

Chapter 2

The Community Development Master Planning Process



2.1 What is Community Development?

“Community development” is a term that presents some degree of ambiguity for most people. Upon hearing the phrase, a variety of ideas about what community development is and what it means for our city come to mind. No doubt, each of us has a slightly (or very) different idea of what community development might be.

Across the country, the specific focus of community development ranges between developing affordable housing for low- to moderate-income families, empowering communities or groups of citizens to have a voice in local government, building economic and environmental sustainability, and developing public spaces such as parks, community centers, and pedestrian-friendly streets. While these foci are varied, community development can be defined as **actions that work in unison to improve quality of life for all citizens within the community.**

In Texas, the *Development Corporation Act of 1979* allows the creation of two types of public “development corporations.” These organizations are not to be confused with land developers and are, in fact, public bodies – they are founded by a city government and are managed by a board comprised of citizens. Two types of development corporations are allowed – a §4A corporation, which focuses on manufacturing and industrial development, and a §4B corporation, which focuses on community development and quality of life improvement within a city. Both types of corporation are funded by local sales tax and are responsible to the public.

The Colony has both a §4A and a §4B corporation – known locally as the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and the Community Development Corporation (CDC), respectively. As with other §4B corporations in Texas, The Colony’s CDC is authorized to collect sales tax revenue and use this revenue to carry out projects that will help secure the **economic and social sustainability of the city by improving quality of life.**

The proposition approved by voters and establishing The Colony Community Development Corporation is as follows: "The adoption of a Sales and Use Tax within the City of The Colony , Texas , at the rate of one-half of one percent to be used, after the holding of at least one public hearing, for land, buildings, equipment, facilities, and improvements required or suitable for use for sports, athletic, entertainment, tourist, convention, and public park purposes and events, including but not limited to Community Centers, Libraries, and Hike and Bike Trails, and the promotion or development of new or expanded business enterprises, as authorized by Section 4B of Article 5190.6 Vernon 's Texas Civil Statutes, as amended (The Development Corporation Act of 1979); and maintenance and operating costs associated with any of the above projects that are publicly owned and operated."

While The Colony’s CDC is authorized to be involved in these various types of projects, the Board focuses the majority of its efforts on developing and enhancing public spaces, including individual parks, all of which add to quality of life. Specifically, the CDC supports parks, recreation, and athletics facility projects as well as projects that support the cultural identity of The Colony, such as renovations to the City Library. With the completion of this Community Development Master Plan (CDMP), the City of The Colony and The Colony CDC will have a road map, which includes a vision, guidelines, and strategies, for the future of community development in The Colony.

2.2 Why is Community Development Important to The Colony Today?

All cities practice planning – the act of understanding current conditions and trends and developing and applying strategies to influence the development of a district, city, or region. This planning takes many forms – transportation planning, zoning, water resources planning, etc. – and results in actions and changes to cities that impact the way citizens live, travel, and work. While all adopted planning efforts impact citizens significantly, it is the work performed in community development master planning that is often most recognizable by citizens.

The purpose of The Colony CDC is to enhance the quality of life within the community for all of the city’s residents. The CDC strives to achieve this purpose through developing public spaces, such as parks, athletic facilities, and cultural amenities that directly impact the lives of citizens. Looking around the city, one might notice the influx of new playground equipment, sidewalks, and shade pavilions in the city’s parks. Many of these new additions were funded by the CDC. Specifically, the CDC has been instrumental in attracting the development of the Hawaiian Falls Waterpark; development

of the \$7.5 million Five Star Athletic Complex – the addition of which helped The Colony earn the title of “50th Anniversary Sportstown for Texas,” which was awarded by Sports Illustrated Magazine and the National Recreation and Park Association in 2003; \$2.5 million trail development; and over \$1 million park improvements. It is through these and other projects (including the sponsorship of this Community Development Master Plan) that the CDC is helping to improve the quality of life in the city and make The Colony the standard for excellence for community development.



The Community Development Master Plan was sponsored by the CDC Board in conjunction with The Colony Parks and Recreation Department and was developed with the aid of a team of consultants led by Half Associates of Richardson, Texas (hereafter, Planning Team). Through the community development master planning process, the Planning Team went to the public to gain input on what is important in The Colony. Information gathered from these meetings was combined with the mission of the CDC to develop a roadmap for community development. Through the implementation of the recommendations presented in this master plan, the city will take considerable steps to improve the quality of life, image, and character of The Colony over the next five to ten years. Specifically, the 2008 Community Development Master Plan:

- Identifies the need for additional community facilities, including parks;
- Evaluates the spatial location of parks, recreation, and cultural facilities within the City and recommends measures to ensure a balanced distribution of facilities within the city;
- Guides the CDC Board and City Staff in acquiring land to meet current and future park, open space, and facility needs;
- Recommends and prioritizes key improvements so that the most significant deficiencies are addressed as quickly as possible;
- Is intended to guide City Staff and City leaders in determining where and how funding should be allocated over the next five to ten years;
- Identifies opportunities and recommends appropriate measures for improving quality of life within the city; and
- Provides a plan which is consistent with the funding and grant requirements for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

2.3 The Components of the Community Development Master Plan

There are many facets to community development, but for this specific planning effort, the Planning Team was asked to examine five elements that best describe the role of community development for The Colony. These elements were identified through discussions between the CDC Board, City Staff, and the Planning Team and are as follows:

- City Image & Beautification – Including the physical appearance of the city’s public spaces and community spirit
- Parks, Open Space & Recreation – Including active and passive recreation opportunities as well as open space to preserve the city’s rural identity
- Arts – Including performing and visual arts both indoors and outdoors
- History – Including the natural and cultural history of The Colony
- Culture – Including community identity and cultural development and educational programs

2.3.1 The Community Development Master Plan as a Parks Plan

One of the key ways in which community development affects people is through the experiences provided in parks, open space, and recreation centers and programs. In addition, parks and open space often play a large role in forming a city’s image and providing beautification. For The Colony, parks, open space, and recreation are key elements in achieving the vision for community development. As such, a considerable portion of the Planning Team’s efforts has been toward parks and recreation planning tasks, including identifying the condition of existing parks, developing target levels of service for park acreage and facilities, and producing a prioritized action plan.

2.3.2 Project Timeline

This version of the Community Development Master Plan took approximately eighteen months to complete, from December 2007 to June 2009.

2.3.3 Master Plan Timeline

After discussing the needs of and changes occurring within The Colony, the CDC Board and City Staff determined that the CDMP should cover a fifteen (15) year timeline. This specifically effects the recommendations of implementation, phasing, and funding created by the Planning Team. These recommendations, discussed in Chapter 7, will be divided into three levels of priority (Priority 1, Priority 2, and Priority 3) and by topic:

- Policy Actions
- Land Acquisition
- Trails & Trail Amenities
- Public Space Development and Improvement
- Development of Recreational and Cultural Facilities
- Consultancy Studies