



Vision 2034

# **The Woodlands Township**

## Strategic Plan

*Adopted July 22, 2014*



## Introduction

Based on the results of the historic governance process, the Board of Directors of The Woodlands Township implemented a strategic planning process. The Woodlands is in a period of dynamic change relating to how it is governed, funds itself, and provides services and amenities. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to keep The Woodlands Township on course during this time of change and beyond.

### Vision for the Future

The first step in developing a strategic plan is to determine what is desired to be accomplished. For a company, this might be reaching a sales level or industry position. For an organization like The Woodlands Township, which is responsible for making decisions on behalf of an entire community, this process starts with a Vision for the Future.

The Vision for the Future is the ideal desired condition of the community at some future point in time – typically decades away. The Vision is a dream rooted in reality that may contain some existing conditions to be preserved along with future ambitions to be strived for.

The Woodlands Vision should be referred to regularly to ensure decisions being made are consistent with its contents.

### The Woodlands Vision

The Woodlands, our dynamic hometown within a natural forest, is known for its balance between man and nature. We are a thriving business community and a premier destination for visitors – a place where generations live, worship, work, learn and play.

### The Woodlands...

- ...is a place where we feel safe and secure
- ...achieves prosperity by promoting economic development and quality of life
- ...cultivates the relationship between urban needs and George Mitchell's vision of environmental sustainability
- ...provides premier services and activities, superior educational opportunities, a diversity of jobs, vibrant public spaces, integrated mobility options, public activities, cultural events and entertainment for all
- ...is a place that welcomes everyone from everywhere to grow and thrive

### Organizational Mission

To pursue The Woodlands' Vision for the Future, organizations, agencies, businesses, and citizens will need to work collaboratively with a focus on the future. Leading the way will be the community's local government, The Woodlands Township. To carry out the business and myriad of tasks necessary, it is important that the Township has a clear mission.

# The Woodlands Township Strategic Plan



The Woodlands Township Vision for the Future and Mission together provide the foundation for the Strategic Plan.

## **The Woodlands Township Mission**

We fulfill The Woodlands vision by:

- Protecting the well-being and safety of our residents, visitors and businesses
- Achieving the highest standards in service delivery
- Partnering with others to sustain the vitality of our region
- Communicating with our constituents and partners
- Attracting and retaining a talented and innovative staff
- Serving as the community's political voice
- Powering economic growth through community investment
- Promoting continued vitality of neighborhoods and commercial areas
- Maintaining transparent governance
- Serving as financial stewards of the community's resources
- Evolving a governance structure to meet our goals
- Promoting sound environmental policy
- Collaborating with community partners to promote public events and cultural activities
- Collaborating with community partners to improve mobility throughout The Woodlands



## Focus Areas, Goals, and Key Initiatives

Focus Areas, Goals, and Key Initiatives provide the structure for the Strategic Plan. **Focus Areas** are broad “containers” into which the vast majority of The Township’s activities and responsibilities will fall. These Focus Areas, in no prioritized order, are:

1. Service Delivery
2. Communications
3. Organizational Support
4. Governance
5. Economic Development
6. Transportation and Mobility
7. Environmental Sustainability
8. Fiscal Policy

Within the Focus Areas are bolded **Goals** which establish what is desired to be accomplished. The Goals are long-term pursuits that encourage new and more effective ways of operating.

Accompanying the Goals will be **Key Initiatives** that provide broad, action-oriented direction. Through the Focus Areas, Goals, and Key Initiatives, the Board of Directors has clearly stated what it desires to be accomplished. The professional staff of The Township uses this direction to formulate specific programs, projects, and actions it will take to pursue the Goals and implement the Key Initiatives along with identifying necessary resources.



## **Focus Area 1: Service Delivery**

The Woodlands community operates through a multitude of service providers and The Township plays a critical role in directly providing several basic services along with supporting and coordinating many others. The Township often serves as the first point of contact for residents and businesses even though it may not be the service provider.

Maintaining a high level of service has been indicated as a priority in resident surveys and as the role of The Township evolves and changes, it must be in position to continue to provide superior services.

### **1.1. Protect the well-being and safety of constituents**

- 1.1.1. Maintain and continue to explore options to provide a high level of proactive law enforcement visibility, effectiveness, availability and awareness
- 1.1.2. Support law enforcement public safety efforts with other kinds of security support in public areas
- 1.1.3. Explore, develop, and implement options that improve safety and educate residents on the role they can play in making their community safer
- 1.1.4. Maintain lighting to meet performance and safety standards
- 1.1.5. Maintain safe public facilities and amenities
- 1.1.6. Take appropriate steps to minimize the impact of various emergencies and disasters that occur and prepare the community in the management of response and recovery options for large scale emergencies
- 1.1.7. Maintain Fire Department ISO 1 rating
- 1.1.8. Maintain and continue to provide a high level of fire prevention and emergency medical services

### **1.2. Provide superior parks and recreation amenities, facilities, programs and services**

- 1.2.1. Ensure high quality programs and services remain affordable and cost effective while facilities are still effectively used and maintained
- 1.2.2. Provide a parks system with amenities that reflect the diversity of our population, provide accessibility features and preserve The Woodlands environment, quality and excellence
- 1.2.3. Provide a pathway system that promotes healthy lifestyles, reflects the commitment to preservation of The Woodlands environment, and



adequately connects the entire community for transportation, health and wellness

1.2.4. Provide for quality, diverse, life span recreational programming and opportunities

1.2.5. Provide special event opportunities that foster community spirit, family values, and healthy lifestyles

### **1.3. Provide and promote efficient, cost effective and environmentally responsible waste disposal and recycling community wide**

### **1.4. Enforce covenants and standards to maintain neighborhood and commercial area vitality**

1.4.1. Develop and maintain the structure to enforce covenants and standards

1.4.2. Update standards as technology advances

1.4.3. Research and provide programming and policy options to maintain vitality as the community ages

1.4.4. Promote clean, well-maintained properties and preserve architectural integrity

1.4.5. Maintain and improve community, village, and neighborhood signage, medians, and entry ways to promote village and neighborhood identity

### **1.5. Influence local partnerships to provide effective services**

1.5.1. Serve as a resource for our constituents in dealing with issues that impact quality of life

1.5.2. As needs arise, identify and establish alliances with organizations that will help us achieve our vision and carry out our mission

### **1.6. Maintain appropriate levels of support services, infrastructure, technology and other resources to carry out and enhance the functions of the Township**

## **Focus Area 2: Communications**

Providing effective two-way communications with The Woodlands' constituents is essential as the community's leadership and operating structures evolve. As the long-term governance structure is solidified in the coming years, it will be important to develop an atmosphere of trust and transparency within the community.

### **2.1. Ensure effective communications with the community and partners**

2.1.1. Expand public service announcements and information outlets

# The Woodlands Township Strategic Plan



- 2.1.2. Improve and maintain emergency operations communications plans
- 2.1.3. Effectively utilize other entities and programs to disseminate and collect information
- 2.1.4. Provide feedback opportunities such as surveys and opinion polling
- 2.1.5. Provide ability for the public to communicate to the board
- 2.1.6. Communicate accurate and timely information on the activities of the Township to the media and the public
- 2.1.7. Proactively educate residents on Township-related community issues to ensure residents have the facts and are well-educated
- 2.1.8. Improve communication and public relations to incorporate social media and enhance general awareness of the Township and its role in the community.

## **2.2. Provide an inclusive atmosphere to enhance transparency and trust**

- 2.2.1. Hold town hall meetings
- 2.2.2. Maintain relationships with Village Associations
- 2.2.3. Effectively communicate financial information to the public
- 2.2.4. Compile and make available Board meeting records
- 2.2.5. Encourage awareness of public meetings
- 2.2.6. Promote and recognize volunteer and community accomplishments

## **Focus Area 3: Organizational Support**

The Township's ambitious vision and mission cannot be implemented without highly skilled, trained, and motivated people. Ensuring the highest degree of effectiveness and customer service at all levels is a high priority. In addition to providing facilities and resources to ensure a productive work environment, a culture of innovation and creative problem-solving must be maintained.

### **3.1. Provide education and training opportunities and a supportive working environment for Township staff**

- 3.1.1. Provide a working environment that promotes productivity and high morale
- 3.1.2. Encourage education and training opportunities and continuing professional development



- 3.1.3. Educate employees on the Township vision, mission, and services provided

## **3.2. Position the Township to attract and retain high quality employees**

- 3.2.1. Develop a progressive succession program that encourages internal promotion
- 3.2.2. Maintain a formal staff evaluation program
- 3.2.3. Provide competitive benefit and compensation packages
- 3.2.4. Provide employee recognition events to recognize accomplishments and tenure

## **Focus Area 4: Governance**

As the recognized local government entity representing The Woodlands, The Township and its leadership need to be active participants in addressing regional issues and planning efforts. The Township also needs to be represented and visible at all legislative levels. As The Woodlands' journey toward effective self-governance continues, changes to the Township's enabling legislation must be continually explored to address unmet needs and new challenges and to facilitate future adoption of a more effective form of comprehensive local government. The impacts of these changes must be evaluated with the results communicated to the residents and business community for feedback. At the present time, the only known comprehensive alternative to the current form of governance of The Woodlands is incorporation as a municipality.

### **4.1. Participate in local and regional planning and advocacy efforts**

- 4.1.1. Identify participation opportunities
- 4.1.2. Prioritize and assign board and staff representation

### **4.2. Ensure that The Woodlands is represented and visible at governmental and legislative bodies**

- 4.2.1. Identify participation opportunities
- 4.2.2. Prioritize and assign board and staff representation

### **4.3. Maintain and expand local, regional, state, and federal partnerships with other governmental entities and stakeholders**

- 4.3.1. Assign staff to specific entities to build relationships
- 4.3.2. Coordinate representation to ensure maximum participation

### **4.4. Continue to explore changes and enhancements to the current governance structure and clearly quantify and communicate potential impacts**



# The Woodlands Township Strategic Plan



- 4.4.1. Continue to observe community indicators reflective of community values that would trigger specific changes or comprehensive change in governance structure
- 4.4.2. Perform a comprehensive feasibility impact analysis of proposed changes
- 4.4.3. Develop and implement a comprehensive communication, public input and education process to ensure understanding of governance issues, proposed changes, and implications

## **4.5. Consider changes in the existing governance structure**

- 4.5.1. Identify options to streamline covenant administration review processes
- 4.5.2. Identify improvements to the Township's regulation making authority
- 4.5.3. Organize the Township structure similar to a City (i.e. City Attorney, Public Works, etc.)
- 4.5.4. Identify alternate descriptor for members of the Township's governing body to resemble or equate to similar governmental elected positions

## **4.6. Develop appropriate legislative and financial strategies to deal with future governance structure and incorporation issues**

## **Focus Area 5: Economic Development**

The Woodlands' viability as a community and ability to pay for services and amenities is based on a strong local economy. The Township supports efforts to attract and retain employers and quality businesses to create jobs and also to position The Woodlands as a premier destination for visitors and travelers to expand the local tax base.

### **5.1. Attract, retain and promote high quality businesses**

- 5.1.1. Proactively maintain contact with local and regional employers' issues and concerns
- 5.1.2. Maintain active involvement with other organizations, entities, and stakeholders to promote the local economy and secure economic development incentives (i.e., Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Partnership, etc.)

### **5.2. Encourage expansion of employment and education opportunities in The Woodlands**

- 5.2.1. Support strategic infrastructure improvements
- 5.2.2. Explore and develop viable incentives to attract employment and education opportunities to The Woodlands

# The Woodlands Township Strategic Plan



- 5.2.3. Act as a liaison between private organizations and local governmental entities to facilitate development incentives

## **5.3. Support events, venues and programs to bring visitors to The Woodlands**

- 5.3.1. Support convention and visitors bureau
- 5.3.2. Support public/private partnerships to increase visitors
- 5.3.3. Expand, support and create new cultural, sporting and entertainment venues
- 5.3.4. Expand collaborative efforts with other regional visitor attraction entities
- 5.3.5. Expand Hotel and Occupancy Tax revenues and tax base
- 5.3.6. Produce and sponsor high quality community events

## **Focus Area 6: Transportation and Mobility**

The community is committed to improving mobility throughout our community. As a designated recipient of Federal Transit Authority funding and as the representative government for the community, the Township is vested in supporting or leading local and regional transportation and mobility projects and improvements.

### **6.1. Develop an integrated mobility system that is seamless within and surrounding the Township**

- 6.1.1. Explore funding sources and partnerships to maintain affordable transportation and transit options
- 6.1.2. Implement effective and efficient Town Center transit system (way of moving people i.e. Trolley in the central business district)
- 6.1.3. Examine options to provide transportation to village and employment centers
- 6.1.4. Collaborate with transportation agencies and regional government partners (Counties and RUD) to implement potential road system and mobility improvements
- 6.1.5. Complete development of systems to enhance mobility and provide safe walking, running and cycling networks
- 6.1.6. Expand accessibility within the Township
- 6.1.7. Improve overall pedestrian/transit/cycling mobility options in the Town Center to reduce congestion

# The Woodlands Township Strategic Plan



- 6.1.8. Collaborate in the development of regional transportation and mobility plans

## **Focus Area 7: Environmental Sustainability**

The community is committed to the stewardship of the environment as a critical element of its quality of life. The Township plays a key role in supporting and in some cases leading local and regional environmental preservation efforts.

### **7.1. Proactively address environmental and conservation issues**

- 7.1.1. Support efforts of the municipal utility districts, San Jacinto River Authority, and others to achieve superior water quality, conservation and reuse
- 7.1.2. Expand environmental education
- 7.1.3. Support conservation initiatives
- 7.1.4. Encourage and communicate the value of the creation and retention of natural forested areas on private property

### **7.2. Adopt policies and standards to encourage energy efficiency and use of renewable resources**

- 7.2.1. Investigate opportunities and communicate with homeowners and business
- 7.2.2. Identify grant opportunities
- 7.2.3. Improve energy efficiency of the Township fleet and facilities
- 7.2.4. Explore options for development standards that promote conservation and George Mitchell's vision of environmental sustainability
- 7.2.5. Expand recycling stream

### **7.3. Preserve and protect the natural forested areas of the community**

- 7.3.1. Maintain policies to protect native vegetation and wildlife habitats
- 7.3.2. Support reforestation and forest management planning
- 7.3.3. Enforce Covenants to ensure the proper maintenance and retention of green space and reserve areas

## **Focus Area 8: Fiscal Policy**

The Township must maintain a financial position to allow it to meet current and new needs in a cost effective and accountable manner while ensuring the maintenance of existing assets as the community ages.

# The Woodlands Township Strategic Plan



## **8.1. Maintain sound fiscal policies and budgets that allow the Township to address evolving service needs and maintain community quality**

- 8.1.1. Plan for and identify funding for services and long term maintenance of public facilities and assets
- 8.1.2. Establish reserves for appropriate working capital, replacement of capital assets, and economic development opportunities
- 8.1.3. Explore budget philosophies that prioritize and align resource allocation to the Strategic Plan
- 8.1.4. Explore funding sources and opportunities
- 8.1.5. Maintain policies and programs regarding the collection of fees and taxes
- 8.1.6. Maintain a fiscally responsible management system to address funding requests from outside organizations and individuals
- 8.1.7. Maintain an effective long term debt management strategy
- 8.1.8. Conduct an annual audit of financial statements
- 8.1.9 Plan for future funding requirements as Developer phase-out occurs



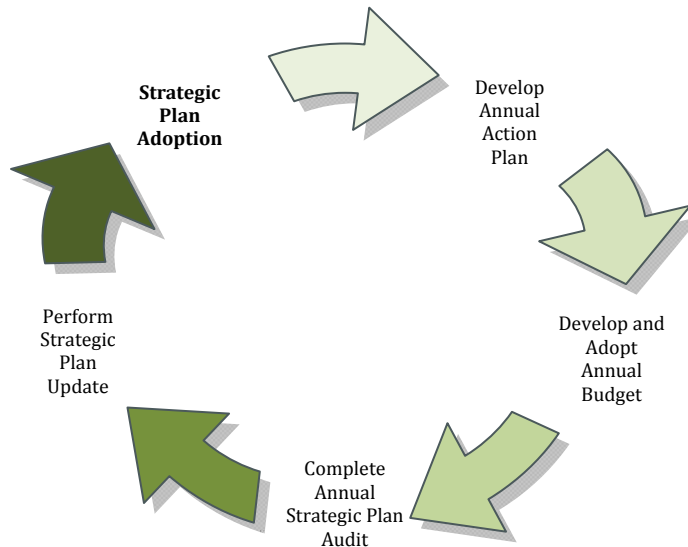
## Plan Implementation

The success of an organization is measured by the results of its decisions. An important tool for effective decision-making is the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan must remain current and relevant through regular review and updates. Based on the challenges and changes on the horizon for The Woodlands Township, using the Strategic Plan to remain on course and keeping the plan up-to-date are critical.

The Strategic Plan is integrated into the day-to-day organizational operations of the Township. The Board of Directors uses the plan to provide strategic direction, prioritize expenditures, and evaluate proposals. Township staff used the document to develop action plans and budget proposals.

Staff is also responsible for conducting an annual Strategic Plan Audit. This activity and subsequent document consists of identifying accomplishments and progress made as well as implementation challenges faced throughout the year. Plan Audits also include any new information or changes that should be considered by the Board of Directors during their Strategic Plan update process.

Prior to the annual budget process, the Board of Directors will update and adopt the Strategic Plan.



In addition to annually updating the Strategic Plan, the Vision and Mission that serve as the foundations need to be periodically assessed. As The Woodlands grows and matures and as new people enter the community, it is important to periodically check-in with the residents so that the governing body can be confident they are leading in the desired direction.

Through systematic and diligent implementation of the Strategic Plan, The Woodlands Township can help ensure that The Woodlands continues to be a highly desirable place for generations to live, work, learn, and play.