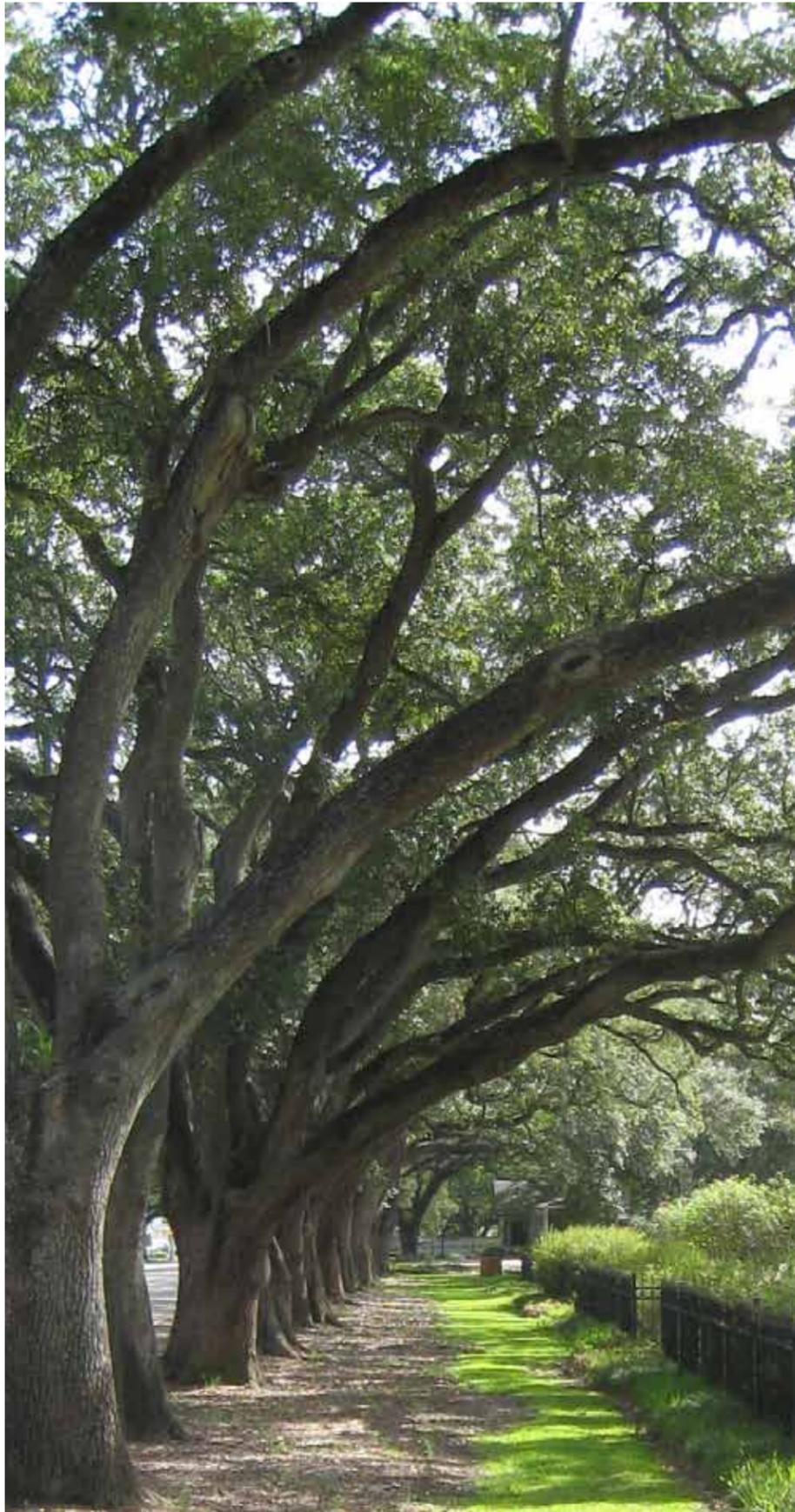


# 1 – INTRODUCTION



**P**lan Responsibly and Act Decisively. One of four Organizational Values established by City Council in 2009 set the tone for an aggressive effort to fully understand the needs and desires regarding League City's future and seize upon a common vision. Responsible planning means taking an honest look at current conditions, establishing a clear direction for the future and making the tough decisions needed to get there. The legacy of planning responsibly and acting decisively will be the League City of 2035.

Between 2009 and 2010, League City embarked upon updates to a number of plans that allowed staff to simultaneously address key issues related to land use, community character, mobility, water, wastewater, stormwater, economic development, and hazard mitigation. The effort to update nearly all of the city's major plans at the same time provides League City with a substantial advantage. It has provided a rare opportunity to truly glimpse "under the hood" at all of the issues facing the community, particularly in comparison to goals of the community.

As part of this effort, the City decided to revise the plan that recognizes and synthesizes the relationship between all of these issues - the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan is the one tool that translates the vision of the community into neighborhoods, open spaces, streets, trails, commercial

centers, gathering spaces, and the myriad other features that make up the community. It guides the manner in which development (and redevelopment) occurs, where development should go (and should not go), and the type of development defined as "desirable." It serves as a "blueprint" for responsible growth as determined by the residents, business owners and community leaders of League City.

In this manner, the Comprehensive Plan is a "form-based" interpretation of the community's goals for economic development, community character, mobility, water, and more. It seeks to create the "great places" that are desirable to current and future residents, employees and guests, while also appreciating the limitations faced by the community. Even in constraint it creates advantage. Mobility issues result in creative solutions that, by themselves, could become marketable attractions. Stormwater issues could result in a green approach to development that is also desirable to a growing segment of the community.

The Comprehensive Plan builds around a "preferred growth scenario" that highlights the desired character and development patterns in the community. It supports the preferred growth scenario with development-related policies, including those related to Parks, Infrastructure, Mobility, Community Facilities, Hazard Mitigation and Economic Development. In each case, the Comprehensive Plan embraces the intentions and

recommendations of other plans and serves as a bridge tying the solutions of these plans together through development.

## The Planning Process

The process of updating the Comprehensive Plan involved addressing four questions: where are we now, what do we want to be, how do we get there, and how do we make it happen?

### WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The planning process began with looking at League City today and understanding the community, its history, its residents and how it functions. This initial phase included a review of development considerations such as existing development patterns, growth trends, infrastructure systems and capacities, and key issues facing the community. Analysis of existing characteristics and systems resulted in a solid understanding of the community’s assets, needs and opportunities. This analysis was used in developing a growth scenario for League City following current trends. The community profile in Chapter 1 along with Chapter 4 – Growth Analysis describes League City today and highlights the findings of the existing conditions analysis.

### WHAT DO WE WANT TO BE?

The next step in the planning process involved determining what League City should be like in the future. A visual preference survey, (discussed in Chapter 2 – Issues), was conducted at the beginning of the planning process to determine the types of developments desired in League City. A public workshop was held to identify and validate key issues facing the community and opportunities for the future. In synthesizing all the input received, several core values and themes emerged, and from this a series of guiding principles were developed. These guiding principles, identified in Chapter 3 – Guiding Principles, reflect and summarize the shared vision of the community over the next 25 years and were used, along with other information, to develop three additional growth scenarios, including the “preferred growth scenario” (Chapter 4 Growth Analysis) and subsequent plan policies.

### HOW DO WE GET THERE?

The Plan is divided into the following core elements:

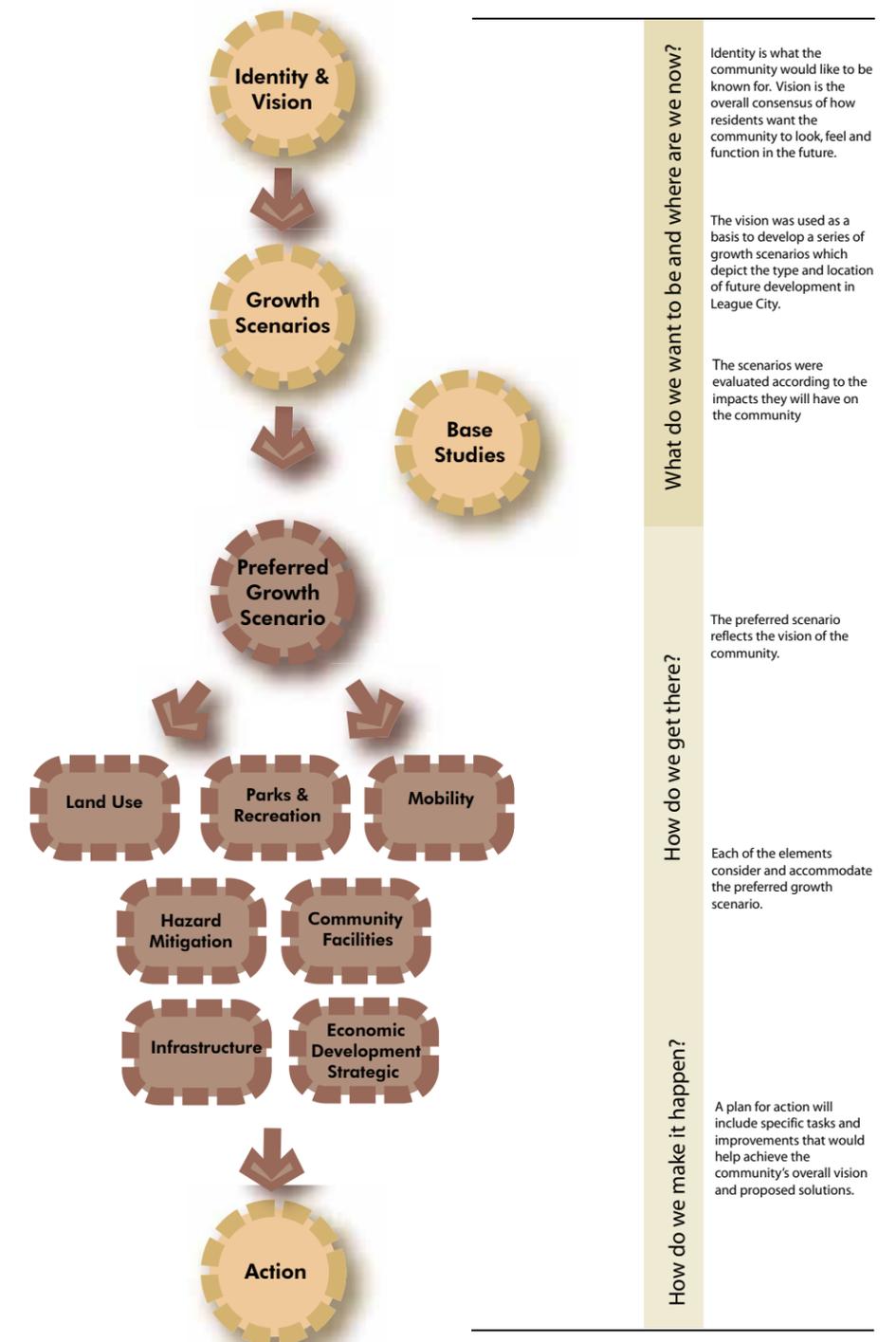
- Chapter 5 – Land Use
- Chapter 6 - Mobility
- Chapter 7 – Parks and Recreation
- Chapter 8 – Hazard Mitigation
- Chapter 9 – Community Facilities
- Chapter 10 - Infrastructure
- Chapter 11 – Economic Development

Each of the core plan elements includes a series of policies that support the preferred growth scenario and provide direction in making “form based” decisions related to land development, mobility, parks and recreation, infrastructure, community facilities, hazard mitigation and economic development. Adoption and implementation of these policies along with implementation of specific actions recommended in plans such as the Master Mobility Plan and the Master Wastewater Plan will allow League City to achieve its desired vision for the future.

### HOW DO WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?

Planning Responsibly ensures that the community has a vision for the future. However, moving to reality requires Acting Decisively. In many ways, establishing the vision is the easy part. Action requires bold steps - some of which may be unpopular or uncomfortable. The Policies established in the Comprehensive Plan require substantial changes to current development codes that are necessary if the community intends to manage its resources responsibly, implement a destination-based approach to growth, or become a full reflection of the “Recreation Lifestyle” brand. Complementary plans recommend a number of infrastructure and mobility improvements, park improvements, streetscape enhancements, open space acquisitions, along with numerous other activities and projects. Each of these recommendations plays a role in realizing the vision for the community. Finally, the success of the Comprehensive Plan depends upon the community’s willingness to support and defend the vision for the future.

Figure 1-1, Planning Process



## How the Plan Works

Each of the core plan elements includes a series of goals and policies. Goals are the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan and state the desired outcomes that support the community's vision and guiding principles. Goals are broad and begin to answer the question "How will the vision be implemented?"

Policies are intended to guide daily decisions by staff and elected officials to see that the goals of the Comprehensive Plan are achieved. They provide a basis for evaluating development proposals, zoning changes and other land development decisions to ensure consistency with the guiding principles and Future Land Use Plan.

The policies will serve as the basis for code revisions and updates that will occur following adoption of this plan. Some of the policies will evolve into code language while others will be used in making daily decisions. For example in Chapter 5 – Land Use, one of the character related policies states "eliminate minimum lot size and configuration requirements in favor of density requirements...", this policy can simply be turned into code by replacing the current minimum lot size requirements with average lot size requirements. Other policies such as "new development on sites adjacent to existing infrastructure is preferable to "leapfrog" development" can be used when making decisions regarding the extension of utilities and other infrastructure systems.

The Comprehensive Plan intentionally does not include specific action items beyond policies. Rather, it builds upon the actions recommended in the other plans referenced throughout this document and identified below:

Other plans completed or currently being completed by League City:

- Master Mobility Plan (2011)
- Main Street Plan, Existing Conditions Report (2010)
- Water Master Plan (2010)
- Wastewater Master (2010)
- League City Assessment Finding and Suggestions Report (2010)
- Branding, Development and Marketing Action Plan (2010)
- League City Economic Development Strategic Plan (2011)
- Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (2010)
- Parks Master Plan (2006)
- Trails Master Plan (2010)
- The City of League City Feasibility Study (2008)

## Who We Are?

### REGIONAL CONTEXT

League City is located in northwestern Galveston County and southern Harris County, equal distance from Houston and Galveston off of Interstate 45. The northern border fronts Clear Lake and to the south the city borders Dickinson. The boundaries to the east and west respectively are the cities of Kemah and Friendswood. Sitting at an elevation of 20 feet, the city is comprised of 52.3 square miles, 2% of which is water.

### ACCESSIBILITY

The City is bisected by Interstate 45 which serves as the main transportation corridor through Houston's metropolitan region all the way to Galveston. There are three beltways (Loop 610, Beltway 8 and Grand Parkway) around Houston that intersect with Interstate 45, giving access to all major cities in Texas. Located within twenty miles of League City to the north there are two airports, William P. Hobby, which is a major hub for Southwest Airlines and Ellington Field, which is used by NASA and private operators. The Union Pacific Railway operates one main line through League City, running parallel to I-45, and transporting goods to the midwest, southeast and west coast.

### THE ECONOMY

League City is considered a "bedroom-community" that has less taxable retail sales per capita than its neighboring communities to the north. In the past there has been lack of retail facilities in League City and residents were spending their retail sales dollars elsewhere in the region. This and the shortage of quality employment opportunities within League City has had a marked effect on the city's tax base and its ability to fund capital programs, but, within the past 5 years, commercial activity at FM 646 and I-45 has started to change this trend. League City is slowly becoming a practical destination for new businesses that will expand the economic base.

The area's economic base includes aerospace (NASA), petrochemicals, health care (UTMB and Texas Medical Center), upscale commercial, boating and visitor attractions.

League City's central location is prime for research support and development firms and branch locations from the Texas Medical Center, the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), the University of Houston, and Rice University. A branch of UTMB for specialty care along with numerous outpatient clinics are now located within League City.

Reasons that make the area's workforce attractive to business and industry are its low unionization and a high percentage of technicians compared to the total labor market. League City employees tend to be younger, and well educated.

### THE PEOPLE

To get a better understanding of the people in League City, ESRI's Tapestry Segmentation was used to identify the top 10 "groups of people" with similar interests and lifestyles living in the community. Tapestry segmentation is a system used to classify neighborhoods in the US into 65 segments based on their socioeconomic and demographic compositions. Neighborhoods with the most similar characteristics are grouped together, while neighborhoods showing different characteristics are separated. Neighborhoods are analyzed and sorted by more than 60 attributes including income, employment, home value, housing type, education, household composition, age, and other key determinants of consumer behavior.

The information provided through assessment of different groups gives a good sense of the types of people living in League City, what their lifestyle is like, the activities they like to participate in, where they shop, the types of homes, neighborhoods, and amenities they prefer, and purchases they like to make. All of which is important in determining the types of places, neighborhoods and amenities residents desire. Based on a 5 mile radius ring around a central point on Walker Street, League City's top 10 Tapestry Segments are shown in Table 1-1.

As shown League City primarily consists of affluent, educated households consisting of married couples with children. Other groups include empty nesters, singles or married couples without children. Each of the groups differ in their lifestyle which translates into different amenities, places and neighborhoods they would desire. For example the singles or married couples without children identified in the "Young and Restless" and "In Style" groups may prefer living in a condo or townhome in a mixed used development as opposed to a single family home. While the young families in the "Milk and Cookies" and "Up and Coming Families" groups would prefer living in a suburban single family home with trails and parks nearby. Not only can this analysis be used in understanding the people living in the community today, but it can also be used in determining the types of amenities, places and developments needed to attract other segments of the population to League City.

Table 1-1, League City Tapestry Segments

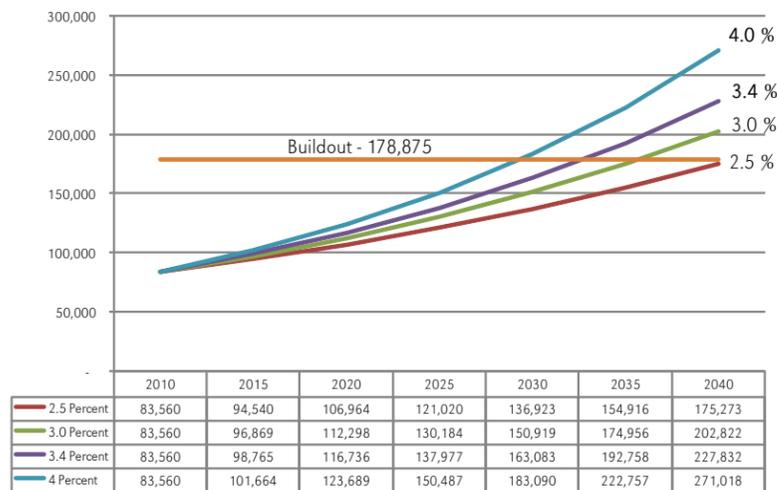
Tapestry Segment by Rank	Description	Median Household Income	Median Age	Education	Median Home Value	Residential	Family Dynamic	Focus	Purchases	Activities
17.3% Milk and Cookies	Young, affluent married couples who are starting their families or already have young children	\$64,527	33.7	>20% have bachelor's degree or higher	\$132,494	Single-family homes in suburbs	Married with children	Family and future	Products for children	Games, TV, theme parks
15.4% Young and Restless	Young on the go population with busy lifestyle	\$45,458	28.6	36% have bachelor's degree or higher	85% rent	Apartments	23% with children	Single professionals pursuing career	Shop online, domestic vehicles	Magazines, internet, movies, gym
12.1% Up and Coming Families	A mix of Generation Xers and Baby Boomers. Young, affluent families with younger children	\$78,189	31.9	1 in 5 have bachelor's degree	\$182,628	New single family housing	Young, married, half with children	Family and home	Products for home and family i.e. baby products, home furnishings	Eat out, zoo, theme parks, sports
8.1% Aspiring Young Families	Young, startup families, married couples with or without children, and single parents	\$52,036	30.4	24% have bachelor's degree or higher	\$141,309	Moderately priced apartments, single-family houses, and startup townhouses	66% with children	Family and home	Products for children and adults	Eat out, theme park, TV, movies, biking
7.1% Boomburbs	Affluent young families, highest concentrations of young families with children.	\$123,091	33.8	50% have bachelor's degree or higher	\$289,813	Single-family homes	Married with children	Family and vacations	Home furnishings, games, electronics, cleaning services	Computers, family vacations, tennis, golf, ski
3.9% Exurbanites	Mix of empty nesters and families with children. Affluent lifestyle in open spaces beyond urban fringe.	\$87,339	45.1	>40% have bachelor's degree or higher	\$256,321	Single family homes	40% empty nest 32 % married with children at home	Financial security	Lawn/garden products	Physically active, charities, active vacations
3.8% Prosperous Empty Nesters	Married couples with no children living at home. Residents are enjoying the move from child-rearing to retirement.	\$69,227	48.6	41% have bachelor's degree or higher	\$197,617	Single-family homes in established neighborhoods	40% empty nesters	Health, financial well-being	Home improvements, remodeling, luxury car	Exercise, golf, sports events, travel
3.5% Midland Crowd	62% are married couple families; half of them have children. 20% are singles who live alone	\$50,518	37	16% have bachelor's degree or higher	\$124,088	Single-family homes and mobile homes in rural villages and towns	50% with children/20% single	Politically active	Fast-food, satellite dish TV, trucks, tires	Home improvements, listen to country music, hunting and fishing
3.4% Cozy and Comfortable	Middle-aged married couples comfortable in their homes in older neighborhoods.	\$66,327	42	N/A	\$158,486	Single-family homes in older neighborhoods	Married with or without children	Financial well-being, television	Car and home improvement	Television, golf, home improvement projects
3.3% In Style	Live in the suburbs but prefer the city lifestyle	\$71,177	39.9	42% have bachelor's degree or higher	\$224,030	Townhomes and single-family homes	Married or single without children	Future, financial well-being	Computers, cleaning services, contractors for home projects	Online daily, exercise, eat healthy, live concerts, gambling, hiking, backpacking

Source: Tapestry Segmentation Resource Guide, ESRI

## POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Recognizing the importance of current population projections and anticipated growth in the city will help to plan and prepare for adequate land use, infrastructure, and community facilities and services. Over the past twenty years League City has sustained an annual population growth rate of 4 to 6 percent. The population has grown from 16,578 in 1980 to 83,560 today (2010). Based on market conditions and recent trends, housing and population is anticipated to grow at an annual rate of 3.4%. However the actual rate and timing of growth may be slower, for example at 2.5 or 3 percent, depending on sufficient infrastructure capacity, construction of the Grand Parkway, housing market conditions, and the regional, national and international economy. Figure 1-2 displays population projections for League City that range from an annual growth rate of 2.5 percent to 4 percent.

Figure 1-2, Population Projections



### Notes:

The 3.4 percent growth rate was anticipated by CDS Market Research through 2014 and was continued to 2040.

## HOW LEAGUE CITY FUNCTIONS?

Before planning for the future it is important to have an understanding of the community including its physical layout and function. In order to get a better understanding of League City, how it functions, and what makes it unique, four distinct features were identified as shown on Figure 1-2. These features include paths, edges, districts, and nodes.

Nodes/Activity Centers are significant destinations that regularly attract people in League City. They typically include a focused concentration of land uses such as shopping areas, major parks or employers in one location.

Districts are identifiable areas within a neighborhood or community. Each has a distinct character that is separate from other areas.

Paths are channels for traveling from one destination to another. Paths create the framework for the community on which all other components fit.

Edges create a distinct sense of division between places. On the community wide scale edges create a physical and psychological sense of separation. Edges can be man made such as a highway or major railroad or they can be natural areas or waterways.

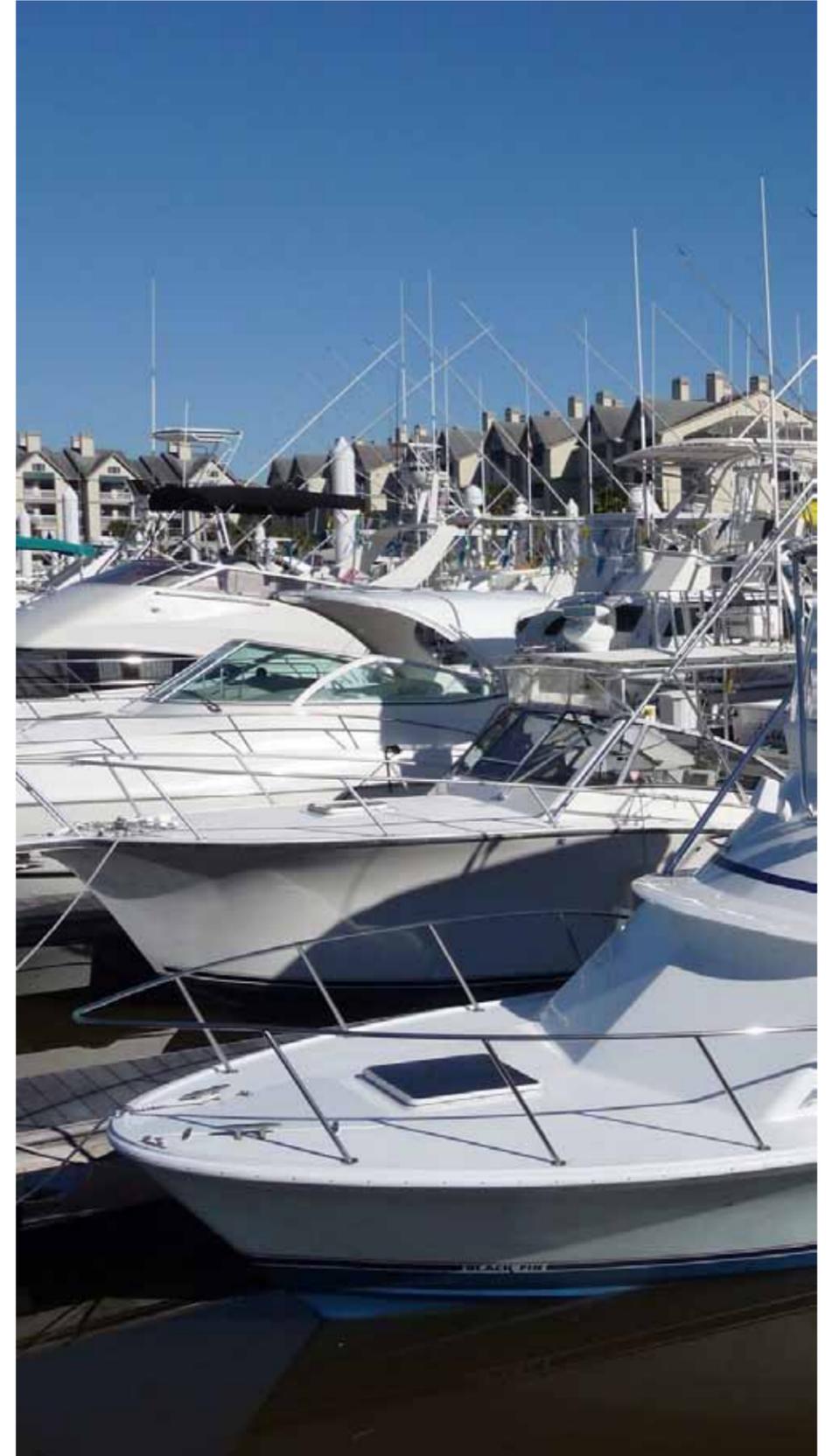
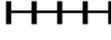


Figure 1-2, How League City Functions

- Districts
-  Main Street
  -  Historic District
  -  South Shore
  -  Town Centers/UTMB
- Nodes
-  Shop
  -  Work
  -  Play
  -  Learn
- Paths
-  Roads
  -  Rail
  -  Trail
- Edges
- 

