

What is the McKinney Town Center Study Initiative?

Phase 1: Establishing the Shared Vision

The Town Center Study Initiative is a sector plan of the oldest part of McKinney, called for as part of the City's 2004 Comprehensive Plan. McKinney's Historic Town Center is blessed with and well-positioned to leverage its location, physical assets, history, character, community pride, vibrant businesses, cultural arts, and diverse demographic composition. However, like many city centers, the challenge facing McKinney's Historic Town Center is learning how to create a renewed emphasis on its authentic form and character while still embracing growth and planning for the future. As a proactive step towards this end, the City of McKinney launched Phase 1 of the Town Center Study Initiative in 2006.

Phase 1 of the Initiative consisted of a series of multi-day public design workshops that engaged community stakeholders (over 300 residents, property owners and business owners) and generated critical ideas about how the Town Center should look, feel, and function over the long-term. This innovative approach resulted in a bold, community-based vision. The overriding beauty of the vision is that it acknowledges that market forces will play a critical role in shaping the Town Center's future, and it allows for a certain level of flexibility to accommodate this vision.

Essentially, the vision is to have the Town Center anchored by two thriving urban villages (the historic downtown core on the west side of State Highway 5 and the transit-oriented village on the east side of State Highway 5) surrounded by stable and preserved single-family residential neighborhoods. These two villages will be compact, walkable, and diverse urbanized places that will have a concentration of jobs, housing, commercial uses, public spaces, public transportation, and pedestrian activity. To create a healthy synergy between the two villages, the State Highway 5 corridor will embrace and unite, rather than divide. Different but compatible land uses will be mixed horizontally or vertically. Buildings for infill development will relate to their associated street types in terms of size, scale, mass, orientation, and frontage. A variety of urban residential infill buildings with minimal setbacks from the street will help to achieve a density necessary to support transit and local commercial activity.

Given general demographic shifts ("back to the city" movement; Generation Y's living and working preferences; Baby Boomer Generation seeking low maintenance housing that is conveniently located close to activity, diversity and vibrancy; single parent households; multi-generational households, etc.) and emerging retail and office trends, McKinney's historic Town Center is poised to fill a market niche for people who want an urban lifestyle but with a small town feel. As the vision is fulfilled, the Town Center will prove to be an appealing alternative to generic suburban subdivisions, strip shopping centers, and congested auto-oriented roads, offering many of the positives of a big city lifestyle without many of the negatives typically associated with a big city.

Town Center Master Plan

In March 2008, the Town Center Study Phase 1 Report and the associated illustrative vision were unanimously approved by City Council and adopted by reference into the City of McKinney Comprehensive Plan. Known together as the "Town Center Master Plan," they serve as a meaningful policy guide for city officials, city staff, property owners, private developers, and citizens when considering decisions in the Town Center. The Town Center Master Plan serves as a road map for the future by outlining preferred redevelopment concepts to ensure that future choices are consistent with the shared vision.

The Town Center Master Plan includes a number of preferred redevelopment concepts such as encouraging mixed-use and urban residential infill growth, improving pedestrian walkability and

connectivity, creating compatible physical scales and transitions, and fostering long-term economic development through the concept of “place.”

It is important to acknowledge that the preferred concepts shown in the illustrative vision are truly illustrative and do not represent the *only* approach that could be utilized to realize the Town Center Master Plan. The elements noted in the illustrative plan could be some of the many options that work for particular locations within the Town Center.

Phase 2: Implementing the Vision

Now in the final stages of Phase 2, the City is focused on implementing action steps that will bring the vision to life and help the City synchronize land development regulations, public capital investment and fiscal tools. Phase 2 has included the completion of various planning/policy analysis activities that have led the way to several key actions.

Key efforts of Phase 2 have included:

- A market feasibility analysis which analyzed both pre- and post-rail scenarios in the Town Center and confirmed that the preferred concepts of the vision are realistic. The analysis concluded that, over the next 10 years, McKinney’s Town Center could reasonably expect to absorb approximately 1,200 residential units (urban single-family detached, single-family attached townhouses, condominiums, live-work units, and apartments over ground floor non-residential) and 400,000 square feet of non-residential.
- A comprehensive downtown parking analysis which evaluated existing and future supply/demand dynamics, site feasibility of a future public parking structure and options for a paid parking system in the downtown core.
- A public improvement district (PID) analysis, which evaluated the feasibility of establishing a PID in the downtown core.
- Implementation of a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ #1), which serves as a key fiscal tool to support and encourage sustained revitalization of the Town Center over the long-term. City Council formally created the Town Center Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone in late 2010.
- Voter approval of the City of McKinney 2010 bond package, including \$3 million for parking improvements and \$8 million for roadway/utility improvements within the Town Center.
- Award of almost \$2 million in Sustainable Development grant funds from the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) to support infrastructure and planning projects within the Town Center.
- Award of \$400,000 in Brownfields Assessment grant funds from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify and assess potential brownfield sites in order to facilitate property reuse within the Town Center.
- An analysis of the City’s land development regulations, which has led to the drafting of a proposed form-based zoning code specifically for the McKinney Town Center to proactively address unique redevelopment challenges and achieve the desired physical form and character of the adopted community vision. City Council adoption of the McKinney Town Center Form-Based Zoning Code is anticipated in early 2013.

More information about the Town Center Study Initiative can be found online at www.mckinneytexas.org/towncenterstudy.