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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Late in 2013, Sugar Land began the process of updating the Land Use Plan, which is Chapter 6 of the Comprehensive Plan. Chapters 1-5 and the Future Land Use Map were updated and approved by the City Council in 2012; however, the remainder of the Land Use Plan was last updated in 2004. The purpose of updating the Plan is to ensure that Sugar Land continues to thrive and to ensure future development and redevelopment is aligned with the vision and goals laid out by the Comprehensive Plan and provide further guidance on land use specific goals and policies.

The City is at a transitional moment in its history. Sugar Land evolved from a small company town, to a rapidly growing suburb of Houston in the latter half of the twentieth century. Since 2000, the city has developed into a mature well-rounded city with high quality neighborhoods, significant employment, and attractive destination venues. However, the City also has aging buildings and infrastructure, increasing commercial vacancies, and limited vacant property. The population is increasingly diverse and aging, leading to shifts in housing market preferences. In order to address these changes in the city, this Plan establishes guidance for development and redevelopment which aims to improve residents' quality of life and support the City's economic growth.

The process of updating this Plan has involved citizens, stakeholders, and the City Council. City Council approved Resolution 13-34 August 2013 appointing the Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC), a group of volunteer citizens, who developed the recommendations laid out in the Plan. During the summer of 2013, stakeholders such as Mayor's Youth Advisory Council (MYAC), Planning and Zoning Commission, Fort Bend ISD, and others participated in a series of interviews with city staff and consultants. Individual interviews were also conducted with the mayor and council members. During these interviews stakeholders identified aspects of the city's land use they desired to see stay the same and those they preferred to be different. Over a 3-month period in 2014, a six-part public forum was held in Sugar Land for citizens to learn about various growth trends in Texas and across the United States. Each land use forum began with a presentation by an expert in their field, followed by a discussion among citizens. Key takeaways from these were used to inform and help formulate this Plan. Lastly, two public meetings and three Online Town Halls allowed additional opportunities for citizens to provide feedback on components and drafts of the Plan.

Based on the extensive discussions, this Plan establishes a vision and proposes 10 overarching goals for Sugar Land which are described in detail in the Land Use Vision, Goals and Policies in Section 5, pages 32-63:

> Sugar Land will develop and redevelop to remain a desirable place to live and do business. The city will change in response to long-term shifts in market demands and demographic trends, managing that change to preserve the city's appeal. It will balance different land uses, preserve the character of its neighborhoods, and create new walkable mixed use Regional and Neighborhood Activity Centers with a variety of offices, housing, retail, entertainment, and civic institutions.

Preserving Single-Family Neighborhoods

Amenities for All

Fostering Redevelopment

Creating Mixed-Use Activity Centers

Inviting Outdoor Spaces

Celebrate Sugar Land

Encouraging Residential Options

Connected Land Uses

A Great Place for Business

Balanced Growth

Young families have traditionally moved into Sugar Land for the remarkable schools, inviting single-family neighborhoods, and high standard of living. **This Plan prioritizes the preservation and protection of single-family neighborhoods in Sugar Land and encourages increased coordination with the school districts.** Additionally, during discussions residents expressed a desire for more housing options such as live-work units, townhomes, compact single-family houses, and multifamily apartments for young professionals as well as empty-nesters. Policies in this Plan encourage new housing options but limit them to designated areas and provide guidance on the number of multi-family units envisioned. **The Land Use Plan provides guidance for establishing stronger restrictions on multi-family development, including a definitive statement that no new stand-alone, single-use, multi-family residential development within the City should be approved.**

Two types of Activity Centers are introduced in the land use categories to guide denser development in preferred areas such that they do not negatively impact single-family neighborhoods. **The success of Sugar Land Town Square is a model for future new walkable mixed use Regional and Neighborhood Activity Centers.** These centers address the growing demand for living closer to services and entertainment. Regional Activity Centers are proposed to attract visitors from around Sugar Land and the entire region. These are intended to have a civic anchor such as City Hall and a central outdoor gathering space. Neighborhood Activity Centers are proposed to be created through redevelopment of aging retail centers that are adjacent to existing single-family neighborhoods and would provide everyday services such as grocery stores, dentist offices, and dry cleaners, and would promote walkability for daily trips. **Redevelopment is critical to maintaining the long-term fiscal health of the City but must always be balanced and considerate of the impact on any adjacent single-family neighborhoods.** All new, denser housing options should be located in these activity centers, in order to minimize impacts to single-family neighborhoods.

Large employers in the region are looking for amenities such as restaurants, gyms, retail, and hotels in close proximity to their offices. Regional Activity Centers will provide Class-A office spaces in walkable distances from these amenities. **Maintaining amenities such as retail, restaurants, hotels, cultural institutions, parks, entertainment and recreational destinations are important in attracting residents, tourists and visitors. The Plan encourages these amenities to be located in appropriate locations respectful of adjacent single-family neighborhoods.**

This Plan also preserves areas for limited industrial uses for target industries and protects the airport. **Continued commercial development is vitally important to the City from both an economic perspective as well as the civic services and amenities it provides to residents and visitors.**

Open spaces are crucial for a City for the health of citizens, recreation, and gathering. Sugar Land will preserve its parks and open spaces and encourage connectivity among the parks and along the Brazos River. Plazas in activity centers may be used for community events and holiday celebrations to cultivate a sense of community. Connectivity is encouraged in all new land use development and redevelopment to allow citizens the option to walk or bike in addition to driving from point A to point B. **The Plan recognizes the benefit of utilizing Land Use strategies to increase overall mobility and reduce traffic congestion.**

The policies in this Plan strive to sustain the long-term fiscal health of the City by encouraging a balanced mix of land uses, denser development in activity centers, high quality infrastructure and building construction, and the consideration of the availability of natural resources in proposed developments. These enable the City to continue to provide high quality services and ensure infrastructure is well maintained, all while maintaining a low tax rate. Overall, the Plan seeks to ensure that the changing needs and demands of current and future residents are met, to attract the younger population to the City, and to encourage economic growth and strengthen the City's tax base. **The Future Land Use Plan is the single most important document that will guide how the City positively and proactively responds to long-term market shifts and demographic trends – all with the goal of preserving our single family residential neighborhoods and ensuring Sugar Land continues to be a premier place to live, work, shop and play in the region.**

In addition to policies aimed at accomplishing each of these goals, this Plan offers a Future Land Use Map that identifies Regional Activity Centers and Neighborhood Activity Centers along highways and major vehicular corridors, Suburban Neighborhood areas to preserve existing single-family neighborhoods, and other land use categories. The land use categories are redefined to allow for flexibility in design while guiding developers and city staff to specific mixes of uses. The Plan also includes an Areas of Change Map which identifies areas that are not anticipated to change significantly in the coming years. The map also identifies limited areas of the City and ETJ that are expected to change and are recommended for redevelopment based on changing demands for those areas. Lastly, the Plan outlines a list of prioritized actions that the City should pursue to implement the Plan.