

# University Park Centennial Master Plan

Adopted 2022



## Preparing for the Future

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# Theme 5

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## Preparing for the Future

The ideas presented so far through the comprehensive plan have discussed goals and action items that are responses to current conditions, identifying what can be done in the current context to ensure that the City continues to be prosperous, maintains its identity, and conserves the resources University Park already possesses. Although the whole plan is about what University Park will be in the future, this Theme is different. Preparing for the Future pulls together issues and action steps that look at the long horizon. In other themes, the plan is dealing with present-day constraints, whereas Preparing for the Future focuses on constraints that may not yet be commonplace throughout University Park.

From issues of sustainability and residential protection in digital spaces to what facilities are needed to protect residents from future emergencies, this Theme dives into the what-ifs that are anticipated in our increasingly advanced and technological society. It's about big ideas and big bets — thinking outside the box, but doing so with rigor and data, based on best practices and the glimmer of emerging trends. University Park wants to be adaptive to trends such as net zero energy use and drone technology as long as the core values of the City aren't compromised. In creating this plan, action items were generated to get in front of ideas and set a pathway on how to respond to innovation.

While these can't be known for sure, it is an effort to be far-sighted, as was the 1989 plan. University Park aspires to be the best-managed city in the country, with the highest quality of life. Looking at emerging trends and smart plans from cities around the nation, and the world, gives insight into how University Park should be preparing itself for new age issues. The goals and action steps

analyzed in this theme cover issues of sustainability and conservation, protecting residents from new threats, encouraging resilient revenue streams, and planning facilities with future needs in mind. In order to best achieve these goals the action steps created are a mix between immediate changes that can be made to prepare for the future and planning processes that can help guide University Park as technology, social trends, and economics advance.

In Texas, many cities are beginning to adopt goals that protect their community from future problems. The City of San Marcos has created a Renewable Energy Credit (REC) Program in 2021 that allows customers to purchase energy that has been metered and verified from renewable sources, including wind and solar power. Furthermore, the credit is one-megawatt hour (MWh) of renewable energy. Purchasing RECs that equal the number of MWh of energy used allows customers to power residences or businesses with 100% renewable energy.

The City of Denton works with a company, DTE, that utilizes methane gas created from decomposition of landfills to generate electricity for hundreds of Denton homes. The project not only is creating a renewable energy source but also reduces the city's greenhouse gas emissions. Through partnerships with companies such as DTE and other programs, University Park can find innovative ways to convert waste and other resources into an overall benefit for the community. Both Denton and San Marcos are good examples of how some cities are aiming to make their communities more sustainable and future focused; and the goals and action steps below speak to how University Park can employ these new strategies.

# Preparing for the Future: Plan Goals and Action Items

## 1. Sustainability and Conservation

With the need to adapt to future demands throughout this comprehensive plan another byproduct of growth and development is the need to build sustainability into all projects and conserve resources that University Park already possesses. A major focus is being placed on how to deal with rainwater harvesting and the responsible use of water for irrigation of residential lawns. Focus is also being given to making City buildings and vehicles more sustainable through converting vehicles to electric and making buildings energy neutral. These goals and action items will hopefully create a standard of sustainability and conservation in University Park across systems outside of just the ideas presented in this comprehensive plan.

Action Item 1.1 Promote harvesting rainwater and run-off water collected in underground storage tanks for both public and private irrigation.

**Description:** Rainwater and run-off water utilization can help University Park conserve water for the foreseeable future. This action item should be both a public and private focus as the City can store rainwater and run-off in underground tanks, i.e. Caruth Park, and can also inform residents how to safely and effectively utilize rainwater and run-off for their irrigation needs.

**Background:** The University Park stormwater system is critically undersized so neighborhoods often get street flooding during large rain events. The StormTrap detention center collects the water off the street and holds it until pipes have capacity. Storing and using that water could benefit Caruth Park and other nearby public areas. In order to use the water for irrigation, University Park should install a filtering system to remove contaminants from the water. Only the water that is used to irrigate will need to be filtered.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Long

Action Item 1.2 Research and implement new irrigation techniques to promote water conservation in University Park.

**Description:** The City should pursue requiring new irrigation systems to communicate with the internet, and other communication systems, for weather/drought conditions (including City systems). The City should also push for the reuse of water for irrigation - cistern, condensate, and separate distribution.

**Background:** Irrigation typically uses the highest amount of water in an area, figuring out how to make irrigation more efficient can help University Park decrease its water usage. The City could require new irrigation systems to communicate with the internet for weather/drought conditions (including City systems) or issue irrigation permits to allow a uniform system.

**Examples:** Cities like Fort Worth and Arlington utilize irrigation permits that could list make/model of controller from approved list.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Medium

Action Item 1.3 Make existing buildings more energy neutral, shoot for “net zero” for new buildings.

**Description:** Set a goal to have the City reach net zero in electricity kWh purchased versus generated. The City should investigate ways to make existing buildings more energy efficient and establish policies to make new buildings net zero.

**Background:** Zero-energy buildings are energy efficient and reduce the rate of carbon emissions once the building is in operation. This saves money and allows the City to utilize green building grants and other funding.

**Examples:** The Houston Advanced Research Center reached net zero for its energy usage in 2020 making it the first energy neutral commercial building in Texas.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Long

Action Item 1.4 Create a pilot program to begin converting City vehicles to electric.

**Description:** The City should conduct a pilot program to determine the cost, efficiency, and effectiveness of converting the City's fleet of vehicles to electric. Utilizing opportunities when City vehicles are replaced, the City can convert some of the replacements to electric vehicles for use in the pilot program.

**Background:** The City has 180 vehicles in its fleet, with a typical lifespan of 12 years or 50,000 miles. Vehicles with limited use will be kept longer, typically, the City replaces 10 to 15 vehicles per year. Due to these parameters, there is an opportunity to begin replacing vehicles with electric options as they become eligible for replacement.

**Examples:** About 40% of the City of Dallas fleet is electric, according to GreenDallas.net. Carmel, Indiana, is using Hydrogen On Tap technology. San Jose, California initiated "Green Vision San Jose," a 15-year plan to remake city purchasing and initiatives. This program gave way in 2018 to "Climate Smart San Jose", which includes a goal of converting 100 percent of the city's fleet to alternative fuels.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Medium

## 2. Resident Protection

From the physical to the digital space there are new threats that could affect University Park residents in the coming years. The addition of new technology and its integration into daily life in University Park puts resident data and privacy at risk. This plan lays out goals and action items to protect residents and their online data and also ask for a plan to cover the future of drone use in University Park. For public safety officials, completing a risk reduction plan and utilizing innovative non-lethal weapons can provide the Fire and Police Department with new directives that will increase safety around the City.

Action Item 2.1 Create a Community Risk Reduction plan for the City of University Park that coincides with the current Fire Department five-year Strategic Plan.

**Description:** Identify target groups within University Park whose lives may be enhanced with specialized services that the fire department can provide.

**Examples:** The City of Round Rock created a

Community Risk Reduction program that consists of a home safety survey that identifies potential concerns in each household and can eventually aggregate into citywide risks that need to be mitigated or identify target groups who need specialized services.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Medium

Action Item 2.2 Develop regulations to govern private and public drone use in University Park.

**Description:** Drone use is becoming more popular across the country and University Park should be aware of how it can be used publicly and privately. Drones could be used for public safety, delivery of items, mapping/surveillance, and more. The City can create regulations to give parameters to drone use to benefit from its innovations and protect against major issues.

**Background:** Public drone use could reduce the time between the detection of an "event" and the delay in the response from the University Park Police Department and University Park Fire Department. An Unmanned Aerial Vehicle or UAV equipped with thermal imaging capability could proactively send pictures to the units during response. It is valuable to know the exact location of a fire due to the close proximity of building structures in University Park.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Long

Action Item 2.3 Create a local ordinance to protect resident data privacy.

**Description:** With the increased use of connected devices and online storage of information there is an increased risk of a breach of resident data. The City should have its own standard of how to ensure resident data stays out of the wrong hands.

**Background:** City online interfaces should not sell resident data. This includes all third-party contracts and/or third-party providers like website hosting and phone applications. Data is becoming a major resource (in both positive and negative respects), and many entities are interested in collecting personal information. Although the state has regulations on data and privacy, University Park needs its own regulations to ensure that the City is adaptive to the ways resident data is being used that can lead to privacy risks.

**Examples:** Chicago, New York, San Jose, Washington

D.C., and Barcelona all have digital privacy policies or data mining policies.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Short

Action Item 2.4 Provide the latest and most cost-effective tools to the Police Department, including non-lethal weapons systems.

**Description:** Retire outdated or modded systems like batons and nightsticks in favor of modern non-lethal weapons; periodically review traditional weapons systems for cost-effectiveness and technological advances. Additionally, the City should make a commitment to always seek technology that would limit lethal force where possible.

**Background:** Investing in more non-lethal weapons can help residents and visitors of University Park feel safe while navigating through the City.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Short

Action Item 2.5 Create an IT Plan to continually upgrade the security of City computer systems to stay up-to-date with potential threats.

**Description:** City computers may be vulnerable to attacks from unknown sources and future threats. University Park must adapt with the times and be certain that data created and stored on City computers are as secure as possible. Because of the quick expansion on internet threats, the IT plan should be consistently revisited to be sure that the City is protected from new cyber threats.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Short

### 3. Create Resiliency in City Revenues

In different areas of this plan, there are commitments to being adaptive to state regulations that may limit city revenues. In Preparing for the Future, the plan identifies fiscal tools that will increase the revenue that the City receives from the many established/potential commercial uses that are or will enrich the University Park community. Outlining how to use the revenue brought in from commercial activities can help University Park build and maintain other important facilities, infrastructure, projects, and programs that can enrich the quality of life in University Park. These are long-term financing tools that can build revenue

for University Park and could be tied to helping fund other action items in this plan or future ideas yet to be realized.

Action Item 3.1 Explore the adoption and potential use of funds from a hotel occupancy tax that will improve the visitor experience to the City's shopping centers, parks, SMU campus, and other amenities.

**Description:** The action item, based on state regulations, is to implement a 7% tax on hotel stays and short-term rentals in University Park to create an additional revenue stream/resilience. This action item will also require City staff time to create and implement the program upfront. Additionally, staff time will be needed to maintain the program through ongoing collection/billing and continued civic outreach.

**Background:** The addition of a Hotel Occupancy Tax would be beneficial to providing funds for promoting tourism for University Park. The guidelines for what the funds can be expended for are fairly specific. The usual occupancy rate in Texas is 13% with 6% going to the state and 7% going to the City. Although University Park only has one hotel, there may be potential for more throughout the lifespan of this plan. The examples below show Hotel Occupancy Tax rates from cities with limited amounts of hotels.

**Examples:** Cities like Buda, Texas, that also have a small number of hotels, charge a 7% HOT tax rate on rent paid and collect taxes on a monthly basis. Salado, Texas only uses a HOT tax rate of 4% with less than five hotels/motels in their jurisdiction.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Medium

Action Item 3.2 Work with property owners to establish a Public Improvement District or Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone in the City's key commercial areas.

**Description:** To facilitate public-private partnerships, aligning long-term values and enhancing/infrastructure management goals, create a collective of commercial property owners who can guide and be in alignment with the City's long-range capital, operations, and infrastructure expenditures in a specific commercial area. This action item can facilitate public-private partnerships, aligning long-term values and enhancing infrastructure

management goals.

**Background:** There are many examples of cities in Texas and across the United States that have used Public Improvement Districts (PIDs) and Tax Increment Redevelopment Zones (TIRZs) to finance improvements and operations. There are lots of firms with experience creating these and this plan would recommend the City contract with one of these firms to go through the process of creating the documents. Every project has nuances and it is important to craft documents that ensure the City's vision is accomplished.

**Examples:** The Uptown Dallas PID is made up of over 2,000 properties and is created to address public safety, encourage positive design standards, build public infrastructure, increase access for pedestrians/bicyclists, and other improvements. This model can be used in a more scaled down fashion in University Park.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Short

## 4. Future Facilities

New facilities will play an important role in preparing University Park for the next few decades. Major concerns are centered around facilities for emergency equipment, reducing congestion made by delivery vehicles, and finding permanent facilities for public safety officials to have access to firearm training. Many of the facilities that are action items of this comprehensive plan are not requiring newly built facilities, but could be achieved by adding on to existing facilities or repurposing facilities for the intent of the new action items. Co-location of uses should be a major focus to best integrate these action items into the fabric of University Park.

Action Item 4.1 Develop voluntary centralized package drop-off site and/or encourage residents to request delivery to FedEx or UPS stores in the City.

**Description:** Create a centralized location where residents can volunteer to have their packages delivered to in order to increase safety. This centralized location can be placed at City Hall, allowing for more security around the packages and would most likely not require a huge financial investment to complete.

**Background:** The expanded use of online purchasing has increased delivery truck traffic and theft from porches has increased alongside.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Short

Action Item 4.2 Fund the development of a facility or engage in a long-term partnership with a facility to provide the Police Department with access to regular firearm training.

**Description:** The Police Department currently utilizes other facilities, but a permanent partnership or development of a facility would increase officer availability and provide certainty around availability and cost. To get a long-term partnership, University Park should evaluate the potential use of firearm training and one of University Park's current facilities, or fund a repurposing of current facilities that can be converted to a firearm training facility.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Medium

Action Item 4.3 Find or fund a facility capable of storing temporary equipment for emergencies.

**Description:** University Park should have one facility with emergency use bunks and showers (as were needed during the winter of 2021), secure storage for motorcycles. An added benefit of an additional facility, could be a safe keeping area for large pieces of property and evidence.

**Background:** A facility to house all these uses would be ideal and increase accessibility of these items at times of emergency.

**Timeframe (short, medium, long):** Medium