

Legislation Text

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Presenter/Contact

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SUBJECT:

Envision New Braunfels: the Community's Comprehensive Plan

BACKGROUND / RATIONALE:

Council District: Citywide

A comprehensive plan is an over-arching, policy document that guides decision making to reach end-goals. Driven by citizen and stakeholder input, it informs all other plans communities engage in at different hierarchical levels. Time horizons for comprehensive plans range from 15 to 40 years depending on population growth rate. As New Braunfels is presently the 2nd fastest growing city in the nation, much will change (and has been changing) from year to year. Therefore, updates to our plan should be frequent to keep pace with growth.

Envision New Braunfels is an update to the 1999 Comprehensive Plan, which was last updated in 2006. It is a community-driven planning initiative that will guide strategic decision making around core issues such as housing, transportation, urban design, natural resource protection, etc., all to sustain our quality of life in the face of tremendous growth over the next 15-plus years.

Envision New Braunfels has been developed over an almost 2-year process that included data collection; population/demographic analysis; technical expertise from stakeholders throughout the community; City staff, community leaders, and consultant team assistance; and continuous public input. The plan addresses projected growth through goals, strategies and actions that will drive policies, projects and partnerships to improve the built environment, guide development patterns, enhance mobility, increase housing options, and incent regional collaboration.

Process

In the fall of 2016, Design Workshop was hired to assist the community with development of Envision New Braunfels. City Council created a 9 member Steering Committee made up of representatives of the following entities:

- City Council
- NBU
- Comal County
- Guadalupe County
- New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce
- New Braunfels Planning Commission
- New Braunfels Economic Development Corporation (4B Board)
- New Braunfels Independent School District
- Comal Independent School District

The role of the Steering Committee was to guide the process and review work of the advisory groups and consultant.

City Council also established 9 Plan Element Advisory Groups:

- Growth and Future Land Use
- Urban Design & Cultural, Heritage and Historic Preservation
- Parks and Recreation
- Transportation
- Economic Competitiveness
- Tourism
- Natural Resources and Infrastructure
- Education and Youth
- Facilities, Services and Capital Improvements

Over 200 Citizens, residents, property owners, business owners and other stakeholders volunteered to serve on these advisory groups. The role of the advisory groups was to meet, write and review content of the plan itself.

Four community-wide dialogues were held using various different input gathering methods and engagement tools:

- November 2016 - Visioning
- March 2017 - Goals and Growth Scenarios
- October 2017 - Key Findings
- January 2018 - Actions

The Plan Element Advisory Groups met individually via 9 meetings over the summer of 2017. At these meetings, group members wrote strategies and actions intended to achieve the goals established at the March 2017 community-wide dialogue. The Advisory Groups also spent considerable time corresponding via email on drafts and edits over the Fall 2017 and Spring 2018.

Several online polls were set up to gather input, as well as feedback on work done. A Facebook page was established to provide information on events and activities, and to generate conversations about core long range planning issues and topics <https://www.facebook.com/NBCompPlan/>. Additionally, a project website, www.envisionnewbraunfels.org <http://www.envisionnewbraunfels.org>, was established for the general public to follow along with the process.

Throughout the process, City staff engaged the general public in a variety of venues and with innovative methods including interactive presentations, discussions, and activities. Groups engaged included:

- Ministerial Alliance
- Breakfast Lions Club
- Rotary Club
- Downtown Rotary Club
- Kiwanis Club
- National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association
- Chamber of Commerce Board
- Economic Development Foundation
- Hispanic Business Alliance
- Chamber's RAP Council
- Several realtor groups and associations

Creative outreach activities at various events included:

- Family Fun Day at Eikel Park
- City University
- Movies in Landa Park
- Memorial Early College High School Careers Class
- Comal ISD's Student Advisory Committee Meeting

The open process included information push and interactive exercises with the advisory groups and the general public along the way. In mid-June 2018, the "public hearing draft" of the plan was completed and sent to all groups, including the Planning Commission. A press release informed the general public. This draft is posted on the Envision New Braunfels website and will be up for public comment throughout the entire public hearing adoption process.

Highlights

Envision New Braunfels has 3 main components: an introduction and process overview, existing conditions chapters, and an implementation section. The Implementation Roadmap includes a layered future land use map generated out of the scenario planning and goals development exercises conducted by the advisory groups. It also includes the advisory group drafted strategies and actions.

The building blocks of the future land use plan include:

- Sub Areas - geographic areas with special characteristics based on existing conditions or future vision
- Existing Centers - current points of activity and vitality
- Corridors - linear connections that stitch the community together and that should, therefore, have special attention to design
- Future Centers - strategic placement of future growth that supports the community's vision and goals

Various different types of Centers are identified:

- Employment
- Market
- Medical
- Civic
- Outdoor Recreation
- Education
- Tourist/Entertainment

With a Center/Corridor approach, New Braunfels can preserve and protect existing and future neighborhoods, historic resources, parks, open space, natural resources, and trails by guiding future growth and development in centers and create attractive multi-modal corridors. The plan identifies those centers and corridors where appropriate mixed use transitions currently and should occur which can include appropriate locations for infill housing.

Eight overall Strategies follow the future land use plan. When implemented, these strategies will achieve the goals outlined in the introduction. Each Strategy is then followed by categorized Actions - steps toward ultimate implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Finally, a regional planning section outlines ways our community can collaborate with our regional partners, whether they are other cities, agencies or the private sector, to achieve broader goals. Collaborative partnerships is a running theme throughout the plan as an approach to accommodating the projected growth of the community and the region while sustaining New Braunfels' exceptional quality of life.

Next Steps

- Public Review: June through August, 2018
- Planning Commission public hearing and recommendation: July 3, 2018
- City Council Presentation: July 9, 2018
- City Council Public Hearing and 1st Reading: August 13, 2018
- City Council 2nd Reading: August 27, 2018

ADDRESSES A NEED/ISSUE IN A CITY PLAN OR COUNCIL PRIORITY:

Creates the overarching policy plan with a framework that informs all other city plans and priorities.

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

This is a presentation, therefore no action is required.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

As a presentation, no action is required.

The draft Comprehensive Plan can be viewed here: www.envisionnewbraunfels.org
<<http://www.envisionnewbraunfels.org>>