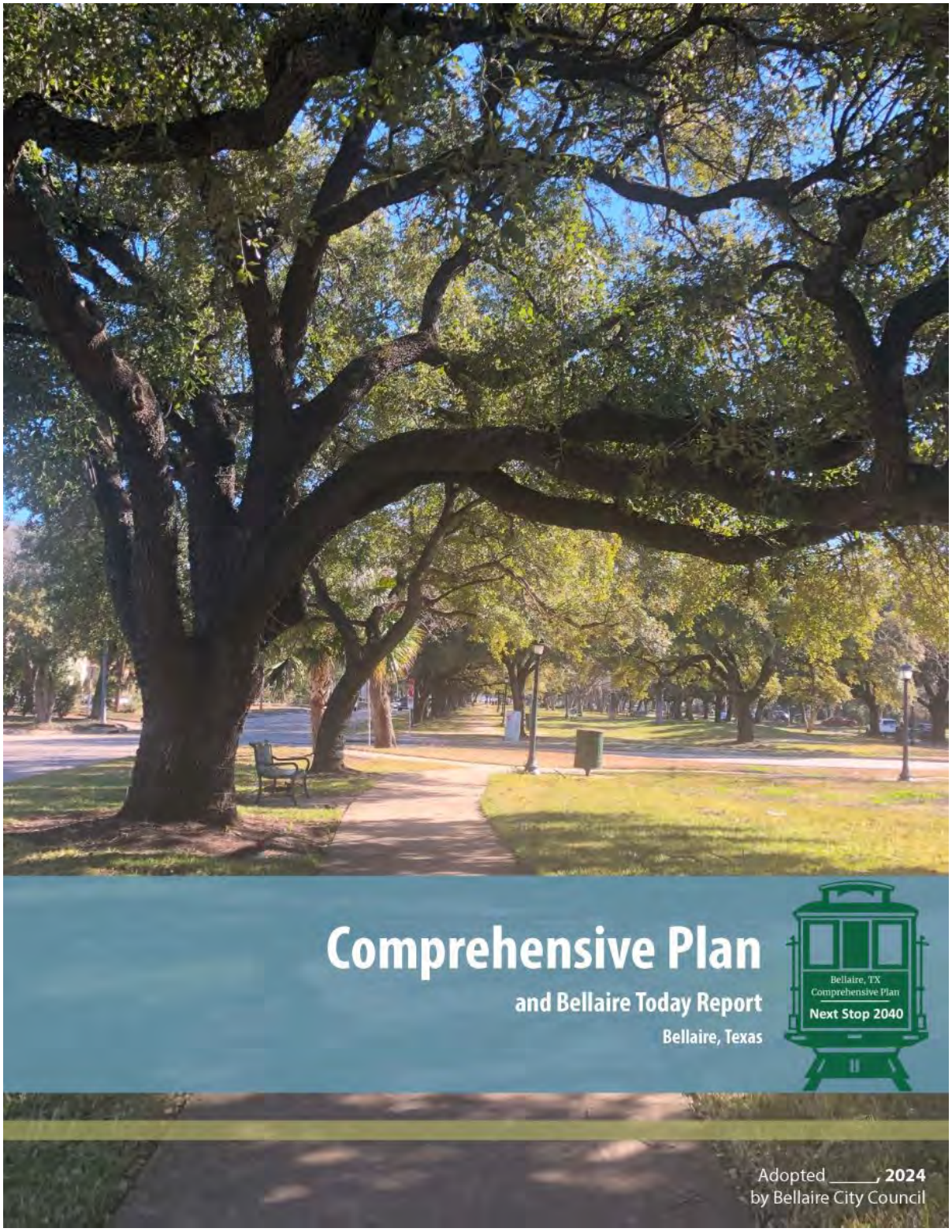
City of Bellaire



City of Bellaire

Contents:

- Cover
- Introduction
- Land Use and Community Character
  - Key Planning Issues and Considerations
  - Framework for Action
  - Actions for Land Use and Community Character
  - Future Land Use and Character
    - Suburban Residential
    - General Residential
    - Small-Lot Residential
    - Small-Lot Residential Attached
    - Residential-Office Mix
    - Corridor Mixed Use
    - Urban Village - Downtown
    - Suburban Office
    - North Bellaire Special Development Area
    - Bellaire Uptown Business Area
    - Government
    - Parks
- Public Infrastructure and Services
  - Key Planning Issues and Considerations
  - Framework for Action
  - Other City of Bellaire Plans and Programs
  - Newest Service Indicators
- Commercial Area Development and Enhancement
  - Key Planning Issues and Considerations
  - Accomplishments Since the 2009 Plan
  - Framework for Action
  - Actions For Commercial Area Development and Enhancement

City of Bellaire

Plan Implementation
- Actions Based on Comprehensive Plan
- Action Agenda
- Key Implementation Roles
- Implementation Monitoring and Progress Reporting

City of Bellaire

INTRODUCTION

Joint Workshop Draft (January 2024)

The Bellaire Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide future development, redevelopment and community enhancement efforts over the next 10-20 years. However, discussions during a community planning process often involve an even longer-range outlook, helping establish a vision of what Bellaire could and should be versus the trend line it is currently on. Based on this broader context, the purpose of this plan is to provide realistic goals and achievable strategies that residents, business and land owners, major institutions, civic groups, the Planning and Zoning Commission and public officials prefer – and will support with action – in the decade ahead.

Bellaire's quality of living is largely based upon residential conditions and how they can be improved, along with ongoing efforts to revitalize and enhance the community's older commercial areas. At the time of this 2023-24 plan update, mitigation of flooding risk was a core focus, with continued emphasis on public safety, infrastructure upgrades, traffic management, City park and facility improvements, and making Bellaire a more visually attractive place – from its entry points to its green spaces and quality developments. The appropriate business development, community services, public spaces and quality of education must also be monitored continually and enhanced to increase the quality of life for Bellaire citizens.

Geographic Coverage and Context of the Plan

This plan addresses the 3.6 square miles within the City limits of Bellaire. Bellaire's location seven miles southwest of downtown Houston makes it an "enclave" city, completely surrounded by Houston with West University Place to the east. Bellaire has been nicknamed "The City of Homes" because of its primary design as a residential community. Nearby activity centers, including the Texas Medical Center, Rice University, the Galleria and Uptown Houston, Greenway Plaza, and Houston's Central Business District, offer professional employment opportunities for Bellaire residents. Access to these jobs, exceptional educational offerings, and the ongoing transition to larger single-family homes in Bellaire greatly appeals to adults with younger children, as well as "empty nesters."

Process

This updated Comprehensive Plan resulted from a nine-month planning and community engagement process, followed by public hearings and plan adoption. The plan's findings and action recommendations focus on the physical and economic aspects of Bellaire's projected growth, development and redevelopment in the coming years. It provides guiding principles, goals and action priorities that will help City officials, board/commission appointees and staff in determining the location, financing and sequencing of public improvements; administering development regulations; and guiding reinvestment efforts. The plan also provides a basis for coordinating the actions of many different functions and interests within and outside of municipal government.

To facilitate the plan update process, the City again engaged Kendig Keast Collaborative, community planning consultants based in Sugar Land.

Leadership and Community Engagement

Outreach activities completed in support of the Plan update included:

- 2 listening sessions with groups of 15-20 residents each. [May 2023]
- Forum on Bellaire's Future (public open house at Civic Center). [June 2023]
- 3 resident meetings at Evelyn's Park, Nature Discovery Center and Bellaire High School. [June-July 2023]
- 3 listening sessions with small groups of local business community representatives, and another with a group of local realtors. [May-June 2023]
- Presentations/discussions with local organizations (Bellaire Business Association, Bellaire Southwest Houston Rotary Club, Patrons for Bellaire Parks). [June/August 2023]
- An online community survey, available from July 4 through 28, that drew 1,169 responses and led to a 33-page Community Survey Highlights report.
- Informal "out-and-about" interactions with residents at Bellaire City Library, the Betsy's outdoor seating area at Evelyn's Park and during the City's July 4 Celebration of Independence event. [July 2023]
- 3 joint workshops of the City Council and Planning & Zoning Commission for updates, direct input and process guidance at key milestone points. [May and August 2023, and January 2024]
- 4 workshop meetings with the Planning & Zoning Commission to consider potential plan content updates. [September-December 2023]
- A dedicated Comprehensive Plan page on the City website, other website and social media posts, and opportunities for direct notifications via the City's Notify Me option.
- Associated local media coverage of the process and specific activities.

City of Bellaire

Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan is usually the most important policy document a municipal government prepares and maintains. This is because the plan:

- Lays out a "big picture" vision and associated goals regarding the future growth and enhancement of the community.
- Considers at once the entire geographic area of the community, including areas where new development and redevelopment may occur.
- Assesses near- and longer-term needs and desires across a variety of inter-related topics that represent the key "building blocks" of a community (e.g., land use, transportation, urban design, commercial development, redevelopment, neighborhoods, parks and recreation, utility infrastructure, public facilities and services, etc.).

"Planning" is …

The process of identifying issues and needs, establishing goals and objectives, and determining the most effective means by which these ends may be achieved.

Through a comprehensive plan, a community determines how best to accommodate and manage its projected growth, as well as the redevelopment of older neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas. Like most similar plans, this Comprehensive Plan is aimed at ensuring that ongoing development and redevelopment will proceed in an orderly, well-planned manner so that public facilities and services can keep pace and residents' quality of life will be enhanced. Significantly, by clarifying and stating the City's intentions regarding the area's physical development and infrastructure investment, the plan also creates greater predictability for residents, land owners, developers and potential investors.

The comprehensive planning process is intended not only to celebrates accomplishments of the past while providing an opportunity to anticipate and address challenges of the future. In some cases, this plan will offer guidance to decision makers for challenges only now emerging while other sections reinforce established policies that should be carried forward as a sure and sound basis for future development and redevelopment.

Whether an issue is a challenge or an opportunity, the utmost importance should be placed upon periodic comprehensive planning as an opportunity for thoughtful public discussion on the real and perceived challenges currently facing Bellaire and the opportunities that will shape its future. As Bellaire looks forward to the coming years, the desires of residents are woven through all aspects of this plan. From parks to neighborhood integrity, there are many community assets that this plan strives to utilize to Bellaire's fullest advantage. Local residents have demonstrated their ability to manage and improve an appealing community for more than 100 years, since 1908, and this plan seeks to continue that tradition.

City of Bellaire

PLAN FOCUS AREAS

This plan focuses primarily on the responsibilities of City government in the physical planning arena, where municipalities normally have a more direct and extensive role than in other areas that residents value such as education and social services. Focus areas within the Comprehensive Plan provide direction when setting program and funding priorities to enhance the quality of life in Bellaire. The **four focus areas** of this plan, highlighted below, were considered in developing the Bellaire Today Report and helped orient this Bellaire Tomorrow portion of the plan (and the Mobility and Public Infrastructure & Services focus areas were later combined into one section in the new streamlined plan).

Land Use and Community Character

Mobility

Public Infrastructure and Services

City of Bellaire

PLAN FOCUS AREAS

Commercial Area Development and Enhancement

A final Plan Implementation section utilizes the action recommendations of the individual plan elements, as well as the current City Council Strategic Goals and priorities, to consolidate an overall strategy for implementing the Comprehensive Plan – particularly for the highest-priority initiatives that will be first on the community's action agenda. Specific tasks are cited which must be accomplished to achieve the community's vision and goals. Identification of expected action timeframes, assignment of responsibilities, and establishment of a monitoring and reporting function are all essential to provide a means of accountability for plan implementation.

City of Bellaire

Why Plan?

Local planning allows the City of Bellaire to have a greater measure of control over its destiny rather than simply reacting to change. Planning enables the City to manage future development and redevelopment actively as opposed to reacting to development proposals on a case-by-case basis without adequate and necessary consideration of community-wide issues.

Long-range planning also provides an opportunity for the City's elected and appointed officials to step back from pressing, day-to-day issues and clarify their ideas on the kind of community they are trying to create and maintain. The process required to update the Bellaire Comprehensive Plan may prove more valuable to the community than the plan itself since the document is ultimately only a snapshot in time. The planning process involves major community decisions about how much and where development and redevelopment will occur, the nature of future development, and the community's capability to provide the necessary public services and facilities to support this development. This leads to pivotal discussions about what is "best" for the community and how everything from taxes to "quality of life" will be affected.

In summary, important reasons for long-range planning in Bellaire include:

- To ensure adequate public facilities to meet the demands of future development and redevelopment.
- To achieve an efficient development pattern that reflects the values of the community.
- To ensure the long-term protection and enhancement of the image and visual appearance of the community.
- To provide a balance of land uses and services throughout the community to meet the needs and desires of its population.
- To involve local citizens in the decision-making process and reach consensus on the future vision for Bellaire and its ongoing development and redevelopment.
- To develop annual City budgets, department work programs, and potential new and amended ordinances, and to prioritize capital improvements, pursue external grant funding that leverages local dollars, and strengthen and establish mutually beneficial partnerships consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- To identify finer-grain planning and studies needed to clarify action strategies and costs in particular areas of City governance.

Planning Authority

State Support for Community Planning – Section 213 of the Texas Local Government Code

Unlike some other states, municipalities in Texas are not mandated by state government to prepare and maintain local comprehensive plans. However, Section 213 of the 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." The Code also cites the basic reasons for long-range, comprehensive community planning by stating that, "The powers granted under this chapter are for the purposes of promoting sound development of municipalities and promoting public health, safety and welfare." The Code also gives Texas municipalities the freedom to "define the content and design" of their plans, although Section 213 suggests that a comprehensive plan may:

- include but is not limited to provisions on land use, transportation, and public facilities;
- consist of a single plan or a coordinated set of plans organized by subject and geographic area; and
- be used to coordinate and guide the establishment of development regulations.

Bellaire Planning & Zoning Commission

Section 2-114 of the Bellaire City Code of Ordinances establishes the Commission. More detail on its purpose and specific charges, including "the authority to formulate and recommend to the city council, for its adoption, such plans, programs and policies related to the future growth and development of the city," may be found online via the Section link above.

Section 24-401, within the Planning and Zoning chapter of the City Code, also directs the Commission to review and report annually to City Council on the Comprehensive Plan including any recommended amendments. Consistent with the State of Texas enabling statute for local zoning (Local Government Code Section 211.004), this City Code section also specifies that all zoning decisions "shall be consistent with the policies adopted in the plan."

Therefore, as a Texas municipality that has adopted and administers zoning regulations, it is prudent for the City of Bellaire to have an up-to-date Comprehensive Plan to guide its land use policies and zoning strategy.

It is also important to distinguish between the function of the Comprehensive Plan relative to the City's zoning ordinance and other development regulations. The plan establishes overall policy for future land use, road improvements, utilities and other aspects of community growth and enhancement. The City's zoning ordinance and official zoning district map then implement the plan in terms of specific land uses and building and site development standards. The City's subdivision regulations also establish standards in conformance with the plan for the physical subdivision of land, the layout of new or redeveloped streets and building sites, and the design and construction of roads, water and sewer lines, storm drainage and other infrastructure that will be dedicated to the City for long-term maintenance.

City of Bellaire

LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Joint Workshop Draft (January 2024)

This plan section establishes the necessary policy guidance to enable the City of Bellaire to plan effectively for future land development and redevelopment – and for ongoing stewardship of areas intended to remain much as they are. Sound planning is essential to ensure that the community is prepared for anticipated land use transitions and new development, can serve it adequately with public services, and can manage its impacts to maintain compatibility of land uses and preserve community character.

Land use considerations inter-relate with all other Comprehensive Plan topics. For instance, the transportation network provides access to land, which, along with real estate market factors, influences the type and intensity of development that may occur. The availability, capacity and condition of public utilities can dictate the location, amount and timing of development as can economic development efforts by the City and other partners. Similarly, proximity to parks and public facilities promotes public health and safety and affects the development potential of an area. Development character and site design shape community aesthetics and the perceptions held by area residents, visitors and those considering investment in Bellaire.

Key Planning Issues and Considerations

Through the Bellaire Today and Plan Direction phases of the Comprehensive Plan update process, numerous real and perceived community issues and needs were identified through leadership and public engagement activities, as well as through the work of the plan consultants and their interactions with City management and staff. Key issues and considerations that led to the goals and action items in this Land Use and Community Character section include:

- Maintaining Bellaire's image as the "**City of Homes**," with a development pattern comprised primarily of single-family detached residences in distinctive neighborhood settings, along with selected areas previously developed with smaller-lot and attached housing options.
- Factoring **storm water management and mitigation of flooding risk** into all decision-making involving land development and redevelopment given their fundamental importance in Bellaire. Maintaining Bellaire's **lush mature tree canopy** can also help offset more intensive summer heat that the Houston area is already experiencing amid a period of global climate change.
- Ensuring **compatibility of nonresidential development** in areas of the city where it is adjacent to or near residential, to protect the integrity of neighborhoods while insisting on **quality outcomes** in areas of Bellaire that are intended and zoned for retail, service, office and institutional land uses.

- Emphasizing **safety** in all forms (personal security, when mobile in the city, etc.) when considering the layout and design of land uses, and their interaction with nearby properties and public roadways, sidewalks and other means of circulation.
- Making the connection between the City's **Street and utility infrastructure and public service capacities** (police, fire, parks/recreation, library, City facilities, etc.) and the type and intensity of development and redevelopment that is approved within the community.
- Recognizing the **level of public interest that is drawn by significant new development or redevelopment proposals** since Bellaire is largely built out with many areas of the community likely to remain just as they are. This reality allows a focus on those areas most likely to undergo redevelopment and reinvestment as encouraged by this Plan and the City's zoning strategy. Such activity also offers the **opportunity to address land use compatibility, quality and appearance issues from past development** by applying newer standards as properties redevelop.
- Monitoring **Bellaire's population** numbers as no major change is anticipated in the years ahead, but a small upward or downward shift in average household size – driven by both an aging population and family-formation trends – could prove significant even with no notable change in the number of dwellings within the city. Any sizable redevelopment activity within Bellaire that might involve smaller-lot and/or attached housing types could also add new population.
- Managing **ongoing turnover in Bellaire's residential housing stock** given the difficulty of maintaining older homes amid rising property values and associated tax appraisals.
- Being watchful for **proposed development and redevelopment just outside of Bellaire** that can affect residents' quality of life, property investments or sense of security – but also recognizing that Bellaire, as an "enclave" city hemmed in by Houston and West University Place, has limited ability to influence such activity beyond its jurisdiction.

Framework For Action

This Framework for Action portion builds off of the key issues and considerations cited above plus evolved thinking and evaluation of outcomes since the City's last Comprehensive Plan update in 2009. The actions below involve tangible steps that will, either soon or over a longer timeframe, lead to achievement of the goals in this Land Use and Community Character section.

GOALS for Land Use and Community Character

1. **A land use pattern that continues to prioritize the primarily residential atmosphere of Bellaire and the desirability of its neighborhoods.**

   Related principles include:

   - Maintaining and enhancing residential property values, including as Bellaire continues to see teardowns and rebuilding of its older housing stock.

- Maintaining Bellaire as a community of primarily single-family detached dwellings while preserving existing townhome and smaller-lot housing options for "downsizing" and changing needs at different life stages.
- Continuing to prioritize the maximum practical preservation of mature trees along residential streets and in front yards.

2. **An ongoing focus on boosting Bellaire's livability for residents by offering desired retail and service uses, parks and recreation offerings, and other amenities in appropriate locations and designed for quality and residential compatibility.**

   Related principles include:

   - Ensuring the compatibility of all nonresidential development with nearby residential properties while providing clear standards and expectations for desired nonresidential development to meet.
   - Designing all development with safe circulation in mind, whether people are traveling in vehicles, on foot or by bike.
   - Confirming adequate public services are available for all proposed new development and redevelopment, especially for proposals that could introduce new residential population to Bellaire.
   - Providing adequate time and notice for community dialogue and input on significant development and redevelopment proposals while meeting statutory timelines and requirements.

3. **A resilient community in terms of attention to storm water management best practices in all matters involving land use and development approvals.**

   Related principles include:

   - Elevating mitigation of flooding risk as a primary focus in all development review and approval processes.

Actions For Land Use and Community Character

Capital Investments

1. Add criteria to the City's capital improvements planning process to specify that candidate capital projects should be evaluated for how their scale and/or design could affect the character of the surrounding area and potentially influence land use outcomes or evolution.
    - Also evaluate all City properties, facilities and parks for compatibility with their area character and context, including balancing vehicle access and parking with pedestrian/bicycle friendliness and transit accessibility, as applicable at particular locations. Also consider design elements such as landscaping, lighting, signage, sidewalks and crosswalks, presence or lack of medians on adjacent streets, etc.

Regulations and Standards

2. Review all aspects of Chapter 24, Planning and Zoning, in the City's Code of Ordinances to identify potential regulatory and/or standards updates that will advance priorities of this new Comprehensive Plan, including:
    - Replacing the current Urban Village-Transit (UV-T) zoning district with a new district based on the Bellaire Uptown Business Area category description for the Future Land Use and Character map.
        - Given the desire to provide a wide range of potential uses for market flexibility, also consider requiring Specific Use Permit approval for various uses to ensure appropriate scrutiny and evaluation of the overall area use mix.
        - Rely on the option for Planned Development applications to accommodate unique use and site design proposals as discussed for the area in recent years.
    - Revising certain standards for the Urban Village-Downtown (UV-D) and Corridor Mixed Use (CMU) zoning districts:
        - Removing multi-family residential as a potential use in CMU, and revisiting the standards for this use in UV-D.
        - Revisiting the allowance for small-lot attached residential in UV-D (but maintaining in CMU).
        - Eliminating the minimum building height requirement in UV-D.
        - Revisiting the maximum building height allowed in UV-D.
        - Providing for some front yard area in UV-D, including to accommodate street trees, wider sidewalks, outdoor seating areas and/or landscaped spaces along sites frontages, versus the current required zero setback of buildings from front property lines (with the intent still to minimize parking in front of buildings in UV-D in favor of mostly side or rear parking, along with opportunities for off-site shared parking arrangements plus utilization of on-street parking or any future public parking in the area).
        - Revisiting the extent of lot/site coverage allowed in UV-D and CMU, including for flood mitigation reasons.
        - Providing more explicit decision guidance for Specific Use Permit determinations in UV-D involving proposed drive-in or drive-through arrangements – along with weighing the

broader question of whether such auto-oriented design and activity should be allowed at all in UV-D.

- Revisiting the standards for the Residential Multi-Family (R-MF) zoning district – unless the district is eliminated and replaced by CMU on the one current affected property.
- Eliminating the Mulberry Residential Estate District (MRED) if it is no longer needed or useful, and switching the affected properties to the adjacent R-1 zoning.
- Potentially eliminating the Larch Lane Development District (LLDD), after investigating any nonconformities this might create for existing property owners, and switching the affected properties to the adjacent R-3 zoning.
- Eliminating the Light Industrial (LI) district if the few current LI-zoned properties are rezoned to CMU, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

In conjunction with these potential changes, additional steps should include:

- Updating Section 24-513a, Design Standards in Commercial and Mixed-Use Districts, to reflect the zoning district changes made (new zoning district in place of UV-T, changes to UV-D and CMU, potential elimination of R-MF).
- Considering any further adjustments needed to the City's noise and outdoor lighting regulations following amendments adopted during the Comprehensive Plan update process.
- Adding to or revising Section 24-202, Definitions, based on the above changes.
- Addressing other recommendations and legal compliance issues raised by the City's community planning consultant.
- Making any further adjustments to the Future Land Use and Character map category descriptions based on amendments made to Chapter 24.

3. Explore potential variations in certain UV-D standards for development activity that is within a specified distance from Bellaire Boulevard and/or from Bissonnet Street within the district. The intent would be to recognize the challenge of achieving a more Urban character outcome on such properties relative to the more auto-oriented nature of CMU properties. But this approach would also avoid changing entire properties from UV-D to CMU zoning within the core UV-D area.
4. As part of development regulation updates based on this new Comprehensive Plan, explore the applicability to Bellaire of contemporary community planning trends elsewhere in Texas and across the nation, including the trend toward:
    a. reduced or eliminated minimum parking requirements in favor of more market-driven outcomes; and
    b. maximum caps on off-street surface parking where appropriate to eliminate excess parking supply and unproductive use of land, and to reduce associated storm drainage, "urban heat island" and aesthetic effects.
5. Regularly review and update, as appropriate, the City's land development, building/construction and infrastructure-related fees to ensure adequate revenue generation in line with costs and based on regional trends across jurisdictions

Partnerships and Coordination

6. Continue close coordination with the Houston Independent School District as one of the City's essential partners for community building and maintaining school campuses as neighborhood anchors.

7. Establish contacts within the City of Houston Planning and Development Department for periodic discussion of mutually beneficial or concerning development trends, practices or specific projects in the Bellaire vicinity.
8. Continue coordination with the cities of West University Place and Southside Place on shared planning interests and objectives.

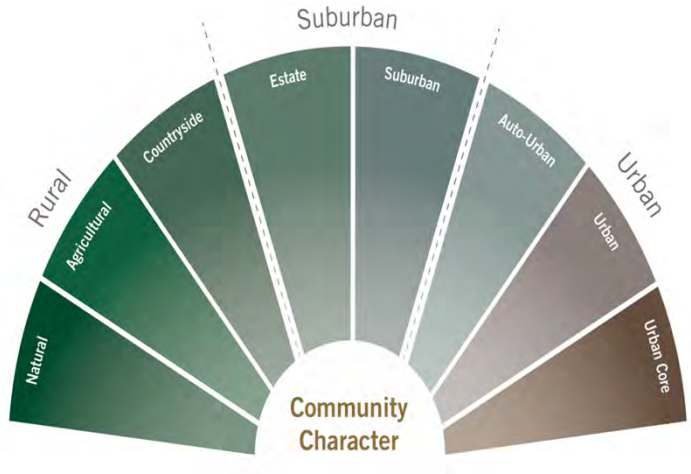
More Targeted Planning / Study

9. Follow the completion of this overarching Comprehensive Plan update with targeted special area planning efforts, to enable finer-grain planning and design exercises particularly for key corridors (e.g., Bellaire Boulevard, Bissonnet Street, South Rice Avenue) and other subareas crucial to Bellaire's community planning priorities.

City of Bellaire

Community Character Framework for Land Use Planning

This Comprehensive Plan reinforces Bellaire's approach to land use planning, which builds on the concept of **community character**. This approach looks beyond the basic use of land – residential, commercial, industrial, etc. – as only one factor that determines the ultimate compatibility and quality of land development within and near neighborhoods, in nonresidential areas and along roadway corridors.



Character Emphasis

Community character relates to the use of land, but more importantly, involves the physical design characteristics that influence the "look and feel" of development. Instead of simply identifying the land use, such as commercial, the determination of an area's character more distinctly defines the intensity of development and the design features that contribute to its specific nature and appeal.

Nearly any land use can occur in a range of settings within a community, from the most Rural and Suburban to the most Urban, provided the use is designed to match the character of its surrounding area.

The community character approach to evaluating and planning for land use emphasizes the variation in physical conditions experienced along a spectrum from natural and rural landscapes at the edges of some communities to a city's most urbanized environments, usually found in a core downtown area. A character-based approach focuses on the intensity and design of land uses, which encompasses:

- The density and layout of residential development;
- The scale and form of nonresidential development; and
- The coverage of land surfaces by buildings and paving relative to the extent of open space and natural vegetation or landscaping.

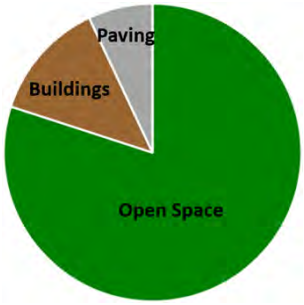
How the automobile is accommodated is a key factor in distinguishing character types including how public streets are designed, how parking is provided and how buildings and paved areas are arranged on sites. Among the three major character classes:

- **Rural** character areas have wide open spaces where structures and paved surfaces occupy only a minimal portion of the landscape, or none at all in pristine or preserved natural areas.
- **Suburban** character areas have noticeably less intensive use of land than Urban character areas, with open and green spaces balancing – or, in Estate areas, exceeding – the extent of land covered by structures and paved surfaces.
- **Urban** character areas exhibit the greatest pedestrian orientation, through a more compact scale and "architectural enclosure" of streets by buildings situated close to front property lines and sidewalks.

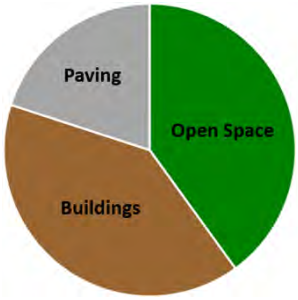
Within the Urban class, **Auto Urban** character areas are a particular planning challenge as they are designed mainly to accommodate automobile circulation and parking. Land cover by buildings and paved surfaces is similar to **Urban** areas but without the walkability emphasis.

The community character approach can be applied to the entire array of land use types and regardless of whether a site is in private ownership or owned and developed by a government agency for public purposes. Examples include:

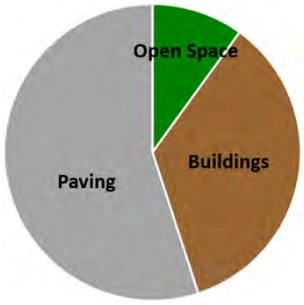
- A single-family home situated on a relatively large lot, with many mature trees and substantial separation from neighboring homes (Suburban or Estate character), versus a single-family bungalow on a small, narrow lot with rear-alley access and minimal yard space or vegetation (Urban neighborhood character).
- Storefront shops and small cafes in a walkable, neighborhood commercial setting (Urban character) versus "big box" stores and associated pad-site restaurants and retailers in a large-scale shopping center with extensive surface parking and minimal landscaping (Auto Urban character).



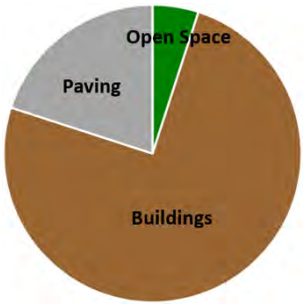
Example Proportions of **Rural Character** Elements



Example Proportions of **Suburban Character** Elements



Example Proportions of **Auto Urban Character** Elements



Example Proportions of **Urban Character** Elements

- A master-planned business park in a campus-like setting (Suburban character) versus an office building on a site dominated by surface parking (Auto Urban character) or a more vertical building in a downtown setting with ground-level retail uses and a nearby parking garage (Urban character).
- A public library, community center, or neighborhood park that is designed to be compatible with the surrounding residential area (whether Suburban or Urban in character) versus a municipal public works maintenance and storage site or a wastewater treatment plant that is as intensive as most private industrial sites in a community.

Maintaining and enhancing desired character is a central aim – and challenge – of implementing community plans amid constant change. A community character approach allows the formulation of standards within the City's development regulations to achieve the desired character in newly developing areas, and to protect and enhance it in redevelopment and infill areas. Character-focused categories on a municipality's future land use plan and character-oriented districts on its zoning map better portray the intended on-the-ground outcomes for land use and development. This offers assurance to neighboring property owners, a smoother path to approvals for development applicants, and more beneficial outcomes for the entire community.

Therefore, examined in this plan section is the basic use of land in Bellaire, along with the character of neighborhoods and commercial areas and corridors. This includes such factors as density (generally determined by lot and building size), building setbacks, building height, lot coverage, levels of open space, and the amount of vegetation or volume of landscaping. It is this combination of basic land use and the physical characteristics of such use that more accurately determine the real compatibility and quality of development, as opposed to just land use alone.

Design and Character

Aesthetic enhancements such as architectural design, landscaping and screening, signage standards and site amenities also contribute to development appearance. But these factors can and should vary with the area character, which as defined here involves the interplay between buildings, paved surfaces, and unbuilt areas. For example, in a downtown Urban core relative to Suburban character areas, landscaping shifts more to the public realm where buildings often have minimal setbacks and sites have limited yard areas.

Future Land Use and Character

Shown on the **Future Land Use and Character map (Map 2.1)** is the general pattern of uses anticipated and/or desired in the years ahead, and the character contexts in which uses are intended to occur. The map, along with the text descriptions in this section, indicate the use that is expected to predominate in areas where land is currently undeveloped or, in previously developed areas, based on what is already on the ground and will likely remain or possibly evolve. Such transitions in use can occur through redevelopment of previously built sites, “infill” construction on a vacant parcel amid existing built sites, or repurposing of an existing structure for another use without significant site changes.

Along with the predominant use types, other complementary uses will also remain or may emerge in particular areas of the community (e.g., small-scale, neighborhood-oriented retail and service uses within or near the edges of largely residential areas). Certain uses can be located amid other predominant use types, such as public facilities and places of worship within predominantly residential areas. Mixing uses on sites is common in downtowns (e.g., upper floor office or residential above ground-floor retail) and may occur elsewhere in a community as the market accommodates and zoning allows.

Some uses are highly market-driven, with their timing and particular location dictated by the extent and pace of other types of development. This includes the typical pattern of retail uses locating near new residential “rooftops” and often at key roadway intersections. The location and extent of various forms of residential development can also be difficult to predict amid broader housing market cycles and regional needs, combined with developer areas of expertise and interest in bringing single-family or multi-family products to market.

Map Categories

The Future Land Use and Character map shows areas within Bellaire designated in **12 categories**, most of which address both use and character:

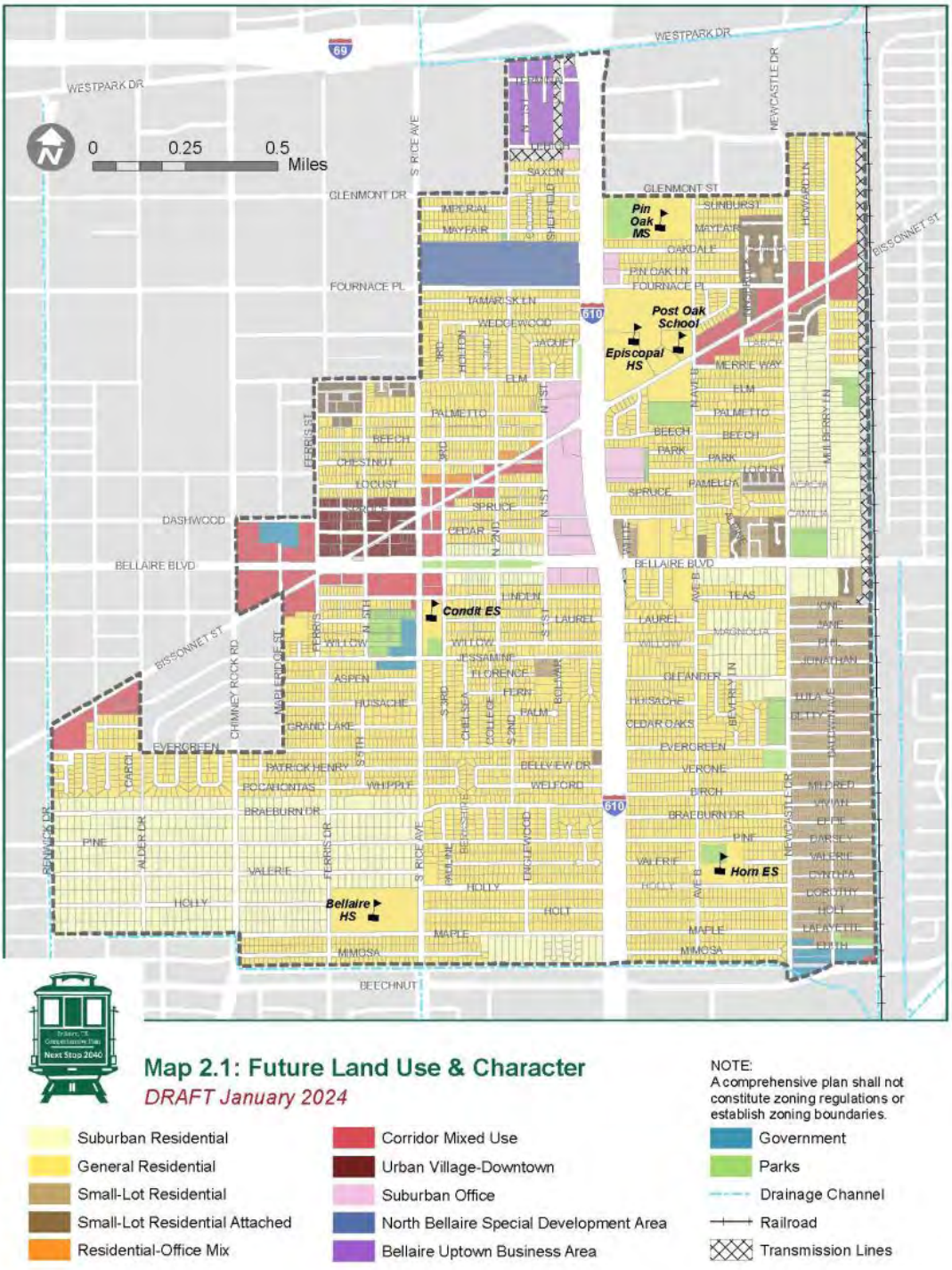
- Suburban Residential
- General Residential
- Small-Lot Residential
- Small-Lot Residential Attached
- Residential-Office Mix
- Corridor Mixed Use
- Urban Village - Downtown
- Suburban Office
- North Bellaire Special Development Area
- Bellaire Uptown Business Area
- Government
- Parks

Existing places of worship and schools nearly all have a residential designation on the Future Land Use and Character map, reflecting their context and consistent with the City's zoning regulations. However, other government facilities are specifically identified on the Future Land Use and Character map since they are special uses, with unique attributes and impacts, within a community (e.g., municipal buildings and facilities, U.S. post office). From a character standpoint, all of these government and/or public assembly uses should be designed to match and complement the character of the areas in which they are situated, whether Urban, Suburban or more auto-oriented. Appropriate buffering and screening measures should also be employed to ensure compatibility with adjacent and nearby uses of differing types and intensities, particularly residential uses.

The following descriptions indicate the anticipated principal uses in each category, plus the intended character of the areas in which the land uses occur, abut or mix. Public and institutional uses, including public parks, commonly occur in all of these areas and should match the character. Specific standards for land development and redevelopment based on these designations are articulated through the City's implementing regulations (zoning, subdivision, etc.) as they currently exist within the City Code of Ordinances and may be further amended based on this planning guidance. Potential amendments should involve further community dialogue to ensure consensus on the most appropriate and practical strategies for achieving the City's vision and objectives for its development outcomes and desired community character.

City of Bellaire

Future Land Use and Character Map



NOTE: If viewing the map above online, click on the map to view a larger-scale PDF version.

City of Bellaire

Land Use Planning versus Zoning

The side-by-side comparison below highlights the distinct purposes and uses of a future land use map relative to a zoning map. The City's development regulations are among the primary tools for implementing the plan. The zoning and subdivision regulations, in particular, can play a significant role in establishing and protecting the physical character of the community. Zoning regulations delineate land use districts and the uses permitted within them, together with standards for buildings and site improvements. As a result, the zoning and subdivision regulations largely direct development outcomes. Although the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use and Character map provide only general planning guidance, they become the basis for updates of the zoning and subdivision regulations and the official zoning map that carry legal weight.

Aspect	Future Land Use Map	Zoning Map
Purpose	▪ Outlook for future use of land and character of particular areas of the community. ▪ Macro level, showing generalized development patterns.	▪ Basis for applying different land use regulations and development standards in different areas of the community ("zones"). ▪ Micro level, with an area- and site-specific focus.
Use	▪ Guidance for City's zoning map and related decisions (zone change requests, variance applications, etc.). ▪ Baseline for monitoring consistency of actions and decisions with the Comprehensive Plan.	▪ Regulating development as it is proposed or as sites are positioned for the future with appropriate zoning (by the property owner or the City).
Inputs and Considerations	▪ Existing land use in the community. ▪ The locational aspects of community planning priorities involving housing, economic development, infrastructure, parks and recreation, public facilities, etc.	▪ Comprehensive Plan and future land use map for general guidance. ▪ Zoning decisions that differ substantially from the general development pattern depicted on the future land use map will indicate the need for some map adjustments during the next plan update.

City of Bellaire

Suburban Residential

This designation is for residential areas where Suburban character is established and preserved by achieving a balance between buildings and other site improvements relative to the degree of open space maintained within the neighborhood. The openness may be found in relatively large yard areas on individual lots and between homes and/or in common green spaces or water features. This distinguishes Suburban character areas from more auto-oriented areas where site coverage in the form of dwellings, driveways and other paved surfaces predominates over green and open spaces.

Where on the Map: The aerial view above shows one pocket of Suburban Residential character in east Bellaire between Newcastle Drive on the east and Avenue B on the west, and bounded by Oleander Street on the south and extending north to mid-block between Magnolia and Teas streets. Other areas of larger-lot Suburban character are north of Bellaire Boulevard centered around Mulberry Lane; within the Bellaire Boulevard Estate overlay zoning district (just north of the area pictured above) plus lots west of Loop 610 that front toward Paseo Park; along the south side of Maple Street west of Loop 610; and in a large area in the southwest corner of the city between South Rice Avenue and South Renwick Drive.

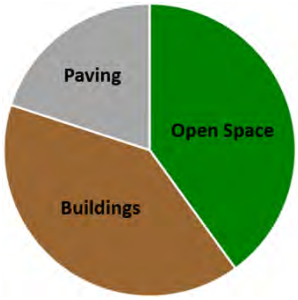
City of Bellaire

Primary Land Use Types

- Detached residential dwellings.
- Public/institutional uses, including parks, schools and certain public assembly uses such as places of worship.

Characteristics

- Less noticeable accommodation of the automobile compared to more intensive auto-oriented areas, especially where driveways are on the side of homes rather than occupying a portion of the front yard, and where garages are situated to the side or rear of the dwelling.
- This designation also encompasses a few locations in Bellaire where even larger lot sizes were platted. The sense of openness is even greater in these locations due to the estate-size lots (generally one acre or more), which are generally wider and especially deeper in Bellaire, have relatively low lot coverage by buildings and paved areas, and have relatively greater separation between homes.



Suburban Residential character reflects a balance between built and open areas, as exemplified by the 55% maximum coverage on the 14,400 square foot and 7,400 square foot minimum lot sizes allowed, respectively, in the R-1 and R-3 zoning districts.

Zoning Parameters to Implement Comprehensive Plan Direction

Most closely associated zoning districts: R-1 and some R-3 Residential.

- Minimum lot area, width and depth.
- Maximum building height.
- Minimum required yards (building setbacks) in front, sides and rear.
- Maximum lot coverage by buildings and paving.

General Residential

This designation covers areas of primarily single-family detached residential use where accommodation of the automobile is more visually dominant relative to more prominent green space in Suburban Residential character areas. This is typically due to relatively smaller and narrower lots, and often with limited open space set-asides.

Where on the Map: The aerial view above shows one example of this most widespread residential designation within Bellaire. The area above is between Loop 610 on the east, the Elm Street vicinity on the south, South Rice Avenue on the west, and Fournace Place on the north. General Residential is found in all quadrants of Bellaire, including nearly all properties between South Rice Avenue on the west and Newcastle on the east to the south of Bellaire Boulevard.

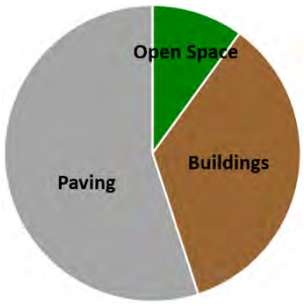
City of Bellaire

Primary Land Use Types

- Detached residential dwellings.
- Public/institutional uses, including parks, schools and certain public assembly uses such as places of worship.

Characteristics

- Residential neighborhoods with less openness and separation between dwellings compared to Suburban Residential areas.
- More prevalent Auto Urban character, especially where driveways and front-loading garages dominate the front yards and front facades of homes. This can be offset by landscaping, as well as by the extensive urban tree canopy in Bellaire.



General Residential character is largely Auto Urban, offset somewhat by landscaping.

- Enhanced design and landscaping of public and institutional sites can also influence the perceived character and appearance of largely auto-oriented areas.

Zoning Parameters to Implement Comprehensive Plan Direction

Most closely associated zoning districts: R-3 and some R-4 Residential.

- Minimum lot area and depth.
- Maximum building height.
- Minimum required yards (building setbacks) in front, sides and rear.
- Maximum lot coverage by buildings and paving.

Small-Lot Residential

This designation is for areas where single-family detached dwellings may be built on the smallest lot sizes permitted within the city (5,000 square feet). Such areas sometimes provide a transition between residential development comprised entirely of single-family detached dwellings and properties with attached single-family residential, multi-family residential and/or nonresidential development.

Where on the Map: The aerial view above, looking west, shows mostly single-family detached dwellings on narrow lots along White Drive in central Bellaire, just inside West Loop 610 on the north side of Bellaire Boulevard (several pairs of dwellings are attached on both sides of White Drive, presumably approved as part of the Planned Development zoning application). Small-Lot Residential is also found at scattered locations in northwest Bellaire (along Elm Street), northeast (along Fournace Place), elsewhere along Bellaire Boulevard inside the Loop, and southwest at Jessamine and Bolivar Streets. The largest contiguous area is the between Newcastle Drive and the eastern city limits to the south of Bellaire Boulevard.

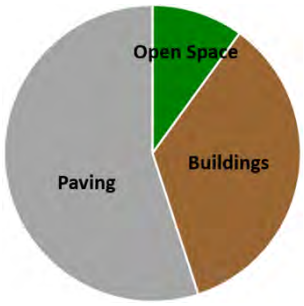
City of Bellaire

Primary Land Use Types

- Detached residential dwellings.
- Public/institutional uses, including parks, schools and certain public assembly uses such as places of worship.

Characteristics

- Residential neighborhoods with narrower and shallower lots, greater lot coverage and less openness and separation between dwellings compared to Suburban and General Residential areas.
- Auto Urban character, especially where driveways and front-loading garages internalized within the structure dominate the front yards and front facades of homes. Along with the associated reduction in trees and overall landscape surface that typically results, this is a key contributor to such areas having reduced green space relative to the grey streets and driveways that must accommodate automobiles in a denser residential setting. As in the General Residential category, Bellaire is fortunate that its mature tree canopy is evident even in many Small-Lot Residential areas, which helps offset the development intensity more typical of Urban character areas.



Small-Lot Residential character is almost always Auto Urban, unless offset by common open space.

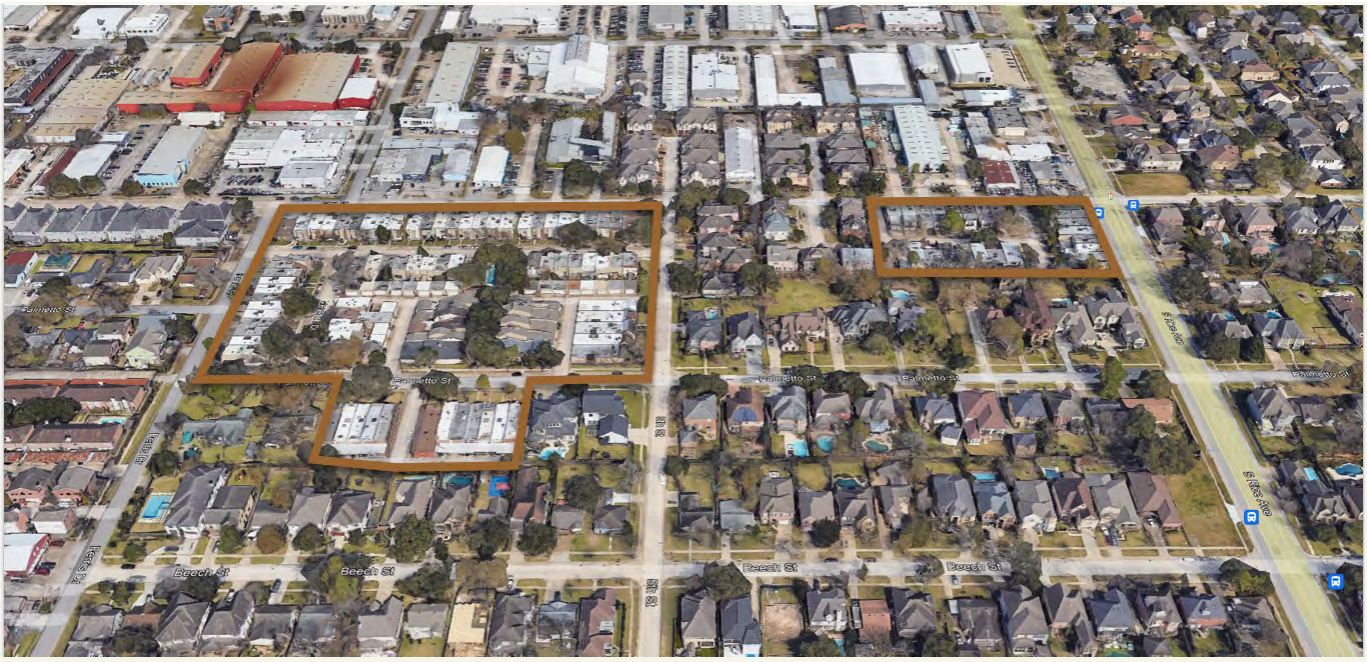
Zoning Parameters to Implement Comprehensive Plan Direction

Most closely associated zoning district: R-4 Residential.

- Minimum lot area and depth.
- Maximum building height.
- Minimum required yards (building setbacks) in front, sides and rear.
- Maximum lot coverage by buildings and paving.

Small-Lot Residential Attached

This designation is a subset of Small-Lot Residential, for areas that, along with still allowing single-family detached dwellings, also provide for various forms of attached housing (e.g., duplexes, townhomes, etc.) on some of the smallest residential lot sizes – and, thus, with some of the highest residential densities – found in Bellaire.



Where on the Map: The aerial view above shows areas designated for Small-Lot Residential Attached use in northwest Bellaire to the south of Elm Street, between South Rice Avenue on the east and Ferris Street on the west. Other clusters of Small-Lot Residential Attached are found in northwest Bellaire around Bissonnet Street and Newcastle Drive, along and near Bellaire Boulevard inside West Loop 610, and one location on the west side of the Loop at Evergreen Street.

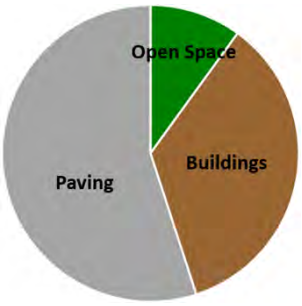
City of Bellaire

Primary Land Use Types

- Detached residential dwellings.
- Attached residential forms (e.g., two-family dwellings, townhomes, patio homes or other small-lot housing types with common walls) as permitted by zoning or where not otherwise restricted.
- Public/institutional uses, including parks, schools and certain public assembly uses such as places of worship.
- Planned developments, potentially with varying residential densities, subject to compatibility and open space standards.

Characteristics

- As a subset of Small-Lot Residential, this category has the same characteristics, but potentially on even smaller lot sizes and/or denser subdivision layouts.



As with Small-Lot Residential, the character of attached housing on small lots is almost always Auto Urban, unless offset by common open space.

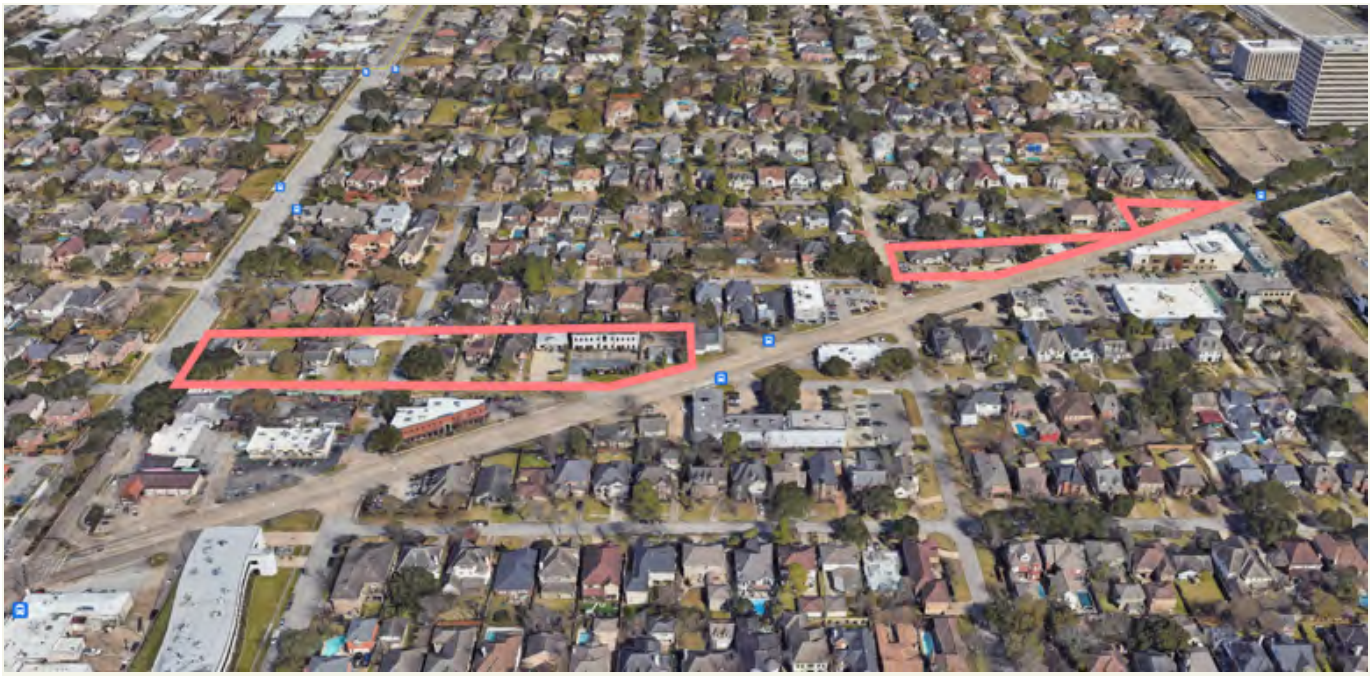
Zoning Parameters to Implement Comprehensive Plan Direction

- Most closely associated zoning district: R-5 Residential, which allows for single-family detached dwellings on minimum 5,000 square foot lots as in R-4, but with the option for attached residential dwellings via Planned Development approval.
- The key zoning standards are the same as highlighted for Small-Lot Residential, although side yards do not apply for attached housing, except typically on corner lots, on either side of attached two-family dwellings, and for the end units on a larger set of attached dwellings (i.e., townhomes).

City of Bellaire

Residential-Office Mix

This designation is included primarily in support of the unique and very targeted Residential-Office Mixed-Use (R-M.2-O) district in the City's zoning regulations. The zoning district encompasses only about 15 relatively small properties to the north of Bissonnet Street between West Loop 610 and the Urban Village-Downtown area. The R-M.2-O purpose statement in the zoning regulations describes it as "a medium density mixed residential and small-scale commercial area that serves as a buffer zone between retail/office and residential uses." While the 2009 Comprehensive Plan contemplated that this zoning district would be folded into the new Corridor Mixed Use (CMU) district along Bissonnet, the R-M.2-O district was ultimately retained and kept separate to continue as a lesser-intensity buffer area between CMU and areas to the north designated for General Residential use on the Future Land Use and Character map.



Where on the Map: The aerial view above shows the single area of Bellaire where R-M.2-O zoning applies, to a relatively small number of properties along and just north of Bissonnet Street between N. 1st Street on the east and South Rice Avenue on the west.

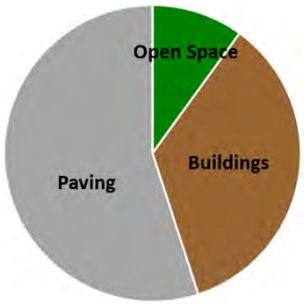
City of Bellaire

Primary Land Use Types

- Detached residential dwellings.
- Office uses.
- Kindergarten, nursery and/or day care center.
- Public/institutional uses, including parks, schools and certain public assembly uses such as places of worship.

Characteristics

- Especially on smaller sites, significant portions are devoted to vehicular access drives and surface parking, making pavement the most prominent visual feature. This can be offset by reduced site coverage and enhanced landscaping, building design and well-designed signage.



R-M.2-O character is largely Auto Urban, but with development standards to offset the adverse aspects of mostly automobile-oriented site design, especially on larger sites.

Zoning Parameters to Implement Comprehensive Plan Direction

Most closely associated zoning district: Residential-Office Mixed-Use (R-M.2-O).

- Minimum lot/site area, width and depth.
- Maximum building height.
- Minimum required yards (building setbacks) in front, sides and rear.
- Maximum site/lot coverage by buildings and paving.

Other City Code provisions apply in R-M.2-O involving landscaping, screening and buffering; and off-street parking.

Corridor Mixed Use

This designation is for properties along and near portions of some of Bellaire's highest-profile roadway corridors that are in a variety of commercial uses, and potentially mixed on a single site, including the possibility of some attached residential dwellings. Such mixed-use development and redevelopment outcomes are desired and encouraged. The potential for residential is especially to provide additional housing options and forms within the community. Major public and/or institutional facilities may also serve as development anchors within such areas.

Additionally, entirely residential developments may be considered through Planned Development (PD) applications within Corridor Mixed Use areas. PD review would allow for more in-depth site plan evaluation to ensure compatibility with other nearby use types and intensities, and especially between varying housing styles and densities on corridor sites relative to single-family detached dwellings on properties just off the corridor. A PD application also requires public notice and hearings as it is effectively a zone change request for the subject property.

Not all properties in this designation will be viable for or result in mixed-use outcomes given their size, location and/or market position. Therefore, a range of typical stand-alone uses is also anticipated. However, Corridor Mixed Use is particularly intended to recognize fundamental paradigm shifts occurring in the development models for residential, retail, office and hospitality uses, leading to even greater focus on "destination" developments that creatively mix uses, integrate amenities and emphasize quality design.

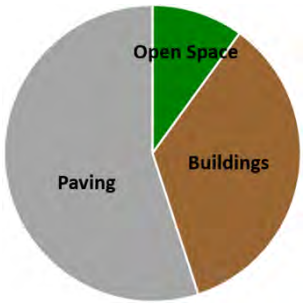
Where on the Map: The aerial view above shows the segment of Bissonnet Street between Avenue B on the left and the railroad corridor (east city limits) on the right. The Corridor Mixed Use designation is also along the portion of Bissonnet just west of West Loop 610; around the periphery of Bellaire's west side "City Center" area (east side of South Rice Avenue, south side of Bellaire Boulevard, and west of Ferris Street to Chimney Rock Road); and along the westernmost portion of Bissonnet within Bellaire near Renwick Drive.

City of Bellaire

Primary Land Use Types

- Commercial retail, service, medical, recreation and amusement uses, at varying scales and development intensities depending on the physical characteristics of the particular corridor, and of a specific site and its adjacent uses.
- Office uses, involving larger and/or multi-story buildings or small-scale offices depending on the site.
- Cultural uses (e.g., art gallery or museum).
- Attached single-family residential forms (e.g., townhomes) only as a component of mixed-use development.
- Public/institutional uses, including parks, schools and certain public assembly uses such as places of worship.
- Potential Planned Development proposals to accommodate custom site designs and/or mixing of uses, as well as entirely residential developments.

Characteristics



CMU character is largely Auto Urban, but with development standards to offset the adverse aspects of mostly automobile-oriented site design, especially on larger sites.

- Many of Bellaire's primary roadway corridors are auto-oriented in design and appearance. However, relative to "General Commercial" areas shown on many cities' future land use maps, Corridor Mixed Use is intended to elevate nonresidential development quality and mitigate, where possible, the adverse aesthetic and environmental outcomes from mostly auto-oriented development. This is done through building and site design standards involving site and parking area landscaping and screening, signs, access management, among others. Bellaire's corresponding Corridor Mixed Use zoning district also aims to reduce auto orientation by allowing drive-in and drive-through facilities on commercial sites only through Specific Use Permit review and approval.
- Some corridor frontage properties within this designation are relatively small and shallow, limiting their development and redevelopment options. At the same time, a relatively low minimum site area requirement in the zoning ordinance provides for small business activity plus neighborhood-focused uses near residential areas. Larger-scale and more intensive uses will naturally require bigger sites to meet parking requirements and other development standards, and such sites are found elsewhere in this designation such as near the City Center area.
- Another intent of a Corridor Mixed Use area may be to achieve a more bike- and pedestrian-friendly character outcome, although this may be difficult to achieve in a setting where most business patrons, employees and visitors will still reach their destinations by private vehicle and require adequate on-site parking. Site design and development criteria may at least be set to soften the auto-oriented development character found along most busy roadway corridors, as well as to enhance safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

Zoning Parameters to Implement Comprehensive Plan Direction

Most closely associated zoning district: Corridor Mixed Use (CMU).

- Minimum mix of uses to qualify as “mixed use” on larger sites.
- Different parameters for commercial and small-scale mixed-use development on sites under one-half acre.
- Minimum lot/site area, width and depth.
- Maximum building height.
- Minimum required yards (building setbacks) in front, sides and rear.
- Height-setback plane at CMU edges that are adjacent to single-family detached residential properties, providing for additional setback of upper portions of buildings on CMU sites, along with added screening along the common property line.
- Maximum site/lot coverage by buildings and paving.
- Maximum density for multi-unit attached residential.
- Maximum cap on percentage of total gross developed floor area within CMU, excluding the floor area of any parking structures, that may be in multi-unit attached residential use.

Other City Code provisions apply in CMU involving landscaping, screening and buffering; off-street parking; and design standards for commercial and mixed-use districts.

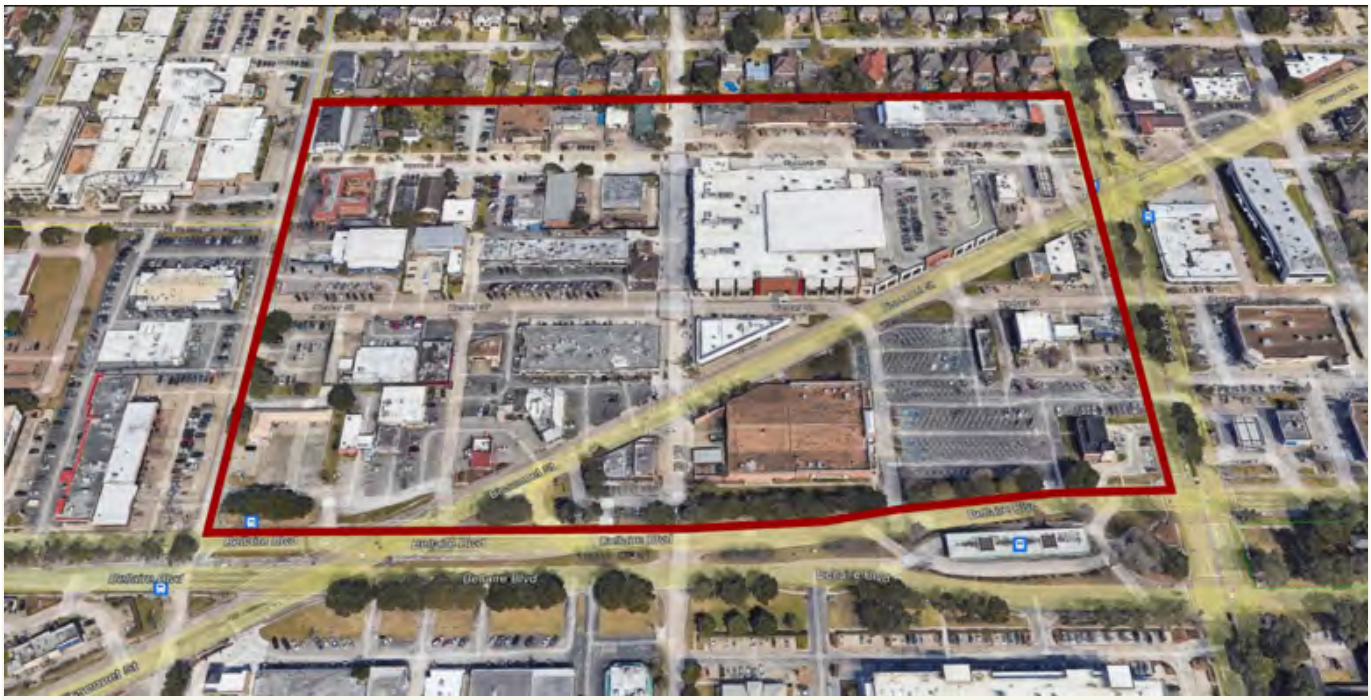
Urban Village - Downtown

Relative to the development intensity of a traditional downtown core with clear Urban character, this designation is for a less intensively-developed mixed-use area within Bellaire that aspires to accommodate an even wider range of uses over time and evolve toward a more pedestrian-friendly environment. In this way, it would achieve more of the “small-town downtown feel” desired by Bellaire residents, making it more attractive for extended, multi-purpose visits that are essential to a vibrant mix of retail, service and hospitality businesses. The potential to introduce some degree of residential use would be another supportive element, by putting full-time residents in the area who create built-in demand for local shopping and services, and with expectations for a safe and appealing environment in which to live, recreate and host guests and visitors.

The edges of the mixed-use area transition to other nearby neighborhoods, commercial blocks and roadway corridors that are more uniform as areas primarily for single-family detached residential uses and commercial uses, respectively.

Various elements can reinforce a greater pedestrian orientation and potential for personal interaction more characteristic of Urban character areas than auto-oriented areas. These include: (1) smaller blocks, narrower streets, wider sidewalks and availability of on-street parking versus extensive on-site parking in some locations; (2) buildings with reduced or no setback from streets and sidewalks, to create “architectural enclosure” of streets and public spaces as discussed under the Characteristics heading below; and (3) site and building design standards to ensure that all new development and redevelopment maintains the area’s intended quality and character, including canopies/awnings over sidewalks where buildings have minimal setback, and street trees and other enhancements to make walking more safe and comfortable. Public plazas and pocket parks can provide green space amid the urban environment and a place to gather and host community events. Overall, more pedestrian-oriented street scenes in vibrant downtowns are “activated” by varied retail storefronts and cultural venues; restaurants with open-air sidewalk seating areas, plus places for coffee and confections; and complementary streetscape and design treatments in the public realm.

For historical perspective, it should be noted that the Urban Village-Downtown designation applies to a significantly smaller area than what was within Bellaire’s previous “City Center” zoning districts (CCD-1 and CCD-2). This reflects the direction of this and previous Bellaire Comprehensive Plans to focus on a core revitalization area that has the greatest potential to transition to more of an Urban, pedestrian-oriented character over time. Although this objective is challenged by the Bissonnet Street diagonal slicing through the area’s east side, creating various unusually shaped and undersized building sites. The fringes of the former “CCD” areas are more oriented toward Bellaire Boulevard and Bissonnet Street, making them more likely to continue exhibiting an auto-oriented character for the foreseeable future. For this reason, these UV-D edge areas were included in the Corridor Mixed Use designation rather than Urban Village.



Where on the Map: The aerial view above shows the single location of the Urban Village-Downtown category, bounded by the mid-block property lines between Spruce and Locust streets on the north, South Rice Avenue on the east, Bellaire Boulevard on the south, and Ferris Street on the west.

Primary Land Use Types

- Mixed uses, on single sites and within individual structures.
- Commercial retail, service, medical, recreation and amusement uses, at varying scales and development intensities depending on the physical characteristics of a specific site and its adjacent uses.
- Office uses, involving larger and/or multi-story buildings or small-scale offices depending on the site.
- Hotels, but not motels as defined in the City's zoning regulations.
- Bars, only as an accessory use to certain other uses (e.g., restaurant, hotel, commercial indoor amusement, movie theater, live-performance theater or a private club).
- Cultural uses (e.g., art gallery or museum, theater for live performances).
- Attached single-family residential forms (e.g., townhomes), often on relatively small and/or narrow lots and sometimes with rear alley access versus a front driveway for street access.
- Multi-unit attached residential only as a component of mixed-use development, whether for rent (apartments) or ownership (condominiums).
- Public/institutional uses, including parks and public spaces (sometimes in the form of public plazas and pocket parks, along with places to gather and host community events), schools and certain public assembly uses such as places of worship and conference center facilities.
- Commercial parking garage operations, within multi-level and/or underground garage space as defined in the City's zoning regulations, but not commercial surface parking lots.
- Potential Planned Development proposals to accommodate custom site designs and/or mixing of uses.

Characteristics

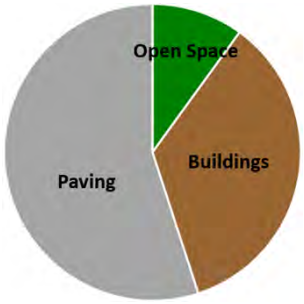
- Where a greater pedestrian orientation is desired, the area may exclude certain uses that, by their very nature, cannot avoid an automobile orientation in their design (e.g., extent of site coverage by paved areas as with many automobile service stations and car washes, plus funeral homes with large parking areas for visitors and vehicle queuing). Otherwise, pedestrian-oriented development and design standards can also avoid encroachment of auto-oriented uses that are better suited to other areas of the community.
- Multi-story structures encouraged, along with reduced front building setbacks, to bolster Urban character through the design principle of "architectural enclosure" of streets and public spaces. Together with building entry and window design standards for street-level building facades, this contributes to a pedestrian-oriented sidewalk setting. It also encourages vertical mixing of uses within buildings, and promotes retail viability and a mix of diverse uses that contribute to the area's evolution into a destination activity center.

[NOTE: The current UV-D zoning includes minimum building height requirements, along with required zero setback of some or all portions of buildings along front property lines.]

- Desired evolution toward more on-street and shared parking and reduced off-street parking to avoid large areas of surface parking and promote a greater mix and critical mass of diverse uses in a relatively compact area – all intended to promote a greater pedestrian versus automobile orientation. Additionally, as in the Corridor Mixed Use category, Bellaire's corresponding Urban Village-Downtown zoning district aims to reduce auto

orientation by allowing drive-in and drive-through facilities on commercial sites only through Specific Use Permit review and approval.

- Often the only place in a community where multi-level parking structures may make sense and be financially viable, which also contributes to reducing the extent of surface parking in the area.
- Often apply residential development and design standards that require rear-access garages to eliminate an automobile orientation in front home facades, which also removes vehicle/pedestrian conflict points where sidewalks are interrupted by front residential driveways.
- Often a focus area for infill and redevelopment activity in the community, requiring customized development and design standards to ensure compatibility with the intended area character.
- Streetscape enhancements in public ways usually emphasized given limited area for private on-site landscaping relative to other character areas.
- Any public/institutional uses should be designed to match the area's intended pedestrian-oriented character.



UV-D character is mostly Auto Urban today, but with development standards to offset the adverse aspects of mostly automobile-oriented site design, especially on larger sites – and the potential for some portions of the area to evolve toward a more Urban, pedestrian-oriented character.

Zoning Parameters to Implement Comprehensive Plan Direction

Most closely associated zoning district: Urban Village-Downtown (UV-D).

- Minimum mix of uses to qualify as "mixed use" on larger sites.
- Attached single-family dwellings permitted only at UV-D edges near R zoning districts.
- Different parameters for commercial and small-scale mixed-use development on sites under one acre.
- Minimum lot/site area, width and depth.
- Minimum floor area for single-family attached dwellings.
- Maximum floor area to site area ratio (FAR) for commercial, mixed-use and Planned Development projects with only surface parking, with potential FAR bonuses for providing certain development features (involving extra site area beyond the minimum required, type of parking, parking garages wrapped with ground-level retail or restaurant uses along public streets, and amenity areas).
- Maximum building height (with likely elimination of the current minimum building height requirement through anticipated zoning ordinance updates based on this updated Comprehensive Plan).
- Minimum required yards (building setbacks), though typically less than in more auto-oriented commercial areas to promote architectural enclosure of streets and other public spaces.
- Height-setback plane at UV-D edges that are adjacent to single-family detached residential properties, providing for additional setback of upper portions of buildings on UV-D sites, along with added screening along the common property line.
- Maximum site/lot coverage by buildings and paving.

- Maximum density for multi-unit attached residential.
- Maximum cap on percentage of total gross developed floor area within UV-D, excluding the floor area of any parking structures, that may be in multi-unit attached residential use.

Other City Code provisions apply in UV-D involving landscaping, screening and buffering; off-street parking; and design standards for commercial and mixed-use districts, including to achieve more pedestrian-oriented development outcomes.

Suburban Office

This designation is similar to the Corridor Mixed Use category in that, while focused on larger office uses in this case, it aims to enhance development outcomes in areas that are primarily auto-oriented in nature. This is especially the case along the West Loop 610 frontage through Bellaire. A combination of higher landscape surface requirements, maximum lot coverage, sign regulations, and other site and building design standards – including criteria for building placement and orientation and the location of surface and/or structured parking on the site – is essential along such a high-profile corridor where Bellaire's image is established every day with thousands of visitors and through commuters. The standards should also address buffering, screening and other measures to ensure compatibility with adjacent residential uses and neighborhoods.

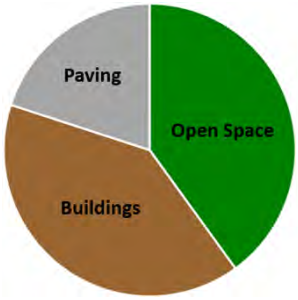
Where on the Map: The aerial view above shows the collection of office developments along the West Loop 610 corridor, from Bissonnet Street to Bellaire Boulevard, that are in the Suburban Office category. A few more instances of this category are farther north at the northeast corner of Fournace Place and the Loop, and at the southeast corner of Lehigh Street and the Loop.

City of Bellaire

Primary Land Use Types

- Office uses, involving larger and/or multi-story buildings or small-scale offices depending on the site.
- Potential incorporation of residential use as zoning allows, which is the case in Bellaire's Loop 610 zoning district, in which single-family detached dwellings are permitted by right.
- Public/institutional uses, including parks and public spaces, schools and certain public assembly uses such as places of worship.
- Potential Planned Development (PD) proposals to accommodate custom site designs and/or mixing of uses, with Bellaire's Loop 610 zoning district calling out two potential PD types with specified development parameters: (1) Office Plaza, and (2) Residential-Office Plaza.

Characteristics



Suburban Office character is mostly Auto Urban today given the development intensity and site coverage allowed in the past on these sites (except the former AT&T site at the southwest corner of West Loop 610 and Bissonnet Street), but with Comprehensive Plan intention to achieve a more Suburban character through any significant future redevelopment activity.

- Suburban character achieved and maintained through reduced site coverage by buildings and paving (typically a minimum open space ratio of 30 percent or more) and increased open space.
- Development outcomes often controlled by private covenants and restrictions that exceed municipal ordinances and development standards involving landscaping and signage, sometimes supplemented by special streetscaping and design treatments at site entries and within the site.
- Intended to create a highly attractive business environment.

Zoning Parameters to Implement Comprehensive Plan Direction

Most closely associated zoning district: Loop 610 (L-610), plus a series of Planned Developments approved along the West Loop 610 corridor.

- The Loop 610 district includes typical provisions for residential use (minimum lot area/width/depth, maximum building height, minimum floor area per dwelling unit, minimum yards/building setbacks and maximum lot coverage), plus for churches and schools. The maximum residential building height is 3 stories (without a definitive limit in terms of feet).
- Office development in the Loop 610 district is possible only through Planned Development (PD) applications, with specific parameters provided for the two PD options of Office Plaza or Residential-Office Plaza.
- In the Residential-Office Plaza scenario, on minimum required sites of 4 acres or larger, at least 34% of the site must be allocated to residential use, no more than 33% to office use, and at least 33% "committed to open space, including public and private rights-of-way, all impervious surfaces, exclusive of buildings, and pervious (green) area."

North Bellaire Special Development Area

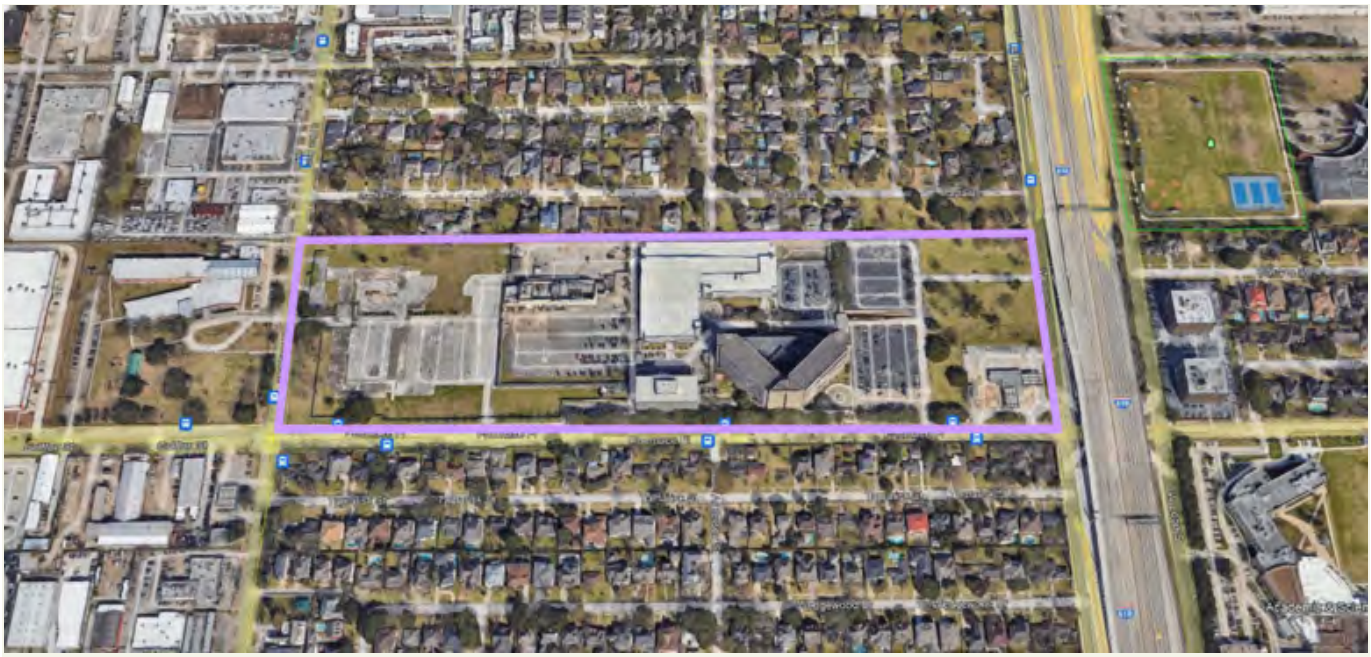
Since the 1940s, the area just north of Fournace Place, between the present-day West Loop 610 on the east and South Rice Avenue on the west, had been devoted to technical/research functions and other office space, first by Texaco and in recent decades by Chevron Corporation. Through its zoning ordinance, the City of Bellaire applied a Technical Research Park (TRP) classification to the area, including several adjacent properties that front on Loop 610. One of these properties has long been in use as a gas station at the northwest corner of Fournace and the Loop. The zoning classification corresponded with a Business Park designation for this area on the Future Land Use and Character map within the City's Comprehensive Plan. This Land Use and Community Character section of the plan previously described the Business Park designation as appropriate for "areas already developed as, or envisioned for office and research and technology-related uses in a campus-like environment."

In summer 2016, Chevron announced its plans to remove all activities from this location by 2017 and sell the property. This turn of events opened up redevelopment possibilities for a contiguous, rectangular area of some 30 acres in north Bellaire, with the corner gas station property also going on the market. This is similar to significant property sales and land use transitions seen in nearby areas of central Houston, and particularly to the north around the West Loop 610 corridor through Uptown Houston. The difference is that Bellaire uses a Comprehensive Plan and zoning regulations to set parameters for land use and clarify desired community outcomes from new development and redevelopment activity. This is essential as the North Bellaire Special Development Area is bordered not only by busy arterial streets but also a major freeway. Long-established neighborhoods of single-family detached homes are immediately north of the area and also to the south across Fournace Place.

Given this context, the area presented a unique redevelopment opportunity for a new mixed-use setting within Bellaire that could include retail, restaurants, office, entertainment, hospitality and service businesses that cater to the local community and provide a pedestrian-oriented destination which promotes community and boosts quality of life in Bellaire. However, given the area's location amid a primarily residential portion of Bellaire to the north and south, development must be properly located, scaled and designed to provide protection to the adjacent residential areas. Specifically, the most intensive uses in the Special Development Area, and their associated vehicular access points, should be located along or near the Loop 610 frontage. A next tier of use intensity could occur along the South Rice Avenue frontage and along the Fournace Place frontage, especially in the areas nearest the existing office building on the Chevron site, constructed in the 1970s and situated close to Fournace. The lowest development intensities, together with adequate separation and buffering, should occur along the northern boundary of the area, closest to the single-family homes that front on Mayfair Street. As in the other Bellaire zoning districts that involve the interface between low-density residential and higher-intensity land uses, a "height-setback plane" (greater setback of upper portions of buildings) should govern the allowable height of potential multistory buildings near single-family homes to maintain openness and protect residential privacy.

[NOTE: The eventual NBSDD zoning district did not provide for any residential uses.]

Any proposed new development or redevelopment should be considered for Planned Development (PD) zoning approval. As in other areas of the community, a PD application provides the opportunity to put forward a master-planned development approach that may involve an alternate set of land uses and/or special site design elements. Any such proposal for a PD would be vetted through a site plan review process and associated public discussion and hearings as provided for in the City's development regulations and procedures.



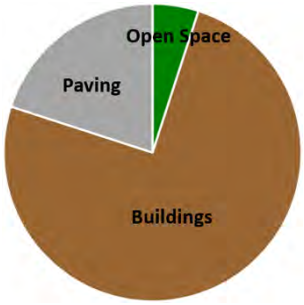
Where on the Map: The aerial view above shows the single location of the North Bellaire Special Development Area category, bounded by the north property lines that are shared with R-3 zoned lots along the south side of Mayfair Street, West Loop 610 on the east, Fournace Place on the south, and South Rice Avenue on the west.

Primary Land Use Types

All proposed development involving uses other than municipal facilities or utilities, which are permitted by right under the City's zoning regulations, require a Planned Development (PD) application. Allowable uses within a PD may include one or a combination of two of more of the following:

- Mixed uses, on single sites and within individual structures.
- Office uses.
- Commercial retail, service, medical, recreation, amusement and conference center facility uses as specified in the NBSDD zoning provisions.
- Hotels, but not motels as defined in the City's zoning regulations.
- Bars, only as an accessory use to certain other uses (e.g., restaurant, hotel, commercial indoor amusement or theater).
- Cultural uses (e.g., art gallery or museum, theater for live performances).
- Commercial parking garage operations, within multi-level and/or underground garage space as defined in the City's zoning regulations, but not commercial surface parking lots.

Characteristics



NBSDD, after its redevelopment, will likely be a hybrid of Urban character (as illustrated above) in its more compact, dense and pedestrian-oriented subareas, with pockets of green that help offset other portions that tend toward Auto Urban character from having to accommodate some amount of on-site automobile circulation and parking.

- The master-planned, mixed-use development desired within this area, depending on its ultimate approved layout and design, may approach Urban development character in some portions depending on the compactness of its building configurations; the scale and height of the buildings; and the potential "architectural enclosure" of streets and public spaces – all of which contribute to a pedestrian-oriented setting and walkable connectivity between varied uses. The allowance for relatively high site coverage in the area's zoning standards also supports this scenario.
- Along with the Urban Village-Downtown area, NBSDD will likely be feasible for multi-level parking structures, which also contributes to reducing the extent of surface parking in the area and supporting greater pedestrian orientation.
- The redevelopment opportunity afforded by this significant land turnover in north Bellaire should also lead to creative site planning and design that incorporates highly visible green and open space areas into any proposed development. This is especially important to reduce impervious surfaces and mitigate development-related drainage impacts. The tree-lined frontage and pathway along the north side of Fournace Place should also be maintained and extended all the way to South Rice Avenue. Pocket parks, landscaped plazas and seating areas, and generous plantings within street rights-of-way would provide the desired green amenities and area enhancement. The City's landscaping standards should also be applied to conceal parking structures to the maximum degree practicable, where garages are not already wrapped by buildings with active uses. Additionally, landscaping plans across the entire Special Development Area should have a core objective of extending the signature urban tree canopy of Bellaire into the interior of the area – including through targeted installation of mature oaks from offsite rather than only through smaller plantings for future growth.

- Any public/institutional uses should be designed to match the area's intended pedestrian-oriented character.

Zoning Parameters to Implement Comprehensive Plan Direction

Most closely associated zoning district: North Bellaire Special Development District (NBSDD), with some development standards ultimately determined by the approved site plan for the Planned Development, together with parameters set in the district standards.

- Minimum site area.
- Maximum building height.
- Minimum required yards (building setbacks), tied in some cases to proximity to residential properties along the area's northern boundary or to West Loop 610.
- Height-setback plane at NBSDD edges that are adjacent to single-family detached residential properties, providing for additional setback of upper portions of buildings on NBSDD sites, along with added screening along the common property line.
- Maximum site coverage by buildings and paving.

Other City Code provisions apply in NBSDD involving landscaping, screening and buffering, and off-street parking, but subject to potential modification through Planned Development review and approval.

Bellaire Uptown Business Area

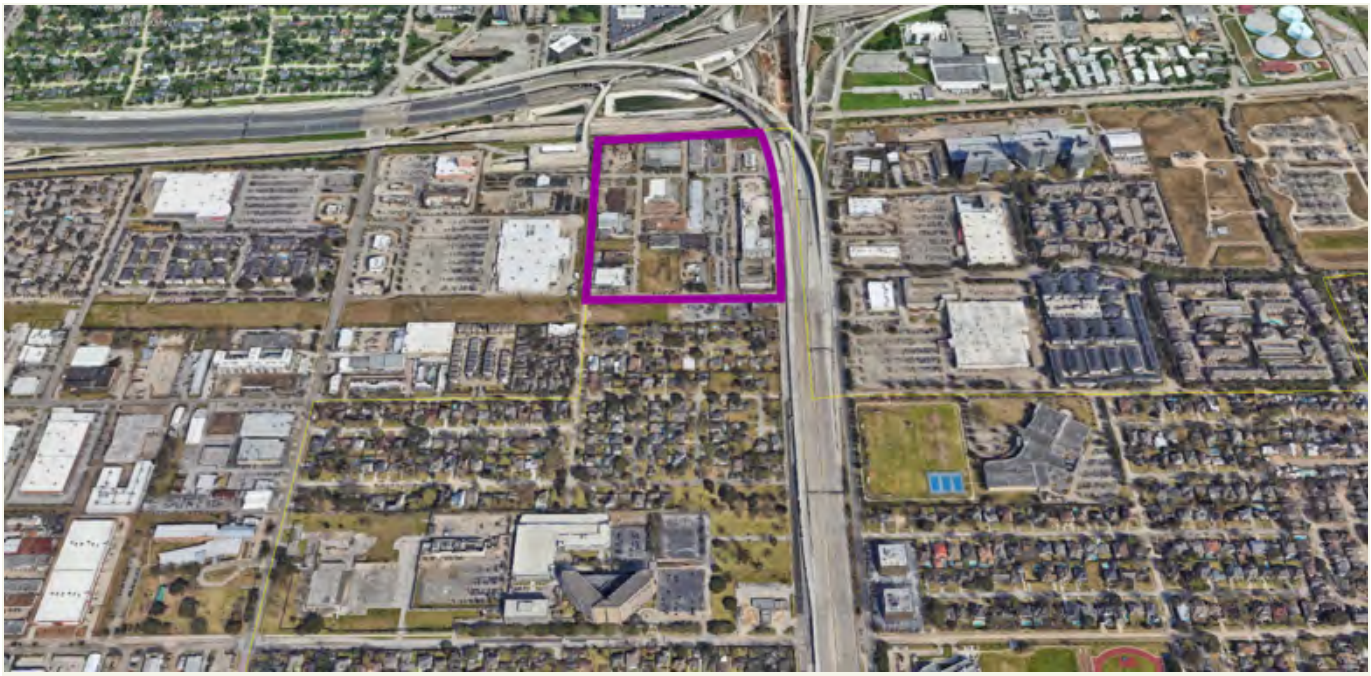
This designation is unique in Bellaire, applying to one relatively small, approximately 30-acre area at the northernmost city limits near Westpark Drive, just west of Loop 610. The area's physical development has changed little over recent decades, other than the introduction since the mid-2000s of four-story buildings and accompanying parking structures for medical uses along the West Loop frontage road, along with some limited redevelopment activity.

The area has long accommodated a mix of commercial and office uses but not traditional retail activity – although its zoning has always allowed retail use. This is because the area has limited access and relatively low visibility at a corner of the massive Loop 610/Interstate 69 freeway interchange. Prior to 2011, the area was zoned as the "Research, Development and Distribution" (RDD) district, described by the zoning ordinance at the time as "a land use intensive district providing an important focal point for economic development within the City of Bellaire and the region it serves." City-initiated rezoning that year, based on the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, placed the area in a new "Urban Village - Transit-Oriented Development" (UV-T) zoning district. The new district parameters allowed for even more intensive development, with 90% maximum site coverage and building heights up to 16 stories (235 feet), based on a transit-oriented development (TOD) concept plan for the area. This plan was prepared in anticipation of a METRO light rail transit (LRT) station in Bellaire along Westpark Drive that would be a transit hub and key transfer point between the east-west University LRT line and the north-south Uptown LRT line. Typical of TOD zoning, the UV-T framework encouraged relatively dense residential living and a mix of other uses concentrated within close proximity to a transit station, with this compact development pattern also prioritizing pedestrian over vehicular circulation, with parking structures to eliminate auto-oriented surface parking.

When federal funding for the University LRT line was withdrawn soon after 2011, the UV-T zoning strategy lost its core impetus. The Bellaire Uptown Business Area still builds on the notion of associating this area with the nearby Uptown/Galleria area of Houston to the north, but within parameters that Bellaire is able to set through zoning. It is still viewed as an area that can be provided greater development and redevelopment flexibility given its edge location within the city limits, proximity to busy freeways and the relative intensity of the Uptown/Galleria area, and its built-in separation from Bellaire residential neighborhoods to the south thanks to the nearly 200-foot-wide east-west CenterPoint electric utility easement south of Lehigh Street. However, the area still faces the same challenges as pre-2011 of limited developable land area, another CenterPoint easement that also cuts through north-south, further encroachment from the expanding Loop 610/Interstate 69 interchange, and few points of access (only via Terminal and Lehigh streets off the Loop 610 frontage road). The area now has the added constraint of needing to meet contemporary storm water management requirements with any new development or significant redevelopment. The access situation is unlikely to change as one or more direct street connections to Westpark Drive, through the still-intact former railroad right-of-way along the south side of Westpark, would probably never gain official approval (and review of aerial imagery back to the 1940s indicates that North 1st , 2nd and 3rd streets were all stubbed at the rail right-of-way and never connected to Westpark).

As when this northern fringe area of Bellaire was zoned as RDD and later as UV-T, minimizing adverse impacts on established Bellaire residential neighborhoods to the south will remain a priority, whether involving potential development intensity, drainage concerns or traffic implications. A key element of the TOD scenario was providing continuous east-west traffic flow between Loop 610 and South Rice Avenue, especially to minimize the potential for cut-through traffic on Bellaire residential streets to the south – and with the added inducement that Anderson Street might be restricted only to pedestrian and bicycle movement and no vehicular traffic as part of the area's development.

As in other areas of the community, property owners/developers can pursue a Planned Development (PD) application to propose development approaches that may involve an alternate set of land uses and/or special site design elements – as some owners within the Bellaire Uptown Business Area have already shared with the City at an early conceptual design stage. However the area may evolve and redevelop, the same approach and principles will apply as under the former "RDD" zoning: (1) a variety of nonresidential uses can potentially be accommodated in this area, and (2) along with typical development standards, performance standards in the City Code Section 24-511 will also apply to regulate concerns such as "noise, air pollution and particulate matter and other air contaminants, odorous matter, fire and explosive hazard material, toxic and noxious matter, vibration, open storage and glare."



Where on the Map: The aerial view above shows the location of the Bellaire Uptown Business Area, with only the residential neighborhood to the south abutting it within the Bellaire city limits. On all other sides to the west, north and east, the area is hemmed in by freeways and development within the City of Houston, including the METRO Westpark/Lower Uptown Transit Center that was ultimately built just outside of Bellaire along Westpark Drive (visible on the aerial view where direct ramps to/from the Transit Center connect to the transit lanes in the center of Interstate 69).

Primary Land Use Types

- Mixed uses, on single sites and within individual structures. [NOTE: The former RDD zoning treated residential and retail as potential accessory uses within a commercial office building, with a 33% limit on the extent of accessory use relative to the "predominant" office use.]
- Live/work units, allowing for residential living space in conjunction with certain occupational pursuits involving primarily the resident occupant (e.g., office, art/sculpture/music, photography studio, etc.).
- Multi-unit attached residential only as a component of mixed-use development, whether for rent (apartments) or ownership (condominiums).
- Commercial retail, service, medical, recreation and amusement uses, at varying scales and development intensities depending on the physical characteristics of a specific site and its adjacent uses.
- Office uses, involving larger and/or multi-story buildings or small-scale offices depending on the site.
- Hotels, but not motels as defined in the City's zoning regulations.
- Conference center facilities.
- Cultural uses (e.g., art gallery or museum, theater for live performances).
- Bars, only as an accessory use to certain other uses (e.g., restaurant, hotel, conference center, commercial indoor amusement, movie theater, live-performance theater or a private club).
- Heavy commercial uses (e.g., building supply).
- Technical research facilities.
- Public/institutional uses, including parks, schools and certain public assembly uses such as places of worship.
- Potential Planned Development proposals to accommodate custom site designs and/or mixing of uses.

Characteristics

- Based on existing development conditions in the area, and given its location and limited developable property within the area, relatively more intensive development is anticipated than permitted elsewhere in Bellaire in terms of maximum site coverage, maximum building bulk and height, etc. Although storm water management requirements will likely limit this development potential.

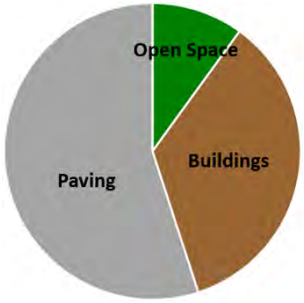
  [NOTE: The former RDD zoning allowed 85% coverage, floor area to site area up to 150%, and 6-story buildings. The current UV-T zoning allows 90% coverage, floor area to site area up to 400% for mixed-use development with potential bonuses for certain added features – and no maximum for developments that address all UV-T objectives, and 16 above-ground working stories or 235-foot maximum building height – with the potential for greater height if approved through the PD process.]
- If the City's typical landscaping requirements are applied to the area, this will provide more on-site greenery than in other areas zoned for a more Urban character, and will also help offset more Auto Urban character outcomes.

Zoning Parameters to Implement Comprehensive Plan Direction

Most closely associated zoning district: None at this time. This Comprehensive Plan recommends developing and adopting an entirely new zoning designation for this area. Along with permitted uses, typical zoning parameters will include:

- Minimum site area, width and depth.
- Maximum floor area to site area ratio (FAR) for commercial, mixed-use and potentially Planned Development projects, and with potential FAR bonuses for providing certain development features.
- Maximum building height.
- Minimum required yards (building setbacks).
- Maximum site coverage by buildings and paving.
- Maximum density for any permitted multi-unit attached residential.

Other City Code provisions involving landscaping, screening and buffering; off-street parking; and design standards for commercial and mixed-use districts.



Bellaire Uptown Business Area character, as today, will likely be a hybrid mix of multiple character types. Auto Urban character currently prevails (as illustrated above), but development standards can help offset the adverse aspects of mostly automobile-oriented site design, especially on larger sites. Some sites within the area may redevelop with a more Urban, pedestrian-oriented character. However, owner concepts for some properties include sizable green space areas for public activity and gatherings.

Government

This designation is for public facility land uses and their vicinities that warrant special consideration. Such consideration is necessary either to: (1) protect a major community asset or other highly-valued use, or (2) buffer and protect nearby properties from potential adverse effects depending on the nature and operational aspects of the public use. In Bellaire, the latter description applies to the City's public works facilities at the southeast corner of the city near Beechnut Street and Baldwin Avenue. This category also encompasses City Hall and all nearby facilities (police/municipal court, fire, library, recreation) along South Rice Avenue, plus the U.S. Postal Service facility along Dashwood Street in northwest Bellaire. Existing places of worship and schools nearly all have a residential designation on the Future Land Use and Character map, reflecting their context and consistent with the City's zoning regulations. Some such uses are likely to remain in this form of public activity for the foreseeable future, but it is recognized that sites in public use sometimes can transition to private ownership and use over time.

Where on the Map: The aerial view above shows the cluster of City facilities at Bellaire Town Square along South Rice Avenue including City Hall, Police Department and Municipal Court, Fire Department and Bellaire City Library, all co-located adjacent to Bellaire-Zindler Park and the Recreation Center and Family Aquatic Center.

The second view below shows the City's wastewater treatment facility and other Public Works properties and activities at the southeast corner of the city near Beechnut Street, east of Newcastle Drive. Future decisions on the long-term use of this property must take into account the proximity of residential neighborhoods, as well as Lafayette Park.

City of Bellaire

Primary Land Use Types

- Government offices and similar facilities.
- Public safety facilities (police, fire, emergency management, training, etc.).
- Water and wastewater treatment facilities.
- Other intensive public works sites and facilities, especially with outdoor activity and/or storage.

Characteristics

- Facilities developed and operated by a government entity should be designed to match and complement the prevailing character of the areas in which they are situated, whether Urban, Suburban or more auto-oriented, for compatibility with the character and quality expectations placed upon private properties and developments.
- A high degree of visitation and/or pedestrian activity in some cases, with people coming and going throughout the day (e.g., public library, utility billing location, etc.).
- May involve multiple buildings arranged in a campus-like setting, with substantial green and open space or sometimes with a denser Urban pedestrian-oriented character with buildings situated close to streets.
- Appropriate buffering and screening measures should be employed to ensure compatibility with adjacent and nearby uses of differing types and intensities, particularly residential uses.

Zoning Parameters to Implement Comprehensive Plan Direction

Most closely associated zoning district: Public facilities are permitted by right in all Bellaire zoning districts. No development standards are specifically called out for public uses in most cases, although presumably they should meet the standards (development and design, landscaping/screening/buffering, off-street parking, etc.) that apply to other allowed nonresidential uses and to mixed-use developments that include one or more public uses. This includes the height-setback plane provision at the edges of certain zoning districts when adjacent to single-family detached residential properties, providing for additional setback of upper portions of buildings, along with added screening along the common property line.

Parks

This designation involves the locations of City-maintained public parks, designed for both active and passive recreational enjoyment. Some sites are developed with a variety of facilities and amenities (e.g., Evergreen Park and Bellaire-Zindler Park) while others have limited improvements, with some or all of the acreage intended to remain in a more natural state (e.g., Russ Pitman Park and Nature Discovery Center).

Where on the Map: The aerial view above shows Evergreen Park (foreground) and Russ Pitman Park and Nature Discovery Center along Newcastle Drive in southeast Bellaire. Locations of other parks are distributed across the city.

City of Bellaire

Primary Land Use Types

- Public parks and other City-maintained trails and green spaces.
- Public recreation areas and facilities, both outdoor and indoor (e.g., Bellaire-Zindler Park).
- Joint City-school park areas (e.g., block in southeast Bellaire with Horn Field and Paul W. Horn Elementary School).

Characteristics

- As with any public facility, the design, intensity of development and planned uses/activities within parks should match area character (e.g., public squares/plazas in Urban downtowns relative to recreational play and sports-focused parks in Suburban character areas, and nature-oriented parks for passive recreation in less developed areas or at special-purpose park sites).
- Public parkland theoretically will remain so in perpetuity compared to other public property and buildings that can transition to private ownership at some point.

Zoning Parameters to Implement Comprehensive Plan Direction

Most closely associated zoning district: Public parks are permitted by right in most all Bellaire zoning districts except for the Light Industrial (LI) district and North Bellaire Special Development District (NBSDD). Zoning considerations around public parks typically focus on providing for complementary uses, development intensity and site design in their vicinity, and protecting them from encroachments on adjacent private properties (e.g., height/density of buildings, minimum required yards/building setbacks, maximum site/lot coverage by buildings and paving) along with appropriate landscaping/screening/buffering and placement of off-street parking areas and other site activities with potential lighting, noise, drainage and other effects.

City of Bellaire

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Joint Workshop Draft (January 2024)

This plan section addresses City of Bellaire priorities and focus areas involving both transportation and utility infrastructure, along with key City services and their continued responsiveness to resident and business needs. All of these involve the core duty of local government to promote public health, safety and welfare, whether in terms of crime prevention, personal safety when moving about the community (in a vehicle, on a bike or on foot), safe drinking water, efficient handling of wastewater and solid waste, and quality of life amenities such as parks, recreational facilities, library services and community events. Most importantly, mitigation of flooding risk and enhanced storm water management has taken on even greater prominence in recent years due to recurring flooding events in the area that have put both lives and property in harm's way. Since the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, and even since the interim 2015 plan update, Bellaire has also made significant investments in its public facilities, along with systematic street and drainage upgrades, meaning that ongoing, effective maintenance will be a focus for the decades ahead.

While this section contains some overarching goals, it differs from the other plan sections by not including specific initiatives or action recommendations. Instead, this section references other City master plans and programs that already advance community goals and priorities involving public infrastructure and services. These other plans effectively become part of the Comprehensive Plan, especially in terms of how infrastructure and services inter-relate with desired land use, development and redevelopment outcomes in the city – along with how Bellaire manages its local streets, sidewalks and paths within the context of the regional mobility network and public transit services.

Key Planning Issues and Considerations

Through the Bellaire Today and Plan Direction phases of the Comprehensive Plan update process, numerous real and perceived community issues and needs were identified through leadership and public engagement activities, as well as through the work of the plan consultants and their interactions with City management and staff. Key issues and considerations that led to the goals in this Public Infrastructure and Services section include:

- The need to monitor any **significant new land development or redevelopment** for cumulative impacts on the City's utility and transportation infrastructure capacity, and well as key public services starting with police and fire, as Bellaire is largely built out but could still see significant evolution in land use intensity in some locations (e.g., North Bellaire Special Development Area, Bellaire Uptown Business Area, Urban Village-Downtown, Corridor Mixed Use areas, etc.).
- Remembering that Bellaire's infrastructure and key public services must respond not only to the demands of a resident population of approximately 17,000, but also a **daytime population** that

has been estimated to roughly double as office buildings, retail businesses, schools and other places of employment and institutions reach their peak activity levels on weekdays.

- Recognizing the **extent of pass-through traffic** that Bellaire receives as an enclave city traversed by an interstate highway (West Loop 610), major regional roadways (Bellaire Boulevard and Bissonnet Street) and public transit routes – all of which are beneficial to local retail trade and a vibrant City Center, but which also bring daily traffic congestion and safety concerns amid an ever-growing Houston metro area.
- Likewise, appreciating how Bellaire, as an enclave city, **must interact regularly with other area jurisdictions and public agencies** on essential utility infrastructure needs and issues (e.g., water supply, reduction in ground water use relative to surface water to manage regional land surface subsidence, interplay between City-maintained storm sewers and facilities relative to the capacity of Harris County Flood Control drainage channels, freeway-related drainage coordination with the Texas Department of Transportation, annual allocations to City of METRO mobility funds, etc.).
- Emphasizing the fundamental priority placed on **neighborhood integrity** in Bellaire, which is influenced by traffic volumes, speeds and the potential for cut-through traffic on residential streets, along with the **safety of kids and adults when walking and biking** in the community.
- Beyond maintaining a superior level of service for water and sanitary sewer, also making the necessary capital investments and ongoing maintenance budgeting to remain in **compliance with federal and state regulatory standards**.
- Providing the necessary budget support to enable the City's police and fire departments to attain notable **accreditations and service ratings**, indicative of their value to residents as a fundamental reason for living in Bellaire, also bolstered by periodic support from other nearby jurisdictions through mutual aid agreements.
- Determining the **long-term outlook for the City's wastewater treatment facility and other public works properties and facilities** at the southeast corner of the city, in part due to flooding impacts in this area of Bellaire.
- Understanding the continuing traffic circulation, turning movement and bike/ped street crossing challenges at certain Bellaire locations due to **past street layouts and design**, notably at various places along the Bissonnet diagonal as it cuts across the Bellaire street grid, and at the confluence of Fournace Place and Newcastle Drive just north of Bissonnet – plus interaction between local and entering/exiting freeway traffic along Bellaire's West Loop 610 service roads.
- Managing peak-hour drop-off/pick-up activity, bus circulation, parking, foot traffic and other **impacts around Bellaire's various school campuses**, which are among the community's most significant traffic generators and, as expressed through input to this Comprehensive Plan update, can place onerous impositions on immediately adjacent homes.
- Maintaining the **efficiency of the long-established major street network** through and within Bellaire to promote smooth traffic flow and deter non-local traffic from seeking alternate routes on local neighborhood streets.
- Highlighting the **role of street design – and purposeful public investments in retrofitted streets and streetscapes – in establishing and reinforcing the desired character of an area**, particularly in locations within Bellaire where a more urban "feel" and a greater pedestrian orientation are desired more than accommodation of the automobile (e.g., Urban Village-Downtown, North Bellaire Special Development Area, etc.).

Framework For Action

This Framework for Action portion builds off of the key issues and considerations cited above plus evolved thinking and evaluation of outcomes since the City's last Comprehensive Plan update in 2009. As noted above, this plan section provides only overarching goals, then points to other City master plans and programs that already contain goals and/or lead to actions and initiatives that advance community priorities involving public infrastructure and services.

GOALS for Public Infrastructure and Services

1. **Continued support for public safety services to maintain the responsiveness and levels of service expected by Bellaire residents.**
2. **A steady commitment to data-driven capital planning and investment in maintenance and upgrades to City-owned public infrastructure and facilities.**
3. **A multi-modal transportation system that integrates Bellaire with the region and enhances the mobility and safety of residents within their own community.**
4. **Ongoing collaboration with various partner agencies and organizations to advance strategies and projects that address mutual needs involving utility and transportation infrastructure, flooding and emergency response.**

Other City of Bellaire Plans and Programs

More details on the following plans and programs may be found on the City website:

- Bellaire City Council Strategic Plan (Fiscal Years 2024-26)
- Newest multi-year Capital Improvements Plan (currently Fiscal Years 2023-27)
- Master Drainage Concept Plan (2020)
- Parks Master Plan (2015-25)
- Facilities Master Plan (2019)
- Police Department Service Plan (Fiscal Years 2022-24)
- Art Master Plan (2015-20)

All of the above available at: https://www.bellairetx.gov/1883/Master-Plans

- Regional Drainage Improvement Program (https://bellairedrainageimprovementprogram.org/)
- Flood Risk Management Programs and Activities (https://www.bellairetx.gov/1548/Flood-Risk-Management)
- Drinking Water Quality Report, 2022 (https://www.bellairetx.gov/DocumentCenter/View/31002/Bellaire-CCR-2022)

- Water Conservation Plan and Drought Contingency Plan, 2019 (https://tx-bellaire6.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/27426/City-of-Bellaire-Water-Conservation-and-Drought-Contingency-Plan-2019-Update)
- Bellaire City Library Long Range Plan, 2022-27 (https://www.bellairetx.gov/DocumentCenter/View/28368/Library-Long-Range-Plan-2022-2027)
- Bellaire Special Events (https://www.bellairetx.gov/715/Special-Events)

Newest Service Indicators

Bellaire City departments report annually on a range of municipal functions and performance indicators. Statistics of interest from 2021 were included in the Bellaire Today Report, which were the newest available a the time. Below are the latest numbers from 2022:

Public Safety

- 30,047 calls for service handled by Police Department dispatch.
- 1,791 emergency responses by Fire Department.
- 5:08 average response time by Fire Department (with a goal to arrive at 90% of all incidents, and at 95% of emergency medical services incidents, within four minutes).

Utility Infrastructure

- 2.78 million gallons of average daily water consumption, with peak daily consumption of 5.78 million gallons – resulting in approximately 1,014 million gallons of total annual consumption.
- 71% of water supply from surface water and 29% from well water – the highest share from surface water over the last decade amid an ongoing transition away from ground water reliance across the region to reduce land surface subsidence.
- Approximately 1.4 million gallons of average daily sewage treatment, with peak daily treatment of 3.13 million gallons (relative to wastewater treatment capacity of 4.5 million gallons per day) – resulting in 509.7 million gallons of total annual sewage treatment.

City of Bellaire

Scale of Infrastructure and Facility Maintenance

- Police and fire stations, along with other municipal facilities.
- 67 miles of streets and 1,036 streetlights.
- 73 miles of water system mains.
- 3.23 million gallons of water storage capacity.
- 772 fire hydrants.
- 70 miles of sanitary sewer lines, leading to the City's wastewater treatment facility.
- 49 miles of storm sewer lines.
- 1.32 miles of open ditch/creek/canal drainage.
- 14 City parks, encompassing 121.3 acres of public parkland.
- Recreation Center and other facilities (e.g., aquatics, sports courts and fields, etc.).

City of Bellaire

COMMERCIAL AREA DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

Joint Workshop Draft (January 2024)

This plan section was a particular addition within Bellaire's 2009 Comprehensive Plan. It was meant to expand beyond the core future land use and zoning focus of the Land Use and Community Character section. This sense of urgency came at a time when minimal reinvestment was occurring in the city's older commercial areas, while Bellaire's residential real estate had been dramatically upgraded in many areas through complete home teardowns and rebuilds. Now as then, this section emphasizes the importance of both: (1) commercial development quality, and (2) attractive design of public streets, infrastructure and streetscapes along Bellaire's major roadway corridors as this is where first and lasting impressions of the community are formed in the eyes and minds of residents, visitors and pass-through commuters in a largely auto-oriented city.

Various accomplishments followed based on that planning guidance of 10+ years ago as highlighted in this refreshed section. Other opportunities and challenges remain within Bellaire's primary commercial areas and along key roadway corridors while new issues and needs have also emerged in the meantime, such as a greater-than-ever focus on flooding prevention and reducing nonresidential noise and lighting impacts on residential neighbors. Leadership and community feedback regarding on-the-ground outcomes in the ensuing years also warrants revisiting certain strategies and considering new and modified approaches. A continuing area of discussion is how active and extensive a role the City should take to facilitate and/or incentivize community-desired development and redevelopment outcomes – beyond its primary local government tools of development regulation and capital projects.

As in 2009, this plan section was updated with consideration of 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 focusing on strategic Bellaire locations such as the "City Center" area (within the UV-D and CMU zoning districts), the northernmost area of Bellaire near Westpark Drive that is likely to be rezoned from UV-T based on a new post-transit vision in this updated Comprehensive Plan, and key corridors where the City's nonresidential development has traditionally been focused (e.g., Bissonnet Street).

Key Planning Issues and Considerations

Through the Bellaire Today and Plan Direction phases of the Comprehensive Plan update process, numerous real and perceived community issues and needs were identified through leadership and public engagement activities, as well as through the work of the plan consultants and their interactions with City management and staff. Key issues and considerations that led to the goals and action items in this Commercial Area Development and Enhancement section include:

- A continuing and often-stated desire in community meetings to **improve the general aesthetics of Bellaire's nonresidential areas**, especially to distinguish them from the very similar

appearance of surrounding Houston and achieve a better standard worthy of the "City of Homes."

- Ensuring **quality redevelopment** now that more such reinvestment is happening in Bellaire unlike a decade before, and recognizing that these newest projects will likely be around for many years.
- Applying the City's **post-2010 development standards** that were designed to improve residential protection but also contribute to enhanced community appearance (i.e., through site landscaping, screening of parking/loading areas, sign regulation, building design, etc.).
- Placing an even greater focus on **storm water management and mitigation of flooding risk**, which relates directly to the extent of paved areas on both private sites and within public street rights-of-way and other areas, plus the benefits of generous landscaping, permanent green spaces and tree preservation in an era of climate change for a community that is already hot and humid a good part of each year.
- Making Bellaire attractive for **further commercial reinvestment** to continue upgrading older areas and help relieve some of the residential tax burden.
- Recognizing the degree of community sentiment for **improved security and reduction of crime risk** in some of Bellaire's busiest and highest-profile commercial areas – especially in the City Center near METRO's Bellaire Transit Center – to make these areas more appealing to patronize, walk around and bring visitors.
- The importance of **making upgrades to the public realm in conjunction with street and infrastructure projects** in a small city that has limited resources to do so at other times, and as stand-alone beautification projects.
- Taking advantage of **high community interest in, and the extensive possibilities for partnerships** involving community image and beautification initiatives.

Accomplishments Since the 2009 Plan

- Adopted multiple new commercial and mixed-use zoning districts, including to consolidate into fewer districts than before, and providing "bonus" provisions to incentivize redevelopment activity.
- Received valuable feedback on results of the zoning implementation, providing the basis for this Comprehensive Plan update and further zoning amendments to come.
- Through the zoning updates above, adopted more contemporary parking requirements and provisions for shared parking to help reduce the extent of commercial surface parking, especially in the City Center area. Also upgraded standards for parking area perimeter screening and interior landscaping.
- Adopted design standards for all new and substantially redeveloped commercial, mixed-use and multi-family residential sites. Also required site plan review and approval in many more cases beyond just Planned Development applications previously.
- Accomplished one streetscape initiative along Spruce Street in City Center, also with valuable community feedback on "likes" and "dislikes" for future projects.

- Seen a clear revival in investor interest in the City Center area, bringing welcome new restaurant and retail activity, including the much-praised redevelopment of the Bellaire Town Center site at the southwest corner of Bellaire Boulevard and South Rice Avenue – now considered a model for other area projects.

Framework For Action

This Framework for Action portion builds off of the key issues and considerations cited above plus evolved thinking and evaluation of outcomes since the City's last Comprehensive Plan update in 2009. The actions below involve tangible steps that will, either soon or over a longer timeframe, lead to achievement of the goals in this Commercial Area Development and Enhancement section.

GOALS for Commercial Area Development and Enhancement

1. **Realization of new land use, design and redevelopment possibilities for the Bellaire Uptown Business Area by implementing the zoning strategy recommended in Chapter 2 of this plan.**

   Related principles include:

   - Protecting nearby residential neighborhoods from incompatible nonresidential development.
   - Having the City take a more direct role in spurring the area's revitalization, beyond just a new zoning framework.

2. **Ongoing renewal of Bellaire's City Center area to satisfy more of the shopping, service and leisure needs of residents.**

   Related principles include:

   - Protecting nearby residential neighborhoods from incompatible nonresidential development.
   - Branding and promoting City Center as a convenient place for Bellaire residents to shop and dine, but also a comfortable place to meet and interact.
   - Ensuring that the City Center area is conveniently and safely accessible to Bellaire residents by bike and on foot.
   - Improving safety and security – both real and perceived – in the City Center area.
   - Taking advantage of opportunities to gain new public green space for Bellaire in the City Center area.
   - Having the City take a more direct role in spurring the area's revitalization, beyond just zoning and capital improvements.

3. **Vibrant commercial corridors with improved aesthetics and public and private design quality.**

   Related principles include:

   - Elevating the quality of Bellaire's commercial areas and corridors to match the level of residential investment across the community.

- Protecting adjacent residential neighborhoods from incompatible nonresidential development.
- Seeking a balance in commercial area zoning and regulation that does not inhibit beneficial business development and expansion but also protects other private investment and community interests from incompatible and/or unappealing development outcomes.
- Taking advantage of opportunities to achieve design upgrades along commercial corridors as private redevelopment is proposed and public street and infrastructure rehabilitation occurs.
- Incorporating more green space and features into Bellaire's commercial areas both on private sites and in public ways.
- Pursuing 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.

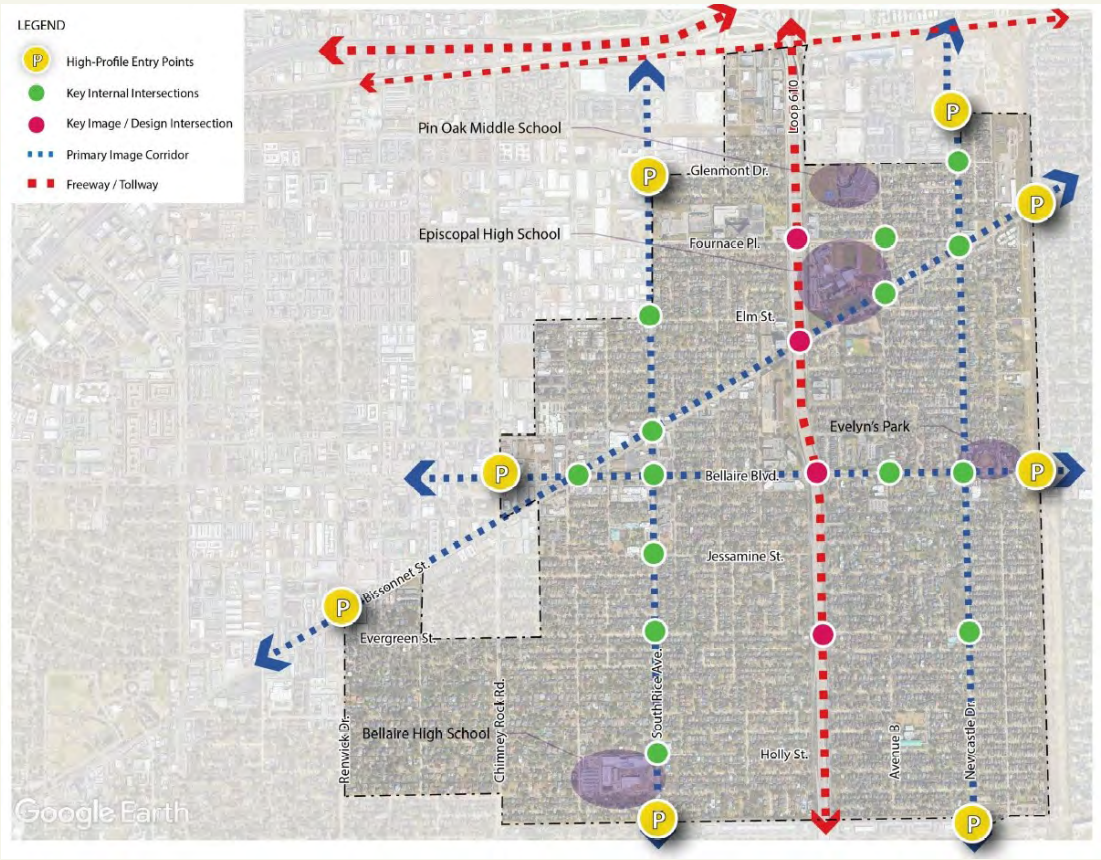
Actions For Commercial Area Development and Enhancement

Capital Investments

1. Design and construct signature gateway and streetscape treatments, which can include monument signage or other elements that call out the Bellaire name (and any branding) as these locations offer opportunities to establish "first impressions," promote Bellaire's image and communicate community values. Potential locations can be clarified through the special area planning recommended in the Land Use and Community Character section of this Comprehensive Plan and, as illustrated on the map below, might include:
   - At high-profile entry points into Bellaire on main corridors: Bellaire Boulevard, Bissonnet Street, South Rice Avenue, Newcastle Drive, Fournace Place, Chimney Rock Road and Renwick Drive.
   - At key internal intersections: Bellaire at Bissonnet, South Rice, Avenue B, Newcastle; Bissonnet at South Rice, Avenue B, Newcastle; South Rice at Elm, Jessamine, Evergreen and Holly; Newcastle Drive at Glenmont and Evergreen; Fournace at Avenue B; and all major West Loop 610 intersections.

   Potential improvements 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. Installing esplanades in place of continuous center turning lanes (e.g., on Bissonnet, South Rice, etc.) would also help control vehicle 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.

Aesthetic and Image Enhancement Opportunities



SOURCE: Google Earth for map base.

NOTE: If viewing the map above online, click on the map to view a larger-scale PDF version.

2. Explore more opportunities to upgrade street surfaces and drainage in the City Center area, but also to improve street appearance and edges, convert excessive paved areas to wider sidewalks and green space (e.g., along Cedar Street) – and to signal City commitment and public investment in the area as recommended through previous City Center revitalization planning.
3. Complete sidewalk extensions and gap-filling projects to provide more direct, continuous and safer pedestrian connections between Bellaire's primary commercial areas and nearby neighborhoods.
4. 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.

5. Explore opportunities to link the design and construction of specific capital projects to community beautification objectives. This can include supplementing public infrastructure with art and design elements that help to improve the aesthetics of and/or screen an otherwise utilitarian capital project.

Programs and Initiatives

6. Pursue implementation of pertinent City-led actions in this Comprehensive Plan section through coordinated oversight and interaction between the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Culture and Arts Board (CAB). As stated on the City's website, the CAB already has the charge to:

   > … [enhance] the quality of life in Bellaire through visual and performing arts that transform the places our citizens live, work, and play. It attempts to create more welcoming and beautiful environments through the integration of artistic styles. Such created environments attempt to reflect a vibrant image of Bellaire as a contemporary and progressive city.

   The CAB submits to the City Council recommendations for public art projects and improvements for public spaces within the city. It also serves as a vehicle for potential partnerships and financial assistance from other governmental agencies and the private and non-profit sectors (e.g., Patrons for Bellaire Parks).

7. Consider acceptable ways the City can help recruit lifestyle amenities desired by Bellaire residents (e.g., quality restaurants, niche retailers, community theater, etc.).
8. As part of addressing community image and aesthetics to support commercial area revitalization and enhancement, consider ways to incentivize upgrades to older retail centers and commercial properties (e.g., façade improvement assistance and other mini-grants used by many cities) while also monitoring ongoing disruption in the nation's retail sector from online shopping and pandemic recovery that has led to commercial vacancies and/or underutilized space. Such public sector support can help spur other building improvements, enhanced landscaping or other site upgrades that might not otherwise occur where no major construction activities are planned that would trigger compliance with newer development standards.
9. Pursue establishment of a local Keep Texas Beautiful affiliate to focus energy and resources toward Bellaire's beautification and image enhancement, and to highlight accomplishments and voluntary improvements on private properties. [RESOURCE: https://ktb.org/form-an-affiliate/]

   Other established Texas affiliates can be found and explored at https://ktb.org/find-an-affiliate/

10. If not currently participating, pursue Bellaire's designation as a Tree City USA through the Arbor Day Foundation as one way to continue reaping the environmental, economic and aesthetic benefits of a healthy and robust urban tree canopy.
    [RESOURCES: https://www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/ and https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/treecityusa/]
11. 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.

Regulations and Standards

12. As part of the comprehensive review and potential updates to City Code Chapter 24, Planning and Zoning, recommended in the Land Use and Community Character section of this Comprehensive Plan, especially evaluate site design elements of recent development projects that have been favorably received by the community, plus those that have raised concerns.

Elements of Bellaire Town Center Redevelopment

Near universal praise for the Bellaire Town Center redevelopment example was heard during the Comprehensive Plan update process. The specific site and building design features cited were a mix of Urban, Auto Urban and Suburban character elements, indicating that a hybrid mix of such elements may be most appropriate to match community desires for Bellaire's City Center area.

Hybrid Character Elements:

1. Green buffer and street trees along street frontages.
2. Building not close to street, set back to provide visible parking in front of building, convenient for patrons making short-duration visits.
3. Rear parking garage mostly not visible from front. Accommodates overflow parking when front parking full, parking for longer-duration visits (with visible, covered access way through middle of building), and parking during inclement weather.
4. Visible bike racks in front of building and accessible from adjacent streets.
5. Quality and varied building materials.
6. Variations in building facade and roofline to add architectural interest versus a simple box design.
7. Extensive use of large and transparent windows along pedestrian ways at ground level and on upper level, plus a partial balcony on upper level.
8. Some pedestrian areas under cover, and use of canopies elsewhere.
9. Landscaping dispersed along front of building to break up extensive paved area somewhat.
10. Unobtrusive business signs on building facade.

SOURCE: sdirealty.com and bing.com/maps for aerial view.

13. Continue to assist small businesses and building owners to navigate code requirements and other potential challenges to locating in and renovating spaces within older structures in City Center and other Bellaire commercial areas.

Partnerships and Coordination

14. Explore opportunities to partner with the cities of Houston, West University Place and/or Southside Place to implement gateway enhancements at shared boundary/entry points that would benefit all parties. Other potential partners for such efforts include area utility providers, local organizations, and business groups or individual businesses, as well as Scenic Houston (https://scenichouston.org/).
15. Related to the lifestyle amenities action above, target potential recruiting efforts to private development partners 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.

More Targeted Planning / Study

16. Build incrementally toward the level of sustained image enhancement and beautification efforts achieved in other area cities, which helps focus public/private energy and resources toward visible results and brings ongoing community and funder support. For example, the City of Katy and Keep Katy Beautiful have been recognized repeatedly through the prestigious Governor's Community Achievement Awards (in 2022, 2018, 2013, 2010, 2007 and 2000), which also leads to Texas Department of Transportation funding for further landscaping and community identity projects along local TxDOT rights-of-way. Area winners in 2023 included the cities of Dickinson and Lake Jackson. [RESOURCE: https://ktb.org/gcaa/]
17. After building a track record of success through planning and public/private investment, pursue Scenic City certification through Scenic Texas. The Scenic City Certification Program recognizes Texas municipalities that have implemented scenic standards for public roadways and public spaces. The program assesses ordinances and code language in these areas:
    - Streetscape enhancements;
    - Parks, trails and open spaces;
    - Lighting standards;
    - Design integrity;
    - Landscaping and screening;
    - Sign control;
    - Litter and graffiti prohibition;
    - Utility and cable line programs;
    - Unique municipal features; and
    - Special programs.

Cities whose applications score at the upper level and demonstrate a landscaping/tree planting program, on-premise sign regulations and prohibition of new billboards may earn a Certified Scenic City designation. Texas now has 91 certified "Scenic Cities," including in the Houston metro region: Baytown, Dayton, El Campo, Friendswood, Fulshear, Houston, Lake Jackson, League City, Magnolia, Missouri City, Nassau Bay, Pearland, Richmond, Seabrook, Sealy, Sugar Land, Webster and West University Place.

[RESOURCE: https://www.scenictexas.org/scenic-city-certification-program-2]

18. Explore a potential "percent for the arts" approach for City capital projects as done by numerous state and local governments across the country, who budget into major public investments an allocation for associated image and beautification enhancements as part of design and construction (some locales also pursue such percentage allocations as part of private development projects). The organization Americans for the Arts offers guidance and resources, including an inventory of percent for art ordinances from across the nation (with many example programs readily available online through a "percent for the arts" browser search). The Texas Commission on the Arts is the lead entity for such efforts in Texas:

    > Per Section 444.029 of Texas Government Code, any county, municipality, or other political subdivision of this state undertaking a public construction project estimated to cost more than $250,000 may specify that a percentage not to exceed one percent of the cost of the construction project shall be used for fine arts projects at or near the site of the construction project. Those organizations may consult with Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) for advice in determining how to conduct the public art or percent for art project.

    [RESOURCES: https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/percent-for-art-ordinances and https://www.arts.texas.gov/initiatives/public-art/]

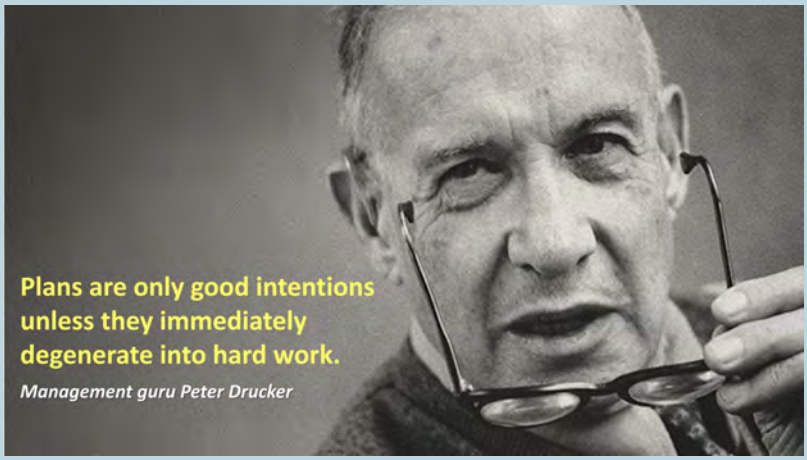
19. In conjunction with the Bellaire Business Association, conduct a survey of commercial property owners and local businesses to gauge their openness to and tolerance for potential formation of a business or public improvement district. Such districts are typically funded through an annual fee assessment, the revenue from which can finance specific capital projects, landscaping installations and other beautification initiatives – along with stepped-up maintenance – to enhance the commercial area or corridor. As part of this outreach effort, share examples of the many improvement districts and their tangible results across other Houston metro area cities (also through Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones and Municipal Management Districts).
20. Become more familiar with the recently-published METRO Urban Design Manual to prepare for design coordination opportunities if and when METRO initiates planning for facility or bus stop improvements within Bellaire. Also consider tapping into other METRO initiatives such as its Arts in Transit program. [RESOURCE: https://www.ridemetro.org/about/who-we-are/urban-design]

City of Bellaire

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Joint Workshop Draft (January 2024)

With this refreshed Comprehensive Plan, the City of Bellaire and its various partner agencies and organizations will have an essential new document that should be frequently referred to for guidance in community decision-making. The plan should be a "living document" that is responsive to ongoing change. Its key planning considerations, goals and action strategies must be revisited periodically to ensure that the plan is providing clear and reliable direction on a range of matters including land development issues and public investments in infrastructure and services.



Implementation goes well beyond just a list of action items. It is a challenging process that will require the commitment of the City's elected and appointed officials, staff, residents, business owners, major institutions, other levels of government, and other organizations and individuals who will serve as champions of the plan and its particular direction and strategies. Among its purposes, this final plan section highlights specific roles, responsibilities and methods of implementation to execute priority plan recommendations. Equally important are formalized procedures for the ongoing monitoring and reporting of successes achieved, difficulties encountered, and new opportunities and challenges that have emerged since plan adoption. This is in addition to any other change in circumstances, which may require rethinking of plan priorities. Scheduled plan evaluations and updates, as described later in this section, will help maintain its relevance and credibility as an overarching policy and action guide.

Actions Based on Comprehensive Plan

The action items in this Comprehensive Plan are presented in five categories that represent the major ways that plan goals and initiatives are typically advanced and accomplished:

City of Bellaire

Capital Investments

Like many local governments, Bellaire uses a multi-year capital improvements planning process to identify and budget for "big ticket" projects, especially those that must be phased and/or coordinated with other initiatives. This may include street infrastructure; water, sanitary sewer and drainage improvements; parks, trails and recreation facility construction and upgrades; construction of public buildings; and purchases of land, vehicles or major equipment. With a typical five-year outlook, a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) provides predictability regarding a jurisdiction's capital investment plans and priorities for the benefit and awareness of citizens and private interests. Anticipating and adequately budgeting for major capital projects will be essential to implementing this Comprehensive Plan. Likewise, decisions regarding the prioritization of proposed capital improvements should reflect the direction and priorities of this plan.

Programs and Initiatives

Programs involve the routine activities of City departments and staff, as well as special projects and initiatives they may also undertake. As part of Comprehensive Plan implementation, this method may include initiating new or adjusting existing City programs and activities; expanding community outreach efforts; or providing specialized training to accomplish a priority objective more promptly and/or effectively. Other City partners – public, private and/or non-profit – may also have ongoing programs or choose to pursue new initiatives that lead to desired outcomes expressed in the Comprehensive Plan goals or in more its specific action steps.

Regulations and Standards

Given that private investment decisions account for a vast majority of a city's physical form, land development regulations and engineering standards are fundamental for plan implementation. Consequently, zoning and subdivision regulations and associated development criteria and technical engineering standards are the basic keys to ensuring that the form, character and quality of development reflect the City's planning objectives. These codes should advance the community's desire for quality development outcomes while recognizing economic factors. They should not delay or interfere unnecessarily with appropriate new development or redevelopment that is consistent with plan principles and directives.

City of Bellaire

Partnerships and Coordination

Some community initiatives identified in this plan cannot be accomplished by City government on its own. They may require direct coordination, intergovernmental agreements or funding support from other public entities or levels of government. Additionally, the unique role of potential private and non-profit partners to advance the community's action agenda should not be underestimated. This may occur through cooperative efforts, volunteer activities and in-kind services (which can count toward the local match requirements for various grant opportunities), and from public/private financing of community improvements.

More Targeted Planning / Study

Various areas of City governance require more detailed study and planning, especially as required to qualify for external funding opportunities. These studies involve targeted planning work at a finer-grain level of detail than is appropriate for comprehensive planning purposes (e.g., utility infrastructure master plans, parks and recreation master plan, streetscape design plan, etc.). As such, some parts of this plan will be implemented only after some additional planning or special study to clarify next steps and associated costs and considerations, including clarification of roles and potential cost-sharing when partnering is involved.

City of Bellaire

Action Agenda

The goals in this Comprehensive Plan will ultimately be attained through a variety of specific actions itemized in each plan section. Compiled in the **Action Agenda table** below is a set of **8 key action items** derived from the plan sections. The table does not include every recommendation found throughout this plan, a number of which aim to reinforce or expand upon existing beneficial activities by the City and its partners. Instead, it details a shorter “to do” list of initial strategic priorities, their potential timing and who is responsible for initiating, administering and participating in the implementation process.

The table indicates a target timeframe for pursuing each action item, either immediately in **Years 1-2** after plan adoption (2 items), in the near term during **Years 3-5** (2 items) or later in **Years 6-10** (4 items). Capital projects typically require lead time for additional feasibility analysis, construction documentation, specifications and detailed cost estimates.

	ACTION	Where in Plan	Action Type	Action Leaders and Key Partners
Years 1-2				
A	Review all aspects of Chapter 24, Planning and Zoning, in the City's Code of Ordinances to identify potential regulatory and/or standards updates that will advance priorities of this new Comprehensive Plan [with a detailed list of items to address].	**Land Use and Community Character** ---- Action 2	Regulations & Standards	▪ **Development Services** ▪ Planning & Zoning Commission ▪ City Attorney
B	Explore potential variations in certain UV-D standards for development activity that is within a specified distance from Bellaire Boulevard and/or from Bissonnet Street within the district. The intent would be to recognize the challenge of achieving a more Urban character outcome on such properties relative to the more auto-oriented nature of CMU properties. But this approach would also avoid changing entire properties from UV-D to CMU zoning within the core UV-D area.	**Land Use and Community Character** ---- Action 3	Regulations & Standards	▪ **Development Services** ▪ Planning & Zoning Commission ▪ City Attorney
Years 3-5				
C	Follow the completion of this overarching Comprehensive Plan update with targeted special area planning efforts, to enable finer-grain planning and design exercises particularly for key corridors (e.g., Bellaire Boulevard, Bissonnet Street, South Rice Avenue) and other subareas crucial to Bellaire's community planning priorities.	**Land Use and Community Character** ---- Action 9	More Targeted Planning / Study	▪ **Development Services** ▪ Public Works
D	Pursue establishment of a local Keep Texas Beautiful affiliate to focus energy and resources toward Bellaire's beautification and image enhancement, and to highlight accomplishments and voluntary improvements on private properties.	**Commercial Area Development and Enhancement** ---- Action 9	Programs and Initiatives	▪ **Parks, Recreation and Facilities** ▪ Public Works ▪ Patrons for Bellaire Parks

Years 6-10				
E	Design and construct signature gateway and streetscape treatments, which can include monument signage or other elements that call out the Bellaire name (and any branding) as these locations offer opportunities to establish "first impressions," promote Bellaire's image and communicate community values. Potential locations can be clarified through the special area planning recommended in the Land Use and Community Character section of this Comprehensive Plan [with additional detail in the action item].	**Commercial Area Development and Enhancement** ---- Action 1	Capital Investments	▪ **Public Works** ▪ Culture & Arts Board ▪ Planning & Zoning Commission ▪ Future Keep Bellaire Beautiful affiliate ▪ Patrons for Bellaire Parks
F	Complete sidewalk extensions and gap-filling projects to provide more direct, continuous and safer pedestrian connections between Bellaire's primary commercial areas and nearby neighborhoods.	**Commercial Area Development and Enhancement** ---- Action 3	Capital Investments	▪ **Public Works** ▪ Development Services
G	Explore more opportunities to upgrade street surfaces and drainage in the City Center area, but also to improve street appearance and edges, convert excessive paved areas to wider sidewalks and green space (e.g., along Cedar Street) – and to signal City commitment and public investment in the area as recommended through previous City Center revitalization planning.	**Commercial Area Development and Enhancement** ---- Action 2	Capital Investments	▪ **Public Works** ▪ Development Services ▪ Future Keep Bellaire Beautiful affiliate

H	In conjunction with the Bellaire Business Association, conduct a survey of commercial property owners and local businesses to gauge their openness to and tolerance for potential formation of a business or public improvement district. Such districts are typically funded through an annual fee assessment, the revenue from which can finance specific capital projects, landscaping installations and other beautification initiatives – along with stepped-up maintenance – to enhance the commercial area or corridor. As part of this outreach effort, share examples of the many improvement districts and their tangible results across other Houston metro area cities (also through Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones and Municipal Management Districts).	**Commercial Area Development and Enhancement** --- Action 19	More Targeted Planning / Study	▪ **City Manager** ▪ City Attorney ▪ Finance ▪ Development Services ▪ Bellaire Business Association

The Action Agenda table provides a starting point for determining immediate, near-term and longer-term task priorities. This is an important first step toward plan implementation and should occur in conjunction with the City's annual budget process, during Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) preparation and in support of departmental work planning. Then, once the necessary funding is committed and roles are defined, a lead City staff member should initiate a first-year work program in conjunction with City management, other departments, and other public and private implementation partners.

The near-term action priorities should be revisited annually by City officials and staff to recognize accomplishments, highlight areas where further attention and effort are needed, and determine whether some items have moved up or down on the priority list given changing circumstances and emerging needs. It should be kept in mind that early implementation of certain items, while perhaps not the uppermost priorities, may be expedited by the availability of related grant funds, by a state or federal mandate, or by the eagerness of one or more partners to pursue an initiative with the City. On the other hand, some high-priority items may prove difficult to tackle in the near-term due to budget constraints, the lack of a lead entity or individual to carry the initiative forward, or by the community's readiness to take on a complex or potentially controversial new program.

Progress on the immediate and near-term items should be the focus of the first **annual review and report** one year after adoption of this Comprehensive Plan as described later in this section. Then, similar to multi-year capital improvements programming, the entire Action Agenda – and all other action strategies within the plan sections – should be revisited annually to decide if any additional items are ready to move into a sooner action timeframe.

City of Bellaire

Key Implementation Roles

Planning and Zoning Commission

The Commission should take the lead in the following general areas:

- Ensuring that recommendations forwarded to the City Council are reflective of plan goals and action priorities.
- After holding one or more public hearings to discuss new or evolving community issues and needs, making recommendations to the City Council regarding plan updates and plan amendments.

City Management and Staff

City staff should take the lead in the following general areas:

- Managing day-to-day implementation of the plan, including ongoing coordination through an interdepartmental plan implementation committee with representatives of all key City functions.
- Completing capital improvement planning efforts.
- Managing the drafting of new or amended land development regulations.
- Conducting studies and developing additional special-purpose and/or special area plans.
- Reviewing land development applications for consistency with the plan.
- Negotiating the specifics of intergovernmental and other agreements.
- Administering collaborative programs and ensuring open channels of communication with various private, public and non-profit partners.
- Maintaining an inventory of potential plan amendments, as suggested by City staff and others, for consideration during annual and periodic plan review and update processes.

City Council Approval and Oversight

Most all actions based on the City's Comprehensive Plan require City Council action, such as:

- Adoption of the annual **City budget**.
- Adoption of new or amended **ordinances**, and repeal of ordinances deemed no longer necessary.
- Approval of **contracts and agreements**.
- Approval of the **local match** for grant applications.
- Adoption of other **specialized plans**, and acceptance of **targeted studies**.

City of Bellaire

Implementation Monitoring and Progress Reporting

While remaining firm in its fundamental principles and reflection of community values, the Bellaire Comprehensive Plan should still be a flexible document that allows for adjustment to changing conditions over time. Shifts in political, economic, physical, technological and social conditions – and other unforeseen circumstances – may influence and change the priorities and fiscal outlook of the community. As Bellaire evolves, new issues will emerge while others will no longer be as relevant. Some action statements may later be found impractical or outdated while other plausible solutions will arise. To ensure that it continues to capture the core goals of the community and remains relevant over time, the Comprehensive Plan must be revisited regularly to confirm that the plan elements are still on point and the associated goals and action strategies are still appropriate.

Key activities – all of which should involve ongoing community dialogue and input – include:

- **Annual Report.** City staff should prepare an annual progress report for presentation to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council. This ensures that the plan is consistently reviewed and that any needed modifications or clarifications are identified and

Criteria for Amending the Future Land Use and Character Map

Along with procedures for monitoring and periodically updating the Comprehensive Plan, another specific issue involves consideration of proposed amendments to the adopted Future Land Use and Character map. A first consideration is whether a map amendment is necessary immediately, such as in conjunction with a particular rezoning request? Or, can a potential map adjustment wait so that it may be examined more holistically, along with any other map changes under consideration, through the next interim review and update of the entire Comprehensive Plan?

The following items should be reviewed and addressed, especially by the Planning and Zoning Commission, when a Future Land Use and Character map adjustment is proposed:

Scope of Amendment: Is the proposed map change limited to one or a few parcels or would it affect a much larger area?

Change in Circumstances: What specific conditions have changed sufficiently to render the current map designation(s) inappropriate or out-of-date (e.g., city's population size and/or characteristics, area character and building form, property/structure conditions, infrastructure or public services, market factors including need for more land in a particular designation, etc.)?

Consistency with Other Plans: In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, is the proposed map change consistent with the intent and policy direction of any other applicable plans (utility infrastructure or drainage plans, public safety plans, parks and recreation master plan, etc.)?

Adequate Information: Do City staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and/or City Council have enough and appropriate information to move ahead with a decision (e.g., utility capacity, potential traffic impacts, other public service implications, resident/stakeholder concerns and input)?

Stakeholder Input: What points, concerns and insights have been raised by area residents, property owners, business owners, partner agencies/organizations or others?

completed in a timely manner. Ongoing tracking of consistency between the plan and the City's development regulations should also be an essential part of this effort.

- **Five-Year Review and Evaluation.** An Evaluation Report to the City Council should be prepared every five years. This report should be prepared by City staff with input from all departments, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and other boards and commissions. The report process involves identifying successes from the current plan, considering what circumstances have changed over the last five years, and making recommendations on how the plan should be modified in light of those changes.
- **10-Year Full Plan Update.** Every decade at most, the City should revisit all aspects of its Comprehensive Plan and prepare a thorough update. This should take into account:
  - Major actions taken and accomplishments based on the previous plan.
  - Plan actions not pursued or completed to re-assess their continued relevance and/or revise them appropriately, along with discussion of any barriers encountered, missed opportunities and lessons learned.
  - Ongoing, evolving and new community issues.
  - Changes in assumptions, as well as in trends and data in the Bellaire Today Report.
  - Changes in the local government organization, resources, in-house skills, and tools and methods for advancing priority initiatives.
  - Changes in federal or state laws, regulations or other external factors that may influence plan priorities and/or the City's implementation capabilities.