



# City of Conroe

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040

August 2021



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# Acknowledgments

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Source: FNI



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# Foreword

The City of Conroe, Texas is a booming community of nearly 100,000 residents located in Montgomery County. The City has experienced tremendous growth in recent years and with this growth and development brings challenges. With these changes, preserving the community's identity and enhancing the existing quality of life for the residents are crucial aspects to consider.

The Conroe Comprehensive Plan is the result of a 16-month planning process that included extensive research and analysis, visioning, public engagement, and strategizing with a variety of individuals and entities—including residents, business and property owners, community and neighborhood organizations, City Staff, and an advisory committee.

The changes in Conroe have been dramatic, and to a degree, a type of change that many cities across the country will never experience. Thousands of people have moved to and will continue to relocate to Conroe. The 2040 Conroe Comprehensive Plan considers the anticipated growth and presents a long-term planning strategy for protecting Conroe's way of life, while anticipating new demands on the City's infrastructure and resources. It is intended to be a strategic guide with overarching policies and recommendations

that aim to inform decision-makers. After adoption, the Plan will be a living document, and will be updated and amended to reflect the changes of the community and surrounding areas (such as shifts in demographic or economic trends).

Both the planning process and adopted Plan resulted in:

- Gathering input and support from Conroe's citizens, stakeholders, and leadership
- Establishing consensus for a community-supported vision and established principles that guide future growth and redevelopment of the community
- Outlining short-term, mid-term and long-term growth strategies that influence development patterns
- Defining realistic, measurable goals and implementation strategies that are achievable and easy to understand
- Providing continuity and predictability for residents, landowners, developers and potential investors
- Fulfilling the legal requirements for Conroe's development standards and regulation



A comprehensive plan can be defined as a long-range planning tool that is intended to be used by City Staff, decision-makers, and citizens to guide the growth and physical development of a community for 10 years, 20 years, or an even longer period. The State of Texas has established laws about the way in which incorporated communities can ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their citizens through a comprehensive plan. More specifically, the law states:

The Texas Local Government Code states, "The governing body of a municipality may adopt a comprehensive plan for the long-range development of the municipality. A municipality may define the relationship between a comprehensive plan and development regulations and may provide standards for determining the consistency required between a plan and development regulations."

In basic terms, the primary objectives of a comprehensive plan are to accomplish the following:

- Efficient delivery of public services
- Coordination of public and private investment
- Minimization of potential conflicts between land uses
- Management of growth in an orderly manner
- Cost-effective public investments
- A rational and reasonable basis for making decisions about the community

There are two interrelated purposes of a comprehensive plan. First, it allows the citizens of a community to create a shared vision of what they want the community to become. Additionally, it establishes recommendations in which a community can effectively implement this vision.







Source: FNI





# 01 | Community Snapshot

The purpose of this Community Snapshot chapter is to understand the City of Conroe's physical, social, historical, and political context. Understanding the City's background and context helps to identify the community's values, needs, and desires, all of which affect future growth and development. Information revealed within this section will lay a foundation for all subsequent planning decisions located within the Plan. This chapter includes a discussion and/or analysis of the following:

- Historical context
- Planning context
- Demographics
- Existing land use
- Physical features analysis

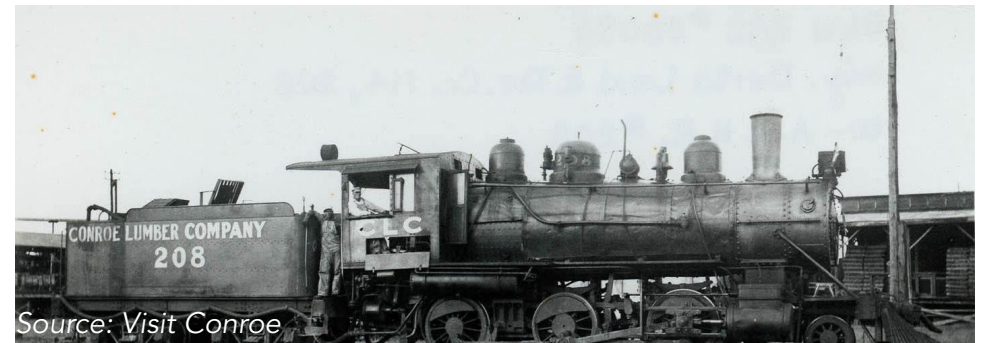


### Historical Context

In 1881, Isaac Conroe established a sawmill on Stewart's Creek near the Great Northern Railroad's Houston Crockett Line, marking the beginning of Conroe's settlement. The growth of the lumber industry in Texas' East Piney Woods and the intersection of two railroad lines in the area led the settlement to become a thriving commercial center during the late 1800s. Conroe soon became the county seat for Montgomery County and was incorporated in 1904 with a population of 1,009.

The City of Conroe faced economic hardship in the 1920s due to a timber shortage, which deteriorated further with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929; however, the Conroe Oil Field boom immediately revived the City and set the stage for a prosperous decade. The City's success in the 1930s is symbolized by two key Downtown buildings designed in the signature Art Deco style of the time – the Crighton Theatre constructed in 1935, and the County Courthouse constructed in 1936.

In more recent decades, the growth of the City has been fueled by the availability of undeveloped land located relatively close to the Houston metropolitan area. The City of Conroe has become an ideal locale for those seeking a small-town lifestyle within reach of various City amenities. Those who reside in the City, new residents and old, have found the community to be more than a residential outpost for Houston. Rather, it is a community with a rich and celebrated history, a wealth of natural resources, established arts and cultural amenities, and opportunities for both business and residential growth.

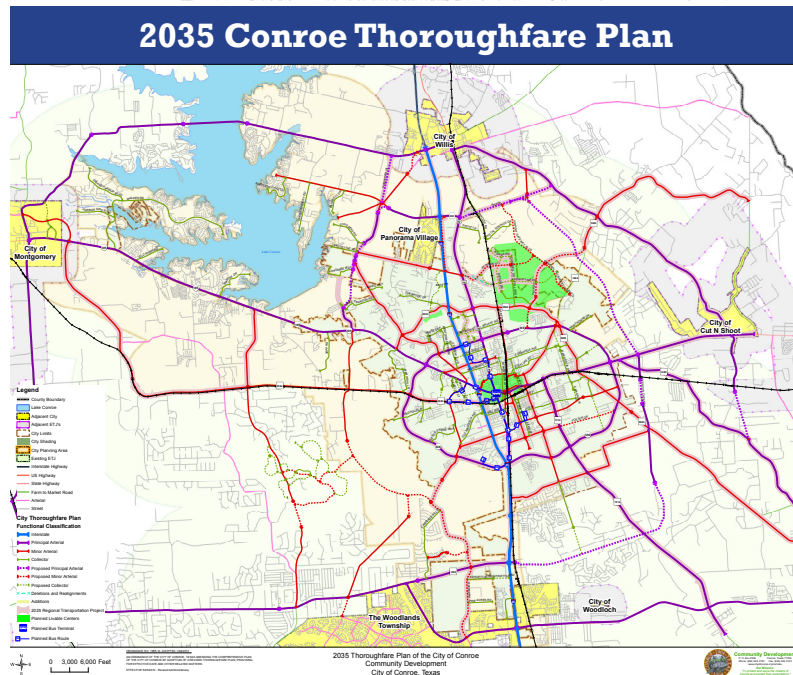




Planning context considers the local and regional context of a city. For Conroe, this includes the City's boundaries, its relationship to Montgomery County, and its relationship to the greater region. This is important because Conroe does not exist in a vacuum – its decisions and actions, as well as those of surrounding cities, have large impacts to the greater region.

The City of Conroe is included within the 13-county Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) region: a voluntary and non-binding association through which local governments consider issues and cooperate in solving area-wide problems. H-GAC is the predominant regional planning body in the Greater Houston area, conducting research, studies, and regional plans related to transportation, environmental sustainability, and growth management. Much of this effort focuses on the rapid growth expected for the area in the years to come.

As part of the regional planning effort, H-GAC aided in the creation of the 2016 Montgomery County Thoroughfare Plan. The document identifies the future classifications of existing and proposed roadways throughout the County to create better connectivity as the area grows. Planned roadway alignments were considered in order to ensure continuity among the various planning documents.



### Local Plans

#### 2007 Comprehensive Plan

Prior to this Plan, the City of Conroe had last updated its Comprehensive Plan in 2007. The Plan included topics relating to housing inventory, code enforcement, transportation, and future needs. In addition to this, the 2007 Plan included information regarding population demographics, utilizing U.S. Census data. This current update to the Comprehensive Plan builds on that previous comprehensive plan's effort, incorporating some of the same ideas and datasets into this document.

#### 2035 Thoroughfare Plan

The City of Conroe adopted its most recent thoroughfare plan in 2010, with periodic updates annually. The plan analyzes existing roadway facilities and proposes future roadway connections as growth continues in order to enhance connectivity throughout the City and its extraterritorial jurisdiction. The current update to the Comprehensive Plan considers information relating to this effort.

### FM 3083 Corridor Study

Approved in 2009, the Carter Moore Drive-FM 3083 Guidelines study was undertaken to define minimum criteria for properties fronting a segment of FM 3083. Specifically, the principal site development elements covered by the corridor guidelines include setbacks, forest preservation, utility locations, edge landscape, landscape screening, parking lot landscape, parking lot lighting, signage and a trail system. Additionally, the guidelines identify several public realm opportunities within the corridor including the creation of entryways, street signage, and an array of street furniture elements.

The residential and commercial development guidelines outlined in this study have been adopted by the City to enhance the aesthetics of the corridor and attract future investment. Key recommendations relating to the study include the following:

- Establish maximum understory removal for forested tracts
- Place all utilities underground within the highway right-of-way rather than within the building setback
- Require the planting of trees from a selected number of tree species to create a unified tree canopy throughout the corridor
- Require street edge and buffer landscape for fronting tracts
- Limit the number and sizes of facility identification signage
- Define materials that must be used for facility identification signage





### Downtown Conroe Master Plan



Source: City of Conroe

### Downtown Development Plan

In 2017, the City of Conroe initiated the creation of a Downtown Development Plan in an effort to strengthen Downtown Conroe as a destination for the region. With the help of an advisory committee, key stakeholders, and residents, a vision was established to guide the development of the Downtown area. Furthermore, through substantial research and community input, recommendations were formulated to help Downtown Conroe achieve the success that the community deserves as well as the understanding of the steps necessary to bring solutions to reality.

Along with a master plan, the Downtown Development Plan includes a total of 41 recommendations. These recommendations include the following:

- Pursue a Downtown Conroe Municipal Management District
- Establish a common gateway treatment and wayfinding program
- Improve and celebrate rail crossings
- Construct Hike and Bike “Loop” throughout Downtown Conroe
- Add on-street parking along old town side streets
- Create an open-air marketplace and public lawn
- Reconstruct Dallas Street into “Dallas Boulevard”
- Enhance the public realm of major corridors
- Reconstruct Metcalf Street into an urban “complete street”

The plan was unanimously adopted in the summer of 2019. Consideration of the Downtown Development Plan was crucial to this comprehensive planning process. This document builds upon previous recommendations and initiatives for Downtown Conroe.

### Demographic Analysis

The purpose of evaluating a community's demographics is to understand its social context, both historically and at the present time. Understanding the background and context of a community can help identify its needs and priorities that will affect its future growth and development. Demographics impact every element of a comprehensive plan, from land use to tax revenue to the demand for infrastructure and services. Understanding the "who", "when", and "where" of demographic trends can help Conroe accommodate current and future needs with a higher degree of efficiency and accuracy.

### Population Growth

Population growth trends are important to consider as they can help predict future growth within a community. An analysis of population growth by decade reveals that Conroe experienced the most growth between 2010 and 2019.

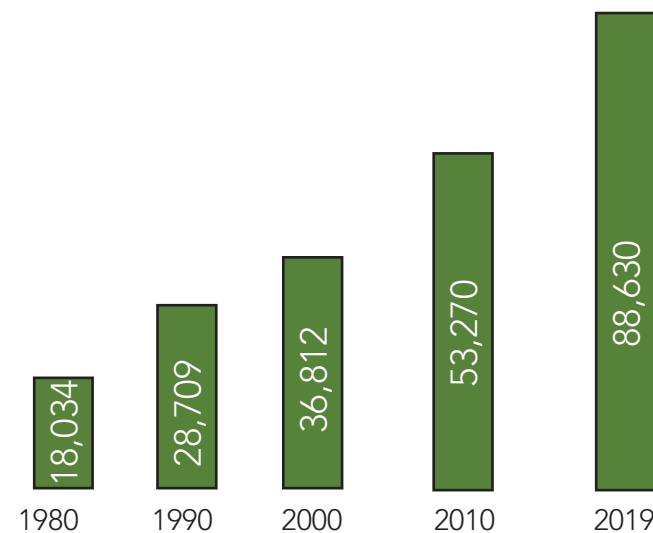


### Data Sources

This Plan utilizes historical data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a systematic count of the number of people living in the country. Additionally, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts an American Community Survey (ACS), which is an estimate based on a small sample of randomly selected participants over a period of several years. This chapter examines Conroe's demographics with ACS 2014-2018 dataset and estimates for 2019.

Recent population trends reveal that the City has experienced tremendous growth since 2010. Between the years of 2010 and 2019, the City has added over 35,000 new residents-- a compound annual growth rate of 5.8%.

**Figure 1.1 Population Growth Since 1980**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### Age and Sex Distribution

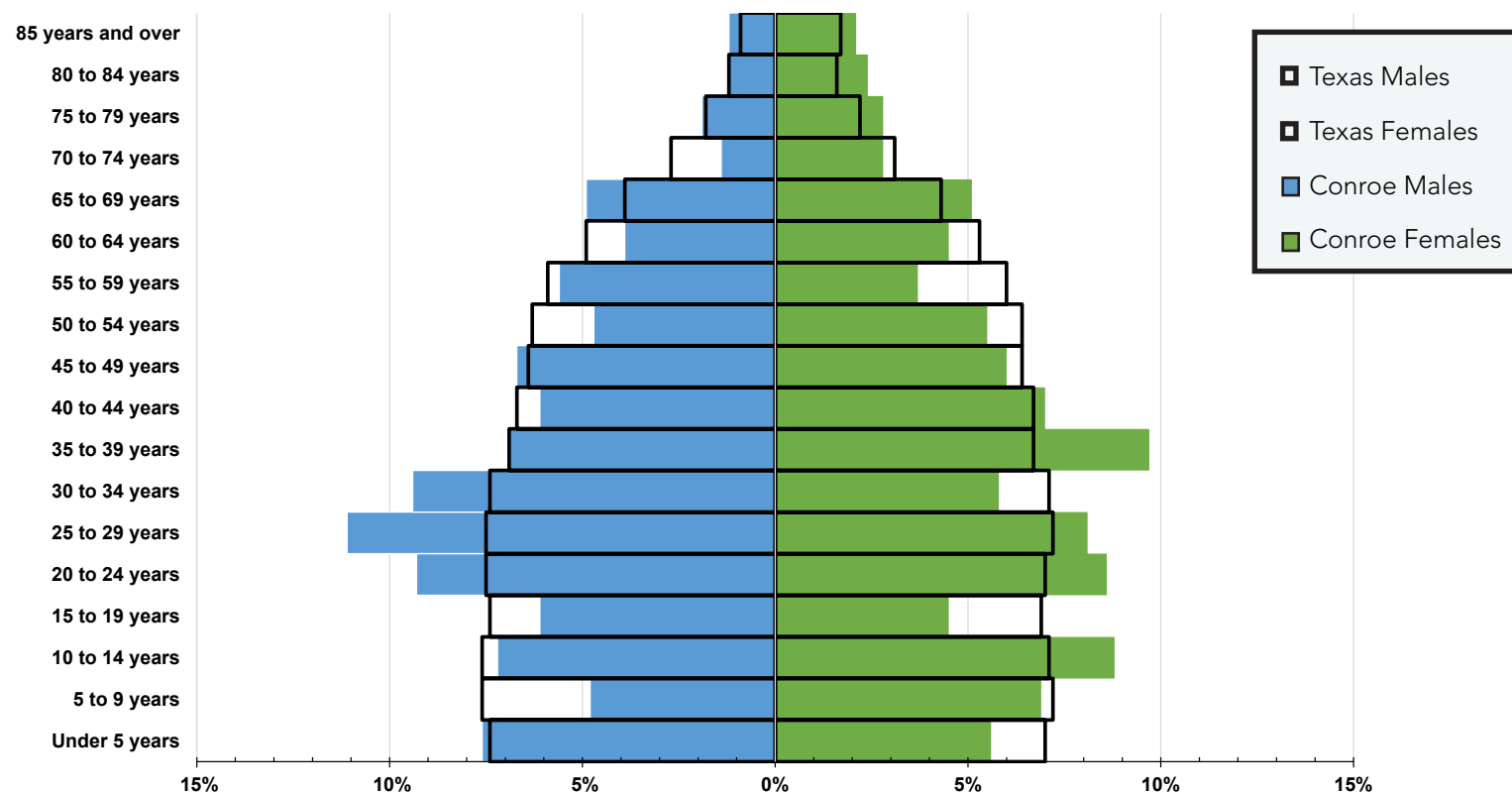
The age distribution of Conroe's population can help to guide the City as to the needs and desires of its citizens. Age and sex have a direct impact on the City's housing, retail, and entertainment markets. Cities with large populations of seniors, for instance, should consider adjusting housing and transportation options to accommodate a higher population of aging residents.



Likewise, communities with a higher proportion of residents in family formation years should plan for more family-oriented housing and entertainment options, as well as adequate schools and employment opportunities. A useful way to examine age composition within a community is through the age-sex pyramid, as shown in Figure 1.2. The age pyramid categorizes age into 5-year cohorts and is a graphic representation of age and sex distribution within the community.

The age pyramid reveals that Conroe's population is well-distributed among various age groups. All age groups between under 5 years to 50 years have a significant presence within the community, while the proportions of those 50 years old and older drop significantly.

**Figure 1.2 Population Pyramid 2018**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2018 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables



### Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are factors that help explain a community's identity. While the two terms are often used interchangeably, race is associated with biological factors, such as facial features or hair color. According to the U.S. Census Bureau classifications, racial classifications in the United States include, but are not limited to, White, Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American. Ethnicity is associated with cultural factors, such as language and traditions. The most differentiated ethnicity in the U.S. is Hispanic/Latino. For more information about how race and ethnicity are defined, please visit the U.S. Census Bureau website.

#### Race

The population is comprised of 70 percent White and 10 percent Black or African American. All other races make up 20 percent of the City's total population. When compared to the racial distribution of the population in 2010, the percentage of White population has decreased by 2 percent and the percentage of Asian population has increased by 1 percent between 2010 and 2019.

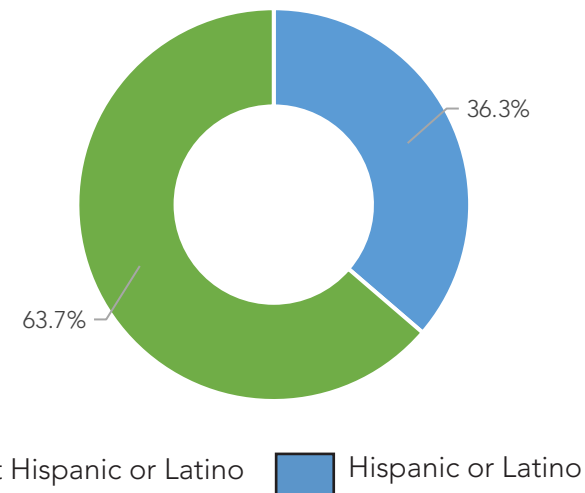
#### Ethnicity

In terms of ethnicity, over one-third of the City's residents are of Hispanic or Latino origin. This constitutes a significant portion of the City's population, as shown in Figure 1.3.

**Table 1.1 Racial Distribution**

| Race                              | 2010  | 2019  |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|
| White                             | 72.8% | 70.3% |
| Black or African American         | 9.2%  | 9.8%  |
| American Indian and Alaska Native | 1.1%  | 1.0%  |
| Asian                             | 1.7%  | 2.7%  |
| Some other race                   | 12.2% | 12.8% |
| Two or more races                 | 3.0%  | 3.4%  |

**Figure 1.3 Ethnicity Distribution**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010



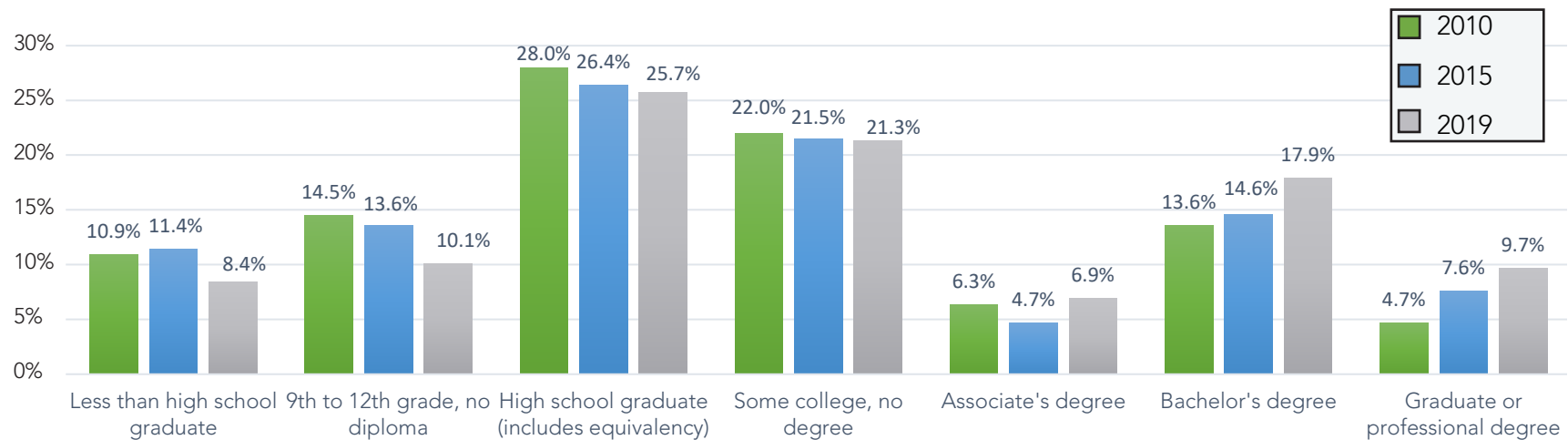
## Educational Attainment

Observing the educational level of a population can indicate the degree of skills and abilities possessed by the residents of the community. This information is important to analyze since it can be useful in attracting businesses to the area, which in turn will increase economic development opportunities.

Figure 1.4 presents a comparison of the highest level of educational attainment by Conroe residents 25 years and older in 2010, 2015 and 2019. Overall, there has been a shift toward higher levels of education.

In 2010, 25.4 percent of residents lacked a high school diploma ; by 2019, this had decreased to 18.5 percent. Correspondingly, the percentage of residents who have obtained a college degree has steadily increased from 18.3 percent in 2010 to 27.6 percent in 2019.

**Figure 1.4 Highest Level of Educational Attainment in 2010, 2015, and 2019**



Source: 2010 U.S. Census, 2014-2018 American Community Survey and Esri Forecasts for 2019

### Household Income

Conroe's median household income from 2010 to 2018 increased, indicating increasing purchasing power. It also relates to cost-of-living factors such as inflation and home prices. Over these years, the median household income increased from \$45,567 to \$57,214, an increase of \$11,647. The City's median household income is slightly lower than the median household income for the State of Texas', which was \$59,570.

The State of Texas has a higher percentage of residents earning higher income levels (\$50,000 or more). The largest income bracket in Conroe is households earning \$50,000 to \$74,999 per year, indicating that Conroe has available purchasing power and may serve as an attractive asset for future retailers within the region.

**Table 1.2 Median Household Income in 2010, 2018, 2019, 2024**

| Year                       | Conroe   | Texas         |
|----------------------------|----------|---------------|
| 2010                       | \$45,567 | \$49,646      |
| 2018 (inflation- adjusted) | \$57,214 | \$59,570      |
| 2019*                      | \$57,896 | not available |
| 2024*                      | \$65,591 | not available |

\*Forecasts

### Home Value

Increasing median home value is a positive indicator of the City's economic condition and financial sustainability. Conroe's median home value has significantly increased since 2010. The median home value in Conroe was \$218,712 in 2019, which is a 78 percent increase from 2010, when the median home value was \$122,400.

### Median Household Income



**\$57,896**

### Median Home Value



**\$218,712**

Source: 2010 U.S. Census, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables and Esri forecasts for 2019



## Household Type and Size

An analysis of renter-occupied versus owner-occupied housing can provide Conroe with a basis upon which to evaluate the affordability of housing stock as well as future housing conditions. A low percentage of renter-occupied housing can be an indication of a lack of affordable housing, while a high percentage of renter-occupied housing can be an indication of the future decline of housing conditions. It is generally believed that owner-occupied housing is better maintained than renter-occupied; therefore, a high number of rental units can lead to poor housing conditions in years to come.

The proportion of occupied and vacant housing units in Conroe has remained consistent over the years. The same statement can also be made regarding the owner and renter occupied housing units as shown in Table 1.3. The increase in total housing units and owner-occupied units indicates positive changes in housing conditions in Conroe.

**Table 1.3 Housing Characteristics in 2010 and 2019**

|                     | 2000   | 2010   | 2019   |
|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Total Housing Units | 19,168 | 21,009 | 35,743 |
| Occupied            | 90.2%  | 89.3%  | 91.2%  |
| Owner-Occupied      | 51.5%  | 49.0%  | 50.4%  |
| Renter-Occupied     | 38.7%  | 40.3%  | 40.8%  |
| Vacant              | 9.9%   | 10.8%  | 8.8%   |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1 and Esri forecasts for 2019



Source: City of Conroe

### Existing Land Use

To accurately assess Conroe's future land use needs, it is important that existing land use is taken into consideration. The pattern of land use that currently exists has evolved to fit the needs of the community as it has grown. This section of the plan provides documentation of the way in which parcels of land within the City are currently being used. This will allow land use recommendations to be tailored to the needs of Conroe and its citizens. Furthermore, this section identifies key developments that currently exist within the City, allowing for subsequent sections to consider existing amenities.

Aerial photography supported by field verification was used to identify existing land uses in the preparation of this section. Parcels in the City limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) are color-coded according to various land use types. This information is included in the Existing Land Use Map, depicting Conroe's current land use pattern.



Source: Freese and Nichols

### Key Existing Developments

Key existing developments are developments that constitute a major investment on behalf of a public entity and/or the private sector, offering unique amenities to a specific area. It is crucial that these developments be identified in order to understand the future needs of a community. It is crucial that recommendations in this plan identify ways increase the value of these developments while also planning for the surrounding area. One of Conroe's most distinctive areas is its Downtown. However, there are two other developments in Conroe that are especially significant: Conroe Park North and Deison Technology Park.

#### Conroe Park North

Located in the northern portion of the City, Conroe Park North is an industrial park comprised of roughly 1,655 acres of land. Just off FM 3083 and two miles east of I-45, the industrial park has seen success in recruiting businesses to the area. Some of the existing businesses located within the park are:

- FedEx Freight
- Ball Corporation
- Hunting Energy
- Galdisa USA
- Airgas

Existing conditions within the development are excellent, with appropriate infrastructure and aesthetic requirements for businesses. As the City continues to grow, it will be important to come up with ways to attract more businesses to the park. Furthermore, as it relates to land use, it is important to consider this area and adjacent land uses as growth occurs.



### Deison Technology Park

Deison Technology Park is a development initiated by the City primarily to attract technology companies to Conroe. The development is located in close proximity to Conroe Park North and is directly adjacent to the Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport. Comprising roughly 248 acres, the development provides nature trails, water features, and other pedestrian amenities to those that visit the site.

Given the lack of investment from the private sector, it will be important for the City to find new ways to attract businesses in order to see a return on the investment. Furthermore, given the nature of the use, it is important to take the park into consideration as it relates to surrounding land uses, incorporating a variety of housing types to accommodate for the technology companies that the City wants to attract.



Source: City of Conroe

### Existing Land Use Types and Distribution

#### LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Single dwelling units that are detached from any other dwelling unit, is built on-site, and is designed to be occupied by only one family. On the Existing Land Use Map, this comprises the Single-Family designation.

#### MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Dwelling units divided by two or more living quarters, with separate entrances for both. On the Existing Land Use Map, this comprises Two-Family (Duplex) and Townhome designations.

#### HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Multiple separate housing units are contained within a building or several buildings. A common example is that of an apartment. On the Existing Land Use Map, this comprises the Multi-Family designation.

#### MANUFACTURED HOMES

Individual dwelling units that are manufactured in a factory rather than on-site.

#### COMMERCIAL

Land utilized for the sale of goods and services to the public. Examples include retail and office establishments. On the Existing Land Use Map, this comprises Commercial, Office, and Retail designations.

#### INDUSTRIAL

Land utilized for the manufacturing of goods and the sale of various services. Examples include, refining or manufacturing facilities, indoor warehouse/storage facilities, and industrial business parks

#### PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Park land, open space, and/or recreational areas located outdoors, including facilities such as tennis courts, swimming pools, pavilions, and basketball courts. On the Existing Land Use Map, this comprises Parks and Open Space, HOA Parks/Facilities, and Private Recreation designations.

#### INSTITUTIONAL/PUBLIC

Facilities that are publicly owned, such as schools, churches, municipal buildings, cemeteries, and some medical facilities. Also includes support services, such as school bus storage lots.

On the Existing Land Use Map, this comprises the Public/Semi-Public, Common Space/Drainage Ponds, and Utility designations.

#### RIGHT-OF-WAY

Land dedicated to public use for streets, alleys, and rail lines.

#### LAKES

Areas that constitute major bodies of water that are localized in a basin. In the City of Conroe, this includes Lake Conroe and Lewis Creek Reservoir.

#### VACANT

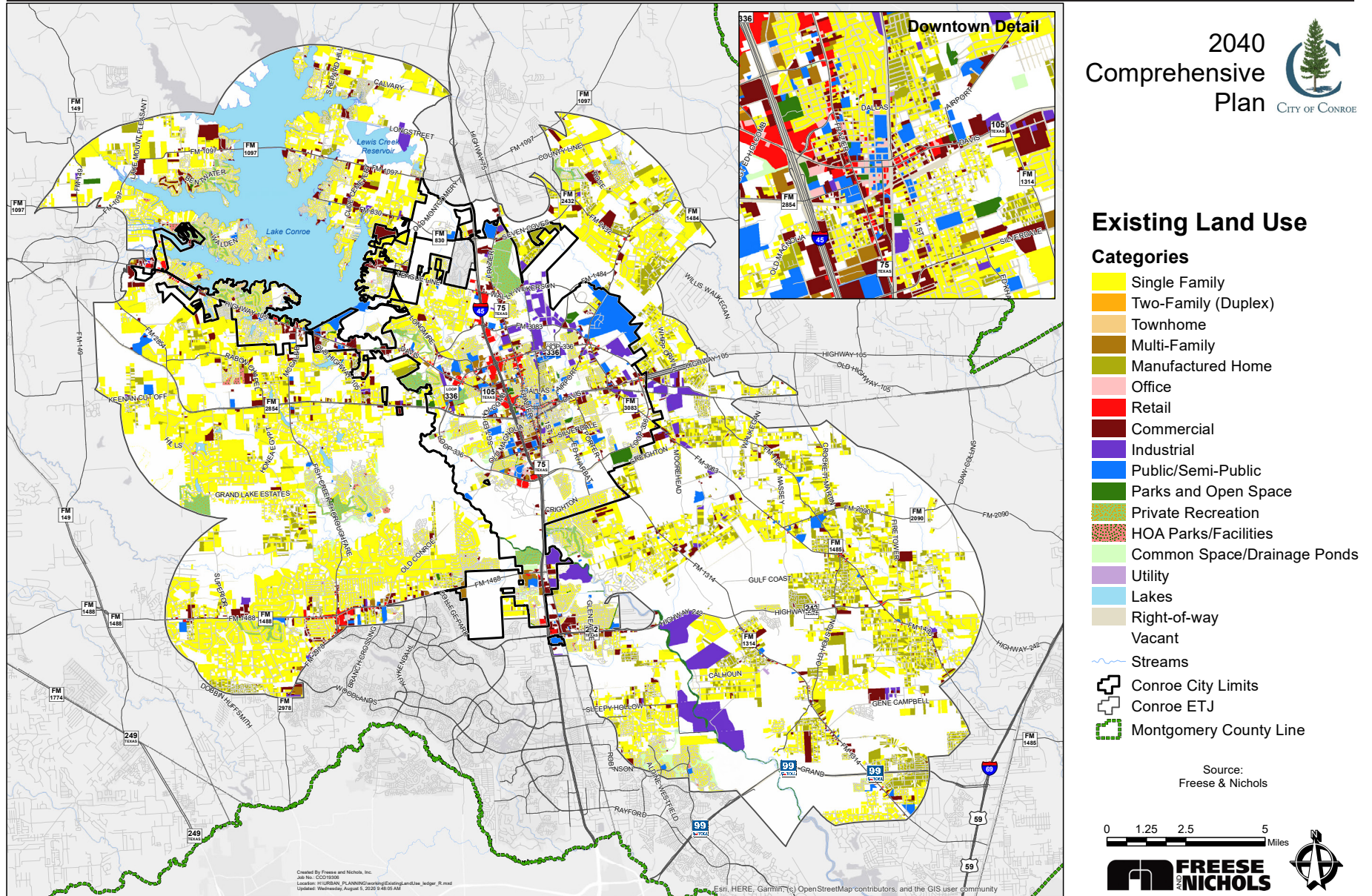
Land that does not have readily visible or apparent use or is used for low-intensity agricultural purposes.



| Table 1.4 Existing Land Use  |                              |             |         |         |         |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Existing Land Use Categories | Detailed Land Use Categories | City Limits |         | ETJ     |         |
|                              |                              | Acreage     | Percent | Acreage | Percent |
| Low Density Residential      | Single-Family                | 8,460       | 18.0%   | 57,958  | 27%     |
| Medium Density Residential   | Two-Family (Duplex)          | 4           | 0.1%    | 6       | 0.1%    |
|                              | Townhome                     | 58          | 0.1%    | 47      | 0.1%    |
| High Density Residential     | Multi-Family                 | 651         | 1.0%    | 208     | 0.1%    |
| Manufactured Homes           | Manufactured Home            | 666         | 1.0%    | 11,161  | 5.0%    |
| Commercial                   | Office                       | 209         | 0.4%    | 56      | 0.1%    |
|                              | Retail                       | 814         | 2.0%    | 335     | 0.2%    |
|                              | Commercial                   | 2,579       | 6.0%    | 5,004   | 2.0%    |
| Industrial                   | Industrial                   | 1,579       | 3.0%    | 3,305   | 2.0%    |
| Parks and Open Space         | Parks and Open Space         | 477         | 1.0%    | 539     | 0.3%    |
|                              | Private Recreation           | 1,792       | 4.0%    | 1,520   | 0.7%    |
|                              | HOA Parks/Facilities         | 13          | 0.1%    | 221     | 0.1%    |
| Institutional/Public         | Public/Semi-Public           | 2,627       | 6.0%    | 1,093   | 0.5%    |
|                              | Common Space/Drainage Ponds  | 279         | 0.6%    | 969     | 0.5%    |
|                              | Utility                      | 36          | 0.1%    | 45      | 0.1%    |
| Right-of-Way                 | Right-of-Way                 | 5,236       | 11.0%   | 11,255  | 5.0%    |
| Lakes                        | Lakes                        | 280         | 0.6%    | 16,637  | 7.0%    |
| Vacant                       | Vacant                       | 20,751      | 45.0%   | 103,556 | 48.0%   |
| Total                        |                              | 46,509      | 100.0%  | 213,915 | 100.0%  |

Source: Freese and Nichols

Figure 1.5 Existing Land Use Map





# Physical Features

## Constructed Constraints

A number of factors, both constructed and natural, impact how Conroe can grow and develop. For example, the City limits, water bodies, floodplains, natural resources, and major thoroughfares impact and influence future development. By understanding these facilitators and impediments, the City can better understand its potential to grow as well as where that growth might occur.

### City Boundaries

It is important that Conroe understand its existing City limits to better plan for the future. Currently, the City limits comprise roughly 46,500 acres. Of this land, approximately 55% is developed, indicating that the City can accommodate growth within its current boundaries.

### Major Thoroughfares

Major thoroughfares are roadways identified as regional routes, providing mobility over long distances. These roadways are different in nature compared to roads located in places like subdivisions as they are meant to provide mobility for high volumes of traffic at relatively high speeds. In Conroe, two major thoroughfares pass through the City: Interstate Highway 45 and State Highway 105. State Highway 105 provides east-west mobility, turning into Davis Street briefly within the City limits. Additionally, Interstate Highway 45 provides north-south mobility, creating an east-west divide within the City.

## Natural Constraints

### Streams and Floodplains

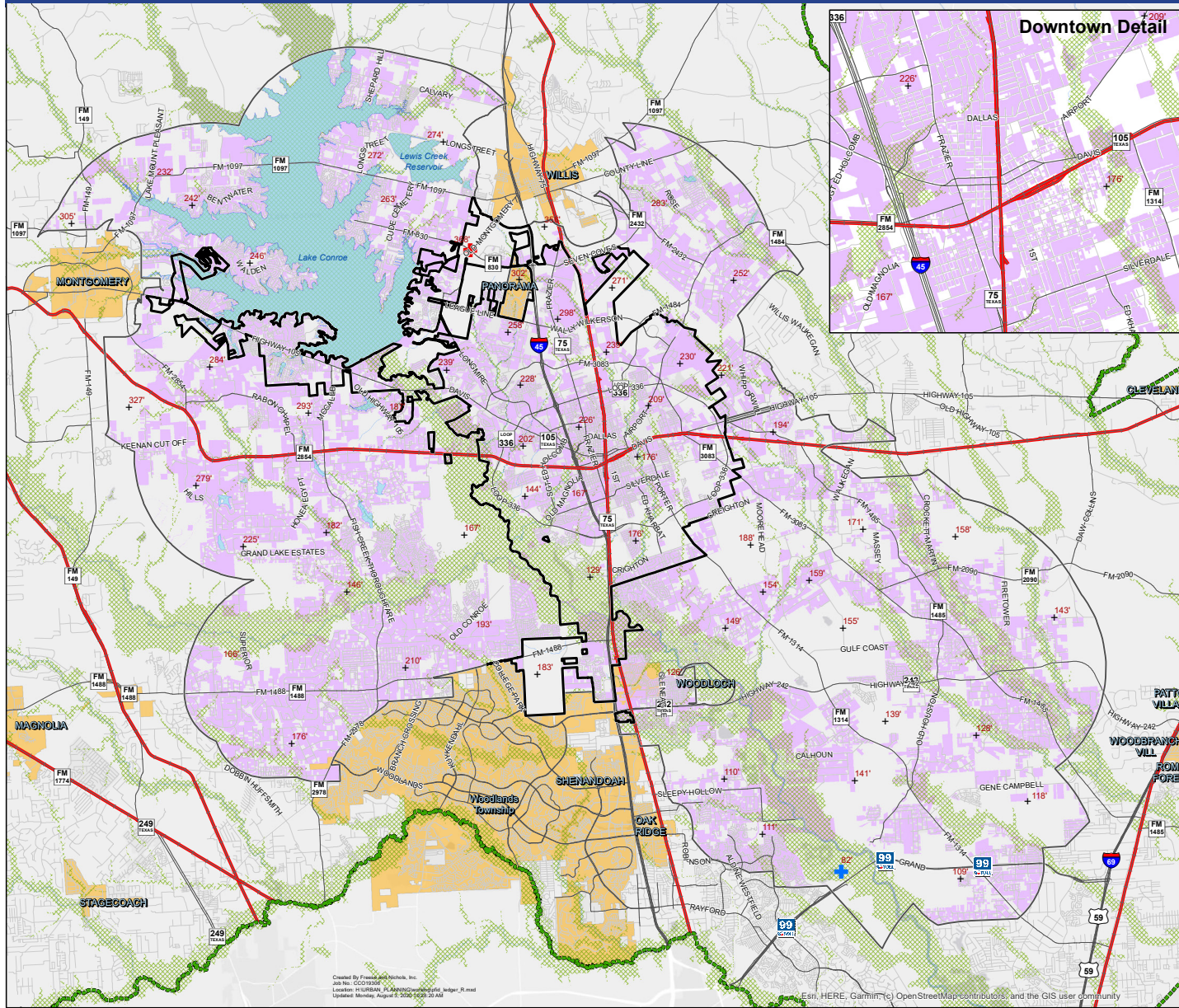
Given Conroe's proximity to major bodies of water – Lake Conroe, Lewis Creek Reservoir, and San Jacinto River – various tributaries flow through the City and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). As a result of various watersheds and water channels, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), about 66,000 acres lie within the 100-year floodplain. Much of this land is located within Conroe's ETJ, but some areas exist within the City limits.

Overall, it is important that the City consider the floodplain when planning for the future, as these areas can impact the feasibility and availability of developable land. In addition, accounting for floodplains in the planning process mitigates impacts from natural disasters, helping to save the lives and property of residents.

### Topography

Corresponding with the floodplain, Conroe's planning area has a high point elevation of about 365' and a low point elevation of 82'. This means that there is an elevation difference of roughly 283' within the City and its ETJ. The location of any significant slopes or changes in elevation will be important when considering developable land and stormwater planning.

Figure 1.6 Physical Features Map



2040  
Comprehensive  
Plan



## Physical Features

- + Highest Elevation
- + Lowest Elevation
- + Spot Elevation
- Rail Lines
- Streams
- Developed Land
- Surrounding Municipalities
- Floodplain (FEMA)
- Conroe City Limits
- Conroe ETJ
- Montgomery County Line
- Waterbodies

0 1.25 2.5 5  
Miles

**FREESE & NICHOLS**







## 02 | Community Vision

A major component of the Comprehensive Plan is the community input. Throughout the planning process, the citizens share what they want the community to look like in the future. With an extensive public input process, this Plan obtained information from anyone interested in participating in the formulation of the vision and goals of this document. The following input opportunities were used as the basis for this Plan:

- Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) Meetings
- Stakeholder group meetings
- Community meetings/events
- Online survey

This chapter provides an overview of the public outreach that occurred during the development of this Plan. Additionally, the chapter formulates a community vision statement and guiding principles for the Plan which together, serve as the foundation of the document.





Source: FNI



## Community Meeting

Date: July 11, 2019

Meeting purpose: The purpose of this meeting was to share information about the comprehensive planning process, gather input from the community on the vision for the future, and encourage the community to stay involved in the planning process.

Summary: The meeting started with a presentation outlining the purpose of planning and its importance to the future well-being of communities. The presentation also included an overview of the project, outlining opportunities for further community involvement and input. Finally, the presentation gave a brief baseline assessment of existing conditions in Conroe, providing current demographic, economic, and land use information.

After the presentation, visioning exercises were conducted in which attendees were asked to share their thoughts on the input boards. The boards covered topics including housing, economic development, community character, transportation, and future land use. Additional information was gathered through comment cards from attendees relating to what is needed or missing, what improvements are needed, and what the attendees' vision is for Conroe.

### Key Takeaways

- Capitalizing on the history, arts and culture is important to the community.
- New entertainment venues, restaurants, and businesses based in the downtown and the waterfront areas are desired.
- There is a desire for diverse housing options such as mixed use residential.



\*Full-size boards are provided in the Appendix

"Improve quality of life via enhancements in the arts, historical and entertainment venues."

"Make it a Music/Arts Destination City"

"Affordable housing needed."

## Conroe 2040 | Planning for the Future





### Stakeholder Group Meetings

Date: September 30 - October 2, 2019

Summary: Four meetings were held to receive input from various stakeholders of the community. The stakeholders included the Chamber of Commerce, the Historic Uptown District Community Association, the Lion's Club, and the Economic Development Council. The meetings provided an overview of planning in general and why an updated comprehensive plan is important for Conroe. In order to receive focused input, questions were asked regarding the assets, challenges, important elements and elements that need to be changed, and favorite places within Conroe. Handouts were also distributed among the stakeholder to receive written feedback.

#### Key Takeaways

- The current infrastructure is aging and will need to be addressed.
- Citizen communication should be improved.
- Growth management will be increasingly important in the future; the need for zoning was brought up at the meetings for discussion.
- The issue of homelessness needs to be addressed.
- The airport, the industrial park and the technology park are assets that need to be utilized.
- The lake, the nature, the history and the arts and culture are keys to building community identity.
- A central green space is desired.
- Increased bike and pedestrian connectivity is desired.

"The greatest challenge facing the City will be the replacement costs associated with updating drainage infrastructure."

"Conroe's greatest asset is its proximity and ease of access to Houston, The Woodlands and SHSU."

"My favorite place to visit in Conroe is Lake Conroe."

"The greatest challenge facing the City will be vehicular mobility as growth occurs."

"The [Downtown] Square gives the City a destination. Conroe is a historical treasure."

### Online Survey

Date: June 28, 2019 – October 10, 2019

Summary: An online survey asked for input relating to the needs and desires of Conroe's residents. This, along with other input opportunities, allowed for public input to be translated into the guiding principles that were used to guide the rest of the Plan.

\*Detailed survey results can be found in the Appendix.

#### Key Takeaways

- Highway 105 has severe congestion at certain intersections.
- Many indicated that Highway 105 is unsafe (drivers going too fast, no police presence).
- Safety and congestion issues were identified on Loop 336 (especially going north).
- General road maintenance should be conducted on potholes and other road issues.
- Most comments indicated the need for a better variety of restaurants (drive-thru and non-drive-thru).
- Many comments indicated the need for better quality grocery options such as Whole Foods and Sprouts.
- Many indicated the City should make it a priority to preserve more trees as new development is built.
- Continue to develop downtown.
- More open space amenities are needed in the City.



92% of respondents identified entertainment, office and retail uses as needed in Downtown Conroe.



**37% of respondents** identified Lake Conroe as the most unique characteristic of Conroe.





**88% of respondents**  
wanted more waterfront dining along  
waterfront areas.



**39% of respondents**  
identified traffic congestion as  
the biggest challenge regarding  
transportation in Conroe.



## What's Missing?

~77% of respondents identified  
community facilities, destination  
points, educational opportunities and  
employment opportunities as missing  
in Conroe.



**37% of respondents**  
ranked good infrastructure as the  
number one priority for Conroe.

## 33% of respondents

identified aesthetic  
enhancements along  
major corridors as an  
economic development  
strategy that is important  
for Conroe's success.





### Community Vision Statement

The Community Vision Statement is an aspirational statement that describes the City at the end of the timeframe addressed by this Plan. This vision carries the themes voiced through the public outreach phase of the planning process and describes a community that has successfully implemented the Plan's recommended projects and strategies.

*"Our vision of Conroe in 2040 is to be a vibrant City with authentic, interesting destinations that represent our rich history and leverage the physical assets of the community. We enjoy a diversity of housing options in neighborhoods that are walkable and connected. Amenities such as open space, parks and trails offer an excellent quality of life for residents and memorable experiences for visitors. Conroe is a well-maintained community with sufficient resources and infrastructure to accommodate sustained growth. Our guiding principles put emphasis on internal and external communications, and policies that make Conroe the community of choice in the Houston metro area."*



Source: FNI



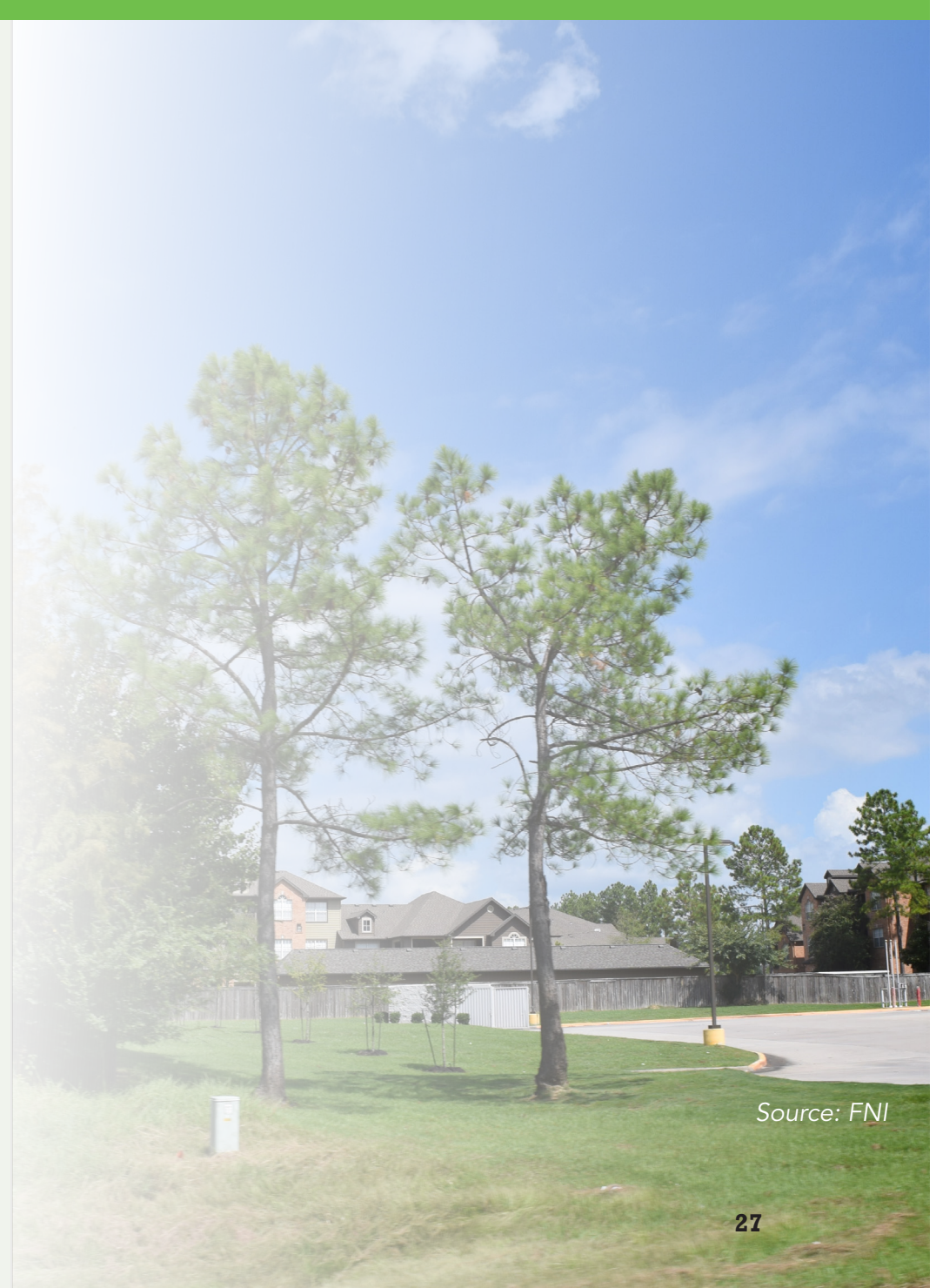
### Guiding Principles

Understanding what is important to the community helps to identify initiatives that the community will support and champion. Guiding principles are a set of general statements that encompass community goals on how the City should develop and help guide future policy decisions that impact Conroe's development pattern. These statements help to ensure that concepts and recommendations align with the community's vision and priorities.

The following guiding principles were derived from the feedback received from the public outreach process. Each guiding principle represents a general concept that arose as a reoccurring theme from public input. These ideas set themselves apart as priorities for the community and should be recognized. These principles are:

- Infrastructure
- Growth Management
- Community Identity
- Communication
- Arts and Culture

From these individual themes, statements were developed that embrace the ideas and vision of Conroe. Final strategies recommended in the Plan are tied to one or more guiding principles to ensure they establish the community's priorities. While these guiding principles are intended to reflect development goals, the concepts presented will also align with the community vision and other City initiatives.



Source: FNI



# Guiding Principles



## **Infrastructure**

Prioritize efforts and incentives to ensure adequate infrastructure within the City to support and attract existing and new developments.



## **Growth Management**

Explore and incorporate tools to manage growth while also providing economic development opportunities.



## **Community Identity**

Build upon Conroe's assets such as the lake, trees, and downtown to establish and preserve its historic character and identity.



## **Communication**

Establish and maintain active and effective communication between the City and the citizens.



## **Arts and Culture**

Utilize Conroe's arts and culture community to encourage destination entertainment venues and events.



A photograph of a large, modern sign for Grand Central Park. The sign is dark grey with white lettering that reads "GRAND CENTRAL PARK". It features a decorative fleur-de-lis symbol below the text. The sign is mounted on a tall, light-colored pole. In the background, there are green trees and a blue sky with some clouds.

## 03 | Land Use and Growth

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is a major element of the Land Use and Growth chapter. The FLUM serves as a foundation for recommendations in this Plan and influences new development and redevelopment within the City. The use of land determines how people move around a city, where they work and live. The future land use designations for Conroe have been revised to reflect community input, anticipated development and best practices. This section of the Comprehensive Plan reviews each type of recommended land use as shown on the Future Land Use Map.

The FLUM is composed of 11 land use designations. Each designation was created by analyzing existing conditions to determine the type of land use and development that could improve and reshape the current development pattern. Some designations were designed to allow for a mix or combination of land uses that would complement or enhance the general character of the area.

The following land use designations each identify one or more primary uses of property. One or more secondary uses may

accompany each primary use if they are clearly related and subordinate to the primary use. This strategy allows the City to be flexible with market demands that may change from time to time. Although primary uses should remain consistent throughout the life of the plan, secondary uses have flexibility to change so long as they complement the primary use.

### Guiding Principles



#### Infrastructure

Prioritize efforts and incentives to ensure adequate infrastructure within the City to support and attract existing and new developments.



#### Growth Management

Explore and incorporate tools to manage growth while also providing economic development opportunities.

## Future Land Use Designations

### Rural Residential

These large lot, low-density areas should preserve the rural atmosphere of Conroe. Homes should be single-family residences with large front yard setbacks from roadways and large side yard setbacks separating homes to reinforce the rural openness. Supporting non-residential uses may be located along major thoroughfares with large setbacks and natural buffers from neighboring residential.

- **Intent:** Retain rural character and facilitate low-intensity development in areas where utilities do not exist and are not planned
- **Dwelling Units Per Acre:**  $\leq 3.0$
- **Primary Use:** Detached single-family homes
- **Target Ratio:** 95% residential, 5% non-residential



Source: FNI



### Neighborhood

Neighborhood character should focus on maintaining a suburban atmosphere. Conservation subdivisions (also referred to as “clustering”) should be encouraged to preserve open space and environmentally-sensitive areas. Development standards should ensure adequate open space and efficient roadway and pedestrian connectivity to schools, neighborhood amenities and parks. Supporting non-residential uses should be similar in scale to the residential properties, include appropriate landscaping and buffering, and be located on major thoroughfares and designed to discourage neighborhood cut-through traffic.

- **Intent:** Facilitate single-family development
- **Dwelling Units Per Acre:** 3.1-7.0
- **Primary Use:** Detached single-family homes
- **Target Ratio:** 90% residential, 10% non-residential



Source: FNI

### Mixed-Density Neighborhood

Mixed-density housing options should be consistent with and complementary to the single-family neighborhoods, emphasizing connectivity and access to neighborhood amenities including schools and parks. Development standards for medium-density housing and any non-residential uses should be in place to ensure compatibility through increased setbacks for taller buildings, architectural designs that are consistent with the neighborhood, and enhanced landscaping. Additionally, any non-residential uses should be located primarily at larger intersections, designed to discourage neighborhood cut-through traffic, and should include appropriate buffering and pedestrian orientation to support the surrounding residents.

- **Intent:** Enable a variety of low and medium density housing types and supporting non-residential uses
- **Dwelling Units Per Acre:** 7.1-14.0
- **Primary Use:** Variety of single-family home types (detached, duplex, townhome)
- **Target Ratio:** 80% residential, 20% non-residential



Source: FNI



### Special Area

This category encourages the creation of planned centers designed to integrate a variety of complementary uses, with an emphasis on retail, offices, and entertainment activities. These centers should strongly emphasize aesthetics with high development standards and the inclusion of public plazas or green spaces. As the most walkable land use category, these areas should be designed in a pattern of pedestrian-oriented, storefront-style shopping streets, with shared parking and strong pedestrian linkages to the surrounding areas. Consideration should be given to adjacent residential uses to ensure compatibility and minimize impacts on neighborhoods.

- **Intent:** Accommodate experience-oriented mixed-use developments that create a center of activity not only in the day, but also at night and on weekends
- **Dwelling Units Per Acre:** 14.0 or more
- **Primary Use:** Mixed-use development (high-density residential and retail)
- **Target Ratio:** 60% non-residential, 40% residential



Source: FNI

### Community Hub

These areas are typically configured as smaller-scaled activity nodes located at the intersection of arterial roads, or at the intersection of arterials and collectors. While these developments are typically auto-oriented, pedestrian connections to the surrounding neighborhoods should be provided. Moderate- and high-density residential is appropriate if/when supporting existing commercial or as part of a planned development. Any high-density residential should be included as vertical mixed use or integrated into adjacent non-residential developments. These areas should emphasize quality building and site design, such as enhanced architectural features, landscaping, and prominent pedestrian facilities.

- **Intent:** Create areas that accommodate local retail, professional office, and service-oriented businesses that serve the residents of Conroe
- **Dwelling Units Per Acre:** 14.0 or more for the residential developments
- **Primary Use:** Small to mid-size retailers
- **Target Ratio:** 80% non-residential, 20% residential



Source: FNI



### Regional Center

Regional centers consist of non-residential and residential land uses that meet the needs of both local and regional residents. Developments may be configured as major shopping centers, stand-alone big-box retailers, or large-scale mixed-use developments. These developments are typically automobile-oriented with convenient access from major transportation routes and highway interchanges. However internal pedestrian connectivity should be maximized. These developments are intended to encourage users to not rely on vehicles and promote a pedestrian friendly experience. By mixing uses and having them in proximity, developments are more walkable than traditional suburban commercial development. These types of developments generally incorporate amenities like plazas, public seating, and pedestrian features. Moderate and high-density residential is appropriate if/when supporting existing commercial or as part of a planned development. Properties should be designed to integrate with any adjacent moderate- or high-density residential development.

- **Intent:** Accommodate commercial uses that serve or draw regional market
- **Dwelling Units Per Acre:** 14.0 or more for the residential developments
- **Primary Use:** Large retailers
- **Target Ratio:** 75% non-residential, 25% residential

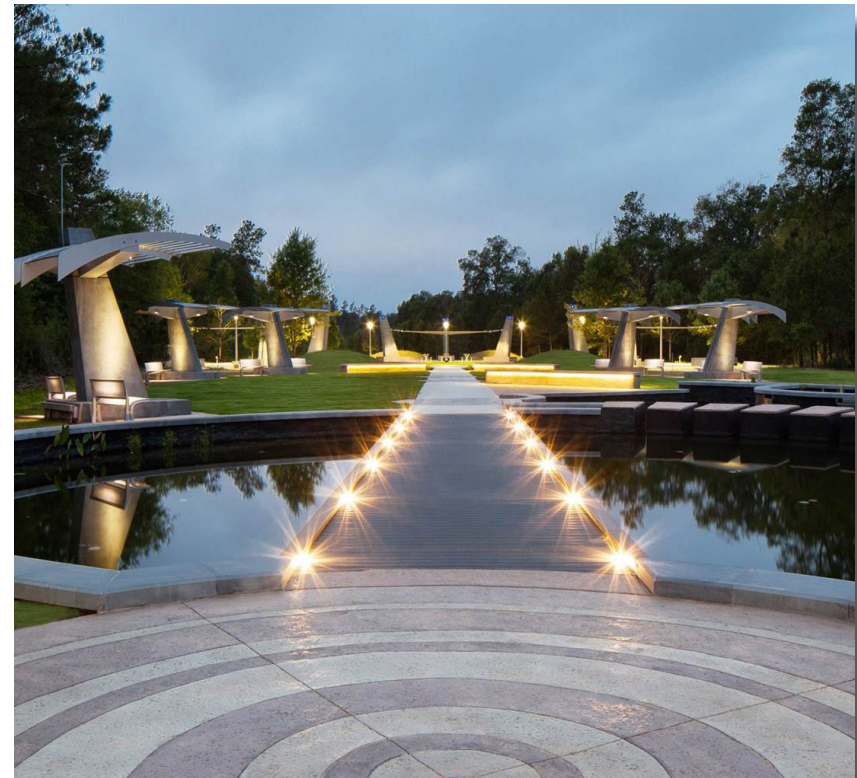


Source: FNI

### Employment Center

These uses should develop in a campus-like setting with generous, linked open space to maximize value, promote visual quality, and encourage pedestrian activity between employment areas and areas of supporting uses such as retail, restaurants, and residential. These areas often act as a transition between more intensely developed industrial uses and residential neighborhoods. These areas should be screened and buffered from residential uses using a major roadway, commercial/retail/office use, or floodplain/natural area. Standards should be developed to ensure that development of these activities is compatible with the character of the surrounding area. Care should be taken to protect adjacent uses from adverse impacts potentially associated with existing industrial uses (truck traffic, outside storage, etc.), using buffering and/or performance-based development standards.

- **Intent:** Facilitate development of well planned, large-scale employment and business activities, as well as supporting secondary uses, which may include moderate- and high-density residential options
- **Dwelling Units Per Acre:** 14.0 or more
- **Primary Use:** Refining or manufacturing facilities, indoor warehouse/storage facilities, and industrial business parks
- **Target Ratio:** 90% non-residential, 10% residential



Source: FNI



### Institutional

This place type includes uses that are governmental, institutional, or religious in nature. The uses may be community facilities, fire and police facilities, schools, places of worship, and any additional land used by the City for storage or utilities. These facilities should project a positive image of the community and should be located to provide ample public access.

- **Intent:** Uses that serve the community
- **Primary Use:** Governmental operations, educational uses, religious uses, and major healthcare facilities
- **Target Ratio:** 100% non-residential



Source: City of Conroe

### Parks and Recreation

Parks, trails, and other recreational amenities should be integrated into and easily accessible from residential neighborhoods and developments.

- **Intent:** Public parks and recreational areas
- **Primary Use:** Parkland, trails, and other recreational amenities
- **Target Ratio:** 100% non-residential



Source: City of Conroe



### Open Space

Floodplains and other natural areas that are preserved as open space.

- **Intent:** Retain rural character and facilitate low-intensity development in areas where utilities do not exist and are not planned
- **Primary Use:** Preservation and/or conservation of natural resources for recreational, ecological, environmental, and agricultural purposes.
- **Target Ratio:** 100% non-residential



Source: FNI

### Waterbodies

These include significant accumulation of water, naturally occurring or man made geographical features.

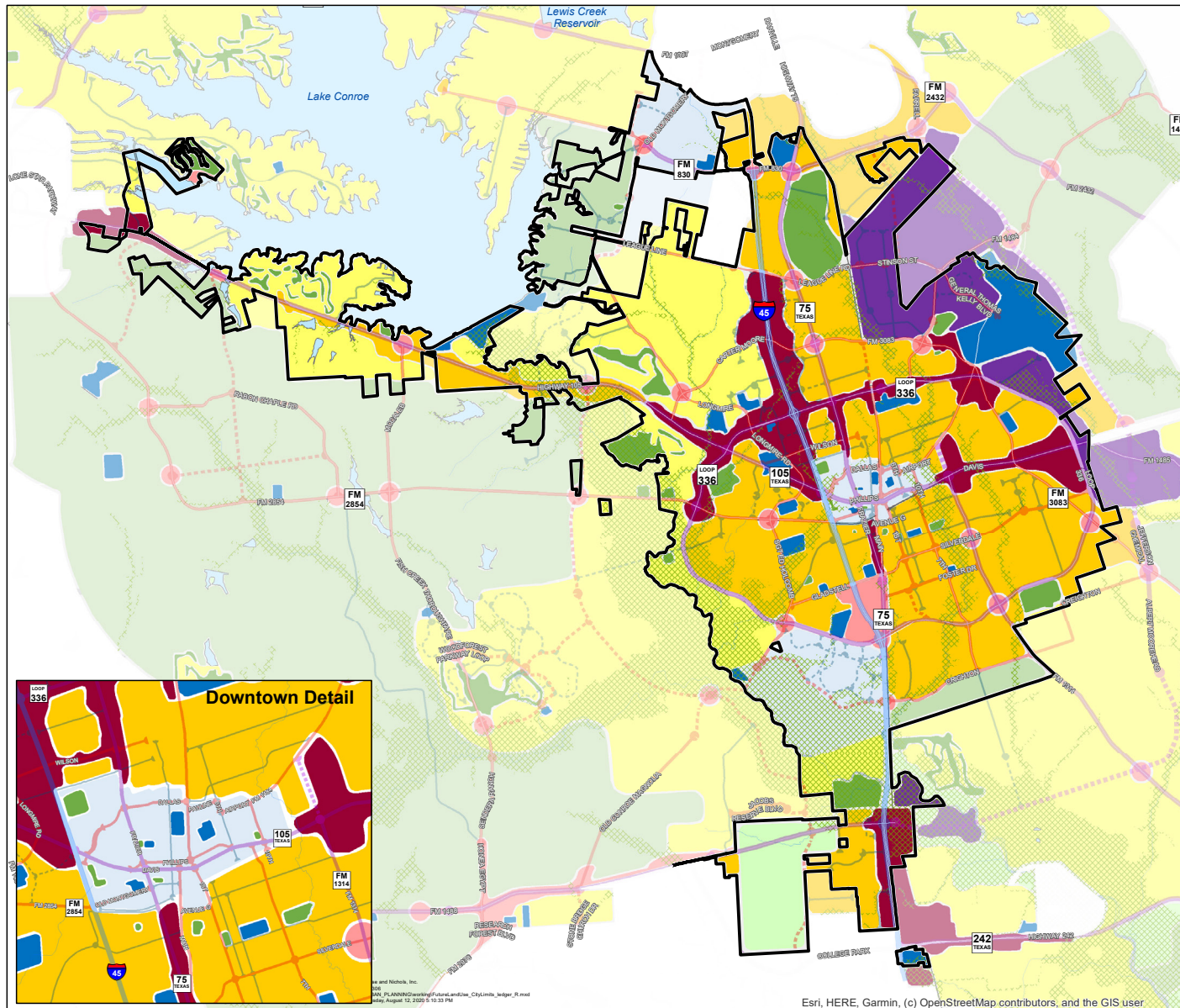
- **Intent:** Maintain and preserve naturally occurring and man made waterbodies
- **Primary Use:** Preservation and/or conservation of natural resources for recreational, ecological, environmental, and agricultural purposes.
- **Target Ratio:** 100% non-residential




Source: City of Conroe



**Figure 3.1 Future Land Use Map City Limits**



2040  
Comprehensive  
Plan  CITY OF CONROE

## Future Land Use Map

### Land Use Descriptions

- Rural Residential
- Neighborhood
- Mixed-Density Neighborhood
- Special Area
- Community Hub
- Regional Center
- Employment Center
- Institutional
- Parks and Recreation
- Open Space
- Waterbodies
- Floodplain (FEMA)

### Functional Classifications

- Toll
- Interstate
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector
- Proposed Toll
- Proposed Principal Arterial
- Proposed Minor Arterial
- Proposed Collector
- Streams
- Conroe City Limits
- Montgomery County Line

Source:  
Freese and Nichols

0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles  
**FRESE AND NICHOLS**

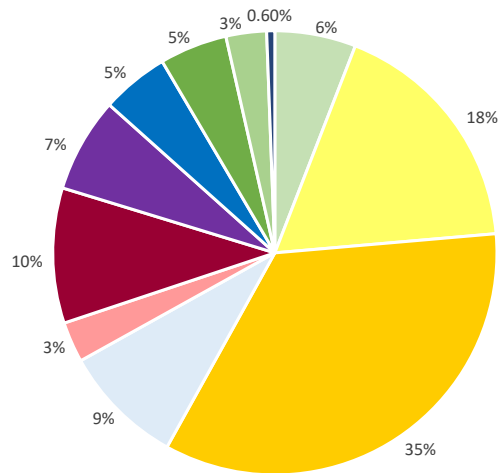


| Table 3.1 Future Land Use  |             |         |         |         |
|----------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Future Land Use Categories | City Limits |         | ETJ     |         |
|                            | Acreage     | Percent | Acreage | Percent |
| Rural Residential          | 2,810       | 6%      | 90,449  | 42%     |
| Neighborhood               | 8,405       | 18%     | 86,398  | 40%     |
| Mixed-Density Neighborhood | 16,150      | 35%     | 2,892   | 1%      |
| Special Area               | 4,163       | 9%      | 1,133   | 0.5%    |
| Community Hub              | 1,260       | 3%      | 2,050   | 1%      |
| Regional Center            | 4,589       | 10%     | 1,100   | 0.5%    |
| Employment Center          | 3,069       | 7%      | 3,370   | 2%      |
| Institutional              | 2,099       | 5%      | 840     | 0.4%    |
| Parks and Recreation       | 2,098       | 5%      | 2,023   | 0.9%    |
| Open Space                 | 1,586       | 3%      | 7,024   | 3%      |
| Waterbodies                | 280         | 0.6%    | 16,637  | 8%      |
| Total                      | 46,509      | 100%    | 213,915 | 100%    |

Source: Freese and Nichols



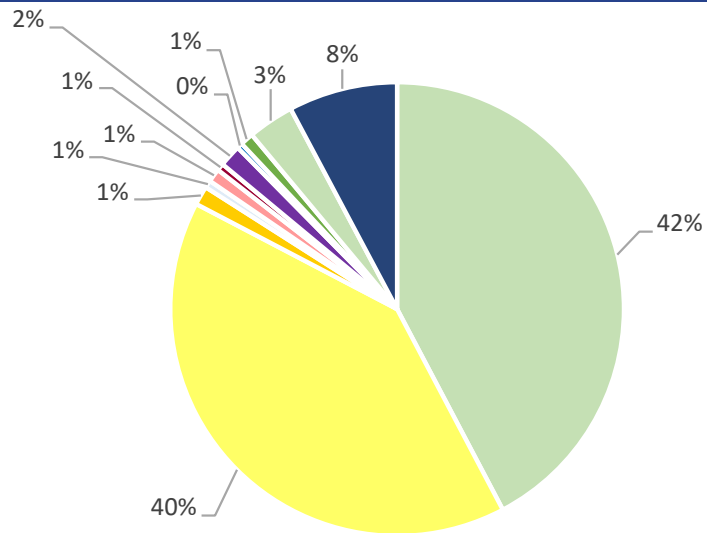
**Figure 3.2 Future Land Use City Limits**



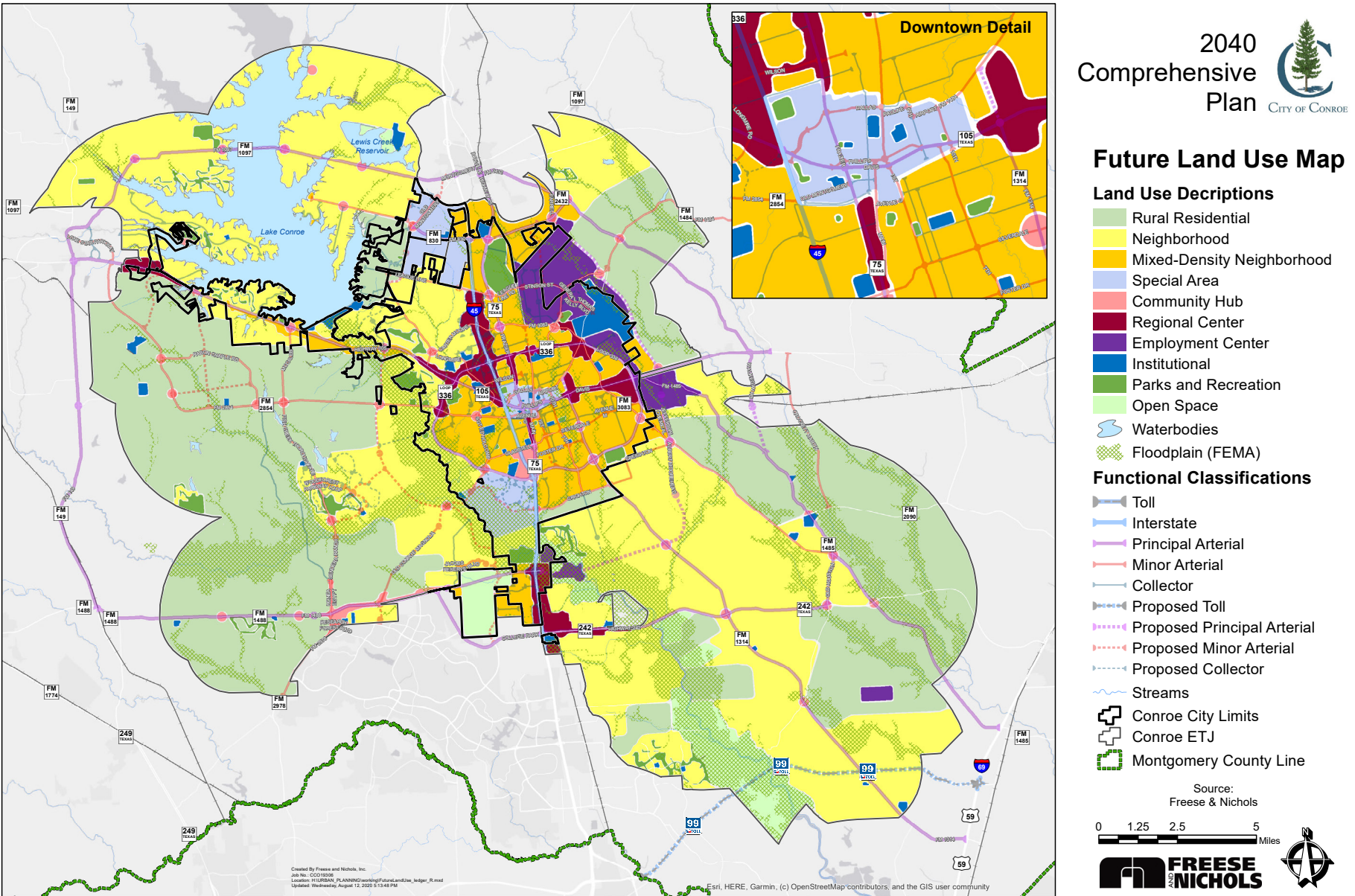
**Future Land Use Categories**



**Figure 3.3 Future Land Use ETJ**



**Figure 3.4 Future Land Use Map ETJ + City Limits**





### Major Opportunity Areas

The City identified certain areas that present major opportunities for development and growth. Some areas were previously thriving commercial areas that are suitable for redevelopment. Others are areas where the City would like to direct growth.

Four locations within the City were identified as major opportunity areas.

- Airport
- Downtown
- Industrial and Technology Parks
- Lake Conroe

These areas are highlighted in the next section. The purpose of this section is to provide a specialized approach to spur development or redevelopment in these areas.



### Airport

The Houston area has two major airport hubs: William P. Hobby Airport (HOU) and George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH). However, smaller airlines are gaining popularity, and many regional airports are growing. The Lone Star Executive Airport went through many renovations in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s and recently was rebranded, changing the logo and name to Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport (CXO) and seeks to be north Houston's regional airport of choice. In order to achieve this goal, the airport should primarily focus on airport amenities, modernization, capacity enhancement, and business development. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires airports to create an Airport Improvement Program, which is used as the airport's primary planning tool for future growth and development. Recent improvements to the airport's runway will allow the airport to accommodate larger aircrafts that fly longer distances. These improvements will increase the economic vitality of Conroe and Montgomery County. CXO has two fixed base operators (FBOs): Galaxy FBO and General Aviation Jet Center. Other opportunities identified in the Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport Master Plan include establishing compatible land uses surrounding the airport, and expanding the airport property for landside development. Landside facilities are those that support the aircraft and pilot/passenger handling functions as well as other non-aviation facilities typically providing a revenue stream to the airport.

### Funding

Financing capital improvements at the Airport will not rely solely on the financial resources of the County. Capital improvement funding is available through various grant-in-aid programs on both the federal and state levels. Historically, CXO has received federal and state grants. The following are funding sources available to CXO:

- Airport Revenues – Revenues generated through various Airport operations (e.g., parking, fuel sales, leases).
- Airport Improvement Program (AIP) – Federal Airport Grant Program that collects and disseminates funds to airports for approved projects. Airports receive a fixed annual apportionment of AIP based on its number of enplanements. Airports may also compete for additional annual discretionary funding.
- Aviation Trust Fund – funded through user fees and taxes on airline tickets, aviation fuel, and aircraft parts.
- Texas Aviation Facilities Development Program – TxDOT funding mechanism that receives annual funding appropriation from the state legislature.
- Routine Airport Maintenance Program (RAMP) – help general aviation airports maintain and, in some instances, construct new facilities. The program was initially designed to help airports maintain airside and landside pavements but has since been expanded to include construction of new facilities.
- Other – Airports also utilize additional funding sources including other federal and state aid programs and various third-party financing. Third-party financing refers to a developer or tenant financing improvements under a long term ground lease.





Source: City of Conroe

### Downtown

Downtown Conroe is the heart of the City. The City can enhance the historic sense of character in the downtown area by rehabilitating historic storefronts, encouraging walking and biking, and enhancing landscaping to improve the streetscape experience for drivers and, cyclists, as well as pedestrians. These improvements can draw people out of their cars to shop, dine and spend time in the downtown area. Improvements include preserving existing development and ensuring new development is compatible with the area's character. Capitalizing on history and, arts and culture is important to the community. The heritage and charming setting is what sets Conroe apart and will create a destination to attract locals and visitors to downtown.

A Downtown Conroe Development Plan was adopted in 2019 to set a vision and provide recommendations for strengthening Downtown Conroe.

### Implementation Strategies

- Prepare a downtown market analysis
- Create destinations that will attract tourism and economic development to the area
- Design streetscape at the pedestrian scale with wide sidewalks and bike lanes
- Use traffic calming devices, like medians, bulb outs, chicanes, to slow traffic and improve walkability and safety
- Implement consistent wayfinding to guide pedestrians through downtown
- Establish the identity of this space using consistent branding
- Enhance design guidelines for commercial development
- Create spaces for public art in public gathering spaces
- Implement small scale façade improvements

### Funding

- Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program - income-producing buildings with substantial rehabilitation projects are eligible for these funds.
- Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program - offers a tax credit for historic buildings.
- Downtown Revitalization Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) - provides grants to communities for downtown façade improvements.
- General funds - support basic services such as police, fire, parks, recreation, streets, and other community services
- Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) - Under Texas law, local HOT revenue can be used only to directly promote tourism and the convention/hotel industry. This means the proceeds should be spent on projects or events that result in visitors or attendees staying overnight in the community, generating more hotel occupancy tax.
- TIRZ agreements - These zones help finance costs of redevelopment and promote growth in areas that would otherwise not attract sufficient market development in a timely manner.
- Public Improvement District (PID) - a special district created by the City that pays for improvements to properties including: roads, water distribution lines, wastewater collection lines, drainage improvements, landscaping, trails, parks, open space, and entry features.
- Conroe Economic Development Council funds - used to attract businesses and bring new capital and employment opportunities in to the community
- Foundations - various foundations with a interest in Downtown can provide funding for improvements.





Source: City of Conroe  
for all photos on this page





### Conroe Park North and Deison Technology Park

Conroe's industrial park contributes to the economic vitality of the City. The industrial park and technology park have the potential to bring more well-paying jobs to Conroe. With the proper planning, they can become new hubs of employment in the City, complemented with housing, stores, and restaurants nearby. The industrial park and technology park also provide an opportunity to diversify the City's economy. By offering multiple sectors of employment the City can be in a better position during economic downturns.

Currently, the Conroe Park North has 27 companies that provide over 3,000 jobs. The foreign trade zone was expanded in 2019. This allows the deferment of tariffs on imported materials, until finished manufactured goods leave the zone and make it to the customer. These companies include oil and gas, manufacturing, wholesale, and telecommunications.

#### Implementation Strategies

- Develop the immediate areas surrounding the industrial park with shopping, dining and entertainment
- Create a business incubator to support start-ups
- Fully realize industrial park potential by expanding, offering tax abatements, and creating public-private partnerships

### Funding

Conroe Industrial Development Corporation (CIDC) - There are several bond issues in the CIDC Debt Service Fund. The bond series issued in 2011 was used to install streets, water, sewer, and drainage infrastructure in the industrial park as well as purchase land for the Deison Technology Park. The bonds issued in 2012 were used to install infrastructure in the technology park. The bonds issued in 2018 were used to purchase 610 acres to expand the Conroe Park North Industrial Park. The bonds issued in 2019 were used to improve the infrastructure of the 610 acre expansion in the Conroe Park North Industrial Park.

### Incentives

#### LOCAL INCENTIVES

- Land available with competitive pricing
- Performance-based grants for job creation and investments
- City of Conroe tax abatements
- Montgomery County tax abatements
- Quadruple Freeport "Inventory" tax exemption
- Foreign Trade Zone #265
- Fast-track permitting

#### STATE OF TEXAS INCENTIVES

- No state income taxes
- Texas Enterprise Fund
- Skills Development Training Fund
- Pollution Control tax abatements
- Research & Development tax credits





Source: City of Conroe, Deison Technology Park



### Lake Conroe

Lake Conroe is an asset to the community. A portion of this 21,000-acre lake is in the City of Conroe and the rest is in unincorporated Montgomery County. It is located west of Interstate 45 and is about 15 miles northwest of Downtown Conroe. The lake is used for a variety of recreational activities and because of its size, it attracts visitors from the City, County, region, and state. The lake is surrounded by the Sam Houston National Forest to the north, Lake Conroe Park to the south, and has RV parks, campgrounds, marinas, and trails nearby. Due to its amenities and beautiful setting, it will continue to attract visitors and is the ideal location for development in the future. It is clear from the planning process that there is a desire from the community to make this a destination point with more waterfront businesses and improved access to the lake. Future developments should be sensitive to the surrounding environment, preserving trees and protecting water quality for generations to come.

### Implementation Strategies

- Attract stores, shops and restaurants to develop Lake Conroe's waterfront area
- Build trail system to capitalize on existing Lonestar Hiking Trail
- Improve access to Lake Conroe for public use, including pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connections
- Increase vehicular infrastructure to make parking available near the lake's key access points
- Strike a balance between active recreation, passive recreation, and environmental activities

### Funding

- Municipal bonds - Cities issue bonds to pay for large, expensive, and long-lived capital projects, such as roads, bridges, airports, schools, hospitals, water treatment facilities, power plants, courthouses, and other public buildings. Although cities can and sometimes do pay for capital investments with current revenues, borrowing allows them to spread the costs across multiple generations.
- State grants - Texas Parks and Wildlife offers a variety of grants that can benefit Lake Conroe including: Boating Access, Clean Vessel Act (CVA), and Local Parks grants.
- Naming rights - This is a combination of philanthropy and public recognition that can benefit the community.
- Partnerships - Public officials charged with being stewards of public funds are increasingly looking for better ways to deploy resources in the most efficient way possible. The public-private partnerships can solve many root causes of poor project performance on large capital investments.
- Vendors - Cities establish Concession Services Agreements with concessionaires who provide products or services at City facilities. The City grants the concessionaire the right to sell their products in exchange for portion of the sales. In turn, their operations benefit the community by enhancing the recreational experience for visitors. This could include, but is not limited to watercraft rentals, food services and other recreation providers.





Source: City of Conroe for all photos on this page



## Population Projections

This Plan utilizes historical data from two primary sources. Every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a systematic count of the number of people living in the country. Additionally, the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) provides five-year projections derived from current events and past trends over a period of several years. It should be noted that it is easier to predict populations when growth is steady as opposed to rapid growth.

The City's 2020 population is projected to be 92,797. In 2010, the Census count in Conroe was 65,775. The rate of change since 2010 was 3.5 percent annually. The five-year projection for the population is 106,451 representing a change of 2.78 percent annually from 2020 to 2025.

Since 2000, the City has been in a period of rapid growth and change. This can be attributed to a growing economy, excellent school district, and available housing.

| Year | Population Conroe | Population Conroe + ETJ |
|------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 2010 | 67,775            | 189,281                 |
| 2011 | 69,457            | 194,223                 |
| 2012 | 70,942            | 199,050                 |
| 2013 | 72,445            | 204,345                 |
| 2014 | 74,179            | 210,670                 |
| 2015 | 76,263            | 218,420                 |
| 2016 | 78,527            | 227,329                 |
| 2017 | 81,339            | 237,354                 |
| 2018 | 84,802            | 249,424                 |
| 2019 | 88,951            | 262,602                 |
| 2020 | 92,797*           | 275,941*                |

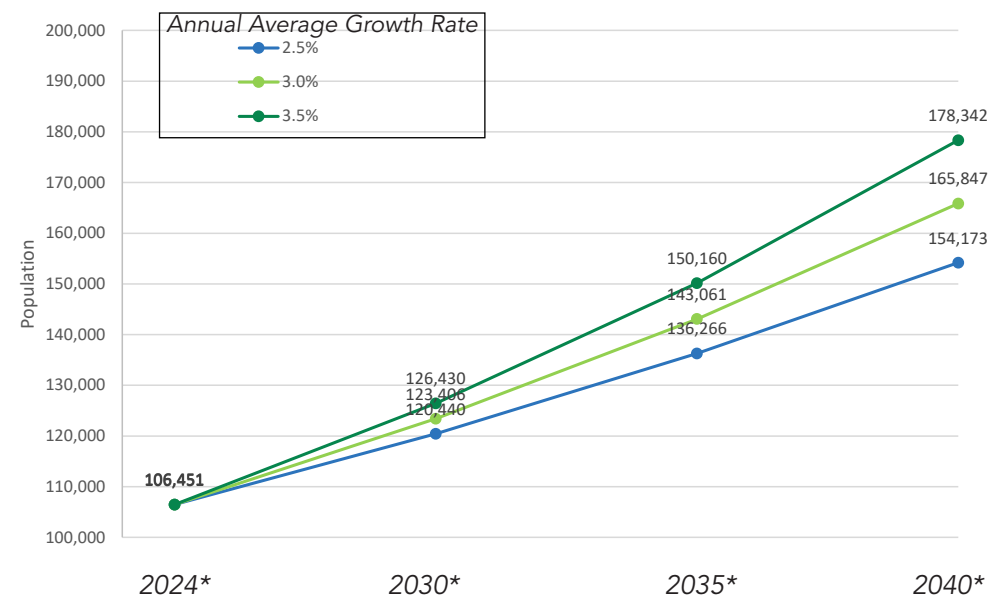
\* Projections based upon rate of growth

The 2040 population and growth projections help us anticipate what growth to expect in the future.

As we plan, we look to the past to learn from previous growth trends, and using population projections as a tool for the future. With these projections, we can plan long term improvements to accommodate growth.

The population projections use a growth rate of 3.0 percent based on current growth trends. A growth rate of 3.5 percent can be used for increased development activity in anticipation of growth in the major opportunity areas, as well as growth in the ETJ. It is important to understand population projections are estimates and are subject to change. They can be impacted by many factors, such as local and national economies, the real estate market, and annexation. Figure 3.5 analyzes the annual growth rate from 2010 to 2020 to project the City's population from 2020 to 2040.

**Figure 3.5 Population Projections**



Data Note: The Esri Vintage 2020 Time Series (2010 thru 2020) represents July 1 annual estimates in 2020 geography. With each annual release, the entire Time Series is revised. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2020 and 2025.



### Development Patterns

Conroe's development pattern is similar to many cities -- the older parts of town are on a grid pattern, while the newer subdivisions take an organic shape with curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs. Each pattern has its advantages and disadvantages. The images below show the difference between these development patterns.

Other patterns that are seen in Conroe are commercial strip development, big-box development, and industrial parks. These types of development tend to follow major routes throughout the City, because businesses want to be in high traffic areas in order to be successful. In Downtown Conroe, this means locating businesses in storefronts that are highly visible from the sidewalk and in cars as people drive by. The City should focus on improving areas where these development patterns converge, near major corridors, and as land uses transition from one geographic area to another.

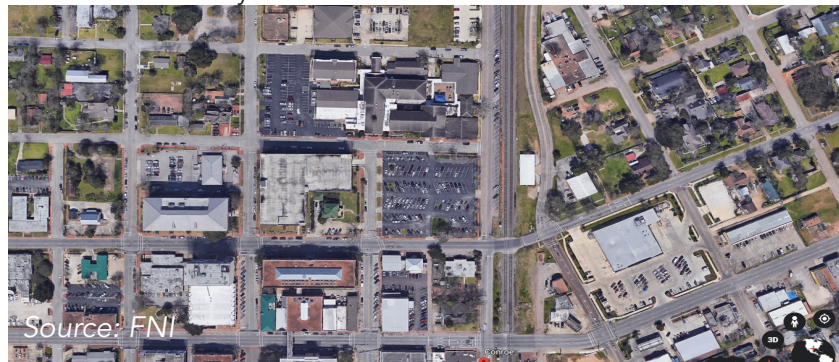
#### Grid

##### Pros

- Easy to navigate
- Standard block
- Walkable
- Scalable
- Multiple access points improve efficiency and accessibility

##### Cons

- Less adaptive to site features and varied topography
- Noise pollution



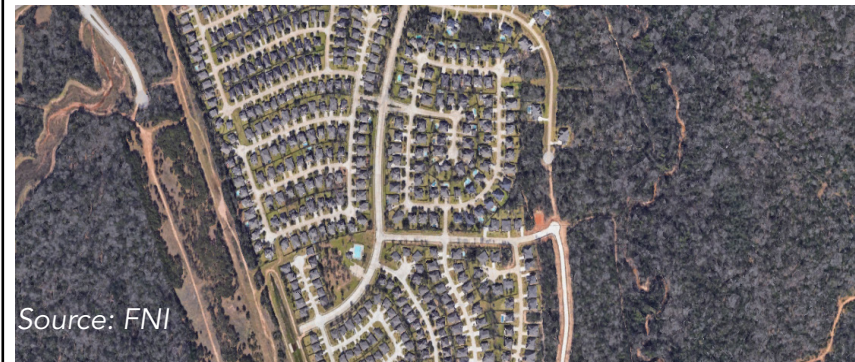
#### Cul-de-sac

##### Pros

- Quieter
- Safer for children
- Less traffic
- Privacy

##### Cons

- Less efficient; concentrates traffic through fewer access points
- Hard to access for public services like police and fire





## Conroe 2040 | Planning for the Future

The U.S. Census Bureau's urban-rural classification identify urban and rural areas throughout the United States. Their definitions are highlighted below:

- Urbanized Areas = Areas with 50,000 or more people
- Urbanized Clusters = Areas with at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people
- Rural Areas = All areas not in an urban area

Conroe's settlement patterns follow national and worldwide trends that show more people settling in urban areas as opposed to rural areas. This trend shows no sign of stopping and the percent of the population living in urban areas and clusters will likely increase in the future. The table below compares the housing units and population in each category. With more people choosing to live in urban areas, the City should focus on development in the urban core.

**Table 3.3 Population and Housing Units by Urban/Rural Status in Conroe**

| Urban/Rural Status       | Housing Units | Population |
|--------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Inside Urbanized Area    | 79.5%         | 82.9%      |
| Inside Urbanized Cluster | 14.1%         | 11.1%      |
| Rural Area               | 6.3%          | 6.0%       |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1.



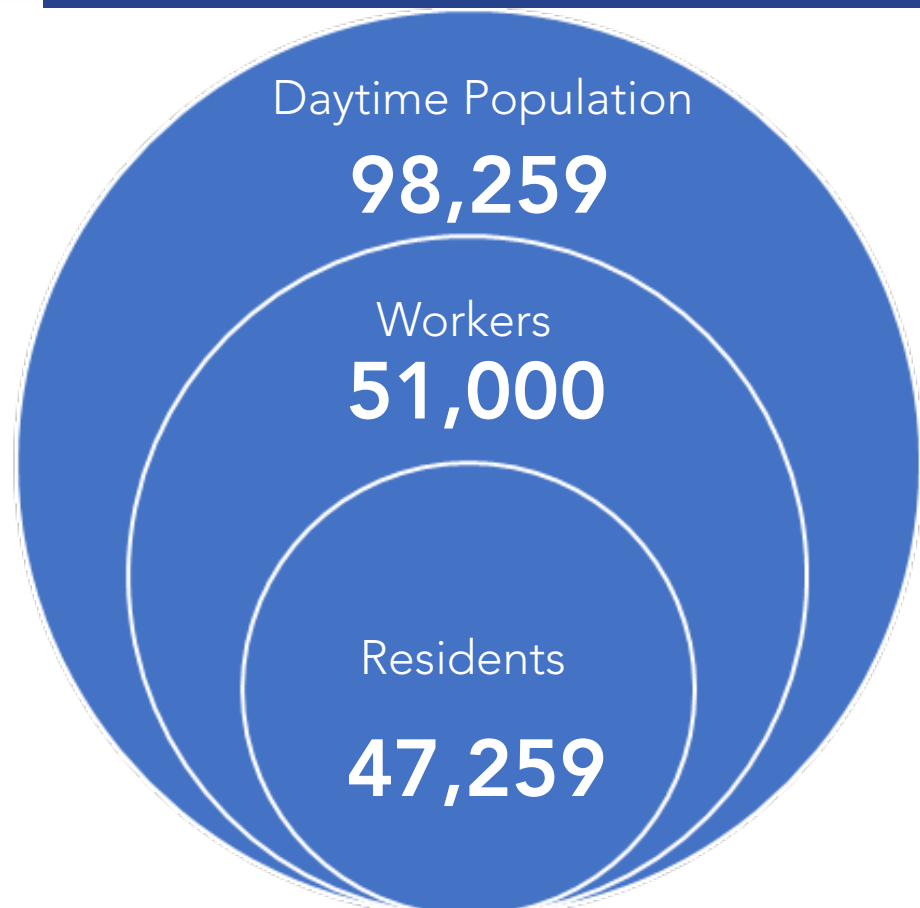




**Figure 3.6 Population Projections**

### **Commuter Adjusted Population**

The U.S. Census Bureau uses data from the American Community Survey, which asks people both where they live and work. According to the American Community Survey, the total daytime population for Conroe was 98,259 in 2019. More specifically, workers make up 52% or 51,000 and residents made up the rest at 48% or 47,259. This information is important to think about as the City plans transportation routes, identifies housing strategies and builds industries. As a center for employment, it is no surprise that Conroe has a daytime population that is roughly 100,000 people. Conroe is unique because it is a balance between a bedroom community and an employment hub, by attracting workers from Houston and beyond to live and/or work in the community.



Source: 2010 U.S. Census and 2014-2018 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey

### Growth Management

The way a community grows impacts its ability to provide services efficiently. Planning for orderly growth also influences the character and development patterns within the City. Essential municipal services such as fire, police, waste management, parks, libraries, and general government are provided to a property within the City limits. These services are less expensive than providing water and wastewater utilities; however, access and utilities are required for a property to develop. The location and design criteria for public infrastructure control the character and intensity of the resulting development. There is a range of planning tools that can shape growth policies for the City.

#### Municipal Utility Districts (MUDs)

Areas not served by the City may establish a municipal utility district (MUD) with service providers that will extend and maintain water and sewer services. These districts are typical within ETJs that do not have access to municipal utilities. This tool was initially established by the state legislature to address access to a safe water supply. Over time, MUDs have evolved into powerful special districts that often mimic many of the powers of a general-purpose local government. There are more than forty-five (45) active MUDs in Conroe, and its ETJ at this time, with approximately 20 more pending.

- The City can address growth by managing MUDs and their role in both development agreements and annexation actions.
- Set up a system that ensures ratepayers can support existing infrastructure as well as the end of lifecycle replacement and maintenance necessary for the City to add new development through annexation.
- Negotiate terms that benefit the City if/when a MUD is considered for annexation. Conduct cost/benefit analyses to determine the real financial impact of annexation, not only immediately but for a longer-term, that accounts for the age and complexity of the services covered under the MUD and maintenance and replacement costs.

- Expire MUDs as soon as possible after annexing the property they govern into the City.
- The City should participate in long-range planning performed by utility districts to guide system improvements.
- Ensure utility systems expand to address anticipated growth in areas the City has identified as appropriate for increased development.

#### High-Quality Development

High-quality development outlasts temporary or substandard products. Low-maintenance materials and sustainable development practices support stable land uses that can evolve and change over time without the need for demolition and reconstruction.

- Wherever possible, the City should incentivize the reuse of existing structures and infrastructure to reduce the cost for the City and the property owner.
- Encourage and incentivize higher intensity development in areas already served by municipal utilities.
- Adopt the International Property Maintenance Code and allocate resources for education and enforcement programs.



### Water Conservation

Ground water and surface water must be managed carefully to support the current quality of life and level of growth the City is experiencing.

- Adopt policies that support the use of green stormwater infrastructure such as low-impact design (LID) techniques.
- Encourage the use of public property for regional retention and detention facilities to promote water quality, protect valuable natural resources, and allow greater intensity of development on private property.

### Annexation

The cost of providing services for residential development is typically higher than non-residential development. Therefore, it is advantageous to the City's fiscal position to annex non-residential uses. Sales taxes collected within the City limits will benefit the City of Conroe and nearby residential developments, whether inside the City limits or not, create a market for goods and services.

Annexation policies should determine geographic limits for urban development patterns and uses to ensure that areas annexed into the City develop sustainably. Annexed property should generate sufficient revenue to support on-going maintenance of municipal utilities and services.

- Conduct cost/benefit analyses to understand the full cost of providing all municipal services to the annexed property.
- Connect the annexation policy to the City's capital improvement program to ensure the timing and condition of facilities and utility networks.

### Development Characteristics

The character of development in the City can become more consistent and sustainable through development practices that support managed growth. Adopt policies that facilitate market-driven growth by matching density and intensity of development to the infrastructure that serves it. Development patterns shaped by locating higher development intensities in areas that offer higher-level services will enable the City to focus on enhancements such as connections between residential areas and key destinations, preservation of open spaces, and community programming.

- Address density levels by establishing a municipal service area based on the reasonable expectation of municipal utilities in the future.
- Encourage standard residential development and unit development classes within the municipal service area.
- Restrict urban estate residential subdivisions and manufactured home subdivisions to areas outside the municipal service area.
- Areas designated for Neighborhood development on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) should be prioritized for annexation and for approval of MUDs over areas shown as Rural Residential.



### Deed Restrictions

The primary purpose of most deed restrictions is to preserve the residential character in neighborhoods. Developers create rules to prevent incompatible uses within residential neighborhoods.

### Density Restrictions

Density restrictions define areas that can have a higher density than the rest of the City, such as Downtown Conroe or other regional centers. This can allow the City to direct growth in specific areas to meet the needs of current and future residents.

### Density Transfer

Density transfer can be used to retain open space by concentrating densities (usually in compact areas adjacent to existing urbanization and utilities) while leaving unchanged historic, sensitive, or hazardous areas. In some cities, for example, developers can buy development rights of properties targeted for open space and transfer the additional density to the base number of units permitted in the area where they propose to develop.

### Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ)

This tool allows certain areas within distinct boundaries to retain property tax revenue for uses within their borders.

### Buffering Ordinance

This ordinance can be used to restrict tall buildings to “major activity centers” by limiting their height, setback requirements and construction styles.

### Historic Preservation

Conroe recognizes the importance of its historic structures and will protect and maintain them for future generations. Historic districts can be created for buildings that are architecturally significant. These districts can require the scale and character of the neighborhood to remain the same.

### Tree Preservation Ordinance

A tree preservation ordinance is a tool that protects sensitive forested areas, limit clearing during development, or provide incentives for development that preserves trees. Since Conroe’s trees are an essential part of the City’s history and its vision for the future, this would support the Community Identity guiding principle.

### Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

ADUs are a type of secondary housing and are a way to tap into underutilized land to increase affordable housing options. These are important because they can provide additional affordable housing in Conroe in the future.



Source: FNI



## Housing

Availability of housing is one of the main deciding factors when someone chooses where to settle. Many studies show people move to where new housing is abundant. Conroe’s housing stock appeals to many homebuyers and renters. Figure 3.7 shows that homeownership has remained steady throughout the years. Additionally, an abundance of new housing can lower the cost of living for a community, making it attractive for residents and businesses in the future. However, to remain competitive, Conroe will need to provide a variety of housing choices that suit the needs of shifting demographics. By providing a variety of housing choices, people can stay in their community during different stages of their life. Throughout the planning process, the public expressed a desire for diverse housing options such as multifamily, mixed-use residential, and townhouses. The key is to have enough supply available to keep housing affordable.

## Household Size

Household size is important when evaluating future demands for housing types. With baby boomers retiring and younger generations delaying marriage and starting a family, household size is decreasing. Table 3.4 shows a slight decline in household size over the past decades and predicted in the future.

## Housing Costs

In 2019, the median value for owner-occupied homes with mortgages in Conroe was \$218,712. This is lower than the national median home value of \$234,154. Over the next five years, the median value is projected to change by 3.23% annually to \$256,387. If median household income keeps pace with the median home value, affordability will not be a pressing issue in Conroe. The Housing Affordability Index (HAI) can be used to

track whether housing is becoming more or less affordable over time. If the HAI is 100, that means the median-income family has enough income to afford a home. If the HAI is higher than 100 that means more households can afford a home. In 2019, the Housing Affordability Index (HAI) was 126%.

Figure 3.7 Households by Ownership Status

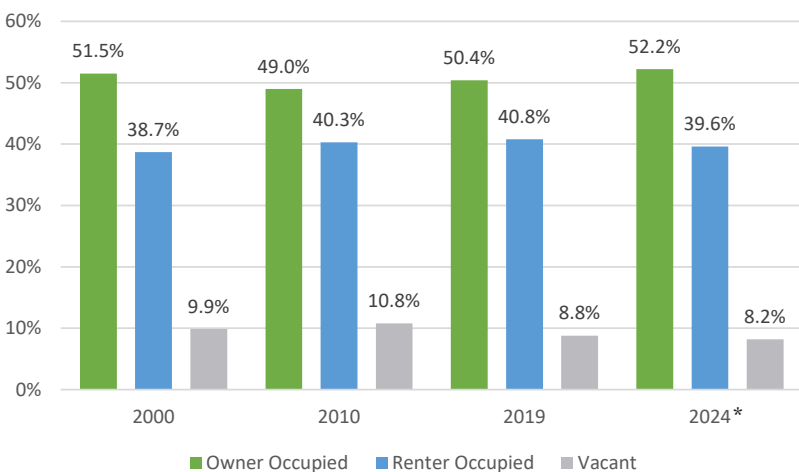


Table 3.4 Household Size and Total Households

| Year  | Household Size | Total Households |
|-------|----------------|------------------|
| 2000  | 2.69           | 17,277           |
| 2010  | 2.65           | 23,787           |
| 2019  | 2.64           | 32,610           |
| 2024* | 2.64           | 37,915           |

\*projected

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2019 and 2024. Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography

### State of Housing

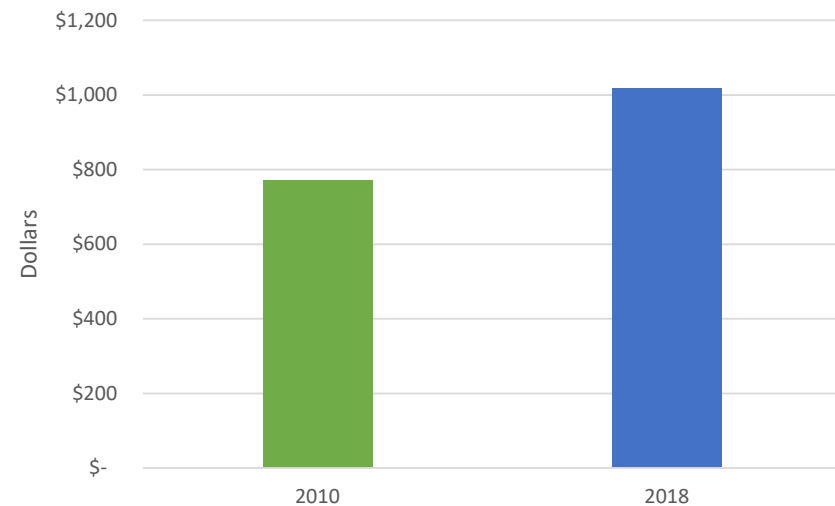
The Kinder Institute conducts research on housing in Harris County and Houston. Their annual report provides consistent and accessible baseline information on housing-related issues in the area. This is relevant to Conroe, because the City is situated in the Houston metro area and is affected by its housing trends. Key findings from the 2020 report are listed below. Conroe can continue to meet the demand for housing from the greater metro area by offering housing for families.

#### Key Takeaways

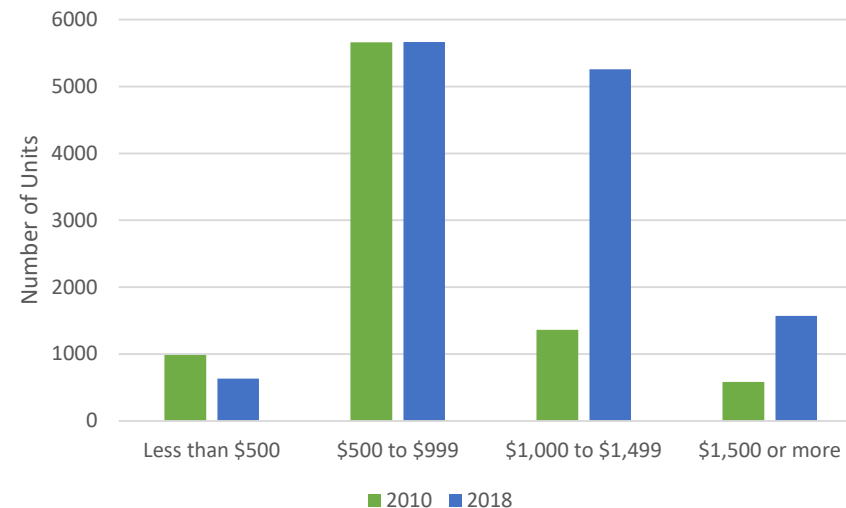
- Harris County is the center of the region's job and economic activity, but the population is growing at a faster rate outside of the county. This spatial mismatch between work and home results in major transportation costs for Harris County households.
- Housing construction trends of new housing show growing multi-family supply. While many units are being built, they tend to be higher priced, and existing affordable units are declining.
- Heads of households between the ages of 25 and 39 are settling equally between Harris County and the City of Houston, though families with children continue to locate in neighboring cities.

Source: Kinder Institute for Urban Research State of Housing Report

**Figure 3.8 Change in Median Gross Rent, 2010-2018**



**Figure 3.9 Renter-Occupied Units by Gross Rent, 2010-2018**



Source: 2010 U.S. Census and 2014-2018 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey



**Figure 3.10 Strategies for Healthy Neighborhoods**

| Preserve  | Restore  | Rehabilitate  |
|---|--|---|
| <p><b>Application:</b></p> <p>Neighborhoods that are in good health and appearance, generally the newest neighborhoods.</p> <p><b>Goal:</b></p> <p>Maintain the current condition to prevent decline, which can begin with minor code violations. Quality, well-designed neighborhoods maintain their value and attract reinvestment long after construction.</p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code enforcement and compliance</li> <li>• Access to parks and recreation</li> <li>• Neighborhood organizations and homeowners' associations (HOAs)</li> <li>• Quality neighborhood design</li> <li>• Quality building materials</li> <li>• Compatible non-residential development (prohibiting incompatible uses)</li> <li>• Establishing conservation</li> </ul> | <p><b>Application:</b></p> <p>Neighborhoods that are beginning to show signs of wear and tear. The physical structures are in sound condition, but minor exterior improvements may be needed.</p> <p><b>Goal:</b></p> <p>Correct code violations and encourage homeowners to make minor repairs to prevent further decline.</p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code enforcement and compliance</li> <li>• Improvements to existing parks and recreational facilities</li> <li>• Facilitating neighborhood organizations</li> <li>• Neighborhood branding</li> <li>• Housing maintenance programs (grants or events such as Rebuilding Together)</li> <li>• Housing maintenance incentives for minor repairs (rebates or matching funds)</li> <li>• Maintenance assistance (identification of elderly or at-need households)</li> </ul> | <p>Neighborhoods that need significant repair. Structures may exhibit structural problems that can pose hazards to residents.</p> <p><b>Goal:</b></p> <p>Encourage homeowners to hire assistance for major repairs, allocate funding for demolitions when necessary, and target redevelopment/infill areas.</p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code enforcement and compliance</li> <li>• Significant public investment in parks and quality of life enhancements</li> <li>• Improving neighborhood and community centers and programming</li> <li>• Neighborhood branding</li> <li>• Facilitating neighborhood organizations</li> <li>• Proactive housing demolition</li> <li>• Property acquisition</li> <li>• Infill/redevelopment incentives</li> </ul> |

### Figure 3.11 Housing Conditions Map

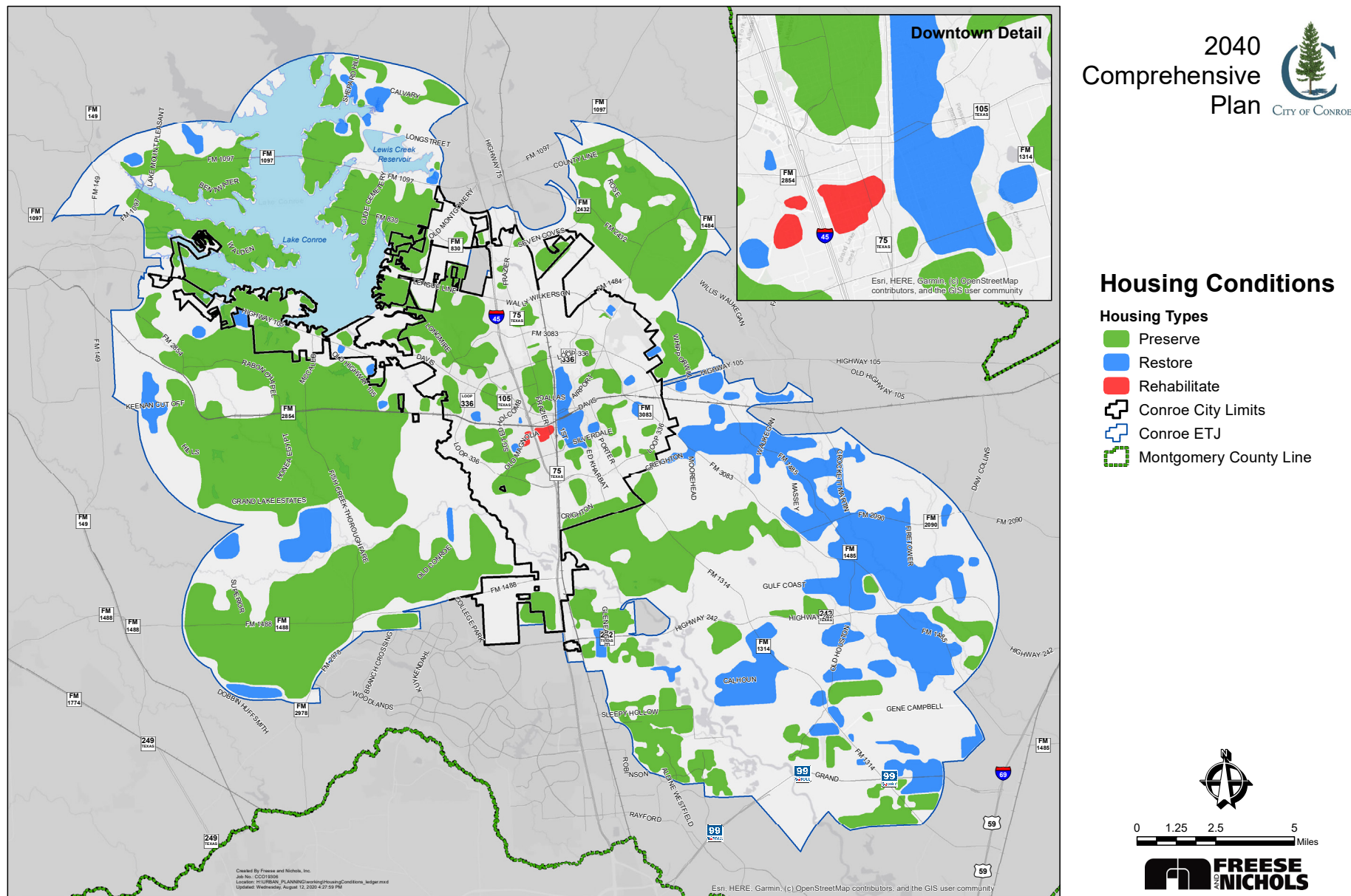




Figure 3.12 Strategies for a Livable Community



### Community Character and Healthy Neighborhoods

Conroe is a family-friendly community shaped by a collection of great neighborhoods and high-quality developments that provide local shopping and services. The quality of life in the City is reflected in the places that residents live and recreate. The City can help preserve the community's character by ensuring access to municipal services and administering programs that establish minimum standards for property maintenance.

The long-term sustainability and vitality of neighborhoods contribute to the desirability of the City and the overall character of the broader community. These areas must be attractive to investment and reinvestment over time. Healthy neighborhoods should reflect the values of the community. They are maintained in good condition as they age, ensuring affordable and sustainable housing stock for people at all stages of their lives. Residential neighborhoods comprise the most extensive land use in Conroe. To remain vital, they require attention from property owners as well as the City.

The City can support the stability and quality of existing and future neighborhoods through subdivision design enhancements, the interconnectivity of parks and open spaces, and improvement programs that incentivize property owners to engage in routine maintenance and renovations to address code compliance and beautification.

### Subdivision Regulations

The City has offered funding to local business owners in Downtown Conroe for visual investments to existing businesses through The size and shape of blocks should support the proposed development and ensure connectivity of streets and alternative travel routes while providing efficient public and safety services. Consider updating the subdivision regulations to support a more connected and efficient street network.

- Establish a shorter maximum block length for smaller lot developments. The current maximum block length of 1400' does not encourage sufficient connectivity or promote walkability.
- Reduce the use of cul-de-sacs for residential developments by adopting a connectivity index, requiring additional access/cross-access to support a more cohesive street network.
- Require mid-block pedestrian connections and extensions of existing off-street non-motorized travel paths (e.g. sidewalks, trails) within new residential and non-residential developments.
- Require stub-outs for future street connections to adjoining undeveloped property.



### Interconnectivity of Parks and Open Spaces

Connecting parks and open spaces throughout the broader Conroe community supports alternative transportation modes and promote healthy lifestyle options for residents. The current development regulations require reservations of land necessary to conform with adopted master plans. This provision, as well as the supporting master plans, should be reviewed and updated. A composite map reflecting all open space, trails, and parks within the City will help identify gaps in this network and set priorities for new capital projects. Once specified, these projects should be included in the City's capital improvement program and implemented as resources become available.



Source: FNI

### Strong Neighborhoods Program

A program to support and improve existing neighborhoods can help stabilize residential areas that struggle with negative impacts, either from nearby non-residential uses or unsightly conditions caused by a lack of repair or maintenance of homes. The City can support neighborhoods by developing a program and providing resources. The program can build over time but should include opportunities for outreach and education and a property maintenance component.

#### Program Goals:

- Protect the property values of stable neighborhoods.
- Improve the physical condition of residential areas of the City.

#### Strategies for Implementation:

- Assemble resources for property owners, including workshops, written materials, and online information related to necessary repairs and property maintenance. This may include how-to guides, tool sharing libraries, recycling instructions, and contact information for local non-profits and other organizations that may offer assistance.
- Adopt the International Property Maintenance Code and allocate resources to enforce minimum standards for residential properties.
- Create a fund for the beautification of public property located within highly visible corridors or adjacent to residential neighborhoods.
- Prioritize resources to address safety needs.

### Decision-Making Criteria

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) should be a living document that is referenced often during all City policy decisions including development proposals, capital investments, and requests for financial participation in projects. The City should invest their resources in projects or initiatives that meet the City's guiding principles and overall vision for the City of Conroe. Careful consideration must be applied to address transitions, scale, and compatibility with adjacent stable single-family neighborhoods.

Below are questions to consider for each project and policy decision:

- Does it align with the Comprehensive Plan Guiding Principles?
- Does it advance the land use character of the corresponding place type in the FLUM?
- Does it strengthen pedestrian connectivity to mixed-use, commercial centers, and the City's park/trail system?
- Does it provide positive fiscal impact to the City?
- Does it complement and remain compatible with surrounding land uses and historic character?
- Does it protect and preserve natural assets such as tree cover and watersheds?
- Does it protect and preserve the quality of adjacent residential areas?





## 04 | Transportation

The Infrastructure and Growth Management Guiding Principles for the Comprehensive Plan align with the six transportation specific goals identified. The transportation goals and the language within them were generated through the following process:

- A peer review of state, regional, and federal agency transportation goals
- Public engagement
- Discussion and coordination with City staff and elected officials

### Transportation Goals

- Goal: Optimize Movement of People and Goods
- Goal: Preserve Infrastructure
- Goal: Sustainably Fund and Deliver the Right Projects
- Goal: Enhance Safety
- Goal: Protect and Preserve Human and Natural Environment
- Goal: Strengthen Conroe's Economic Competitiveness

The City engaged The Goodman Corp. to produce a long-range transportation plan for Conroe. This chapter of the Plan represents a summary of that work. Recommended transportation projects and strategies have been incorporated into the Implementation chapter of this Plan.

### Guiding Principles



#### Infrastructure

Prioritize efforts and incentives to ensure adequate infrastructure within the City to support and attract existing and new developments.



#### Growth Management

Explore and incorporate tools to manage growth while also providing economic development opportunities.





Source: The Goodman Corporation



### Roadway: Congestion and Safety

#### Existing Conditions

The City of Conroe is served by a number of principal arterials, which form the backbone of the transportation network. Loop 336 provides a circular connection around the core of the City, and SH 105 and SH 75 provide an east-west and north-south connection, respectively. The City is bisected by I-45, which can be interpreted as both a strength and a challenge. Many of the major roadways in the City are owned and maintained by TxDOT, including Loop 336, SH 75, SH 105, FM 1314, FM 1488, FM 3083, FM 1484 and FM 2854. Other important roadways such as Old Conroe Road, Airport Road, Sergeant Ed Holcomb Boulevard, Longmire Road and Wilson Road are owned and maintained by the City.

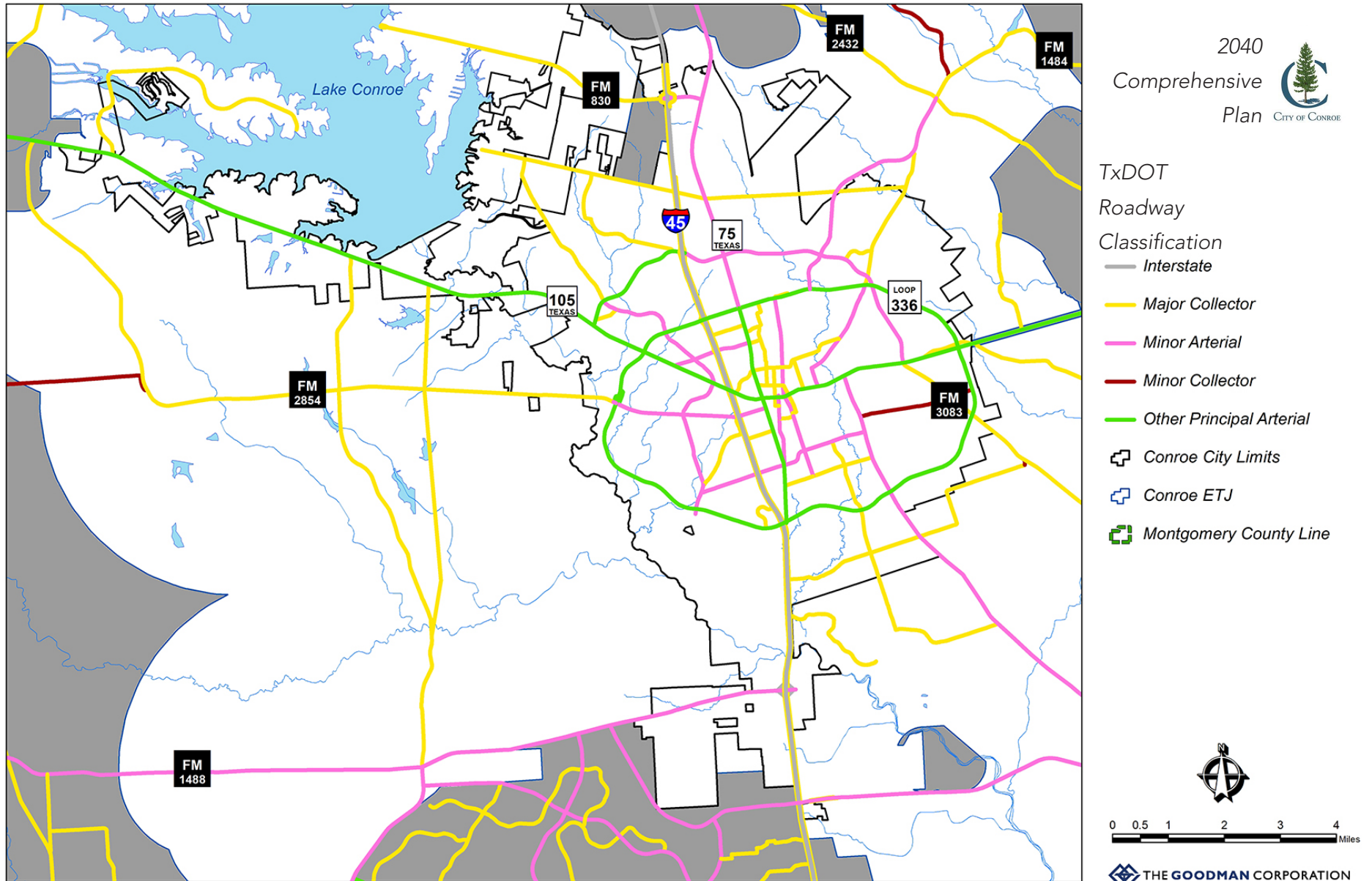


Source: The Goodman Corporation

The City's roadway typical cross-section standards were most recently amended in September 2019. A list of how the City classifies streets is shown below. For proposed streets, the projected number of dwellings is based on potential build-out and projected through-traffic volumes:

- Local street: Serves residential area encompassing no more than 150 dwellings, with combined 1,500 vehicles/day. The minimum right-of-way width is 50 feet.
- Collector street: Receives and distributes traffic to and from various subareas, and receives traffic from neighborhood/commercial areas, between 151-600 dwellings and combined 1,501-6,000 vehicles/day. The minimum right-of-way width is 70 feet.
- Urban estate street: Local or collector street that has open ditches. The minimum right-of-way width is 60 (local) or 70 (collector) feet.
- Commercial street: A collector street that is developed for commercial use. The minimum right-of-way width is 70 feet.
- Industrial street: Principal arterial that serves abutting property that is developed for industrial use, with a typical right-of-way of 100 feet.
- Minor arterial: Similar to principal arterial, but either lower through-traffic volumes and more traffic originating along it or streets off it. Combined 6,001-20,000 vehicles/day. The minimum right-of-way width is 80-90 feet, depending whether a center turn lane is included.
- Principal arterial: Serves traffic flows not originating directly on the roadway for through-traffic or connectivity. Combined volumes of greater than 20,000 vehicles/day. The minimum right-of-way width is 100 feet.

Figure 4.1 Roadway Classification





## Existing Conditions: Congestion

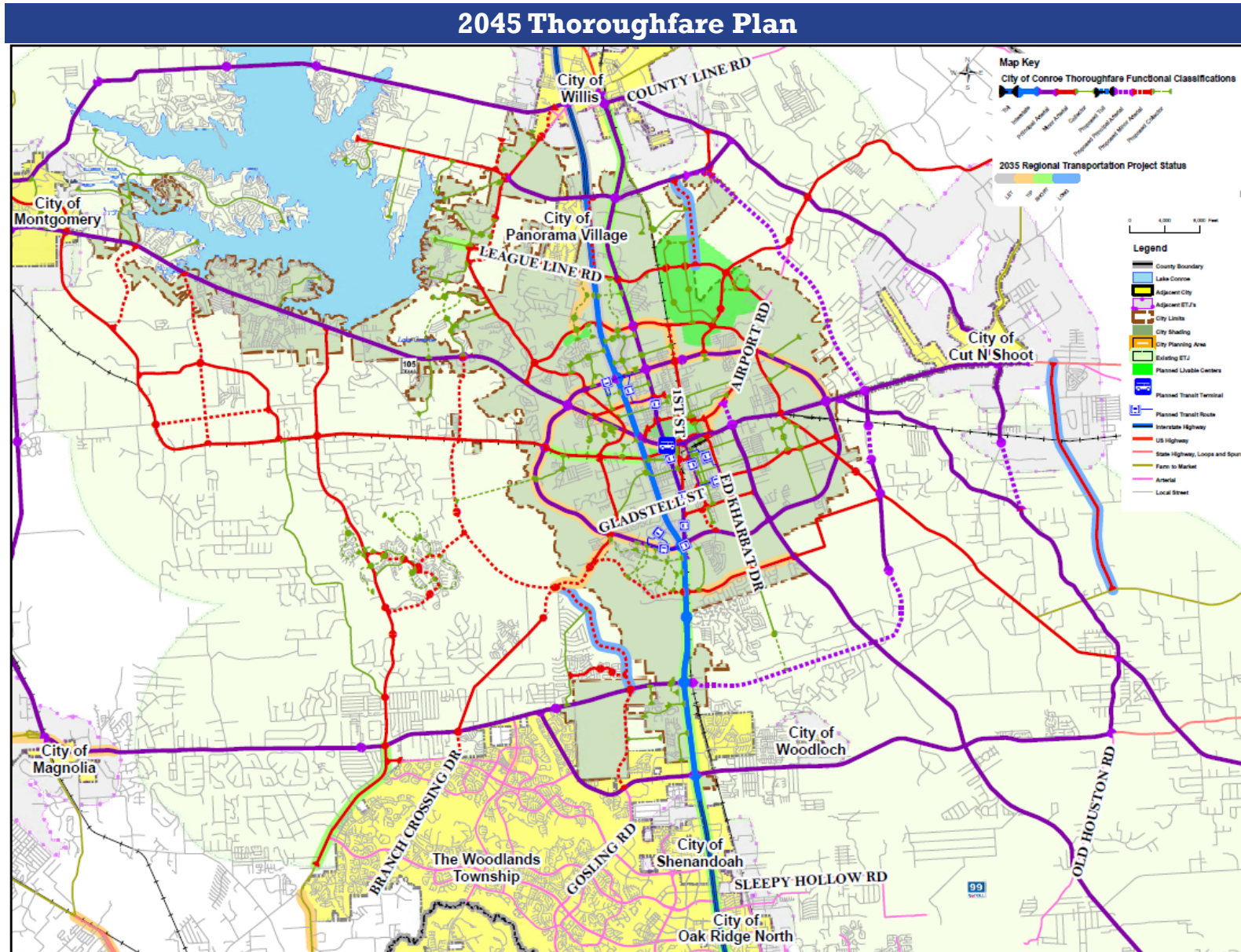
The average daily traffic volumes on FM 1488, SH 105, and Loop 336 are the highest in the City, excluding I-45. The congestion level on select roadways is measured through the H-GAC Travel Demand Model, using the current base year network of 2020. A weighted average of the volume to capacity ratio for the AM and PM peak periods is calculated using the travel demand model network and assigned a relative ranking.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the congestion levels are based upon bi-directional volumes compared to their capacity and are weighted for the entirety of the corridor. The congestion map is based on a combination of the H-GAC travel demand model as well as local knowledge of conditions on certain roadways.

| Major Roadway                     | Annual Average Daily Traffic (2016 TxDOT) | Peak Period Congestion Level (2020) |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| SH 75                             | 13,218                                    | Medium                              |
| SH 105: N Loop 336 to Walden Road | 32,152                                    | High                                |
| SH 105: Loop 336 to Loop 336      | 20,568                                    | High                                |
| FM 2854                           | 9,195                                     | Medium                              |
| Loop 336                          | 17,572                                    | Medium to High                      |
| FM 1314                           | 11,187                                    | Medium                              |
| FM 830                            | 12,766                                    | Medium                              |
| Sgt. Ed Holcomb Road              | 5,814                                     | Low                                 |
| Longmire Road                     | 6,321                                     | Low                                 |
| FM 3083                           | 13,834                                    | Low to High                         |
| FM 1488                           | 48,461                                    | High                                |

1- Provided by H-GAC in 2019

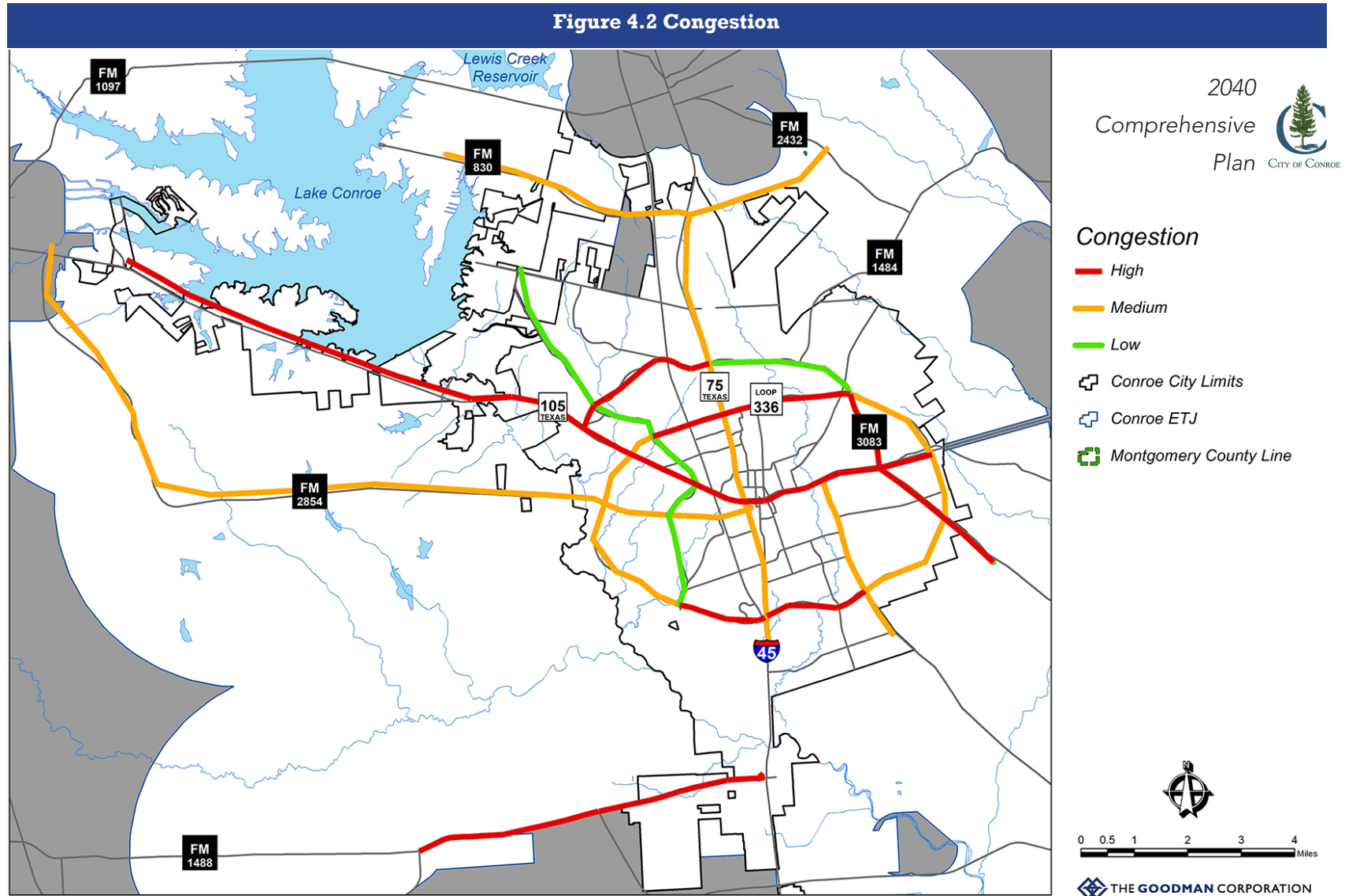


Source: The Goodman Corporation



2045 Thoroughfare Plan of the City of Conroe





### Existing Conditions: Safety

Within the City limits in the past five years, there have been approximately 2,780 crashes reported per year, which resulted in an average of 75 serious injuries and 13 deaths per year. To evaluate the crash data that directly corresponds to the safety conditions within the City, crash records were obtained from the TxDOT's Crash Records Information System (CRIS) database for years 2014 to 2018.<sup>2</sup>

#### City of Conroe Crash Stats (2014-2018)

**Average ~2,780 Crashes Per Year**

**Average ~75 Serious Injuries Per Year**

**Average ~13 Deaths Per Year**

There were eight corridors within the City that experienced 80 or more crashes per year during this timeframe. Table 4.2 shows the five-year average number of crashes and injury severity per year. The greatest number of crashes were reported along I-45; however, this corridor also experiences the most traffic per year. To normalize or account for the weighting of traffic, a common factor of 100 million vehicle miles (MVM) is applied. The 100 MVM is then multiplied by the number of crashes and severity, which results in count and severity crash rate per 100 MVM. The top ranked corridors are located on Loop 336, Frazier Street, I-45 Feeder, and Davis Street.

2- Law enforcement data found within the CRIS dataset uses the KABCO Scale, which rates traffic crash injury on a five-point scale with categories designated as fatal (K), serious (A), moderate (B), minor (C), and none (O).

**Table 4.2 Corridors with > 80 Crashes/Year**

| Corridor (Approx. Limits)                  | Average No. of Crashes | Serious Injuries | Fatalities |
|--|------------------------|------------------|------------|
| SH 105 (FM 1485 to I-45)                   | 263                    | 5.4              | 0.4        |
| FM 1488 (I-45 to Kuykendahl Road)          | 82.8                   | 4                | 0.4        |
| Frazier Street (S Loop 336 to Meador Road) | 169.6                  | 5.6              | 0.4        |
| I-45 (SH 242 to FM 830)                    | 329.4                  | 9.8              | 2.4        |
| I-45 Feeder (SH 242 to FM 830)             | 172.4                  | 5                | 1          |
| SH 105 (I-45 to Walden Road)               | 249.4                  | 5.6              | 3.6        |
| South Loop 336 (Davis St. to SH 105)       | 118.4                  | 2.6              | 0.8        |
| North Loop 336 (Davis St. to SH 105)       | 180.2                  | 5.6              | 0.4        |

Intersection safety is also evaluated. Crash records were grouped into an intersection if the crash occurred in the intersection or within approximately 50 ft of the major intersection. There were 13 intersections where 25 crashes or more per year occurred. Table 4.3 shows the average number of crashes and injury severity per year. To normalize or account for the weighting of traffic, a common factor of 100 Million Entering Vehicles (MEV) is applied. The 100 MEV is then multiplied by the number of crashes and severity, which results in count and severity crash rate per 100 MEV.



**Table 4.3 Intersections with >25 Crashes/Year**

| Intersection                   | Average No. of Crashes | Serious Injuries | Fatalities |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Airport Road & E. Davis Street | 34.2                   | 1.0              | 0.0        |
| W Davis & I-45                 | 93.2                   | 0.8              | 0.0        |
| W Davis & N. Frazier           | 93.2                   | 1.6              | 0.0        |
| FM 3083 and I-45               | 15.6                   | 0.2              | 0.0        |
| Gladstell & I-45               | 3.8                    | 0.4              | 0.0        |
| Loop 336 & Airport Road        | 22.2                   | 1.8              | 0.0        |
| Loop 336 & E. Davis Street     | 48.0                   | 1.0              | 0.2        |
| Loop 336 & N. Frazier Street   | 85.0                   | 1.4              | 0.2        |
| Loop 336 & Old Montgomery Road | 19.6                   | 1.0              | 0.0        |
| Loop 336 & W. Davis Street     | 64.6                   | 0.8              | 0.2        |
| Loop 336 N & I-45              | 47.8                   | 1.6              | 0.0        |
| Loop 336 S & I-45              | 44.2                   | 1.6              | 0.0        |
| Wilson Road & I-45             | 1.8                    | 0.0              | 0.0        |

## Justification of Needs: Congestion

With the existing conditions demonstrating the opportunity for improvements in congestion and safety, it is important that the City work to optimize movement of people and goods and enhance safety. In considering how best to address these issues, it is also important that the City select the projects that are feasible and beneficial to Conroe's citizens, through sustainable funding and delivering the right projects.

Congestion was identified as the number one issue by the citizens through a comprehensive plan survey, with respondents choosing it as the top transportation challenge facing Conroe. Out of the comments received on specific roadways, SH 105 and Loop 336 were identified with the greatest frequency. Other issues identified were traffic congestion on SH 75/Frazier Street and general traffic signal timing issues.

There are two thoroughfare plans that affect the City of Conroe. The first is the 2016 Montgomery County Major Thoroughfare Plan. This plan was designed to develop a holistic, county-wide transportation plan that would accommodate current and future mobility needs. The City of Conroe also has its own 2045 Thoroughfare Plan, which is generally similar to the County's. However, there are some areas where there are differing projections. The Thoroughfare Plan published by Conroe is a living document; the Plan is dependent on projected development and is edited based on existing projections and any issues that might arise. The Thoroughfare Plan is used as a tool to preserve right-of-way.

The Table 4.4 shows the added capacity projects that are planned by TxDOT and the City on the major roadways in Conroe, as well as the designation of the roadway in Conroe's Thoroughfare Plan. The projects denoted with asterisks are City projects.

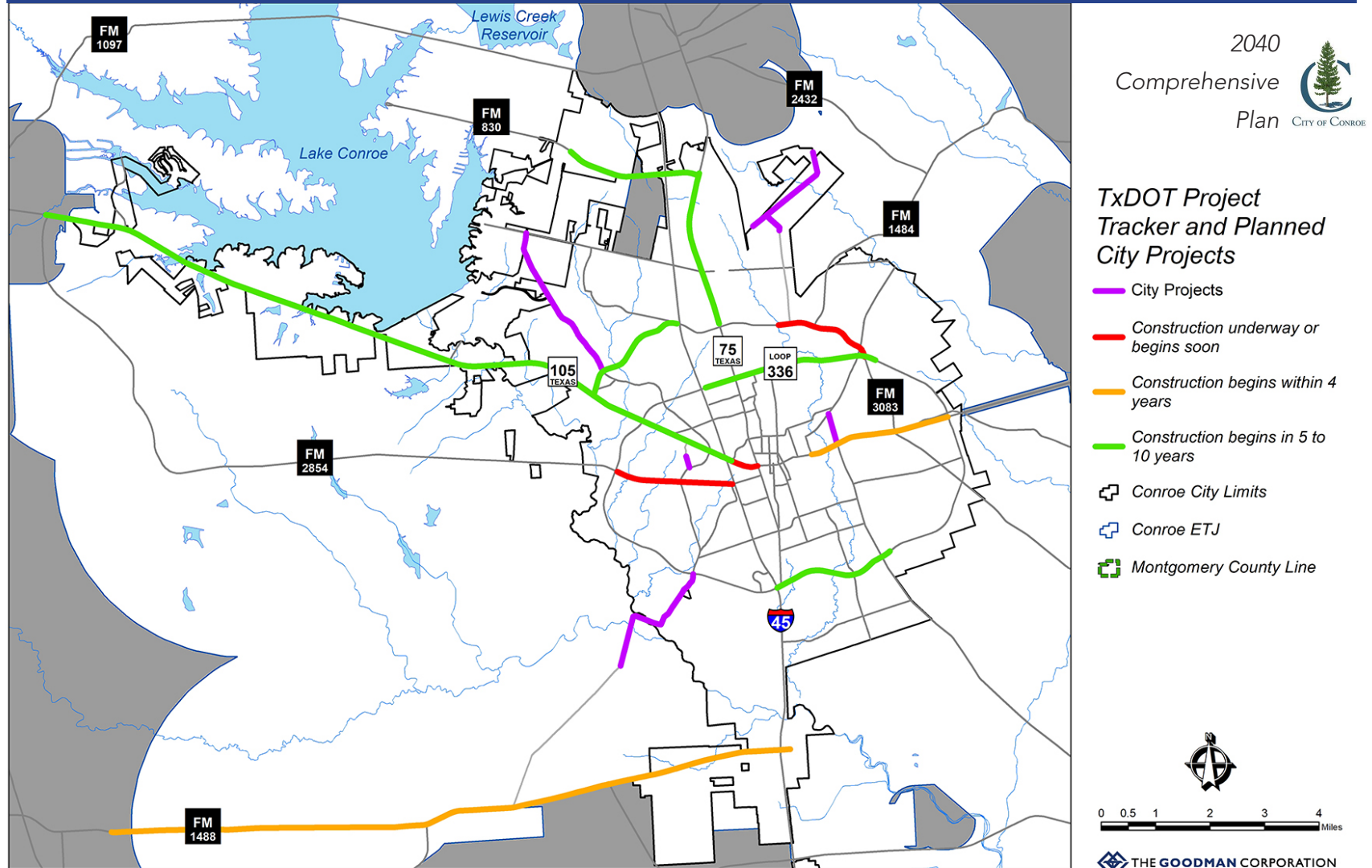
**Table 4.4 Added Capacity Projects Underway by TxDOT and City of Conroe**

| Major Roadway                    | Conroe 2045 Thoroughfare Plan                                    | Proposed Capacity Improvements: TxDOT Project Tracker, City CIP  |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| SH 75                            | Principal Arterial   | Widening from League Line to FM 3083 and N Loop 336 to SH 105  |
| SH 105 (Loop 336 to Walden Road) | Principal Arterial   | Access management study from FM 2854 to I-45   |
| SH 105 (Loop 336 to Loop 336)    | Principal Arterial   | SH 75 to I-45: Construct raised median and add pedestrian/transit activities; 10th St. to N Loop 336 E: Widen roadway                        |
| FM 2854                          | Minor Arterial   | Loop 336 to I-45: Make a 4-lane divided facility   |
| Loop 336                         | Principal Arterial   | I-45 to FM 3083: 4- lane to 6- lane divided<br>FM 1314 to I-45: Widen Road from 2 to 4 lanes   |
| FM 1314*                         | Principal Arterial   | Extension from existing terminus to Airport Road   |
| FM 830                           | Minor Arterial (lake to Old Montgomery Road), Principal Arterial | Widen Road from Old Montgomery Road to SH 75   |
| Sgt. Ed Holcomb Road*            | Minor Arterial   | Widened from S Loop 336 to new bridge over San Jacinto River   |
| Longmire Road*                   | Minor Arterial   | City project: Widen to a 4-lane roadway from FM 3083 to Wedgewood Boulevard (Phase 2B) and Wedgewood Boulevard to League Line Road (Phase 3) |
| FM 3083                          | Minor Arterial   | 3 projects: widening from I-45 to SH105; grade separation at UPRR; widening to 4-lane divided from N Loop 336 to Stewart's Creek             |
| Old Conroe Road*                 | Minor Arterial   | Widen from 2- to 4- lane roadway from FM 1488 to San Jacinto Bridge  |
| Industrial Park*                 | Minor Arterial   | Extension of 4-lane road from Pollok Drive to Farrell Road   |
| Camelot Road*                    | Collector  | Extension to SH 105  |
| FM 1488                          | Principal Arterial   | Widen road from FM 2978 to I-45  |

\*City roadways



**Figure 4.3 TxDOT Project Tracker and Planned City Projects**



### Justification of Needs: Safety

Traffic fatalities are a top concern for the State of Texas. In June 2019, the Texas Department of Transportation Commission ordered TxDOT to develop and implement strategies to reduce the number of deaths (average ~3,700) on Texas roadways by 50 percent in 2035 and to zero in 2050. As such, roadways with higher fatality rates per 100 million vehicle miles (MVM) that are higher than the Texas and national averages should be considered for further evaluation to provide recommendations and costs for safety improvements. The fatality rate per 100 MVM along SH 105, from I-45 to Walden Road, is significantly higher than the fatality rate of Texas and the United States.

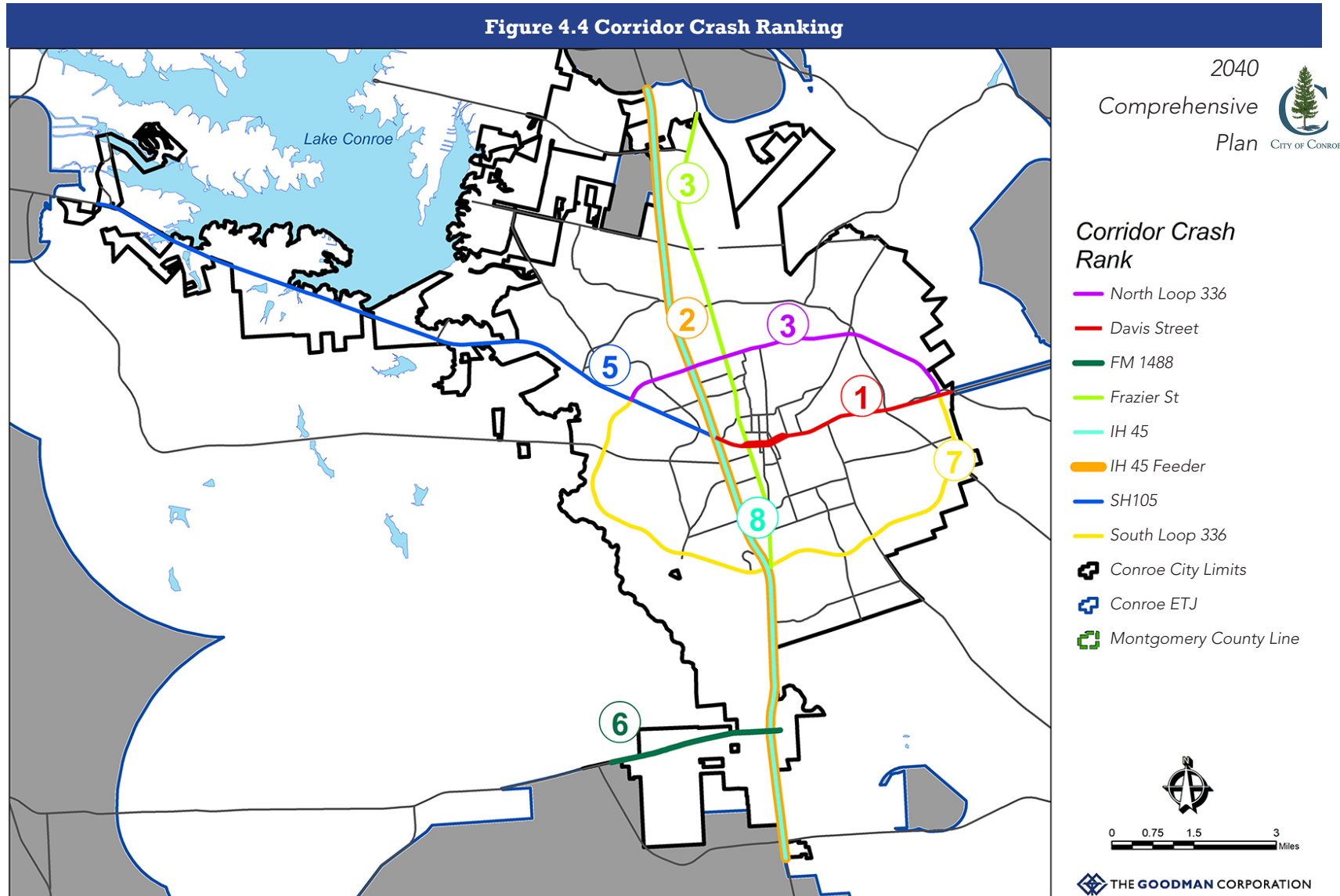
The rankings for both corridors and intersections are based upon number of crashes, fatalities and serious injuries per 100 million vehicles. The ranking in each category is based on natural breaks in each category, and the criteria is averaged for each corridor and intersection. Traffic volumes are normalized.

| Table 4.5 Added Corridor Ranking Criteria and Scores |                      |                  |            |         |      |
|--|----------------------|------------------|------------|---------|------|
| Corridor   | Average # of Crashes | Serious Injuries | Fatalities | Average | Rank |
| Davis Street (FM 1485 to I-45)                       | 5                    | 5                | 4          | 4.7     | 1    |
| I-45 Feeder (FM 242 to FM 830)                       | 4                    | 4                | 5          | 4.3     | 2    |
| Frazier Street (S Loop 336 to Meador Road)           | 5                    | 2                | 5          | 4       | 3    |
| N Loop 336 (Davis St. to SH 105)                     | 5                    | 4                | 3          | 4       | 3    |
| SH 105 (I-45 to Walden Road)                         | 3                    | 3                | 5          | 3.7     | 5    |
| FM 1488 (I-45 to College Park)                       | 3                    | 4                | 3          | 3.3     | 6    |
| S Loop 336 (Davis St. to SH 105)                     | 3                    | 2                | 4          | 3       | 7    |
| I-45 (FM 242 to FM 830)                              | 2                    | 1                | 1          | 1.3     | 8    |

The following corridors warrant consideration for a detailed safety study to further evaluate the safety issues along the corridor and provide countermeasures to mitigate crashes:

| Table 4.6 Corridors for Further Evaluation |   |
|--|---|
| Corridor                                   | Major Safety Concerns                         |
| Davis Street (FM 1485 to I-45)             | # of Crashes, Serious Injury Rate per 100 MVM |
| Frazier Street (Loop 336 to Meador Rd)     | # of Crashes                                  |
| I-45 Feeder (FM 242 to FM 830)             | Crash and Fatality Rates per 100 MVM          |
| SH 105 (I-45 to Walden Rd)                 | Fatality Rates per 100 MVM                    |
| Loop 336 North (Davis St. to SH 105)       | # of Crashes, Serious Injury Rate per 100 MVM |





**Table 4.7 Intersection Ranking Criteria and Scores**

| Intersection                            | Average # of Crashes | Serious Injuries | Fatalities | Average    | Rank       |
|---|----------------------|------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Loop 336 &amp; E. Davis Street</b>   | <b>5.0</b>           | <b>3.0</b>       | <b>5.0</b> | <b>4.3</b> | <b>1.0</b> |
| <b>Loop 336 &amp; N. Frazier Street</b> | <b>5.0</b>           | <b>3.0</b>       | <b>4.0</b> | <b>4.0</b> | <b>2.0</b> |
| <b>Loop 336 &amp; W. Davis Street</b>   | <b>4.0</b>           | <b>2.0</b>       | <b>4.0</b> | <b>3.3</b> | <b>3.0</b> |
| Airport Road & E. Davis Street          | 5.0                  | 4.0              | 0.0        | 3.0        | 4.0        |
| Loop 336 & Airport Road                 | 4.0                  | 5.0              | 0.0        | 3.0        | 5.0        |
| E. Davis Street & N. Frazier Street     | 5.0                  | 3.0              | 0.0        | 2.7        | 6.0        |
| Loop 336 & Old Montgomery Road          | 3.0                  | 4.0              | 0.0        | 2.3        | 7.0        |
| Loop 336 N & I-45                       | 3.0                  | 3.0              | 0.0        | 2.0        | 8.0        |
| Loop 336 S & I-45                       | 3.0                  | 3.0              | 0.0        | 2.0        | 9.0        |
| W. Davis Street & I-45                  | 3.0                  | 1.0              | 0.0        | 1.3        | 10.0       |
| FM 3083 and I-45                        | 2.0                  | 1.0              | 0.0        | 1.0        | 11.0       |
| Gladstell Road & I-45                   | 2.0                  | 1.0              | 0.0        | 1.0        | 12.0       |
| Wilson Road & I-45                      | 1.0                  | 0.0              | 0.0        | 0.3        | 13.0       |

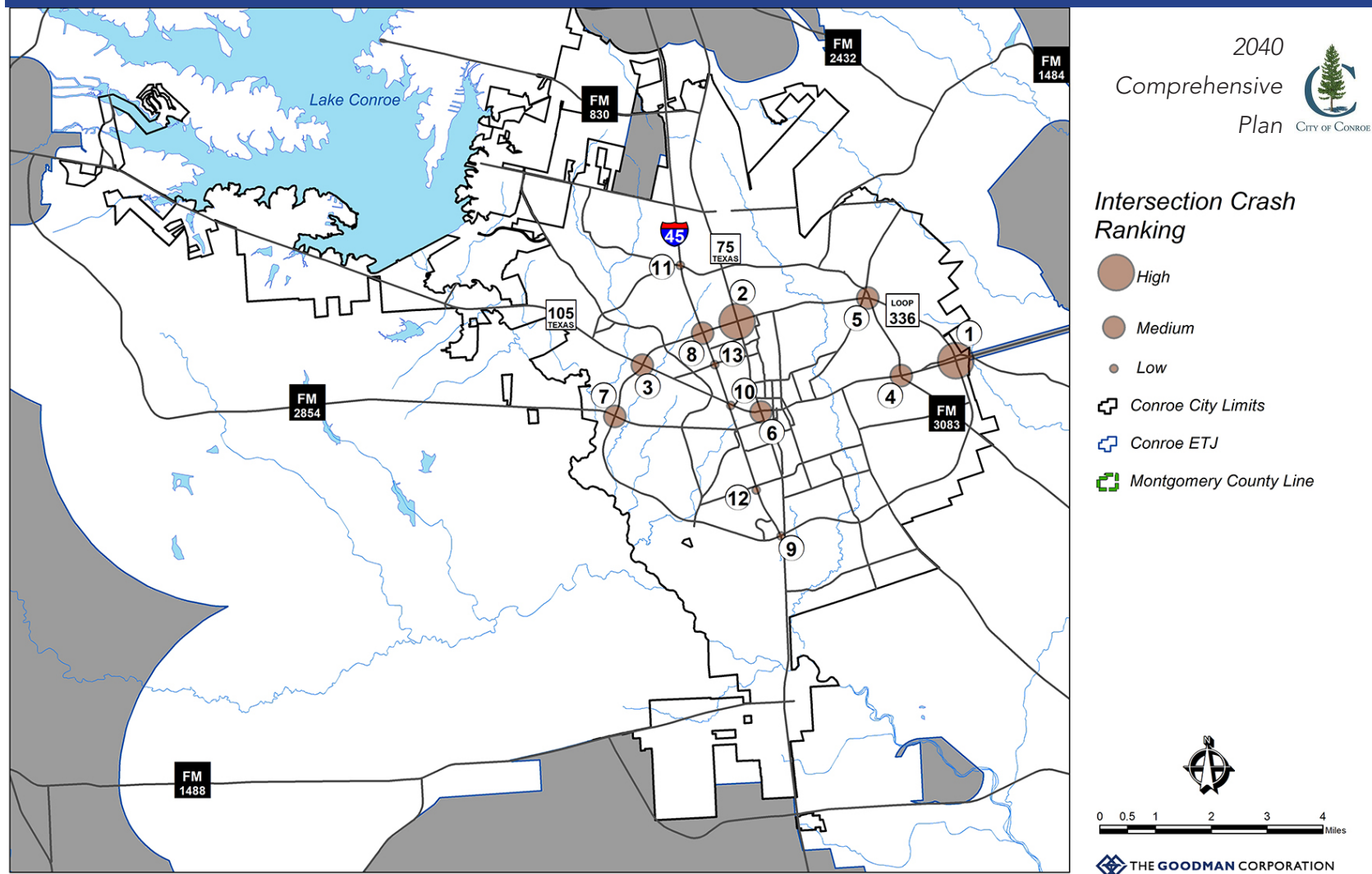
The top 3 ranked intersections are located on Loop 336 at N. Frazier Street, W. Davis Street, and E. Davis Street. These intersections warrant a detailed safety study to further evaluate the intersection to provide specific recommendations and costs for safety improvements.

**Table 4.8 Intersections for Further Evaluation**

| Intersection                 | Major Safety Concerns                                       |
|------------------------------|---|
| Loop 336 & E. Davis Street   | Serious Injury and Fatality Rate per 100 MEV                |
| Loop 336 & N. Frazier Street | # of Crashes, Serious Injury, and Fatality Rate per 100 MEV |
| Loop 336 & W. Davis Street   | # of Crashes and Fatality Rate per 100 MEV                  |



**Figure 4.5 Intersection Crash Ranking**



### Recommendations

The City should continue to keep the Thoroughfare Plan as a living document and update as needed based on updated development projections. To ensure the appropriateness of the Thoroughfare Plan, the City should ensure that the projections in the H-GAC Travel Demand Model (TDM) for roadway type and number of lanes are consistent, as well as the projected development, which is to be reflected in the demographics and underlying trip tables. Running the H-GAC TDM will help determine if the capacity will be adequate or if the plan needs to be adjusted.

The majority of the major roadways in the City, including SH 105, are owned and maintained by TxDOT. To the extent possible, the City should continue to coordinate with TxDOT and advocate for necessary projects and improvements. Partnerships and intergovernmental coordination with TxDOT are essential for improved mobility in the City. The City has already worked to add flood gates at certain points on TxDOT roadways to prevent access onto flooded facilities, and the City and TxDOT should continue to coordinate regarding flooding issues and access during high water and other emergency events to ensure access and mobility.

Safety improvements are needed on a variety of corridors and intersections in the City. It is recommended that a study be initiated to determine specific countermeasures and recommendations for each of the specific areas.

SH 105 is identified as the top corridor for congestion issues by citizens and has a high rate of documented crash incidents. An access management study has been proposed for the western portion, and TxDOT is planning to widen the road from 10th Street to Loop 336 and add a raised median and pedestrian/transit

amenities from SH 75 to I-45. However, a more comprehensive study should be conducted for the entirety of the corridor within City limits to determine the impact of potential improvements as well as identify other improvements, including transit, that can help holistically address safety and congestion issues along the corridor.

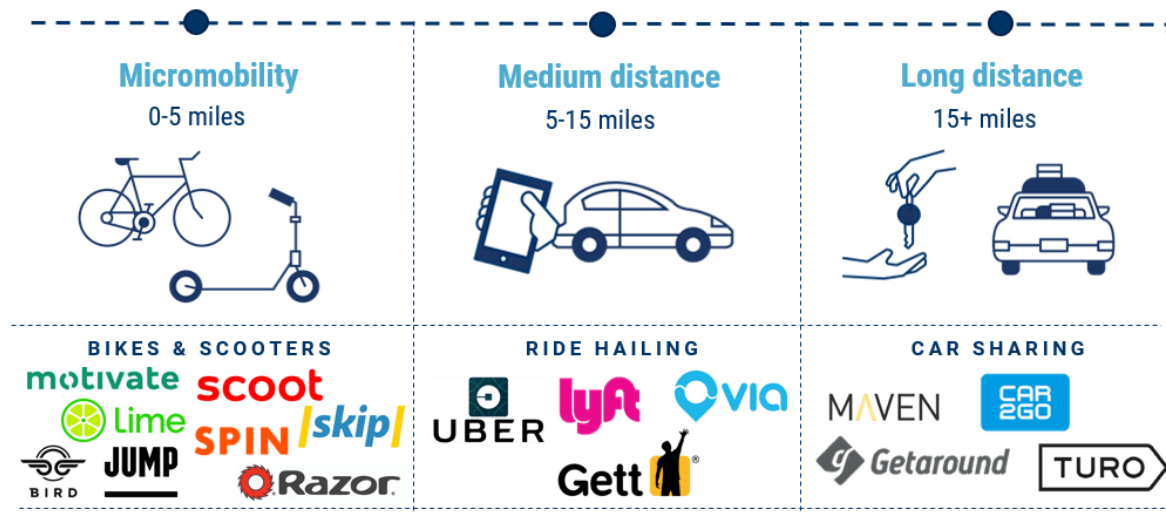
Technology can also be used to help alleviate congestion and safety concerns in the City, while furthering the goals of optimization of people and goods and enhancing safety. Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and other emerging technologies will become increasingly important tools for the City to use.

A 2017 Conroe Project Assessment Report considered City-wide signalization and ITS upgrades. The City identified the need to upgrade nearly 70 signals with a variety of the following improvements: new signal poles and mast arms, upgrading span wires to mast arms and poles, radar detectors, battery backups, flashing yellow arrows, modems, and signal cabinets. Furthermore, there are 19 schools within the Conroe ISD and many of them could benefit from additional flashing school zone signage. The City should develop a comprehensive ITS Master Plan, which would expand upon the improvements listed above as well as additional technologies such as CCTV monitoring, railroad crossing improvements, installation of new signals as the City grows, and coordination with NorthStar/TranStar.

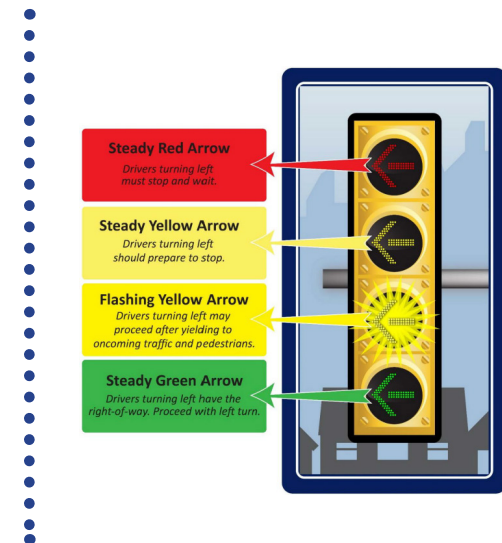


The City has implemented flashing yellow upgrades at 28 intersections throughout the City. Furthermore, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) are conducting a Traffic Optimization for Signalized Corridors (TOSCo) study along SH 105. These technologies and methods can continue to be used to help optimize movement in the City.

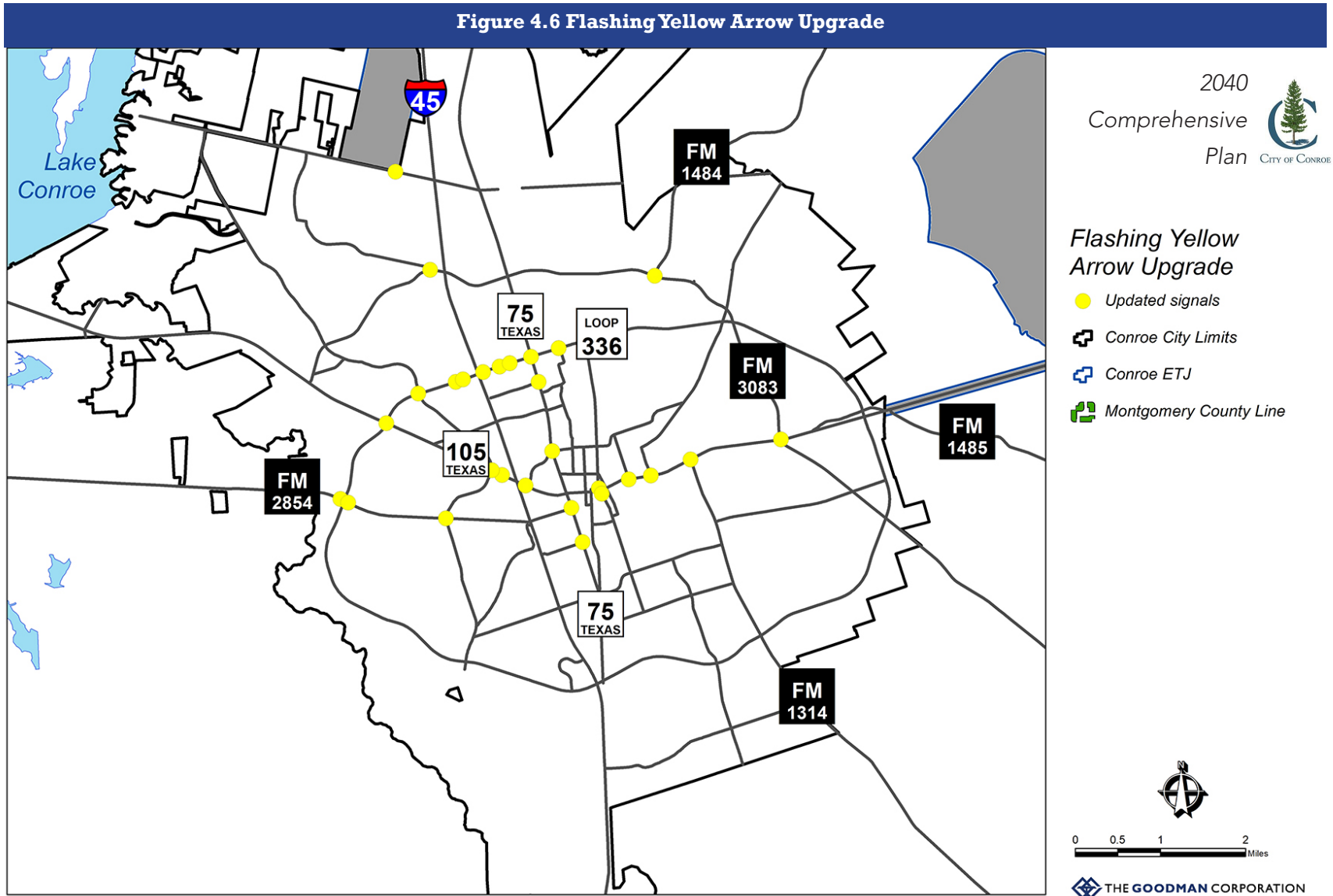
The City should continue to prepare for emerging technologies, such as autonomous vehicles, mobility as a service, e-bikes, and scooters. Mobility as a service is a shift away from personally-owned modes of transportation and towards mobility provided as a service. Although the timing and absorption rate of new technologies is unknown, the City should continue to proactively create policies and participate in efforts (such as the TTI study) to be able to adapt to the changing landscape of transportation. Ordinances should be in place for the City to be equipped to regulate technology that can be deployed by third parties, such as dockless bike-share and scooters.



(Source: CB Insights)



(Source: Explore Venango)



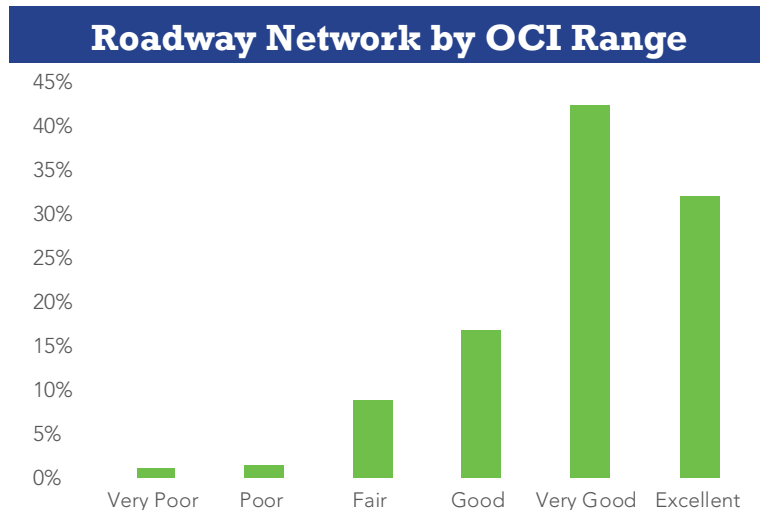


## Roadway: State of Good Repair and Bridges

### Existing Conditions

While building new roadways or adding lane-miles to existing roadways may alleviate congestion and address connectivity issues, the existing infrastructure and newly built infrastructure needs to be continually maintained to keep the system in a state of good repair.

The City of Conroe contains 410 centerline miles of roadway, 346 miles of which the City is responsible for maintaining. A 2017 Pavement Management Report, which contained a pavement condition assessment, found that nearly 75 percent of the pavement in the City is in very good or excellent condition. As a comparative measurement, the City of Houston's 2017 data<sup>3</sup> shows that about 46 percent of the major roadway network and 21 percent of the local roads to be in good condition (PCI 86-100).



Source: 2017 Pavement Management Report

Bridge structures are a vital piece of the City's transportation infrastructure. Bridges provide immense travel efficiencies, which save users time and strengthen the local economy. There are 125 bridges in the City, per the National Bridge Inventory. The City owns and/or is responsible for 29 of these bridges or about 23 percent of all the bridge structures within the City of Conroe. TxDOT owns or is responsible for 88 bridges; the other six are owned or cared for by railroads and the County.

The TxDOT Highway Bridge Division monitors and reports bridge data to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) National Bridge Inventory. There are several factors that are reported<sup>4</sup>, such as deck condition, substructure conditions, average daily traffic, scour condition, etc. These numerical representations are indexed into an overall bridge sufficiency rating. Sufficiency ratings range from 0 to 100, from worst to best. Additionally, bridges that are deficient are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.<sup>5</sup>

3 - [http://proceedings.esri.com/library/userconf/proc17/papers/351\\_111.pdf](http://proceedings.esri.com/library/userconf/proc17/papers/351_111.pdf)

4 - Texas Department of Transportation. TxDOT Bridges. Retrieved on May 15th, 2019 from [http://gis-txdot.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/83af0d2957ca4c2eb340e4bd04a1046f\\_0](http://gis-txdot.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/83af0d2957ca4c2eb340e4bd04a1046f_0)

5 - Definitions of functionally obsolete and structurally deficient can be found here: [http://onlinemanuals.txdot.gov/txdotmanuals/bpd/category\\_6\\_funding.htm](http://onlinemanuals.txdot.gov/txdotmanuals/bpd/category_6_funding.htm)

## Conroe 2040 | Planning for the Future

The City boasts an average sufficiency rating of 90.4, with only two bridges falling under 80: Southmore Drive, 0.6 miles west of Ed Kharbat Drive (68.7 rating, and Sergeant Ed Holcomb Boulevard, 0.6 miles north of South Loop 336 (79.6 rating); The Sergeant Ed Holcomb Boulevard bridge is functionally obsolete and no longer in use. There are 26 bridges within the City limits that have a rating sufficiency under 80 and of those 26 bridges only five are functionally obsolete. According to the 2018 TxDOT Bridge Inventory, there is not a bridge within the City that is structurally deficient.

A review of previous Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs) back to 2012 was completed in order to understand the approximate percentage of resources being allocated to new construction versus rehabilitation projects. In discussing goals, objectives, and needs with Transportation and Public Works staff, the largest challenge noted was an imbalance in funding allocation for 'new' capital projects versus 'rehabilitation/maintenance' projects. The allocations in the table below are based upon CIP category language, which typically includes the scope of a project as well as the type of project. This is not always the case, so the percentages below are an approximation. It is also difficult to categorize some projects that touch both categories. An example of such a project is one that reconstructs an existing facility and adds lanes.

Aggregately, the average allocation for new construction projects through FY2012 is nearly three quarters (74%) of the annual CIP budget. In the context of Conroe's growth within this time period, this CIP allocation is logical.

**Table 4.9 Bridge Condition**

| Owner        | Count by Owner | Functionally Obsolete | Average Rating |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| City         | 31             | 3                     | 90.4           |
| County       | 3              | 0                     | 84.4           |
| Railroad     | 3              | 2                     | 53.6           |
| TxDOT        | 88             | 4                     | 87.6           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>125</b>     | <b>9</b>              | <b>87.6</b>    |

**Table 4.10 CIP and New/Rehab Scope**

| CIP     | FY 12-13 | FY 13-14 | FY 14-15 | FY 15-16 | FY 16-17 | FY 17-18 | FY 18-19 | FY 19-20 |
|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| % Rehab | 13%      | 26%      | 26%      | 23%      | 19%      | 46%      | 26%      | 25%      |
| % New   | 87%      | 74%      | 74%      | 77%      | 81%      | 54%      | 74%      | 75%      |

(Note: The 2019-2020 CIP also includes projects from the CIDC)



However, as growth begins to level out and the amount of municipal infrastructure “in the ground” continues to increase, it will become even more important that the City consider the cost associated with maintaining built infrastructure and how this cost category will continue to increase as new infrastructure is constructed and will require commensurate future maintenance.

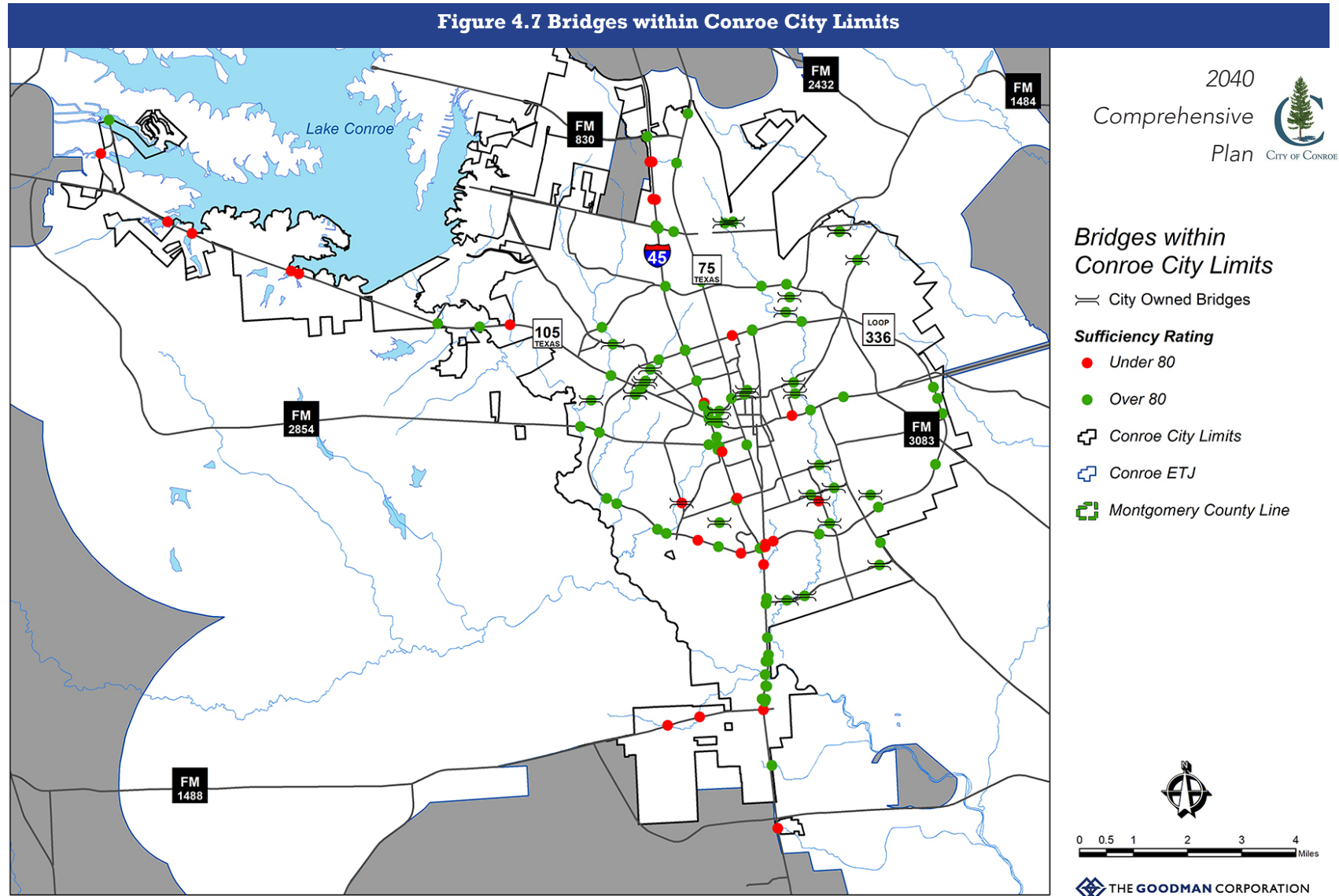
Currently, much of the roadway pavement that is maintained by the City is in excellent or very good condition, and the majority of the bridges in the City are in good condition. However, moving forward, the City can focus on the following recommendations, which will help in preservation of infrastructure and enhancing safety, which are two of the stated mobility goals.

### Roadway Recommendations

The City should establish a definition of “new construction” and “rehabilitation/maintenance” type projects in order to delineate the difference between projects that include both areas. In the annual CIP, the City should include a summary table that denotes the amount and percentage of funding that is allocated for “new construction” and “rehabilitation/maintenance” projects. The City should maintain a tabular summary sheet that depicts and aggregates the 5 to 10-year cost associated with reasonably necessary new construction projects as well as rehabilitation/maintenance projects; this will help facilitate investment decision making between the two categories. Finally, an overall policy or goal for percentage allocation between “new construction” and “rehabilitation/maintenance” should be established.

As bridges age, the maintenance costs tend to rise rapidly and the cost to continually repair the bridge outweighs the cost to replace the structure. In Texas, the Highway Bridge Replacement Fund is available to assist in replacement of bridges that are both on- and off-system. For a bridge to receive assistance from this fund, the bridge must have a sufficiency rating below 80 and either

be classified as structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Once a City bridge nears the end of its useful life, the City should evaluate the feasibility of replacement. Additionally, the City should continue to maintain and monitor bridge structures to ensure they are meeting or exceeding the safety standards set by TxDOT and FHWA, which ensures safety for all users of these important transportation assets.





## Roadway: Funding

### Existing Conditions

An evaluation of peer cities identifies that the City of Conroe has an extremely competitive property tax rate. The rate is the second lowest of all peer cities identified, and nearly half that of the highest taxed peer city (Baytown). Of the cities reviewed, only Sugar Land has a tax rate lower than that of Conroe.

| Peer City      | Est. Population | FY 2018-19 Tax Rate |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Baytown*       | 83,724          | 0.8220              |
| DeSoto         | 53,553          | 0.7214              |
| Pearland*      | 121,500         | 0.7092              |
| Temple         | 76,864          | 0.6772              |
| Missouri City* | 74,561          | 0.6300              |
| Bryan          | 85,613          | 0.6299              |
| Victoria       | 67,659          | 0.6224              |
| San Marcos*    | 61,980          | 0.6139              |
| League City*   | 104,857         | 0.5638              |
| Galveston      | 50,550          | 0.5610              |
| <b>Conroe</b>  | <b>84,378</b>   | <b>0.4175</b>       |
| Sugar Land     | 82,919          | 0.3176              |

\*Has capital recovery fee, detail in table 4.12

6- As of July 2019

This low tax rate is evidence of strong financial management within the City. This is functionally demonstrated in Conroe's 120.7-day general fund reserve balance<sup>6</sup>, which exceeds the City-established 90-day reserve policy by 30.7 days. Assisting Conroe's overall financial framework is their historic success in the pursuit of federal and state discretionary funding to help leverage local dollars for general mobility projects, sidewalks, and public transportation. Funding from external sources have been for new roadways and other infrastructure, versus for repair and maintenance of existing infrastructure, such as the Old Conroe Road extension. In the future, more funding is needed to cover the costs of maintaining infrastructure.

The State of Texas currently has a sales tax ceiling that the City effectively utilizes. The municipal property tax rate is set annually after careful consideration by City staff and elected officials. However, the City does have unmet needs in regards to general mobility and transportation.



Source: The Goodman Corporation

### Recommendations

In order to sustainably fund and deliver the right projects, the City must grapple with how best to prioritize projects, given that there are more needs than funding available.

For this reason, other funding sources should be considered for the support of municipal projects. One area that the City has not utilized to date are capital recovery fees (CRFs). CRFs are fees that are designed to offset the costs associated with infrastructure (water, wastewater, and transportation) associated with new development. Note that these are separate and different from the fees the City currently utilizes for commercial and residential permitting and inspection. The table below provides a reference summary of CRF status amongst Conroe's peer cities in Texas.

| Peer City     | CRF Fees? | CRF Details                                | FY 2018-19 Tax Rate |
|---------------|-----------|--|---------------------|
| Baytown       | Yes       | Water/Wastewater                           | 0.8220              |
| DeSoto        | No        | -  | 0.7214              |
| Pearland      | Yes       | Water/Wastewater + Limited Roads           | 0.7092              |
| Temple        | No        | -  | 0.6772              |
| Missouri City | Yes       | Water in one area (Mustang Bayou)          | 0.6300              |
| Bryan         | No        | -  | 0.6299              |
| Victoria      | No        | -  | 0.6224              |
| San Marcos    | Yes       | Water/Wastewater                           | 0.6139              |
| League City   | Yes       | Water/Wastewater/Transportation            | 0.5638              |
| Galveston     | No        | Authorized by ordinance, no fees allocated | 0.5610              |
| Sugar Land    | No        | -  | 0.3176              |

In addition to the peer cities previously examined, the following table reviews the status of CRF for cities that are geographically proximal to the City of Conroe:

| Proximal City    | CRF Fees? | CRF Details               |
|------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| Houston          | Yes       | Water/Wastewater/Drainage |
| Magnolia         | Yes       | Water/Wastewater          |
| Oak Ridge North  | Yes       | Water/Wastewater          |
| Panorama Village | No        | -                         |
| Shenandoah       | No        | -                         |
| Willis           | No        | -                         |

While the majority of the CRF examples noted above address water, wastewater, and drainage rather than strictly transportation, the general prevalence of the concept itself may be helpful for future consideration. In order to provide for future growth, the City should initiate a study to determine the potential revenue which could be generated via CRFs in all areas. The City should continue to identify and prioritize projects for discretionary funding support based on evolving funding frameworks at the regional, statewide, and federal levels.



### Hike and Bike

#### Existing Conditions

The City of Conroe has approximately 75 miles of sidewalk within the City limits. Approximately 19 miles of sidewalk connect directly to the Conroe Connection fixed route system, and approximately 40 miles of sidewalk are within half a mile of the transit system. From 2008 to 2020, the City has spent nearly \$17.5 million, both federal and local, on sidewalk improvements. This amounts to approximately \$1.5 million per year.

Per Conroe's City ordinance in Section 94-298, sidewalks must be provided along all new streets except for local streets. The ordinance also states that sidewalks must be provided on both sides of the street, but in lieu of this, an 8-foot shared use paved trail can be provided on one side.

Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure is a top concern for Conroe residents. The lack of connectivity for non-motorized users ranked as the top concern for 19 percent of survey respondents, with approximately 120 of 704 respondents identifying it as the biggest challenge regarding transportation. This ranks second, just after traffic congestion. Overall, citizens desire a more walkable and bikeable Conroe.

As the population of the City grows, particularly in the downtown area with increased population density, the need for non-motorized infrastructure will continue to increase. Walking and biking will be a key component of sustainable mobility, and it is imperative that the City address safety of all modes, including bicyclists and pedestrians.

From 2014-2018, there were a total of 145 crashes involving pedestrian and bicyclists in the City of Conroe. Out of the 145 crashes, there were 15 fatalities involving pedestrians. There are many schools that are lacking viable pedestrian access or a contiguous network allowing students to walk safely to school.

Per the H-GAC Sidewalk Inventory, there are several schools without access or with a very limited network (i.e., just sidewalks directly in front of the facility): Wilkinson Elementary, Runyan Elementary, Armstrong Elementary, Anderson Elementary, Peet Junior High, Reaves Elementary, Bozman Intermediate, and Patterson Elementary. The schools along FM 830 that currently do not have access include Meador Elementary, Robert Brabham, Willis High School, and Turner Elementary. Based on an inventory of transit stops, there are several stops, particularly along the two newer routes (the Northeast and West), that are lacking adequate pedestrian access.



Source: The Goodman Corporation

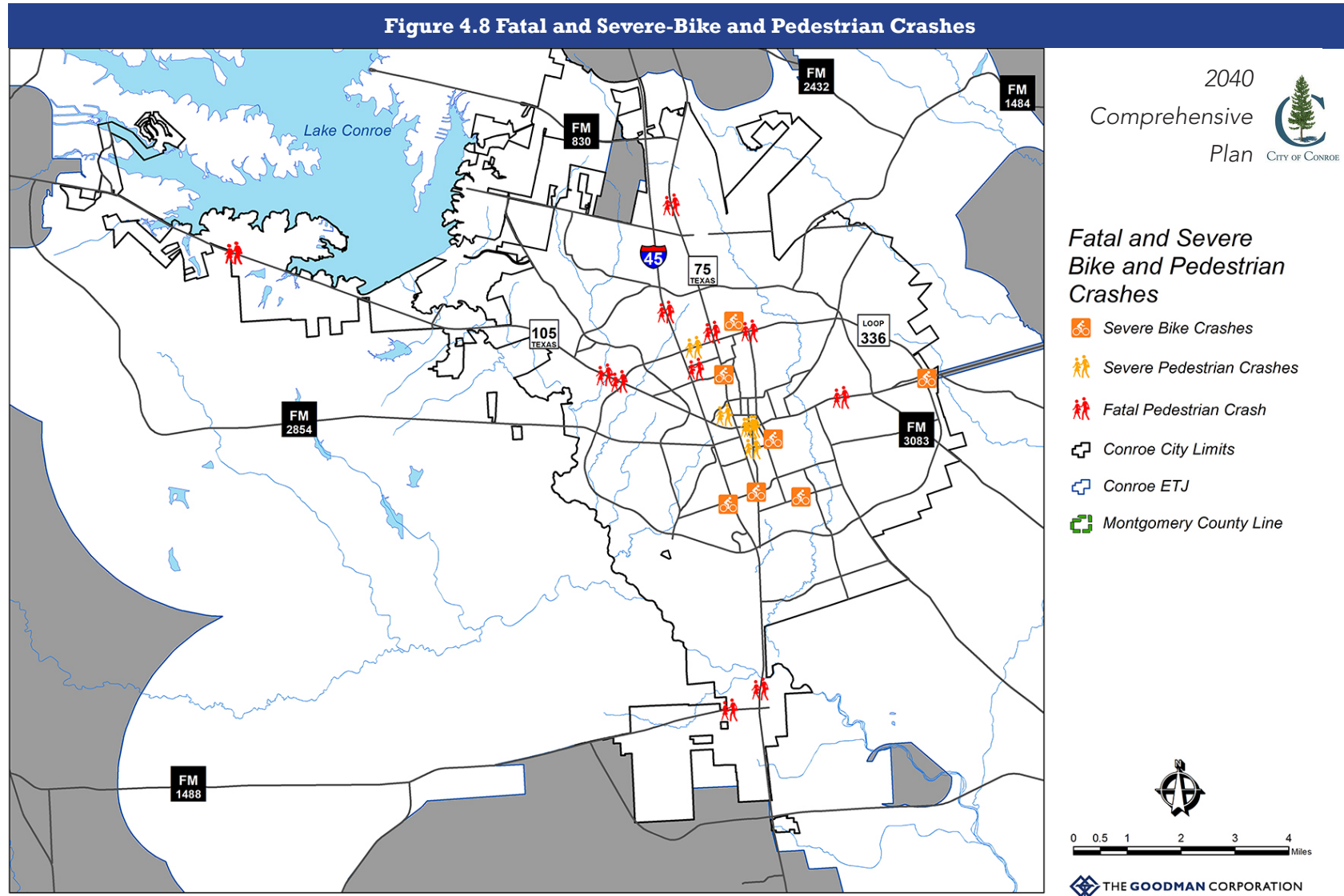
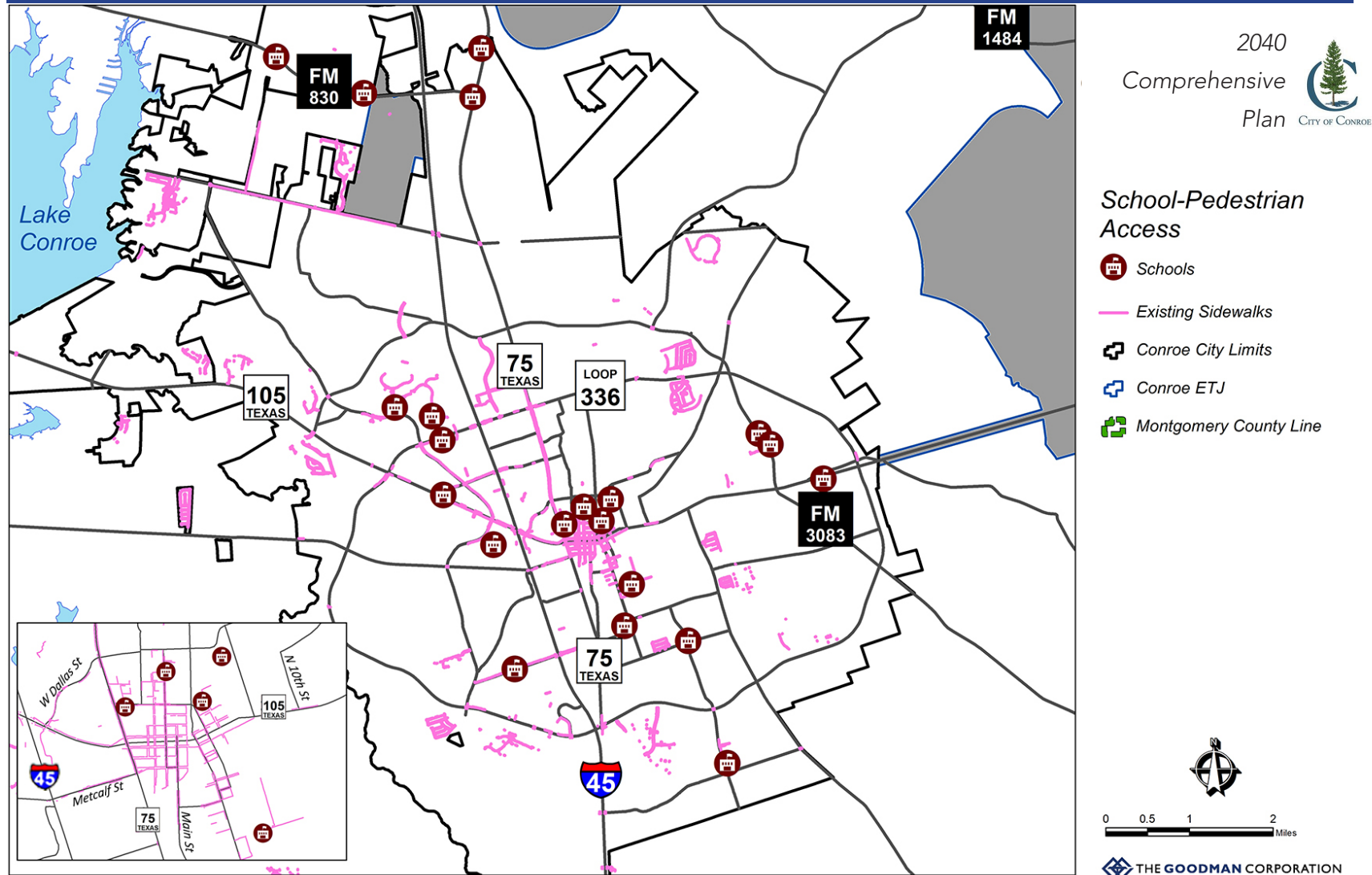
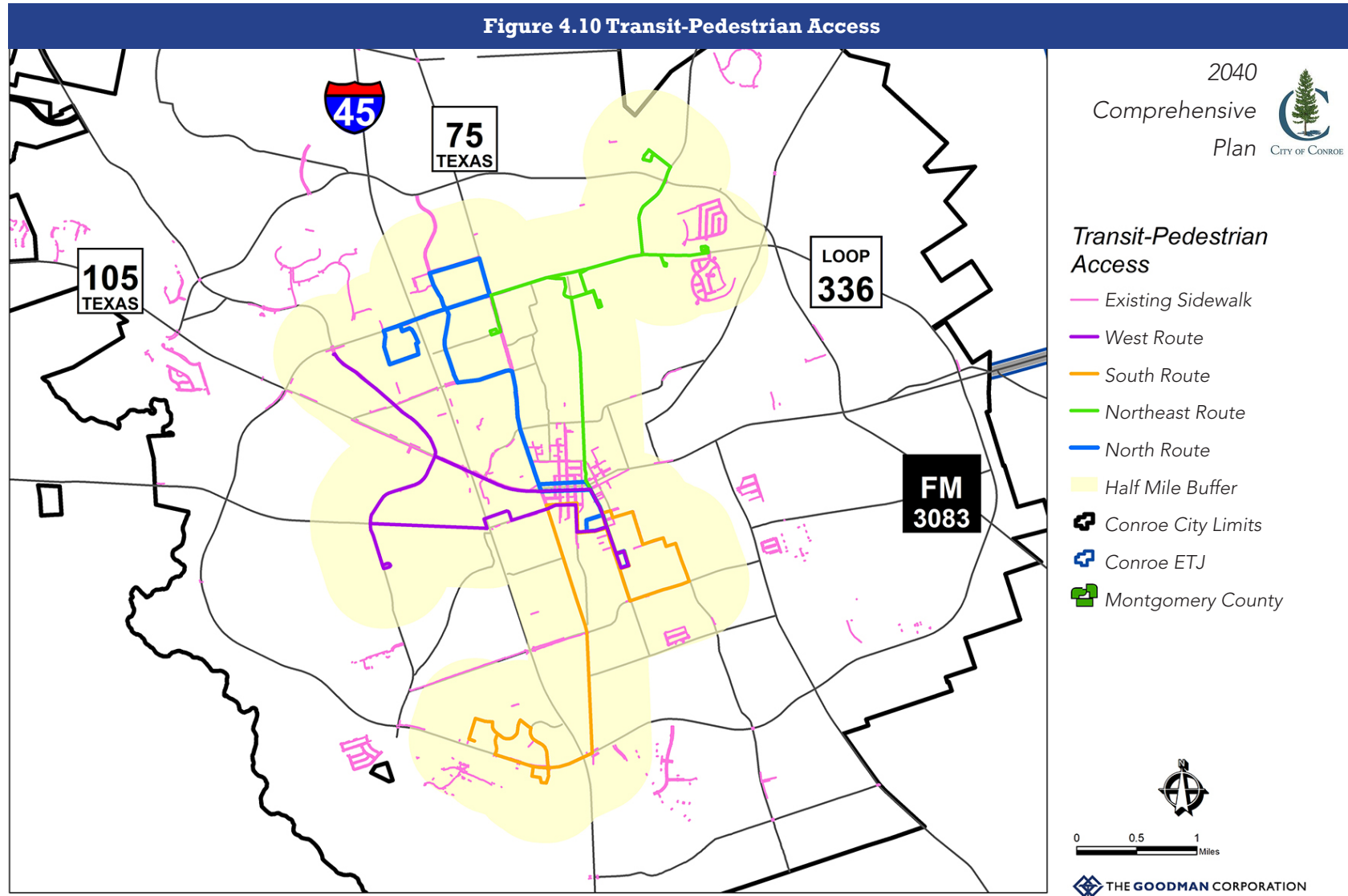




Figure 4.9 School-Pedestrian Access







The City of Conroe has been developing bicycle and pedestrian networks and projects in a variety of planning efforts over the last decade. Several plans included project ideas for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. The 2009 Parks and Recreation Master Plan included ideas for recreational shared-use paths and trails throughout the City. The 2017 City of Conroe Project Assessment Report identified 16 corridors and nearly 20 miles of new sidewalk. The proposed sidewalks were within ½ mile of the Conroe Connection routes. Several of these corridors were grouped for an application to the 2018 H-GAC Call for Projects but were not selected for funding or inclusion into the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Additionally, TxDOT has identified a north-south connection for the Texas Bicycle Tourism Trails network for recreational purposes.

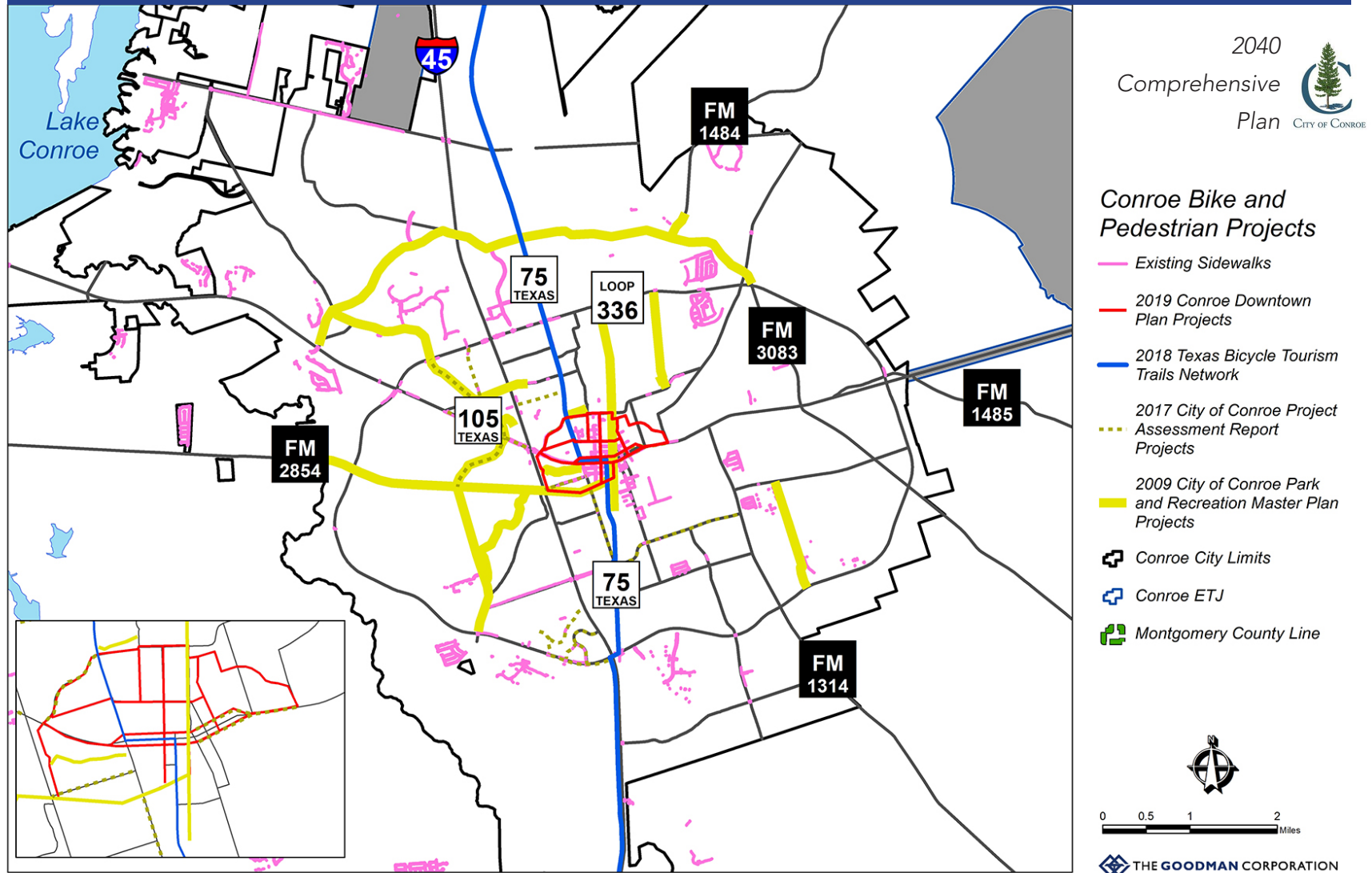
H-GAC has several planning programs, one of which specifically targets transportation and mobility. The 2040 Regional Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan established the framework that the Transportation Policy Council uses when investing in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and supportive policies and programs. The 2045 Active Transportation Plan is a long-range planning document that describes the region's vision for improving active transportation (bicycle and pedestrian) infrastructure within the eight-county region. It supports the 2045 RTP, a long-range multi-modal transportation plan that guides investment for the next 25 years in all types of transportation infrastructure. The Active Transportation Plan includes an overview of existing bicycle and pedestrian network conditions for each county. These plans provide a high-level framework to tailor solutions that fit each local government. The 2045 Active Transportation Plan identifies Downtown Conroe as a top pedestrian bicycle focus area (as it lacks a dense grid of proposed bikeways). The 2045 RTP estimates that the cost to build new concrete sidewalks five feet in width in the downtown area of Conroe would cost approximately \$25.7

million. This only includes new sidewalks and does not include improvements to existing sidewalks, crosswalks, bridges, or any right-of-way needed.

The Downtown Conroe Development Plan, created in 2018, identifies the need for improved non-motorized infrastructure, particularly walking and biking paths into the Downtown core from the surrounding areas. Travel by bike is identified as an issue within the Downtown area as well, due to the lack of dedicated bike paths and amenities. The major recommendation from the plan is the creation of a "Hike and Bike Loop" through Downtown Conroe. The plan alludes to safe street improvements to Lewis Street, N. Roberson Street, N. Thompson Street, and N. 3rd Street as candidates for improvements to serve a variety of schools in the vicinity. These improvements, which are in progress, will make the roadways suitable for walking and biking with bike paths and sidewalks.

The Figure 4.11 shows the planned projects across a variety of plans, ranging from the 2009 Parks and Recreation Master Plan to the Downtown Conroe Development Plan, in contrast with the existing H-GAC sidewalk layer.

Figure 4.11 Conroe Bike and Pedestrian Projects





### Hike and Bike Recommendations

The City should consider the sidewalk and bicycle facility improvements that have been identified in these various planning efforts, as well as the corridors with high incidences of crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists. Moving forward, it is recommended that the City establish a systematic approach to non-motorized connectivity, including overarching policy and goals for spending per year. This can be done through allocating funding to various fund categories based on connectivity type (i.e., downtown, school, transit) and implementing projects based on type. It is important that equity and environmental justice are considered when determining the placement of new and improved non-motorized infrastructure.



Source: The Goodman Corporation

### Transit

#### Existing Conditions

Conroe's transit system currently consists of four fixed routes that serve the City of Conroe, provided by Conroe Connection Transit. This service also provides demand response paratransit within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile of the fixed route system. Demand response service is also provided by Senior Rides throughout Montgomery County. The Conroe Commuter Connection provides park and ride service for commuters from Conroe to the downtown Houston area.

The timeline below shows the implementation of these various services.

**2007** The 2007 Comprehensive Plan identifies transit as a transportation need

**2013** Federal funding for transit begins

**2014** City purchases its first transit vehicles

**2015** Conroe Connection Transit launches service on two routes

**2018** City expands service to four routes

**2019** Commuter bus service between Conroe and downtown Houston and Texas Medical

The City's four fixed routes are located along the major arteries of Frazier Street, N. Loop 336, S. Loop 336, Davis Street, FM 2854, Sgt. Ed Holcomb Boulevard, Longmire Road, First Street, and within downtown and the Dugan subdivision.

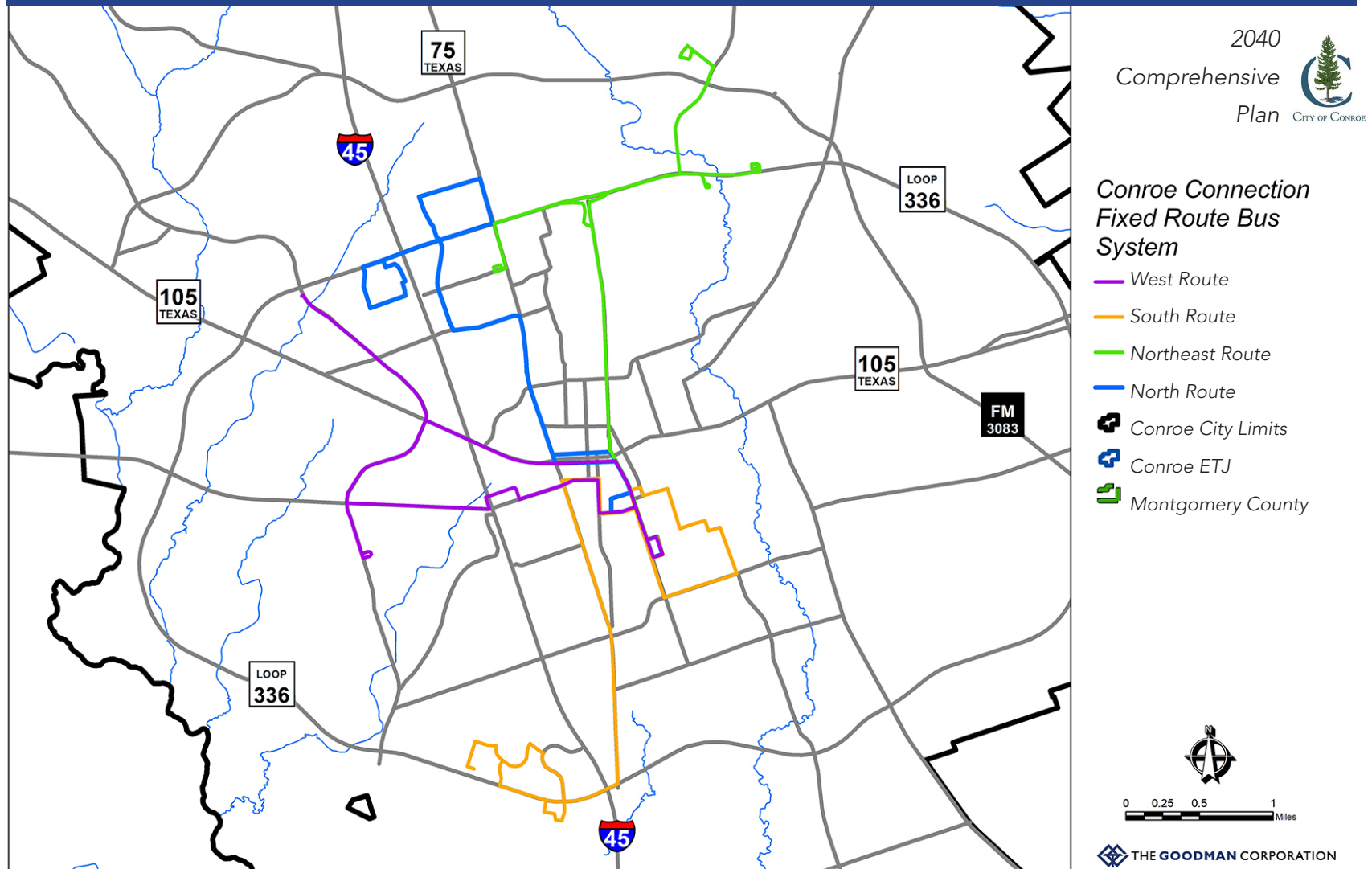
The North and South routes were the original routes, which were established in 2015. These routes run on a one-hour headway. In September 2018, the City added additional routes. The third route is composed of two separate routes, the Northeast and West routes, that are run on alternating, 60-minute headway intervals. Riders can transfer from the North route to the South route (as well as the Northeast and West routes) at the Transfer Point.



Source: The Goodman Corporation



**Figure 4.12 Conroe Connection Fixed Route Bus System**



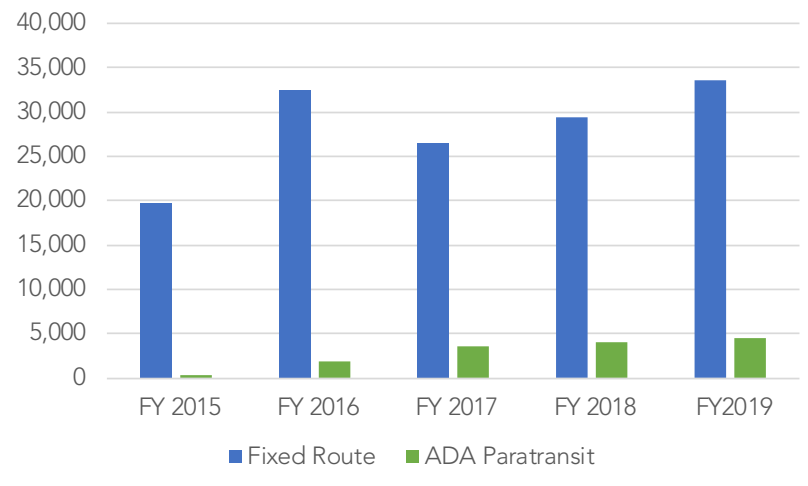
## Conroe 2040 | Planning for the Future

The City negotiated with Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) to establish Park & Ride Commuter Bus Service to Houston through an interlocal agreement. Through a partnership with H-GAC and METRO, Route 291 connects Conroe to Downtown Houston, Midtown, the Texas Medical Center and the VA Hospital. This service commenced in mid-2019.

In 2019, there were a total of 38,230 passenger trips for the fixed route and paratransit systems combined. The 33,670 fixed route trips were over 105,950 revenue miles and 9,300 revenue hours. The 4,560 paratransit trips were over 26,960 revenue miles and 3,190 revenue hours. Ridership for the fixed route and paratransit from 2015-2019 is shown below:

As of 2019, the North route has the highest ridership. It also has the highest population density and most accessible stops, with very few stops needing improvements for walkability. Importantly,

**Figure 4.13 Transit Ridership**



this route is the most direct – the time to get to destinations via transit is not significantly more than commuting via a personal vehicle. The South route has the next most ridership. Both routes have a 60-minute headway. The West and Northeast routes are the newest routes in the system and have the lowest ridership as well as the lowest amount of walkable and accessible stops. These two routes also have the lowest directness factor.

The transit expenditures for FY20 are shown in Table 4.14. The highest expenditure is for the commuter bus service, accounting for nearly 40 percent of total costs. Much of the costs are currently subsidized by other sources. Administration and fixed route service account for just over half of the costs. The commuter bus service from Conroe to Downtown Houston currently costs approximately \$785,000 per year before grant reimbursement and farebox recovery. Currently, the public transportation program operates with a consistent level of local funding. Since program inception, approximately 32 percent of the total program cost has been derived from the City of Conroe's general fund; the remaining balance is provided via federal grant funds. However, commuter bus service is heavily subsidized (70 percent) by a temporary CMAQ grant by the Houston-Galveston Area Council. When this grant expires, the City will have to make funding decisions relative to the continuation of this service.



**Table 4.14 FY 2020-21 Transit Expenditures**

| Line Item            | Estimated Costs    | Funding Assistance | Estimated Local Share |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Administrative       | \$568,000          | \$454,000          | \$114,000             |
| Fixed Route Service  | \$537,900          | \$276,900          | \$261,000             |
| Paratransit Service  | \$184,800          | \$94,800           | \$90,000              |
| Commuter Bus Service | \$785,000          | \$500,000          | \$285,000             |
| Capital Equipment    | \$25,000           | \$20,000           | \$5,000               |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>\$2,100,700</b> | <b>\$1,345,700</b> | <b>\$755,000</b>      |

Other regional options are being explored through the Houston-Galveston Area Council. The High Capacity Transit Task Force (HCTTF) was created to investigate the need and opportunity for high capacity transit in the eight-county region. In April 2019, the HCTTF released a report containing a transit vision and various scenarios for regional high capacity transit. The total capital costs for the region range from \$34 billion to \$100 billion. To connect Downtown Houston to Conroe, the plan shows a combination of technologies and modes. From Conroe to Greenspoint, the HCTTF Vision Plan shows 25.4 miles of all-day service via in-freeway BRT (bus rapid transit) or grade-separated LRT (light rail). From Greenspoint to the Fannin South Park & Ride (P&R), the Plan shows 22.5 miles all-day service via grade-separated LRT (light rail), except one scenario that is at-grade LRT until the N. Shepherd Park & Ride and then in-freeway BRT. The City of Conroe should work with other entities along the I-45 corridor

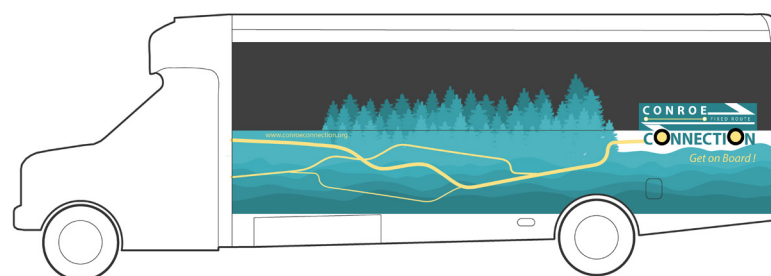
to determine the optimal options for direct service to Conroe from a regional perspective.

Overall, as a system, Conroe is in-line with its peers. The five-year plan conducted in 2019 shows that the Conroe Connection performs at a similar level compared to other systems of a similar size, per the National Transit Database. The Conroe transit system's strengths are also intangible. Drivers are familiar with the existing riders, and the City of Conroe is responsive to needs of the riders. The City frequently conducts surveys and the riders are able to be flexible about service and changes.

A rider survey conducted in 2019 identified specific issues on the system, with riders desiring the following improvements: weekend service, more frequent service, additional stops, and shelters and benches at bus stops. Riders also desire improved sidewalk connectivity near bus routes and stops.

The Comprehensive Plan survey conducted showed that transit is the third largest transportation challenge in the City of Conroe, according to citizens, 82 out of 704 respondents, or 13 percent, chose the lack of transit service as the top issue. In general, citizens feel like there could be more transit service in terms of frequency and duration of service. The majority of people who provided comments desired an expansion in the service area, both locally and regionally.

**Figure 4.14 Bus Wraps**



The rebranded bus wraps

### Transit Recommendations

While Conroe's system has been able to grow in the last few years from a non-existent system to one with riders, the City of Conroe and the transit system will need to develop a long-term strategy and determine priorities moving forward to address concerns raised by citizens through the surveys. With Conroe's population growing and the additional development in the City, transit will need to keep up in order to continue the optimization of people and goods within the City and regionally. As the City addresses the trade-off between increasing service frequency and/or routes, transit stops and routes should be considered from an accessibility, equity, and safety perspective. Furthermore, as the transit system grows, the City will need to contend with balancing the budget while considering costs for contractors, maintenance and service delivery options. As Conroe and the region continue to grow, the City should also integrate long-range planning efforts with regional efforts to leverage the location and resources in an economically competitive manner.

To help create strategic priorities with community input, the City should create a "Transit Advisory Board" to steer the future direction of transit and help implement the recommendations stated below.

The City should focus on accessibility to transit stops to enhance safety. There are many stops and areas of town that have a lack of safe pedestrian connections, due to topography issues that impede the ability for access. The City should prioritize and provide pedestrian accessibility to all current transit stops, and when expanding the service area and adding additional stops to ensure adequate access. The five-year plan focuses on shorter term recommendations and provides more detail regarding the stop accessibility. Short-term recommendations and a sidewalk inventory can be found in the five-year plan.

Transit is essential in the optimization of transporting people and goods. The City should focus on land use and transit integration as

well as consider transit when planning for social services and other land-uses that need transit. For transit-dependent populations in the City, access to transit and essential social services go hand-in-hand. The impetus for the additional routes created in 2018 was for the Tri-County and Social Security offices to be connected via transit. In the future, transit should be considered in conjunction with site locations and land use. This principle also applies to private sector development when considering land use and transit access in conjunction.

To ensure preservation of infrastructure and transit assets, the City should consider service delivery options for the transit system. Currently, the system is contracted out to a third-party provider. If the City is to bring the service in-house, they should consider a plan to maintain the buses through a maintenance facility. The City should also create a Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan for bus stops and other stop-related infrastructure to ensure that new and existing assets are adequately maintained and replaced as needed.

To sustainably fund and deliver transit service, the City's Transit Department should continue to coordinate with the Finance and Public Works Departments to ensure optimization of resources. The City should continue to develop five-year plans to look at short-term needs and improvements throughout the life cycle of the Comprehensive Plan. Short-term planning will help determine the highest priorities and allocation of resources in the immediate future. The five-year plan also should include cost-trade-offs and alternatives analyses that will help the City best make decisions in the short-term. Short- and long-term trade-offs and priorities can be made in conjunction with the Transit Advisory Board, which can help guide trade-offs between coverage and frequency and local and regional/commuter transit. It would be helpful for the City to have a general understanding of the community's public transportation priorities so that the ideology can be incorporated into overall programmatic budgeting decisions made by staff and Council.

Environmental justice and equity need to be considered when planning for transit to ensure that the system adequately serves the most vulnerable populations. The City can also modify its development codes to require accommodation/provision for future transit enhancement and amenities (shelters, benches, signage, etc.)

Conroe must be integrated into regional efforts for long-range transit planning efforts regarding expansion. There is no existing transit service within Montgomery County; to expand service to the Woodlands, Huntsville and other destinations within the County, Conroe must coordinate with other local entities. The City is in a centralized location along I-45, and these various entities can coordinate with Conroe to leverage resources and create a multi-modal transportation network. This would help enhance the economic competitiveness of both Conroe and the region.



Source: The Goodman Corporation



Source: The Goodman Corporation



### Other Modes

#### Existing Conditions

The City's other transportation assets include two Class I railroads and the Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport.

The City of Conroe contains two Class I railroads: Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF). The UPRR line traverses the City in a north-south direction, and the BNSF line traverses the City in an east-west direction. The BNSF line includes a maintenance yard and office located in the eastern portion of downtown Conroe. Based on the Inventory Crossing Data provided by the Federal Railroad Administration, there are about 45 at-grade crossings involving either the UPRR or BNSF rail line in the City of Conroe. The inventory data generally shows between eight and ten trains per crossing in 2019. The City conducted a quiet zone study, at seven UPRR intersections. The following intersections were considered as a part of the study:

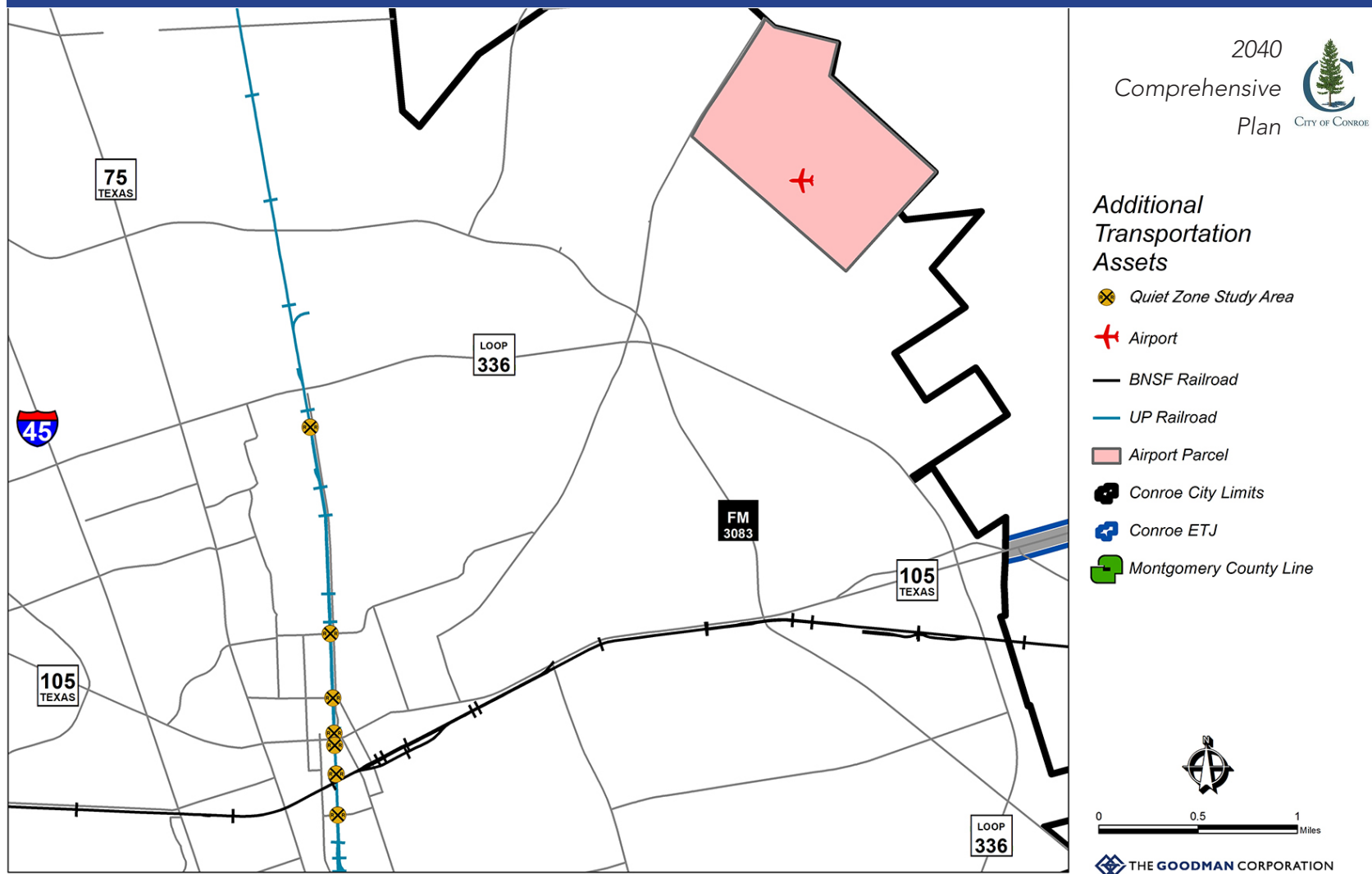
- Avenue G (#435483M)
- Avenue A (#435484U)
- SH 105 – Davis Street (#435485B)
- SH 105 – Phillips Street (#435486H)
- Lewis Street (#435487P)
- Dallas Street (#435488W)
- Cartwright Road (#435489D)

Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport is located in the northeast section of the City of Conroe, in the northeast corner of the City. The airport is owned and operated by Montgomery County and currently consists of 578 acres. The airport has two runways and is operated by two Fixed-Base Operators (FBOs). There are approximately 20 businesses and government agencies that are located at the airport.

#### Justification of Needs

As the City of Conroe's population and traffic grows, it is important to ensure that the railroads and City work together to enhance safety and optimize movement of people and goods. Freight traffic is projected to increase through 2040, which will result in additional trucks, trains, and vehicles utilizing the transportation network. Coordination with the Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport will be essential as the airport expands. The airport can be used as a method to help increase Conroe's economic competitiveness. The airport serves as a regional center for a variety of aviation users, excluding commercial airlines. However, the airport plans to serve commercial traffic within the next five to 15 years. The airport has completed its own master plan with forecasts including capital and future improvements to occur on-site.

Figure 4.15 Additional Transportation Assets



### Other Modes Recommendations

The City should continue to work with UPRR and BNSF to enhance safety at the at-grade crossings and ensure that the railroad infrastructure is complementary to the City's goals through aesthetic improvements to the rail yard. The City and the railroads can continue to coordinate to help achieve the goals of the Downtown Conroe Development Plan. Such recommendations include crossing upgrades to the downtown at-grade crossings for aesthetic and functional (safety) reasons, as well as enhancements for the BNSF rail yard, including aesthetic improvements for visual appeal and separation between the yard and the downtown.

Given the potential the airport has for economic development, the City should enact policies to facilitate the expansion and support the airport. This includes considering land use around the airport and supporting appropriate developments, as well as providing infrastructure and adequate roadway capacity to support the airport to handle any future commercial airline traffic. The surrounding business park can be leveraged in the future to support complementary industries for economic growth and development. More on this topic will be addressed in the Economic and Development chapter.



Source: City of Conroe



# 05 | Economic Development

This chapter documents existing partnerships and ongoing economic development efforts in Conroe. Economic development is a term that is widely utilized and recognized by both local government officials and the average citizen. At the same time, it can have many conceptual definitions. In the context of this Comprehensive Plan, an accurate definition of economic development is:

**Instituting and sustaining processes to utilize available assets to generate improved and broadly shared economic well-being and quality of life for Conroe residents and businesses.**

## Guiding Principles



### Infrastructure

Prioritize efforts and incentives to ensure adequate infrastructure within the City to support and attract existing and new developments.



### Growth Management

Explore and incorporate tools to manage growth while also providing economic development opportunities.



### Economic Development Summary

Responsible economic development policies and activities maximize the value of the tax base to the benefit of residents, businesses, and governmental entities, including the City. Economic development should raise and enhance the standard of living in the community resulting in:

- Broadened employment and business investment opportunities
- Improved and cost-effective public services, including education
- Expanded commercial and retail enterprises to serve and employ residents
- Enhanced quality of life and community appeal as a great place to live, work, play, and invest.

In this regard, any program or expenditure of the City should be considered in light of these benchmarks. There are economic development aspects to any decision made by the local government. A tax abatement for a new business is easily seen as economic development. However, an investment in a new park can also be viewed as economic development since that improvement raises the quality of life in the community and increases the appeal of the community for residents and employers alike.

Conroe has a positive legacy of past economic development successes and a well-established organizational structure to support economic development efforts. Economic development initiatives in Conroe are led by a partnership of the Conroe Industrial Development Corporation (CIDC) and the Conroe Economic Development Council (CEDC).



Source: City of Conroe





Source: FNI

The CIDC is a Type B non-profit development corporation operating under Texas Local Government Code Chapters 501, 502 and 505. The CIDC is operated under the supervision of the Conroe City Council. Revenue from a one-half cent sales tax levied by the City for the benefit of the corporation provides incentive funding to attract new and to expand businesses in the City and has also funded the development of the CIDC-owned Conroe Park North Industrial Park and the R. A. "Mickey" Deison Technology Park on 250 acres adjacent to the Conroe North Houston Regional Airport. The CIDC and CEDC initiatives have been successful and there is strong community support to continue the activities of these two organizations.

Embarking on the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan provides the opportunity to continue existing economic development efforts while also correlating new efforts within the definition offered above. It is important to be reminded that while cities have considerable control over development via platting and development codes, there are many aspects of the private sector and other governmental entities that are beyond the control of the City as outlined on page 120. It is in the realm of economic development that cities can influence outcomes that they cannot compel. Economic development tools can be used to enhance development outcomes and incrementally implement aspects of the Comprehensive Plan. A list of the most common types of tools is presented on the following pages. Especially in a city without zoning regulations, economic development incentives become one of the primary means of influencing growth that conforms to the Comprehensive Plan and the Future Land Use Map.



### Cities Can Control

#### Regulatory Environment

- Platting, Lot Size, Setbacks
- Right of Way Widths
- Access Management
- Roadway Alignments
- Parking
- Sidewalk Widths and Location
- Public Realm – Lighting, Landscaping, Signage, Public art
- Health & Safety
- Tax Rates, Budgets

### Cities Cannot Control

#### Private Sector Activity

- Ownership
- Parcel Size
- Third Party Transactions
- Building Architectural Appeal
- Edge Conditions in Abutting Cities
- “The Market”
  - Competition
  - Demographics
  - Demand
  - Risk Assessment

#### Other Governmental Activity

- Texas Department of Transportation
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- General Land Office
- Corps of Engineers
- State Historic Agency
- Texas Historical Commission

### Cities Can Influence

#### Via Economic Development

- Visual Aesthetics
- Urban Design
- Enhancement to Public Realm Improvements
- Branding and Marketing
- Infrastructure Upgrades
- Commercial Renovations
- Range of Housing
- Risk Mitigation
- Land Acquisition / Land Swaps
- Interest and Support of Commercial Property Owners
- Resident Support

In the absence of zoning and other land use and building façade regulations, the use of financial incentives provides a market-based tool to implement the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Described below are several of the most common types of tools and their uses. It is important to note that many of these tools require no direct out of pocket expenditures by the City.

| Table 5.1 Common Fiscal Tools          |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Fiscal Tool                            | Project Type  | Typical Uses  |
| Chapter 380 Agreements                 | City may loan, grant, or rebate money and other municipal resources to promote economic development it deems worthwhile   | Often used for cost sharing or “oversizing” agreements so that the costs of utility mains or roadways can be equitably shared while ensuring that ultimately needed facilities are constructed    |
| Municipal Utility Districts (MUD)      | Provides for construction of and repayment of the costs of water, sewer, drainage, and road facilities to serve development through a tax approved by voters in the MUD                             | Cities have the right to consent to the creation of new MUDs. Via consent conditions, land uses and infrastructure that matches the Comprehensive Plan can be negotiated.                         |
| Public Improvement Districts (PID)     | Public improvements for a specific geographic area where costs are shared pro-rata by those who benefit from the improvements through an assessment   | Similar to a MUD, but typically on a smaller scale or more limited scope  |
| Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) | Public improvements to promote new or redevelopment of specifically designated area using the incremental new taxes from a defined area to fund the infrastructure needed to support the new growth | Usually reserved for projects of special significance because the City must reinvest the new tax revenues into the project and forego the new tax revenue for operations for the term of the TIRZ |
| Type B Economic Development Sales Tax  | Projects as voted by referendum usually related to industrial expansion, job creation and/or public quality of life improvements  | Direct incentives or reimbursements to businesses or improvements that are valued by the community.   |
| Tax Abatements                         | Foregoing of tax for defined period usually for creation or retention of jobs and/or new business entity relocating   | Waive property taxes for up to 10 years for new or expanded primary employers   |

Economic development programs are powerful implementation tools when underpinned by the philosophy that a public investment should engender a private sector response that is consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan goals. Economic development should:

- Be used to capture the best from the market; cities cannot create a market that does not exist,
- Be used to foster job growth and development that provide benefits to the community that are above and beyond those that are simply market-based,
- Take into account the City's cost of serving a particular land use, since not all land uses are equal in their service demand and cost, and
- Be analyzed to determine the size and magnitude of economic development assistance that is correlated to the net benefit the City derives from a proposed development.

Comprehensive plans are inherently long-term goal statements for a community. Some aspects of implementation will require specific economic development initiatives, while other aspects will involve being prepared to respond to opportunities as they materialize. While economic development tools and market opportunities can come together, it takes patience and political fortitude to implement the goals of this Plan.

### **Potential CIDC & CEDC roles for Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan**

- Prepare for the expansion of the Industrial Park.
  - » Accumulate adequate funding reserves and prepare development plans.
- Foster a collaborative and entrepreneurial economy by establishing a network of academic, business, and investment resources to assist entrepreneurial start-ups to launch and develop locally grown businesses.

- » Pattern programs after or in collaboration with Houston Exponential, a non-profit created to connect entrepreneurs, investors, educational institutions and the government.
- Serve as the local clearing house and conduit for connecting employers with appropriately trained employees including development of skills training partnerships and internship programs between local employers, Conroe ISD, Willis, Montgomery, and Lone Star Community College.
  - » The staff and members of CIDC and CEDC are uniquely positioned to be the hub of communication to connect those in need with available resources.
- Partner with Montgomery County to assist with funding of water and sewer infrastructure necessary to develop the vacant land on the east side of the Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport for additional runway-served business access.
  - » Extending water and sewer utilities would open 200 acres for valuable development.
- Partner with private real estate development interests to subsidize the construction of Class A office space, mixed use, and/or lifestyle developments at the Technology Park.
  - » Move-in ready executive office space would provide a catalyst for development.
- Partner with private property owners to promote downtown redevelopment, assisting with parcel consolidation, environmental remediation, demolition, and/or infrastructure improvements.
  - » The downtown area is a key focus area for restaurant and entertainment opportunities.



### Key Connections

The CEDC has a strong legacy of success and is implementing its recently adopted new strategic plan. Primary goals of the CEDC Strategic Plan that are consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan are:

- Attract quality jobs and capital investment
- Improve workforce development and attraction
- Grow economic development capacity

### Lone Star Community College - Conroe Center



Source: FNI

### Partnerships

The CIDC works in partnership with the CEDC to attract and retain business in the City of Conroe. The CEDC Board is composed of business, civic, and institutional leaders and has a mission to enhance the strength and stability of the greater Conroe economy through the support of existing industry and the attraction of manufacturing and service sector business (basic industries), which bring new capital and employment opportunities into the community.

The City of Conroe has several assets that provide an advantage over many of its regional neighbors. These assets are well-known and are being deployed to attract quality businesses and a growing population. Chief among these assets are:

- Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport
  - » All weather airport with U.S. Customs Federal Inspection Station
  - » 200 acres available for development
- Conroe Park North Industrial Park
  - » Multiple sites available with full access and utilities in place
- Deison Technology Park
  - » Premier amenities with multiple sites available
- Partnerships with educational institutions
  - » Conroe ISD and Lone Star Community College
- Future water supply

The CEDC and CIDC are key partners and can assist the City with implementation of the Comprehensive Plan by being watchful for initiatives within their purview that can overlap and support the overall goals of the Comprehensive Plan.







Source: FNI





## 06 | Parks and Recreation

This chapter documents an assessment of existing parks and facilities and ongoing planning efforts in Conroe. The purpose of this Parks and Recreation chapter is to understand the City of Conroe's park and facility access, walkability and gaps in the system. This chapter includes a discussion and analysis of the following:

- Park Inventory
- Benchmarking
- Walkability
- Funding Opportunities
- Trends

### Guiding Principles



#### Infrastructure

Prioritize efforts and incentives to ensure adequate infrastructure within the City to support and attract existing and new developments.



#### Community Identity

Build upon Conroe's assets such as the lake, trees, and downtown to establish and preserve its historic character and identity.



#### Arts and Culture

Utilize Conroe's arts and culture community to encourage destination entertainment venues and events.



### Park and Facilities Inventory

The City operates and maintains 19 parks. The City offers a variety of parks that range in size and provide a mix of features and amenities to meet park users' needs. The list below highlights the five park types found throughout the City, and six facilities maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department.

#### Metropolitan Park

- Carl Barton, Jr. Park - 204 Acres

#### Community Park

- Candy Cane Park - 24 Acres
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Park - 25 Acres
- McDade Park - 38 Acres
- Kasmiersky Park - 9 Acres
- John Burge Park at Shadow Lakes - 39 Acres

#### Neighborhood Park

- Booker T. Washington Park - 3 Acres
- Flournoy Park - 4 Acres
- Lewis Park - 5 Acres
- Lions Park - 3 Acres
- Milltown Park - 2.3 Acres
- Roberson Park - 1.6 Acres
- Stewarts Creek Park - 9 Acres
- Walter P. Jett Park - 2 Acres

#### Mini Park

- White Oak Point Park - 1.8 Acres

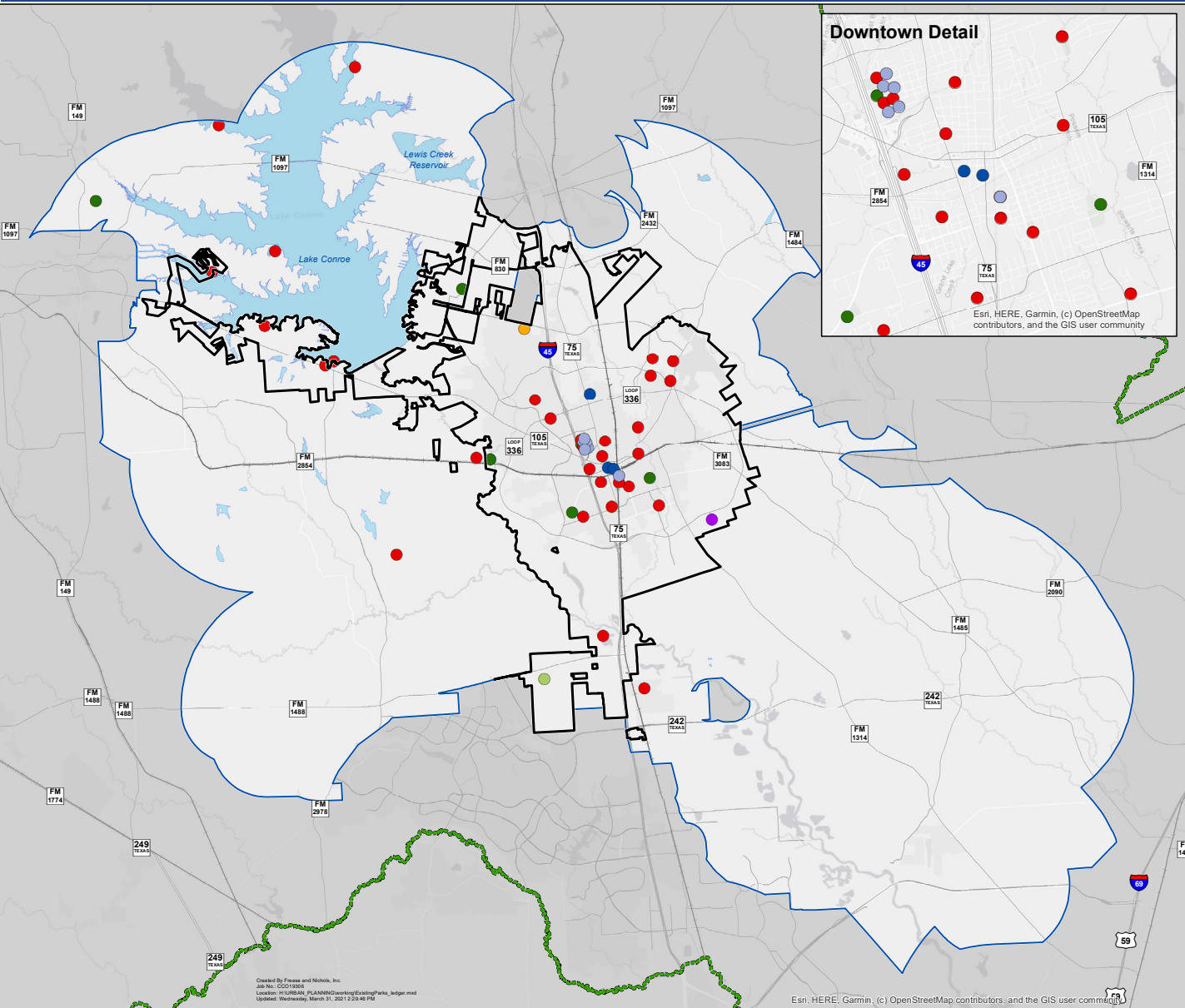
#### Special Use

- Heritage Place - 1.5 Acres
- Wiggins Village Park - 8 Acres
- Downtown Pocket Park - 0.6 Acres
- Founders Plaza - 0.6 Acres
- Lone Star Monument and Historical Flag Park - 2 acres

#### Facilities

- Oscar Johnson, Jr. Community Center
- Senior Center
- C.K. Ray Recreation Center
- Activity Center
- Conroe Aquatic Center
- Parks and Recreation Administration

**Figure 6.1 Existing Parks and Facilities**



| Park Types               | Acres per 1000 Population | Minimum Size      | Service Area             |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Metropolitan Park</b> | 5.0-10.0 acres            | 100 acres or more | 30 miles/1 hour drive    |
| <b>Community Park</b>    | 5.0-8.0 acres             | 25 acres          | 1-2miles/5 minute drive  |
| <b>Neighborhood Park</b> | 1.0-2.0 acres             | 15 acres          | 0.5mile/12 minute walk   |
| <b>Mini Park</b>         | 0.25-0.50 acres           | 1 acre or less    | <0.25 mile/5 minute walk |
| <b>Special Use</b>       | Varies                    | No standard       | No standard              |



### Past Planning Efforts

#### The Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan was adopted in 2009. Key findings include:

1. The population in the Conroe area is estimated to increase by approximately 10% by 2013.
2. In order to meet National Recreation and Park Association(NRPA) standards for developed park land, Conroe needs an additional 287 acres to meet current needs, or 365 additional acres by 2013.
3. Areas in Conroe, on the west side of Interstate Highway 45, are geographically underserved.
4. Pedestrian and Bicycle trails are one of the highest priority demands identified from public input.
5. Aquatics facilities are not sufficient to meet the current or projected capacity needs. An additional aquatics facility, capable of serving a capacity of 900 users, is needed to meet demands over the next five years.
6. Restroom facilities and drinking fountains are high priorities for park users.
7. An additional recreation center is needed on the west side of I-45.

#### C.K. Ray Recreation Center

The C.K. Ray Recreation Center was renovated in 2011. The renovation helped expand the programs offered and increased the reach to almost 1,000 visitors per day. The renovation included a remodeled fitness center, multipurpose room, Kidz Zone and locker rooms.



### **Oscar Johnson, Jr. Community Center**

A feasibility study for the Oscar Johnson, Jr. Community Center was adopted in 2015. This study evaluated building a new community center on various properties throughout the City. These were the findings of the first study:

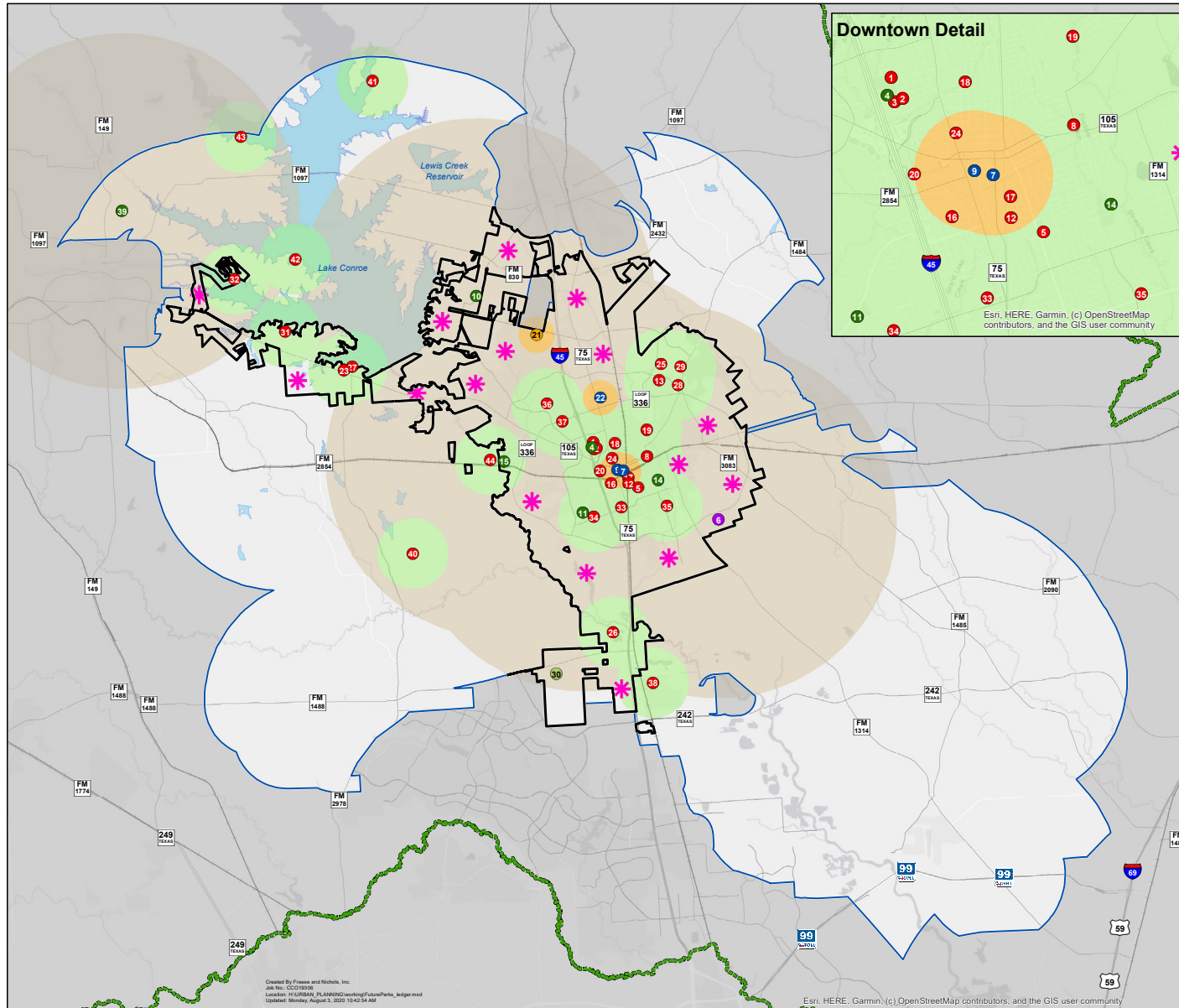
- Demand for additional program space
- Separate/secure youth entrance and program space
- Improved traffic flow for youth pick-up/drop-off areas
- Need for indoor facilities
- Increased capacity for growing community needs
- Classrooms and activity rooms
- Computer and technology center
- Reading/literacy area
- Covered multi-purpose outdoor facilities

Another feasibility report for the Oscar Johnson, Jr. Community Center was conducted in 2018. The consultant was tasked with assessing the existing facility and studying the option for building a new community center on approximately 25 acres in southeast Conroe. This study built on the previous study with key findings that include:

- Ability to host existing Oscar Johnson, Jr. Community Center programs.
- Ability to expand Oscar Johnson, Jr. Community Center programs to a larger audience
- Providing much needed community development investment in southeast Conroe
- Capturing existing demand from Conroe residents engaged in, or interested in engaging in, community activities, events, fitness activities, etc.
- Providing complementary spaces and increased activity capacity for those with access challenges or for which the private marketplace does not currently serve well








In addition to renovating or replacing the Oscar Johnson, Jr. Community Center, it is recommended that the City build another recreation center west of I-45. This area is underserved and a recreation center will help meet the needs of the future.

Figure 6.2 Future Parks









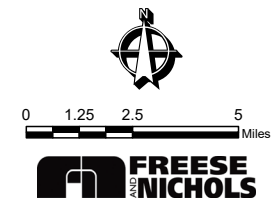
## Future Parks

### Park Description

-  Potential Neighborhood Park
-  Existing Metropolitan Park
-  Existing Community Park
-  Existing Neighborhood Park
-  Existing Mini Park
-  Existing Special Use Park
-  Forest

### Existing Park Buffers

-  1/2 mile Zone (Special Use Parks)
-  1 mile Zone (Neighborhood Parks)
-  5 mile Zone (Community Parks)
-  Conroe City Limits
-  Conroe ETJ
-  Montgomery County Line





### Park Access

Research shows that living within walking distance of a park increases the chances that residents visit parks and in the long term improves their quality of life. In addition to improved quality of life, park access can improve our mental and physical health. The National Recreation and Park Association, the Trust for Public Land, and the Urban Land Institute have collaborated on a nationwide campaign to ensure everyone in neighborhoods throughout the country has a park within a 10-minute walk from their home. Mayors in many cities have committed to this campaign because they see the value access to parks brings to their citizens and their cities. Only 28% of the population in Conroe lives within a 10-minute walk of a park. The national average is 54%.

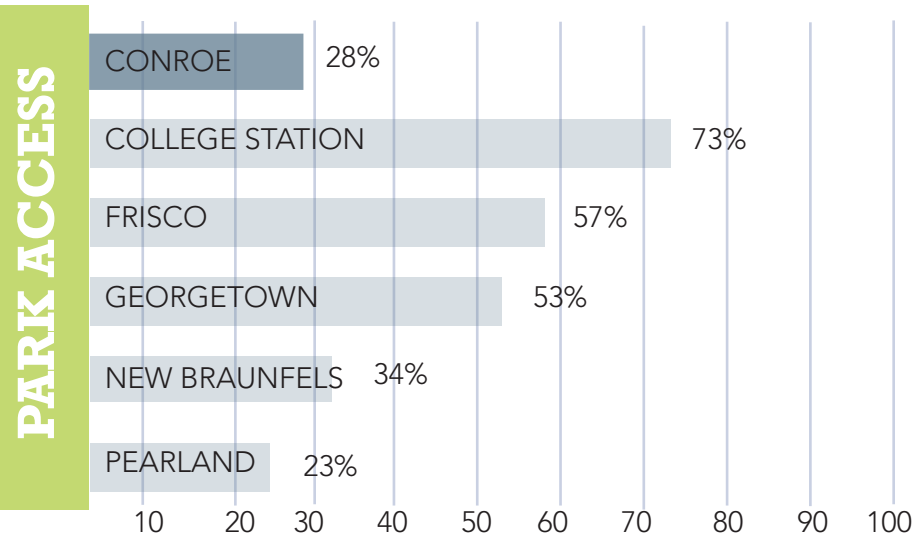
### Park Acreage

Six percent of Conroe's city land is used for parks and recreation, with a total of 388 acres of parks. The national median is 15%. When compared with peer cities Conroe is in the bottom half. One way to increase park acreage and improve access to parks is to continue partnering with Conroe ISD to form joint use agreements that allow school parks to be used by the community outside of school hours. Adding larger parks that are 15 acres or more is another way to increase park acreage in Conroe.

Peer cities were selected based on similar population size, climate, and city land area. These are regional cities that are similarly situated outside of major metropolitan areas like Conroe.

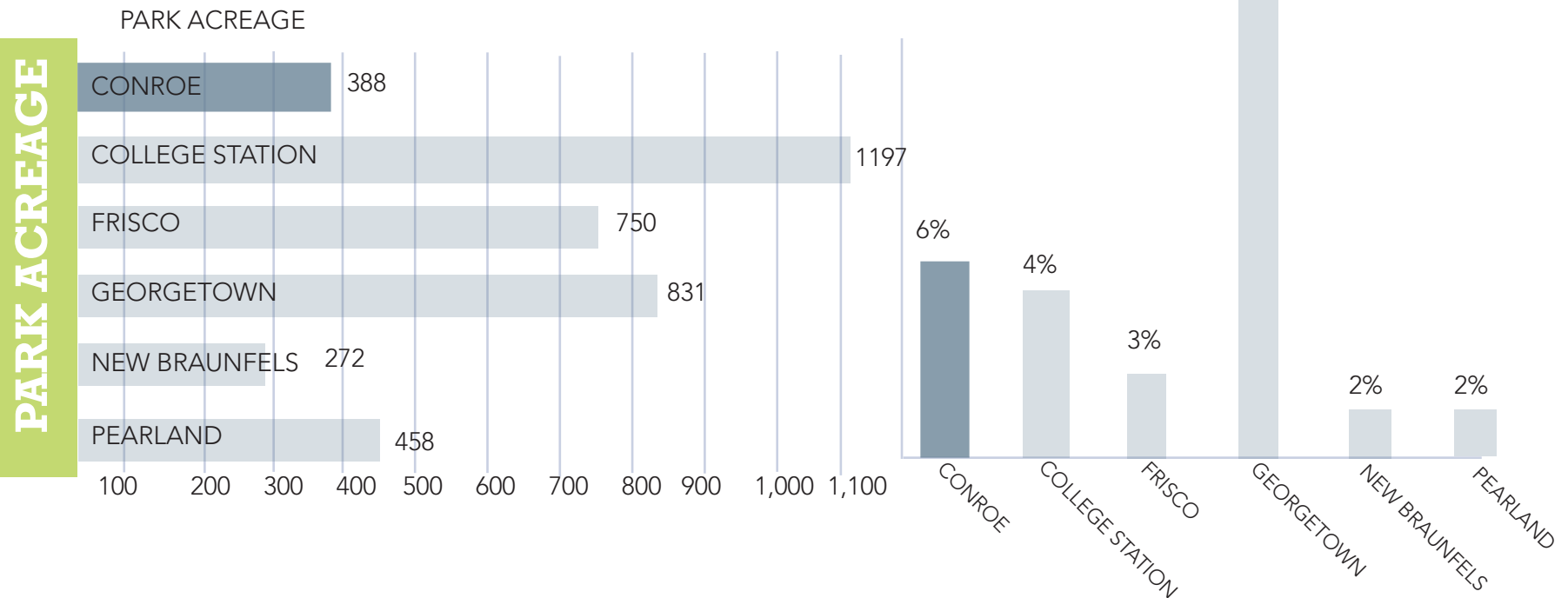


% OF POPULATION WITHIN A 10-MINUTE WALK OF A PARK



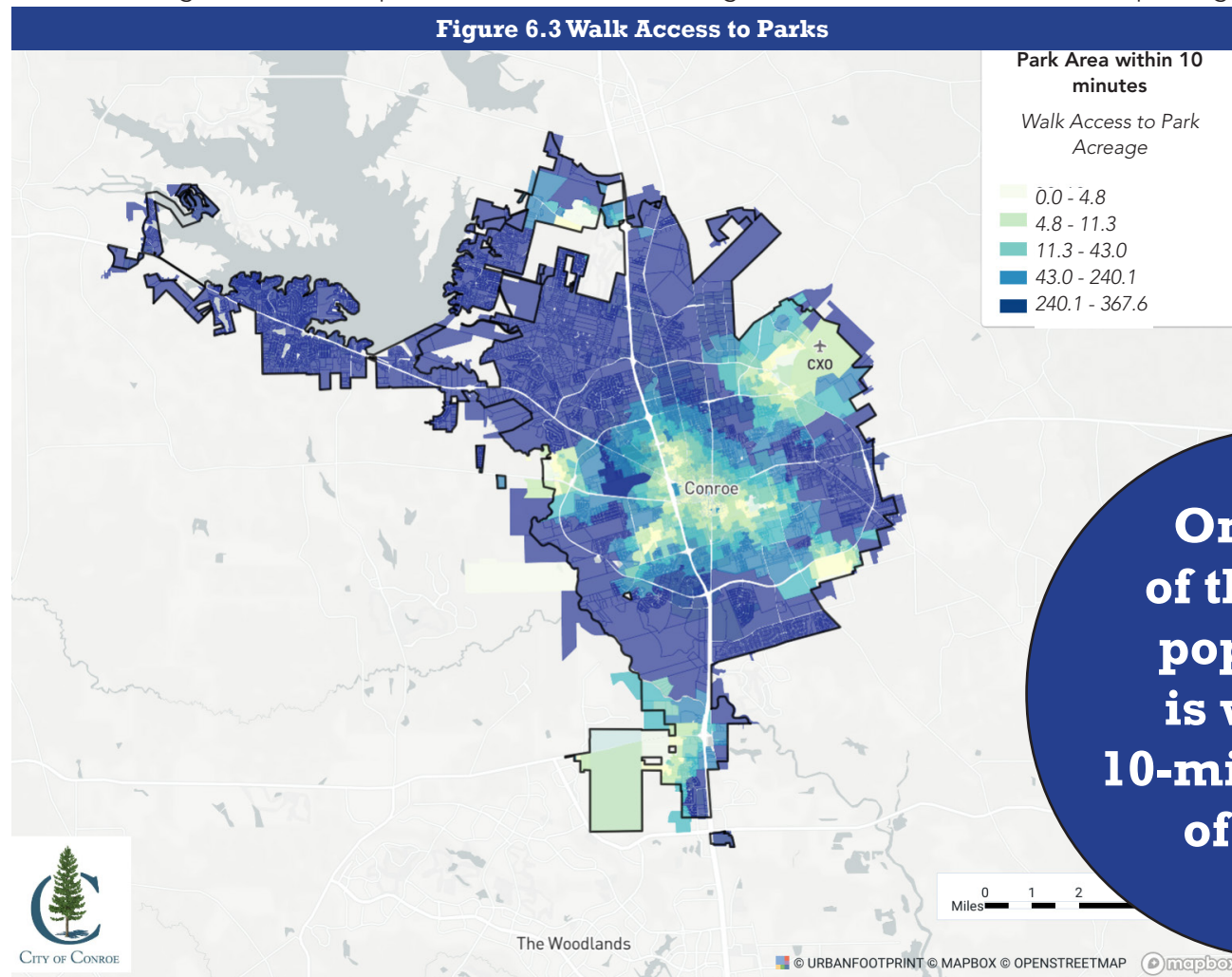
**6% of Conroe's land within city limits is used for parks and recreation**

% OF LAND USED FOR PARKS AND RECREATION



### Walkability

Much like other cities in the metro area, Conroe is a car dependent city. Most activities in the City require a trip in a car. Many factors contribute to this including automobile-oriented design, generous parking supply, increased vehicle ownership and urban sprawl. Walk Score measures the walkability of cities across the country by analyzing walking routes to nearby amenities. Figure 6.3 shows how accessible parks are by walking. The older and more established areas of Conroe are more walkable. This can be attributed to the smaller blocks, sidewalks and a mix of land uses. The darker the color the lesser accessible. The lighter green areas are more accessible. Transportation could be a barrier to park access for residents living in the darker blue areas. Residents in these areas that are further from parks rely on vehicles to get to and from parks, which can add to congestion and increase demand for parking lots in parks.



**Only 28%  
of the City's  
population  
is within a  
10-minute walk  
of a park**



### Trails

A strategy for improving walkability is building a trails system. Trails provide numerous benefits like recreation, health, transportation, environmental and social benefits. A trail system, like the one shown on Figure 6.4, could connect residents and visitors to Conroe's main attractions and parks. Trails were a high priority item in past plans and continue to be in current plans. While trails are popular and in demand, a common challenge is funding and maintenance. To address this challenge the City is working on a trails master plan with a goal of gaining an understanding of the community's wants and needs and exploring various design components. By carefully planning the trail network the City can create trails that serve people of all ages and abilities and reduce maintenance costs.

There are a variety of types of trails that range in costs. Lower cost trails can have a crushed granite or mulch material, while more expensive trails are concrete or permeable pavement. For short term trail projects, some cities work with conservation crews like Conservation Corps and Americorps. These programs offer solutions to creating trails by having crew members who work on trail-building and maintenance projects. Other cities with long-term trail projects partner with the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. This non-profit organization is dedicated to creating a network of trails by utilizing former rail lines. Other partners include Texas Conservation Corps of American YouthWorks and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Figure 6.4 identifies locations for potential trails based on the Hike and Bike Loop recommended in the Downtown Plan and the trails recommended in the Parks Master Plan. Further studies can address effective planning, design, funding, implementation and evaluation of the trail system.

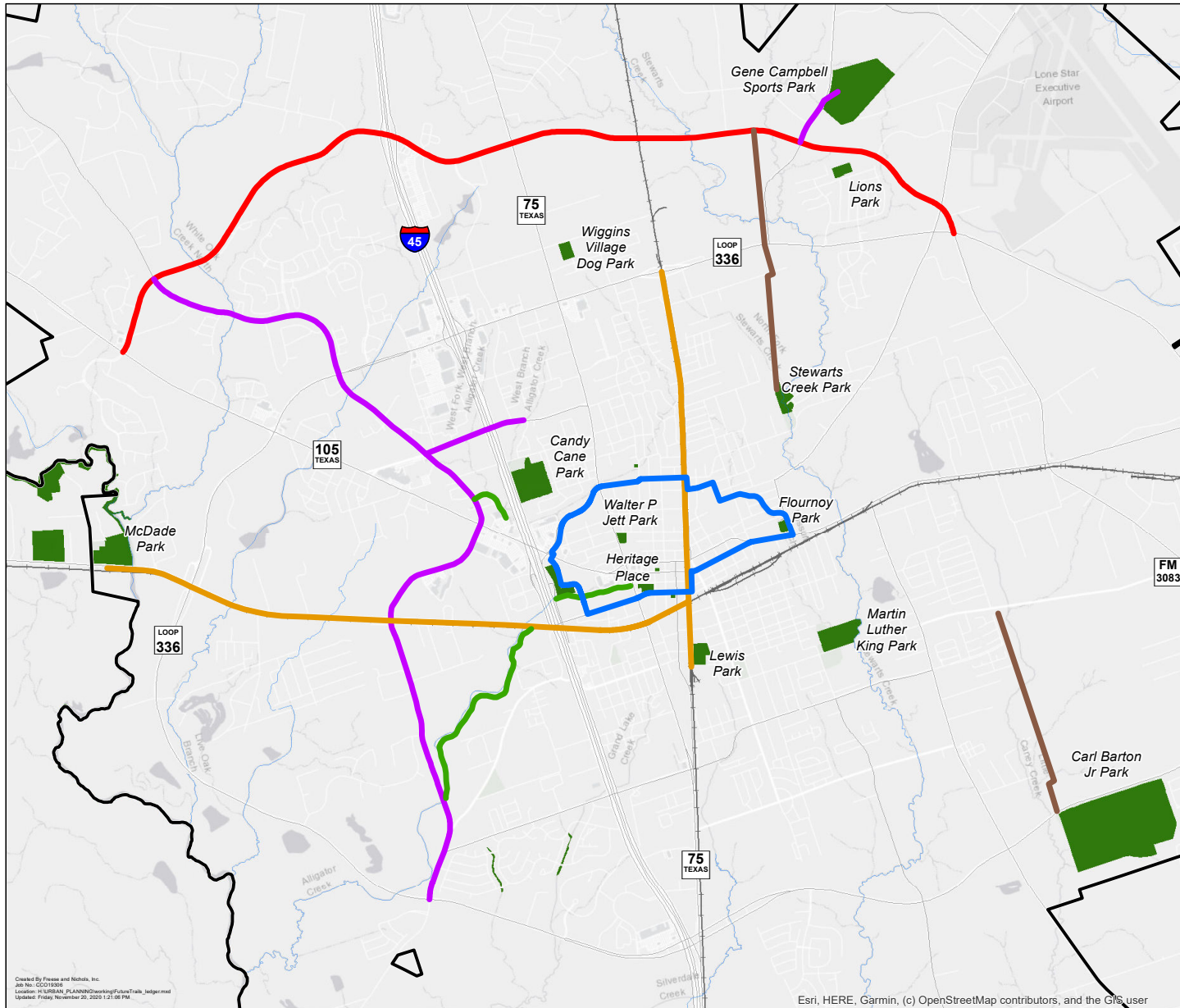
### Trail system elements to consider:

- Trail users
- Trail types
- Mobility options
- Funding sources
- Maintenance costs



Source: FNI

Figure 6.4 Trail System



## Trail System

### Trail Types

- Carter Moore Trail
- Creek/Floodway Trail
- Downtown Loop
- Railroad ROW Trail
- Right-of-way or Bike Lane
- Utility Easement Trail
- Parks and Open Space
- Conroe City Limits



0 0.5 1 Miles

**FREESE AND NICHOLS**

Created by Freese and Nichols, Inc.  
Job No. CCO19002  
Location: 1130544X\_PLANNING/Checking/Future Trails\_10/20/2020  
Updated: Friday November 20, 2020 1:21:05 PM

Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user



## Funding Opportunities

Texas cities continue to grow rapidly and are confronted with the challenge of providing facilities to service this growth. Over the past 25 years, about 50 Texas cities have enacted parkland dedication ordinances to address park needs related to such growth. In June 2019, Senate Bill 2 was adopted, which lowered the cap on the amount of property tax revenue for cities and counties from 8% to 3.5%. This has caused cities to look for new ways to fund their departments and still provide quality public services with limited budgets. The following are funding options for the City of Conroe to explore.

### Parkland Dedication Ordinance

As Conroe continues to grow, there will be added pressure on the Parks and Recreation Department to keep up with demand and still provide high quality facilities and programs. This includes acquiring parkland, increasing programming, building new facilities, hiring staff and implementing a parkland dedication ordinance. As the City becomes more developed, land will become harder to acquire and it will increase in value. A parkland dedication requirement can ensure enough parkland to balance developed land and open space.

### Fee-in-lieu

As an alternative or as a supplement to a parkland dedication ordinance, a fee-in-lieu program may be considered. In this type of program, the developer or builder of each new lot or dwelling unit in the City is required to contribute funds to address increased demand of the proposed development on the park system. This can ensure there are funds to acquire land and develop parks in areas of high growth.



Source: City of Conroe



**Table 6.1 Current Level of Parkland Provision**

| City            | Dwelling units |        | Current level of parkland provision |          | Land dedication requirements |                     | Fee-in-lieu  |       |
|-----------------|----------------|--------|-------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------|
|                 | Population*    | #DU    | Total park acreage                  | DU/ acre | DU/ acre                     | DU/acre multifamily | SDU          | MDU   |
| Conroe          | --             | --     | --                                  | --       | --                           | --                  | --           | --    |
| College Station | 88,183         | 34,619 | 1,274                               | 27.17    | 102                          | 125.00              | \$619        | \$504 |
| Frisco          | 89,000         | 13,683 | 1,300                               | 10.53    | 100                          |                     | \$300        |       |
| Georgetown      | 56,102         |        | 291                                 |          | 187                          |                     |              |       |
| Grapevine       | 46,684         | 16,486 | 1,492                               | 11.05    | 145                          |                     | \$1,416      |       |
| League City     | 62,500         | 17,280 | 1,041                               | 16.60    | 90                           |                     | \$1,000      |       |
| McKinney        | 110,000        | 19,462 | 1,604                               | 12.13    | 50                           |                     | market value |       |
| New Braunfels   | 45,000         | 14,896 | 408                                 | 36.51    | 150                          |                     | \$100        |       |
| Pearland        | 70,000         | 13,922 | 377                                 | 36.94    | 100                          |                     | market value |       |
| Pflugerville    | 30,000         | 5,239  | 450                                 | 11.64    | 50                           |                     | market value |       |

\*2015 Census data

DU- dwelling unit; SDU - single family dwelling unit; MDU- multifamily dwelling unit

Table 6.1 shows the current level of parkland provision for the Texas cities with dedication ordinances.<sup>7</sup> In this table, data is expressed in terms of dwelling units per acre of parkland. This is derived by dividing column 3 by column 4. The number of dwelling units in column 3 was extracted from Census Bureau data. In the last four columns, this table uses the same measure of dwelling units to report the current dedication requirements for parkland in terms of dwelling units per acre and for the alternative fee-in-lieu option.

The table refers to other cities with parkland dedication ordinances. Since a parkland dedication requirement is a recommendation for Conroe, the table serves as a reference and benchmark for other communities and demonstrates the effectiveness of parkland dedication ordinances. The communities that are shown above have a common focus on the quality of life amenities their citizens enjoy. A parkland dedication ordinance would help Conroe keep up with the growth by having development contribute to parks and open space.

### Trends

The National Recreation and Park Association compiles a list of trends every year. Some top trends over the past year that are relevant to Conroe include:

- A growing need for dog parks
- Recreation centers are hubs for the community
- Multiple purpose facilities to accommodate ever-changing recreation programs
- Indoor facilities are gaining popularity with increasing temperatures
- Cities should defend parks by dedicating them, so that parks are not lost to development
- Parks viewed increasingly as desirable open space, not as a destination that is over programmed

### A Growing Need for Dog Parks

Dog ownership has been increasing in recent years. The American Veterinary Medical Association conducts studies on pet ownership by state every five years. Texas falls in the top 10 states with the most dog owners, with 44% of households owning a dog.<sup>8</sup> The Trust for Public Land released a report that confirms this trend. Their report found that off-leash dog parks are growing faster than any other type of park in America's cities. Successful dog parks require a collaboration between the cities, the community, and dog advocacy groups. There are options when it comes to dog parks. Cities can designate off-leash trails, off-leash parks and more. Cities can establish ordinances and set design standards that guide creation, maintenance, and operation of dog parks.

8- Dog park rankings for the 100 largest U.S. cities.,2018 Retrieved on July, 31, 2020 from [https://cloud-tpl.s3.amazonaws.com/images/landing-pages/ccpf/2018/City%20Park%20Facts\\_Dog%20Parks%202018.pdf](https://cloud-tpl.s3.amazonaws.com/images/landing-pages/ccpf/2018/City%20Park%20Facts_Dog%20Parks%202018.pdf)



Source: City of Conroe

### Recreational Centers as Hubs for the Community

Cities across the country are seeing an increase in demand for multi-generational recreation centers. In addition to recreation, communities want to provide a space where people can gather, relax, and socialize. Some recreation centers include event space, arts and games, and services that appeal to seniors. A needs assessment could be conducted to find the features and functions the community desires. In recent years New Braunfels has opened a new recreation center. It has a gym, elevated track, and aquatic center with an eight-lane pool and indoor-outdoor water slide. In addition to renovating or replacing the Oscar Johnson, Jr. Community Center, there is a need for a recreation center west of I-45 to accommodate the needs of the future. In order to fund these projects cities have been creative; assembling financing packages that include money from bonds, private foundations and school districts.

### Nature Tourism

Tourism is growing in Texas and a significant portion of this growth is in nature tourism. Nature tourism is defined by the State Task Force on Texas Nature Tourism, as travel to natural areas that conserves the environmental, social, and cultural values while generating an economic benefit to the local community. Nature tourism includes and is not limited to birding, backpacking, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting and biking. Conroe is perfectly situated to meet the needs of nature tourism, with abundant trees, Lake Conroe, and State Parks nearby. The following pages highlight nearby recreation that attracts both visitors and residents.

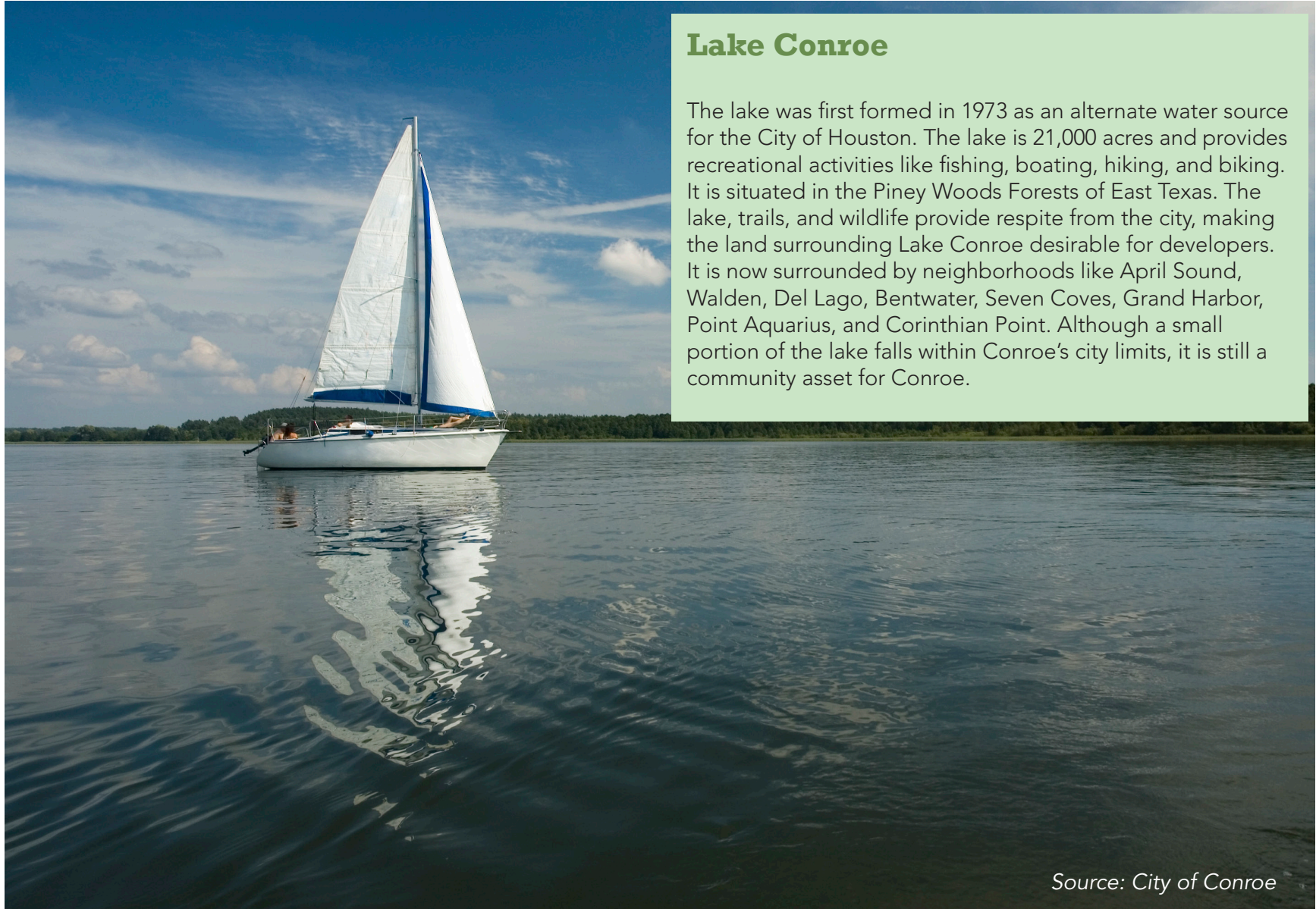
- Lake Conroe
- Lonestar Hiking Trail
- Sam Houston National Forest
- WG Jones State Forest

#### Nature Tourism

travel to natural areas that conserves the environmental, social, and cultural values while generating an economic benefit to the local community



## Nearby Recreation



### Lake Conroe

The lake was first formed in 1973 as an alternate water source for the City of Houston. The lake is 21,000 acres and provides recreational activities like fishing, boating, hiking, and biking. It is situated in the Piney Woods Forests of East Texas. The lake, trails, and wildlife provide respite from the city, making the land surrounding Lake Conroe desirable for developers. It is now surrounded by neighborhoods like April Sound, Walden, Del Lago, Bentwater, Seven Coves, Grand Harbor, Point Aquarius, and Corinthian Point. Although a small portion of the lake falls within Conroe's city limits, it is still a community asset for Conroe.

*Source: City of Conroe*



### Lonestar Hiking Trail

The Lonestar Hiking Trail was an idea of the Houston Chapter of the Sierra Club. It is the longest continuous hiking trail in Texas. It connects Richards and Cleveland, Texas as it winds through Conroe and the Sam Houston National Forest. The hiking trail is 140 miles long and consists of three major sections:

- The 40-mile Lake Conroe section
- The 60-mile Central Area
- The Winters Bayou/Tarkington Creek Area







### Sam Houston National Forest

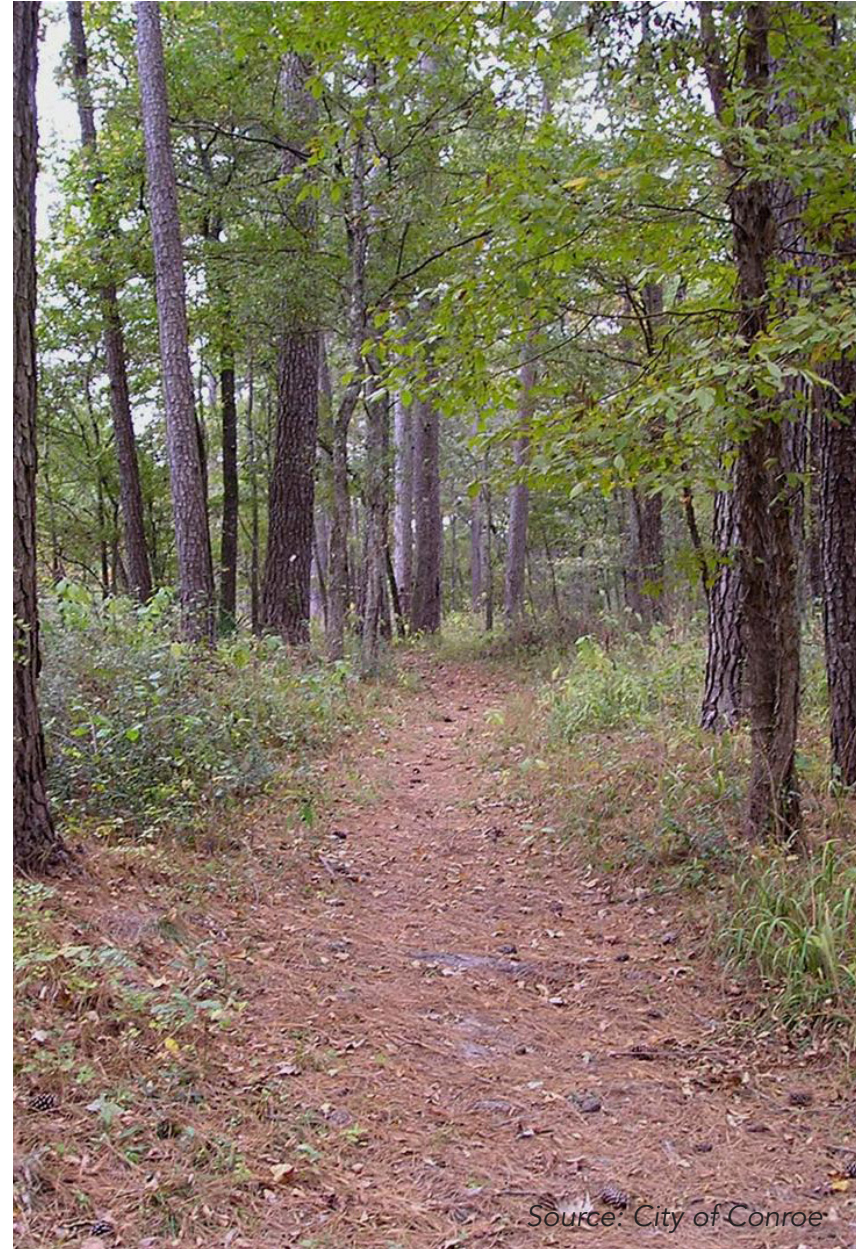
This forest is located about 20 miles north of Conroe. It contains 163,037 acres between Huntsville, Conroe, Cleveland and Richards, Texas. Sam Houston National Forest is one of four in Texas. It offers recreational uses including fishing, hunting, hiking, boating, and camping.





### WG Jones State Forest

The forest is situated on 1,722 acres south of Conroe. It is home to the red-cockaded woodpecker. It's mainly an educational and study area but it also provides recreational uses including hiking, biking, horseback riding and fishing.







### **Pirates Bay Baytown Texas**

Pirates Bay is a city owned and operated water park in Baytown, Texas. It offers a variety of features like a lap pool, slides, lazy river and pavilions.

Conroe could benefit from having a regional park like this one. Larger and more centralized water parks can be more financially sustainable than owning and maintaining multiple neighborhood pools.

Source: City of Conroe

### **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Programs**

The following are grant programs offered by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department that can help fund some of the recommendations in this chapter.

#### **Outdoor Recreation Grants**

This grant program provides 50 percent matching funds to municipalities, counties, municipal utility districts (MUDs) and other local units of government with populations less than 500,000 to acquire and develop parkland or to renovate existing public recreation areas. Projects must be completed within three years of approval.

#### **Indoor Recreation Grants**

These grants provide 50 percent matching funds to construct recreation centers, nature centers and other indoor recreation-related buildings. Grant recipients must be qualified local units of government with populations less than 500,000.

#### **Community Outdoor Outreach Program (CO-OP) Grants**

The CO-OP grant helps to introduce under-served populations to the services, programs, and sites of TPWD. This is not a land acquisition or construction grant; this is only for programs. Grants are awarded to non-profit organizations, schools, municipalities, counties, cities, and other tax-exempt groups. Funds may be used to cover direct program costs for outdoor recreation or environmental education and conservation programs.

#### **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Recreational Trail Grants**

TPWD administers the National Recreational Trail Grants in Texas in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). This federally funded program receives its funding from a portion of federal gas taxes paid on fuel used in non-highway recreational vehicles.





## 07 | Infrastructure and Public Facilities

Providing and maintaining public facilities is essential to the protection of the health, safety, welfare and quality of life of the residents and businesses in Conroe. Adequate land allocation for public facilities is necessary to maintain high levels of service as growth continues. As Conroe continues to experience development of residential and nonresidential uses, it becomes vital that the land allocation needs for public facilities are identified before development occurs and limits options. When safety services (e.g., police, fire, EMS) are able to provide high levels of service, the community is safer and lower insurance rates can be maintained. This chapter provides a look at the long-term facility needs for the City.

### Guiding Principles



#### Infrastructure

Prioritize efforts and incentives to ensure adequate infrastructure within the City to support and attract existing and new developments.



#### Growth Management

Explore and incorporate tools to manage growth while also providing economic development opportunities.



#### Communication

Establish and maintain active and effective communication between the City and the citizens.

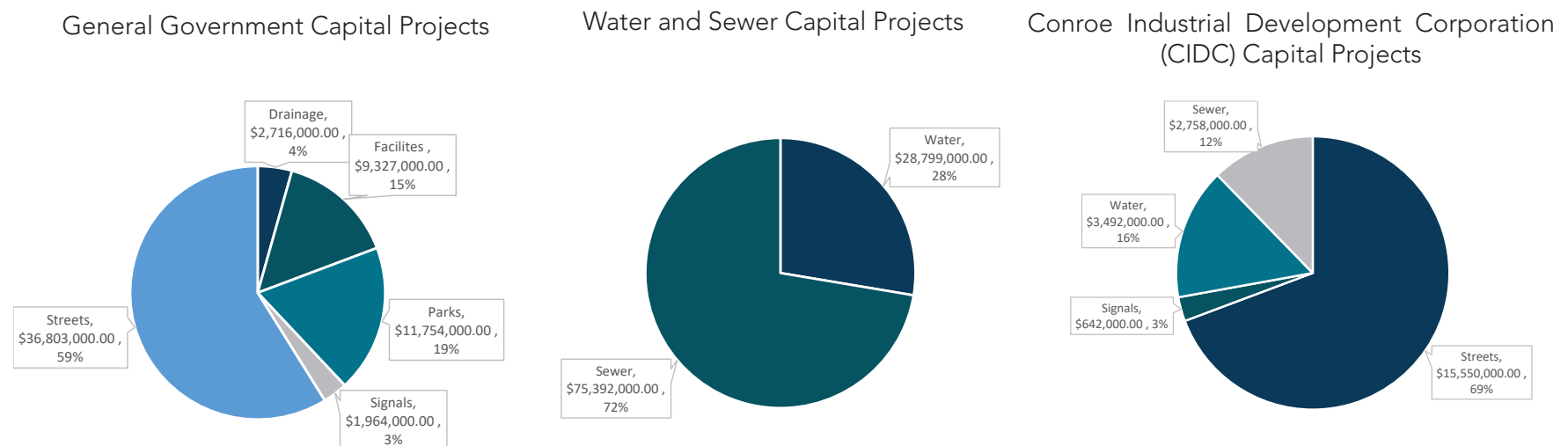
### Capital Improvement Program

A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a dynamic community planning tool that coordinates location, timing, and financing of capital projects including facilities, parks, drainage, water, streets, and sewer. A CIP is one of the best tools for the City to use to implement physical improvements recommended by the comprehensive plan. The City will need to evaluate the CIP regularly because there are competing demands. It will be necessary to prioritize and plan out these improvements over the next 10-20 years.

The costs of infrastructure construction and maintenance and capital revenue stream must match. The charts below show the distribution of resources in the current FY 2019-2020 CIP. The largest costs in the 10-year CIP are for sewer, streets, and water projects. These will be funded from various sources including revenue bonds, certificates of obligation, and current funds. When looking at a city's budget, it is important to ask, "Is there enough capital revenue to pay for maintenance of infrastructure?". In the current situation, is someone who is living outside of the city paying their share in the cost to bring services to them? Conroe has been growing for the last decade, but what are the long-term results? The City should ensure the growth in infrastructure costs that are associated with the increasing population can be covered.

Unfunded service costs and liabilities like deferred street maintenance, when not accounted for, will continue to increase. These costs can be addressed by infill development and/or implementing growth boundaries. Conroe's managed growth, paired with sound planning principles, can strengthen the local economy, provide a better quality of life, and maintain Conroe's community character.

**Figure 7.1 CIP FY 2019-2020**





### Water

Ensuring water capacity for future city growth is essential, especially in a fast-growing city such as Conroe. The City receives groundwater from the Jasper and Catahoula aquifers and surface water from Lake Conroe, all of which are in Montgomery County. Montgomery County's population growth increases water demand yearly, emphasizing the need to identify various water supplies to meet future demand. Conroe has a reuse permit used for downstream customers and receives treated surface water from SJRA. The City should continue monitoring its growth and long-term water demand.



Source: City of Conroe



### Wastewater

In 2018, Freese and Nichols, Inc. prepared the Wastewater Master Plan for the City of Conroe. The report is a planning tool that will serve as a guide for short-term improvements and long-term additions to the wastewater system infrastructure. The CIP or recommendations developed in this plan enabled the City to serve the projected population growth while maximizing the City's existing infrastructure. The plan presents two future wastewater treatment capacity alternatives. One alternative suggests treating projected wastewater flows at a combination of two wastewater treatment plants and the other alternative suggests treating projected wastewater flows at a combination of three wastewater treatment plants. It is recommended that the City adds another wastewater treatment plant in the Southeast Wastewater Service Area, highlighted in the map below.

The Southwest Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant currently serves the City of Conroe as well as a portion of the City of Willis. As of January 2018, the City owns and maintains approximately 50 lift stations. A major focus of the Wastewater Master Plan was to develop a lift station consolidation plan. Under normal operating conditions, the water collected from water sources is treated at the Southwest Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant with the capacity of approximately 12 million gallons of water and distributed throughout the City in over 380 miles of pipeline.

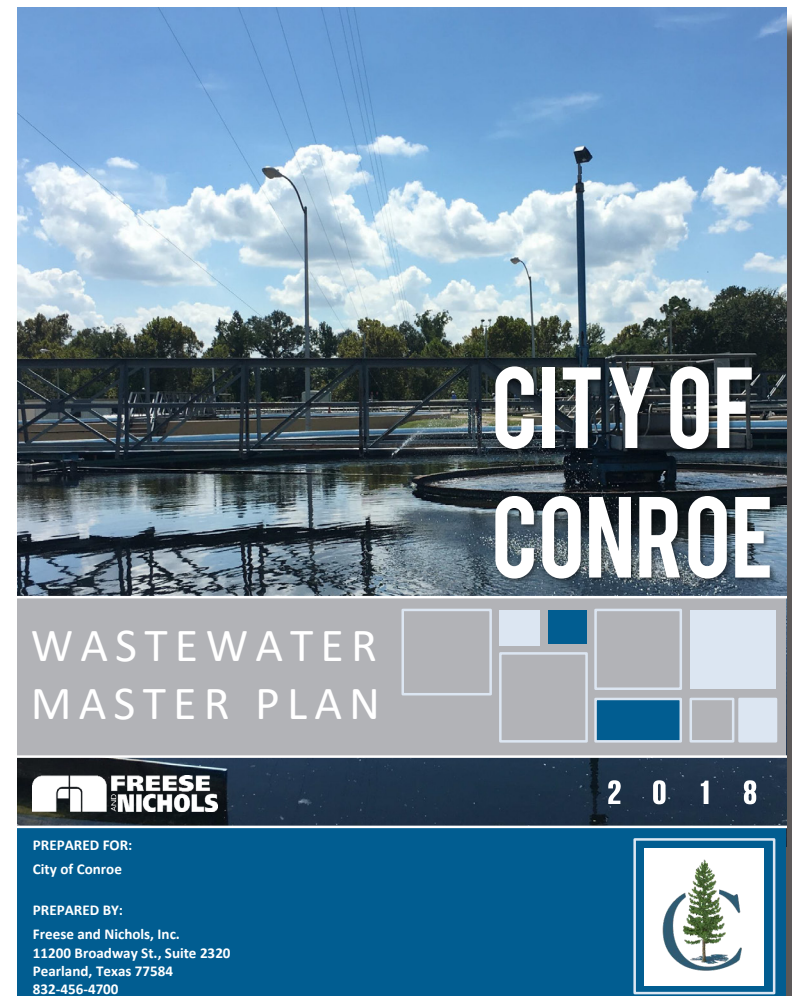
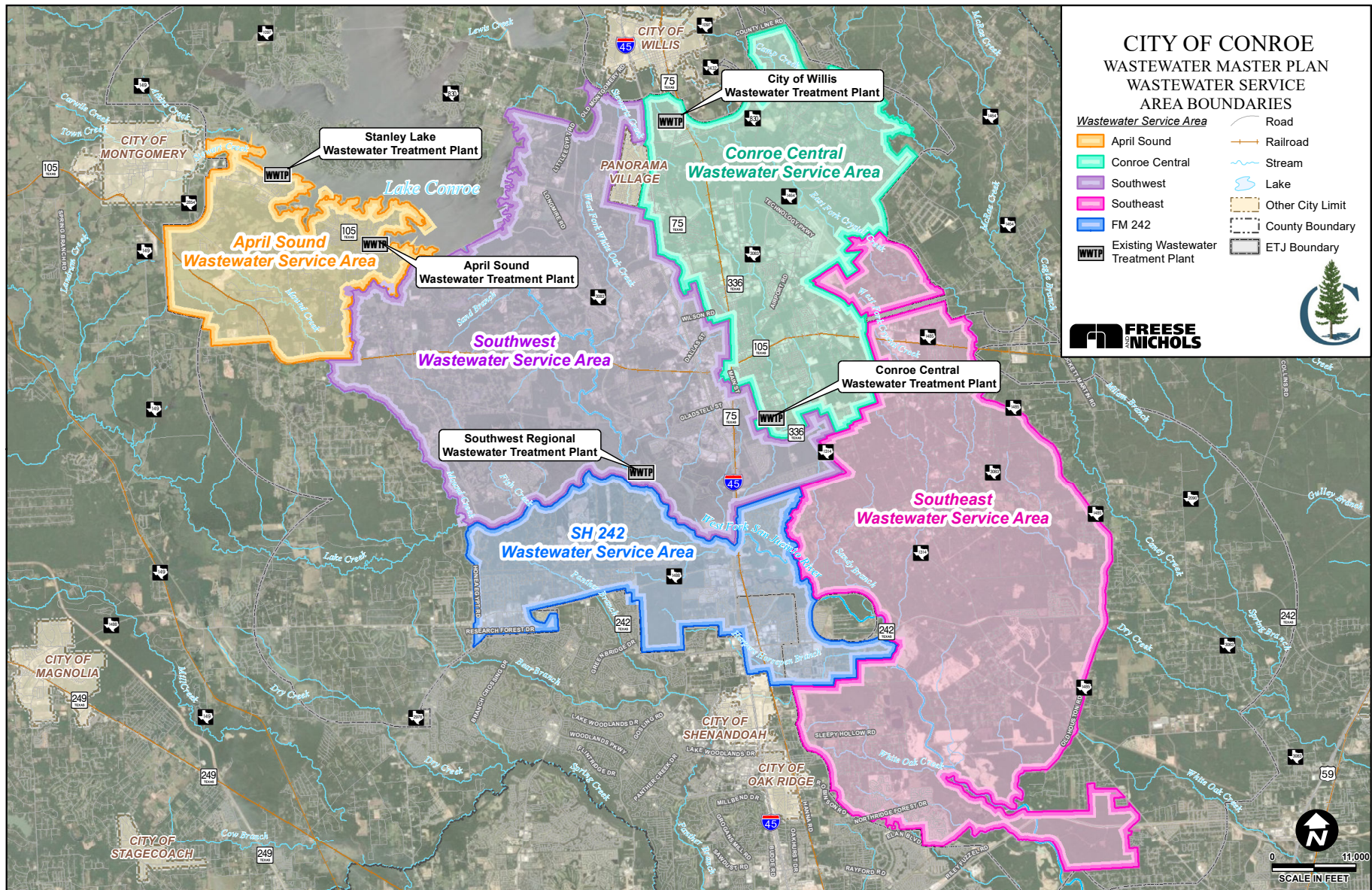




Figure 7.2 Wastewater Master Plan



\*Full size map is available in the Appendix

### Options for Funding Infrastructure for Future Development

#### Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones

The City established the Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) #2 as an incentive to develop the West Fork subdivision on State Highway 105 west of Loop 336. All property tax revenue generated by the increase in value in the subdivision that is above the base value when the TIRZ was created will be set aside in this fund. The money will be used to reimburse the developer for certain infrastructure costs related to the development.

TIRZ #3 was established in 2001 to generate money for street improvements to serve an expected surge in housing development. The zone includes areas south, west, and northwest of the City where development activity is scheduled to occur.

#### Capital Recovery Fees

There are several options available for funding new infrastructure required to support growth of the City. Most options rely on the fees from developers based on the amount and type of development. Connection fees are one example of this type of recovery fee that the cities use. Connection fees are imposed on some developments to offset the impact on water and wastewater systems, as established by a development agreement. These fees are typically required by municipal utility districts (MUDs) where new development occurs. The fee structure and payments are based on development agreements between the city and MUDs and are not typically subsidized by other income sources.

Similar to connection fees, capital recovery fees are a funding mechanism that allows cities to recover the costs associated with constructing new facilities or the expansion of the current system for future development. Chapter 395 of the Texas Local Government

Code defines a capital recovery fee as “a charge or assessment imposed by a political subdivision against new development in order to generate revenue for funding or recouping the costs of capital improvements or facility expansions necessitated by and attributable to the new development”. Statutory requirements mandate that capital recovery fees be based on a specific list of improvements identified in a capital improvements program and only the cost attributed (and necessitated) by new growth over a 10-year period may be considered.

Capital recovery fee programs may be used to cover costs related to:

- Construction contract price
- Surveying and engineering fees
- Land acquisition costs
- Fees paid to the consultant preparing or updating the Capital Improvements Program (CIP)
- Projected interest charges and other finance costs for projects identified in the CIP

By state statute, capital recovery fees are required to be updated every five years and are calculated using mandated methodologies. This ensures that developers are paying an appropriate amount based on the current and projected growth. Capital recovery fees can be established for a specific area, like an ETJ, or city-wide. Typically, a city is divided into separate service areas and when fees are collected for a development, the fees collected can only be used for infrastructure in the same area. A separate fee can be established for different infrastructure types such as water and wastewater, or roadways. Some cities choose to only have one type of capital recovery fee while others have both however, roadway fees cannot be established in the ETJ.



Table 7.1 shows the current water and wastewater capital recovery fees for the 12 cities. These costs represent a range of water and wastewater capital recovery fees in other cities.

| <b>Table 7.1 Capital Recovery Fee Comparison</b> |                                     |            |          |
|--|-------------------------------------|------------|----------|
| Peer Cities                                      | Capital Recovery Fee for Base Meter |            |          |
|  | Water                               | Wastewater | Total    |
| Allen  | \$2,840                             | \$1,644    | \$4,484  |
| College Station                                  | \$500                               | \$3,000    | \$3,500  |
| Frisco <sup>1</sup>                              | \$2,120                             | \$2,344    | \$4,464  |
| Kingwood   | Does not have capital recovery fees |            |          |
| Kyle   | \$3,535                             | \$2,826    | \$3,535  |
| League City                                      | \$5,101                             | \$2,567    | \$7,668  |
| McKinney   | \$1,295                             | \$162      | \$1,457  |
| Pearland   | \$3,551                             | \$2,926    | \$6,477  |
| Plano  | Does not have capital recovery fees |            |          |
| Round Rock                                       | \$4,025                             | \$2,099    | \$6,124  |
| Georgetown <sup>2</sup>                          | \$6,921                             | \$3,115    | \$10,036 |
| The Woodlands                                    | Does not have capital recovery fees |            |          |

<sup>1</sup> Single family land use

<sup>2</sup> Citywide outside South for Service Area

To implement capital recovery fees, a city begins by conducting a capital recovery fee study. In the study, the existing and planned infrastructure are reviewed to assess what growth is projected for the next 10 years and the anticipated costs. This is the basis for how the fees are calculated and results in a range of appropriate amounts for each type of fee such as water or wastewater. This range of values presented allows the city to choose to be more conservative or aggressive in promoting development and funding improvements.

Capital recovery fees are a widely used tool to fund the extension of infrastructure. Although it is an additional cost for development, it provides an invaluable resource for cities to effectively plan and fund for future growth by having the development community invest in the infrastructure they will be using, and to promote further development in the future by providing the necessary access to public services.

### Facility Needs for City Departments

There are public facilities that serve the community at large and others that serve a smaller service area. City Hall is an example of a public facility that serves the whole community. The fire stations are an example of public facilities that serve a smaller service area. This section provides a look at the long-term facility needs for the City while summarizing the existing conditions of key public facilities.

#### Police Department

The City of Conroe Police Department currently has 132 full-time officers. This police force works out of the Police Department located at 2300 Plantation Drive, Conroe, Texas 77303. The department anticipates needs for substations on the west and southeast areas of the City to provide the same level of service as the City grows. The City is currently divided into patrol districts and officers are routinely assigned to a specific district on a regular basis. Permanent district assignments are one of the cornerstones of community oriented policing and the Conroe Police Department subscribes to this innovative concept of public service.

Communications personnel perform many complex duties, including, but not limited to, dispatching patrol officers for calls for service. The Communications Center is a state-of-the-art facility with advanced computer aided dispatch system, as well as a self-contained emergency radio system designed to maintain communications in the event of a total radio console failure.

#### Future Needs

- Co-locate additional services, like municipal court, with police substations or fire stations.
- Acquire additional equipment to patrol the lake.
- Increase police force to support proactive community oriented policing.



Source: City of Conroe



### Fire Department

The protection of life and property from fire is a vital service provided by the City of Conroe Fire Department. The City of Conroe Fire Department currently has 134 full-time firefighters. The department works out of seven fire stations.

#### Future Needs

- Identify intergovernmental agencies for possible partnerships, funding opportunities and to select a site and acquire property for the new training center.
- Build fire station 8.

### Emergency Services

In addition to police and fire protection, emergency services play an important role in the City. Montgomery County Hospital District is responsible for all emergency medical services in Conroe. There are 27 stations located in the County, seven of these stations are in Conroe. Montgomery County Hospital District is using a new model to address response times. Instead of relying solely on ambulances they have expanded their geographic coverage with a paramedic squad. Paramedic squads are a sport utility vehicle with a paramedic equipped to deliver care. This helps reduce response time to isolated or low call-volume areas. The hospital district will continue to cover the 1,100 square mile service area with this mixed approach.

**Table 7.2 Existing and Future Fire Service Needs**

| Ratio Analysis of Existing and Future Fire Service Needs              |               |  |
|---|---------------|--|
| Current # of Firefighters   | Ratios        | Future # of Firefighters Needed        |
|   |               | Population Estimate of 106,451 in 2024 |
| 134   | 1.5 per 1,000 | 160                                    |
| Current Population (2019): 88,630                                     |               |  |
| Current Ratio of Firefighters Per Population in Conroe: 1.5 per 1,000 |               |  |



Source: City of Conroe

## Conroe 2040 | Planning for the Future

### City Hall

City Hall is in the Conroe Tower at 300 W. Davis Street in downtown Conroe. The City purchased the building in 1995. This 58,000 square foot building houses administrative offices, Community Development, the City Council Chambers, and the Mayor and Council offices.

The Municipal Building located at 700 Metcalf Street houses Engineering, Permits, Inspections, Utility Billing and Fire Administrative offices.

The City should consider building or renovating a facility to accommodate multiple departments in the future. Synergy between departments is important and helps to improve customer service and experience.



Source: City of Conroe





## 08 | Implementation

Implementation is one of the most important, yet most difficult, aspects of the comprehensive planning process. Without viable, realistic strategies for implementation, the recommendations contained within this Comprehensive Plan will be difficult to realize.

Few cities can implement every recommendation or policy within their comprehensive planning document immediately following adoption—Conroe is no exception. Plan implementation should be prioritized by short-, mid-, long-term, and ongoing priorities. These priorities should be balanced with timing, funding, and City Staff resources.

The Comprehensive Plan is a living document. As recommendations are implemented the City should reevaluate the needs and desires of the community. With a fast growing city like Conroe, it is necessary to update the Comprehensive Plan every five to ten years.



### Implementing the Plan

Planning for the City's future should be a continuous process, and this Plan is designed to be a dynamic tool that can be modified and periodically updated to keep it in tune with changing conditions and trends. Plan policies and recommendations may be put into effect through adopted development regulations and through resource allocation tools, such as the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Many recommendations within the Plan can be implemented through simple refinement of existing City regulations or processes, while others may require the establishment of new regulations, programs, or processes. Some recommendations may require additional public input to gather buy-in and support from local organizations as well as private partnerships.

There are two primary methods of plan implementation: proactive and reactive methods. Proactive methods ensure coordination of City programs to focus resources to achieve the best outcomes for the community based on shared goals. Reactive methods allow the City to apply plan recommendations as projects and programs are implemented and in response to applications for private development. To successfully implement the Plan and gain its benefits, both methods must be used in an effective manner. Both proactive and reactive actions that could be used by Conroe are described within this Implementation chapter.

#### Examples of proactive methods include:

- Adopting incentive programs (such as a TIRZ) to support development that is consistent with the Plan's vision and guiding principles
- Conducting studies to support capital recovery fees, master plans for utility systems, and to address barriers to managed growth
- Developing a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) to direct City resources
- Updating subdivision regulations

#### Examples of reactive methods include:

- Coordinating ongoing meetings with departments and agencies involved in development and redevelopment activities in the City
- Developing Municipal Utility District (MUD) type criteria to negotiate terms for annexations that support the City's vision and guiding principles
- Site plan review
- Subdivision review

### Strategies

Strategies represent general concepts that should be pursued to achieve the vision of the City. The following table lists the strategies for each of the Comprehensive Plan chapters. It also shows how each strategy is related to one or more of the guiding principles that inform the Plan's vision.

### Timeframe

Short-term projects (S) can begin soon after adoption. These projects are considered "low-hanging fruit." They are more attainable and do not require large amounts of funding. These projects are generally planned CIP projects planned within the next five years.

Mid-term projects (M) are not as attainable within the first five years. They require planning or funding to prepare but should be implemented in six to ten years.

Long-term projects (L) may not currently have an anticipated time frame for implementation or may require prerequisite planning before implementation. Long-term projects should be revisited to assess the status of the project and determine if implementation can be accomplished sooner.

Ongoing projects (O) can begin soon after adoption and are reviewed on an ongoing basis.

### Responsible Party

No single individual or entity is responsible for the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. There are multiple aspects of the Plan that require participation by various parties. Responsible parties include City departments, and public and private partnerships. Each of these parties has a vital role they can play in implementation based on their areas of expertise. Responsible parties include various City departments, Conroe Connect, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Conroe Economic Development Council (CEDC), Conroe Industrial Development Corporation (CIDC), Greater Conroe Arts Alliance, Montgomery County Historical Commission, and the Conroe Convention and Visitor Bureau.

### CIP Integration

Key tasks require coordination through the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) in order to be prioritized, funded, and achieved. These strategies are specifically identified so that they may be included on Conroe's CIP and ranked based on need, priority, and community support.

The action matrix on the following pages outlines key tasks for the City and its partners to undertake in the coming years. It is important to maintain focus on the strategies that will result in a community that reflects the vision of this Plan. It is important to prioritize directing resources to accomplish these tasks.



### Priority Focus Areas

This Plan organizes implementation strategies into priority focus areas. This approach allows the City to leverage related projects and encourages the allocation of resources in a coordinated manner that provides more effective outcomes. Projects that draw resources away from the priority focus areas must be considered carefully and evaluated by decision-makers to ensure they offer an appropriate return on the investment of any public resources. The City can amend the Plan through a formal and collaborative process that includes outreach to the community to integrate new projects into priority focus areas.

#### Focus on Destinations



#### Focus on Transportation



#### Focus on Core Services



#### Focus on the Plan



### Focus on Destinations

Destinations like Downtown and Lake Conroe are uniquely Conroe, and are assets other communities can't replicate.

The City should:

- Support programs and projects that enhance the vibrancy of Downtown and Lake Conroe;
- Create economic opportunities through programs that increase access and create a diversity of land uses;
- Encourage uses and amenities that will draw tourists as well as local visitors; and
- Provide resources to support placemaking, walkability, and local businesses.

Partnerships with economic development corporations and utility providers will ensure continued interest and growth in the Airport, Conroe Park North, and the Deison Technology Park. These destinations drive tax revenues and create employment opportunities for current and future residents of Conroe.

### Focus on Transportation

Mobility choices for all users are necessary for managed growth, desirable development, and high quality of life. Corridor studies and coordination with TxDOT will inform the identification of crucial transportation and transit improvements. Connecting neighborhoods to destinations and areas that provide neighborhood services with sidewalks and bike facilities can reduce vehicle trips while improving physical and mental health outcomes. Maintaining and expanding transportation choices for all users supports everyone's ability to connect with the community and to move through it safely.

### Focus on Core Services

Municipalities provide core services that promote a favorable environment for private development and investment. Using regular citizen satisfaction surveys to gather feedback can improve service delivery and outreach efforts. Striving to develop or expand municipal facilities to serve multiple purposes. An example of this is to co-locate public safety substations and community centers with parks or utility functions such as pump stations or regional detention ponds.

### Focus on the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is a road map for the City. It contains policy support for actions that move the City toward its stated vision. Developing programs and financial tools such as 380 agreements, MUDs, PIDs, and TIRZ to incentivize infill. Full utilization of existing resources ensures the City is taking a proactive approach to managed growth. Updates can help regulations to align with guiding principles.

Coordination, communication, and monitoring are critical for successful plan implementation. The City should develop a regular reporting tool that can track progress and keep the City's focus on strategies recommended in the Plan.

## Land Use and Community Character

| PRIORITY FOCUS                    | # | Strategies   | Time | Responsible Party   | CIP |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|------|---|-----|
| Downtown                          | 1 | Perform a Market/Feasibility Study for the desired uses identified during the planning process (i.e., entertainment venues, offices, restaurants, and destinations).   | M    | CEDC, Greater Conroe Arts Alliance, Montgomery County Historical Commission, the Conroe Convention and Visitor Bureau |     |
|                                   | 2 | Use the above Study as basis for TIRZ creation to plan and fund needed improvements to public realm, branding, wayfinding, signage, façade improvements program, and use Chapter 380 economic development assistance to attract new desired commercial uses. | L    | Community Development Department  |     |
|                                   | 3 | Use TIRZ to fund Corridor Study of SH 105 through Downtown related to mobility, pedestrian safety, transit, sidewalks, etc.  | M    | Community Development Department  |     |
| Airport/Industrial Park/Tech Park | 4 | Partner with CIDC to provide incentives to private sector commercial developers/users around Conroe Park North and Deison Technology Park.   | S    | Community Development Department, CIDC, private developers  |     |
|                                   | 5 | Partner with private real estate development interests and CIDC to subsidize the construction of Class A office space, mixed-use, and/or life style developments at Deison Technology Park.  | S    | Community Development Department, CIDC, private developers  |     |



## Land Use and Community Character

| PRIORITY FOCUS | #  | Strategies  | Time | Responsible Party  | CIP |
|----------------|----|---|------|--|-----|
| Lake Conroe    | 6  | Create a task force composed of real estate community members, property owners, commercial users, and City Staff to identify obstacles to achieving the highest and best-use development on lakefront properties. | S    | Community members, property owners, commercial users, and City Staff |     |
|                | 7  | Perform traffic and parking analysis to make recommendations on improving mobility and parking at key lake access points.   | M    | Engineering Department   |     |
|                | 8  | Negotiate with lake ownership and operating authorities to increase public access points to the lake.   | O    | Community Development Department                                     |     |
|                | 9  | Perform benchmark study of comparable lake communities to determine appropriate level of public safety staffing and equipment.  | S    | Police Department  |     |
| General Issues | 10 | Use MUD consent conditions to negotiate allowable land uses that will match the FLUM Triggers for annexation into the City Limits can also be negotiated.   | S    | Community Development Department                                     |     |
|                | 11 | Require businesses receiving any type of economic incentive to follow agreed upon building design guidelines.   | O    | Community Development Department, Engineering Department, and CIDC   |     |
|                | 12 | Use a TIRZ or Type B sales tax funds for the property acquisition or utility capacity aspects of arts/cultural projects   | M    | Community Development Department                                     |     |
|                | 13 | Update subdivision ordinance to reflect the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.  | S    | Community Development and Engineering Departments                    |     |

## Transportation

| PRIORITY FOCUS       | #  | Strategies   | Time | Responsible Party   | CIP |
|----------------------|----|--|------|---|-----|
| Traffic & Congestion | 14 | Continue coordination with TxDOT on TxDOT-controlled roadways regarding maintenance and upgrades   | M    | TxDOT   |     |
|                      | 15 | Conduct Corridor Study of SH 105 west of I-45 to address congestion and safety   | M    | Engineering Department  |     |
|                      | 16 | Conduct evaluation of known congestion hot spots to identify non-structural solutions that improve mobility  | M    | Engineering Department  |     |
|                      | 17 | Take necessary action to determine cost for city-wide Intelligent Transportation System  | O    | Engineering and Public Works Departments                        |     |
| Transit              | 18 | Implement the April 2020 Conroe Connection Strategic 5-Year Plan   | S    | Conroe Connection   |     |
| Budgeting            | 19 | Partner with CIDC and Montgomery County to extend water/sewer utilities to 200 undeveloped acres at the airport  | L    | CEDC, CIDC, Community Development Department, Montgomery County |     |
|                      | 20 | Partner with CIDC to provide incentives to private sector commercial developers/users around Conroe Park North and Deison Technology Park  | S    | CIDC  |     |
|                      | 21 | Partner with private real estate development interests and CIDC to subsidize the construction of Class A office space, mixed-use, and/or life style developments at Deison Technology Park | S    | Community Development and Engineering Departments               |     |

## Parks and Recreation

| PRIORITY FOCUS           | #  | Strategies  | Time | Responsible Party               | CIP |
|--------------------------|----|---|------|---------------------------------|-----|
| Administration           | 22 | Update 2009 Parks Master Plan   | M    | Parks Department                |     |
| Traffic                  | 23 | Connect parks and recreation facilities and connect to neighborhoods, improving access to parks for all segments of the community | O    | Parks Department                |     |
| Facilities & Programming | 24 | Identify co-location opportunities with the school district and other entities  | O    | Parks Department and Conroe ISD |     |
|                          | 25 | Prepare RFQ for developer-operator for regional aquatics center   | M    | Parks Department                |     |
|                          | 26 | Conduct residents' survey to gauge support for expanded programming and events  | S    | Parks Department                |     |
|                          | 27 | Prepare concept plan and schematics for Alligator Creek Linear and identify funding sources                                       | M    | Parks Department                |     |
|                          | 28 | Evaluate demand and support for multigenerational community center  | M    | Parks Department                |     |



## Infrastructure and Public Facilities

| PRIORITY FOCUS | #  | Strategies   | Time | Responsible Party   | CIP |
|----------------|----|--|------|---|-----|
| Utilities      | 29 | Prepare a drainage master plan   | M    | Public Works Department and Engineering Department          |     |
|                | 30 | Acquire land in the southeast quadrant of the City for a wastewater treatment facility   | S    | Public Works Department                                     |     |
|                | 31 | Use MUD consent conditions to influence the location and sizing of MUD-funded infrastructure to match the Comprehensive Plan goals   | O    | Community Development Department                            |     |
|                | 32 | Use TIRZ to incentivize annexation into the City Limits and fund the extension of utilities to locations distant from existing utilities   | L    | Community Development Department                            |     |
|                | 33 | Use a 380 agreements to reimburse a developer for oversizing utility mains for a new residential or commercial development. The source of funds could be the new property and/or sales tax generated by the project. | O    | Engineering Department and Community Development Department |     |
|                | 34 | Allow use of a public improvement district (PID) to fund the rehabilitation of utilities or roadways in older areas of the community in need of revitalization or which are experiencing redevelopment pressure      | L    | Community Development Department                            |     |
|                | 35 | Incentivize infill development to capitalize on existing infrastructure using allowable economic development tools   | O    | Downtown Manager  |     |

## Infrastructure and Public Facilities

| PRIORITY FOCUS | #  | Strategies   | Time | Responsible Party                                  | CIP |
|----------------|----|--|------|--|-----|
| Public Safety  | 36 | Conduct an analysis to identify potential locations for police substations in under-served areas, including staffing and operating needs                                       | L    | Police Department                                  |     |
|                | 37 | Co-locate other needed municipal services at substations   | L    | Various Departments                                |     |
|                | 38 | Identify and overcome obstacles to building Fire Station #8  | M    | Fire Department                                    |     |
|                | 39 | Identify and overcome obstacles to building the Fire Training Center   | M    | Fire Department                                    |     |
| Administration | 40 | Include community branding elements such as signage or decorative poles when designing city-funded capital improvement projects  | O    | Public Works Department                            |     |
|                | 41 | Conduct feasibility study for a municipal building that houses multiple departments  | L    | Community Development Department                   |     |
|                | 42 | Initiate a capital recovery fee study to evaluate the feasibility of implementation  | S    | Engineering Department and Public Works Department |     |
|                | 43 | Establish a committee to monitor implementation of the Comprehensive Plan  | O    | Community Development Department                   |     |
|                | 44 | Create internal communication channels to ensure departments and agencies are informed and working collaboratively to achieve common goals related to development in the City. | O    | Community Development Department                   |     |

### Measuring Progress

Key performance indicators can be used to measure and track the progress of the plan. In the next section, indicators are listed for each guiding principle with targets for 2040. Using these metrics will help the City determine where efforts are fulfilling the vision of the Plan and where additional resources are needed.

### INFRASTRUCTURE



Prioritize efforts and incentives to ensure adequate infrastructure within the City to support and attract existing and new developments.

The following metrics can be used to track the progress of infrastructure related strategies in the plan.

- Increase the number of neighborhoods with convenient access to transit, jobs, and retail
- Increase new residential units within a 10-minute walk to a neighborhood center
- Increase mode share for non-vehicular commute
- Miles of pipes repaired or replaced
- Number of high priority infrastructure plans completed
- Improve citizen satisfaction with City services and facilities
- Increase miles of trails
- Increase miles of bike lanes
- Increase linear feet of sidewalk installed
- Improve walk, bike and transit score



### GROWTH MANAGEMENT



Explore and incorporate tools to manage growth while also providing economic development opportunities.

The following key performance indicators can be used to track the progress of growth management related strategies in the plan.

- Development permits issued that are consistent with the Future Land Use Map
- Infill and redevelopment activity
- Percentage of capital improvement dollars spent within infill areas vs. greenfield development
- Vacant infill areas
- Percentage of CIP funding spent for improvements within target areas against citywide spending
- Compare current % of residential units in city vs. in ETJ or County
- Number of permits issued in areas with existing infrastructure (not greenfield)





### COMMUNITY IDENTITY



Build upon Conroe's assets such as the lake, trees and downtown to establish and preserve its historic character and identity. The following key performance indicators can be used to track the progress of community identity related strategies in the plan.

- Increased tourism
- Increase in lake users
- Façade and sign grants in downtown





## COMMUNICATION



Establish and maintain active and effective communication between the City, citizens, and City departments.

The following key performance indicators can be used to track the progress of communication related strategies in the plan.

- Increase attendance at public meetings (may include virtual meetings as well as in-person)
- Visits to website
- Use social media metrics like audience size, likes per post, shares per post, comments per post and clicks per post
- Improve citizen satisfaction with City services and facilities.
- Number of meetings conducted to coordinate development review by departments and partner agencies
- Distribute a citywide citizen satisfaction survey every two years to measure and track improvements in service delivery and quality of life indicators

CONROE TOWER



## ARTS AND CULTURE



Utilize Conroe's arts and culture community to encourage destination entertainment venues and events. The following key performance indicators can be used to track the progress of arts and culture related strategies in the plan.

- Conroe Convention Center Traffic
- Community Center expansion and renovation projects completed
- Increase programming at community centers

CONROE FOUNDERS PLAZA

# City of Conroe

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040





**Plan Prepared by:**



Freese and Nichols

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