

2015

# Pearland

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Pearland Recreation Center

## SECTION 1

# Introduction

The *2015 Pearland Comprehensive Plan* is intended to guide and balance future development, redevelopment, infill development, and community enhancement efforts in the City over the next 20 years through 2035. This plan acts as a framework for thoughtful community discussion on the real and perceived challenges facing Pearland currently – as well as the upcoming opportunities that will shape the City's future. Today, the City is positioned for continued physical and economic growth. Through long-range planning efforts, the community can accommodate its projected growth in a manner that preserves its history and culture and enhances overall quality of life for current and future residents and businesses.



The 2015 Pearland Comprehensive Plan resulted from a two-year planning and citizen involvement process. The plan's findings and recommendations focus on the physical and economic aspects of the City's projected growth and development in the coming years.

## Purpose

### GUIDING GROWTH

A comprehensive plan is usually the most important policy document a municipal government prepares and maintains. This is because the plan:

- lays out a "big picture" vision regarding the future growth and enhancement of the community;
- considers at once the entire geographic area of the community, including areas where new development and redevelopment may occur; and,
- assesses near- and longer-term needs and desires across a variety of inter-related topics that represent the key "building blocks" of a community (e.g., land use, transportation, urban design, economic development, redevelopment, housing, neighborhoods, parks and recreation, utility infrastructure, public facilities and services, cultural facilities, etc.).

### USE OF THIS PLAN

A comprehensive plan, if on target and embraced by the City and its leadership, has the potential to take a community to a whole new level in terms of livability and tangible accomplishments. The plan is ultimately a guidance document for City officials and staff, who must make decisions on a daily basis that will determine the future direction, financial health, and "look and feel" of the community. These decisions are carried out through:

- targeted programs and expenditures prioritized through the City's annual budget process, including routine but essential functions such as code compliance;
- major public improvements and land acquisitions financed through the City's capital improvements program and related bond initiatives;
- new and amended City ordinances and regulations closely linked to comprehensive plan objectives (and associated review and approval procedures in the case of land development, subdivisions, and zoning matters);
- departmental work plans and resources in key areas;
- support for ongoing planning and studies that will further clarify needs, costs, benefits, and strategies;
- pursuit of external grant funding to supplement local budgets and/or expedite certain projects; and
- initiatives pursued in conjunction with other public and private partners to leverage resources and achieve successes neither could accomplish on their own.

Despite these many avenues for action, a comprehensive plan should not be considered a "cure all" for every tough problem a community faces. These plans tend to focus on the responsibilities of City government in the physical planning arena, where cities normally have a more direct and extensive role than in other areas that residents value, such as education and social services. Of necessity, comprehensive plans, as vision and policy documents, also must remain relatively general and conceptual. The resulting plan may not touch on every challenge before the community, but it is meant to set a tone and motivate concerted efforts to move the community forward in coming years.

It is also important to distinguish between the function of the comprehensive plan relative to the City's development regulations, such as the zoning and subdivision regulations. The plan establishes overall policy for future land use, infrastructure improvements, and other aspects of community growth and enhancement. The City's zoning regulations and official zoning map then implement the plan in terms of specific land uses and building and site development standards. The City's subdivision regulations also establish standards in conformance with the plan for the physical subdivision of land. Other standards in the subdivision regulations address the layout of new or redeveloped streets and building sites, the design and construction of roads, water and sewer lines, storm drainage, and other infrastructure that will be dedicated to the City for long term maintenance.

### PLANNING AUTHORITY

Unlike some other states, municipalities in Texas are not mandated by state government to prepare and maintain local comprehensive plans -- although Chapter 211 of the Texas Local Government Code specifies that zoning regulations must be adopted "in accordance with a comprehensive plan." In Section 213, the Code provides that, "The governing body of a municipality may adopt a comprehensive plan for the long-range development of the municipality." The Code also cites the basic reasons for long-range, comprehensive community planning by stating that, "The powers granted under this chapter are for the purposes of promoting sound development of municipalities and promoting public health, safety and welfare." The Code also gives Texas municipalities the freedom to "define the content and design" of their plans, although Section 213 suggests that a comprehensive plan may:

1. include but is not limited to provisions on land use, transportation, and public facilities;
2. consist of a single plan or a coordinated set of plans organized by subject and geographic area; and,
3. be used to coordinate and guide the establishment of development regulations.

The Pearland City Charter, at Section 7.01(d)(1), authorizes and requires the Planning and Zoning Commission to "amend, extend and add to the master plan for the physical development of the City."

### WHY PLAN?

Local planning allows the City of Pearland to have a greater measure of control over its future rather than simply reacting to change. Planning enables the City to manage future growth and development actively as opposed to reacting to development and redevelopment proposals on a case-by-case basis without adequate and necessary consideration of community-wide issues. The process used to develop the *2015 Pearland Comprehensive Plan* may prove more valuable to the community than the plan itself since the document is ultimately only a snapshot in time. The planning process involves major community decisions about where development and redevelopment will occur, the nature and extent of future development, and the community's capability to provide the necessary public services and facilities to support this development. This leads to pivotal discussions about what is "best" for the community and how everything from taxes to quality of life will be affected.

### Reasons for LONG-RANGE PLANNING

- To provide a balance of land uses and services throughout the community to meet the needs and desires of the City's population.
- To ensure adequate public facilities to meet the demands of future development and redevelopment.
- To achieve and maintain a development pattern that reflects the values of the community, and which ensures a balanced tax base between residential and nonresidential development.
- To ensure the long-term protection and enhancement of the image and visual appearance of the community.
- To involve local citizens in the decision-making process and reach consensus on the future vision for Pearland and its ongoing development.
- To guide annual work programs and prioritize improvements consistent with the comprehensive plan.
- To enhance the quality of life of Pearland residents.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 1892** William Zychlinski bought 2,560 acres of land surrounding the Mark Belt outpost along the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe rail line.
- 1894** Zychlinski platted the original town site for Pearland.
- 1895** The Southern Homestead Company took over the promotion of Pearland to people in the farm-belt states. The area was promoted as having fertile land bringing people from the Midwest to settle in Pearland. Early on, a business district was formed providing basic needs that supported the community.
- 1900** The Great Hurricane of 1900 destroyed nearly all of the town of Pearland and drastically cut its population by almost three-quarters. To bring population back, the Allison-Richey Land Company began promoting the new development of Suburban Gardens, a model community west of the railroad tracks.
- 1912** A two-story high school was completed as well as roads that began connecting Pearland to other nearby communities.
- 1915** Pearland was re-populated as new residents moved into the area, and cattle, hay, family-owned dairies, and fig production emerged as key activities. However, a second Gulf Coast hurricane caused damage and out-migration as significant as in 1900.
- 1917** Modernization and infrastructure defined the second rebuilding of Pearland. Telephone lines were strung and a public phone booth was erected.
- 1930s** Pearland profited from the discovery of oil right outside of its boundaries as well as the rise in rice production.
- 1940s** Throughout the decade, Pearland began to grow back to a similar population as before the 1900 hurricane.
- 1949** Pearland took its first steps toward becoming a town with the development of the Brazoria County Water Control and Improvement District Number Three. This helped to generate the funding for Pearland's water and sewer systems.
- 1950s** The Lions Club became responsible for a number of improvements to Pearland, including garbage collection, sidewalk improvements, and streetlights.
- 1959** The City of Pearland is incorporated.
- 1960** Pearland's population had tripled since 1940, and the City now had a Mayor, City Council, and City Marshal.
- 1984** Construction was completed on South Freeway (SH 288) from downtown Houston. The "expressway" portions south of Loop 610 were gradually upgraded to full freeway standards through the 1990s.
- 1987** City Hall moved from the Old Townsite to Liberty Drive alongside the train depot.
- 1990s** The master-planned Silverlake development was initiated in the early 1990s. The Shadow Creek Ranch master-planned development followed in the late 1990s.
- 1995** Pearland Economic Development Corporation established through voter approval.
- 1997** Construction was completed on the south segment of Beltway 8.
- 2003** Pearland Parkway was completed, providing north-south traffic relief and an attractive new entry into Pearland from Beltway 8.
- 2009** Pearland Town Center opened as a major new mixed-use development near the intersection of SH 288 and Broadway / FM 518.
- 2010** Recreation Center and Natatorium opened on Bailey Road, through a partnership between the City, Pearland Independent School District and Pearland Economic Development Corporation.
- 2010** Pearland campus of University of Houston-Clear Lake established along Pearland Parkway.

## PAST PLANNING EFFORTS



### Comprehensive Plans

- **1968** Comprehensive Plan (1st)
- **1978** Comprehensive Plan Update
- **1993** Comprehensive Plan Update
- **1999** Comprehensive Plan Update
- **2004** Comprehensive Plan Update



### Plan Addenda

- **2011** Grand Boulevard: Pearland Old Townsite Master Plan
- **2011** Proposed Form-Based Code For Lower Kirby Urban Center



### Other Planning Initiatives

- **2005** Old Townsite Downtown Development District Plan
- **2006** Unified Development Code
- **2009** Land Use Plan Update
- **2012** Pearland EDC Competitive Assessment
- **2013** Pearland EDC Strategic Plan and Implementation Guidelines

## Plan Outline

# 1

### Introduction and Community Overview

Section 1 sets the context for long-range and strategic community planning by presenting the purpose and function of the comprehensive plan; documenting community participation and input; and identifying key community indicators and trends that will guide future decision-making.

# 2

### Growth Capacity and Infrastructure

Section 2 addresses the City's intent and policy regarding how growth, new development and redevelopment will be accommodated. This section aims for growth to be consistent with other fiscal and community considerations. In particular, efficient utilization of land and associated water, wastewater and drainage infrastructure is essential to maintain and achieve a desired urban form and character. This section also includes an evaluation of existing utility infrastructure and public safety capacities and "planning-level" improvement needs.

# 3

### Mobility

Section 3 focuses on the orderly development of the transportation system. It considers not only facilities for automobiles but other modes of transportation including pedestrian and bicycle circulation, freight movement facilities, public transportation, local and regional airports, and associated needs. This element is closely coordinated with growth and infrastructure planning and future land use planning to evaluate the impacts of different transportation investment decisions on future development, urban form, and community character.

# 4

### Housing and Neighborhoods

Section 4 assesses the local housing market to confirm an adequate supply of housing to accommodate persons desiring to relocate within or to the community. Neighborhood design strategies help to ensure that residential development outcomes are meeting community expectations for quality living environments, and are compatible with adjacent uses and area character. This plan element also emphasizes policies and initiatives for sustaining Pearland's value as an attractive place to live, including neighborhood conservation strategies for older, established residential areas.

## KEY ENGAGEMENT POINTS



### “Issues and Needs” Workshop

This workshop oriented the City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission to the comprehensive planning process. The workshop also yielded early leadership input and set direction and priorities for the planning effort.



### Informal “Listening Sessions”

These four small-group sessions engaged residents, business and property owners, public officials, the development community, and community organizations to hear their hopes, concerns, and priorities for the City’s future.



### Virtual Town Hall (MindMixer)

This public outreach tool was organized as an online discussion forum intended to solicit community input at times and locations convenient for individual users.



### “Big Picture” Outreach Workshops

These two workshops were focused on broad public participation organized around the plan’s Vision and Principles and Action Agenda and Priorities.



### Workshop Meetings

A Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) vetted all elements of the updated plan through five work sessions.



### Joint Workshop

This workshop allowed the City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission and CPAC to review the complete draft plan and prioritize strategic recommendations.

## 5

### Economic Development

Section 5 ensures the City’s comprehensive plan is consistent with the objectives, priorities and initiatives of the Pearland Economic Development Corporation (PEDC). These strategies were identified in the *Pearland 20/20 Strategic Plan*, completed in 2013, and are already moving forward. Of particular importance to this plan element are the physical planning components that contribute to the community’s readiness to accommodate new development and reinvestment.

## 6

### Land Use and Character

Section 6 assesses Pearland’s long-range development outlook and context to establish the necessary policy guidance for making decisions about the compatibility and appropriateness of individual developments and proposed redevelopment and infill projects. An updated Future Land Use Plan map illustrates the type, pattern, and character of desired development outcomes – rather than focusing only on uses and relative densities. Both the plan element and map align with community objectives for growth and urban form, and with associated planning for capital improvements and amenities.

## 7

### Parks and Tourism

Section 7 highlights and provides guidance for enhancing the community’s quality of life amenities. These include Pearland’s park and recreation facilities, open space areas and views, historic and cultural resources, educational assets and continuing education options, and other leisure opportunities. All of these assets are also crucial to ongoing efforts to expand Pearland’s appeal as a tourism destination.

## 8

### Implementation

Section 8 utilizes the recommendations of the individual plan elements to consolidate an overall strategy for executing the *2015 Pearland Comprehensive Plan*. This strategy encompasses the highest-priority initiatives that will be first on the community’s action agenda, as well as a longer-term series of implementation efforts anticipated over the next decade. This plan element also outlines crucial procedures for monitoring and revisiting the plan policies and action priorities every year, and for completing future plan updates at appropriate milestones.



Welcome to

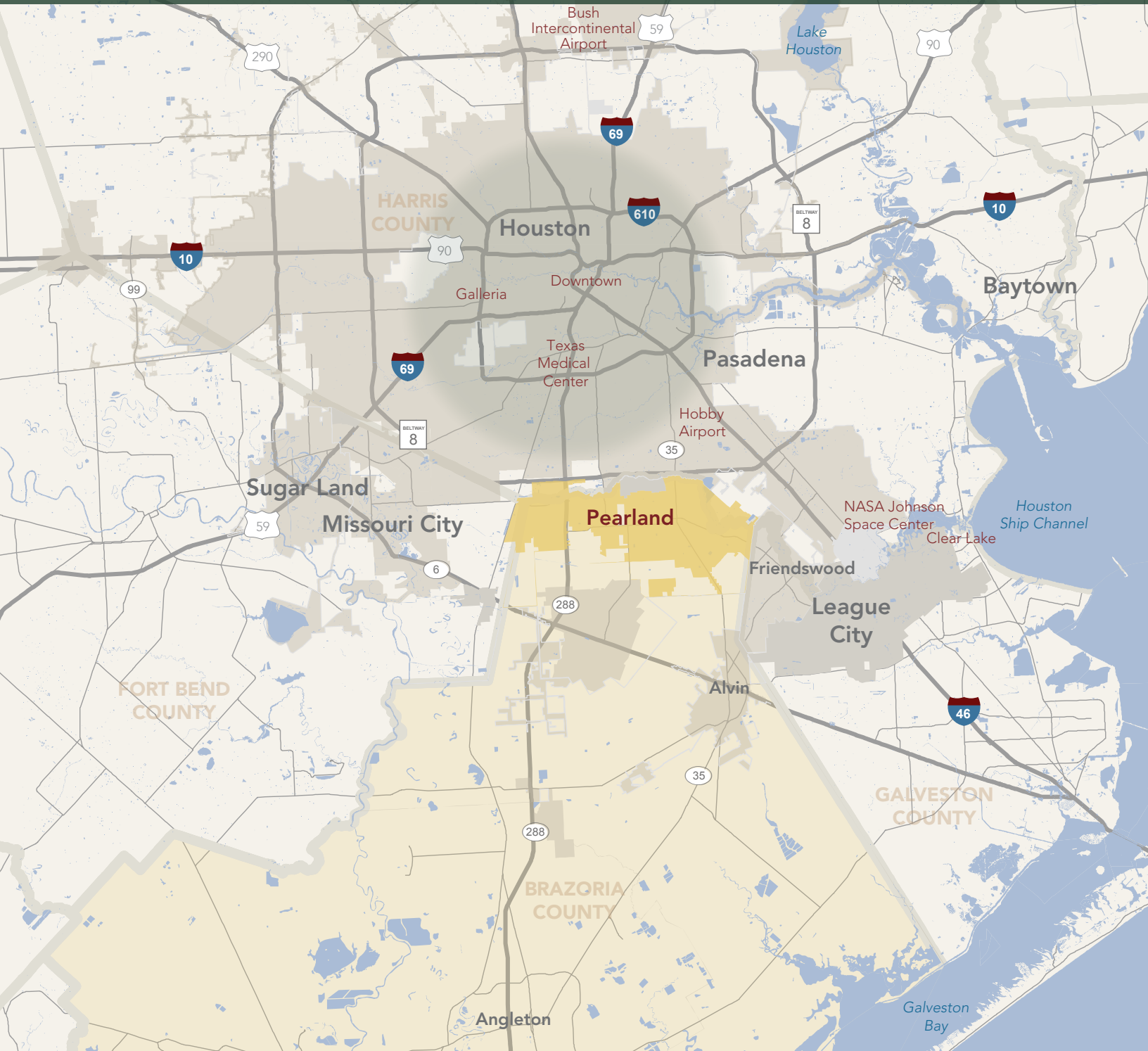
PEARLAND  
Town Center

“Our ‘To-Do List’ includes moving the City to the next level by building on **Pearland’s growth and achievements and recognition** as one of the three ‘Land’ communities around Houston (along with Sugar Land and The Woodlands).”

-Mayor Tom Reid in his 2013 State of the City Address

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

Pearland is primarily within and occupies the northernmost portion of Brazoria County, but also has small portions of its City limits within Fort Bend and Harris counties. This places Pearland just 16 miles south of downtown Houston, which is at the core of a region that surpassed the six million population mark soon after the 2010 Census. A distinguishing feature of the Houston metropolitan area is that a single major city dominates both in population and geographic size due to a long history of expansion by annexation. As of the 2010 Census, the City of Houston had 2.1 million residents, and the next largest city was Pasadena with 149,043 persons. Pearland was third in size with 91,252 residents, and one of eight cities in the region with 50,000 or more inhabitants including, in rank order after Pearland: League City (83,560), Sugar Land (78,817), Baytown (71,802), Missouri City (67,358), and Conroe (56,207). Three unincorporated population clusters would appear within this list if counted: The Woodlands in southern Montgomery County (93,847), the Atascocita area near Lake Houston (65,844), and the Spring area in far north Harris County (54,298). The nearby cities of Friendswood (35,805) and Alvin (24,236) ranked as the region's 12th and 17th largest cities.



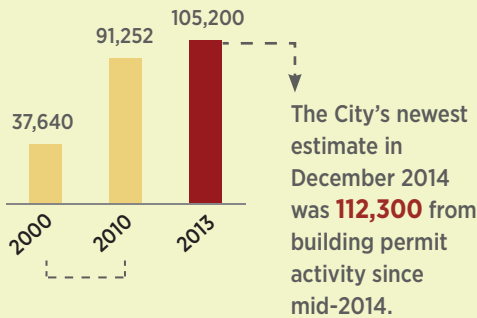


# Community Profile

This section highlights key aspects of Pearland's demographic and socioeconomic profile, with all data obtained from the *Pearland Economic and Demographic Profile 2013* unless otherwise noted. These characteristics and trends pertain to the community's population, housing, economy, educational attainment, and crime. Although this summary is only a snapshot in time, it provides insights to the community's strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats toward future progress. These and other community statistics are essential for long-range and strategic planning. They will be prominently featured in later plan sections that address mobility, housing and neighborhoods, and economic development.

## Population

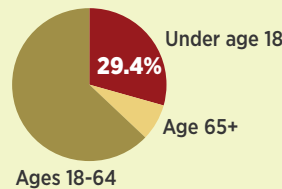
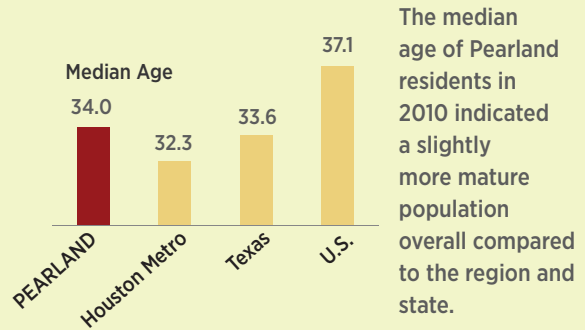
Between 2000 and 2013, the City's population increased at an estimated **7.6%** average annual growth rate, which made Pearland the fastest growing large city in the Houston metropolitan area over that period. During this same period, housing units nearly kept pace at an estimated **7.58%** average annual growth rate.



**+142%**  
increase in population from 2000-2010

## Age of Residents

An estimated **40.7%** of Pearland residents were in their prime income-earning years from ages 35-65, as of the 2010 U.S. Census. In addition, **81.8%** of residents between ages 18 to 64 were participating in the labor force as of 2011.



### Implications:

- Housing needs
- Infrastructure (water, wastewater) demands
- Public service (police, fire, EMS) demands
- Traffic volumes
- Park and recreation capacity
- School enrollment



### Implications:

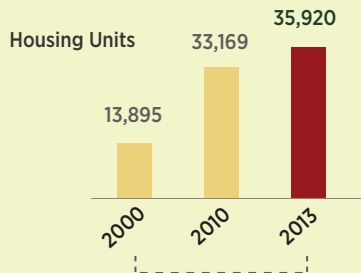
- Varying purchasing power at different "life cycle" phases
- Expectations for shopping, entertainment, and cultural opportunities
- Senior mobility needs
- Bike/Pedestrian safety

## COMMUNITY CONTEXT

When drafting public policy focused on improving the lives of community residents, decisions must rely on data that answer who these people are, where and how they live, and how their lives are changing. Demographic and socioeconomic indicators help to answer these questions are essential to policymakers and development planners across nearly every sector of society. The facts and figures in this section illuminate the current characteristics of Pearland's population, such as its size and composition. Planners place particular emphasis on recurring or projected patterns so that they can fulfill the needs of their constituency and plan for change effectively.

### Housing

Pearland is the most affordable community in comparison to several peer cities (Franklin, TN; McKinney, TX; and Sugar Land, TX). This ranking is derived from a "home affordability index" which is based on a ratio of 2011 median home value (\$181,500) to median household income (\$87,033). Pearland has a **2.09** ratio, indicating it is also more affordable than Texas (2.54 ratio) and the U.S. (3.49 ratio).



**+138%**

increase in housing units from 2000-2010

### Economy

Pearland's median household income was **\$89,113** according to the 2010 U.S. Census. These income statistics make Pearland one of the highest-income communities in the Houston metropolitan area. In addition, the labor force has more than doubled from 23,865 in 2005 to 50,550 in 2012, with more than 4,900 of these individuals added just since 2010.

**1:3** one job per three working age (18-69) residents, given 21,085 private and public sector jobs in 2010.

**9.2%** average annual growth in retail sales from 2006-2011, making Pearland **#1** among the top 50 retail markets statewide.

This translates into increasing sales tax revenue for the City, which reached \$22.4 million in 2012 (nearly **4x** as high as the \$5.8 million in sales tax revenue in 2000).



#### Implications:

- Increased attractiveness of Pearland as a destination for prospective home buyers in and new to the Houston area
- Need for housing options sought by business executives and managers
- Stability and growth of value of existing housing stock
- Challenge of lower property values relative to cost of serving residential



#### Implications:

- Marketable skills and prominent occupation types among the active labor force
- Potential nonresidential land use demands (e.g., office, medical, industrial, retail, hospitality, etc.)
- Increased sales tax revenue which helps to fund upgrades to local infrastructure and amenities



### Educational Attainment

Pearland has a highly educated population. Among those with some level of college degree, **41%** (or **18.5%** of the entire age 25 years and older group) had also earned a graduate or professional degree.

**45.2%**

Pearland residents in age 25+ group who had earned a bachelor's degree or higher as of 2010.

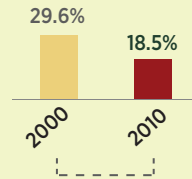
**9%**

of Pearland residents in age 25+ group did not have a high school diploma as compared to 14.6% for the U.S. as a whole in 2011.

### Public Safety

Pearland achieved nearly a one-third reduction in the rate of violent crimes from **1.76** incidents per 1,000 residents in 2000 to **1.34** in 2011. These positive trends during a very rapid growth period for the City are clear. This is reassuring given resident perception (expressed during small-group discussion sessions) that increasing crime can be a by-product of a growing city.

Property Crimes (per 1,000 Residents)



**60%**

decrease in property crimes between 2000-2010



#### Implications:

- Projected demand for a range of jobs and amenities available in Pearland
- Projected increase in earning potential of Pearland residents
- Projected increase in median household income
- Maintaining community attractiveness to a mobile workforce with many options



#### Implications:

- Ongoing monitoring of crime trends
- Resources and technology for public safety services

2015  
**Pearland**  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



**INPUT METHODS**

- "Issues and Needs" Workshop
- Informal "Listening Sessions"
- Virtual Town Hall (MindMixer Website)
- "Big Picture" Outreach Workshops
- Advisory Committee Workshop Meetings
- Joint Workshop of City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission



**KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

This list is derived from public and leadership input. It is arranged in alphabetical order and does not reflect a specific ranking.

- Comprehensive community beautification
- Emphasis on key locations, corridors, and entries to City
- Expanded commercial tax base
- Growth management and annexation as build-out approaches
- Management of re-use, redevelopment and infill development
- Recapitalization of core infrastructure systems
- Recreation, entertainment, and event facilities
- Regional automobile, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit linkages
- Strategic east-west and north-south corridor planning
- Strengthened "sense of community" as one Pearland
- Targeted economic diversification with focus on high-value businesses and jobs
- Traffic congestion relief within and commuting to/from City
- Wider range of home ownership options

**Vision and Guiding Principles**

In the Future, Pearland is...

**BALANCED**

- Old and new
- Housing for all ages
- Culture and entertainment

**CONNECTED**

- Sense of community
- Streets, sidewalks, trails
- Transit to/from Houston

**ATTRACTIVE**

- Desirable place to live and work
- Retail magnet
- Special destinations

**SAFE**

- Bike- and pedestrian-friendly
- Low crime rate
- Great place for kids

**INVESTED**

- Homeownership emphasis
- Public infrastructure/facilities
- Great place to grow a business

**ACTIVE**

- Healthy living emphasis
- Community events
- Volunteerism

**HIGH QUALITY**

- Development
- Infrastructure
- Public services

**Your City, Your Plan...**

**BE INVOLVED, STAY INVOLVED**

The following quotes are a sampling of comments from community outreach efforts throughout the comprehensive planning process. They especially demonstrate concern for Pearland's character, identity and appearance in the years ahead.

**SMALL-TOWN CHARACTER.** "Pearland has something special... We have less than zero desire to simply be 'a suburb south of Houston.' We are our own entity, and a wonderful community, with so much to be proud of. I came to Pearland by choice almost 15 years ago, and I can't imagine having raised my son anywhere else. It's not easy to maintain that small-town feel, but the end result is so worth it."

**IDENTITY.** "The city is very diverse - although somewhat segregated. That needs to be addressed along with improving relations between East and West Pearland. It also seems that the city is being more successful with attracting multi-job companies which pay well. Those are positives."

**TOWNHOMES, CONDOS, AND BROWNSTONES.** "We desperately need these in our city. I was raised here and watched all the development for the most part. This is a missing piece to the 3rd largest city in the Houston area."

**SENIOR LIVING.** "Need more cottage/condo 55+ active communities. There are several we have visited in Boerne and Austin that would be great here."

**REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY.** "The current light rail in Houston is too slow to be a real option for many commuters. Any type of service from Pearland up into Houston would need to be much faster in order to truly appeal to the masses."

**TRAFFIC.** "The traffic is heavier, but there were problems 10 years ago also. There are more people, but there are also more lanes, and more roads [than] there were 10 years ago."

**SIDEWALKS AND BIKE LANES.** "There need[s] to be connected sidewalks. It is very difficult to walk anywhere. Biking needs dedicated lanes, and bikers need to stay in them."

**PARKS AND RECREATION.** "Houston was rated the fattest city last year? Let's be healthy and green to not only attract visitors but also be the first to make money and be the model too at the same time. Something such as an outdoor mountain bike park, skate board park, more public basketball and tennis courts..."

**JOINT-USE FACILITIES.** "Large detention pond facilities can be used for walkways like those that are near Friendswood. This is a great amenity when there is no rain but still has a functional purpose."

**REGULATIONS.** "The UDC [Unified Development Code] needs to be continually monitored and updated to meet new technologies and construction practices. The UDC sets us apart from many other cities. It should be monitored so that it does not impede growth, but guide[s] quality development."

**MORE SHOPPING.** "The Pearland Town Center is beautiful. The only downside is seasonal limitations - lot of rain and hot summer. An indoor shopping mall as an extension to Town Center will definitely bring more traffic to Town Center."

**ENTERTAINMENT VENUE.** "We are in desperate need of a cultural arts/convention facility for a city of 100,000 plus. People need something to do, something to see, etc. Shopping and restaurants are not entertainment and do not make us a destination city."

