

# **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

Taylor Comprehensive Plan Update – 2004

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Located in central Texas, Taylor is an established regional residential, agricultural, and manufacturing center. Approximately 29 miles northeast of Austin and 17 miles east of Interstate Highway 35, the City is part of the five county Austin/San Marcos Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), one of the fastest growing areas of the United States. Originally named Taylor Station, the City was laid out by the Texas Land Company in anticipation of the coming railroad and incorporated in 1882. Cotton farming, a mainstay of the community since the middle 1800s continues to dominate the rural landscape. By 1900, settlers from Czechoslovakia, Germany, Austria, England, Scotland, and Mexico had created a lively community with mayor/council government, a public school system, banks, a cotton compress, electric company and several newspapers. Today, Taylor is an ethnically diverse city with a population of over 14,700, proud of its “small town” atmosphere and friendly people.

To address current and new development needs, issues, and pressures, the City Council authorized the development of a new Comprehensive Plan in November 2003. Developed in a multi-stage process, it provides the vision, goals, objectives and actions necessary to direct the City’s progress over the next thirty years. As an official public document it will serve as the guide for policy decisions relating to the physical, social, and economic growth of the community. In addition to providing goals and objectives, the Plan assesses the opportunities and challenges facing the City and sets priorities for an implementation program that outlines specific actions and practical results. It is highly important that the needs and aspirations identified in the Plan be balanced with the primary roles and duties of the City in providing mandatory and essential city services.

As a principal part of the City’s overall, ongoing planning process, this new Comprehensive Plan establishes the vision and direction of the community and represents an important first step toward achieving the City’s stated goals. This plan should not be considered a static document. It is the result of a continuous process to gather and evaluate information and make informed decisions based upon constantly changing conditions. The Plan should be regularly reviewed, revised and updated as needed to maintain its applicability to current conditions and established priorities. At a minimum, the entire plan should be revisited every five years to ensure that it continues to reflect the true values and direction of the community. While Taylor’s Comprehensive Plan Update should be flexible enough to respond to changing needs, the community should remain steadfast in its vision and support for the core goals and objectives contained in the Plan.

Taylor’s Comprehensive Plan is a guide with a foundation in state law. Chapter 213 of *Texas Local Government Code* provides that “The governing body of a municipality may adopt a comprehensive plan for the long-range development of the municipality. A municipality may define the content and design of a

comprehensive plan.” Since Taylor is a municipality with a population of more than 5,000 residents, it is permitted an extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) extending one mile beyond its borders. In these areas, the City has the right to review and approve subdivisions, and prepare plans for areas that have direct relationships to municipal planning.

Funded in part by a grant from the Office of Rural and Community Assistance (ORCA) of the State of Texas, the new Comprehensive Plan is a continuation of years of successful planning activities.

## Previous Plans

In 1996, the current Comprehensive Plan was developed by Dunkin Sefko as a continuation of the City’s commitment to planning. Older previous plans include the *1967 Comprehensive Plan* by Bernard Johnson Engineers, *Taylor Planning Studies* by Southwest Texas State University in 1979, and the *Comprehensive Plan* by Community Land Resources, Inc. in 1986. In developing this update, previous plans will be considered; however, the update will reflect current desires of the community and current development issues and trends. Priority projects and development strategies from previous plans will be reviewed in the development of each chapter to determine if they have been accomplished, and if they are applicable or desired in the current environment.

## Elements of the Comprehensive Plan

The elements of the Taylor Comprehensive Plan are organized into 11 chapters, each of which includes existing conditions, issues, goals, objectives, and actions for identified aspects of the community.

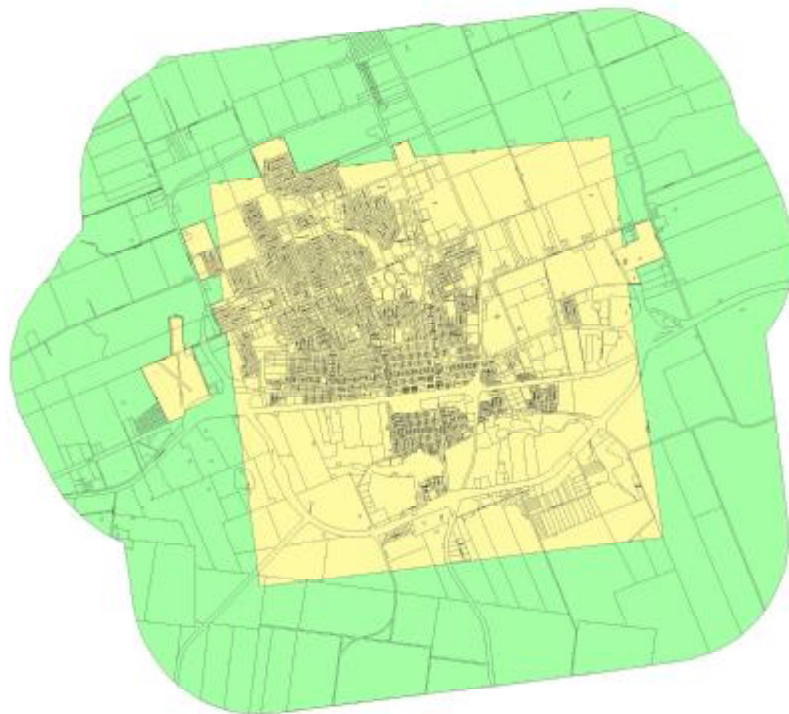
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Each chapter of the new Plan was developed to specifically address the current and anticipated needs of the community. Although they are separate chapters, they are interrelated as land use influences transportation which impacts economic development, which in turn demands housing units which require parks and open space. Coordination is therefore required between the goals, objectives and actions of each chapter within the overall Comprehensive Plan.

## Geographical Area for the Comprehensive Plan

The geographical planning area for this Plan is shown in **Figure 1.1 - Comprehensive Planning Area** and includes both the incorporated city (yellow) and the one-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction (green). In these areas, the City has the right to protect surrounding areas and effectively manage growth patterns. Taylor's identity as a regional center requires the chapters of the Comprehensive Plan be responsive to factors and needs beyond the established one-mile boundary.

**FIGURE 1.1**  
**COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AREA**



## Development of the Comprehensive Plan

The Taylor Comprehensive Plan Update is the result of many hours of consideration and input from community residents and leaders. It is an effort to answer five questions that are the basis of the comprehensive planning process:

- Where has Taylor been in the past?
- Where is the City now?
- Where are we heading in the future?
- Where do we want to be in the year 2025?
- How do we achieve our desired future?

Understanding the community's past and present conditions is necessary to determine the city's identity and its ability to successfully plan for the future.

Citizen involvement is the cornerstone of the Comprehensive Plan. In order to be a workable plan, it must be identified not just with the City's elected officials who adopt it, but also with the entire City and its residents who helped draft it. The Plan should be capable of being followed and maintained even as elected officials change. Through community involvement, the Comprehensive Plan sought to incorporate the community's values in terms of quality of life; character and scale of development; enhanced aesthetic appeal; and how new development should be integrated into the existing and future city framework.

These key participants in the planning process included:

- μ The citizens of Taylor, through two Community Forums held at the outset and toward the end of the planning process;
- μ The Steering Committee, a group of citizens appointed by the City, who meet regularly for over a year to discuss the issues and elements of the Plan and to provide initial input, overall review and monitoring of the planning process;
- μ City staff as the liaison between the Steering Committee, Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council and the Consultant team;
- μ The Planning and Zoning Commission as the appointed group of citizens responsible for developing and administering the Comprehensive Plan; and,
- μ The Mayor and City Council, who as the City's ultimate decision-making officials were involved at key stages so the resulting plan would fulfill their expectations and requirements.

Meetings between various members of these groups and the planning consultant were held to discuss and develop the various aspects and directions of the Plan. The Steering Committee was involved in a thorough process of identifying issues, discussing alternatives and solutions, and determining needs and priorities.

The Planning and Zoning Commission, as the planning recommending body will perform a key role in helping to determine how the plan will be used on a daily basis in making land use and development decisions. With responsibility for the Plan, they will need to recommend adoption of the plan to the City Council.

As the City's chief governing body, the City Council will adopt the new Comprehensive Plan, a plan that will assist in and direct their decision-making process. The resulting Comprehensive Plan should assure the citizens of Taylor a future that meets their desires and aspirations for their community.

## **A Plan for the Future**

When Taylor initiated this new effort in long-range planning, the City decided to manage its destiny rather than reacting to change. The results of previous

planning efforts are reflected in very tangible accomplishments across the community achieved through dedication and commitment to a shared vision.

Planning for Taylor's future is the continuous process of identifying issues and needs, building consensus, establishing goals and objectives, and determining the most effective means by which these ends may be achieved. With its emphasis on meaningful results, this Comprehensive Plan sets the stage for intelligent and coordinated actions instead of complacency and inaction. In light of the challenges and opportunities facing the City of Taylor, the following chapters of the Comprehensive Plan are intended to provide guidelines for the next 20 years to ensure Taylor's desired future.