

COMMERCIAL AREA DEVELOPMENT & ENHANCEMENT

Why this Comprehensive Plan chapter is Important for Bellaire:

- ✓ *Highlights particular areas of the community that are likely candidates for commercial redevelopment activity and where the City, therefore, should concentrate its revitalization efforts to ensure outcomes desired by Bellaire residents.*
- ✓ *Anticipates the potential construction of a new METRO transit center along Westpark, just outside of Bellaire, and the implications for redevelopment opportunities at Bellaire's north City limits closest to Uptown Houston.*
- ✓ *Emphasizes the importance of both commercial development quality and attractive design of public infrastructure and streetscapes along Bellaire's major corridors as this is where first and lasting impressions of the community are formed.*
- ✓ *In conjunction with Chapter 2, Land Use & Community Character, provides the basis for potential adjustments to the City's zoning strategy for its prime commercial areas and corridors.*

CHAPTER 5

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the outlook for commercial development and redevelopment activity in Bellaire, both in terms of local community-serving needs, as well as in the context of broader Houston-area development trends. This includes consideration of strategic locations such as the "City Center" area (within new zoning districts CMU and UV-D) and the new UV-T zoning district in north Bellaire, plus key corridors where the City's non-residential development has traditionally been focused. This chapter serves to reinforce Chapter 2, Land Use & Community Character, by documenting the types of commercial development residents anticipate and would like to see in their community in the future—and where such development and redevelopment activity should be focused to ensure compatibility and protect the character of the "City of Homes."

This chapter also addresses the City's role in encouraging and guiding desired development types and forms, in terms of preferred location, scale



and quality design. This includes consideration of aesthetic treatments on both private development sites and within the public realm that can improve image and appearance along the community’s major corridors (e.g., “context sensitive” roadway design, landscaping, signage, building and site design, and other amenities). Lastly, through the 2009 comprehensive planning process, this chapter pointed out the need for a dedicated City staff or contract position focusing on ongoing commercial redevelopment efforts in Bellaire and to interact with potential commercial development prospects. This was cited by noted Houston area development community representatives as one of various impediments to City Center redevelopment in a 2007 market study, which is also referenced further in this chapter. Since 2009 the City engaged a consultant to help assess Bellaire’s approach to and explore its priorities for commercial revitalization. Based on that effort and as part of updating this Comprehensive Plan in 2015, this plan recognizes that the City Manager and the Director of Development Services are primarily responsible for commercial redevelopment efforts as part of their overall duties and—in close collaboration with the Mayor and City Council—can speak on behalf of the City and advance its interests in this area.

KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The following facts, assumptions, and considerations provide the context for the goals and action strategies presented in this chapter:

Bellaire Urban Village at Westpark

In the Comprehensive Plan adopted in November 2009, this section included extensive discussion on the potential for a “transit-oriented development” (TOD) scenario near the north Bellaire City limits along Westpark, focused around an anticipated new Bellaire Rail Station. This was because it appeared, at the time, that METRO’s east-west University light rail line and a complementary north-south Uptown light rail line were proceeding toward near-term construction, with necessary funding lined up and final regulatory approvals pending. Updates to this Comprehensive Plan during 2015 highlight that the City, in 2011, adopted a new zoning strategy for the TOD area by replacing the former Research, Development and Distribution (RDD) zoning district with a new Urban Village-Transit Oriented Development (UV-T) district.

In the interim between the City’s 2009 and 2015 comprehensive planning efforts, METRO’s University and Uptown light rail lines were postponed indefinitely. More recently, Uptown Houston chose to proceed with broader mobility improvements for its area that include implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service along Post Oak Boulevard. The ultimate Uptown Houston vision, as presented to and discussed with City of Bellaire officials, is to tie the BRT service into a proposed new METRO transit center along Westpark. At the time of the 2015 update of this Comprehensive Plan, it appeared that the transit center would be located farther west, within the



City of Houston, versus at the earlier rail station location along Bellaire's northern City limits. It also appeared that Uptown Houston was pushing back the timeline for the transit center while focusing first on BRT design and construction.

The passage of time has also led to different market calculations and real estate decisions by owners of property within the City of Houston, just west of the UV-T area toward South Rice Avenue. Larger tracts on the Houston side that were once part of the TOD vision along Westpark have already developed in a more typical, auto-oriented fashion with large-footprint retail stores, associated pad sites along South Rice, and expansive areas devoted to parking. Properties conducive for redevelopment in Bellaire's UV-T district could still follow a different path, with a more mixed-use and walkable design. Developer inquiries to the City demonstrate this potential and also reflect build-out of the Uptown area and continued interest in strategic sites for upscale and mixed-use projects in areas west of River Oaks and Upper Kirby. As with the earlier RDD and TOD scenarios, the introduction of east-west traffic circulation across the UV-T district, all the way from Loop 610 to South Rice, could be an additional impetus to new real estate investment in the area. Uptown Houston has continued to recognize this critical element in its planning for the potential transit center, but recent development activity between South Rice and the Bellaire City limits impedes this connectivity.

Through the 2015 update of this Comprehensive Plan, the Goal 5.1 table is now annotated to indicate action items already accomplished since the 2009 plan update related to the Bellaire Urban Village area near Westpark.

City Center Area

As a precursor to the 2009 Comprehensive Plan process, Bellaire's City Center area was the focus of a special study during 2007 that included a physical assessment and visioning process, led by Kendig Keast Collaborative (the City's consultant for this Comprehensive Plan), as well as a market analysis conducted by CDS Market Research. Besides assessing current conditions and the future outlook for City Center, this strategic planning process was also intended to yield a consensus vision and goals for the area as presented in the sidebar on this page. The vision and goals were crafted to suggest a balance between commercial redevelopment objectives and the community's desires for City Center.

The study process included review of previous plans and studies, dating back to significant "Town Center" planning and implementation efforts during the 1980s (including the creation and later dissolution of a tax increment financing district); a property ownership inventory and history; field inventories of the area; a series of stakeholder interviews; and a special workshop with members of all City-appointed Boards and Commissions. The study results were reviewed and finalized in coordination with the Strategic Planning & Development Committee of City Council, which also included the Chair and Vice Chair of the City's Planning & Zoning Commission. The study helped to confirm:

NOTE: The information in this City Center Area section, from the Comprehensive Plan update in 2009, is retained here as background. As noted at the end of the section, City-initiated zoning ordinance amendments based on these City Center priorities and guidance were adopted by City Council during 2014.



City Center Vision and Goals

VISION: A revitalized City Center that enhances the quality of residential life in Bellaire by providing attractive and convenient shops, services, entertainment and residential options.

GOAL 1: A City Center that is directly linked to Bellaire’s immediate and long-term well-being and is realistically achievable.

GOAL 2: A City Center that fills a local market niche that responds directly to the needs and desires of Bellaire residents.

GOAL 3: A City Center that attracts desirable commercial, retail, mixed use and residential development.

GOAL 4: A City Center that provides safe and convenient pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular mobility.

GOAL 5: A City Center that balances the space and parking needs of various commercial activities with the community’s desire for an appealing downtown. Key elements would include “pockets of green,” attractive site development and building design, signature corridors, and intersections with exceptional streetscapes.

GOAL 6: A City Center enlivened by the presence of residential options.

GOAL 7: A City Center that links municipal facilities to the community’s commercial core.

- ◆ The degree of development interest in Bellaire’s City Center, but with suggestions from local and regional development community representatives that the City of Bellaire needs to take a more active role to encourage significant reinvestment (e.g., by setting quality standards, establishing a more walkable setting, addressing area aesthetics in terms of streetscape and signage, providing public parking, and exploring public/private partnership opportunities).
- ◆ The economic and market reasons for limited property turnover or improvements in the area for an extended period.
- ◆ Receptiveness among Bellaire officials and residents to potential residential development in City Center (whether stand-alone or in mixed-use scenarios).
- ◆ The City’s two current “CCD” zoning districts do not allow a stand-alone residential development in City Center.
- ◆ Scenarios under consideration (through a concurrent Bellaire Town Square facilities study) in which some City facilities might be relocated to City Center.
- ◆ The fundamental desire to achieve some tangible improvement of the area and ensure that any revitalization effort enhances residents’ quality of life (versus a typical economic development focus on expanding commercial tax base and associated revenue).

A prioritization exercise involving members of City Council, the Planning & Zoning Commission, and members of other City Boards and Commissions resulted in the following items rising to the top as the desired focus for City Center revitalization:

1. Housing diversity and opportunities in City Center.
2. A comprehensive strategy for renewing the area.
3. Pedestrian mobility.
4. A more green and attractive setting.
5. Truly unique businesses (specialty stores, boutiques).

The Existing Physical Conditions element of the City Center study identified 10 key factors in considering how best to enhance the area, some of which mirror the prioritization results above. These are summarized as follows:

1. **Urban Character Without the Benefits of a True Downtown Setting:**
 - Urban feel from “intensity” of area (traffic, hardscape).
 - But spread out and auto-oriented.
 - Regional arterials pass through area.
 - Area lacks “critical mass.”





Bellaire City Center area, in yellow (as defined by the previous zoning districts CCD-1 and CCD-2), and the “Urban Village” area, in dark red (now the Urban Village-Downtown zoning district), to be a prime focus of ongoing revitalization efforts.

- No anchor use(s) or activities.
 - Some edges of area directly abut unzoned City of Houston properties.
2. **Difficult Building Sites:**
- Bissonnet diagonal the dominant physical feature.
 - Resulting street and block pattern.
 - Some unusually shaped and undersized parcels.
 - Minimal development potential on some sites (especially after setback and parking requirements applied).
3. **Parking Arrangements:**
- Extensive surface parking.
 - Adds to extent of “hardscape.”
 - Adds to spread-out nature of area.
 - Some under-utilized parking areas.



- Opportunities for:
 - shared parking
 - freed-up space for more productive use
 - green space and amenities

4. **Marginal Conditions:**

- Limited maintenance or upgrades in some locations (e.g., facades, pavement).
- Image of substandard property upkeep.
- Detracts from the area’s appeal.
- A mismatch with improvements to Bellaire’s residential stock.
- Undermines residents’ quality of life.

5. **Lack of Residential Presence:**

- Would create more foot traffic during evenings and on weekends.
- Also demand for retail, services, and entertainment.
- Residents living right in the area would expect a safe, inviting setting.
- Current CCD zoning only allows residential uses through “combined retail/residential,” which also requires navigating a Planned Development review and approval process.
- An urban residential renaissance is occurring in central Houston.

6. **Lack of Bicycle/Pedestrian “Friendliness” and Safe Neighborhood Access:**

- CCD-1 purpose statement in the zoning ordinance refers to “... a predominately retail commercial area ... easily accessible to city residents.”
- Lack of marked bike/pedestrian routes and walkways to/from and within the area.
- Traffic is a positive for retail, but most vibrant downtowns have a pedestrian orientation.

7. **Lack of Municipal Presence:**

- All Bellaire civic functions elsewhere.
- Another common generator of visitation and daytime (and evening) street activity.
- A potential means for adding more “green” and other amenities to the area (e.g., public squares, fountains), as well as public parking.
- Another potential anchor, including for a master-planned development approach (public/private mix).

Other City Center Study Findings

The Market Analysis portion of the study included the following findings:

- With a median parcel size of 0.3 acres, the area was divided among 73 property owners. The top eight landholders controlled about half of all private land.
- Of the roughly 81 acres within the CCD zoning districts, 28.5% of the area is within publicly owned streets and easements.
- The gross taxable value of area properties was \$54.2 million in 2006, which yielded approximately \$238,000 in property tax revenue for the City. Tax delinquencies totaled \$71,849.
- City Center rents ranged from \$9 to \$13 per square foot for older space to \$20 to \$28 per foot for newer space. Despite the lower rentals for older retail properties, the property owners appear to be satisfied with their current revenue streams given the low-cost environment and with their properties carrying low tax values relative to the highest-and-best-use values.
- At the time of this study, the City was planning \$3 million of infrastructure improvements, including upgraded traffic signals, sidewalks, and pedestrian street crossings.
- Also at the time of the study, retail businesses in the area appeared to be doing well, particularly “upscale” shops (e.g., Magpie’s, Starbuck’s, Lemongrass) that are most often mentioned as desired by Bellaire residents.
- The City of Bellaire has no program of developer incentives.
- Condemnation of land is also not available as a redevelopment tool following a November 2006 City Charter amendment prohibiting the use of eminent domain to acquire properties for economic development.



8. **Lack of “Green” Areas and Amenities – Despite the Extent of Public Space:**

- CCD-2 purpose statement in the zoning ordinance refers to the City Center area as “... the focal point of the City’s visual character.”
- Limited open space or vegetated areas.
- Excessive street sections.
- More streetscape and image/identity enhancements needed.
- Another benefit of residential uses in the area (private landscaping and visible flowers, plants on porches, in windows).

9. **Wide Range of Building Styles:**

- All types of architecture in area.
- Partly due to different eras, but also the level of sophistication in building types and quality in some cases.
- Contributes to area’s disjointed appearance.
- How far to go with potential design standards?
- Building orientation relative to streets is another consideration.

10. **Dramatic Retail Market “Drop-Off” and Change in Community Character to the West:**

- Definite change in housing, retail, and general physical conditions past Chimney Rock.
- A fundamental factor beyond an enclave community’s control.
- City “Center” is actually at west edge of community.

The goal, guiding principles, and associated action strategies in this chapter related to City Center (under Goal 5.2) are intended to build upon the results of the 2007 study and consensus-building effort. Through the 2015 update of this Comprehensive Plan, the Goal 5.2 table is now annotated to indicate action items already accomplished since the 2009 plan update. Further details on the market analysis phase of the earlier City Center study are available in the full CDS Market Research report, *Independent Market Analysis - City Center District - Bellaire, Texas* (June 2007).

Commercial Development in General

Bellaire City Council periodically refines and agrees on a set of goals and objectives to focus its efforts and guide City staff functions. The City Council Goals and Objectives for January 2008 through January 2010—the timeframe when this Comprehensive Plan was previously updated—addressed commercial development issues most directly through Objective D3, as highlighted in the sidebar on the next page. Priority initiatives associated with this objective included ongoing coordination with the Greater Southwest Houston Chamber of Commerce and others “to identify and investigate potential development interest,” plus preparation of an Economic Development Plan for Bellaire’s commercial districts. (It should be noted that



business development and networking efforts in Bellaire previously supported by the Chamber now occur through the Bellaire Business Association, or BBA.) The list of considerations for this suggested plan was very much in line with the opportunities and challenges discussed within this chapter for the Bellaire Rail Station and City Center areas:

- ◆ more mixed use;
- ◆ revitalization of older buildings;
- ◆ better mix of retail offerings;
- ◆ traffic flow accommodation;
- ◆ new development possibilities;
- ◆ walkways;
- ◆ green areas with pedestrian seating;
- ◆ possible architectural standards that are uniform, but unique;
- ◆ mixed usage residential and commercial;
- ◆ connection to other surrounding urban centers;
- ◆ architectural and/or art features built into City rights-of-way and commercial businesses that identify “Bellaire” (i.e., gateways, pavers, special lighting, benches, landscaping, etc.); and
- ◆ easy access parking, such as underground parking.

City Council Goals and Objectives

The Council’s adopted Goals and Objectives for January 2008 through January 2010 included the following goal for the Strategic Plan and Development Focus Area:

The City Council of the City of Bellaire, Texas, will take a proactive role in the long-term development of the commercial and residential areas to make Bellaire the most desirable city in Harris County.

Then, the following objective focused specifically on commercial development considerations:

OBJECTIVE 3: *Encourage development of commercial areas.* There is a significant commercial value and potential in our extensive commercial districts within the City. Develop recommendations for a long-term economic vision plan.

Additionally, the other primary commercial area in Bellaire is the Bissonnet corridor, east of City Center between 3rd Street and Loop 610, and then east of Loop 610 to the east City limits past Mulberry. As illustrated by the photo examples in this section, this commercial corridor, in its current state, also underperforms in terms of general aesthetics and contribution to community character. This is partly due to shallow lots along much of the corridor, but especially because of limited design-related standards in the City’s development regulations.

This situation was addressed through a key implementation step resulting from this chapter within the 2009 Comprehensive Plan update—the adoption by City Council, in 2014, of two new zoning districts, the Corridor Mixed Use (CMU) and Urban Village-Downtown (UV-D) districts. These districts encompass much of the Bissonnet corridor within Bellaire and, along with the new UV-T district in north Bellaire, are the mechanism for applying new site

and building design standards in these areas (as codified in Section 24-513a., Design Standards in Commercial and Mixed-Use Districts, within the City’s Code of Ordinances). As stated at the beginning of the new City Code section, “The purpose of this Section is to establish reasonable design standards and related guidance to address community desire for visually appealing non-residential and mixed-use development that enhances the overall quality and character of the City, while balancing the legitimate development and commercial needs of property owners.”



Houston Urban Corridor Planning

The City of Houston Planning & Development Department in 2009 was proceeding with a multi-year initiative intended “to change the City’s land development regulations and infrastructure standards to accommodate a broad range of mobility options—walking, bicycling, public transit, and driving—in order to improve access to jobs, services, entertainment and recreation, now and in the future.”

The corridor planning effort was concentrating on areas near METRO’s expanding light rail system, with a special emphasis around the transit stations, to create a more transit-supportive built environment. While it is not surprising that this program was explicitly described as not involving zoning, it was a commendable effort by the City of Houston to explore ways to improve community appearance and residents’ quality of life as described in this brochure excerpt:

The way the city grows is directly related to the rules that regulate land development and the standards for the infrastructure that supports development. These dictate things like the width of streets and sidewalks, the distance between buildings and the street, how many parking spaces a business must have, what type of landscaping must be added, and much more. Each of these items may seem like a minor issue on its own, but when taken as a whole, they create the world we live in and make the difference between having communities we can walk in or where we have to drive everywhere. Changes to regulations and standards can positively impact how growth is distributed, the way the city looks, and how we get around.



This stretch of Bissonnet east of Avenue B exhibits many common features of a “strip development,” auto-oriented corridor: (1) stand-alone, single-use buildings surrounded by paved parking areas with minimal landscaping (although the structure is pulled close to the street in this case, with some parking to the rear); (2) entire site frontages devoted to paved parking areas, with no green space relief of any kind; and (3) commercial sites with extensive frontage area devoted to vehicle access, which further limits landscaping potential and leads to access management concerns through the cumulative impact of this situation along a roadway corridor.



From ground level, the typical outcome is an “Anytown, USA” appearance, with minimal attention to aesthetics or establishing a unique image for Bellaire. Indeed, there is little to distinguish this scene from a commercial corridor in many other communities. However, the office building site across Bissonnet (below) demonstrates the value of generous front yard landscaping, attractive signage, and skillful site design in which parking is placed under and behind the main structure.





These conceptual images illustrate how street redesign and added streetscape and site design features can dramatically transform corridor aesthetics and the community's overall image and appeal. Examples depicted include installation of landscaped esplanades, more extensive landscaping within public rights-of-way and on private sites, special street lighting and traffic signal fixtures, enhanced traffic signals and street signage, overhead utility wires moved underground, and distinctive designs for intersection crosswalks and widened sidewalks.



GOALS AND ACTIONS

The tables on the following pages present a set of goals and guiding principles for addressing the key issues identified in relation to commercial area development and enhancement in Bellaire. Potential action strategies are then outlined to respond to particular opportunities and challenges associated with the overall goals. The action options are arranged in six categories that represent the main ways that comprehensive plans are implemented.



The City's wastewater treatment facility is a prominent visual element that shapes first impressions of Bellaire at one of the community's busiest gateway locations along Beechnut.



This example at the corner of Bissonnet and N. 3rd Street illustrates the beneficial effect, in terms of neighborhood compatibility and corridor quality, of designing a small corner office use with residential-style architecture and scale. The restaurant example below (from another community) shows how attention to development character, as well as the particular use, can complement nearby neighborhood and corridor development.



**GOAL 5.1:
Repositioning of the UV-T district in north Bellaire
as a mixed-use area with an Urban character.**

Guiding Principles

- A. Brand the UV-T area as a focal point of new amenities for Bellaire residents and a unique and inviting destination for visitors.
- B. Pursue the community’s life-cycle housing objectives in the UV-T area by encouraging varied residential living options not found elsewhere in the community.
- C. Protect adjacent residential neighborhoods from incompatible non-residential development.
- D. Recognize the UV-T area as one of the community’s best opportunities for gaining new public green space.
- E. Ensure that the UV-T area is conveniently and safely accessible to Bellaire residents by bike and on foot.
- F. Have the City take a more direct role in spurring commercial area revitalization, including in the UV-T area.

Consideration 1: Transformation of the UV-T into a Mixed-Use, Pedestrian-Oriented Area.

Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Focus on attracting retail establishments, restaurants, and services desired by Bellaire residents and intended to serve local needs, but also appealing to visitors to Bellaire.
Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ [ACCOMPLISHED, in large part, through standards for the new UV-T zoning district] Completely rework the current “RDD” zoning strategy to promote a transit-oriented, mixed-use station area district with an urban character. Code amendment priorities should include elimination of permitted uses not compatible with this vision (e.g., light industry, distribution, and typical horizontal uses such as auto dealerships); provision for attached housing types, as well as mid-rise residential structures (potentially with first-floor retail or service uses); zoning incentives for mixed-use projects (e.g., density/intensity bonuses), and an easier path to vertical mixed use buildings besides only the Planned Development process; and development standards specifically aimed at protection of adjacent, established residential neighborhoods. Also frame building height standards to allow for the tallest buildings in the core of the district, nearest the rail station, and then taper down the permitted heights in the southern portion of the district, closest to the adjacent existing residential neighborhood.
Capital Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Pursue access and circulation improvements described in Chapter 3-Mobility, to open up east-west traffic movement across the UV-T area and support its redevelopment. ▶ Through development proposals and potential City-provided improvements, ensure that a small-block urban street grid is established as a framework for redevelopment in the UV-T area. Also provide wide sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities throughout the district.
Program/ Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ As part of the special study recommended under Further Study/Planning, refine and establish a branding and marketing strategy for the UV-T area to ensure that, over time, it achieves a distinct image and unique appeal that is recognized across the Houston metropolitan area.
Partnerships/ Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Continue coordination with METRO, the City of Houston, Uptown Houston, the Harris County Toll Road Authority, private development interests, and others involved in planning for a potential new METRO transit center along Westpark, just outside of Bellaire. ▶ In conjunction with the City of Houston and other potential partners, pursue the South Rice Avenue improvement and enhancement strategy depicted in the <i>Bellaire Town Center Vision Plan</i> (Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn Architects, July 2008). ▶ Recruit development partners, for potential public/private ventures, with a track record of quality results, interest in redevelopment projects, and ability to take on complex projects and see them through to successful completion.

<p>Further Study/ Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Complete a special strategic planning and market study of the UV-T area as was done in 2007 for the City Center area. This effort should help to clarify development and redevelopment potential in the UV-T area, especially given the indefinite postponement of any METRO light rail construction along Westpark since 2010. ▶ [Density bonuses ACCOMPLISHED through standards for the new UV-T zoning district] Consider financial and/or non-financial incentives the City may be able to offer (fiscally, politically) to encourage desired development and redevelopment outcomes (e.g., land assembly, infrastructure and drainage support, density bonuses).
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GOAL 5.2:

A revitalized City Center area geared toward the shopping, service, and entertainment needs of Bellaire residents.

Guiding Principles

- A. *Brand City Center as a convenient place for Bellaire residents to shop and dine, but also a comfortable place to meet and interact.*
- B. *Pursue the community’s life-cycle housing objectives in the City Center area by encouraging varied residential living options not found elsewhere in the community.*
- C. *Protect adjacent residential neighborhoods from incompatible non-residential development.*
- D. *Recognize the City Center area as one of the community’s best opportunities for gaining new public green space.*
- E. *Ensure that the City Center area is conveniently and safely accessible to Bellaire residents by bike and on foot.*
- F. *Improve safety and security—both real and perceived—in the City Center area.*
- G. *Have the City take a more direct role in spurring commercial area revitalization, especially in the City Center area.*

Consideration 1: Renewal of City Center to Provide the Small-Town Downtown Atmosphere Sought by Bellaire Residents

Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Focus on recruiting lifestyle amenities desired by Bellaire residents (e.g., “boutique”/niche retailers, quality restaurants, community theatre, etc.).
Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ [ACCOMPLISHED, in large part, through standards for the new CMU and UV-D zoning districts] Rework the City Center zoning strategy, as discussed in Chapter 2-Land Use & Community Character, to shift the focus toward residential development suited to the City Center environment (e.g., small-lot and attached forms such as townhouses) in the CCD-1 zoning district, and focus commercial revitalization efforts on major street frontages and within the higher-intensity CCD-2 district. Also allow for mid-rise residential structures, potentially with first-floor retail or service uses, in the CCD-2 district. ▶ Incorporate into the City Center zoning provisions allowing a relaxation of specified standards that may prevent or add difficulty to the redevelopment process, so long as certain precautions and mitigation criteria can be met. Common regulatory constraints to redevelopment include site access and circulation standards, limited on-site area for parking and loading, nonconforming setbacks, and on-site drainage requirements. ✓ [ACCOMPLISHED through standards for the new CMU and UV-D zoning districts] Add shared parking provisions within the CCD zoning framework to enable reduction of land-wasting surface parking, which detracts from a desired urban character.
Capital Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Through ongoing facility planning, pursue the potential relocation of certain City functions with significant public interaction to a suitable location in the City Center area. ▶ Expand the Rebuild Bellaire program to commercial areas, particularly the City Center area, not only to upgrade street surfaces and drainage, but also to improve street appearance and edges, convert excessive paved areas to sidewalks and green space (e.g., along Cedar and Spruce streets)—and to signal City commitment and public investment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide physical improvements intended to present a unified image and visual definition of the City Center area. Examples include unified district identification and wayfinding signage (including a possible new logo and design/color scheme for “branding” purposes); special street lighting and/or traffic signal fixtures; consistent landscaping across the district, particularly at key entry points and intersections; special paver and crosswalk designs at major intersections; distinctive pole banners; and special district-wide street signs (unique color and/or style). A more ambitious step would be to coordinate with property and business owners to replace scattered, competing signage with coordinated/joint signs using a consistent design across the entire district (and a prototype of this approach could be implemented in the catalyst revitalization area).
Program/ Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide special outreach and attention to established “mom and pop” businesses long patronized by Bellaire residents in the City Center area to help them make the transition and maintain their presence in a revitalizing City Center. ▶ Establish a more visible police/security presence in the City Center area, whether through horse/foot patrols, a high-profile police storefront location, or private contract security personnel.
Partnerships/ Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recruit development partners, for potential public/private ventures, with a track record of quality results, interest in redevelopment projects, and ability to take on complex projects and see them through to successful completion.
Further Study/ Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Identify candidate locations for possible catalyst projects aimed at concentrating revitalization efforts and associated public and private investments and demonstrating City Center redevelopment potential. ✓ [ACCOMPLISHED through standards for the new CMU and UV-D zoning districts] Consider limiting the range of permitted uses in the CCD districts to focus on a use mix that better reflects the “small town atmosphere” consistently cited by Bellaire residents in various community discussions and studies (including the Rice University <i>Framework for Desirable Growth</i> report and the University of Houston <i>Quality of Life</i> report, both completed in 2005). ▶ Consider financial and/or non-financial incentives the City may be able to offer—fiscally and politically—to encourage desired development and redevelopment outcomes. This should include reducing the extent of streets and hardscape in the City Center area, and the potential abandonment of certain street segments to support redevelopment, whether for land assembly, drainage needs, additional public/open space, etc. ▶ Study the feasibility of structured parking as part of redevelopment efforts in the City Center area.

**GOAL 5.3:
Vibrant commercial corridors with improved aesthetics
and public and private design quality.**

Guiding Principles

- A. *Elevate the quality of Bellaire’s commercial areas and corridors to match the level of residential investment across the community.*
- B. *Seek a balance in commercial area zoning and regulation that does not inhibit beneficial business development and expansion but also protects private investment and community interests from incompatible and/or unappealing development outcomes.*
- C. *Protect adjacent residential neighborhoods from incompatible non-residential development.*
- D. *Take advantage of opportunities to achieve design upgrades along commercial corridors as private redevelopment is proposed and public street and infrastructure rehabilitation occurs.*
- E. *Incorporate more green space and features into Bellaire’s commercial areas both on private sites and in public ways.*
- F. *Pursue strategic opportunities for City government to take a more direct role in spurring commercial development and reinvestment to balance the local tax base, provided the proposed activity meets the fundamental criterion of advancing residents’ quality of life.*

Consideration 1: Upgraded Quality and Appearance of Bellaire’s Commercial Corridors to Match its Residential Neighborhoods and Major Office Developments

Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recognize the City’s major thoroughfares as the primary place—in a largely auto-oriented community— where Bellaire’s image is established in the eyes and minds of residents, visitors, and pass-through commuters.
Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ [ACCOMPLISHED, in large part, through standards for the new CMU, UV-D and UV-T zoning districts] Supplement existing zoning for non-residential and mixed-use development with new site and building design standards aimed at enhancing architectural quality; increasing landscaping around buildings, site perimeters and frontages, and within parking areas; and ensuring compatibility with the character of nearby residential development (i.e., building scale and design reflective of adjacent residential uses where a commercial or service activity is situated at a neighborhood edge). ▶ Conduct an in-depth evaluation of areas within the Suburban Office and Business Park designations on the Future Land Use & Character map in this Comprehensive Plan to consider “what if” scenarios of their desired re-use if the current uses were discontinued at some future point. As with the new CMU, UV-D and UV-T districts, one consideration would be whether to shift to a zoning approach that provides more flexibility.

<p>Capital Improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Design and construct signature gateway and streetscape treatments at high-profile entry points into Bellaire (e.g., Bellaire Boulevard, Bissonnet, Newcastle, South Rice, Chimney Rock), as well as at key intersections (e.g., Bellaire/Bissonnet, Bellaire/ Newcastle, Bissonnet/Newcastle, Bissonnet/Avenue B, Bellaire/ Avenue B, Bellaire/South Rice, Bellaire/Chimney Rock, Bissonnet/Chimney Rock, Bissonnet/Renwick, Evergreen/ South Rice, Bissonnet/South Rice, Elm/South Rice, Fournace/South Rice, and all major West Loop intersections). These improvements should include the types of features illustrated in the “before and after” corridor scenes in this chapter (installation of landscaped esplanades, more extensive landscaping within public rights-of-way and on private sites, special street lighting and traffic signal fixtures, enhanced traffic signals and street signage, overhead utility wires moved underground, and distinctive designs for intersection crosswalks and widened sidewalks). ▶ Install esplanades in place of continuous center turning lanes (e.g., on Bissonnet, South Rice) to control turning movements and increase safety, provide an intermediate refuge area for pedestrians crossing major streets, and enhance corridor aesthetics through landscaping of the new esplanades.
<p>Program/ Initiative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Offer mini-grants to existing commercial property and business owners to help finance building façade improvements, enhanced landscaping, or other site upgrades that might not otherwise occur where no construction activities are planned that would trigger compliance with newer development standards.
<p>Partnerships/ Coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Explore opportunities to partner with the City of Houston and/or the City of West University Place to implement gateway enhancements at shared boundary points that would benefit both parties. ✓ [ACCOMPLISHED through successful formation and ongoing networking through the Bellaire Business Association (BBA)] Under the auspices of the Greater Southwest Houston Chamber of Commerce, establish a Bellaire-specific business network, especially as a forum for greater public/private interaction on issues of particular concern in Bellaire (recognizing that many area business owners do not live in the community). Also maintain connections through other local networks (e.g., Rotary Club).
<p>Further Study/ Planning</p>	<p>n/a</p>