

City of Plano

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

TECHNOLOGY ELEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Basic Premise

To enhance Plano's status as a "City of Choice" for residence, employment, and business location, the City of Plano should lead the process of enabling the community to utilize the opportunities afforded by technological advances. This must include applications of advances in technology for the enhancement of 1) quality of life, 2) competitive business advantages/economic development, and 3) efficient communications.

Relationship of Technology to Comprehensive Planning

Technological advances have frequently resulted in changes to the development patterns, transportation systems, and growth management policies of cities. One of the most obvious technological impacts came with the mass production of automobiles, which led to lower housing densities and suburbanization. Today, suburban sprawl, traffic congestion, and other factors are contributing to densification, mixed-use development, and increased dependence on modern mass transit systems.

Today's cities are also experiencing new challenges and opportunities presented by technological advances, particularly in the communications field. Adaptations to near- and long-term technological advances, some major and some subtle, will be necessary to

continue Plano's success as an outstanding place to live, work, and play. The Technology Chapter sets a basic framework for that to occur.

KEY FACTORS

Quality of Life

"Quality of Life" is often used by cities to define their overall goals or "missions." It is the cornerstone of the "Mission Statement" for the City of Plano. Quality of life implies that a community's residents have a variety of services, facilities, and opportunities available to them to enhance the way they live from day to day. Quality of life issues include services relating to basic sanitary facilities and operations, public safety, libraries, parks and recreation, cultural activities, and education. Services provided by the private sector such as retail stores and shops, movie theaters, and restaurants are also quality of life components. Mobility and accessibility by private vehicles, mass transit, and communications systems also play a major role in one's ability to function successfully in today's society.

There are also some within the community who do not use technological advances effectively, particularly in the area of communications. Their access may be impaired by lack of financial resources, limited knowledge and understanding of technological devices, unavailability of certain technologies where they live or work, or a lack of desire to use such services. These challenges must be noted when developing service programs and operations.

A critical component of Plano's quality of life has been the development and implementation of an effective planning program. This program starts with the Comprehensive Plan as the guide to growth development and redevelopment of the community. The plan has been effectively implemented through a series of regulatory measures, the Capital Improvements Program (CIP), and the Operating Budget. As a maturing city, Plano is facing issues such as infill development, redevelopment, and revitalization. Technological advances may very well enhance the City's ability to effectively accommodate and enhance these opportunities.

When applied properly, technological advances clearly enhance quality of life. Therefore a major concept of this element of the Comprehensive plan is enabling technology to contribute to and benefit the lives of Plano residents.

Business/Economic Development

Much of Plano's success as a community involves its ability to combine a strong economy with residential opportunities. Plano's location in the Dallas metropolitan area, its accessibility via major transportation routes, its skilled work force, and its quality of life have made it a major economic center. Its strong economy has also contributed to Plano's quality of life by providing job opportunities and by strengthening financial resources.

The ability of current and future Plano businesses to remain competitive in the market place will depend on their ability to utilize technological advances to improve their efficiency, product quality, and marketing programs. Much of Plano's future success as an economic center will depend on the ability of its business community to effectively incorporate technology into its operations.

Communications

Efficient and effective communications are at the forefront of our changing world. In recent years, technological advances in communications and information sharing have changed our abilities

and expectations to seek, generate, and receive information quickly and comprehensively. Such advances are likely to continue over the next decade and beyond. Cities that embrace communication enhancements via technological advances are likely to be more successful in meeting the needs of their communities. City rights-of-way will probably continue to provide the primary opportunities for installing technologically advanced communications systems.

Continued expansion of wireless operations will supplement such facilities, but it is not likely to totally replace them. The ability of providers and the City to work, over time, on the effective use of these rights-of-way will be a critical factor. The City will attempt to accommodate private communications facilities when doing so does not inhibit the ability to provide basic services within its rights-of-way.

Enhancing Plano's ability to communicate and share information with various individuals and groups will, in turn improve its effectiveness as a governmental entity. Technological advances should continue to provide numerous opportunities to inform and educate the citizens about issues that affect their daily lives. Communications technologies provide citizens with opportunities to interact effectively and efficiently with local governments. Citizens can provide input on various pending issues and challenges facing decision makers. The inconvenience of certain permitting processes and procedures can be mitigated through the effective use of communications.

Information sharing between Plano and public and private entities is important. This should be done in a manner that minimizes duplication of resources and protects proprietary data, public security, and individual privacy.

O B J E C T I V E S / S T R A T E G I E S

The following section builds on the description of

“Key Factors” to define the City’s technology-related objectives and the key approaches for meeting those objectives. Regular review and monitoring of their effectiveness, particularly in the fast-paced environment of technology change, will be necessary. The City Council, boards and commissions, and staff will use these objectives and strategies in program development and related decisions. They will also be useful to organizations, businesses, and residents in understanding the City’s philosophies and expectations.

The achievement of the objectives will require careful evaluation to ensure that the City’s resources and capabilities are properly used. While the City intends to be pro-active in encouraging the use of technological advances, it must primarily focus on core competencies and services.

Quality of Life

Objectives:

- Enhance the design, development, delivery, and access to public services through the cost-effective use of technological advances.
- Promote communications technology as a means for reducing traffic, improving air quality, and increasing productivity.
- Support reasonable options for those residents limited by circumstance to access technological advances.

Strategies:

- Monitor advances in technology; and employ them if the City can financially and functionally accommodate them.
- Include technological considerations when updating or evaluating the Comprehensive Plan, the Capital Improvements Program, the

Operating Budget and similar documents. Consider adjustments to these documents to ensure that they are consistent with changing technologies and do not unintentionally hamper their use.

- Work with employees to develop transportation management programs that include telecommuting as a means for reducing single occupant vehicular trips to and from work.
- Where feasible, make available public and private facilities and services to extend access to technological advances, primarily information and communication technologies, to residents that might not otherwise take advantage of these advances. For example, the Plano Library System currently makes personal computers with Internet access available to patrons. It also offers basic training on the use of related equipment and data. The emphasis of such programs should be on creating options as opposed to the City providing full service to every home or business in Plano.

Competitive Business Advantages Economic Development

Objectives:

- Ensure that City regulations afford businesses the opportunity to apply technological advances to their operations.
- Promote coordination between the local business community and public entities to share information and assess the impacts of technological advances on both sectors.
- Apply technology to supplement business recruitment and retention programs.
- Promote the development of employee training and education programs as technological advances impact work force requirements.

Strategies:

- Provide for codes and ordinances that enable businesses to gain efficiencies and economies of scale in the market place. This may involve periodic comparisons of technological advances and resulting changes in business activities to the applicability of current regulations. For example, technological advances could impact the design and layout of certain business facilities and the City may find it appropriate to refine development standards to account for such changes.
- Encourage activities that link business leaders with those in local governmental and educational institutions. This can be accomplished through existing venues such as the Plano Economic Development Board and joint forums with local business, governmental, and educational leaders. Technology will continue to change and affect the market place, the local economy, and public resources. Therefore, proactive coordination will be critical to the community's overall success in attracting and retaining businesses.
- Use technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to develop interactive programs assisting business prospects with identifying suitable properties and lease spaces. This could include on-line demographic analyses for specified areas.
- Promote flexible regulations for home occupations that allow residents to take advantage of technological advances while protecting the character of residential neighborhoods.

Efficient and Effective Communications

Objectives:

- Accommodate the reasonable use of public rights-of-way for communications while providing for all required public services.

- Enhance the City's ability to share information and coordinate with various public and private organizations through the cost-effective use of technological advances.
- Enhance public participation in and contribution to the decision-making process through the cost-effective use of technological advances.

Strategies:

- Establish balanced and fair rights-of-way policies that preserve the City's ability to provide safe and efficient traffic movement, effective utility operations, and infrastructure maintenance along with opportunities for the placement and maintenance of communications services. Such policies should be monitored in accordance with technological advances and government regulations.
- Explore opportunities to employ technological advances as means for sharing information, data, and other resources between the City and public and private entities. Such programs should be carefully designed to ensure that "sensitive" data and information is protected and that security and individual rights to privacy are not compromised. Cost effectiveness and operational efficiencies for all participants should also be a part of any determination to implement these technological advances.
- Explore techniques such as visualization of development plans, on-line surveys, and on-line permit applications to improve participation and information sharing with the City. The Internet and/or other communications systems should provide information about upcoming meetings, pending projects and activities, and opportunities for citizens to express their views on certain matters. This would increase the public's understanding of how the City functions in one's day-to-day life and strengthen the sense of "community"