

Chapter 2

A Shared Vision



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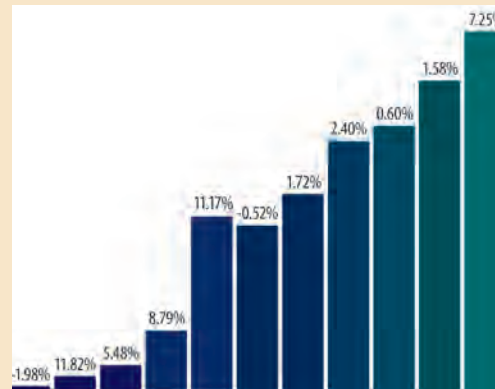
A Shared Vision

WHY PLAN NOW?

Midland has changed drastically over the past 100 years. From a community of less than 5,000 residents to a regional metropolis of nearly 130,000 residents, this change continues to impact all aspects of the community, its neighborhoods, and its ever evolving role in the region. This reality necessitates consideration of what the future of Midland should look like, a process that begins by looking at the trends and conditions that challenge the city today (see Tall City Today).

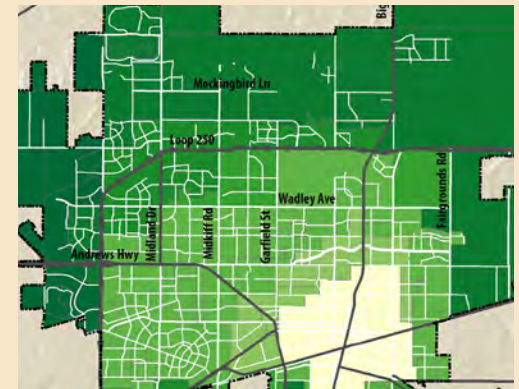
In times of growth it is easy to move forward in a rush, but the Tall City Tomorrow Plan affords community members the opportunity to step back and look at the direction in which their community is going. Development and growth can be viewed in a broader picture of what the city should look like and how it should function in the future. Having a solid vision for the city provides community leaders with the tools necessary to make sound decisions based on the aspirations of residents.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Historic Growth

The make-up of Midland's population has changed over the years. Today the city has more young professionals and a growing number of adults living longer lives. These changes affect the types of programs and services the city supports, the type of businesses that are started, and the type of housing that is built.



Fiscal Sustainability

As the city's physical structures grow and expand into new areas, basic services must also expand. Historic population trends show that the city will continue to grow – the challenge is to make sure that growth is efficient and allows for the quality services residents expect at a cost they can afford.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Living with Resources

The city's draws and pump jacks are both assets and challenges. The draws can be great natural environments that protect residents from flooding, but they can also collect litter and attract illegal dumping. The pump jacks are the driving force of the economy, but can also limit the physical growth of the city. Living with these resources is a fact of life for Midland, and finding ways to integrate these assets into a quality living environment will be an essential part of Tall City Tomorrow.



Housing Choice

Living in a community with inherent support systems is a fundamental purpose of cities. Residents living longer and changes in generational desires create different housing priorities than those of the past. Housing options at all stages of life have not always been provided, but this idea must be addressed.



Economic Sustainability

Stable economies need diversity in order to weather business cycles and retain talent of all types. Midland's business community will need to build on the emerging economic sectors such as aerospace, education, and healthcare.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Quality of Place

Leading cities have great places where people meet, interact, share ideas, and enjoy their city. Midland lacks these types of gathering spaces.

The city's streets, parks, and other public spaces speak to the character of the community, as well as the pride that residents have in Midland and in what they expect from a great city.



Transportation For All

Midland's traffic system is dominated by the car, and likely will be for the life of this plan. This dominance can limit and isolate some residents. For others, the congestion can take away from time at home or work. Local surveys and national trends show increasing demand for walking, biking, and transit options. A well-planned system that ensures the development of arterial and collector streets in tandem with sidewalks, trails, and bike routes will improve the quality of life in Midland.



Multi-Purposing Infrastructure

The city has a long and generally successful history of addressing stormwater in streets and parks. This has been a highly efficient approach, but development upstream has often stressed these systems. Good development practices in the future will need to ensure that the existing stormwater systems are not overwhelmed and that draws can be used for both stormwater management and recreation corridors.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: THE FOUNDATION OF THE PLAN

The foundation of Tall City Tomorrow is the community – the residents, leaders, and business owners who attend meetings or offer their input and ideas in different ways. In many ways, the process of developing the plan is as important as the document itself; without the support for implementation from the public and community leadership to guide the process, the plan offers little value.

The community engagement portion of a comprehensive plan, like Tall City Tomorrow, has three primary purposes: to create a vision for the future of the community; to identify problems and develop solutions to create a better future; and to position the community to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Public Engagement Process

The approach to public engagement was designed to make participation easy for all stakeholders. From focus groups, design studios, and formal presentations, to social media and online town hall meetings, significant efforts were made to engage all segments of the population.

STEERING COMMITTEE

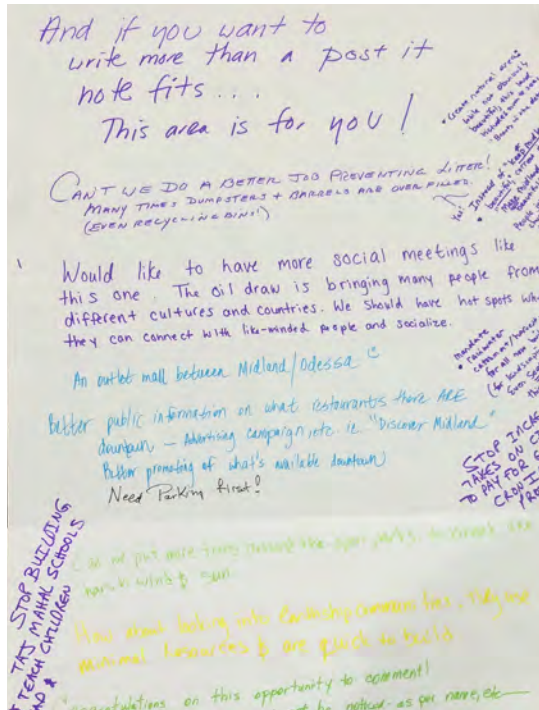
The Steering Committee was thoughtfully selected to represent a cross-section of Midland’s diverse population. These 14 members provided guidance to the engagement process, served as a barometer for the direction of the plan, and will continue to represent the plan through implementation. Their contribution, patience, and support were an invaluable resource in creating a robust plan for the future of Midland that is grounded in public engagement.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP CONVERSATIONS

A proven tool to gain a deeper and more profound understanding of the community, these facilitated discussions covered a broad range of topic areas as each group explored a targeted aspect of the community. A total of 10 facilitated stakeholder group conversations were held throughout the planning process on the following topics:

- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Economy
- Commercial Land Uses
- Downtown
- Transportation
- Public Safety and Fire
- Building and Zoning Codes
- Community Services (schools, parks and recreation, and trash service)
- Oil and Gas
- Community Quality





QUOTES FROM PUBLIC MEETINGS:

- “Can’t we do a better job preventing litter!”
- “Housing on the north and east. Parks on the north and west.”
- “More small affordable housing for senior citizens, teachers, families, and singles.”

DESIGN WORKSHOPS

Early in the process, a three-day public design session was held to offer an informal arena for residents and stakeholders to see, and contribute to, how the physical plan comes together based on community input.

NEIGHBORHOOD WORKSHOPS

The neighborhood workshops brought the planning process to residents and allowed them to talk about their local issues and concerns. Residents were able to review the plan goals and preliminary land use concepts, and were encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas through a variety of input techniques.

MEETING-IN-A-BOX

A Meeting-in-a-Box is essentially a mobile meeting tool; a way to engage residents and stakeholder groups in a guided conversation around the themes of the plan. The opportunity was made available to the groups within the community.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

The online town hall is an engagement forum that enables stakeholders to contribute ideas and respond to comments from the comfort of their own computer, phone, or mobile device. This infographic illustrates trends from the online town hall forum. Full results and comments are available from the city by request.

SURVEY

The Community Report Card was an online survey tool used to gauge public opinion, to identify issues, and to solicit ideas for the future of Midland. The outcome of the survey presents a baseline understanding of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with various aspects of the community. This tool was used at the onset of the project and received 138 responses over the course of several weeks. Full survey results are available from the city by request.

The integrated approach to public engagement led to a better understanding of the community, its values, and its vision for the future. As the Tall City Tomorrow Plan is based on the vision of Midlanders for their future, the public participation process was designed to engage the population.



**ONLINE DISCUSSION
TOP VOTE RECIPIENTS:**

Sync lights for steady traffic flow

Redesign the off-coming traffic from the 250 Loop

Create more parking downtown

Better information flow; more kid-friendly activities/events

“While building more parking should be done, I think the city should first make downtown more walk-able, making it easy and comfortable to park and walk.”

COMMUNITY THEMES

Months of public engagements, hundreds of conversations, and countless internet posts helped define a number of community themes, or “big ideas”, helping to define the overall direction of the Tall City Tomorrow Plan. These are ideas from the people of Midland and for the future of Midland.

Diversify the Economy

- » Create a resilient, diverse, and multi-dimensional economy

While residents recognize the strength of the local economy, the creation of jobs and businesses that are not reliant on the oil and gas market would create a more diverse economy that is less susceptible to fluctuations in the national and international energy markets. Areas of expressed interest were the potential of attracting business around the spaceport/international airport and attracting technology businesses to Midland.

Beautify Midland

- » Create a welcoming, clean and beautiful community

The desire to live in an attractive and clean community is universal, and in many ways is requisite to creating community pride. While many areas of Midland are attractive and well-maintained, the mature neighborhoods, commercial districts, and street rights-of-way can suffer from litter, dilapidation, and a less-appealing public realm. The vast majority of comments on this topic were clearly rooted in a genuine desire to build a greater sense of community in Midland.

Input around this theme was broad and practical with the following highlights:

- Address derelict buildings and nuisance issues
- Reduce littering
- Promote drought-resistant plantings
- Plant more trees

Streamline Traffic Flows and Reduce Congestion

- » Develop a transportation network that enables safe and efficient movement for everyone

Residents recognize the impact of rapid growth on the capacity and function of the transportation network. While frustration is common around the topic of transportation and traffic congestion, the general tone of comments was constructive and hopeful that improvements will be made to accommodate current and continued growth.

Input around this theme included the following suggestions:

- Sync traffic lights to manage peak traffic loads
- Create more street connections to alleviate congestion
- Improve on- and off-ramps along the 250 Loop
- Provide more efficient transportation alternatives

An additional idea that transcends the theme was the desire to better connect neighborhoods to parks and schools in order to create a stronger sense of community and a more convenient way of life.

Build Community / Quality of Place

- » *Develop high-quality places for residents to experience and integrate into the community*

Midland is home to longtime residents, as well as transplants drawn by the economy. While these groups are unique in their tenure in Midland, their community objectives are often similar – a place where they can integrate, socialize, and enjoy. Input around this theme focuses on creating high-quality places where residents can build social networks and integrate into the community as their home. Input included the following highlights: more neighborhood parks, more walking/bicycling trails, and more and better places for events.

Connect Civic and Recreational Amenities with Trails and Sidewalks

- » *Maximize the benefit of community amenities by connecting assets*

The value of community amenities increases as these assets become connected. Individually, a park or library serves only the guests that seek out the experience of that particular facility, while a connected network of amenities increases the use of the overall system including each of its individual parts. Input around this theme focused on providing trail and sidewalk connections between parks, recreation fields, libraries, and schools.

Improve Opportunities for Youth

- » *Create a physically and socially connected network of youth support facilities to develop the next generation of Midlanders*

While the school district is managed independently and is outside the scope of the Tall City Tomorrow Plan, the future of the youth is not. This theme area is based on the idea of creating an integrated environment which supports the development of youth into a productive and positive force. This means creating a physically and socially connected network of schools, parks, sport fields, libraries, and entertainment destinations to make Midland a welcoming and supportive environment.

Improve the Downtown

- » *Create Downtown Midland as a place to work, live, and entertain*

Downtowns are typically symbolic to the community as a whole. In Midland, downtown serves as a corporate office environment during the workday but offers little nightlife or weekend activity. The input around this topic was practical: additional parking structures; traffic calming on major roads to make the district more walkable; more social and entertainment events; address dilapidated and derelict structures; better connect nearby neighborhoods to the district; and promote what is available and happening in downtown Midland.