

# City of Cedar Hill Comprehensive Plan 2008



## Chapter 2: VISIONING



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# INTRODUCTION

The *Baseline Analysis*, Chapter 1, provides a foundation for this *2008 Comprehensive Plan*. It does this by generally outlining facts about Cedar Hill that should be considered; facts which pertain to demographics and land use characteristics. This chapter also provides a foundational element for this Plan, but in a different way. The *Visioning* chapter outlines the overall vision of the City that should be pursued and is the basis for the recommendations contained in this *Comprehensive Plan*.

What does the future hold for Cedar Hill? What should the City be like in the year 2020 or 2030? These are key questions that this chapter addresses. The vision for Cedar Hill that is described within this *2008 Comprehensive Plan* will help shape and direct growth and development for the next ten years and beyond. In order to do this effectively, this Plan should be premised upon a shared vision of the citizenry and the stakeholders of what Cedar Hill should become as it grows, attains its anticipated build-out configuration, and becomes an increasingly livable and sustainable City.

In order to create this shared vision, numerous meetings were conducted with the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is composed of a cross-section of Cedar Hill's citizenry, including Planning & Zoning Commissioners, a variety of business leaders, and both new and long-time residents of Cedar Hill. The first section in this chapter describes the results of the Visual Character Survey (VCS). A discussion of the SWOT Analysis is provided in the following section. The final section outlines the vision for this *Comprehensive Plan* and discusses the formation of goals and objectives.



# VISUAL CHARACTER SURVEY

A Visual Character Survey (VCS) is a technique in which respondents are asked to score a series of photographs based on what they find to be visually preferable. The images illustrate various aspects of the developed environment. Although it is not necessarily scientific in nature, the VCS is an effective method of receiving attitudinal, aesthetic-based input, which is used to guide development methods and techniques based on the community's preferences. This is possible because the survey allows the respondents to view and score real-world examples of developed areas and elements.

The Visual Character Survey that was developed specifically for Cedar Hill was primarily the result of issues identified by the Steering Committee toward the beginning of the comprehensive planning process. The various subjects presented in the VCS were the following:

- Building Articulation
- Building Materials
- Connectivity
- Housing Mix
- Loop 9
- Mixed Use
- Natural Open Space
- Non-Residential Development
- Pedestrian Oriented Design
- Public Space
- Signage
- Street Design
- Transitions Between Uses
- Transit Oriented Design

Respondents were shown approximately 175 images corresponding to the above categories. They were asked to rate each image according to the scale shown in *Figure 2-1* below.

*Figure 2-1: VCS Scoring Scale*

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Highly</i>	<i>Strongly</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>NEUTRAL</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Strongly</i>	<i>Strongly</i>	<i>Highly</i>	<i>Highly</i>
<i>Inappropriate</i>					<i>Appropriate</i>					

Respondents were asked to consider several questions about each image as they rated them:

- *Do I like or dislike the image?*
- *By what value do I like or dislike it?*
- *Is it appropriate or inappropriate for Cedar Hill?*

Following are the results of the VCS. (In evaluating the results of the VCS, the average score of each image is used.) Overall high and low scoring images are shown first, followed by the highest and lowest scoring images within each of the subject headings previously listed.

## Highest Scoring Images

Following are the ten images that were rated the highest in the VCS. Each of the ten images received an average score of 3.0 or higher. The average score is shown just below the lower right-hand corner of the image.



3.4



3.4



3.4



3.3



3.3



3.1



3.1



3.1



3.0



3.0



## Lowest Scoring Images

Following are the ten images that were rated the lowest in the VCS. Each of the ten images received an average score of **-1.1** or lower. The average score is shown just below the lower right-hand corner of the image.



**-3.2**



**-1.9**



**-1.9**



**-1.8**



**-1.6**



**-1.5**



**-1.4**



**-1.4**



**-1.3**



**-1.1**

## Highest & Lowest Scoring Images by Subject

As stated previously, a wide variety of image types were included within this Visual Character Survey (VCS). The following results illustrate the highest and lowest scoring images for each subject.

### **Building Articulation**

Images featuring buildings with the most design features, including height and depth variations, were scored most favorably.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

### **Building Materials**

Stone and a combination of stone and masonry were favored among non-residential building materials, while cementitious fiberboard and stone were the highest ranked building materials for residential structures.



*Highest  
Non-Residential*



*Lowest  
Non-Residential*



*Highest  
Residential*



*Lowest  
Residential*

### Connectivity

All Connectivity images received positive scores.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

### Housing Mix

Traditional single-family homes, including those on large lots, ranked most favorably among all Housing Mix images. Both single-family homes and townhomes scored more favorably than duplexes and multiple-family structures.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

### Loop 9

Office buildings and business campus developments were found to be the most suitable for the Loop 9 corridor.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

### Mixed Use

Mixed Use images which appeared to be primarily non-residential scored more favorably than those images which appeared to be primarily residential.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

### Natural Open Space

All Natural Open Space images were scored positively.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

### Non-Residential Development

Retail and office uses ranked the highest among Non-Residential Development images. Commercial uses, such as manufacturing and distribution, were the least favored Non-Residential Development images.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

### Pedestrian Oriented Design

All Pedestrian Oriented Design images scored positively. Images scoring the highest featured more landscaping and natural ground cover, while the lower scoring images tended to have more concrete and pavement.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

### Public Space

All Public Space images scored positively. Public gathering spaces seem to be strongly favored.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

### Signage

Signs which featured natural elements, including rock and landscaping were scored favorably; these also tended to be low to the ground, visually interesting, and non-obtrusive. Signage which was least favored included pole signs, those with minimal design features, large scale signs, and those with little or no masonry.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

### Street Design / Visual Appeal

Street Design images which ranked the highest depicted people taking advantage of street features, such as crosswalks and bike lanes, with very little traffic. Images with traffic and on-street parking were not as well received.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

### Transitions Between Uses

The highest scoring Transitions images featured the use of landscaping and trees to provide a buffer between the street, sidewalk, and adjacent land uses. Stark transition features, such as concrete walls, incorporating little or no landscaping did not score favorably.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

### Transit Oriented Development

Transit Oriented Development images which focused on the human element, rather than solely on the transit element, were the most favorable.



*Highest*



*Lowest*

# S·W·O·T ANALYSIS

A Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) Analysis is a technique in which various characteristics are evaluated in regards to their affect on the community in question. When this method is applied to a business setting, strengths and weaknesses are considered to be internal evaluations, while opportunities and threats are considered to be external. However, in reference to a community or City, strengths and weaknesses are thought to reflect the present, and opportunities and threats refer to the future. It is important to note that some characteristics, such as growth for example, could easily fall into more than one category. In fact, depending on the point of view, growth could be considered a strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat, all for the same City.

## Strengths & Weaknesses

Through open discussion, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee identified the following characteristics as strengths and weaknesses of Cedar Hill at the present time. It's encouraging for the City that the Steering Committee identified many more strengths than weaknesses. This indicates a positive outlook and level of satisfaction among residents.

STRENGTHS		
Topography	Escarpment	Elevation
Natural Beauty	Sense of Community	Personality
Existing Rail Line	Open Government	Citizen Participation
Population Size	Population Diversity	Infrastructure
Housing Mix	Economic Growth	Emerging Retail
Lake Joe Pool	Cedar Hill State Park	Open / Green Space
School District	Willingness to Embrace New Ideas	

WEAKNESSES
Lack of High Tech Businesses
Lack of Employment Opportunities
Land Use Balance (Lack of Commercial / Industrial)
Narrow Residential Zoning Standards
Aesthetics of Highway 67 Corridor
Functionality & Infrastructure of Highway 67
Unsustainable Housing in Old Downtown
Code Enforcement (Need for Additional Officers)
Lack of Mass Transit
East-West Connection
Community / Neighborhood Sustainability
Foreclosures

# Opportunities & Threats

The Steering Committee also identified the characteristics they perceive to be positive opportunities for the future of Cedar Hill and those which could threaten the future of the City. Again, the Steering Committee demonstrated their optimism for Cedar Hill by identifying more than twice as many opportunities as threats. However, recognizing these characteristics is extremely important, because only by distinguishing such characteristics as a threat can the City properly plan for and alleviate any negative impact they may cause.

OPPORTUNITIES	
Become a Regional Attraction	Higher Density Development
New Zoning Classifications	Mixed Uses
Live-Work Development	Downtown Design Standards
Agri-Business	Natural Resources
Cooperation with Grand Prairie	Mass Transit
Create Destination Land Uses	Open Minded to All Possibilities
View of Lake	Quality Housing Choices
Preserve Natural Features	Green Friendly Buildings
Tourism / State Park	Multi-Modal Choices
Hike-Bike Trails / Parks	Recreational Venues
Business Growth	Population Growth
Evaluate Economics of Vacant Land	
Shift Economic Growth Focus from Retail	

THREATS
Failure to Plan for Increasing Demand for Municipal Services
Adjustment to Shifting Demographics
Loss of Natural Resources & the Escarpment
Loss of Wildlife Habitat
Becoming Like All Other Suburbs
Failure to Inform the Public of City Processes, Projects & Progress
Empty Big Boxes (Retail Buildings)
Lack of Youth Activities
Lack of Neighborhood Sustainability
Over Saturation of Retail



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION STATEMENT

The City of Cedar Hill has previously established and is guided by the following vision statement: *We envision Cedar Hill as a premier city that retains its distinctive character; where families and businesses flourish in a safe and clean environment.*

It was decided by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee that this *Comprehensive Plan* should have a similar, but independent vision statement. This vision statement is intended to supplement the City's vision statement, by describing how the Steering Committee envisions that this Plan can be utilized as an instrument of direction for the City.

Thorough input from the Steering Committee and numerous draft statements, the vision for the Comprehensive Plan was established as the following:

The Cedar Hill Comprehensive Plan will be a statement of policy, priority, and direction that will be used to guide the City, community organizations, and businesses as they develop plans to maintain and improve our premier community.

## Goals & Objectives

A set of goals and objectives were also formulated during the visioning process. Goals are general statements of guidance concerning an aspect of Cedar Hill's desired ultimate physical, social and/or economic environment; these are statements that outline how various issues should be addressed in a broad sense. Objectives express specific statements of intent that will ultimately lead the City to achieve what is envisioned within the goal statements. These statements can be found in their respective *Comprehensive Plan* chapters. It should also be noted that many of the goals and objectives represent items that are not only intended to be addressed by the *Comprehensive Plan*, but also by the City on a long-term, continual basis.