

Chapter 1

Executive Summary: *A Vision for The Colony*



Opportunities

The progress made by a community is often a direct result of the opportunities presented to that specific community and to what degree the City leadership takes advantage of such opportunities. The Colony has been blessed with many opportunities that have shaped the community thus far and can continue to shape and provide benefit to the community and its residents into the future. Some of these opportunities are geographic in nature, such as The Colony's **regional positioning** and proximity to Dallas, Fort Worth, and other cities in the area as well as the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport. Such positioning places The Colony in the highest-growth sector of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. A more unique opportunity for The Colony is its **adjacency to Lewisville Lake** which provides 26 miles of shoreline and over 1,000 acres of lakeshore land. Another geographic feature is the beautiful valley in the southern portion of The Colony (near Austin Ranch) that has been created by **Indian Creek**. These geographic features not only define the physical features of The Colony, they also define the image of the community.

In addition to these geographic opportunities, the physical development of The Colony also provides opportunities for the community. **Recent development** within the City (such as that at The Cascades, The Tribute, and Austin Ranch) has been of high quality and is setting a new precedent for development in The Colony. **Opportunities for new commercial development** in The Colony have been recently provided by the improvement of State Highway 121; such new commercial development which will help to improve the City's tax base. Finally, the **distribution of park land** within The Colony is a great opportunity for the community. The City has a great amount of park land that is generally well-distributed throughout the City that, with a few additions and reallocations of land, will easily meet The Colony's needs at build-out conditions.

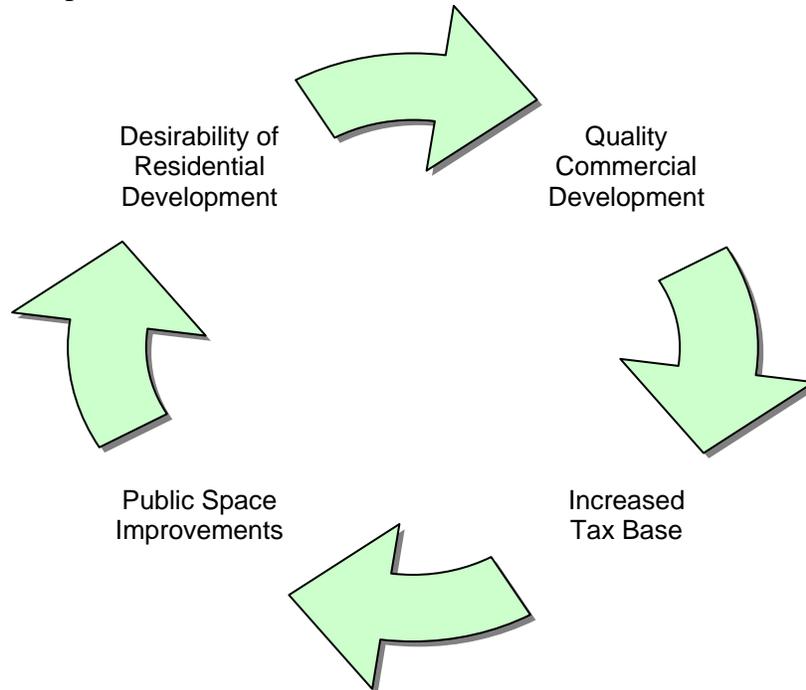
Finally, The Colony is blessed to be made up of citizens that are positive, hard-working people that believe in The Colony and are invested in their community. With the support and efforts of its citizens, The Colony can achieve great things and be a community with a strong sense of identity and much to offer its citizens.

Challenges

While many opportunities are present, there are also weaknesses which, though few in number, pose great challenges for The Colony. The first and possibly most challenging weakness of The Colony is that development patterns beginning in the 1970s and leading up to today **have not embraced Lewisville Lake** and have, in effect, cordoned off the Lake from the rest of the community. Today, one can be less than a quarter of a mile from the Lake and not realize it is there. Taking steps to embrace the Lake through redevelopment and parks and trails is of paramount importance to The Colony. Another challenge that is facing the community is **aged residential and commercial development** in the older parts of the City. There have been efforts in the recent past by some homeowners to meet the challenge of the upkeep of the older residential areas but generally the commercial areas have not had the same attention. Many of these areas have become depressed and outdated and therefore impact the image of The Colony accordingly. Further impacting the image of the community is the manner in which park development has occurred within The Colony. While the City has an admirable amount of park land that is well distributed, it appears that parks in The Colony have in the past been **developed in an as-needed fashion** as funding has become available rather than in a comprehensive manner. The City has begun to change this practice with recent park development, but efforts are needed to revamp older parks which exhibit varying levels of quality to meet a higher standard of quality to improve the image and character of public space in The Colony. All of this results in a community that does not have a strong sense of its identity and considers itself subpar to its neighbors.

The overarching challenge to community development that The Colony faces is that **the quality of residential development, the amount of quality commercial development, the size of the City's tax base, and the quality of public spaces** (including parks and streets) **are all dependent upon one another**. Specifically, there is a cycle wherein quality residential development attracts quality commercial development which helps to increase the City's tax base which allows the City to improve its public spaces which in turn attracts additional quality residential development. It is then vastly important for

The Colony to set this cycle in motion. The occurrence of new quality development can begin to start the cycle, but must be assisted on all fronts – namely by investing in public space improvements to continue to improve the desirability of the community and its residential development.



The above is a graphic representation of the self-perpetuating cycle to be initiated by the leaders of The Colony: commerce leads to tax base, tax base allows improvements to public space, improved public space attracts residents, and residents attract retail.

Vision

Considering these opportunities and weaknesses, the vision for community development in The Colony focuses on taking full advantage of its opportunities which will, in turn, address and mitigate the weaknesses of the community. Specifically, The Colony must decide to invest in its public spaces, coordinate development to embrace the City’s natural resources such as the Lake and the Indian Creek valley, and build upon the cache of parkland that the City has amassed over the years. Working toward these tasks will help to build a strong, positive identity for The Colony, improve quality of life, and allow for the continued growth and improvement of the City and its public spaces. The end result will be an attractive community with a defined image that provides a full array of amenities and services to its citizens, as well as non-governmental resources (retail, jobs, etc.), while maintaining a strong sense of identity.

Purpose of the Master Plan

The Community Development Master Plan (CDMP) 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 Halff Associates of Richardson, Texas (hereafter,

Planning Team). Through the community development master planning process, the Planning Team consulted 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 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.

Key Community Development Needs

Community Development needs are derived from the results of the Public Input process, which utilized several methods of input – both quantitative and qualitative – during the process. The Planning Team reviewed a previously conducted community survey (the 2006 DirectionFinder[®] Survey), attended a community event and spoke with citizens (the 2008 Easter Egg Hunt), held two Focus Group meetings, organized an Open House, and distributed and analyzed a self-conducted questionnaire. Consolidating and comparing the input from these various components of the Public Input process results in the creation of five key Community Development Needs:

Image & Identity

There is a need to improve the physical image of the City through beautification, art, gateway features, and signage as well as the need to improve the identity internally and externally of The Colony and its citizens. This latter facet includes improving community involvement, community spirit, and the City's reputation.

Improvement of Existing Parks

The Colony has a wealth of parkland that is generally well-distributed throughout the City. Many of its parks, however, are in need of repairs and renovation including new playgrounds and other equipment, additional walkways and ADA access, and overall “freshening up” of park facilities to provide an improved image of parks in The Colony.

Trails

Citizens of The Colony expressed a need to develop more trails within the City to serve as recreational amenities and as means to support alternative transportation. These trails should connect schools, residences, and parks as well as the Lake and natural areas. They should also connect residences to commercial areas so that users can walk or bike to and from shopping and dining destinations.

Recreation / Community Center

The provision of a facility that provides expanded recreational opportunities, flexible use space, and places for people to gather is in great demand by the community. This was often expressed as one of the top needs throughout the public input process.

Lewisville Lake & Natural Areas

The protection of and access to the natural areas surrounding Lewisville Lake and the shoreline are a high priority of the citizens of The Colony. People expressed their desire to capitalize on the Lake's recreational opportunities, its natural habitat and open space, and its ability to improve The Colony's image and identity. The City should identify ways in which it can "embrace" the Lake through redevelopment and future new development so that it becomes a much more visible feature of the community.

Youth, Families & Seniors

Providing opportunities for recreation and enrichment of the diverse population of The Colony is expressed as a significant need by the community. Expanded programming offered through the City and the provision of facilities, both indoor and outdoor – that meet the needs of the full cross-section of the population of the City are paramount to the citizens. This includes expanding programming beyond league athletics, which is typically provided for children up to twelve years old, to meet the needs of user groups currently not fully served by the City.

Values & Goals

Heavily informed by the public input process, the CDC, City Staff, and the Planning Team developed values and goals for the CDMP. Five "Value Areas," which represent the broad statements describing what The Colony should be in the future, were created. These can be seen as components of an overall vision for Community Development within the City. In Chapter 4 of the Master Plan report, each of these Value Areas are broken down into goals for community development. It is from these goals that decisions throughout the CDMP process are made, including performing needs assessments, setting target levels of service, making recommendations, and prioritizing recommendations.

Identity

The citizens of The Colony value a city-wide Identity – an image and a sense of community. An identity for The Colony should include a strong, clear vision, it should unite the City, and it should be visible. An identity announces one's arrival to the city, yet is also present within the core of the city. The identity will reflect the culture and history of the community and should be represented in a unique and artistic manner. An

identity incorporates Lake Lewisville as a destination and visual attraction, maintaining The Colony’s image as the “City by the Lake.”

Family & Community

The citizens of The Colony value children, families, and seniors. This focus on the family is important to the social structure and community of the city. This culture of family-orientation should support community, safety, and education in recognition of the spiritual, creative, and educational welfare of children, families, and seniors. Building the self confidence, self awareness, and self esteem of youth positions them to become better adults and the foundation of the next generation of citizens.

Diversity

The citizens of The Colony value diversity – both of its citizenry and the physical City itself. Community involvement and the expansion of cultural and recreational activities should transcend the lines of gender, age, ethnicity, wealth, and physical and mental abilities. There should be a diverse array of activities accessible to all citizens of all backgrounds. It is important to meet the diverse needs of different citizens, but it is also important to bring these groups together. As the City has older districts and newer districts, so should there be a diverse array of opportunities for cultural, artistic, and recreational activity.

Health & Fitness

The citizens of The Colony value health and fitness. Opportunities for exercise, wellness, and recreation should be accessible to improve the public health of the city and to fight obesity in children, youth, and adults. Different types of opportunities should be provided to meet the health & fitness needs of differing user groups.

Nature

The citizens of The Colony value the natural environment, which is most abundant along the shoreline of Lewisville Lake and along creeks and lowland areas that feed into the Lake. Natural open space is valued for its recreational use as well as its importance to the health of the city. The citizens value the preservation and accessibility of open space.

Achieving The Vision

Community Development requires **commitment**. It requires commitment from the Council, the CDC, and City Staff to make decisions in accordance with and strive toward the vision to improve The Colony for current and future residents.

With the multitude of choices available today, peoples’ priorities when relocating to a new city is determined by the type of lifestyle they desire rather than a specific job. The question then becomes: How do we capture and attract this demographic to The Colony? It is through an understanding that quality lifestyles are not only about functional infrastructure, safety and education, but are often defined by the intangibles of mental well-being – including happiness, beauty, and a sense of purpose. Officials often shy

away from such concepts, but when approached with an open mind and willingness to extend the boundaries of the conventional, true greatness can be achieved in communities through enlightened and committed leadership.

As a matter of City policy, The Colony is challenged and called upon to make a commitment to Sustainability, Quality, and Beauty for the City:

Commitment to Sustainability

Due to worldwide population growth (the world population officially transitioned from majority rural to majority urban in 2007) and the affects of pollution and over-development in a finite environment, the awareness of the importance of environmental stewardship is not a fad anymore, but is rather regarded as a necessity by most people today. Therefore, commit to developing and operating the City in a sustainable manner.

Commitment to Quality

Today’s young professionals and their families are drawn to cities by state-of-the-art facilities, community buildings, parks, and arts (both performing and visual) facilities. These people expect to find amenities and facilities in cities similar to what they experienced during their education at universities and colleges. Attracting and retaining residents, as well as businesses to employ and serve such residents, will depend on providing high-quality, state-of-the-art facilities in The Colony. For too long, it appears that residents of The Colony have settled for the mediocre or the “good enough” – today, The Colony needs to commit to quality facilities and programs.

Commitment to Beauty

As an age old quest to define beauty, it is often found in the smallest and simplest of ideas and concepts, especially as experienced in nature: a sunset, a view over quiet water, the appearance and change of fall color, spring flowers. However it is defined, all people deserve to have access to beauty – to live, work, and play in beautiful surroundings and environments. Therefore, commit to beauty – to providing attractive places for people to linger, to play, or to pass by. The impact of attractive environments are major on mental well-being; therefore, commit to achieve beauty in The Colony.

Achieving Uniqueness

Expressing the uniqueness of The Colony is paramount to having a strong City image and community identity. The recommendations, actions, and policies contained in this CDMP – as well as actions taken externally to this Master Plan – should serve to not only support the vision, but also to set The Colony apart from the banal and apart from other surrounding communities.

Achieving this uniqueness will depend on specific ideas by which to base recommendations and future actions so that the steps taken by The Colony are distinctive to this City, this community, and this land. Forging these ideas, adopting them, and implementing their products will ensure the growth and development of The Colony as a community, a place to play, and a unique city in North Texas. The ideas most crucial to The Colony today are:

- Creating a strong, unified, and coordinated City Identity that includes physical landmarks, quality graphic standards for signage, and a quality higher than average for everything the City does. In addition, the enhancement and beautification of streetscapes and parks is vital to the formation of a strong, positive City Identity.
- The protection, enhancement, and recognition of Lewisville Lake, its Shoreline, and views toward it. Protect these areas against erosion and development that prevent access to the lake; ensure viewsheds remain open so that the natural beauty of the area can be seen to reinforce the City Identity.
- Becoming a City connected by parks, trails, and greenbelts by which people can move throughout the community on foot or by bicycle. This network should also provide linkages for wildlife and ribbons of green that enhance physical and mental health for the City's residents.
- Provide state-of-the-art services and facilities to the City's diverse population that includes the amenities and programs required by the community.

The implementation of such ideas requires visionary leadership, whereby tools are used to identify, define, preserve and respect important natural and cultural features within the community and find ways to incorporate those creatively in the City. The direct results of the comprehensive implementation of improvements to the City that adhere to the vision and that stem from these four ideas will be higher property values, a more beautiful City, enhanced City Image, and a greater quality of life for citizens.

Key Community Development Recommendations

The following does not encompass the complete list of recommendations for The Colony; rather, it provides an overview of the key recommendations for community development.

Access to the Lake

Paramount to the success of the CDM and the improvement of The Colony is physical and visual access to Lewisville Lake. Work toward achieving this goal by:

- Providing trails along entire shoreline
- Providing trail heads and other access points to the lake for every one mile of shoreline
- Holding more festivals/events at lakeside parks to draw people to the lake
- Developing more parks to have lake access (such as a trails system/access at Wynnewood Peninsula)
- As described and recommended in the City's 2007 Comprehensive Plan, efforts should be made to preserve the views of the lake from Main Street/FM 423. By providing appropriate guidelines for development along the corridor, the "City by the Lake" image can be strengthened.

Beautification & Streetscape Master Plan

Develop a Beautification and Streetscape Master Plan for the entire City that includes the location and design of gateway features at major City entrances (such as FM 423, SH 121, Windhaven, Plano Pkwy), the coordination of signage, developing monument signs

for every park in the City, and landscaping medians with trees, shrubs, seasonal color, and grasses. The City has an existing Beautification Plan which should be updated as a component of a combined Beautification and Streetscape Master Plan. Throughout the City, strive to establish a unique Brand for The Colony that establishes a presence in peoples' minds.

Park Land Acquisition/Reallocation

While The Colony already has a wealth of parkland, it must designate additional acres to neighborhood and community parks to meet the needs for these parks in the next 10 to 20 years and at build-out conditions. Land acquisition should follow the needed acreage for build-out as outlined in Table 6.1 in Chapter 6. The following describes the recommended acquisition of park land per City Area:

Wynnewood Peninsula

Proposed parks situated in this area include three Neighborhood Parks, and two Community Parks.

City Core

Proposed parks situated in this area include two neighborhood Parks and one Community Park.

South of SH 121

Proposed parks situated in this area include two Neighborhood Parks and one Community Park.

Park Dedication Ordinance Revision

The Colony currently determines Park Dedication Fees in Lieu of Land based upon the average per-acre value of the land within a development, rather than utilizing a set fee. The Park Dedication requirement is currently five (5) acres per 1,000 persons projected population (at the City's average persons per household figure of 3.1, this equates to 1 acre / 64.5 DU). While The Colony has an arguably progressive Park Dedication Fees in Lieu of Land rate, the Park Dedication acreage requirement is quite low. In addition The Colony accepts floodplain land at a ratio value of 1:3 compared to out-of-floodplain land, whereas many cities do not accept floodplain land as part of park dedication.

Revision:

a) Park Dedication

1 acre / 50 DU - single family AND multi-family residential units (currently 1 acre / 64.5 DU)

b) Fee in Lieu of Land

\$500 / DU - single family AND multi-family residential units (currently: fee is based on the value of the property that is developed)

c) Floodplain land

Revise the allowance of 1:3 ratio to 1:15, or ideally, no acceptance of any floodplain land as part of park land dedication

New:

- d) **Dwelling Unit Park Improvement Fee**
\$1,500 / DU
- e) **Non-residential Park Improvement Fee (new):**
\$1,000 / acre
- f) **Floodplain land**
Have all flood plain land protected with no reclamation allowed

Individual Parks

Recommendations are made for each park in the City's park system. These are general master plan level recommendations, and are intended only to define the magnitude of the improvements for each park. **Each park should be programmed and master planned as it enters the design phase, and extensive area citizen and user group input should be included in the design process.** Specific facility improvements per individual park are recommended in the Appendix of the Master Plan report. Typical improvements to be made to all parks in The Colony include:

- Ensure that all improvements meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements.
- Increase shade in all parks by planting additional trees where practical.
- For additional landscape improvements, place preference on the application of native plantings including trees, wildflowers and grasses.
- Provide shade structures at the children's play areas where feasible.
- Provide adequate funding.

Activity Center Development

Construct a facility that serves as a regional activity center for the City (and includes recreational, cultural, and civic amenities). This would allow multiple programming to occur for entire family interests. When the City decides to proceed, an in-depth analysis of citizen desires and preferences with a citizen survey and public meetings dedicated specifically to the recreation center will help set exact priorities for such a center.

Develop an Arts Master Plan

It is recommended that The Colony develops an Arts Master Plan for the entire City. Involve the Cultural Arts Board and the Community Development Board as well as the Parks and Recreation Department in the master plan process. This master plan should include an analysis and recommendations for public art and the display and performance of other types of art. The plan should include general themes and ideas for public art to be located in public spaces such as parks and streetscapes and should identify funding opportunities. Finally, the feasibility of a stand-alone arts facility should be studied as part of this City-wide Arts Master Plan.

Create an Arts Selection Committee

An Arts Selection Committee – dedicated to the selection and procurement of qualified art pieces for public projects – should be created out of citizens and should include liaisons from the CDC Board, Cultural Arts Board, and City Staff. This committee

should be given the responsibility of seeking out artists and art pieces to be featured in public projects, should identify funding opportunities, and should determine the location and type of art for specific projects.

Festivals & Events

The Colony’s festivals and special events – such as the annual Easter Egg Hunt, the Liberty by the Lake events, and Holiday in the Park – serve as the backbone for cultural happenings in the City. It is at these events that the most people participate in any type of programming offered by the City. It is recommended that the City commit to improving each of these events each year and adding additional festivals and special events whenever appropriate and as funding becomes available.

Action Plan Summary

Prioritized Task List Priority 1 Action Items			
	Units	Estimated Cost (2009 Dollars)	CDC/City Assumed Cost*
Land Acquisition and Repurposing	149 acres	\$5,940,000	\$300,000
Trails & Trail Amenities		\$80,000	\$80,000
Public Space Development and Improvement		\$6,457,000	\$2,457,000
Development of Recreational and Cultural Facilities		\$150,000	\$150,000
Consultancy Studies		\$270,000	\$245,000
Total Priority 1 Expenditures		\$12,817,000	\$3,152,000

Action Plan Implementation Strategy

In order to achieve the vision set forth in this Master Plan, to meet the needs of the community, and to improve quality of life in The Colony, the Priority 1 Action Items as described in the Prioritized Task List (see Table 8.1, Page 8-3a) must be implemented. It is understood that the City does not have unlimited funding and that public improvements must be paid for somehow. However, initiating improvements requires considerable up-front funding. In the 2006 DirectionFinder® Survey, citizens were asked their likelihood of supporting bonds and increased taxes to fund various projects within the City.

Overall, citizens were more supportive of bond funding for parks and recreation facilities than they were for tax increases for various parks and recreation and cultural arts facilities. When asked how likely they were to support the issuing of bonds for parks and recreation facilities, 66% responded “very likely” or “likely.” Only 15% said “not likely” or “not likely at all.”

In addition to general citizen support for issuing bonds for the projects recommended in this master plan, there are other reasons to make a large initial investment in The Colony’s public spaces. Two primary reasons are cost effectiveness and inflation. While

it might be initially more affordable to make only piecemeal improvements to the City's parks, trails, and facilities, in the long run it is often more cost effective to fund and implement a number of projects concurrently (for example, materials purchased in bulk are less expensive per unit). Finally, cost inflation must be considered. The current economic recession has caused rapid fluctuations in the costs of goods and services; as our nation emerges from the recession, a rapid rate of inflation is very likely.