

City saw Wisdom of Planning Early On—Now, Focus is 2025

“In 1962, none of us had any experience in administering a city,” says former Sugar Land mayor Bill Little. “And we didn’t want to fly by the seat of our pants.” Mayor Little (the city’s second mayor, serving from 1961-1965) sought the assistance of the engineers and planners in the Houston firm Bernard Johnson (now, BJY); the company’s comprehensive city plans could be purchased through Federal grants, and the work would include engineering plans, zoning ordinances and property assessments.

“I thought then, Well, we have a chance to make an ideal city,” says Little. The year was 1962; when the plan was finished, it was estimated that Sugar Land would have a population of 60,000 in the year 2000.

“Remarkably accurate, I’d say,” says Little, who worked for Imperial Sugar and then served as vice president of Sugarland Industries, 1962 to 1970, and saw Sugar Land first as a company town.

Through the dedication of Ike Kempner and William Eldridge, partners in the Imperial Sugar Refinery, the fledgling company town founded in 1908 became a safe and orderly community over the years. Streets, sewer lines, electric and gas lines, levees and fire and police protection were put into service, so when the city incorporated in 1959 many elements were already in place. Importantly, there was a strong sense of community pride among the residents.

As the saying goes, The more things change, the more they remain the same. And the dedication to foresight and creating well thought-out plans

remain guiding principles in 2009 for Sugar Land's City Council. In fact, the Council has recently approved a document that will guide future policies taken by the City—Vision 2025. The document is the result of six months' work, including a retreat for senior management and a Community Summit in June where residents offered feedback on the draft document.

"The process we went through in adopting Vision 2025 has been extremely valuable," says Mayor James Thompson. "All the work we've done the last six months has really brought clarity on how we can improve Sugar Land, and ensure it remains one of America's premier cities."

Vision 2025 contains 11 value-based principles that highlight key areas for the City's future—among them mobility; safety; recreation, educational and cultural opportunities; continuing to build a regional business center.

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Mayor Little reflects on his tenure as Council member and mayor. "We were well served by that initial comprehensive plan. That City Council built a foundation, and over the years this has become a pretty fine city."

But a fine city just does not happen because of a plan—there were plenty of long hours and lots of elbow grease invested in the City over the years by Councils and staff. And of course the residents, always eager for involvement in their City as evidenced by the enrollments in the academies the City offers.

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Want to know more about Vision 2025? Or the various academies offered by the City? Or the City's early history? All of this and much more can be

found on the City's website, www.sugarlandtx.gov

Money Magazine and CNNmoney.com rank Sugar Land as one of America's Best Places to Live.
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