

# COMMUNITY CHARACTER



# 2

College Station has experienced substantial growth and change since the adoption of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. Investments by the City in infrastructure, facilities, public safety, and services combined with private investments supported the growing community and contributed to its character and identity. More than 12,000 new residences were constructed to house the growing population. New commercial development and rehabilitation of older commercial areas brought new shopping, dining, and lodging opportunities to residents and visitors.

Looking now to the future, the City of College Station embarks on a new Comprehensive Plan to identify, preserve, create, and connect places of distinction – those unique areas that set College Station apart from other cities. With growing concerns over natural resource management, the City is faced with the additional task of balancing its future growth with environmental sustainability.



A more distinct urban character is emerging in Northgate as redevelopment activity continues.

The Comprehensive Plan and associated implementation tools must address housing a growing and diversifying population; protecting natural features and resources subjected to ever-increasing pressures; accommodating redevelopment and infill to better utilize land and strengthen the core of the City; and expanding the parks and bicycle and pedestrian system to offer more recreational opportunities and mobility options – all of which must contribute to a character and identity unique to and appropriate for College Station. Residents, public officials, and development interests all seek greater assurance of acceptable, desired outcomes. This chapter serves as the foundation of this Plan in that it encompasses many inter-related components and is closely linked to the other chapters in the Plan.

This chapter promotes the creation and enhancement of places of distinction. Whether new development or redevelopment, and whether private or public construction, how land is used – including its intensity, appearance, and physical arrangement – contributes significantly to the community's character and its sense of place with far-reaching and long-term impact. Through its strategies and actions, this chapter establishes an approach for managing development and redevelopment activity that emphasizes accommodating market opportunities; protecting and enhancing neighborhood character; creating and protecting unique

districts and corridors; and protecting natural features and the rural character of certain areas in and surrounding the City.

### PURPOSE

This chapter establishes strategies and actions that enable effective planning for future growth, neighborhood protection, new development, and redevelopment. Sound planning ensures that opportunities are created to accommodate needed development, that development can be adequately served with public services, and that its impacts can be managed to maintain compatibility and to promote the desired character and identity.

Along with the text and illustrations in this chapter, **Map 2.1, Concept Map**, and **Map 2.2, Future Land Use & Character**, depict the strategies visually.

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### PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Through the planning process, participants identified various issues and opportunities regarding land use planning, protection of natural features, and enhanced community identity and aesthetics. The considerations highlighted in this section were used in the development of the goal, strategies, and action recommendations that follow.

#### Growth and Development

College Station is poised for significant population growth in the upcoming decades. This growth will bring with it significant demands for additional housing, shopping, recreation, public facilities and services, and transportation. How land is used and development occurs to serve this increasing population will have significant and long lasting impacts on the community. Infrastructure development is of paramount importance to adequately support and accommodate the projected population increase.

The population of the City of College Station is projected to increase by approximately 40,000 for a total population of approximately 134,000 by 2030. The housing demand associated with this population increase is projected to equate to an additional 20,000 dwelling units. If current trends prevail about one-fourth or 5,000 of these will be new single-family homes and the remainder will consist of duplexes or apartment units. This projected increase in housing necessitates the availability of nearly 3,000 to 4,000 acres for new construction in greenfield areas or through redevelopment and infill development.

Though students continue to make up a large portion of the population, College Station is diversifying in age. Those aged 50 and over represent a small percentage of the population but are the fastest growing cohort. This diversity will continue to offer market opportunities

for development while representing challenges as a larger portion of the community is permanent residents with differing expectations and standards than a more transient population.

If population and housing demands continue to increase and the challenges associated with the physically expanding the City's boundaries persist, then the population density of College Station will likely increase. The current population density of the City is estimated at slightly more than 1,800 persons per square mile. Since 1940, the City's population density has ranged from a low of 856 persons per square mile (1940) to a high of 2,211 persons per square mile (1999). Though the population density remains quite low in comparison to other metropolitan areas, increasing population density offers opportunities for new building types, such as condominiums, townhomes and vertical mixed use. It also presents the need for more effective land use planning and capital investments.

### Character and Identity

The City's planning efforts and implementation actions should directly address character and identity. College Station residents are interested in the character of their neighborhoods, special districts, corridors, and natural areas, and they have expressed the following considerations.

- **Protection and enhancement of existing neighborhoods:** Protect existing neighborhoods from undesirable and incompatible change. This includes insensitive redevelopment, insensitive infill development, incompatible development on its periphery, erosion of residents' quality of life, or decreased property values. Further, residents have expressed their interest in ensuring homes, properties, roads, sidewalks, streetlights, and parks are well maintained and updated when necessary (see **Chapter 3: Neighborhood Integrity**).
- **New neighborhoods that are sustainable:** New neighborhoods should remain vibrant well into the future. Sustainable neighborhoods require a balance between owner and renter occupancy; access to neighborhood-serving businesses; parks and open space; transportation facilities designed for the density of the neighborhood; and access to and connectivity with adjacent neighborhoods (see **Chapter 3: Neighborhood Integrity**).
- **Transportation planning and road design that is sensitive to its context:** Transportation planning that provides connectivity between neighborhoods and to the larger community; choices in how one can move through the community; and designs that are sensitive to the context that facilities pass through (see **Chapter 6: Transportation**).

- **Sensitive redevelopment and infill development:** Redevelopment and infill development in areas in and around existing neighborhoods should be sensitive to the current residents. Over the life of this Plan, some areas will require redevelopment. Infill development is desirable in appropriate locations. Residents should be directly involved in identifying these areas and in participating in the planning for such areas.
- **Development, enhancement, and protection of unique corridors (natural and man-made) and districts:** Create or protect places with unique character and identity. Some of the busiest roads and natural corridors offer the opportunity to contribute substantially to the character of the community. Likewise, certain districts may offer opportunities to concentrate development in an urban mixed-use pattern with a unique focus.
- **Protection of rural areas:** Protect rural areas within the current City limits and Extraterritorial Jurisdiction. Streams, stands of trees, pastures, and open areas contribute significantly to the character of the area. Retention of these rural areas further acknowledges the limitations of public services and infrastructure.

#### Resource Protection and Sustainability

College Station residents are interested in protecting natural features for their ecological functions as well as their contribution to the character and identity of the community. Furthermore, there is an increasing interest in developing strategies and actions which ensure that the use of existing natural resources does not compromise resource availability for future residents. Residents have expressed an interest in the following considerations relating to resource protection and sustainability.

- **Preservation and acquisition of natural areas:** Preserving and, where necessary, acquiring natural areas. Streams, wooded areas, and open spaces provide habitat for a variety of plants and wildlife, convey and clean our storm water, and add to the area's character and identity.
- **Conservation of resources:** As the population grows and demands exerted on natural resources (such as clean water and clean air) increase, it becomes apparent how limited these resources are. Using less of these resources and causing less harm is not only environmentally friendly but makes sound economic sense. Drilling deeper wells or finding alternative sources of water, using more expensive means to treat and clean water or air, and repairing damage caused by flooding represent significant costs that can be lessened or avoided through thoughtful use and conservation of these resources.

- **Green efforts:** In addition to conserving existing resources, efforts can be initiated that enable use of sustainable practices. Walking and biking can reduce reliance on the automobile. Energy can be acquired from solar or wind sources, reducing reliance on coal generated power. Treated wastewater can be used to irrigate park facilities. City vehicles can use alternative fuels, reducing reliance on gasoline. Trees can be preserved or planted to further green the City.
- **Site planning and development practices:** Land use and site development can have a profound impact on natural features. Improper management of storm water can cause flooding and damage habitats. Clearing all the trees from a site can reduce habitat and contribute to soil erosion. Vast areas of low-density, sprawling development consume valuable agricultural land.

## EXISTING LAND USE AND CHARACTER

Future land use and character is grounded in the current use of land and the prevailing character. An overview of the current conditions is therefore necessary prior to forming policies for the future use of land and community character. College Station can be readily divided into three basic types of existing land use: urban, suburban, and rural. These are common terms that should bring immediate images to mind. In general, College Station is predominantly suburban in character with pockets of rural areas within the City and Extraterritorial Jurisdiction. Only the Northgate area exhibits the characteristics of an urban area.

The following further describes these existing types of land uses, including explanations and descriptions of their sub-components. Attributes that currently define these areas contribute (sometimes negatively) to the identity of College Station.

### Urban

Urban character is currently concentrated in the Northgate area. It primarily involves the businesses along either side of College Main, immediately north of University Drive. The public parking garage and recent multi-story residential projects built close to the street continue this urban feel. This area currently includes vertical development; minimal setbacks; minimal surface parking lots, and a high level of pedestrian activity.



Urban character on College Main.

Suburban

Suburban character dominates College Station as a result of the time period of most of College Station's development (post-World War II), local preferences and building customs, and the dominance of the student population (dormitories and apartments). Much of this suburban character is auto-dominated, that is it consists of land uses that have extensive areas of parking in relationship to their floor area. Big-box retail areas and shopping malls are quintessential examples of this character. Most apartment complexes, duplexes, and even single family residential developments catering to students exhibit similar auto-oriented character and design.

Areas of the City exhibit a less auto-dependent and more walkable character. These areas retain a balance between green areas (parks and open space) and the built environment. Often these areas include parks, schools, and small-scale, neighborhood-serving businesses. The College Hills area is a good example of this type of suburban land use and character. A few of these areas are more specialized in land use, such as the College Station Business Center, which provides employment and business opportunities in a walkable environment with significant open space.

There are also suburban areas that are dominated by open space. These estate areas are much more rural in character with homes generally placed on large lots. Foxfire subdivision is a good example of this type of suburban land use and character.

Rural

Rural areas that currently exist in and around College Station include areas that exhibit countryside, agricultural, and natural character. Countryside is typically dominated by a few lots of estate size fronting a road surrounded by agricultural or natural lands. The latter two tend to be determined by uses – crop or ranching in agricultural areas and wooded or savannah lands in natural areas. Rural areas tend to be more



Auto-Suburban Commercial along Earl Rudder Freeway



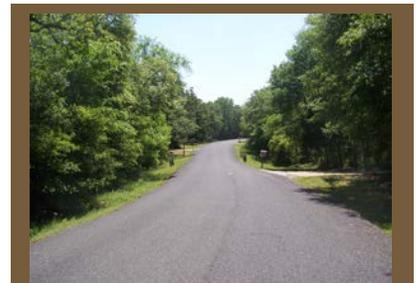
Auto-Suburban Residential along University Oaks.



Central park space in College Hills contributes



Suburban character in the Business Center.



Estate character in Foxfire.

sensitive than other character areas to intrusions from incompatible development.

## FUTURE LAND USE AND CHARACTER

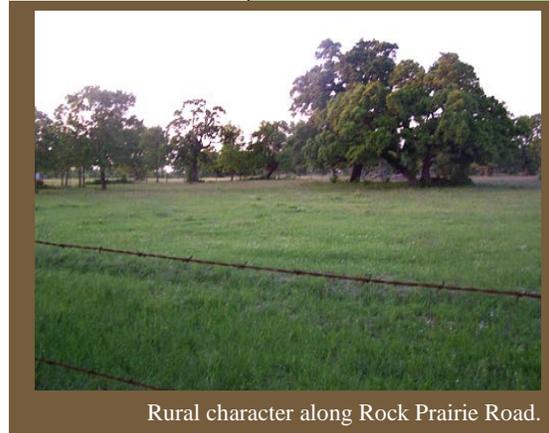
The Future Land Use & Character Plan is presented through the following text and associated graphics contained in this chapter – **Map 2.1, Concept Map**, graphically portrays the policies; and **Map 2.2, Future Land Use & Character**, provides more specific details regarding the preferred future use of land in the City and Extraterritorial Jurisdiction and the desired character. Combined, this information captures the City's policies regarding how and where College Station will grow and change over the course of the next two decades.

### Concept

The concept embraced by this Plan is visually portrayed in **Map 2.1, Concept Map**. The basic land use concept associated with this Plan is to achieve the highest quality of life by accommodating the projected demand for new housing, businesses and public facilities, resulting in multiple places of distinction. This concept focuses on:

- Strong and sustainable neighborhoods;
- Unique districts and corridors both natural and man-made;
- Growth areas flexible enough to respond to a changing marketplace while proscriptive enough to contribute to the community's quality of life;
- Rural areas that preserve open spaces and respect the limits of public infrastructure and services;
- Redevelopment areas that renew struggling or underperforming areas of the community through partnerships with public and private interests; and,
- Context sensitive mobility system linking the community together.

In addition to meeting the projected demands associated with an increasing population, this concept enables the City to continue to strengthen its principal competitive advantage for attracting and retaining residents and visitors along with new businesses and the employment and tax revenues that accompany them – that is, a high quality of life. The following provides further clarification of these concepts.



Rural character along Rock Prairie Road.

*Neighborhoods*

Existing neighborhoods, and adjacent areas of influence, are designated as Neighborhood Planning areas where, generally, the current land use, character and identity will remain. Each of these areas will be the subject of a future neighborhood plan. These plans will, among other activities, identify appropriate and compatible land uses and design for vacant lands within the neighborhood and its area of influence as well as for areas appropriate for redevelopment. Neighborhood plans will also aid in the development of strategies that address existing problems (for example, code issues) and identify enhancement actions (such as pedestrian or park improvements).

The Concept Map identifies 14 neighborhood planning areas dispersed throughout the City.

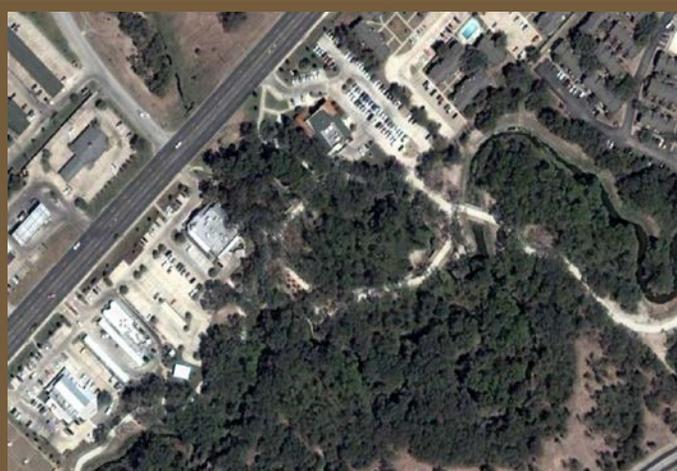
*Districts and Corridors*

Districts and corridors exhibit opportunities for a mix of uses with an emphasis on walkability and the potential for a unique focus. An urban example is the Northgate District. Additionally, corridors (both natural and man-made) exhibit opportunities for resource protection or recreational activities. Examples include the Carter Creek and Lick Creek Corridors. Each of these areas have interim land uses designated on **Map 2.2, Future Land Use & Character**, and will be the subject of a future district or corridor plan that will, among other activities, refine appropriate and compatible land uses and design for vacant land within the district or corridor and for areas appropriate for redevelopment or resource protection. The following provides a brief overview of the focus for each of these future district and corridor plans:

- **Area I: Wellborn Community Area** - This is an area located just outside the current City limits in the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction that is anticipated for annexation in the future. The area contains elements of a rural historic community (e.g., cemetery, community center, post office) which contribute to a unique character that the area residents have stated a strong preference to retain. The focus of this district plan should be working with the residents to identify and retain the elements of the community that contribute to its rural character.
- **Area II: Spring Creek District** - This is an area located along State Highway 6 near the Rock Prairie Road interchange and the Spring Creek Business Park. The area includes the City's only full-service hospital as well as a number of other medical related facilities. The area also includes significant natural features – a branch of Lick Creek and Spring Creek and a master planned, City-owned business park. The area represents one of the primary gateways into the City as one approaches

from the south. The focus of this plan should be linking current and future medical facilities into a cohesive district. The natural features of the area should be incorporated into the design of the district and other identity elements such as signage, landscaping, and design, should be used to visually tie the district together.

- **Area III: Presidential Corridor Gateway District** - This is an area located near the intersection of State Highway 47 and Raymond Stotzer Parkway (FM 60) adjacent to the Texas A&M University Health Science Center in Bryan. With the construction of the Health Science Center and the proximity of the Traditions development and Easterwood Airport, this area offers many opportunities for future growth and development. The focus of this district plan should be accommodating business (research and development, office, and light industrial) that builds upon the assets in the area and protects and enhances this primary gateway into the City.
- **Area IV: Northgate District** - This area serves as the City's primary entertainment district and represents the City's only current urban character area. This area has been the subject of considerable planning along with substantial public and private investment. The focus of this district plan should be to update the previous planning efforts and continue development of this area into a vibrant entertainment district that includes mixed-use projects, tourist attraction, and existing faith-based organizations.
- **Area V: Hospitality Corridor** - This is an area along University Drive near its intersection with Texas Avenue. A number of hotels and restaurants are currently located along this corridor. The City plans to develop a convention center along this corridor in the near future. The focus of this corridor plan should be linking current and future hospitality facilities into a cohesive corridor along with adjacent redevelopment areas that, over time, could emerge as another urban character area. The plan should include identity elements such as signage, landscaping, and design, to visually tie the corridor together.
- **Area VI: Wolf Pen Creek District** - This district combines parks, arts, and commerce by linking a variety of private and public



Integration of commercial development and green space in the Wolf Pen Creek District.

facilities together with an urban greenway. This area has been the subject of considerable planning along with substantial public and private investment. The focus of this district plan should be to update the previous planning efforts and to expand its reach into the adjacent areas of influence, resulting in a more urban character.

- **Area VII: Municipal Center District** - This is an area located between State Highway 6 and Texas Avenue including the original City cemetery, several municipal facilities, and Stephen C. Beachy Central Park. The area also includes significant natural features such as Bee Creek and several wooded areas. The focus of this district plan should be the development of a municipal center that would bring together City facilities, including a new City Hall, with opportunities to include residential and commercial activities with an urban character all in a cohesive design integrating the natural features in the area.
- **Area VIII: Carter Creek Corridor** - This corridor consists of the entirety of Carter Creek and associated floodplain. Carter Creek is a significant natural feature stretching along much of the eastern edge of the City, linking College Station, Bryan, and the remainder of Brazos County. The focus of this corridor plan should be the protection of this natural feature and development of recreational opportunities that could tie the region together.
- **Area IX: Bee Creek Corridor** - This corridor contains Bee Creek, a significant stream that traverses many neighborhoods in the core of the City. The watershed has been the location of intense development resulting in significant alteration to the stream. The focus of corridor this plan should be on the continued restoration of the creek, development of recreational opportunities, and expansion of its role in linking adjacent areas.
- **Area X: Lick Creek Corridor** - This area includes Lick Creek Park and the surrounding area. Lick Creek Park is one of the most significant natural features in College Station, offering a unique natural setting and protecting a large wooded area, much of a watershed, and the habitats of rare and endangered species. The focus of this corridor plan should be the continued protection of the natural features found in the area, additional recreational and educational opportunities, and expansion of its role in linking adjacent areas.
- **Area XI: Speedway District** - This is an area just south of the current City limits in the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction and is intended to be annexed in the near future. The area includes

the Texas World Speedway in addition to a number of small businesses. The focus of this district plan should be protection and promotion of the speedway while transitioning the speedway into a master-planned General Suburban area that could involve a mix of uses including, but not limited to, general commercial, office uses, business park, or single-family residences.

- **Area XII: College Station Science Park District** - This is an area just east of State Highway 6 adjacent to the Raintree neighborhood and includes the former Westinghouse plant. This area has been designated an Enterprise Zone by the City of College Station and is intended to be the location of a significant research and development facility. The site includes considerable land area beyond that necessary for research and development activities. The focus of the district plan should be accommodating the research and development operations along with additional opportunities for a mix of uses (residential and commercial) that should be suburban in character and integrated with and compatible to the surrounding residential areas.
- **Area XIII: Harvey Mitchell District** - This is an area on the south side of Harvey Mitchell Parkway between State Highway 6 and Texas Avenue. This area includes a large floodplain and significant road frontage along Harvey Mitchell Parkway and Texas Avenue. The focus of the district plan should be the development of an urban area that incorporates the significant natural features of the area and that incorporates design elements that positively contribute to two significant entries into the core of the City.

### *Growth Areas*

Growth areas exhibit opportunities for new development. In general, these areas are greenfields, located beyond the influence area of existing neighborhoods and not intended to be within a district or corridor. These areas will be the most market responsive areas; that is, they will offer the greatest level of land use flexibility. This flexibility will be accompanied by proscriptive land use and design guidance that will ensure the resulting development furthers the City's overall goals and objectives.

**Growth Area I** - This area consists of land adjacent to State Highway 6 bounded by the Speedway District to the south, the Pebble Creek area to the north and the Lick Creek Corridor to the east. This area should exhibit a suburban character overall. The streams, related riparian areas and floodplains shall be left intact and undisturbed except where utility placements, recreation facilities, or street crossings are necessary.

- *General Suburban Portion* - Land nearest State Highway 6 should be used for suburban or neighborhood commercial and office activities. Suburban or neighborhood commercial and office activities may be appropriate elsewhere in the area if part of a planned development of at least 30 acres. High-density single-family lots (minimum 5,000 square feet), townhomes, and duplexes shall be limited to that portion of the area designated as General Suburban and shall incorporate specified design criteria including, but not limited to, minimum open space, floor-to-area ratios, and bufferyards.
- *Restricted Suburban Portion* - The remainder of the area should be used for less intense suburban activities. A sizeable portion (15% or more) of the overall area should be retained as natural areas, parks, or open space with land uses clustered or with larger minimum lot sizes. Suburban or neighborhood commercial and office activities shall only be permitted as part of a planned development of at least 30 acres and shall incorporate specified design criteria, including, but not limited to, minimum open space requirements, floor-to-area ratios, and bufferyards. Medium-density single-family lots (average 8,000 square feet) are appropriate throughout this area when clustered, larger lots when not clustered. Townhomes may be permitted as part of a planned development of at least 30 acres and shall incorporate specified design criteria, including, but not limited to, minimum open space requirements, floor-to-area ratios, and bufferyards.

**Growth Area II** - This area consists of land near the interchange of William D. Fitch Parkway (State Highway 40) and State Highway 6 and land southwest of William D. Fitch Parkway (State Highway 40) to the current City limits.

- *Urban Portion* - Land nearest the William D. Fitch Parkway (State Highway 40) and State Highway 6 interchange should be used for intense land use activities including general commercial activities, office uses, townhomes, apartments, and vertical mixed-use. Single-family uses (excluding townhomes) should be prohibited from this area due to issues of incompatibility. No more than 25% of this total area should be used for residential activities exclusive of units incorporated into vertical mixed-use buildings.
- *Estate Portion* - Due to service limitations (water, fire, and police), this area should remain rural in character and be developed at a low intensity. A significant portion (30% - 50%) of the total area shall be retained as natural areas, parks, or open space with land uses clustered or placed on large lots (minimum one acre). Low-density estate lots (average

20,000 square feet) are appropriate throughout this area when clustered.

**Growth Area III** - This area consists of land along Rock Prairie Road bounded by Carter Creek to the northeast and established neighborhoods and the Spring Creek District to the west and south. The streams, related riparian areas, and floodplains shall be left intact and undisturbed, except where utility placements, recreation facilities, or street crossings are necessary.

- General Suburban Portion - Land between Lick Creek and Rock Prairie Road should be used for general suburban activities. High-density single-family lots (minimum 5,000 square feet), townhomes, and duplexes shall be limited to that portion of the area designated as General Suburban on the Future Land Use & Character map and shall incorporate specified design criteria including, but not limited to, minimum open space, floor-to-area ratios, and bufferyards. Suburban or neighborhood commercial and office activities are appropriate in this area as an element of a planned development of at least 30 acres and shall incorporate specified design criteria including, but not limited to, minimum open space, floor-to-area ratios, and bufferyards.
- Estate Portion - Due to service limitations (water, fire, and police) and the prevailing rural character, this area should remain rural in character and be developed at a low intensity. A significant portion (30% - 50%) of the total area shall be retained as natural areas, parks, or open space with land uses clustered or placed on large lots (minimum one acre). Low-density estate lots (average 20,000 square feet) are appropriate throughout this area if clustered. Suburban or neighborhood commercial and office uses may be appropriate adjacent to the intersection of William D. Fitch Parkway and Rock Prairie Road.

**Growth Area IV** - This area consists of land between the intersection of William D. Fitch Parkway (State Highway 40) and Wellborn Road (FM 2154) to the current southern City limits bounded by the Wellborn Community Area to the west and the established Castlegate neighborhood to the east.

- General Suburban Portion - Land near the intersection of William D. Fitch Parkway (State Highway 40) and Wellborn Road (FM 2154) should be used for general suburban activities. High-density single-family lots (minimum 5,000 square feet), townhomes, and duplexes shall be limited to that portion of the area designated as General Suburban on the Future Land Use & Character map and shall incorporate design criteria including, but not limited to, minimum open space, floor-to-

area ratios, and bufferyards. Suburban or neighborhood commercial and office uses are also appropriate in this area.

- Restricted Suburban Portion - This area should be used for less intense suburban activities. A sizeable portion (15% or more) of the overall area should be retained as natural areas, parks, or open space with land uses clustered or with larger minimum lot sizes. Suburban or neighborhood commercial and office activities shall only be permitted as part of a planned development of at least 30 acres and shall incorporate specified design criteria including, but not limited to, minimum open space requirements, floor-to-area ratios, and bufferyards. Medium-density single-family lots (average 8,000 square feet) are appropriate throughout this area when clustered, larger lot sizes when not clustered. Townhomes may be permitted as part of a planned development of at least 30 acres and shall incorporate specified design criteria including, but not limited to, minimum open space requirements, floor-to-area ratios, and bufferyards.
- Estate Portion - Due to the prevailing rural character, this area should remain rural in character and be developed at a low intensity. A significant portion (30% - 50%) of the total area shall be retained as natural areas, parks, or open space with land uses clustered or placed on large lots (minimum one acre). Low-density estate lots (average 20,000 square feet) are appropriate throughout this area if clustered.

**Growth Area V** - This area consists of land near the Wellborn Road (FM 2154) and Harvey Mitchell Parkway (FM 2818) intersection to the Rock Prairie and Wellborn Road (FM 2154) intersection, bounded by the established Southwood Valley area to the east and the Great Oaks neighborhood to the west.

- Urban Portion - Land between the Wellborn Road (FM 2154) and Harvey Mitchell Parkway (FM 2818) intersection to the Cain Road and Wellborn Road (FM 2154) intersection should be used for intense land use activities including general commercial, office uses, townhomes, high-density apartments, and vertical mixed-use. Single-family uses (excluding townhomes) should be prohibited from this area due to issues of incompatibility. No more than 25% of the area east of Wellborn Road (FM 2154) should be used for residential activities exclusive of units incorporated into vertical mixed-use buildings.
- General Suburban Portion - The area between Cain Road and Rock Prairie Road should be used for general suburban activities. High-density single-family lots (minimum 5,000 square feet), townhomes, and duplexes shall be limited to that portion of the area designated as General Suburban on the Future

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Land Use & Character map and shall incorporate design criteria including, but not limited to, minimum open space, floor-to-area ratios, and bufferyards. Suburban or neighborhood commercial and office uses are also appropriate in this area.

**Growth Area VI** - This area consists of land north of Harvey Mitchell Parkway (FM 2818) bounded by the Texas A&M University campus to the northwest, Wellborn Road (FM 2154) to the east, and Southwest Parkway to the northeast.

- Urban - This entire growth area should be used for intense land use activities including general commercial, office uses, townhomes, high-density apartments, and vertical mixed-use. Single-family uses (excluding townhomes) should be prohibited from this area due to issues of incompatibility.

**Growth Area VII** - This area consists of land between Texas Avenue and State Highway 6 bounded by the Wolf Pen Creek District to the north and the Municipal Center District to the south. Much of this area is currently developed, though opportunities for infill and redevelopment exist.

- Urban - This entire growth area should be used for intense land use activities including general commercial adjacent to Texas Avenue and State Highway 6, office uses, townhomes, high-density apartments, and vertical mixed-use. Single-family homes (excluding townhomes) should be prohibited from this area due to issues of incompatibility.

### *Rural Areas*

Portions of the City and most of the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction are planned to remain rural and are identified accordingly on the Future Land Use and Character map. Additional information about these areas is contained in **Chapter 8: Growth Management & Capacity**.

### *Redevelopment*

Portions of the City are identified for redevelopment activities. Within these areas it is anticipated that a change in land use – and, if appropriate, character – requires some form of direct market intervention by the City. This intervention may involve regulation (e.g., City-initiated rezoning), investment (e.g., capital expenditure on infrastructure), or incentives (e.g., fast-tracking of a project). This stands in contrast to areas that will experience a change in use consistent with the Plan based on market opportunities alone. Some of these redevelopment areas may be included in an established neighborhood area, district, or corridor and, thus, may be further refined through the subsequent plans for these areas.

- **Redevelopment Area I: Northgate Area** - This area will continue to be the focus of public and private redevelopment efforts.

These efforts should be guided by the district plan for the area, focusing on uses that support the entertainment and mixed-use aspects of this urban area.

- **Redevelopment Area II: Texas Avenue, University Drive, and Harvey Road** - This area includes a number of underperforming land uses that, due to their proximity to two of the busiest corridors in the City, are poised for redevelopment. Much of the area is currently subdivided into small lots, making it difficult to assemble land for redevelopment. A portion of this area includes the current City Hall, which offers the opportunity to redevelop a larger parcel if City Hall is relocated to the Municipal Center District. The proximity of existing neighborhoods and the Texas A&M University campus requires careful site planning and appropriate building design. These efforts should be complimentary to the Area V: Hospitality corridor plan, the neighborhood plan for the Eastgate area, and the Texas A&M University Campus Master Plan and should focus on bringing vertical mixed-use and other aspects of urban character to this portion of the City.

Areas along Harvey Road include new commercial areas that are part of the Wolf Pen Creek District but also include a number of underperforming commercial and multi-family properties. Additionally, this area includes Post Oak Mall, which will likely need to reposition itself in the near future to remain competitive. This entire area could evolve into a more dense area, including vertical mixed-use activity, which could compliment the adjacent Wolf Pen Creek District.

- **Redevelopment Area III: George Bush Drive/Wellborn Road** - This area includes a number of underperforming commercial activities and poor quality residences that, due to planned road construction in this area and to their proximity to the University, are poised for redevelopment. Much of the area is currently subdivided into small lots, making it difficult to assemble land for redevelopment. The presence of existing residences and businesses, and proximity to existing neighborhoods and the University campus, requires careful site planning and appropriate building design. These efforts should be guided by the neighborhood plan for the Southside neighborhood area and should focus on bringing vertical mixed-use and other aspects of urban character to this portion of the City.

## FUTURE LAND USE & CHARACTER PLAN

The concepts discussed in this chapter are further clarified by the following descriptions and are visually portrayed in **Map 2.2, Future Land Use & Character**. The associated acreages in each land use category are compiled in **Table 2.1, Future Land Use & Character**.

**TABLE 2.1**  
**Future Land Use & Character**

Designation	Acreage in City	% of Total	Acreage in ETJ	% of Total	Total	% of Total
Neigh. Conservation	1,408.6	5.0%	0.0	0.0%	1,408.6	1.0%
Rural	0.0	0.0%	94,930.4	87.6%	94,930.4	69.4%
Estate	3,498.9	12.4%	0.0	0.0%	3,498.9	2.7%
Restricted Suburban	4,030.4	14.3%	447.6	0.4%	4,478.0	3.3%
General Suburban	2,467.2	8.8%	601.7	0.6%	3,069.0	2.3%
Urban	2,690.8	9.6%	300.6	0.3%	2,991.5	2.1%
Urban Mixed Use	400.8	1.4%	0.0	0.0%	400.8	0.3%
General Commercial	882.3	3.1%	0.1	0.0%	882.4	0.6%
Suburban Commercial	912.8	3.2%	76.6	0.1%	989.4	0.7%
Business Park	1,203.2	4.3%	835.1	0.8%	2,038.3	1.5%
Institutional / Public	673.9	2.4%	0.0	0.0%	674.0	0.5%
Texas A&M University	5,259.4	18.7%	4.7	0.0%	5,264.1	3.9%
Natural - Protected	1,250.8	4.4%	17.9	0.0%	1,268.7	0.9%
Natural - Reserved	3,413.7	12.1%	11,137.7	10.3%	14,551.4	10.7%
Utilities	61.7	0.2%	2.4	0.0%	64.2	0.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28,154.5</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>108,354.7</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>136,509.7</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

NOTE: The total area of the combined City limits and ETJ is approximately 141,370 acres. The total area in the land use categories is 136,509.7 acres. The difference is within street and highway rights-of-way (4,860.3 acres, or roughly 3.4% of the overall area).

\* Totals down to decimal place level may vary slightly due to rounding.

**Neighborhood Conservation** - This land use designation is generally for areas that are essentially “built-out” and are not likely to be the focus of extensive infill development or redevelopment. Further, these areas often were platted before current development regulations were in place often resulting in non-conforming situations. These areas are appropriate for overlays or zoning classifications that provide additional character protection and address non-conforming issues.

**Rural** - This land use designation is generally for areas that, due to public service limitations, inadequate public infrastructure, or a prevailing rural or agricultural character, should have very limited development activities. These areas will tend to include a mix of large acreages (ranches and farmsteads) and large-lot (one acre or larger) residential developments. Open space is the dominant feature of these areas.

**Estate** - This land use designation is generally for areas that, due to public service limitations or a prevailing rural character, should have

limited development activities. These areas will tend to consist of low-density single-family residential lots (average 20,000 square feet) clustered around open space or large lots (minimum one acre).

**Restricted Suburban** - This land use designation is generally for areas that should have a moderate level of development activities. These areas will tend to consist of medium-density single-family residential lots (average 8,000 square feet) when clustered around open space, or larger lot sizes when not clustered. Townhomes, neighborhood commercial, and office uses may also be permitted in growth areas as an element of a planned development.

**General Suburban** - This land use designation is generally for areas that should have an intense level of development activities. These areas will tend to consist of high-density single-family residential lots (minimum 5,000 square feet). Townhomes, duplexes, and neighborhood commercial and office uses may also be permitted in growth areas.

**Urban** - This land use designation is generally for areas that should have a very intense level of development activities. These areas will tend to consist of townhomes, duplexes, and high-density apartments. General commercial and office uses, business parks, and vertical mixed-use may also be permitted within growth and redevelopment areas.

**Urban Mixed Use** - This land use designation is generally for areas that should have the most intense development activities. These areas will tend to consist exclusively of residential, commercial, and office uses in vertical mixed-use structures.

**General Commercial** - This land use designation is generally for concentrations of commercial activities that cater to both nearby residents and to the larger community or region. Generally, these areas tend to be large in size and located near the intersection of two regionally significant roads (arterials and freeways). It is preferred that in such areas development be concentrated in nodes rather than spread out in strips.

**Suburban Commercial** - This land use designation is generally for concentrations of commercial activities that cater primarily to nearby residents versus the larger community or region. Generally, these areas tend to be small in size and located adjacent to major roads (arterials and collectors). Design of these structures is compatible in size, roof type and pitch, architecture, and lot coverage with the surrounding single-family residential uses.



Example of a Suburban Commercial restaurant use in another community.

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**Business Park** - This land use designation is generally for areas that include office, research, or industrial uses planned and developed as a unified project. Generally, these areas need good access to arterial roadways.

**Institutional/Public** - This land use designation is generally for areas that are, and are likely to remain, in some form of institutional or public activity. Examples include schools and libraries.

**Texas A&M University** - This land use designation is generally for areas owned by Texas A&M University.

**Natural (Protected)** - This land use designation is generally for areas permanently protected from development. Such areas are preserved for their natural function or for parks, recreation, or greenways opportunities. These areas include areas such as regulatory floodway, publicly owned open space, conservation easements, and public parks.

**Natural (Reserved)** - This land use designation is generally for areas that represent a constraint to development and that should be preserved for their natural function or open space qualities. These areas include floodplains and riparian buffers, as well as recreation facilities.

**Utilities** - This land use designation is generally for areas that are, and are likely to remain, in some form of major utility activity. Examples include electric substations and wastewater treatment plants.

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## COMMUNITY DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

The physical design and appearance of the built environment – what buildings, streets, and parks look like – contributes significantly to the character and identity of the City. This section identifies many of the community’s unique assets and provides general policy guidance regarding suburban and urban design, streets and streetscape design, public buildings and facilities, image corridors, and gateways. More specific and detailed guidance will be provided through subsequent neighborhood, district, and corridor plans, as well as master plans and other studies and plans adopted by the City Council.

### Community Assets

College Station has a number of existing assets (both natural and man-made) that contribute significantly to the character and identity of the City and, thus, are deserving of identification and worthy of policy guidance. **Map 2.3, Community Assets and Image Corridors**, visually portrays these assets which include natural features such as Carter Creek and Lick Creek, connections to the greater region such as Easterwood Airport, public facilities such as the Texas A&M University campus and Veteran’s Park, and various vistas and views. Care should

be taken to protect each of these assets from encroachment by incompatible land uses and from insensitive development activities that would compromise their contribution to the area's character and identity.

#### Suburban and Urban Design

Effective design helps to create places of distinction – places worth remembering and protecting. Effective suburban and urban design contributes significantly to the quality of life experienced by residents and visitors to our community. Design represents one of the places where private development interacts with the public realm. The design of parking lots, storefronts, streetscapes, and other physical features all have an impact – positive or negative – on those who walk or drive through an area. Along with giving more attention to where, when, and how land uses are developed (urban form), this Plan also highlights the impact that the design of the public realm has on character and identity.

#### Streets and Streetscapes

The design of a street and its intersections (its width, its design speed, the way it does or does not accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists in addition to vehicles, etc.) contributes to the experience of walking or driving along a corridor. The design of a street should be a function of both its role as a mobility corridor and its surrounding context. A street through a dense mixed-use urban area should differ considerably in design from a street through a predominantly rural area. This Plan uses an approach known as context sensitive design to ensure that streets are appropriate for the context in which they are located. Context sensitive design is discussed in much greater detail in **Chapter 6: Transportation**.

Streetscapes are an important element of the character of the City and contribute to the experience of the pedestrian, bicyclist, and driver. An attractive and cohesive streetscape helps to reinforce the character and identity of an area. Wide sidewalks, unified street furnishings, and canopy trees contribute significantly to the character and identity of Northgate, as an example.

Sidewalks and street trees perform several functions. Wide sidewalks in urban areas not only move pedestrians through an area but also offer opportunities for outdoor seating and sales areas, bringing the activities of a store or restaurant out into the public realm. Sidewalks in suburban areas provide connections between neighborhoods, to commercial areas, and to area parks and greenways. Street trees provide shade for pedestrians and parked vehicles. When placed properly, street trees can provide a buffer separating pedestrians from the travel lanes on a roadway. The addition of a tree-lined median can turn a road into a

parkway. The recently completed Dartmouth Street extension is an example of this effect.

Other features such as arcades and canopies, pedestrian-scaled street lights, wayfinding signs, unified bench styles, trash receptacles, and pavement treatments (such as pavers) help to elevate a street from being simply a utilitarian element of a community to a special place itself.

Some portions of the City including Northgate and the Wolf Pen Creek District have addressed this issue to a certain degree through their district plans. Other areas of the City have been addressed through the 1992 College Station Streetscape Study. Updates to these district plans and the Streetscape Plan, along with new district and corridor plans and the context sensitive street design approach, will aid in maximizing the benefit that can be gained by street and streetscape design.

#### *Public Buildings and Facilities*

The location and design of public buildings and facilities are significant given their role in establishing community character and identity and in making a statement about the community's values and expectations. A well designed elementary school that fits into a neighborhood, enabling children to walk safely from their homes and providing a place for neighbors to gather, contributes positively to that neighborhood's character and reinforces the notion that the school is an integral part of the community. A new and well designed City Hall both enables the people to conduct their business and boldly asserts the value the community places on design.

Public spaces can include plazas, amphitheaters, and pedestrian malls. Most of these facilities serve utilitarian purposes – picnic tables to eat at, venues to hear a concert, and places to walk. But because of the interactions they foster, they also serve to attract residents, businesses, and visitors. Such spaces should be highly visible and accessible to a variety of users; be well designed; safe, and secure; be designed to serve their utilitarian purpose, but also to support social interactions; and be easily and economically maintained.

The location and design of plazas, schools, municipal office buildings, the convention center, and fire and police stations all affect and reflect the character and identity of College Station. Public buildings and facilities are a principal component of the design of any area where they are located. Such buildings and facilities



The quality design of Fire Station No. 5 on William D. Fitch Parkway contributes greatly to the character of this growing area of College Station.

should be strategically located and should employ the best design to strengthen existing and new neighborhoods, districts, and corridors. Recent examples include the impact the design of Wolf Pen Trail has on the Wolf Pen Creek District, the impact the design of the Promenade has on the Northgate District, and the impact the design of the City's award winning fire stations has on the surrounding neighborhoods. Future opportunities exist in the design of the convention center for the Hospitality Corridor and in the design of a new City Hall in the Municipal Center District.

*Image Corridors*

Image corridors are delineated on **Map 2.3, Community Assets and Image Corridors**, reflecting their importance as routes that many residents and visitors travel and, along the way, form impressions of College Station. Several of these corridors either lie within an identified district or serve as a link between districts, further reinforcing their importance. Identity and beautification elements, such as decorative markers and themed wayfinding signs, should be placed along these corridors. Additionally, landscaping and streetscape elements should be unified and significant along these corridors. These corridors also offer the opportunity for the placement of public art and other design elements.

**Primary image corridors** include corridors that carry high volumes of traffic and move travelers through or along some of the City's most significant assets. Examples include State Highway 6, Texas Avenue, and Wellborn Road (FM 2154). **Secondary image corridors** include corridors that tend to carry slightly less traffic volume and move travelers mainly through the community's significant business or residential areas. Examples include Rock Prairie Road, Harvey Road (FM 30), and portions of University Drive (FM 60).

Image corridors also offer an opportunity to support the City's resource protection objectives through the preservation of open space and other natural features along these key corridors. Where these corridors cross streams, go through forested areas, or offer attractive vistas, care should be taken in how bridges are constructed, banks are stabilized, storm water is managed, trees are protected, and views are kept unobstructed so as to maximize the positive impressions gained by these assets.

*Gateways*

A gateway serves as the symbolic entry point to an area, whether the City, a neighborhood, or a district. An effective gateway establishes an immediate positive impression that reinforces the character of an area and is visually harmonious with its surroundings. The key gateways into these areas need specific design elements and

**South Gateway**

State Highway 6 south of College Station is the path that brings many visitors into the community, especially from the Houston metropolitan area. Unfortunately, the City has little, if any, control over the quality and appearance of scattered roadside development that occurs many miles into the ETJ and beyond. Yet, this visual experience is how visitors begin to form an impression of the community long before they actually reach it. Therefore, efforts to establish significant gateways and welcoming points can easily get lost in this environment.

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enhancements to create such an experience. For neighborhoods this may be in the form of landscaping or an entrance monument. For districts and corridors this may be in the form of landscaping, streetscape, special lighting, signage, public art, or building design. Along the image corridors at key entry points to the City this may be in the form of landscaping, special signage, public art, or enhancements to bridges and overpasses.

Each of the neighborhood area plans, district plans, and corridor plans should address the most effective means to enhance associated gateways. This section outlines the framework for the most appropriate manner to address the key gateways into and out of the City as a whole. This Plan identifies three levels of gateways, each with its own specific purpose and related design focus.

**Early Image-Setting Gateways** are locations where those approaching the community can first be engaged and experience the College Station identity. These areas offer opportunities for tasteful signage and landscaping that are harmonious with the surrounding rural areas while announcing one's pending arrival into College Station. Examples of appropriate locations for such enhancements are the intersection of University Drive/ Raymond Stotzer Parkway (FM 60) and Wellborn Road (FM 2154), the FM 60 crossing of the Brazos River, and the intersection of State Highway 47 and Raymond Stotzer Parkway (FM 60).

**Secondary Welcoming Gateways** are locations where community identity and themes can be reinforced through more substantial enhancements. These may include significant monument signage, substantial areas of landscaping and tree planting, and flags. Generally these are located within the City limits but prior to arrival in the core of the City itself. Examples of appropriate locations for such enhancements are the Rock Prairie Road interchange with State Highway 6, the intersection of George Bush Drive and Harvey Mitchell Parkway (FM 2818), and the City limits at South College Avenue.

**Primary Arrival Gateways** are locations where the most substantial enhancements should be installed. These may include significant monument signage, substantial areas of landscaping and tree planting, fountains, lighted icons, and large-scale art. Examples of appropriate locations for such enhancements are the intersection of



This community entry monument, near the interchange of State Highway 6 and William D. Fitch Parkway, is well off the highway and not substantial enough to denote one's arrival into a City as large as College Station.



College Station and Bryan partnered on this gateway enhancement that includes public art.

Texas Avenue and Earl Rudder Freeway (State Highway 6), the University Drive (FM 60) interchange with Harvey Mitchell Parkway (FM 2818), and the intersection of Texas Avenue and University Drive (FM 60).

For these gateways to succeed, it is essential that common elements be used throughout each of the three levels. Further, enhancements should be focused and sized properly to have the intended impact. Enhancements dispersed over a wide area, lacking common elements, and sized inappropriately will have less of an impact and will

miss a critical opportunity to reinforce the character and identity of College Station.

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### GOAL, STRATEGIES, AND ACTIONS

The goal for College Station's future land use and character is *to be a community with strong, unique neighborhoods, protected rural areas, special districts, distinct corridors, and a protected and enhanced natural environment*. Six strategies have been developed to progress toward this goal. Each strategy has a series of action recommendations designed to implement the strategy.

*Strategy 1: Develop and maintain, through regular review, a land use plan that identifies, establishes, and enhances community character.*

- **Land Use Plan Application.** Use the Concept Map and the Future Land Use & Character map in the development of planning studies, development review, capital improvements programming, and economic development efforts.
- **Further Planning.** Develop neighborhood, district, corridor and redevelopment plans to refine the Concept Map and Future Land Use & Character map.
- **Land Use Tracking.** Monitor the actual acreage in various land use and character types in comparison to the amounts presented on the Future Land Use & Character map.
- **Plan Adjustments.** Refine the Future Land Use & Character map through additional planning studies and periodic reviews as indicated in **Chapter 9: Implementation and Administration**.
- **UDO Amendments.** Amend the Unified Development Ordinance as appropriate to establish zoning classifications and related standards consistent with the guidance provided in this chapter.
- **Zoning Adjustments.** Amend the zoning map designations as appropriate for identified growth areas.

*Strategy 2: Establish and protect distinct boundaries between various character areas.*

- **Zoning Adjustments.** Amend the zoning map designations as appropriate to reinforce the desired character areas.
- **Unified Development Ordinance Amendments.** Amend the Unified Development Ordinance as appropriate to address scale and form issues for neighborhood commercial uses, such as buffering between uses.

*Strategy 3: Promote public and private development and design practices that ensure distinct neighborhoods, districts, and corridors.*

- **Further Planning.** Develop neighborhood, district and corridor plans to refine the Concept Map and Future Land Use & Character map.
- **Unified Development Ordinance Amendments.** Amend the Unified Development Ordinance as appropriate to address design issues that arise through the neighborhood, district, and corridor planning process.
- **Context Sensitive Roadway Design.** Adopt the context sensitive design approach to thoroughfare planning and roadway design outlined in this Plan. Coordinate with the Texas Department of Transportation to implement these same provisions in State corridors.
- **Public Facility Design.** Design and renovate municipal buildings to establish or reinforce the desired character. Coordinate with Texas A&M University and the College Station Independent School District to implement these same practices as they construct new facilities.
- **Incentives.** Develop a variety of incentive mechanisms to promote the preferred design practices where market conditions or regulatory measures may not guarantee their implementation.
- **Greening of the City.** Increase tree planting and preservation efforts along streets, in parks, and in private developments.

*Strategy 4: Promote public and private development and design practices that encourage resource conservation and protection.*

- **Conservation Design.** Encourage more extensive use of cluster design in portions of identified growth areas through mandatory open space conservation in exchange for more development options than currently entitled on properties.
- **Preservation and Protection.** Amend the Unified Development Ordinance and other ordinances to protect significant natural features from development. This may include tree preservation and other ordinances to provide for riparian buffers and other environmental protections.

- **Land Acquisition.** Acquire land that is valued for its natural features or open space through purchase or through conservation easements.
- **Green Building - Public Sector Leadership.** Continue the development and implementation of the “Green College Station” initiative. Coordinate with Texas A&M University and the College Station Independent School District in the implementation of similar efforts.

*Strategy 5: Focus community enhancement activities to promote a strong sense of community identity.*

- **Right-of-Way Enhancements.** Add design features and beautification enhancements within road rights-of-way and at key highway intersections to further a common identity at important gateways and along image corridors.
- **Unified Wayfinding.** Implement a formal, City-wide wayfinding system, providing a unifying and consistent design element that assists residents and visitors in locating community attractions.

*Strategy 6: Identify, protect, and enhance unique community assets in our natural and built environment.*

- **Community Assets Mapping.** Continue to refine and amend, as appropriate, the Community Assets Map contained in this Plan to provide a visual portrayal of the City’s unique natural and man-made assets.
- **Further Planning.** Develop neighborhood, district, corridor and redevelopment plans to refine the Concept Map and Future Land Use & Character map.
- **Unified Development Ordinance Amendments.** Amend the Unified Development Ordinance as appropriate to address explicitly the protection and enhancement of unique community assets.
- **Texas A&M University Coordination.** Continue to coordinate with Texas A&M University regarding the benefits and impacts of University sponsored development projects, and support ongoing efforts to implement the Campus Master Plan.