



Inspiration for the Boerne Master Plan

A list of proven best practices to inform and inspire the future of Boerne.

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GROWTH

Smart Growth

Cities throughout the country have learned the pitfalls of poor planning and short-sighted decision making. In response, “best practices” have arisen and are promoted under the term “Smart Growth.” These practices result in vibrant, fiscally sound and attractive cities that attract businesses and tourists.

[Smart Growth America](#)

[American Planning Association: Smart Growth](#)

Balanced Growth & “Efficient Land Use”

Not every parcel within city limits should be developed as “in-fill.” Humans thrive emotionally and psychologically when provided with ample open space in which to recreate, gain perspective and de-stress. Therefore, Boerne needs to balance open space with development, which will help retain its quality of life and Hill Country character.

Calculate the Cost of Growth

Development involves more than just tax revenue! What is the long-term cost of providing services to a development many years after a developer has moved on? How will this affect the budget in 30 or 40 years and what can be done to offset future costs?

For example, rapid sprawl with large housing developments often pays dividends in the short term and the generated tax revenue is often used to pay for infrastructure projects and repairs elsewhere in a city. However, in 30 years much of the new growth’s infrastructure needs repair. Where will this funding come from?

VIDEO [Growth Ponzi Scheme](#)

VIDEO [Assessing Cost of Development in Fate, Texas](#)

LINK: [Cost of Sprawl](#)

LINK: [Conventional Development Versus Managed Growth](#)

Preserving & Improving Quality of Schools

As Cities grow, schools often suffer from overcrowding and reduced quality of education. Boerne can and should do everything that it can to prevent this from happening in BISD schools.

DEVELOPMENT

Update Zoning Codes

"[Form-Based Codes](#)" and "[Smart Codes](#)" are being implemented throughout the country, and could be applied in Boerne.

The key insight about form-based codes is how they create a pattern of development where neighborhood growth is positive for the people already living there. Since all form-based growth builds on the existing pattern of the neighborhood, new development is not a threat to the current order but instead, by definition, enhances it. As our neighborhoods mature in a form-based operating system, gaps are filled in, then places are connected, then destinations are naturally created and, over time, expanded and enhanced. There is no step backwards in a form-based system, just forward.

Smart Codes are also worthy of consideration.

[Strong Towns Perspective](#) on Zoning Codes

[Formbasedcodes.org](#) see "*What Are Form-Based Codes*" slideshow.

Increase Open Space Requirements

"Parkland" and "Green Space" are totally different features and should not be cobbled into one total of X% open space requirement. As an example, developments should not be allowed to count vegetated medians as open / park space.

Parkland and Green Space requirements should reflect the population of the community so that, as developments are introduced, pressure on existing parkland is offset with new parkland provided by the development.

Furthermore, when new developments introduce parkland, they should be placed where they are accessible for all of the city's citizens, not simply surrounded by the new development and walled off. If these new residents will be sharing our existing parks, existing citizens should have equal ease of access to the new parks.

In order to achieve a high [park score](#) and preserve quality of life in Boerne, this requirement should be implemented as soon as possible!

Sample: [City of Buda](#)

Impact Fee for New Developments

New developments should also pay an impact fee that reflects the increased use of public resources, including parks and recreation facilities. The alternative is to over utilize our existing resources while increasing maintenance costs, which will degrade the quality of life in Boerne. [Impact fees](#) will help to maintain a high quality of life in Boerne.

Sample: [City of Buda](#)

ENVIRONMENT

Low Impact Development (LID) Ordinance

Low Impact Development (LID) is a term to describe a land planning, and engineering design approach to manage [stormwater runoff](#) as part of [green infrastructure](#). LID emphasizes conservation and use of on-site natural features to protect [water quality](#). This approach implements engineered small-scale hydrologic controls to replicate the pre-development [hydrologic regime of the watershed through infiltrating, filtering, storing, evaporating and detaining runoff close to its source](#). 'Green infrastructure' investments are one approach that often yields multiple benefits and builds city resilience.

Boerne needs to create a comprehensive stormwater management plan and implement it everywhere, even workforce housing - *no compromising standards!*

[Overview of Low Impact Development](#)

[Urban Runoff: Low Impact Development - Fact Sheets](#)

Increase Stream Setback Requirement

A Stream Setback ordinance is a regulation that creates a “buffer zone” between a river, creek, or stream and adjoining land uses, by specifying where construction of buildings and other infrastructure is or is not permitted. They are intended to protect the many functions (hydrologic, biological, ecological, aesthetic, recreational, and educational) that riparian areas provide for free to communities. They help preserve stream banks and natural vegetation while providing [financial benefits to a community](#).

Implementing “No Build Setbacks” along Cibolo Creek of 300 feet from the center of the creek will provide immense [financial](#), social and ecological benefits. Stream setbacks of up to 300 feet are also appropriate along Cibolo Creek’s tributaries. Stream setbacks would be required by ordinance and kept natural and un-mowed. In areas where public access is desirable, ***they may include walking paths*** outside of the [riparian zone](#). Developers could include the setback as part of their open space requirements and parkland.

Dark Sky Ordinance

[Skyglow](#) is the illumination of the [night sky](#) or parts of it, resembling an orange “smog”. It occurs from both natural and human-made sources. Artificial skyglow is caused by the [over-illumination](#) of the sky from large city centers, shopping centers, or stadiums. It consists of light that is either emitted directly upward or reflected from the ground that is then scattered by dust and gas molecules in the atmosphere, producing a luminous background or light dome. These artificial skyglows cause the sky to be 5–10 times brighter in urban areas than a naturally dark sky that is unaffected by artificial light.

Boerne should implement and fully enforce a dark sky ordinance. New LED light technology enables lighting that is dimmer or motion activated, so even large parking areas can be safely lit using dark-sky friendly lighting. This needs to happen before more development is introduced and we lose our view of the heavenly night sky!

[Preserving Night Skies](#)

[City of Llano](#) has a good ordinance that Boerne can emulate.

Strengthen Tree Ordinance

Trees play a [significant role in human well being](#) in an urban and suburban environment. Therefore, the current Boerne tree ordinance can be enhanced to be more effective at preserving the character of our town.

For example, we can:

Require more tree canopy in parking areas to reduce the warming of our city as large parking-lots absorb heat during the day and radiate heat at night. This is commonly known as the “Heat Island Effect.”

Create tree lined visual buffers to screen the view of big-box stores and strip malls from passing traffic.

Increased the requirement for how many trees must remain on a developed site

TRANSPORTATION

Multimodal Transportation & Complete Streets

Transportation and land use patterns are inextricably linked. Transportation facilities and networks have the power to shape development, influence property values, and determine a neighborhood's character and quality of life.

Integrated transportation and land use planning gives people more choices for getting around their town and their region. Integrated networks of public transportation with bikeable and walkable routes makes it easier to incorporate physical activity into daily routines, reduces transportation costs, and gives more freedom and mobility to low-income individuals, senior citizens, disabled persons, and others who cannot or choose not to drive or own a car. San Antonio is setting a [good example for multimodal transportation](#) planning and action.

[Complete Streets](#) are an important part of integrated transportation, providing places that are more livable and safely navigated by all users, including cars, bicycles and pedestrians. More about Complete Streets can be found [here](#).

Slow Traffic on Main Street & Other Pedestrian Areas

Walking on South Main along the River Arts district is like walking along a highway. It's almost impossible to cross street for approximately 200 yards along the stretch from Bandera and Main to River Road.

Many common pedestrian crossing areas lack formal cross walks. This includes the Old #9 Trail, as well as many parts of Main Street, including the Historic District, as well as River Road. The Historic District is especially suited for becoming a 'pedestrian zone,' enhanced with features like benches, green areas, and other landscape features that encourage walking and driver caution.

The city can implement [simple strategies that will help slow traffic](#) and make drivers more aware of pedestrians, helping to ensure that pedestrians are not putting their lives at risk while navigating the city on foot.

[VIDEO: Traffic Calming](#)

Public Transportation with Electric Buses

Alleviating the traffic pressures on Boerne roads is quickly becoming a priority for most citizens. Eventually, the city will see the wisdom of adding public transportation to it's mix of transportation options. [Electric Buses](#) have come on line in recent years and they are being adopted in cities throughout the world because they are more economical, quiet and don't produce smog. Therefore, as Boerne explores the future of public transportation, electric buses are a sensible consideration. Here is one of the [latest electric bus](#) models to hit the streets.

CHARACTER & HERITAGE

Hill Country Architecture

Standard commercial building practices are threatening Boerne's charm. As strip malls and other commercial buildings are being introduced, the town is beginning to look more like San Antonio than Boerne. We shouldn't allow other businesses to brand this town with cookie-cutter structures and signs reminiscent of "Anytown, USA." This city needs an ordinance to protect the character that the citizens value.

Santa Fe and other cities have learned this lesson and implemented rules that have helped keep their cities charming and appealing to visitors, residents and new businesses. The character of Boerne can be preserved and enhanced by incorporating similar rules that are tailored to the architectural aesthetics that are unique to the hill country.

More Public Natural Areas

Wildlife viewing is a draw for tourists who visit Texas to bird watch and tour its natural areas and the natural setting is what attracts people to settle in the Hill Country.

A natural environment also provides [numerous health benefits](#) for children and adults! Here is a [list of scientific studies](#) showing the many health benefits of frequent exposure to natural areas.

In addition to natural areas, all recreational parks, including those with playing fields, can contain designated [“No Mow” zones](#) that provide wildlife habitat to butterflies and other pollinators, while simultaneously attracting song birds.

To make the best uses of the regions existing natural resources, Boerne needs a parks and natural areas strategy that spatially connects natural and recreation areas to neighborhoods, increasingly the livability of Boerne. In this regard, Boerne would greatly benefit from the creation of a comprehensive parks and vegetation plan similar to Austin’s [Urban Forest Plan](#).

AGRICULTURE

Public Agriculture Features

[Food forests](#) can be established throughout Boerne by planting perennial food plants, including fruit & nut trees along trails and on the peripheries of parks. Utilizing swales and berms on contour can significantly reduce the irrigation needs for these perennial food plants after they are established. Additionally, perennial plants are generally deep rooted and capable of withstanding severe drought.

Urban Agriculture Ordinance

As cities urbanize and modernize, the appeal of super-fresh, locally sourced food increases. This trend can be seen in cities throughout the nation, where urban gardening and other food production is growing in popularity.

Boerne can borrow ordinances from other areas with successful and highly active urban agriculture, ensuring that citizens and businesses can grow on their land in a manner that is consistent with “Best Practices” developed by other cities. Let’s be proactive, not reactive.

[Promoting Urban Agriculture Through Zoning](#)

[Urban Agriculture in Austin](#) see “Policies and Agreements”

UTILITIES

Water Security

Protecting Boerne Lake, a primary source of drinking water for the city, is of utmost importance. The area above and surrounding the lake should be required to utilize the very best water-quality management practices to protect the water shed.

Requiring every new home to be rainwater harvest ready is a sensible idea to prepare for an uncertain future. This can be accommodated by requiring a simple inlet valve on each new home as well as back-flow preventers to restrict rainwater from flowing into public water supplies.

Rainwater harvesting is also a beneficial component of a Low Impact Development strategy. By enabling landowners to secure their water future, they can also contribute to storm-water management.

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy is becoming cheaper every year and Boerne should evaluate its energy supply options accordingly.

Currently the city of Boerne receives and distributes electricity from CPS Energy. Meanwhile, the city of Georgetown, Texas realized that it makes more financial sense to acquire electricity from renewable sources. Similarly, the Bandera Electric Coop has also done the math and has started encouraging homeowners to install solar panels to reduce peak demand and help customers save moneys. These decisions are purely based on economic considerations.

Boerne is wise to have a “Distributed Energy Ordinance” which allows citizens to tie into the city’s electrical distribution system, enabling citizens to roll back their meters and receive energy credits for additional electricity that their system feeds into the grid. The city should promote the grid tied option and explore ways to facilitate solar energy adoption through incentives, which may help reduce peak demand costs throughout the city.

[CITY OF GEORGETOWN: “Georgetown Utility to be Completely Powered by Solar & Wind Energy by 2017”](#)

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Citizen Information Portal

The city does a decent job of making information available to citizens, but it does require some digging around to find the latest city council decisions, agenda items, etc.. Updates to our cities services should include an even easier to navigate portal for citizens seeking information.

Enhance Electronic Newsletter

It would be helpful if the city newsletter provided updates on pending agenda items as well as recent decisions from P&Z and City Council in their electronic newsletter. This will help citizens feel informed and become more engaged – potentially strengthening our community’s participation in our city government.

BROWNFIELD DEVELOPMENT

Old Waste Water Treatment Site

A brownfield is an abandoned, idled, or underused industrial or commercial facility in which redevelopment is burdened by real or potential environmental contamination.

When the old waste water treatment plant is retired, what should go there? This is a question worthy of exploration, public input and public review.