

VOLUME: 2

ARTICLE 15: DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 4: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

Texas municipalities such as the City of Dripping Springs are statutorily authorized to regulate the use and development of land. This document is the conceptual and philosophical foundation for the City's regulations. The Dripping Springs Land Development Code embodies the rules Dripping Springs has enacted, or will enact pursuant to this plan, in an effort to allow orderly growth, enhance property values, maintain a high quality of life, preserve the environment, and protect the public health and safety. Rather than restrict land lot-by-lot, in an ad-hoc fashion, Dripping Springs has adopted regulations that are both broad and uniform.

1.2. Authority

Texas law states that:

The governing body of a municipality may adopt a comprehensive plan for the long-range development of the municipality...A municipality may define the relationship between a comprehensive plan and development regulations and may provide standards for determining the consistency required between a plan and development regulations.¹

There are four inter-related purposes of a Comprehensive Plan ("Comp Plan"):

- (a) it allows the citizens of a community to create a shared vision of what they want the community to become; and
- (b) it establishes ways in which a community can effectively realize this vision; and
- (c) it serves as the basis for the standards enacted through City regulations; and
- (d) it aides in the interpretation and implementation of City regulations.

1.3. Background

Dripping Springs is a little town with big challenges. First settled in 1854, the community has a rich history as an agricultural settlement that was sparsely-populated for over 150 years.² During that time, Dripping Springs served as a commercial, religious, and education center for neighboring properties.³ Since municipal incorporation in 1981, the area has exploded with growth. Shortly after becoming a City, many property owners in the county began petitioning Dripping Springs for inclusion in its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) to avoid annexation by the City of Austin.

Development pressures from the Austin area are ever-increasing. This fact, along with the planning activities and utility projects underway in the region by other political subdivisions make it essential that Dripping Springs take responsibility for its future and adopt a consensus-based plan for its development as a community.

¹ Tex. Loc. Gov't Code 219.002.

² The Complete History of Dripping Springs, Texas, and the P.A. Smith Survey, Carl Waits (2003).

³ Historic Resources Survey of Dripping Springs, Texas: A Comprehensive Inventory for the City of Dripping Springs, Hardy Heck Moore & Wagner & Klein, Inc. (May 1988).

According to the 2000 decennial federal Census, the population of Dripping Springs was 1,548. It is anticipated that in 2010 the population will be 2,500. Envision Central Texas, which engages in planning for Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson counties, has estimated that additional 1.25 million people will live in the region within the next 20 to 40 years.⁴ While many communities must concentrate their efforts on correcting past mistakes, Dripping Springs has an opportunity to concentrate its efforts on ensuring future success.

It is extremely important for the citizens of Dripping Springs that the City guide land development in the city limits and ETJ. This issue is a heightened priority due to three unique factors facing Dripping Springs:

- (a) The community's proximity to Austin; and
- (b) The community's location in regards to the Recharge Zones or Contributing Zones for the Barton Springs - Edwards Aquifer; and
- (c) The unusually large size of the ETJ in relation to the population and size of the incorporated city limits.

This Interim Comp Plan is intended to enable Dripping Springs to transition to a new development code, which consists of the new or amended ordinances that are enacted following this document. This plan, and the subsequent regulations, will address land development issues both within the city limits and in the ETJ. This Comp Plan, as well as subsequent plans, should remain current to reflect the community's evolving character. Thus, this should be treated as a living document that is subject to frequent review and revision.

1.4. Vision

Dripping Springs is a thriving rural community at the crossroads. Just as Highway 290 and Ranch Road 12 connect in Dripping Springs, so intersects the area's rural past with the pressures of regional urbanization. Through professional planning and reasonable regulations, the City shall strive to remain a quaint place to live, productive place to work, and beautiful place to visit. Through the enactment of this plan, and the ordinances based upon this plan, the City shall demonstrate its continuing efforts to allow orderly growth, enhance property values, maintain a high quality of life, preserve the environment, safeguard historic significance, and protect the public health.

1.5 Policy Guide

It is important to recognize the difference between a Comp Plan and the regulations that back up the Comp Plan. The Comp Plan is a policy guide. The recommendations in the Comp Plan should be followed when making decisions about the City's growth and development. The Comp Plan is not a law book. Instead, it serves as the underlying basis for the laws enacted to implement the City's vision, such as the Zoning Ordinance and the Subdivision Ordinance. These implementation tools will be based on the policies set forth in the Comp Plan, as Texas state law mandates.

⁴ Briefing Packet, Envision Central Texas, p. 1 (July 2003).

The Comp Plan is the official land use and development policy statement of the City. It is important to understand that the Comp Plan remains a work-in-progress even after it is formally adopted by the City Council. Planning is a continuous process. The key to successful, ongoing planning is to utilize the Comp Plan, and to regularly update the Plan to reflect changes occurring in the City. It is, therefore, the policy of the City that this document will be reviewed at least annually and updated at least every three years in order to take into account new construction, school enrollment, modified boundaries (e.g., annexation), and changing demographics. The City will continue to seek input from citizens, residents, public officials, chamber of commerce officers, and city staff.

1.6 Current LAND USE Characteristics

Drippings Springs is the *Gateway to the Hill Country*. The community has become known state-wide as a place that values excellent schools, environmental protection, land owners’ rights, and a high quality of life. As the City continues to grow and develop more fully, areas that are currently vacant, agricultural, or are undeveloped will be converted into more intensified land uses, as the market dictates. The conversion process and how it occurs will be very important to Dripping Springs’s future attractiveness and desirability.

The City of Dripping Springs encompasses approximately 2,500 acres of land, and the ETJ covers more than 75,000 acres. In Fiscal Year 2003, the City administered land use permit files for more than 6,775 lots (within the city limits and ETJ). That same year, the City issued 33 building permits within the city limits for \$2.3 million in construction.

**Figure 1.
BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED 2003- 2004**

Type of Construction	'02 Permits	Value	'03 Permits	Value
Single Family Dwellings	6	\$910,000	13	\$2,118,500
Additions & Accessories	8	\$174,400	11	\$149,500
Remodel	8	\$25,370	7	\$46,400
Total	22	\$1,109,770	31	\$2,314,400

The relationships of existing and future land uses not only has an impact upon how the City develops economically, but shapes the areas character and livability. Providing for the orderly and efficient use of land while ensuring that community character is preserved and maintained are keys to a successful comprehensive planning process. Knowledge of the way in which land uses have developed in the past can provide guidance for how market trends affect development. Simply put, the patterns of land use that exist today within the City of Dripping Springs evolved to satisfy the requirements of the community as it has grown, both in geographic size and in population.

**Figure 2.
EXISTING LAND USE – 2004**

Categories	Units	Acreage	Percentage
Residential			
Single-Family	390	979.75	38.64
Duplex/Townhome	50	38.05	1.50
Multi-Family ⁶	2	12.88	<0.10
Manufactured Home	148	86.55	3.41
Subtotal	590	1117.23	43.56
Parkland			
Open Space	3	48.92	1.92
Playgrounds	5	14.16	<0.10
Sports Fields ⁷	25	67.58	2.66
Trails/Greenbelts	1	0.95	<0.10
Subtotal	34	131.61	4.60
Public/Semi-Public			
Historic	4	10.03	<0.10
Schools	2	63.25	2.49
County/City/Federal	4	28.24	1.10
Utilities	3	18.99	0.01
Churches	5	27.33	1.00
Subtotal	18	147.84	4.61
Business-Related			
Office	68	192.23	7.58
Retail	42	138.15	5.44
Commercial Services	52	182.38	7.19
Lodging	1	1.35	<0.01
Subtotal	163	514.11	20.22
Rural Acreage			
Undeveloped/Vacant	18	406.96	16.05
Ag/Ranching/Rural	4	149.23	5.88
Right-of-Way	17 mls	77.47	3.00
Subtotal		633.66	24.93
TOTAL		2544.45	97.92

Although the City has been a municipality for 23 years, rapid growth in the Austin area in recent years has created a need for additional residential, retail, commercial, recreational, and office

⁶ Includes assisted living facilities (i.e., group homes).

⁷ Five different locations were identified during the inventory.

areas. To gain knowledge of how and where these land uses have developed, a parcel-by-parcel land use survey of the City of Dripping Springs and its ETJ was conducted. **Figure 2** shows the results of this survey, reflecting the existing land use composition within Dripping Springs. **Figure 3** denotes the results for the ETJ.

**Figure 3.
EXISTING LAND USE -- ETJ-- 2004**

Category	Units	Acreage	Percentage
Residential			
Single-Family/Low Density	5,030	19,720	
Single-Family/Med Density	977	1,818	
Manufactured Home	43	103	
Multi-Family			
Subtotal	6,050	21,641	28.70
Parkland & Open Space			
Conservation Easement	2	1,913	
Publicly Owner Preserve	1	2,778	
Public Park/Recreation	3	88	
Subtotal	6	4,779	6.33
Public/Semi-Public			
Government/ Institutional	15	163	
Utilities	3	46	
Rights-of-Way		539	
Subtotal	18	748	0.96
Non-Residential			
Office	35	112	
Retail	20	62	
Other Commercial	39	262	
Industrial	2	44	
Subtotal	96	480	0.67
Rural Acreage			
Agriculture/Ranching		46,678	
Other (nursery, hort. Enterprise)	2	64	
Subtotal		47,742	63.33
Total		75,390 Ac.	

The following sections describe each category.

1.6.1. Residential Land Uses

Residential land use consists of areas used for residential dwelling units and related accessory buildings. Residential land use is the predominate use within the City, and it is anticipated that this will continue to be the case. This type of land use is delineated into the following residential categories:

- (a) **Low Density:** This consists of traditional, single-family detached dwelling units. Of the residential categories, the low density category accounts for a majority of the residential acres in Dripping Springs at the time this document was adopted.
- (b) **Medium Density:** This consists of two-family, attached dwelling units, such as duplex units and townhomes. The majority of the areas of the City that are characterized by this type of residential use are located in the proximity of RR 12 South of Highway 290.
- (c) **High Density:** Multi-family housing consisting of 12 or more units per acre.
- (d) **Manufactured Housing:** Manufactured homes, HUD-Code Manufactured Homes, Mobile Homes, and Industrialized Housing (i.e., modular housing). There are 2 concentrated areas for manufactured homes within Dripping Springs; this land use type is interspersed with traditional single-family houses throughout the City, generally in the older areas of the City.

1.6.2. Public/Semi-Public

Educational, religious, governmental or institutional nature; schools, churches, clubs, cemeteries, governmental buildings, fire stations and water towers.

Historic Areas: Land recognized as having historical or architectural significance.

1.6.3. Parkland

Public parks, private parks, golf courses, and open spaces that currently exist in the City of Dripping Springs. There are 94 acres of parks/open spaces in the City. This is an excellent ratio of parks to citizens, considering that the City incorporated only a short time ago. These parks also serve the population located in the ETJ.

1.6.4. Business-Related

All land uses that are not considered residential, parkland, undeveloped or public/semi-public. Future land use plans should encourage flexibility that comes

with mixed use districts. As Figure 2 show, 20.22 percent of the developed land in Dripping Springs is considered to be business-related. Office, retail, commercial services, and lodging, and hotels, which are all types of land uses that are considered nonresidential, are discussed in the following sections.

- (a) **Office Space:** Used for professional office needs; There is a relatively small amount of land used for office purposes in Dripping Springs today.
- (b) **Retail:** retail trade, personal services, and business services. The City of Dripping Springs is known throughout Texas as the “Gateway to the Hill Country,” and that distinction lends itself to attracting tourism and visiting shoppers.
- (c) **Commercial Services:** Service-related establishments that have higher traffic counts and are considered to be of greater intensity than retail establishments, and that have a need for open storage areas. Examples of commercial uses include automobile-related services, home improvement centers, feed stores, and welding shops. There are few areas in Dripping Springs that are currently used for commercial purposes.
- (d) **Lodging:** Bed-and-breakfasts and hotels. Such uses are difficult to classify in any typical land use category because their characteristics are different than other non-residential land uses. The local hotel, the Outpost Motel, is a local landmark that is, by its nature, distinguished from other nonresidential uses.

1.6.5. Rural Acreage

- (a) **Rights-of-Way:** The network of thoroughfares that have been created to allow people to move from one area to another. Current roadways in (near, and through) Dripping Springs that are generally regarded as integral due to their high traffic volumes include US Highway 290, Ranch Road 12, RR 150, Fitzhugh Road, Sawyer Ranch Road, and Highway 1826.
- (b) **Ag/Ranching/Rural Acreage:** Land in the city limits and the ETJ that is used for agricultural, ranching or wildlife management purposes. While portions of this land may be developed for other uses, such as residential or commercial subdivisions, a significant portion of these properties are likely to continue to be utilized for rural purposes in the foreseeable future. Ranching, general agriculture, truck farming, wildlife management, woodlands, conservation easements, and other types of sustainable rural uses will be considered valid and appropriate land uses in the *Future Land Use Plan*. Furthermore, undeveloped land that has no identifiable use has inherent value to the community and warrants a measure of preservation.

The percentage of rural acreage land within the city limits is approximately 24.93%. In the ETJ, this percentage is 63.33%. The *Future Land Use Plan* will include recommendations about the way in which land currently classified as Rural Acreage can be modified or developed - that is, what type of alternate land use would be most appropriate in these areas based on current conditions.

1.7 Demographics

1.7.1. Central Texas

The total land area for the Central Texas region is 2,739,161 acres. Of this, there is a total developed area of 740,563 acres. That is an average of 593 acres for every 1,000 people. There are .46 people per acre in the entire region and 1.69 people per acre in the developed areas.⁹

1.7.2. City of Dripping Springs

According to the 2000 federal Census, in April of 2000 Dripping Springs had a population of 1,548 in the city limits.¹⁰ It is estimated that the population of the ETJ exceeds 25,000. Characteristics of that population are summarized below:

⁹ Executive Summary, *Envision Central Texas* (August 2003).

¹⁰ Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000, US Census Bureau.

**Figure 4.
EXCERPTED 2000 CENSUS INFORMATION**

Male:	794	51.3%
Female:	754	48.7%
Median Age:	36.3	
White:	1,339	86.5%
Black:	4	0.3%
Hispanic:	290	18.7%
Family Households:	419	75.6%
Non-Family Households:	135	24.4%
Average Household Size:	2.79	
Average Family Size:	3.24	
Occupied Housing Units:	554	94.9%
Vacant Housing Units:	30	5.1%
Owner-occupied Housing Units:	384	69.3%
Renter-occupied Housing Units:	170	30.7%
Population > 16 years of age in Labor Force:	850	72%
Population > 16 years of age not in Labor Force:	331	28%
Workers Commuting to Work:	816	
Median Household Income:	\$47,212	
Median Family Income:	\$57,880	
Families Below Poverty Level:	21	

1.7.3. Dripping Springs ISD

Under the Moderate Scenario prepared by DISD, total school district enrollment is projected to increase by 75 students between Fall 2003 and Fall 2004. The largest numeric and percentage increase is expected to occur in the 3rd grade, where the enrollment is projected to increase by 47 students.¹¹ DISD had .66 students per housing unit within DISD.

¹¹ Demographic Study, Dripping Springs Independent School District, p. 64 (Spring 2004).

**Figure 5.
DISD MODERATE GROWTH SCENARIO**

School	Total	Enrollment	%
Year	Enrollment	Growth	Change
2004-05	3,355	75	2.3%
2005-06	3,470	115	3.4%
2006-07	3,640	170	4.9%

1.7.4. City of Austin

With a current population of 692,102, Austin has grown tremendously and spans three counties, Travis, Hays and Williamson. 145,907

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES & ACTIONS

The City of Dripping Springs is committed to steering land use and development in a manner that allows the community to thrive and grow while preserving the natural resources and quality of life that have made the area a wonderful place to live and work for over 150 years. In furtherance of that goal, the Comp Plan contains implementation-oriented policies that are responsive to the City's guiding principles, and that directly address how the desired vision of the community can be achieved. In order to better relate to the Comp Plan itself, the guiding principles and related actions have been divided into subjects related to the Comp Plan sections.

PRINCIPLE 1: Future Land Use

Provide opportunities for coordinated, well-planned growth and development within the City of Dripping Springs and the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) while maintaining and enhancing the City's heritage and character.

- Action 1.1. Develop a *Future Land Use* component for the ~~of this~~ Comp Plan that will provide for types of land uses appropriate for the community, location and amount of acreage, in the city limits and the ETJ.
- Action 1.2. Identify areas within the City that are appropriate for different land uses.
- Action 1.3. Plan for future development that is compatible with the City's natural features and existing land uses.
- Action 1.4. Identify land uses that may not be desirable and/or may not be compatible with the uniqueness of Dripping Springs, such as industrial, heavy commercial, or mining developments.
- Action 1.5. Identify special areas within the City that may warrant special land use designation, such as the area along US Highway 290, Ranch Road 12, on Mercer Street, and in historic areas.
- Action 1.6. Develop a growth management strategy that identifies and prioritizes areas within the City's ETJ for future expansion of the City's limits based upon established criteria.
- Action 1.7. Utilize this Comp Plan in daily decision-making regarding zoning, land use and development proposals.
- Action 1.8. Take into consideration the effects of regional activities on transportation, natural resources, the economy, and land use patterns within Dripping Springs and its ETJ.
- Action 1.9. Participate in legitimate groups that assist with the development and implementation of a regional vision addressing the growth of Central Texas.
- Action 1.10. Incorporate into the City's planning efforts the valid studies and statistical data generated by those organizations with expertise that is deemed reliable.
- Action 1.11. Remain mindful of the low residential vacancy rate (5.1%) and the effect it has on home values.
- Action 1.12. Develop regulations that ensure new construction is consistent with the character, scale and quality of the Dripping Springs style.

PRINCIPLE 2: Transportation

Provide a balanced transportation system that is coordinated with existing needs and with plans for future growth; this system should be economical and responsive to environmental concerns.

- Action 2.1. Develop a Transportation Plan that will allow the City to identify rights-of-way locations (for dedication purposes) and criteria (i.e., for a hierarchical system of roadways) such that future growth can be accommodated.
- Action 2.2. Identify any existing transportation deficiencies, and establish ways in which to improve such deficiencies, if possible.
- Action 2.3. Facilitate the connection of Highway 290 and RR 12 from both the east - west, and north - south corridors in order to improve the traffic patterns and add to the ambience of the City.
- Action 2.4. Ensure that the following concerns are addressed when making decisions regarding transportation within the City:
 - a. regional transportation,
 - b. roadway integrity (i.e., ensuring mobility),
 - c. adequate access (to and from Dripping Springs, and to and from land uses within Dripping Springs),
 - d. impact of high-intensity land uses (i.e., trip generation, parking needs).
- Action 2.5. Explore alternatives to the automobile (e.g., bicycle lanes), and identify ways in which such alternatives can be accommodated within the existing and future transportation system; this is especially needed in and around Downtown Dripping Springs, where the concentrated retail area is located.
- Action 2.6. Utilize the Comp Plan and the Transportation Plan in the plan review process, and in daily decision-making regarding zoning, land use and development proposals.
- Action 2.7. Urge the installation of sidewalks and/or bicycle lanes throughout the City, along US Highway 290, and RR 12, in the city limits and ETJ.

PRINCIPLE 3: Public Facilities & Infrastructure

Ensure that the needs of existing and future residents and businesses within Dripping Springs are adequately served.

- Action 3.1. Develop a Public Facilities Plan that addresses the City's current service needs and the possible expansion of service provision that will likely be required with future growth.
- Action 3.2. Provide public places vital to the administration of municipal affairs and provision of municipal services.
- Action 3.3. Prepare a Future Land Use Plan and related population projections to aid in establishing locational criteria and a general time-frame for service provision; specifically, establish locations for public safety-related services (fire and police stations), and relate the number of personnel required to the existing and future (projected) population.
- Action 3.4. Ensure that local infrastructure systems (e.g., wastewater system, water supply, storm drainage, electrical power, etc.) will adequately serve the health, safety and general welfare of residents and businesses within the City and ETJ.

- Action 3.5. Review standards for the installation, use, and maintenance of septic systems, and where appropriate make necessary changes to those standards.
- Action 3.6. Utilize the Comp Plan and the Public Facilities Plan in the plan review process, and in daily decision-making regarding zoning, land use and development proposals.
- Action 3.7. Work with the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), Dripping Springs Water Supply Corporation (DSWSC), Hays County, and the Hays Trinity Groundwater Conservation District (HTGCD) to incorporate water quality and supply standards into Dripping Springs’ regulatory program and encourage increased compliance.
- Action 3.8. Address centralized wastewater systems within the Subdivision Ordinance.
- Action 3.9. Adopt regulations and incentives that correlate lot size with water source so that lots serviced by well water or a blend of well water and surface water shall be larger than those lots serviced completely by surface water.

PRINCIPLE 4: Parkland

Ensure that adequate parkland, including playgrounds, sports fields, greenbelts and open spaces are provided as the City continues to grow.

- Action 4.1. Provide an assessment of existing parks and open spaces that exist within Dripping Springs and its ETJ today, and identify future parkland needs in relation to the City’s future projected population and in relation to anticipated future land use locations.
- Action 4.2. Explore options for ensuring adequate park and open space provision; such options include adopting a park dedication ordinance (within the Subdivision Ordinance), using of City-owned property, purchasing property, and using floodplain areas.
- Action 4.3. Allow for developers to provide the City with cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication to ensure funding for maintenance of existing parks and creation of new parks that serve the new developments and existing citizens.
- Action 4.4. Establish a pedestrian and bicycle trail system that is capable of providing an alternative to automobile travel throughout the City and ETJ, but especially in and around Downtown Dripping Springs (This should be correlated with the Transportation Plan.).
- Action 4.5. Continue development of sports facilities, schools, Founders Park, Sports Park, Karhan Park, and the future Hanks Park.
- Action 4.6. Pursue grants from regional, state, federal agencies, private endowments and foundations for the purchase, development, and/or maintenance of parkland.

PRINCIPLE 5: Historic Preservation

Ensure that the City of Dripping Springs’ past is preserved, maintained, and honored when making decisions regarding the City’s future.

- Action 5.1. Provide an assessment of historic areas and structures.
- Action 5.2. Explore options for ensuring the preservation of historic areas and structures; such options include establishing an “historic preservation district” (within the

Zoning Ordinance), or establishing an “historic overlay district” (within the Zoning Ordinance).

- Action 5.3. Establish ways in which the City can honor its history and use that rich history to bolster civic pride.
- Action 5.4. Utilize the Comp Plan and the Historic Preservation Strategies Plan in the plan review process, and in daily decision-making regarding zoning, land use and development proposals.
- Action 5.5. Pursue resources for conducting a series of archeological surveys in the City and its ETJ.

PRINCIPLE 6: Corridor Design

Ensure that a positive image of the City of Dripping Springs is projected within its major corridors.

- Action 6.1. Establish the corridors within which the City should concentrate its aesthetic preservation and enhancement efforts; such corridors will likely include Highway 290, Ranch Road 12, and Mercer Street.
- Action 6.2. Establish the image that the City wants to project within these corridors, and effective ways in which this can be pursued.
- Action 6.3. Explore options for projecting the City’s desired image; such options include establishing corridor overlay districts (within the Zoning Ordinance) that promote landscape buffers and preserve scenic vistas.
- Action 6.4. Establish criteria, design guidelines, and/or standards by which the City can evaluate private projects and their contributions to Dripping Springs’s desired image within these corridors.
- Action 6.5. Utilize the Comp Plan and the Corridor Design Guidelines in the plan review process, and in daily decision-making regarding zoning, land use and development proposals.
- Action 6.6. Enact specific requirements for signage and landscaping along essential corridors, with the intent of minimizing the obstruction of our scenic views.

PRINCIPLE 7: Community Livability

Ensure that as the City of Dripping Springs experiences growth and development, its existing character and charm is maintained and enhanced.

- Action 7.1. Establish design-related guidelines for nonresidential development that will help the City and its ETJ retain its unique environment as growth occurs; guidelines would be related to elements such as:
 - (a) signage
 - (b) setbacks
 - (c) building height
 - (d) building materials
 - (e) building size
 - (f) building mass (e.g., façade articulation requirement)
 - (g) parking (e.g., locational requirements to protect the view from the road)
 - (h) screening

(i) landscaping

- Action 7.2. Promote positive land use relationships (between different land uses and between land uses and the roadway) through adjacency standards.
- Action 7.3. Establish the image that the City wants to project, and effective ways in which this can be pursued.
- Action 7.4. Establish criteria by which the City can evaluate private projects and their contributions to Dripping Springs's desired image.
- Action 7.5. Protect the environment through the recognition of environmentally sensitive areas (e.g., Onion Creek, the original Dripping Springs, and Barton Creek, and their watersheds.). Establish regulations that would protect such areas.
- Action 7.6. Establish in the City's Land Development Code zoning overlay districts to protect entrance corridors, watersheds, and the Mercer Street downtown area from incompatible or out-of-scale development.
- Action 7.7. Encourage existing arts and cultural programs and support the development of new artistic ventures.
- Action 7.8. Maintain an active role in organizing and coordinating community activities and civic events for Dripping Springs citizens and the general public.
- Action 7.9. Encourage the use of public space and other properties as venues for the display of art and musical performances.

PRINCIPLE 8: Economic Development

Ensure that economic development opportunities are pursued in order to provide the City with a solid fiscal outlook as future growth and development occurs.

- Action 8.1. Use the positive image that Dripping Springs has throughout Texas to increase economic development opportunities, especially those that are tourism-related.
- Action 8.2. Establish target uses that are considered to be desirable within the City.
- Action 8.3. Establish ways in which to attract target uses to locate in Dripping Springs.
- Action 8.4. Establish methods and procedures for finding and applying for grants that may be available from private foundations and government agencies to assist the City in accomplishing the objective stated herein.
- Action 8.5. Attract green industries that are likely to employ Dripping Springs residents.
- Action 8.6. Create jobs that will enable the community to retain young adults and stem the loss of youthful citizens to larger cities.
- Action 8.7. Cooperate with the Dripping Springs Chamber of Commerce to promote appropriate economic opportunities inside the city limits and ETJ.

PRINCIPLE 9: Natural Resource Protection

- Action 9.1. Remedy the issue of defective on-site sewage facilities (i.e., septic systems) through increased monitoring and enforcement, and by providing for a municipally-owned centralized sewer system.
- Action 9.2. Enact regulations specifically designed to preserve water quantity, protect water quality, and prevent water pollution.

- Action 9.3. Regulate the amount of impervious cover allowed on specific tracts in light of the proposed development's impact on the tract's topography, water quality, drainage, type of wastewater treatment system, and the available mitigation alternatives or corrective measures.
- Action 9.4. Foster tree preservation and responsible responses to the threats of Oak Wilt and Live Oak Decline.
- Action 9.5. Provide for the preservation of open space.
- Action 9.6. Encourage the construction and utilization of rain water collection systems.
- Action 9.7. Encourage lighting practices that preserve our night skies and limit off-site migration of artificial illumination.

PRINCIPLE 10: Ethical Decision-Making

- Action 10.1. Foster a shared sense of moral responsibility for land use decisions among municipal officials, developers, real estate professionals, land planners, citizens and property owners.
- Action 10.2. Enact policies and procedures that facilitate open and honest communications.
- Action 10.3. Strive for integrity throughout the land use and development process.

PRINCIPLE 11: Regional Planning & Intergovernmental Relations

- Action 11.1. Coordinate activities with local, state and federal agencies, including Dripping Springs ISD, LCRA, Hays County, HTGCD, and TxDOT.
- Action 11.2. Participate in cooperative associations such as Regional Water Quality Planning.
- Action 11.3. Maintain a dialogue with the Council of Governments and the City's municipal neighbors, in particular Austin, Bee Cave, Buda, Kyle, San Marcos and Wimberley.
- Action 11.4. Work cooperatively with Pedernales Electric Cooperative (PEC) and Drippings Springs Water Supply Corporation (DSWSC).
- Action 11.5. Seek assistance from regional partners for the mapping of natural, cultural, and historic features, including soils, wetlands, floodplains, slopes, significant wildlife habitat, woodlands, farmland, archeological and cultural features, scenic views, recharge and contributing areas of aquifers.

PRINCIPLE 12. ANNEXATION

- Action 12.1. Consideration for any ETJ Development Agreement or Planned Development District should include the developer's voluntary consent for annexation.

3. FUTURE LAND USE

Provide opportunities for coordinated, well-planned growth and development within the City of Dripping Springs and the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) while maintaining and enhancing the City's heritage and character.

3.1. Purpose

The right of a municipality such as the City of Dripping Springs to regulate land is rooted in its need to protect the health, safety and welfare of its citizens. The first step in establishing guidelines for such regulation is the *Future Land Use Plan*, which establishes an overall framework for the pattern of development within Dripping Springs and its ETJ. Specifically, the *Future Land Use Plan* designates areas for particular land uses, based principally on population growth, locational criteria, compatibility criteria, and a balance of land use types. Graphically depicted for use during the development plan review process, the *Future Land Use Plan* should ultimately be reflected through the City's policy and development decisions. The *Future Land Use Plan* is not a zoning map, which deals with specific development requirements on individual parcels; the zoning map should, however, be based on the *Future Land Use Plan*. In general, the *Future Land Use Plan* is intended to be a blueprint laying out the vision for Dripping Springs' future land use.

3.2. Recommended Pattern of Land Uses

Land uses have been recommended not only for the existing City limits, but also within the City's ETJ. Municipalities in Texas do not have the same extent of land use control in the ETJ, and therefore, land uses are shown for two principal purposes. If and when Dripping Springs annexes an area, the recommended use of the land is known and it can be zoned accordingly. Also, it is important to know the intended land use when engineering studies are conducted. Knowing whether an area is likely to develop as residential or nonresidential affects infrastructure such as roads and water and sewer lines. The following sections outline the various types of land uses that will help to provide a positive land use pattern in Dripping Springs with future growth and development. The Introduction section (above) can be referred to for an expanded explanation regarding the various land use definitions.

3.3. Residential

Residential land use is the predominant use within the City currently, and it is recommended within the Future Land Use Plan that this continue. Single-family residential land uses can be buffered from nonresidential uses through the development of medium residential land uses.

3.3.1. Low-Density (i.e., Single-Family)

This use consists of traditional, single-family detached dwelling units. Of the residential categories, it is recommended that low density residential continue to account for the largest percentage. Also, much of the land area within the ETJ has previously been recommended for low density residential. Although all single-family areas have been considered low density, the City

should strive for a range of lot sizes in order to adequately provide for market choice. Dripping Springs encourages development designs that exchange higher density for the preservation of valuable open space and parkland.

Existing manufactured homes have been included within this category in the Future Land Use Plan. Site-built homes should be encouraged as replacements for manufactured homes whenever possible. Zoning, Subdivision, and Watershed Protection regulations should establish appropriate standards for density for those properties located within Recharge Zones or Contributing Zones the Aquifer for the Barton Springs - Edwards Aquifer.

3.3.2. Medium Density

This use consists of two-family, attached dwelling units, such as duplex units and townhomes. As discussed within The Introduction section (above, there are currently medium density areas within Dripping Springs. It is anticipated that new areas for medium density land use will be developed in the future. One recommended area is located in proximity to FM 150 and North side of Creek Road from Highway 290 to Onion Creek.

Medium density land uses provide areas for “empty nesters”, who may not want the maintenance of a large-lot single-family home, and for young families, who may find a townhome or duplex more affordable. The percentages of acreage that have been allocated for medium density land use within the City and ETJ may seem low, the fact that these areas are dense allows them to develop on a relatively small amount of acreage.

3.3.3. High Density

Traditional apartment-type units in attached living complexes. There are no high density residential areas within the city limits of Dripping Springs, but with the increased need for housing diversity that the City will experience with population growth, it is anticipated that there may be a market for such uses in the future (e.g., Roger Hanks Park). In response to this, it is intended that some of the land allocated to Mixed Use will be used to develop high density residential housing. The fact that no land has been designated solely for high density residential use is not intended to exclude such uses from developing in the City or ETJ. Since high density developments impact concentrated areas, these guidelines should be considered for any multifamily development:

- (a) The proposed multi-family tract should take access from a collector or major thoroughfare (i.e., not directly adjacent to local residential streets).
- (b) All structures within the multi-family development should be 80 percent masonry.

- (c) The tract should not be less than approximately ten acres in size and on a public water system. Greater density may be available if the subdivision is served by an organized sewer system.
- (d) If the tract is adjacent to single-family residential dwellings, transition areas (greenspace, buffer areas, medium density development, etc.) should be incorporated into the project.
- (e) Based upon the density of the complex, an appropriate amount of usable open space should be required.

3.4. Non-Residential Land Uses

Residents of the City of Dripping Springs have the advantage of being able to live, work and recreate within the City itself; the existence of nonresidential uses allows this. Bed-&-breakfasts and inns should be permitted as conditional uses in any area, with the proper parking, buffering, and access considerations taken into account.

3.4.1. Offices

There is a relatively small amount of land used for office purposes in Dripping Springs. However, office uses are in keeping with the small-town character of the community, and it is recommended that the amount of land used for office purposes be increased. There is an area that is recommended for concentrated office land use is the area South of town. It is not generally recommended that new office uses be located directly along major thoroughfares, such as Mercer Street, Highway 290, and RR 12; most of the uses along the major thoroughfares in Dripping Springs should be retail because of the visibility that these thoroughfares provide. In other areas of Dripping Springs, offices can be developed between residential and higher intensity land uses to provide for a positive transition between them. When adjacent to residential uses, offices should be designed in a manner that is compatible with adjacent residential land uses. In addition, due to the high compatibility between office and residential land uses, within areas that are designated as Office on the Future Land Use Plan map, residential uses could generally be permitted. Office uses are also encouraged within any area designated for Retail, Regional Retail, or Commercial, or in areas designated for Mixed Use on the Future Land Use Plan map. It should be noted that commercial land uses should not be permitted within areas designated for Office uses.

3.4.2. Local Retail

The City's specialty shops account for much of the existing retail acreage. Office and residential uses are interspersed throughout these retail areas, and this is intended to continue within areas designated for retail use on the *Future Land Use Plan* map. Dripping Springs is known for its scenic ambiance, which can attract shoppers. The recommendations for retail uses within the *Future Land Use Plan* are intended to support this unique physical charm; the type of retail uses the City has now should be used as an example of the retail uses that should locate within the areas designated for retail use on the *Future*

Land Use Plan map. A large amount of acreage has been recommended for retail land use.

To ensure that new retail development will be compatible with the unique character of existing retail development, the City should consider design guidelines for uses that locate along Highway 290, Ranch Road 12, and Mercer Street, such as:

- (a) limiting the maximum building size of uses
- (b) identifying desired building materials,
- (c) integrating more pedestrian elements (e.g., street
- (d) furniture, sidewalks, trails), and
- (e) integrating public spaces (e.g., gazebos, patios, courtyards and squares)

Within areas that are designated as Retail on the Future Land Use Plan map, low and medium density residential should be permitted within Retail areas along Mercer Street and office uses should generally be permitted within any Retail areas. This is consistent with the way in which the City has developed in the past and is consistent with the Guiding Principles of this document. However, commercial (wholesale retail?) land uses should not be permitted within Retail areas.

3.4.3. Regional Retail

As the City grows in population, there will be an increasing need for larger retail stores, such as grocery stores, department stores, and auto sales. These retail sites are different in nature and size than what has developed previously, and what is envisioned to develop in the future in the core area of Dripping Springs: Two areas in proximity of the intersection of Highway 290 and RR 12.

A grocery store is a necessary, but atypical facility, that is likely to attract and anchor other regional retail uses. The City, therefore, should consider a maximum building size for these areas that is higher than what has been established for Downtown Dripping Springs, such as 100,000 square feet. There must also be an awareness of and consistency with the Dripping Springs scale. This is still in keeping with the community character that the City desires to maintain, but would allow residents to shop for groceries locally or shop at a large bookstore, activities which they would not be able to pursue in the downtown center of Dripping Springs. Office and retail land uses should also be permitted within areas designated for Regional Retail. Commercial land uses should not be permitted. Strict exterior design standards will be necessary to ensure compatibility with the Dripping Springs style, including aesthetics.

3.4.4. Mixed Use

The *Mixed Use* land designation is intended to provide flexibility in the type of development that occurs. It is envisioned that within this area, the primary process of development would be a planned development district (PD), wherein the developer and the City would work together to ensure that a large, diverse proposed development would enhance Dripping Springs. Communities across Texas are experiencing an increased market demand for concentrated areas where people can shop, eat, work and live – this land use designation is intended to support this type of a development concept in a high quality manner by providing an opportunity for a creative mixture of land uses. Uses that should be permitted within Mixed Use areas are: low, medium, and high density residential, office, retail, and regional retail. Commercial land uses should not be permitted.

3.4.5. Business Park

A business park has been recommended within the ETJ north of the City with access via RR 12. The intent of this use designation is to provide Dripping Springs with a location for an office complex (campus). Such uses have many positive aspects, such as providing local employment and increasing tax revenue, and they are relatively low impact, with the exception of their parking lots. Uses envisioned for the area designated as *Business Park* could be multi-story, of different materials, etc., differentiating them from structures that would be located in within the City, which are intended to be designed similarly to homes. All other types of nonresidential land uses should also be permitted within areas designated for Business Park, with the exception of commercial uses.

3.4.6. Commercial Services

Traditional commercial uses generally are not compatible with the character the City desires to maintain and enhance. As mentioned within *The Introduction* section, examples of commercial uses include automobile-related services, feed stores, welding shops, and pawn shops. There are few areas in Dripping Springs that are currently used for commercial purposes, and it is not recommended that the City have a large allocation of commercially designated areas. For areas in which commercial uses are permitted, the City should consider establishing design-related guidelines to ensure their compatibility with other uses of less intensity. Within these guidelines, the City should consider requiring open storage areas to be buffered and/or screened from any adjacent residential uses and from public view. It is strongly recommended that the City limit future commercial uses to areas that are designated as such on the Future Land Use Plan map; due to compatibility issues with other types of land use, commercial uses should not be permitted within any other areas of the City.

3.4.7. Public/Semi-Public

This land use consists of uses that are of an educational, religious, governmental or institutional nature. Public/semi-public uses are generally permitted within any area, so the areas shown on the *Future Land Use Plan* map include the related current uses. Historic areas, and parkland, have also been designated as public/semi-public. The City, upon recommendation from the Dripping Springs Historical Preservation Commission, may delineate an area within which specific regulations pertaining to historic landmarks should be applied.

4. FUTURE PLANNING ISSUES

4.1. Adoption of Ordinances

The City shall adopt ordinances (such as zoning and subdivision ordinances) that are based on this Comp Plan in order to achieve the land use recommendations made herein.

4.2. Ordinance Amendments

A policy is hereby established for amending the Future Land Use Plan in order to be consistent with emerging needs in the community. The Future Land Use Plan should be amended first, and then the zoning regulations should be amended accordingly. In order to expedite the process of amending the Future Land Use Plan and to ensure zoning regulations correspond, the related amendment recommendation(s) may be forwarded simultaneously with specific rezoning requests. If a rezoning request is consistent with the Plan, a routine review process would follow. Recommendation of the project should include a notation that the proposed rezoning request is consistent with the Plan. Other review criteria (i.e., traffic impact, compatibility with surrounding uses, etc.) should also be applied. It is recommended that the City of Dripping Springs engage in regular review of the Future Land Use Plan to further ensure that adopted zoning regulations are consistent and that all amendments made subsequent to the Plan's initial adoption are reflected within the Future Land Use Plan and its map.

4.3. Development Proposals & the Future Land Use Plan

The City anticipates that some proposals will be submitted by applicants that, if approved, will result in inconsistencies between the City's zoning regulations and the Future Land Use Plan. The City may craft specialized development parameters through Planned Developments (PDs) and Development Agreements. The City may approve the proposal if it is beneficial to the community. Review of such development proposals should include the following considerations:

- (a) Will the proposed change enhance the site and the surrounding area?
- (b) Is the proposed change a better use than that recommended by the *Future Land Use Plan*?
- (c) Will the proposed use impact adjacent residential areas in a negative manner? If so, how will the developer mitigate the damage or achieve balance? Or, will the proposed use be compatible with, and/or enhance, adjacent residential areas?
- (d) Are uses adjacent to the proposed use similar in nature in terms of appearance, hours of operation, and other general aspects of compatibility?
- (e) Does the proposed use present a significant benefit to the public health, safety and welfare of the community?
- (f) Would it contribute to the City's long-term economic well-being?
- (g) Does the proposal preserve or enhance water quality protection?

Development proposals that are inconsistent with the *Future Land Use Plan* (or that do not meet its general intent) should be reviewed based upon the above questions and should be evaluated individually. It should be incumbent upon the applicant to provide evidence that the proposal meets the aforementioned considerations and supports community goals and objectives, as set forth within this Interim Comp Plan. It is important to recognize that proposals inconsistent with the Plan might be an improvement over the uses shown on the Plan for a particular area. This may arise due to changes in the market, development, or economic trends that emerge. As such changes occur, and especially if there is a significant benefit to the City of Dripping Springs, then these proposals should be approved, and the *Future Land Use Plan* should be amended accordingly.

4.4. Transportation

Planning must provide for a balanced transportation system that is coordinated with existing needs and with plans for growth. This system should be economical and responsive to environmental concerns. Transportation is inherently linked to land use. A community's transportation system is vital to the community's ability to grow in reasonable manner. The type of roadway dictates the use of adjacent land, and conversely, the type of land use dictates the size, capacity and flow of the roadway. A major challenge for the City of Dripping Springs lies in accommodating population growth within the existing transportation system and in the accommodation of new land development through the expansion of that system. More specifically, the transportation system should:

- (a) Protect the ambience, character, and quality of existing neighborhoods by directing traffic generated by growth away from existing neighborhoods.
- (b) Provide gateways to the business district from major freeways and arterials to ensure easy access to Downtown Dripping Springs.
- (c) Provide ready access and eliminate congestion to future retail land uses.
- (d) Promote the safety and well-being of citizens by defining emergency access corridors and prohibiting the building of low-water crossings.
- (e) Require environmental and/or other appropriate impact studies for all new roadways to ensure appropriate surface water drainage.

The references made regarding the transportation system should not be viewed as references solely to roadways. Communities across the nation are becoming increasingly aware of the problems inherent in constructing a system for the automobile alone; accommodating pedestrians and cyclists is important in creating a community. Downtown Dripping Springs is generally a pedestrian friendly environment, as are many of the residential areas. Another challenge for the City lies in the integration of pedestrian and bicycle facilities such that these facilities entice usage.

4.5. Summary

These recommendations should guide Dripping Springs's future land use planning and related policies. The Future Land Use Plan is not a zoning map. It is a guide to

decision making in the context of the City's future land use, and it should be the basis for the City's zoning regulations as they are developed and enacted. The official copy of the *Future Land Use Plan* map should be on file at Dripping Springs's City Hall. The boundaries of land use categories as depicted on the official map should be used to determine the appropriate land use category for areas that are not clearly delineated on the smaller-scale *Future Land Use Plan* map contained within this Interim Comp Plan document.

5. CONCLUSION

As the *Gateway to the Hill Country*, Dripping Springs has a legitimate public concern regarding the development and use of land in and around the community. How buildings and their amenities are constructed and utilized has a direct impact on the character and livability of Drippings Springs. Concerns regarding quality of life, traffic management, water protection, environmental protection, historic preservation, economic development, and scenic vistas are at the very center of municipal governance in Dripping Springs.

This Interim Comp Plan is adopted in furtherance of the City's goal of achieving *smart growth*. This plan provides the rationale underlying the City's Land Development Code, and the individual ordinances therein. Preferences stated in this Plan represent the informed consensus of the City Council, Planning & Zoning Commission, City staff, professional consultants and participating citizens. Having conducted numerous public hearings and provided ample public notice, the City of Dripping Springs is confident that this document reflects the shared vision of the community.

The City of Dripping Springs is committed to complete work on a more thorough Comprehensive Plan within the next fiscal year.