old Fitzhugh Rd.*

Old Fitzhugh Rd. represents an opportunity to extend the success the City has had with revitalizing Mercer St. to a new area. Old Fitzhugh is part of an Historic District, which has given it a layer of protection from unsuitable development and inappropriate building. The next stage is to make improvements



to the infrastructure of the area that will serve to encourage redevelopment and new building along the road. This development can achieve a variety of community goals by offering new business and housing options in an area already served by infrastructure and in proximity to other City services and businesses.



The key to this effort will be determining how to pay for needed improvements to the area. The typical approach would be for the City to issue certificates of obligation or bonds to fund the needed improvements. Because the spending will result in additional tax revenues over time and meet community goals, this would be an appropriate vehicle for

funding the needed infrastructure. Another option may be the implementation of a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district. TIF districts are an opportunity to leverage the increased property values associated with infrastructure improvements and development to fund the improvements. As property values increase, the additional tax revenue generated by those increases is used to repay the cost of improvements. These can be a good way to fund improvements because the City does not lose any revenue to the general fund, instead, it is only the increased revenue that is channeled to the district. This option should be explored to help offset costs associated with the Old Fitzhugh effort, particularly because the opportunity for significant development exists in this area and infrastructure improvements would unleash the potential of this area to become a destination for Dripping Springs that complements Mercer St.

#### *3.4 Expand parking options in downtown*

Development on Mercer St. has led to increased traffic and more people parking in the area. As growth continues, and as new projects in the area open, it will be necessary to provide additional parking options to serve businesses. Often, it is not necessary to build new parking spaces, rather parking can be an issue of behavior. The first step is to remind business owners and employees that they need to leave prime parking spaces for their customers. It has been known to happen that those who complain most vocally about their customers not having parking are parking their own cars in the spots immediately in front of their business. Education and outreach to owners and employees on the need to leave prime spots for visitors is important.



Another relatively low cost opportunity is to leverage existing parking resources more efficiently. This can include ensuring appropriate and adequate signage directing visitors to existing parking spaces. Wayfinding and signage are an important element in the visitor experience and can serve not only to inform visitors but also to reinforce the identity and branding of an area. To supplement signage, the pedestrian space must be attractive and safe to encourage people to walk farther from parking to businesses. Wide sidewalks, benches, landscaping, and proper lighting will encourage people to walk farther and spend more time in the area. Rather than just parking in front of one business then leaving, having an attractive pedestrian space will encourage people to spend more time in downtown.

Shared parking is another option. Businesses that are open during the business day can make their lots available on nights and weekends, when visitation for other types of businesses like bars and restaurants is higher. The City should work with downtown businesses to support shared parking and encourage this as a low cost solution. Long term, there may be a need for additional parking lots and spaces. This may be an opportunity to utilize City-owned properties in downtown, or potentially other lots in the area. Parking lots can be expensive and it will require an adequate funding source for development and on-going maintenance. A TIF district, discussed above, may be an option to help offset costs for parking improvements. Some communities charge for parking, but this is unlikely to have support in Dripping Springs and might serve to deter visitors. Over the long term, ensuring adequate parking will take investment from the City to ensure the economic vitality of downtown.

### *3.5 Develop a Facilities Plan for City-owned properties*

The City currently owns several properties that offer an opportunity for additional development that benefits the community. A Facilities Plan is an important tool that can identify existing and future needs for the City, including the most appropriate utilization for City-owned properties to

meet these needs. It can also provide direction for related goals like facility sharing with Hays County and DSISD. A Facilities Plan will provide a thorough assessment of City-owned properties and facilities, and incorporate expected staff growth and other long-term issues that will drive future facility needs. It will provide direction for future investment in buildings and other facilities that will be needed as Dripping Springs continues to grow.

The first step is to develop an inventory of City-owned properties with their current uses and conditions. This inventory is the starting point to identify how to best utilize these properties. This may include parking for lots in and around Mercer St., recreational amenities, or even potentially selling the properties to fund other needed projects. In addition, there is a need to establish expected staffing, equipment, meeting space, and other requirements that have to be addressed as City Staff grows. These needs will drive the design for new or expanded facilities, and the costs associated with those facilities.

One of the key city-owned properties is the Stephenson Building. This building is currently under-utilized and in need of significant renovation to become a real asset for the City. There have been discussions about how to best re-use this property; however, there has been limited action taken. The first step is a thorough assessment of the property to determine the renovation needs and estimated costs. This would provide guidance on how to move forward with this project. It may also help determine potential use for the building. With this assessment in hand, the City can then begin to develop a plan for making needed improvements. Identifying a funding source for the effort will be important. Money may be pulled from the General Fund, or as part of other funding options, like bonds or certificates of obligation or a TIF district. There may also be an opportunity for a public / private partnership that funds needed improvements in return for occupying space in the renovated building. This is a potential that should be explored if the City does not have an immediate need for the space. The Stephenson Building is a landmark that can contribute to the heritage and identity of Dripping Springs and should be renovated to provide on-going utility to the community.

Finally, public property can be used as a location for public art. Many communities have had tremendous success in creating interest and excitement through public art. An example is the CowParade, which has exhibited in cities across the country. Cows sculptures are created by local artists, then installed throughout town. They are then auctioned off to raise funds for local charities ([www.cowparade.com](http://www.cowparade.com)). This could serve as an example for a fundraising opportunity for local projects, possibly using the school mascot Tigers instead of cows. Hutto is a community that has embraced its mascot, the Hippo, and hippo sculptures



of all sizes can be found throughout town. Public art can spark interest in the community and serve to attract visitors to the area. It does not take a significant investment from the City, instead, the City can allow installations on city-owned properties. It is a low cost way to serve the community, attract visitors, and contribute to the unique identity of Dripping Springs.

### *3.6 Bring City properties into compliance with Lighting Ordinance*

Being able to see the stars is one reason people choose to live in Dripping Springs. It is such a priority that Dripping Springs became the first 'International Dark Sky Community' in Texas, and has established an ordinance to mitigate light pollution. New development utilizes lighting that provides adequate illumination for safety and activities, but is shielded from lighting the sky or adjoining properties. This helps to preserve the rural character and quality of life for residents.

Many city properties do not yet comply with the lighting ordinance standards. This is because of the cost and work needed to dismantle existing lights and replace with compliant fixtures. The City should update its list of facilities that require replacement lighting and the funding needed to bring them into compliance. This prioritized list can then be utilized during the budget process to identify projects to be completed as funding allows. While preventing light pollution is a high priority, there is also the need to promote fiscal responsibility and these projects can be undertaken over time as funding is available.

### *3.7 Implement City-Wide Trails Plan*

The City has adopted the City-Wide Trails Plan and has begun projects identified in that document. Providing a network of trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes contributes to the quality of life in Dripping Springs by increasing recreational opportunities and providing access to community destinations for those who choose, or are unable, to drive. The City should continue its work to expand these facilities as funding is available. The City is currently working to expand the City-Wide Trails Plan throughout the ETJ as well as adopt trail guidelines.

The City is also working with developers to provide facilities in new development. This marks the most cost effective time for developing trails and sidewalks because they can be incorporated into on-going development projects. This provides amenities and connections that benefit the entire community without costing local taxpayers. This activity should be supported and continued, and developers are likely to go along with this because it enhances the appeal of their projects to include these amenities.

Long term, the City should explore the potential to connect to the Violet Crown Trail. This is a regional plan that will connect existing trail networks in Austin to communities in Hays County through water quality lands and easements on private property. This trail will be a tremendous draw for hikers and cyclists. While the trail is not within the City, there may be an opportunity for Dripping Springs to partner with Hays County and others to create a connection to the trail. This would allow access for Dripping Springs residents as well as bring trail users from the Violet Crown Trail into Dripping Springs to patronize local businesses.

### *3.8 Encourage preservation and stewardship of historic springs*

Very few residents of Dripping Springs have seen the springs for which the town is named. The network of springs that led to the name are on private property and not accessible to the public. There is limited opportunity to change the status of the springs, the resources and support to acquire the properties is not there at this time. However, there is an opportunity to protect the springs and ensure their long term sustainability. To do this, the City should reach out to the property owners to inform them of the historic nature and importance of the springs. In addition,

appropriate standards to protect water quality and quantity should continue to be enforced to maintain the environmental health of the springs as new development continues. The City should also maintain on-going relationships with the property owners so if interests change, the City can be in a position to take advantage of an opportunity to either create access to the springs, or potentially acquire the property in the future.

## Chapter 4: Infrastructure

Infrastructure is one of the most significant costs for municipal government, and requires long term planning and investment. The tremendous growth in and around Dripping Springs has increased usage of infrastructure, particularly water and wastewater. Expected growth will place continued pressure on the existing capacity of these services and require expansion to accommodate in the near term. Having a strategy to develop projects and the funding to support them is a key challenge for the City, and will require partnerships to be successful.

Because of the many partners involved with the provision of infrastructure, from Capitol Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) and Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), to the WSC, and others, the projects identified in this section will take a great deal of work to be successful. It is important for the City to maintain its current relationships with these entities and seek to enhance partnerships going forward to ensure adequate infrastructure to support the rapid growth in the City.

- *Revise Wastewater Allocation Policy*
- *Continue to explore all options for wastewater reuse, disposal*
- *Create Treated Effluent Reuse Policy*
- *Begin Emergency Management planning efforts*
- *Identify unsafe intersections and make needed improvements*
- *Develop a Mobility Plan that incorporates Transportation Plan, Trails Plan, Transit, and other modes*
- *Ensure adequate long term water supply*

### Infrastructure Goals

#### *4.1 Revise Wastewater Allocation Policy*

Expansion of the existing wastewater system, which includes applying for a permit to discharge treated effluent into a tributary of Onion Creek, is receiving significant resistance from property owners, environmental groups, and the City of Austin. There is a need to review the existing

allocation of Living Unit Equivalents (LUEs), which are the way that wastewater capacity is measured. The City should review its existing policies for how LUE's are allocated and revise the policy to support community goals. There is a need to ensure adequate LUEs are available for desired development, including additional retail and restaurant options. Also, multi-family properties will be better served through central wastewater, so having capacity to serve areas designated for this use is necessary. The process of revising this policy should be transparent, ensuring residents understand the decision making process and how priorities are determined. This will facilitate revised policy adoption because a transparent process will also educate the public on the allocation policy and build support for it. This will ensure that residents understand how and why the City is allocating LUEs to particular uses and developments and ensure support for those decisions.

#### *4.2 Explore all options for wastewater reuse and disposal*

The City has explored options for expanding wastewater capacity and is experiencing some resistance to the discharge permit that has been applied for that would allow discharge of treated effluent into a tributary of Onion Creek. However, limited wastewater capacity is a significant drag on continued growth, particularly inside the City Limits where new development is desired. Addressing this challenge is a key issue for Dripping Springs in the immediate future.

The City should continue its outreach and education campaign on the need to expand service and how the water quality in Onion Creek would be protected if a discharge permit is issued. This will be a difficult challenge because there is opposition; however, it is necessary to provide for future development. The City should continue to develop relationships with elected officials and other influencers to build their support for the effort and begin to create a coalition of support to offset the resistance. Education and communication is vital and the City must continue to be open and have on-going discussions with those opposed to better understand their issues and identify opportunities to ameliorate their concerns.

Another opportunity to manage wastewater is through its use for landscape irrigation. At this time the City has over 600,00 gallons per day of treated effluent dedicated to reuse customers. The City should continue to reach out to developers and other property owners to encourage the expansion of areas irrigated with treated effluent. This will require an investment in ‘purple pipes’ to transport the wastewater to where it is needed; however, this effort will reduce the need for dependence on surface or ground water resources for irrigation and will also lesson the amount of treated effluent that would otherwise be discharged. . Another option may be Direct Potable Reuse (“DPR”), which requires fairly expensive treatment; however, can also provide a long term alternative water supply for the City. This has been adopted in a few cities around the country, and will likely become more common over time as populations continue to grow and water becomes more limited. The City commissioned a Direct Potable Reuse Feasibility Study in 2015 and will design the Wastewater Discharge Facility in a manner that will allow for DPR upgrades in the future.

#### *4.3 Begin Emergency Management planning efforts*

The City appointed an Emergency Management Commission in January 2016 to take responsibility for beginning emergency management planning for the City. Dripping Springs does not currently have an Emergency Management Plan, instead it falls under the auspices of Hays County emergency planning. The Commission has been reviewing the Hays County plan to understand the recommendations in place that may affect Dripping Springs and how Dripping Springs can become more active in the County-wide planning efforts. This may lead to the Commission making funding request to City Council in the FY 2018 budget to begin acquiring needed materials for emergency preparedness.

Over time, it will be appropriate to conduct emergency drills that can identify gaps in services and response and help educate residents. These exercises can be coordinated with Hays County, the Emergency Services Districts (ESDs), the WSC, DSISD, and other entities that will need to respond to incidents. These exercises will build capacity among first responders and help ensure preparedness in the event of weather and other large-scale emergencies.

Emergency Management Plan rather than relying on the Hays County plan. This plan would incorporate local priorities and values, and provide direction for the City to ensure it has adequate facilities and equipment to respond to an emergency.

#### *4.4 Identify unsafe intersections and make needed improvements*

Traffic is the inevitable product of rapid growth, and traffic safety becomes an even more pressing issue with more people on the roads. While the major intersections in Dripping Springs are on the state-controlled roads, the City still has a role in promoting traffic safety and reducing wrecks. The first step is to develop an inventory of where crashes are occurring to determine high incident sites and those where severe crashes are occurring. This inventory can become the starting point to determine needed improvements.

Improvements may include the addition of turn lanes, lights, and other features to improve safety. Interim measures may include increased enforcement in specific spots to reinforce proper behavior and adherence to traffic laws. This can be done in partnership with Hays County Sheriff and Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) where appropriate. Other steps may include temporary signage, as was used at the site of a fatal wreck on US 290. This can educate drivers and make them more aware in areas where incidents occur.

Longer term, there may be a need for infrastructure changes that require significant financial investment. If these are on local roads, the City will have to identify funding for needed improvements. On State roads, the City will have to lobby TxDOT for needed changes. If there are serious and immediate improvements, the City may consider a 'pass through' project. This is where the City pays the up front costs to implement a project and is reimbursed by TxDOT over time. This can be beneficial in addressing immediate needs, but is a significant up front expense that may be unreasonable for Dripping Springs to accommodate. However, if there is enough pressure to increase safety, this is an option that can be considered.

#### *4.5 Develop a Mobility Plan that incorporates Transportation Plan, Trails Plan, Transit, and other modes*

A Mobility Plan would build on the existing Transportation Plan and Trails Master Plan to provide a holistic approach to addressing transportation needs in and around Dripping Springs. It would explore all options for moving people to include pedestrians, transit users, cyclists, and drivers.

This process should begin with an exploration of Mobility Plans in other communities to identify best practices and determine an approach that is suitable for Dripping Springs. The plan can then be developed to create a long term vision for mobility that provides for all users and ensures appropriate transportation infrastructure is developed over time.

Many Dripping Springs residents work in Austin, which means most of them are lining up on US 290 to get to work in the morning and home in the evening. There may be opportunities to provide transit options and encourage carpooling to reduce traffic levels. On US 79 in Taylor, there are dedicated parking lots established by TxDOT for car poolers. This provides a safe



parking space for people to leave their cars and then share rides into Austin. This is similar to 'slug lines' that operate in the Washington DC area, where commuters share rides to common destinations. This is a practice that might be beneficial in Dripping Springs, but it would take some coordination to get started. There may also be an opportunity for a partnership with Capitol Metro to provide van pools for commuters. While Dripping Springs does not have the Capitol Metro sales tax, the Transportation Committee can reach out to Capitol Metro to determine what, if any, services might be available, such as van pools, that are funded by user fees rather than sales tax. All options should be explored to improve traffic conditions in and around Dripping Springs to ensure continued quality of life and economic vitality.

#### *4.6 Ensure adequate long term water supply*

Water provision in Dripping Springs is through the WSC, which has its own Board of Directors, funding mechanisms, and long range planning. The City has established a strong relationship with the WSC and works with them as needed to support development in and around Dripping Springs.

Over the long term, the City should engage with Region K water planning efforts and maintain its relationship with the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), which is the primary water management organization for the region. In addition, the City should continue its support for rainwater harvesting and xeriscaping to promote water conservation. This will ensure future development does not affect existing residents by limiting water availability. Another consideration is the adoption of Low Impact Development (LID) standards. These regulations utilize features like rain gardens, swales, etc. to capture runoff on-site and return it to groundwater rather than capturing it in a stormwater catchment and slowly releasing to adjacent waterways. LID standards can mitigate drainage issues, protect water quality, and enhance property values by creating attractive amenities rather than concrete catchments to manage stormwater.

## Chapter 5: Goals from Previous Plans

Dripping Springs is a community that understands the importance of planning and the work involved in implementation. Since the adoption of the 2010 Comprehensive plan, City Staff and others have been actively engaged in implementing the goals identified from that planning process. The results of this work can be seen throughout Dripping Springs, notably the significant improvements to Mercer Street, expanded recreational facilities, Lighting Ordinance, Old Fitzhugh Rd. Historic District, and more. While there has been a great deal of work done and many accomplishments, there are a few goals that remain on the 'to-do' list from prior plans. The single most important one of these is the revision of the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances discussed in the Growth / Development Management section. Remaining goals include:

- *Explore potential for facility consolidation with Hays County, DSISD, others*
- *Develop community water quality and drainage plans*
- *Explore options for increased law enforcement presence*
- *Continue discussions with Water Supply Corp. regarding consolidation*

### Goals from Previous Plans

#### *5.1 Explore potential for facility consolidation with Hays County, DSISD, others*

Rapid growth in and around Dripping Springs has created a strain on facilities at the City, ISD, and Hays County. There is an opportunity to open discussions with these entities to determine if shared facilities might be of benefit to all parties. This could include the development of a government center, with room for City, DSISD, County, and other governmental offices. This would benefit residents by allowing them access to multiple services in one location. It would also reduce costs for each entity because they could share the costs of development and maintenance of the facility and reduce redundancy in things like janitorial services, printing services, and other costs.

The City should reach out to the ISD and Hays County to begin discussing opportunities for this. It would be incumbent to identify the needs and particularities for each entity and begin to develop a feasibility plan to determine the practicality of shared facilities. This conversation should begin in the near term and continue over time. Shared facilities may result in cost savings, which would be beneficial for the entities and taxpayers and support the fiscal conservatism of local governmental entities.

### *5.2 Develop community water quality and drainage plans*

Rapid growth has created challenges for stormwater management and protecting water quality for the region. Water quality is a key challenge facing Dripping Springs as growth places higher demand on water resources. It will be vital to establish policies to maintain water quality over time. The first step should be to review water quality and drainage plans from other communities to determine best practices. It may be appropriate to hire an experienced engineer who can lead this effort and develop a plan that reflects community values and supports development goals. The plan should incorporate techniques like Low Impact Development standards and regional drainage facilities that can provide more efficient service. These types of features are also more attractive and beneficial to the community than requiring a large stormwater catchment for every new development.

### *5.3 Explore options for increased law enforcement presence*

Dripping Springs is a very safe community, with minimal crime. However, growth is leading to some concerns about public safety and ensuring adequate police presence. While the City is not in a position to create its own police department, it should explore options for increased police presence. One of these is the work with the Hays County Sheriff's office to determine the feasibility of increased patrols. It may be that the City can provide some funding to offset the cost of added personnel needed to accomplish this. The City of East Bernard has a contract with the Precinct Constable to provide additional deputies for local law enforcement. The City pays the costs of additional officers which may be an option to explore for Dripping Springs. The City

benefits from the law enforcement presence without having the full cost and liability of its own police force.

An alternative may be the creation of a City Marshal position. The City of Wimberley has this, and it is an individual who is tasked with some law enforcement duties as well as code enforcement. The benefit to this is that it provides some local law enforcement capacity, but is not the burden of an entire police force. The City should contact Wimberley and discuss this position, the funding it requires, and the benefits of it to determine its feasibility in Dripping Springs.

#### *5.4 Continue discussions with Water Supply Corporation. regarding consolidation*

The City has a good relationship with the WSC, and it has provided consistent and reliable service to the community since well before Dripping Springs incorporated. There would be some benefits to consolidating services. It would allow for better planning because one entity would be in control of water and wastewater. It would allow the City to use provision of water as an incentive for areas to be annexed or to potential developers. Challenges include the need to expand City staff to serve the utility, finding the money to pay for the system, paying off any outstanding debt the WSC may carry, and the resistance of the WSC to losing its independence. This issue will take much deliberation and discussion between the City and the WSC and will ultimately be up to the WSC's members to decide on.

## **Conclusion**

Dripping Springs has quite a lot to celebrate. Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in 2010, there have been a significant number of projects undertaken that have led to meaningful change in the community. Mercer St. has become a unique destination, offering a variety of attractions for residents and visitors. Dripping Springs Ranch Park is utilized basically every day attracting local, state, and national events. The City became the first International Dark Sky Community in Texas, preserving the night sky as a connection to its rural heritage. Other, less visible projects, have also taken place, serving to protect and enhance the quality of life for all Dripping Springs residents.

This update is an opportunity to build on that success and continue the momentum of the work that has already been accomplished. This plan is based on extensive public input and has the support of the community. As city leaders move forward with implementation, they can be confident that they are doing what residents want them to do and putting resources into projects that will achieve community wide goals. A plan is only successful if it promotes a community vision and achieves community goals. Dripping Springs has a track record of implementation and using adopted plans as a roadmap to the future. This update provides direction for the next several years, providing direction to continue protecting and enhancing the quality of life for current and future residents of Dripping Springs.