



# Future City

## INTRODUCTION

The Victoria Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide future development, redevelopment, and community enhancement efforts over the next 20 years through 2035. This plan serves as a framework for thoughtful community discussion on the real and perceived challenges facing Victoria currently, as well as the upcoming opportunities that will shape its future. Through long-range planning efforts, the community can accommodate its projected growth in a manner that preserves its history, culture, and overall quality of life for current and future residents.

The Victoria Comprehensive Plan resulted from an 18-month planning and citizen involvement process. The plan's findings and recommendations focus on the physical and economic aspects of the community's projected growth and development in the coming years. The plan provides vision statements, goals, and strategic action priorities that will help City officials 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.

### COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOCUS AREAS

- Land Use and Development
- Mobility
- Growth Capacity and Management
- Economic Opportunity
- Recreation and Amenities

## **PURPOSE**

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 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, economic development, redevelopment, housing, neighborhoods, parks and recreation, utility infrastructure, public facilities and services, cultural facilities, etc.).

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. The Victoria 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

## **WHY PLAN?**

Local planning allows the City of Victoria to have a greater measure of control over its future rather than simply reacting to change. Planning enables the City to manage future growth and development actively as opposed to reacting to development and redevelopment proposals on a case-by-case basis without adequate and necessary consideration of community-wide issues. The process for developing or updating a comprehensive plan involves major community decisions about where development and redevelopment will occur, the nature and extent 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.

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. Through the plan development process, they can look broadly at programs for neighborhoods, housing, economic

development, and provision of public infrastructure and facilities and how these efforts may relate to one another. The comprehensive plan ultimately represents a “big picture” of the community and its near-term and longer-range future. Bottom line, the essential reasons for long-range planning include:

- Providing a balance of land uses and services throughout the community to meet the needs and desires of the population.
- Ensuring adequate public facilities to meet the demands of future development and redevelopment.
- Achieving and maintaining a development pattern that reflects the values of the community, and which ensures a balanced tax base between residential and nonresidential development.
- Ensuring the long-term protection and enhancement of the image and visual appearance of the community.
- Involving local citizens in the decision-making process and reaching consensus on the future vision for Victoria and its ongoing development.
- Enhancing the quality of life of Victoria residents.



plan also creates a greater level of predictability for residents, land owners, developers, and potential investors.

## USE OF THIS PLAN

A comprehensive plan, if embraced by the community and its leadership, has the potential to take a community to a whole new level in terms of livability and tangible accomplishments. The plan is ultimately a guidance document for City officials and staff, who must make decisions on a daily basis that will determine the future direction, financial health, and “look and feel” of the community. These decisions are carried out through:

- Targeted programs and expenditures prioritized through the City’s annual budget process, including routine but essential functions such as code compliance.
- Major public improvements and land acquisitions financed through the City’s capital improvement program and related bond initiatives.
- New and amended City ordinances and regulations closely linked to comprehensive

plan objectives (and associated review and approval procedures in the case of subdivision and land development activities).

- Departmental work plans and resources in key areas.
- Support for ongoing planning and studies that will further clarify needs, costs, benefits, and strategies.
- Pursuit of external grant funding to supplement local budgets and/or expedite certain projects.
- Initiatives pursued in conjunction with other public and private partners to leverage resources and achieve successes neither could accomplish on their own.

Despite these many avenues for action, a comprehensive plan should not be considered a “cure all” for every tough problem a community faces. These plans focus 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. Of necessity, comprehensive plans, as vision and policy

documents, also must remain relatively general. The resulting plan may not touch on every challenge before the community, but it is meant to set a tone and motivate concerted efforts to move the community forward in coming years.

## **PLANNING AUTHORITY**

Unlike in some other states, municipalities in Texas are not mandated by state government to prepare and maintain local comprehensive plans. 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:

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

Victoria has a long history of ongoing and effective local planning. In Article IX, City Planning, of the Victoria City Charter, Section 3 states: "The City Council may authorize and direct the Planning Commission to create

## **FIRM IN INTENT ...**

The Comprehensive Plan is not cast in stone. Revisions will be made when warranted and the plan will be formally updated periodically. The plan will be continually monitored to track the extent to which the plan has been implemented and to determine if plan implementation causes the desired results. This process will protect the plan from misuse, keep the plan a living document, protect the will of the citizens, and allow change to the plan where the proposed amendment meets the intent of the plan.

## **... YET FLEXIBLE IN ITS APPLICATION**

a master plan for the physical development of the City of Victoria and to amend and supplement such plan from time to time, and such plan shall contain recommendations of the Planning Commission for the orderly growth, development, and improvement of the City."

## **THE FUTURE CITY**

While the Existing City Report provides background and insights about Victoria as it is today, this Future City portion of the Comprehensive Plan focuses on Victoria as it intends to be in the years ahead. These aspirations are presented in topic areas that are central to Victoria's physical growth and development as listed on page 1. Each topical section highlights key issues and considerations followed by a Framework for Action portion. A final section on plan implementation considerations, priorities, and procedures rounds out the Future City Report.