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MASTER PLAN
FOR THE
CITY OF HELOTES, TEXAS

Planning and Zoning Commission
P.O. Box 507
Helotes, Texas 78023

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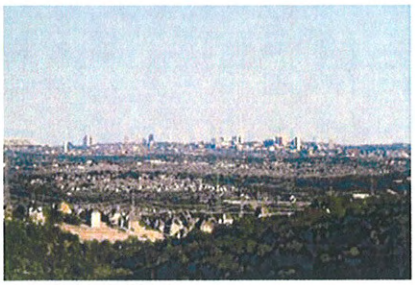
FOREWORD

The Master Plan provides a basis for making informed decisions about physical development and related matters within the jurisdiction of Helotes, Texas. Its purpose is to guide individuals in government and private enterprise in making decisions which effect the City of Helotes with the understanding of the long term effects. For the public policy maker, it provides a way to resolve conflicting demands and to develop sound public policies based upon community needs. The Master Plan expresses the declared policy of the City Council and the way that policy is implemented. It gives citizens, potential investors, and other interested parties an understanding of the City's future direction by detailing development goals chosen by the City Council.

INTRODUCTION



VIEW OF HELOTES

OVERALL GOAL

The overall goal of the Helotes, Texas Master Plan is to develop programs to serve the general welfare and to preserve and improve the quality of life for Helotes citizens.

PURPOSE OF PLAN

This plan is an official declaration of policy to be used by all whose actions affect community development. The plan sets forth policies that will effectively guide all future development in an orderly and desirable manner. The plan establishes short-range and long-range goals and objectives to guide the physical development of the community in a coordinated and unified manner. The plan will minimize conflicts between differing types of land use, while providing the most effective use of public resources. A major consideration is to provide direction for private development, yet protect the public interest.

DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN

Several distinct steps were followed in developing the contents of this Master Plan. A brief description of the methodology follows:

- Identify the major areas of governmental responsibility to be addressed;
- For each area, develop an overall goal statement which best describes the desired end-state condition or outcome;
- Define critical issues and develop objectives in support of each goal;
- Develop Goals and Objectives for each plan element; and
- Summarize the plan in a concise policy statement to guide decision making.

The Master Plan is intended to be a flexible management tool to be used in the conduct of local government business. The stated policies should be adhered to; however detailed implementation should be flexible within the stated goals and objectives.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN

Implementation of the goals, objectives, and policies of the Master Plan is an act separate and apart from the planning process. The Master Plan does not regulate development. Master Plan policies must be implemented by ordinances following prescribed jurisdictional procedures in enabling legislative acts. For example, the subdivision and zoning regulations will be developed and adopted according to the procedures in the Texas Local Government Code. The end product, in most cases, will be an ordinance, resolution, or other legislative act.

Authorities And Responsibilities

City Council

- Develops planning policy;
- Appoints Planning and Zoning Commission members;
- Holds public hearings on and adopts Master Plan;
- Adopts ordinances governing local development;
- Approves capital improvement programs; and
- Exercises final authority on planning and zoning issues.

City Administrator

- Acts as Planning Supervisor for the City;
- Manages the Master Planning process;
- Supervises staff and volunteers in planning activities;
- Provides technical support to the council and commission on planning matters;
- Plans the capital improvement program; and
- Administers zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations.

Planning And Zoning Commission

- Produces and updates the Master Plan;
- Holds public hearings on the Master Plan;
- Makes recommendations to City Council on planning and zoning matters; and
- Advisory authority to City Council on planning and zoning matters.

Zoning board of adjustment

- Grants variances from land use regulations; and
- Hears appeals from land use decisions.

Goals, Objectives, And Policies

The overall goal of the Helotes, Texas Master Plan, as stated in the Introduction, is "to develop programs to serve the general welfare and to preserve and improve the quality of living for Helotes citizens." To achieve this important goal in a rational and efficient manner, the City Council has adopted general statements of goals, objectives, and policies in several areas of public responsibility.

Goals

Goals are the future of the plan. They are those things that the City wants to accomplish over the life of the plan. The goal statements are the highest degree of achievement and desirability in the specific areas of responsibility. Plan goals:

- Serve as the framework for future land use decisions;
- Identify needed public improvements and services; and
- Establish priorities for public investment.

OBJECTIVES

Objectives define specific action steps intended to help meet the stated goal. The objective statements are more specific and represent the major programs and tasks that must be accomplished to achieve the goals. Plan objectives:

- Outline specific and measurable action steps; and
- Are understood by both the decision-makers and the general public.

POLICIES

Policies provide a framework for decision making based upon the goals and objectives. Plan policies:

- Provide direction for decision-makers;
- Are specific to issues identified throughout the planning process; and
- Are consistently applied and implemented.

Because this plan addresses both short-range and long-range goals, some objectives and policies must be programmed into a time line several years in the future. The phasing of these long-range goals will depend on City Council, community priorities, and the availability of financial resources. Nonetheless, the long-range objectives in the Master Plan must be validated at the onset of each review of the document. Advance planning and careful programming of major projects to support goals and objectives will result in financially sound public administration.

The Master Plan is implemented by the City's land use regulations, capital improvements decisions, and related exercises of its police and fiscal powers. It is not self-implementing. Because the Goal and Objectives chart the future direction of Helotes, it is critical to periodically measure progress toward the goals set by City Council. The Planning and Zoning Commission will develop a formal evaluation program to measure performance toward each objective plan. An annual evaluation and progress report will be prepared by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Administrator and submitted to the City Council. The Master Plan must be readily available to all interested parties.

PLAN ELEMENTS

LAND USE ELEMENT

BACKGROUND

Leslie Road

Land use planning is the fundamental determinant of proper physical growth and expansion of a city. Land use refers to how the land is actually used and how undeveloped areas will probably be used in the future. Each parcel of land is classified according to land use categories, such as residential, commercial, industrial, or public areas. The Land Use Plan anticipates the future growth of the city and describes the most desirable allocation of land use to accommodate long-term growth. The Land Use Plan considers all other aspects of the Master Plan. The Land Use Plan identifies environmentally sensitive locations within Helotes and the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) limits and establishes policies to protect them. New development must be harmonious with the existing character of the city and compatible with surrounding land use within each district. In development of the Land Use Plan, it may be discovered that an existing land use activity is inappropriate to the long-range prospective goal within a district. If so, that activity will be identified as a non-conforming use in the plan. Under Texas law, it is possible to develop amortization schedules to eventually terminate nonconforming land uses. This may be considered when the land use clearly violates city planning goals and responsible land management.

Zoning is based on the Land Use Plan and is a legal device for regulating use and structures within the broader land use planning categories. Zoning prescribes permissible uses and restrictions on building character within the zones. Texas law requires that zoning regulations be adopted in accordance with a master plan (TX. Local Govt. code § 211.004). The Zoning Plan should provide for protection of the public's health, safety, moral standards, and general welfare. It should assure protection against physical danger; nuisances, such as noise, vibration, and environmental pollution; undue traffic; overcrowding and congestion; and aesthetic nuisances.

Goals, Objectives, And Policies

Goal 1 *Balance the Protection of Individual Property Rights with the Need to Ensure the Safety, Health, and Welfare of Helotes Residents.*

Objective: Develop reasonable development standards that allow a property to develop while meeting the Master Plan's goals and objectives.

Policy: Maintain a streamlined development review process. Consider use of performance based standards. Upon review by City staff and the Planning Commission, if all standards are met the property owner may get a building permit.

Objective: Promote compatible development.

Policy: Infill development should be well integrated with existing development.

Policy: New development should be compatible in terms of design, density, massing, and scale to adjacent properties.

Policy: New development should transition in increasing height and density away from adjacent lower intensity development.

Policy: Commercial, office, and multi-family expansion into adjacent single-family neighborhoods should be discouraged. When such uses are adjacent to one another, a combination of a landscape buffer in combination with a physical structure, such as a berm or fence, should be placed between the uses.

Policy: The City should consider adopting a noise ordinance that protects adjacent neighborhoods.

Objective: Identify prime commercial-retail areas for new development.

Policy: Zone for an adequate supply of commercial-retail areas based on the adopted Future Land Use Plan Map to promote quality development and to expand the City's sales tax base.

Goal 2 *Maintain the Architectural and Natural Character of the City.*

Natural Hill Country Character

Objective: Require that new large or intense developments establish an architectural and site design theme that is compatible with existing and planned developments.

Policy: Create quality developments through incorporation of the following components:

- Relationship to prominent design features existing in the immediate area (e.g. existing adjacent uses, historic landmarks, tree stands, streams, and slopes);
- A relationship to existing structures;
- Pleasing transitions to surrounding development;
- Maintain an aesthetically pleasing signage system; and
- Maintain a dark sky environment.

Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use Plan is a resource for the Planning Commission and City Council in considering future development proposals. When considering development proposals, city staff and public officials will consider the following factors:

- Identified land use designation;
- The type, size, and density of surrounding existing development patterns;
- The adequacy of infrastructure to support the proposed development, especially roads, water, and wastewater provisions; and
- Environmental concerns, such as drainage, impact to the Edward's Aquifer, floodplain, slopes, riparian corridors, air quality, water quality, and storm water discharge volumes.

A MASTER PLAN SHALL NOT CONSTITUTE ZONING REGULATIONS OR ESTABLISH ZONING DISTRICT BOUNDARIES.

Land Use Categories

The following land use categories are intended for planning purposes. These designations generally follow the existing zoning districts, but do not represent zoning or a change to existing zoning. The use designations identified within the Plan may be modified through the Master Plan amendment process. Existing zoning designations remain as presently recorded and show how the property may currently be used. Zoning may be changed only through the appropriate rezoning process, which includes a public hearing related to the specific property.

Nodal Development:

According to the Urban Land Institute (ULI), a nodal development pattern where higher intensity development, such as retail, office, and multi-family development, is clustered at key intersections or defined areas is preferred over the traditional strip development pattern where auto-oriented commercial-retail developments line both sides of a major corridor. The nodal development concept balances vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle needs; produces less impervious surfaces; and is more economically sustainable than traditional strip development patterns found in many suburbs. According to the ULI, traditional strip developments are plagued by…"congestion, inconvenience, inefficiency, deterioration, and visual blight" and, most importantly, "a lack of sense of place and identity." This is contrasted with a nodal development pattern that provides a distinctive sense of place defined by developments within each node. The areas between the nodes may still support lower-intensity development with sound access management strategies.

Low-Density Residential

Low-Density Residential

These areas are intended for single-family, detached development that represents a majority of Helotes' neighborhoods.

Typical Uses:

- Single-family, detached residential development.
- One accessory dwelling unit or "granny flat."

Infrastructure:

- New subdivisions with homes on lots smaller than 3-acres should connect to central public sewer where reasonable infrastructure is available.
- Paved internal roads.

Mixed-Density Residential

Mixed-Density Residential

These areas are intended to provide a wide-range of housing choices through construction of attached and detached residences with a variety of densities. These uses may occur within designated mixed-use nodes, areas identified along Bandera Road, and areas already zoned for such use. These uses are not allowed within established, single-family neighborhoods.

Typical Uses:

- Duplexes.
- Townhomes.
- Apartments.
- Elderly Housing.

Infrastructure:

- Central public sewer should be required for new developments.
- Paved internal roads with curbs, gutters, and sidewalks on both sides of the street are required for new developments.

Commercial/Office

Commercial/Office

Allows a wide-range of commercial, office, and service establishments to meet the needs of Helotes residents. Provides shopping and employment opportunities, reduced trip lengths, and sales tax revenues.

Typical Uses:

- Commercial-retail.
- Professional office.
- Service uses.
- Hotels.
- Churches and other quasi-public uses.

Infrastructure:

- Central public sewer and water is required for new developments. Other utilities should be placed underground.
- Paved roads with turn lanes and/or access improvements along Bandera Road are required for new developments.

Mixed-Use / Business

These areas are intended to accommodate a mix of commercial-retail, office, and residential uses.

Typical Uses:

- Commercial-retail (first floor preferred).
- Services (first or second floor preferred).
- Professional office (upper floors preferred).

- Apartments and for-sale condominiums (upper floors only).
- Auto-oriented uses, such as drive-through restaurants, are discouraged within these areas.

Guidelines:

- New Mixed-Use developments will have a unique character that defines the development, while incorporating elements of hill country architecture.
- Structures, generally, should be limited to 2-stories. However, additional heights up to 3-stories may be permissible based on discretionary review or design standards set out in the zoning regulations.
- All buildings should be oriented to the primary street. Where feasible, on-site parking should be located behind buildings.
- Each mixed-use area will have an identifiable center that includes central places for residents, shoppers, workers, and visitors to gather, interact, and recreate.

Infrastructure:

- Central public sewer and water is required for new developments. Other utilities should be placed underground.
- Paved internal roads with turn lanes and/or access improvements are required along Bandera Road.

Industrial

These areas are intended to serve small-scale and non-polluting industries, as well as industrial-related commercial uses.

Typical Uses:

- Warehouses and distribution.
- Light manufacturing.
- Small-scale office parks.
- Other uses upon discretionary review.

Infrastructure:

- Central public sewer and water is required for new developments. Other utilities should be placed underground.
- Paved internal roads with turn lanes and/or access improvements are required along Bandera Road.

Public/Semi-Public

These areas include public buildings, schools, and civic organizations. When government and institutional uses are sold, the Planning Commission and City Council should carefully consider alternative uses for redevelopment.

Potential Park Locations

Parks and open space may be located in any current designated land use category. These areas provide opportunities for recreation, civic engagement, and natural resource protection. Potential park locations are identified on the Future Land Use Plan to plan for

the future needs of Helotes residents. It should be noted that these areas would need to be acquired by the City. Property owners within these identified zones may develop their property according to the current underlying zoning designation. However, the City should proactively work with the property owners within these zones to identify potential opportunities for parks, open space, and/or integration of innovative storm water management solutions based upon best management practices, also known as "Storm Water BMPs" or through "Low Impact Design" (LID).

TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

BACKGROUND

Typical Local Helotes Road

Helotes has excellent access to main public transportation arteries. A major four-lane highway, S.H. 16, bisects the City north and south, and FM 1560 runs east and west. State Loop 1604, a limited access divided highway, runs east and west just south of the City. Interstate 10 is five miles east of the City. There are approximately 33 miles of City streets, all paved, and an additional 54 miles of streets in the ETJ.

This Transportation Element calls for easy accessibility for residents, managed traffic flow, and pedestrian and non-vehicular traffic safety. Streets and highways should carefully manage the number of access points along Bandera Road to enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety and minimize congestion while allowing for reasonable access to adjacent uses. Helotes should support projects which afford alternative transportation means to scenic areas. Within Helotes, new developments should provide pedestrian and bicycle trails as integral parts of the community.

The City should develop an ongoing street maintenance and repair program to fully support the goals and objectives of this Element. The program should include any or all of the following elements:

- Assessment of existing street conditions;
- Inventory streets by lane-miles, number of lanes, classification, pavement type (concrete, asphalt, chip seal, other low cost surfaces);
- Needed repairs, including priority and phasing of repairs and a pavement management scoring system (described in Goal 2, below);
- Repair and improvement of street signs;
- Traffic signals;
- Grass and weed cutting on shoulders;
- Routine street striping;
- Resurfacing to prevent asphalt or surface deterioration;

- Cleaning or sweeping of roadway surfaces, including leaves and litter;
- Curb and shoulder surface conditions;
- Cleaning drainage facilities, such as ditches and underground drainage systems to avoid street flooding and clogged catch basins or inlets; and
- Location and structural stability of signs, illumination poles, and mailboxes.

Goals, Objectives and Policies

Existing Bandera Road Looking South from Leslie

Upgraded Bandera Road: Development fronts on a "Slip Road" with Parallel Parking and Landscaped Median

Bandera Road: Existing View in front of a Commercial Strip

Upgraded view with a green buffer edge for better pedestrian access

Goal 1 *Promote a Safe, Effective, and Aesthetically Pleasing Transportation System that Balances the Needs of Motorists, Pedestrians, and Bicycles.*

Objective: Promote the Design of Roads to Optimize Safe and Efficient Traffic Flow.

Policy: Pro-actively work with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to plan for Bandera Road to meet the needs of Helotes residents, as well as the needs of regional through-traffic.

Policy: Work with TxDOT on an access management program for Bandera Road and F.M. 1560. This program should include provisions for consolidating and/or eliminating driveways, minimum spacing between access points, and adding access where appropriate.

Policy: Encourage commercial and office development that is designed with coordinated access points, internal circulation, and parking.

Policy: Work with TxDOT to match the posted speed limits to the appropriate travel speeds and traffic volumes.

Objective: Consider Multi-Modal Needs.

Policy: Work with TxDOT to design pedestrian sidewalks along Bandera Road and F.M. 1560 with ample landscape between the road and sidewalk to buffer vehicular traffic. Adjacent developments should develop adequate internal pedestrian connections to safely connect buildings to sidewalks along Bandera Road and FM. 1560.

Policy: Consider the feasibility of integrating bike paths safely along Helotes creeks and other areas to connect neighborhoods, businesses, schools, and other community amenities. A wide outside shoulder should be retained along major north-south and east-west roads to allow potential bike traffic to share the road with vehicular traffic. Curbs should not be placed next to wide shoulders in order to protect cyclists.

Policy: Coordinate with VIA Metropolitan Transit to plan for potential future transit connections if economically reasonable and feasible.

Objective: Enhance the aesthetic character of Bandera Road.

Policy: Work with TxDOT to consider context sensitive design solutions for future roadway improvements. Future design should respect the rural "Hill Country Aesthetic" of the present roadway.

- Where possible, incorporate landscaped medians with a combination of native vegetation and trees that do not endanger the safety of motorists, cyclists, or pedestrians.

Policy: The City should consider commercial design guidelines to reinforce and enhance the existing character of Bandera Road and F.M. 1560.

- Buildings and landscape should define a majority of the street edge. Surface parking lots and loading areas adjacent to Bandera Road should be screened with appropriate landscaping and/or fences or berms.
- Commercial signage along Bandera Road should be consolidated. Monument-style signs are encouraged.

Bandera Road: Existing View

New Development on an Enhanced Street

Goal 2 *Establish a Program to Evaluate the Need for Maintaining the City's Street, Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Related Transportation Improvements.*

Objective: Develop a pavement management scoring system to evaluate the condition of Helotes streets and to establish priorities for street surface maintenance and rehabilitation.

Examples of street ratings include a letter based scoring system ("A" - "F") or a qualitative system (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor, Very Poor).

Policy: When selecting streets to be paved, the scoring system should consider:

- The pavement condition;
- The volume and type of traffic;
- Utility work planned for the street (coordinate paving with underground utility work to minimize the opening of street pavement);
- The cost of the work, and
- The level of community interest.

Goal 3 *Implement the San Antonio/Bexar County M.P.O. Hike/Bike Master Plan System as guidance for hike/bike facilities in Helotes.*

Goal 4 *Implement Potential Access Management Strategies.*

Objective: Shared parking between adjacent properties shall be encouraged to the greatest extent possible.

> Policy: The City should consider reducing parking requirements if adjacent property owners agree to share parking. The number of parking spaces depends upon the type of use and size of development.

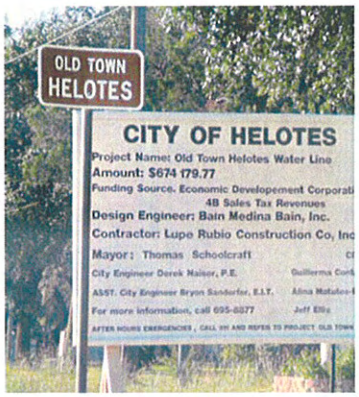
Objective: Property owners are encouraged to provide cross access and/or shared parking areas between adjacent developments. This should ensure a safe and efficient flow of traffic throughout the area and allow local traffic to access adjacent developments without having to enter onto Bandera Road.

> Policy: Whenever possible, the City should encourage adjacent property owners to enter into cross access agreements and/or provide cross access easements between properties.

Objective: Joint access is a single point of access to one or more properties. Joint access may provide one or more points of entry and access between adjacent developments.

> Policy: At a minimum, property owners should be required to provide joint access between all adjacent developments. This should provide vehicles the opportunity to access adjacent developments without having to enter onto Bandera Road.

Community Facilities And Services Element



Background

The orderly development of public facilities and support services enhances the quality of our community and neighborhoods. A large part of the public services in Helotes, such as fire protection, emergency services, senior citizen services, utilities, libraries and schools, is provided by other governmental, private or volunteer agencies. Long term planning is required to satisfy future needs for public facilities and services. Master Planning anticipates these needs and attempts to program them over the long-term to meet the City's goals and objectives.

The Capital Improvement Program focuses on the anticipated needs and priorities of the community. This plan, in concert with the Financial Programming and Budgeting Element, provides a way to balance needs with the reality of limited resources. Careful programming will insure that necessary programs and projects are well-defined, timely, cost-effective, and in the best interest of the public. Future requirements for community support functions and parks and recreation services should be identified as soon as possible so they can be implemented as future development takes place in Helotes.

Helotes has a well-equipped, modern municipal facility which should serve the City over a long period of time. However, continued growth is expected and the City should remain cognizant of this growth.

Goals, Objectives, And Policies

Goal *Leverage Community Investment in Public Infrastructure and Services.*

Objective: Encourage new, infill, and re-development within areas that are adequately served by existing and planned infrastructure and services.

> Policy: Facilitate discussions with utility and service providers, including, but not limited to, San Antonio Water Systems (SAWS), CPS Energy, Grey Forest Utilities, and TxDOT to promote the implementation of the Master Plan goals, objectives, and policies.

PUBLIC SAFETY ELEMENT

BACKGROUND

The basic and foremost responsibility of government is to protect the personal rights and safety of its citizens. The police powers of government entities derive from federal and state constitutions which repeatedly address the requirement to protect the public's health, safety, moral standards, and general welfare. The rights to enjoyment of personal property, safe neighborhoods, and personal safety require a competent, effective police force, adequate fire protection, protection against natural disasters and man-made nuisances, and an appropriate public health program.

In many modern communities and municipalities, protection and safety are threatened by elements of society which show no respect for the property, personal rights, or lives of other citizens. This community should be prepared to declare that no intrusion upon personal rights and safety of citizens will be tolerated.

This public stance requires that we develop necessary strategies, institutions, and programs to safeguard the community. It is also necessary to address safety from natural occurrences, public health hazards, and man-made nuisances, such as excessive noise and vibration. Quiet enjoyment of personal property and safe neighborhoods are a major consideration in carrying out the responsibility of government, and necessary resources should be allocated on a priority basis.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal *Protect the Health, Safety, and Personal Rights of the Citizens of Helotes.*

Objective: Maintain effective police and fire protection.

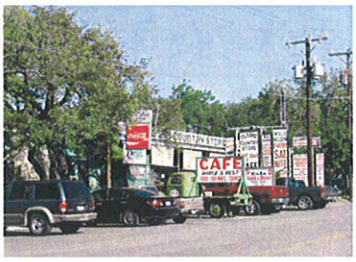
Policy: Work with existing neighborhoods to establish and maintain crime prevention and awareness programs.

Policy: Incorporate crime and fire protection needs into the development review process.

Objective: Develop strategies to safeguard against natural disasters and man-made nuisances.

Policy: Coordinate with regional and national agencies and programs, including, but not limited to, the Governors Division of Emergency Management (GDEM), the Homeland Security Council (HSC), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to develop strategies to safeguard against natural disasters and man-made nuisances.

Old Town Helotes Element



Old Town Helotes

Background And Discussion

Helotes is primarily a residential, suburban community with a historic, rural atmosphere. A major consideration and the overriding theme of the Helotes Master Plan is to preserve and enhance this character and to improve the quality of life for Helotes citizens. An attractive, diverse, and appealing central business district will contribute to these goals.

In 2007, the City completed a planning process for the area known as "Old Town Helotes." This Plan establishes urban design policies that reinforce Old Town as the City's historic central gathering place. The urban design and economic development policies of Old Town are supplemented by the nodal pattern of development contemplated by this Plan, along other areas of the City's major commercial corridor, Bandera Road. A major goal should be to encourage diverse business interests to locate in Helotes. A proper balance of businesses to serve the citizens of Helotes is of extreme importance. A major concern in promoting and accommodating new business, however, is that we maintain the unique character of Helotes. Standards of construction and development within the business district must support the historic, rural image of Helotes.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal

Establish Guidelines and Standards for Business Development that are Consistent with the Historic and Rural Image of Helotes.

Objective: Establish appropriate and reasonable design guidelines that will allow new, infill, and re-development projects that will reinforce and enhance the existing character of the City. The adopted *Old Town Helotes Plan* and Special District Ordinance serves this role and shall remain. Future guidelines and/or regulations should meet the goals and objectives identified within this Plan.

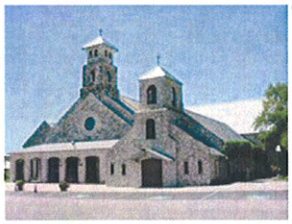
Policy: New design guidelines and standards will be equally applied to all new, infill, and re-development projects.

Policy: New development should use high-quality and locally appropriate materials.

Policy: Architectural elements should be incorporated that are consistent with established "Hill Country" themes.

Historic Preservation Element

Background And Discussion



Existing Historic Structures

Historically significant structures and areas are essential components in defining the unique character of Helotes. It is appropriate to preserve our historic areas, incorporate them into future development, and respect their characteristics because this is part of Helotes' heritage and identity. The historic environment of Helotes must be protected against loss and deterioration and preserved as a legacy to the future.

Historic preservation is enabled by provisions of law and requires a Master Plan before implementing historic zoning ordinances. The Texas Local Government Code permits a municipality to designate places and areas of historic, cultural, or architectural importance. It also permits regulation of the construction, reconstruction, alteration, or razing of buildings and other structures. Several ordinances now exist which have bearing on historical preservation.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal

Conserve the Distinct Historic Features that Contribute to the Character of Helotes.

Objective: Emphasize preservation or adaptive reuse as the preferred approach to historic structures. Where preservation or adaptive reuse is not possible, the City should require that new development, where appropriate, reflect the character and historic references of the original feature.

Policy: In the development review process, all historic features (man-made structures or objects constructed before 1930 or that have historic significance) should be identified on preliminary plats.

Policy: The City should actively identify and promote the preservation of historic structures.

Policy: Encourage public/private partnerships to help encourage the preservation of valuable historic structures when they become threatened.

Environmental Protection Element

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

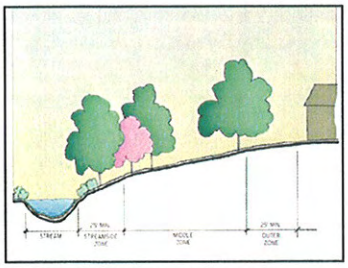
Background And Discussion

Helotes' close proximity to the Edwards Aquifer, combined with the primarily residential suburban character of the community, make it imperative that the Master Plan include responsible and dedicated protection of the environment. Parts of Helotes and its ETJ are within the Edwards Aquifer contributing and recharge areas. Storm water discharge and development in these areas is regulated by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). The health of the aquifer requires special consideration in all planning and development matters. Because of the high permeability of the Edwards formation, it is particularly susceptible to surface pollution. Formations and features, such as caves, sinkholes, limestone outcroppings, flood plains, and other geological features, are significant to aquifer protection. The City's zoning and subdivision regulations should preserve and protect these features. The Environmental Protection Plan will identify polluting activities and sources and develop standards and programs to control these activities. Standards should be integrated into all phases of local planning and policy implementation.

Impervious cover is a very important and sensitive issue. Excessive impervious cover degrades water quality, increases offsite runoff, creates potential flooding issues, and diminishes the City's natural character. Property owners need impervious surface for buildings, parking areas, and other aspects of development. Addressing impervious cover on a citywide or regional scale is an effective way to resolve the tension between resource protection and property rights. While most impervious surface limits control development on a site-specific basis, a more effective system allocates – or allows the market to allocate - impervious surfaces to areas that are more appropriate for relatively intensive development.

The Future Land Use Plan addresses this need by providing for higher intensity development "nodes" with lower intensity nodes between the nodes. This system accommodates the City's retail, employment, and housing needs, while avoiding unreasonable impairment of water resources. The nodes allow a relatively higher percentage of impervious cover than the other land use categories. Even if impervious cover within the nodes, for example, rises to levels as high as 75%, excluding environmentally sensitive areas, citywide impervious cover does not exceed 21%. This limit balances the City's environmental protection and stormwater management policies with its development policies and private property rights.

Goals, Objectives and Policies



Stream Buffer Setback Example

Note: "*transfer of development rights*" *(TDR) system allows property owners to transfer development potential from one parcel to another. Development potential can include density, impervious surfaces, or any other aspect of development that is regulated by the City, as defined in the Zoning Regulations. In most systems, the property owner who conveys development rights records a conservation easement that either prohibits or reduces future development potential, while the property that receives development rights obtains more development potential. A TDR system would involve a voluntary, arms-length transaction between the property owners or between parcels in common ownership. It would not be required by the City.*

Goal 1

Minimize the Impact of Development within Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

Objective: Minimize the impact of development on the Edwards Aquifer.

Policy: Coordinate with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to ensure that potential developments do not adversely affect the aquifer.

Policy: Develop reasonable impervious cover standards to balance the need to allow reasonable development of property without significantly compromising the aquifer water quality and quantity.

Objective: Protect water quality of local streams.

Policy: Adopt a stream buffer setback ordinance that identifies areas or zones to be protected from encroaching development. This ordinance should identify preservation areas, as well as allowed uses and minimum setbacks for adjacent development. The stream buffer width and permitted activities within the buffer should balance the needs for resource and environmental protection with private property rights. These details will be specified in the City's land use regulations.

Objective: Prevent encroachment into the 100-year floodplain.

Policy: Development within the 100-year floodplain should be limited to passive parks and open space.

Rain Garden

Rain Barrel

Goal 2

Utilize Storm Water Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Objective: Minimize storm water impacts throughout the City.

Policy: Encourage developers to integrate innovative approaches to storm water management, including ,but not limited to, the following:

- Pervious pavement;
- Vegetated channels and swails;
- Bioretention areas; and
- Infiltration basins and trenches.

Policy: Encourage residents to become active in storm water management through use of the following:

- Rain gardens; and
- Rain barrels or cisterns.

Goal 3 *Conserve the Distinct Natural Features that Contribute to the Character of Helotes.*

Objective: Actively seek to preserve and enhance scenic and natural features in the design review process.

Policy: Establish design review procedures to ensure that the following features are protected:

- Tree stands;
- View sheds;
- Development themes employed;
- A natural, uncluttered look along Bandera Road; and
- A sense of entering the "Hill Country".

Financial Programming and Budgeting Element

Background And Discussion

Long-term financial planning is integral to the success of any economic enterprise, and it is of utmost importance in governmental operations. Our elected officials must exercise special care in their responsibility to the citizenry. Financial planning, therefore, becomes a critical issue in implementing programs in support of goals and objectives in the Master Plan.

The manner in which public investment is applied largely determines the quality of a community. The orderly development of public facilities and services based on substantiated need is the basis for responsible financial management of our City. Implementation of programs to achieve the goals and objectives in the Master Plan must be made in a rational, deliberate, and open manner and be directly related to stated goals and policies in the Plan. The policy statements keep concise and clear and must be followed in any program implementation. Any program proposed to support this Master Plan must consider costs, effectiveness, and benefits. Wherever practicable, programs and projects should be accomplished using self-help or citizen action groups.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal 1 *Examine Ways in which New Development Can Pay its Fair Share of the Costs of Community Improvements and Facilities that are Necessary to Serve that Development.*

Objective: Ensure sustainable development by making sure that proposed developments can "pay for themselves" in terms of infrastructure provision and basic City services.

Policy: Consider the fiscal impact to the City prior to future annexation to ensure that existing service levels for police, fire, and other services are not negatively impacted.

Policy: Create a mechanism by which City staff can review the proposed public costs and impacts of new development in order to determine what, if any, significant fiscal effects exist.

Policy: Require that any new development that may have a significant fiscal impact prepare a fiscal impact worksheet based on City staff determination of key element . The worksheet will allow the City to assess the total public costs of the proposed development.

Goal 2 *Promote Economic Development Within the City by Creating Reasonable and Positive Incentives for New Development.*

Objective: Focus the City's involvement in economic development activities to traditional site identification and incentive package creation.

Policy: Evaluate various incentive packages to attract desired commercial-retail developments to areas within the City. Incentives should be considered under the following conditions:

- To attract a prime commercial anchor that has the potential to spin-off additional development to help increase the tax base of the City; and/or
- To attract a desired commercial-retail use, such as a specialty neighborhood grocery store.

PROGRAM EVALUATION ELEMENT

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

The Helotes Master Plan defines goals and objectives in several major areas of governmental responsibility. The goals and objectives express the needs, wishes, and desires of the citizens of Helotes. The Master Plan identifies and clarifies the critical issues in delivering governmental services to the citizenry. It devises a structure to guide elected officials in applying efforts and resources in achieving the most desirable community living conditions for the entire City. The Master Plan has been the object of citizen input, public hearings, detailed staff research, and legal review. It states as concisely as possible, what the citizens of Helotes expect from elected officials and what our Mayor and City Council expect to do in service to the people of Helotes. Because the Master Plan embodies such important concepts and goals, it is imperative that we periodically evaluate our progress toward these goals. As we work with the Master Plan, we can see how well we have identified the important functions of our government, and we can see how well we have done in focusing our efforts toward the goals. An open and effective program evaluation plan will permit us to track our progress.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal

Measure Progress of City Projects and Initiatives.

Objective: Establish a review process to evaluate progress of City projects and initiatives.

Policy: At a minimum, the Master Plan will be reviewed and updated every five years. Plan amendments may occur at anytime upon approval of the City Council.

Policy: All city projects and initiatives will be evaluated based upon the Master Plan goals and objectives.

Conclusion

The Master Plan is an all-inclusive development guide for Helotes and its ETJ. Although this Plan projects 15 years in the future, it is recognized that unforeseen circumstances will require periodic plan review. This is particularly true of the Future Land Use Map, which may need amendment over the short term. The Planning and Zoning Commission should review the Master Plan every five years, or when substantial infrastructure improvements occur, to ensure that the Master Plan still reflects the long term goals and policies of the City.

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