

CITY OF BALCONES HEIGHTS

STRATEGIC PLAN



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Introduction

The strategic planning process reflects the hard work of City leadership over the past decade. This process starts with the City's *Master Plan* while the *Community Revitalization Plan* advances it. Although these plans are years apart, they agree on the concepts needed to transform the City. The following discussion highlights those concepts as they evolve into this Strategic Plan.

The Master Plan

To combat an aging infrastructure and stagnant sales and property taxes, the City “engaged in a public process to develop a planning concept for the City’s future.” In 2009, the City adopted its *Master Plan* – its vision to transform the City. Key to the plan’s success is the City’s “ability to promote major retail and mixed-use developments.” To that end, it sets forth seven initiatives:

Master Plan Initiatives

1. Initiate Bus Rapid Transit and Fredericksburg Road Improvements
2. Development of the Crossroads District
3. Development and Redevelopment of the Fredericksburg Road Corridor
4. Development and Redevelopment of the Higher Density Residential Zone along Gentleman Road
5. Redevelopment and/or Conservation of the Single-Family Residential Zone
6. Creation of a Comprehensive Parks and Trails System
7. Providing Linkages to East Balcones Heights

At the forefront of these actions is the VIA Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project and redevelopment of Fredericksburg Road to accommodate it. The Plan also promotes redevelopment of the properties along the Crossroads District and the Fredericksburg Road corridor with mixed-use, compact, and transit-oriented concepts that tie to the VIA BRT.

The Community Revitalization Plan

The *Community Revitalization Plan (CRP)* cuts to the chase when it states, “Balcones Heights needs to revitalize nearly half of the community to address issues of crime and safety, dilapidated housing, insufficient local jobs and a stagnant tax base.”

The *CRP* puts forth initiatives similar to those found in the *Master Plan*. At the heart of their recommendations are multifamily and mixed-use developments tied to the VIA BRT, and redevelopment down the Fredericksburg Road corridor.

The bulk of the *CRP* report includes tangible measures to facilitate future development. It includes incentives, involvement, and rigorous code compliance:

1. Enforce existing codes with aggressive code enforcement
2. Incentivize and aggregate by adjusting land development code so that developers can receive incentives
3. Develop a building improvement program to provide incentive for business owners to make improvements
4. Utilize funds from CPS Energy to seed this incentive program
5. Examine programs in the region, such as Universal City's streetscape & façade enhancement program as a model for program development

Strategic Planning Session

In July 2015, the City engaged Dr. Richard Lewis of Round Top Consulting Associates, to facilitate a strategic planning session. The Mayor, Council, City Administrator and department heads came together and developed strategic goals for the City. After considering numerous ideas, the group adopted five specific goals to transform the City:

Strategic Goals

- ❖ Establish a Positive City Image
- ❖ Increase Public Safety
- ❖ Improve Infrastructure
- ❖ Enhance Partnerships with the Business Community
- ❖ Enhance Opportunities for New Residential and Commercial Development

It comes as no surprise that improving infrastructure and fostering economic development are at the heart of these actions; the time to redevelop an aging building stock and infrastructure is long overdue.

Both of the previous plans endorse multifamily and mixed-use developments along the VIA BRT, and redevelopment down the Fredericksburg Road corridor. The *CRP* recommends using funds from CPS Energy to seed an incentives program to help make that happen.

Increasing public safety resonates with the *CRP*; it correctly identifies that crime deters development and tarnishes the City's image. It makes sense that addressing public safety facilitates accomplishment of all of the strategic goals put forth.

The Strategic Plan

The goals set forth during the strategic planning session have roots in the *Master Plan* and *CRP*; there is harmony between them and this plan. This validates the efforts put forth by City leadership and ensures there are no disconnects between the plans. Accordingly, many of the recommendations from those plans make their way into the implementation portion of this plan.

With the five strategic goals in place, City staff worked to form the implementation portion of this plan. Implementation steps build upon the *Master Plan*, *CRP* and the strategic planning session by ascribing concrete, measurable actions to City departments.

Staff then scrutinized all the elements of a strategic plan from the vision statement down to the implementation steps. We also included core values, which reflect how we interact with others as we go forth to achieve our goals.

It took some time, but all the pieces of a strategic plan were finally in place. City staff tied it all together to create a usable tool – a roadmap. It is our hope that this Strategic Plan will be the roadmap that guides future leaders as they carry out the mission of transforming the City.

City of Balcones Heights Strategic Plan

Vision Statement

Balcones Heights strives to create a vibrant, inclusive, and healthy environment that contributes to a high quality of life and opportunities. This is achieved through a prosperous economy, quality housing choices, a thriving business corridor, well-maintained infrastructure, and excellent municipal services.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a safe environment through efficient and quality services for our community.

Core Values

Commitment

We are committed to transforming our City. We are committed to providing essential core services to residents and businesses.

Responsive

We are eager to serve in a timely, respectful and professional manner.

Inclusion

We will make decisions with respect to the diverse community we serve.

Collaboration

We will collaborate with the community, business leaders and developers to achieve transformation.

Accountability

We will conduct business in an open and transparent manner.

Strategic Goals

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Establish a Positive City Image

Successful implementation of our Strategic Plan will produce a positive City image. We will also undertake several actions to shape the image: Council will proactively engage other cities, elected officials and partnerships; we will initiate a branding campaign; staff will constantly review and update codes and communicate them; we will remain responsive to the needs of the community we serve; and maintain constant contact with the media to promote City events.

Increase Public Safety

Open lines of communication with citizens and business owners are crucial to resolving issues and advancing City initiatives. We will make in-roads with citizens and business owners to educate them on crime issues within the City through such events as Coffee with the Cops and National Night Out. We will initiate programs to affect crime including Zero Tolerance for Crime and Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP).

Improve Infrastructure

Maintaining the infrastructure is a core responsibility of the City. We will advance this goal through several actions: Conduct a survey of all City streets to determine condition and priority of repairs; create a Storm Water Utility to fund storm water projects; develop a Capital Improvement Plan to prioritize needs and explore funding opportunities; and work with Council to find partnerships whenever possible.

Enhance Partnerships with the Business community

There are over two hundred businesses in Balcones Heights; the sales tax they generate is the City's top revenue source. We will be proactive to develop relationships with the business community to identify problems, opportunities, and address areas of concern through regular meetings and one-on-one visits. We will streamline our permit and fees process, and create a centralized database to harvest useful information to supplement the City's directory.

Enhance Opportunities for New Residential and Commercial Development

Economic development is paramount to revitalizing the City. Partnerships are crucial to identifying economic projects and the funding mechanisms that spur growth. We will aggressively pursue in-roads with the movers that can make that happen. Guided by the *Master Plan* and *Community Revitalization Plan*, we will continue to redevelop commercial and multi housing properties while pursuing new growth opportunities.

Strategic Goals – Outlined

1. Establish a Positive Image in the Broader Community
 - A. Proactive Council
 - 1) Partnerships
 - 2) Engage business owners
 - B. Review and Update Codes & Ordinances
 - 1) Annual reviews
 - 2) Work with staff, Planning & Zoning and Council
 - C. Hire Code Compliance Officer
 - D. Educate Community on Codes & Ordinances
 - 1) Property Maintenance
 - 2) Structure Maintenance
 - 3) Top 10 List
 - 4) Editorials
 - E. Improve Public Property Appearance
 - 1) Clean & free from debris
 - 2) Graffiti & signs
 - F. Responsiveness
 - 1) Enforce ordinances fairly and consistently
 - 2) Timely responses to inquiries/requests
 - G. Effective Media Relations
 - H. Branding
 - 1) Branding campaign
 - 2) Gateway Project
 - I. Promotion
 - 1) City sponsored events
 - a. Jazz Festival
 - b. Ribbon cuttings
 - 2) Media involvement
2. Increase Public Safety
 - A. Educate Community
 - 1) Crime prevention
 - 2) City Initiatives
 - B. Business Coalitions
 - 1) Network
 - 2) Address Concerns
 - a. Regular Meetings
 - b. Coffee with the Cops
 - C. Community Involvement
 - 1) Block Watch
 - 2) Apartment Watch

- 3) Address Concerns
 - a. Regular Meetings
 - b. National Night Out
- D. Initiatives
 - 1) Zero Tolerance for Crime
 - 2) Bike, foot & directed patrols
 - 3) Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP)
- E. Maintain Police and Fire Response Times
 - 1) Properly trained and equipped dispatch
 - 2) Continuous training and practice
- F. Increase Inspections
 - 1) Fire Department Training
 - 2) Collaborate with Community Development
- 3. Improve Infrastructure
 - A. Secure City Assets
 - 1) Install lighting and cameras at impound lot
 - 2) Install fencing at the Justice Center
 - B. Streets
 - 1) Street Sidewalk & Design
 - 2) Street Cut Ordinance
 - 3) PCI Rating of City Streets
 - C. Storm Water & Drainage
 - 1) Create a Stormwater Utility
 - 2) Determine fees for funding
 - 3) Determine future projects
 - D. Buildings & Facilities
 - 1) Fire Department renovations
 - 2) Justice Center renovations
 - E. Equipment
 - 1) Capital Purchases
 - 2) Vehicles
 - a. Fire truck
 - b. Patrol cars
 - c. Public Works
 - F. Develop Capital Improvement Plan
 - 1) Replacement Program
 - a. Building & facilities
 - b. Parks
 - c. Vehicles & equipment
 - 2) Prioritize Needs
 - 3) Explore funding options
 - a. Partnerships

- b. Grants
 - c. Bonds
 - 4) Unfunded List
- 4. Enhance Partnerships with the Business Community
 - A. Develop Partnerships
 - 1) Identify problems, goals & opportunities
 - 2) Identify sources
 - 3) Develop partnerships
 - B. Develop Business Relationships
 - 1) Regular visits
 - 2) Brief initiatives & ordinances
 - a. Newsletter editorials
 - b. Top 10 violations
 - 3) Identify areas of improvements
 - C. Initiatives
 - 1) Ordinances
 - a. Shopping Cart
 - b. Animal Control
 - D. Streamline Licensing & Permit Processes
 - a. Tie payments to calendar year
 - b. Create centralized database in iWorqs
 - E. Prepare a Business Directory
 - 1) Harvest information from iWorqs database
 - 2) Supplement to City Directory
- 5. Enhance opportunities for New Residential and Commercial Development
 - A. Create an Economic Development Fund
 - 1) CPS CEID 1.5%
 - 2) Create an Economic Development department
 - 3) Develop Incentive Policy
 - B. Identify New Revenue Streams
 - 1) Mixed use complexes
 - 2) Make in-roads with the movers that can make it happen
 - C. Redevelopment of Properties
 - 1) Lacks
 - 2) Commercial
 - a. Travis
 - b. Siesta
 - 3) Multi housing/apartments
 - a. Twin Lane Trailer Park
 - b. Siesta Lane