GREATER DALLAS PLANNING COUNCIL

THE GREATER DALLAS PLANNING COUNCIL'S AGENDA FOR CHANGE FOR THE DALLAS REGION

The urban environment of the Dallas Region is in a constant state of change due in large part to unprecedented economic and population growth. What we plan and build today will shape the way we live and the way we consume resources for many decades. We need to look to the future and new technology to improve the resiliency and sustainability of our communities. Long-term vision and flexible planning will be necessary to cope with this dynamic environment. Key components of planning a sustainable future for the Greater Dallas region include compact, efficient land use, transit options, low energy and water use, leveraging the natural environment into the planned infrastructure, and diverse neighborhoods promoting livable, healthy communities.

Many of these components of a sustainable future will require changes in laws and regulations. The mission of the GDPC is to shape, promote and advocate a creative, sustainable future for the Dallas region. To that end, the GDPC provides unbiased and reliable information about urban development trends to our region's policy makers, as well as policy recommendations and plans to achieve a sustainable future. Following is a detailed set of recommendations and our advocacy agenda organized into our work areas.

GDPC's AGENDA FOR URBAN DESIGN: Follow principles of New Urbanism.

The GDPC strongly supports the principles of new urbanism advanced by the Congress for New Urbanism: Walkability, Connectivity, Mixed Use and Diversity, Mixed Housing, Quality Architecture and Urban Design, Traditional Neighborhood Structure, Increased Density, Green Transportation, Sustainability and Quality of Life. Applying these principles to the Dallas region leads to the following agenda for change:

- **Density vs. Urbanism – Use principles of good urbanism to address concerns over the pressure to accommodate density.**

It is ironic that the American dream of a lower-density, suburban setting was once considered the token of a sought-after lifestyle, while some of America's most popular major cities - such as San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. – have some of the highest densities in our nation. Population density is not new to the Dallas region. Prior to the suburbanization of our country, the 1940 census showed Dallas had a population density of 7,259 people per square mile. 2016 Census estimates show Dallas has only 3,866 people per square mile. Some of the region's suburban cities - Arlington, Garland, Richardson,

and Plano – have higher densities than Dallas. Density is too often perceived as urban encroachment leading to reduced property values and crime. Instead, it can be a way to unlock the true benefits of urbanization: community cohesion, achieving live-work-play communities less reliant on the automobile and avoidance of the property tax burden from extending infrastructure further away from the center city.

Higher densities for residential and commercial developments need to go hand-in-hand with street-level mix of uses that incorporate broad sidewalks, parks, and public spaces along with community services, retail, restaurants, entertainment and religious centers, with various choices of mobility tied into the street grid. This urban mix can reach its full potential through a finer grain of urban design that fosters human-scale street design, neighborhoods, and development patterns that are focused on being walkable, healthy, and safe. Utilization of urban design best practices and principles should assist in the evolution of a more flexible physical and regulatory landscape that encourages and facilitates the development of a more varied residential housing stock. Thoughtful urban design can facilitate more interactive physical environments, healthier communities, lower crime rates and a more robust tax base.

- **Coordinate Regional Efforts –Strengthen Dallas as a growing polynuclear city composed of interconnected villages, districts, open spaces, and cultural settings.**

Our region is defined to a large degree by its natural features – the escarpments, streams, broad floodplains, riparian woodlands and prairies – and the man-made investments – such as highways, transit lines, neighborhoods, airports, commercial centers and institutions. While city limit signs may note jurisdictional boundaries, our natural and built features tend to be impartial to where waters flow, how people travel, and where potential employees might live.

For our region, we need to forge better working relationships amongst our cities to capitalize on cross-jurisdictional opportunities. This can begin by sharing resources and using consistent measures to evaluate growth and impacts from development. Such opportunities would harness such regional initiatives as the Branch Waters / Trinity River District and enhance investments in transit modes and applications. Collaboration on joint studies and plans would foster coordinated policies and timely implementation that would lead to more efficient use of public dollars for capital projects while supporting sound growth and protecting local values. This could be done through targeted partnership frameworks that lead to implementable, tactical solutions between stakeholders that further develop the region's experience and track record in tackling those challenges that impact the movement of goods, services, and people. The end result will be a more appealing, economically competitive and environmentally sustainable region.

- **Social Equity through Urbanism –All North Texans should be afforded access to affordable housing, transportation and employment in healthy and safe environments.**

Urban design plays an integral role in the effort to achieve social equity. The urban form and landscape can greatly impact the physical connection between mixed-use and residential neighborhoods and employment centers. Sustainable urban landscapes thread such areas

together, support pedestrian and vehicular movement between them and accommodate entrepreneurial activity. For our region to truly succeed, it needs to harness its economic attributes and resources to provide opportunities for all North Texans. Communities that have become food, health, and transportation deserts as well as those locations with access barriers to basic human needs such as housing and education must be addressed. Various community/economic development, land use, planning, transportation and urban design best practices can re-shape the Dallas region to facilitate social equity.

GDPC'S AGENDA FOR TRANSPORTATION: Redefine what transportation looks like and how it functions.

High-density city living minimizes humanity's footprint on the planet while making it possible for people to walk, bike and take transit – the solution to lowering carbon emissions. Following are the principles we advocate in the transportation arena:

- **Develop a new approach to design and function of transportation systems.**

Most of the streets and highways in the Dallas region were built after World War II, a time of radial highway construction, fixation on personal vehicular traffic needs, and suburban sprawl. North Texas highways were designed to move vehicles faster. This one-size-fits-all mindset that seemed like a vision of a better lifestyle decades ago has turned out to be unsustainable today.

The central city of Dallas as well as Edge Cities around North Texas are experiencing higher density development that requires a greater awareness and sensitivity to the design and functions of roadways and other facilities for movement. In addition, the paths between destinations should be safe, comfortable, aesthetically pleasing, and memorable instead of an endless barrage of commercial uses, sign and light pollution, and other types of traveling distractions. This new approach to design and function will need to incorporate the latest technologies and innovation, including metrics to measure levels of service for roads.

- **Develop a multi-modal approach to transportation and related land use policies.**

The continued growth in the region has led to increased traffic congestion as a result of limited roadway capacity and dependence on single-occupancy vehicles. A comprehensive mobility system is needed in the Dallas area that is planned as an integrated system, rather than as distinct silos. The region should invest in a multi-modal approach that includes non-automotive options such as transit, bicycle, pedestrian, bike share, car share and first/last mile solutions through partnerships with transportation providers. Mobility is about providing transportation choices that take advantage of ongoing advances in technology and innovation, including but not limited to connected and automated vehicles, shared mobility services and electric vehicles. Public policies throughout the region must proactively encourage and promote more efficient land use through higher density development that is well designed and articulated in a manner that facilitates effective transitions between buildings, sites and districts; multi-modal infrastructure, and high-performance pedestrian realms.

- **Make Dallas a hub for high speed rail and hyperloop travel.**

As the Texas Central high-speed rail line between Dallas and Houston becomes a reality and a hyperloop route between Dallas and San Antonio is being considered, the Dallas region should take the initiative to build out the state's high speed ground travel network and become a key Mid-America hub for such routes. Through a hub-and-spoke network, a fixed system of routes to various regions of the nation would connect in North Texas. With North Texas already a major center for air travel and a significant junction in the nation's interstate highway network, becoming a hub for high-speed rail and hyperloop travel would add another choice in long-distance transportation movement for Dallas residents and the traveling public.

- **Develop key roadway corridors that tell a story, while enhancing place-making in communities.**

Dallas is a place to be enjoyed and experienced. The Dallas region is made up of many neighborhoods with their own local history, character and quirks. However, the local road network – measured and developed through a functional classification of local, collector and arterial streets and highways - doesn't lend itself to accessing these neighborhoods on a more personal scale. As part of our human habitat such 'roads that tell a story' should be functional, efficient, well-defined, visually attractive and memorable, plus sensitive to the human desire to learn, experience, and share in relationship to place.

The first step is to identify and develop "road corridors that tell a story" of an area's natural and cultural heritage along paths connecting neighborhoods and communities, whether it is the neighborhoods along the Trinity River, many older communities in and around Dallas, or rural areas where former wagon trails and named highways once passed. Key road corridors should help to define communities through which they pass. Streets should be transformed to serve as important ingredients for place-making and bringing out the "there" in neighborhoods and communities. Such roadway corridors should be reoriented from accommodating large vehicles and high speeds, to be more sensitive to the needs of alternative users. Roadway corridors should be made just as pleasing, attractive and memorable as the destination for the user through the addition of public art, creative landscaping, landmarks and way-finding signage.

- **Link the North Texas region through a system of drives, parkways, and trails that enhance our region's waterways and ridges.**

Dallas is a frequently used example of suburban sprawl with its endless residential subdivisions, shopping centers, and business parks connected by freeways and thoroughfares. While the North Texas landscape has few physical barriers to limit development in every direction, its prairie environment offers some wonderful creek and riparian wooded corridors and even some crests, ridges, and escarpments for taking in the greater view. Some of the region's most cherished linkages and paths are located along natural features and bodies of water. Like the veins in a leaf

supporting a leaf blade, such greenway passages should reach into and unify local neighborhoods while providing movement for people and wildlife plus insuring proper space for drainage.

As part of policy, our North Texas roadway and trails network should make greater use of such natural features and open spaces by developing a system of drives, parkways, and trails that link together broad areas of the region as well as provide gateway entries into communities and neighborhoods. Such drives and parkways should be similar in width to two-lane Lawther Drive along the west shore of White Rock Lake, with rare exceptions being allowed for four-lane parkways designed for low speeds. Roads should be designed in context with surrounding terrain to be safe, attractive, pleasing, and memorable. At the same time, these drives, parkways, and trails will bond and connect communities and neighborhoods along either side of stream corridors.

- **Restrict overhead freeways and deck subsurface freeways at key locations.**

North Texas is a land of many freeways radiating outward and circling the urban centers. In many cases, freeways have created barriers separating cities, tearing neighborhoods apart, and fostering economic hardships. Public policy for future reconstruction of existing area freeways should not utilize overhead facilities. Subsurface highway ROW space should be used to re-connect neighborhoods along highway corridors and strengthen nodes by decking these spaces with broad linear parks, with some serving as medians for surface level parkways and boulevards.

Klyde Warren Park over Woodall Rodgers Freeway on downtown Dallas' northern edge is a very successful example, but there are other desirable locations for decking, including around City Place and Glencoe Park-SMU along North Central Expressway, on I-35E from the Dallas zoo to Eighth Street, and the relocation of I-30 away from downtown Dallas' southern edge. These decking opportunities will enhance the central city; however, such opportunities also exist at key nodes in major suburban areas, such as along Dallas North Tollway at Legacy West in Plano, U.S. Highway 67 in Cedar Hill's Uptown area, and I-30 in Arlington's sports and entertainment district.

- **Develop a thirty-year plan to bury overhead utilities along area roads.**

Many roadways, especially in older urban and suburban areas, are lined with unsightly overhead utility lines that clutter the view, butcher desirable street trees, and place utility poles in sidewalks and crosswalk landings. Such poles hamper pedestrian mobility, particularly for people with disabilities. To make Dallas' urban public realm more walkable and pleasing to experience at street level, a thirty-year plan for burying all overhead utility lines should be developed and financially supported based on a priority ranking. In addition, burying utility lines will minimize damage to the power grid and the resultant power outages during severe weather events, as well as enhance healthy and green streets by allowing trees to fully shade the streets and capture rainwater.

GDPC's AGENDA FOR NATURAL RESOURCES: Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of our natural resources.

Our agenda begins with the recognition that the Grater Dallas region is diverse and growing. Its natural resources, which include water, air, energy and land resources are finite. It is GDPC's mission to develop and promote policies and programs that ultimately enhance the sustainability and resiliency of these resources.

We must commit to reducing our carbon footprint and eliminating food deserts, designing our cities and our life systems to be resilient to the hazards that will inevitably confront them while making them thriving, healthy places to live. Holistic planning, in the form of One Water/integrated urban planning and design will be essential in this effort. In order for people to love their city, and for businesses to make investments in it, this basic set of elements needs to be well-designed and well-maintained. Integrated planning will allow cities to leverage the limited available funds to achieve more.

To Achieve Our Goals of Healing, Sustainability, Resiliency, Connectivity, Diversity and Economic Growth, and reducing our impact on the planet the following is necessary:

- **Utilize new technology to improve the environment.**

We live in an age of global warming, water scarcity and a growing fear of ecological collapse. But it is also an era of high-performance buildings, renewable energy and smart infrastructure. Today we know more than ever about our environmental problems - and their solutions. The challenge is to overcome the cost and policy barriers to make these solutions feasible.

Embedded in each of the above policy goals is the recognition that "new technologies" are going to play an increasingly important role in our daily lives. The GDPC will continue to evaluate and encourage the development of new technologies that have the potential to improve air and water quality, and analyze the potential future impact of these technologies for use in long range infrastructure planning. The GDPC will act as a catalyst to provide a forum for educating policy makers of new opportunities in the areas of water conservation and reuse, transit and transportation options that reduce air emissions, conserve energy and promote renewable energy resources and municipal solid waste reduction through recycling.

- **Preserve Water Resources.**

Our water resources are key to our region's survival and growth. This requires regional self-discipline plus innovation in how we conserve and monitor our water supply, restore our urban watersheds, preserve our region's floodplains for drainage and open space, and minimize the risk to lives and structures in flood prone areas.

1) Maintain a reliable water supply.

Maintaining a reliable long-term water supply is essential to growth. A balanced program that prioritizes water conservation and the development of environmentally acceptable new water resource projects is needed. Water quality in the region must be preserved through green storm water management programs. Expansion of the innovative John Bunker Sands Wetlands water reuse initiative to other areas along major river channels in the Trinity River

watershed and the abandoned strip mines south of I-20 in southeast Dallas County should be explored. GDPC will stay involved with and promote understanding of the State Water Plan and actively participate in Region C Planning.

2) Restore urban watersheds.

We advocate an integrated approach to managing and sustaining water resources as well as integrated urban planning to leverage available funds. We strongly support implementing complete streets, stream daylighting, riparian zone restoration and protection, water conservation and water reuse. Such green infrastructure investments are an ecologically sound way to reduce the volume and improve the quality of the water entering our sewer system during storms, which will reduce overall costs, reduce risk of polluted water in our streams and improve the overall quality and reliability of our water supply.

3) Preserve floodplains.

Recent extreme storm events in Texas and Florida have demonstrated the absolute need to maintain and preserve floodplain capacity. The GDPC encourages communities to develop projects that are mindful of the need to protect floodplain resources and require an evaluation of the impact of future development projects on floodplain capacity.

- **Improve Air Quality.**

Improving air quality and reduction of local and regional greenhouse gas emissions should be a high priority. Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Coalition (DFWCCC) through the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) has adopted climate action plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This program is working but its effectiveness can be enhanced by promoting understanding of the program among the public and policy makers.

- **Develop renewable energy sources.**

GDPC supports the conservation of electricity and supports the development of new renewable electric generation projects. The bulk of our energy is derived from fossil fuels, which are becoming ever more expensive to produce and distribute. Public investment can help finance the transition to clean technologies such as solar or wind energy. While cities cannot make investments that will transition the entire economy, they should provide rebates, retrofits and low-cost loans; build demonstration projects; streamline permitting for sustainable technologies such as residential solar panels; and reduce the energy demand of buildings through a variety of programs and policy tools. Public policies should be enacted to prioritize the purchase and use of renewable energy for running our communities.

- **Strengthen our regional food system and better manage municipal waste.**

Our region can reduce its ecological footprint by sourcing and recycling its material resources closer to home.

1) Food Source.

Locally produced food is a good example. Much of what we eat can be produced in our region. Creating a stronger tie between our cities and the North Texas agricultural sector

not only reduces the distance our food travels but also reinforces ecological awareness and creates support to fight sprawl on agricultural land. Though urban agriculture will not become a large source of food, the GDPC supports the production of food within the city because it reinforces our connection with our regional food system and provides health and community benefits. As we shorten the distance between field and fork, we can complement these efforts by turning food waste into compost. Many cities in the region already have innovative programs, but we can and should do more to reduce the waste stream that goes to the landfill.

2) Recycling and Solid Waste.

Each year, the amount of municipal solid waste increases. This waste must be collected (impacting air quality and transportation) and either processed or disposed. The majority of cities in the region have adopted recycling and source reduction programs for the residential sector. However, over 2/3 of the waste generated in the region is from the commercial sector. As the region continues to grow, available landfill space will continue to decline. With the development pressures facing the Dallas region, it becomes increasingly difficult to site and permit new landfill space. The GDPC advocates greater effort to reduce the amount of waste generated by the commercial and industrial sectors and that municipalities create recycling programs to better manage such waste streams. Local governments through NCTCOG should also evaluate opportunities to develop long-term regional approaches to this issue.