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Redevelopment Challenges for the 21st Century – A Case Study: Plano, Texas

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Texas cities face numerous planning, legal, political, and development challenges in redevelopment. As Texas cities continue to expand and age, these challenges will increase. Possible areas of concentration in redevelopment will include the revitalization of deteriorating and neglected communities, gentrification, and the desire to attract business.

Very few cities epitomize the numerous challenges of an emerging city and the successful management of those challenges as well as Plano, Texas. Once seen as a suburban, bedroom community, Plano has transformed into a fully autonomous city providing employment, quality of life, diversity, housing choices, and opportunities to be the rival of every city in the country. Like many ring cities, Plano has had to contend with the burdens typical of a maturing city, such as a historic town center in need of transformation, obsolete industrial and office complexes, changing demographics, and a deteriorating regional mall. With an attitude toward fostering smart, appropriate redevelopment while protecting the interests of its citizens, Plano has become a city of thriving mixed use centers.

I. THE ISSUES. The challenges to be addressed with redevelopment have been numerous and can differ quite significantly from traditional greenfield development, which would instead present a blank canvas for development. With redevelopment there are many more sophisticated challenges to face. In Plano, these include:

- The need to maintain a safe, secure, and healthy City;
- Shifting land use patterns from a totally auto-centric community to one with multiple “suburban urban” centers;
- A need for these centers to provide more than employment, homes, and dining opportunities, but to be citizen-centric livable spaces that become vibrant communities which complement existing and aging neighborhoods;
- The need to encourage new urban development to be compact and to accommodate uses previously separated under traditional Euclidean zoning;
- The accompanying rise in mixed use developments sought by major employers;
- A need for these communities to be connected through technology, transportation, and commerce;
- The emergence of new uses through the advent of new technologies and innovation;
- Outdated limits on development density;
- Stresses on aging and undersized infrastructure to accommodate new demands created by exploding residential and business populations;

- Political protests stemming from the emerging changes in land use patterns and the perceived effects of growth;
- A need for affordable housing to draw the employment talent for relocating corporations;
- Changing demographics and the advent of an international community;
- Transformation of a 1970's era regional mall strategically located at a major entrance into the City; and
- Increased traffic created by new development within the City as well as "pass-through" traffic traversing the City from expanding suburbs to the north.

II. THE PLANNING METHODOLOGY, IMPLEMENTATION, AND LEGAL ISSUES. The framework to Plano's keys to success is presented in "Plano Tomorrow," its Comprehensive Plan- both in terms of the content as well as the means by which the Comprehensive Plan was presented to the community. The Plan recognizes and draws from the City's historic roots as well as the challenges listed above, and it lays the foundation for sound planning and regulatory direction. It identifies the City's vision statement as follows, "*Plano is a global leader, excelling in exceptional education, abounding with world class businesses, and vibrant neighborhoods.*"¹ With regard to providing vibrant neighborhoods, the Plan provides,

*A wide variety of housing options will be available for future residents, ranging from traditional neighborhoods to mixed-use urban centers. Plano's neighborhoods will be active and engaged in community affairs, which will offer a high standard of living for citizens. Retail, restaurant, and entertainment venues will be within walking distance of neighborhoods. Plano will have superior city services and ample parks, trails and recreational facilities that promote active living and citizen well-being. And with low crime rates, multiple transportation options, well maintained homes and streets, Plano will be the most desired place to live in North Texas. People who choose to live in Plano will have a strong sense of community, enriched by the arts, cultural celebrations and active public spaces. Our historic areas will define our community's culture and provide a sense of belonging among residents.*²

A. THE PROCESS: The City initiated the following four-step process to construct the plan:

- Step 1: Survey the Public to Identify Issues
- Step 2: Work with the Advisory Committee to Identify Policies and Actions Based on Public Comments
- Step 3: Confirm Policies and Actions with the Public
- Step 4: Take Final Recommendations to the Planning & Zoning Commission and City Council for Public Hearings and Consideration for Adoption

Plano undertook a major public outreach program to engage the residential and business community in the City's planning process. According to the Plan, the City sent announcements to 82,000 residents, delivered 5,200 announcements to apartments, made 40,000 telephone calls, held

¹ "Plano Tomorrow- A Comprehensive Plan for Excellence," City of Plano, October 12, 2015.

² Id.

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