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Tyler, Texas

## Mayor Unveils Comprehensive City Plan



By JACQUE HILBURN  
Staff Writer

Tyler must aggressively carve out a positive future for its citizens or prepare for life as a zero-personality city with hodge-podge development and nightmarish traffic.

So predicts Mayor Joey Seeber, sparing few details Tuesday as he rolled out a citizen-based, "Tyler 21" Comprehensive Plan to shape the face of Tyler for the next 20, 30 and 50 years and beyond.

Details about the plan were unveiled during a special-called meeting of the Tyler City Council.

"If we don't have a workable plan, we're going to pay a high price," Seeber said. "One need only look at Grande Boulevard and see our failure to properly plan. We're spending millions trying to fix it — we don't want a lot of Grande Boulevards in our future."

"This is an unprecedented planning effort to have a community vision," he added. "This is an exciting time to be in Tyler."

— Staff Photo By David Branch  
**TYLER PLAN: Mayor Joey Seeber (at podium) discusses components of the "Tyler 21" Comprehensive Plan that was unveiled at the Tyler City Council meeting on Tuesday.**

Tuesday's plan outline, which shall serve as the conceptual framework for a final Comprehensive Plan, is designed to touch on a variety of aspects concerning city growth and services.

Tyler officials hope to tap into the knowledge resources of the community and planning experts to identify current and future needs, and then develop a way to address them.

As a companion project, the completed work will include a complete overhaul of zoning and subdivision codes, and creation of a comprehensive land use plan so development decisions made today will complement plans for tomorrow.

Tyler's completed Comprehensive Plan will center on seven key areas: transportation and traffic congestion mitigation; north end revitalization; downtown development; historic preservation; parks, open space and lakes; housing, neighborhoods and quality of life; public facilities and infrastructure.

Officials are touting the efforts — which could take between 18 and 24 months to reach final completion — as an investment in the city's future, and one which should include input from citizens from all areas and walks of life.

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**STEVE SMITH**  
District 1

"We often find ourselves reacting to situations when we really want to proactively plan. This plan will either work SMITH or not, depending upon the type of input from the citizens of Tyler — we're not going through this experience to put it on a shelf."



**JOYCE SCURRY**  
District 2

"This should warm everybody's hearts. North Tyler is the gateway to the city of Tyler."



**DERRICK CHOICE**  
District 3

"We see growth going south and not a lot going north. If there is no vision, the people will perish. This is our vision."



**CHRIS SIMONS**  
District 4

"We have a tremendous opportunity to shape the future of Tyler. Everybody has a little hot button, and this is SIMONS a great way to take ownership."



**NATHANIEL MORAN**  
District 5

"This is another great example of visionary leadership from both our staff and the mayor. It's unusual for some MORAN cities, when they achieve great things, to sit back and become complacent. Here in Tyler, we have a driving force that says, 'Get better, get better, get better.'"



**CHARLES ALWORTH**  
District 6

"We're all in this together. We're going to expand into North Tyler and clean up South Tyler to make it look good. To ALWORTH the citizens, please come and help. It's our plan and our city."



"This is an unprecedented planning effort to have a community vision. This is an exciting time to be in Tyler."

— Tyler Mayor Joey Seeber

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The creation of a base plan should take about 12 months with the remaining used to unify and implement new zoning codes, officials noted.

Seeber said the move to create a Comprehensive Plan was preceded by the realization that Tyler has more than 101,000 inhabitants, based on results obtained from a private study commissioned by the city.

It differs from the previously announced Vision 2010 plan because components are essentially a game plan for the city, not just a listing of recommendations, the mayor said.

"This is a plan of action," Seeber said. "If we don't get public participation, this plan won't be what it should be ... one of the most important things is land use. The stakes are the limit — we're not going to set limits."

### GETTING STARTED

The council agreed on Tuesday to hire the nationally-recognized professional planning firm Goody Clancy, based in Boston, Mass., to bring the project to fruition.

The award-winning firm is expected to coordinate resources with at least seven other firms, mayor appointees and a contingency of average citizens to find out what Tyler citizens want for their city, and then create a plan for how to produce it.

Goody Clancy, the lead firm, has experience in building plans for cities throughout the U.S., including Miami, Savannah and Baltimore. Some of its most current work centers on helping rebuild areas along the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast.

The city expects to spend about \$500,000 for the base plan, with another \$115,000 to overhaul existing codes, said Tyler Deputy City Manager Mark McDaniel.

Money for these projects will be withdrawn over the course of two fiscal year budgets with about 50 percent coming from a one-time revenue payment from oil and gas leases at Lake Tyler, and the remaining from a special capital improvements fund started last year, McDaniel added.

A special mayor's task force was selected Tuesday to act as the steering committee, which is scheduled to meet Wednesday.

Committee members include Dan Aguiño, Joan Brooks, Mike Butler, Nelson Clyde IV, Bob Garrett, Reginald Garrett, Randy Grooms, Hector Guevara, Charles Halstead, JoAnn Hampton, Gayard Hughey, Robert Reiter, Sandy Shepard, Lomny Uzzell and Walter Wilhelmi.

Council members representing each district and state Sen. Kevin Eltife will also serve as ex officio and non-voting members of the steering committee, officials said.

The steering committee will be asked to select citizens to form small sub-committees, one for each area of the city. These sub-groups will help gather community input and provide information back to the steering committee.

At the same time, Goody Clancy representatives will be working with other specialty firms, which are subcontracted to provide additional planning assistance.

Those firms and their specific areas of expertise include: Freese & Nichols, transportation, public services, facilities and citizen input; Planning Concepts, public participation, open space and recreation, on-site assistance; Neighborhood America, Web site development and maintenance; ETC Institute, public opinion survey; Mary Means & Associates, downtown planning; ZHA, real estate and economic analysis; and Duncan Associates, zoning.

"We congratulate your city for recognizing what's happening to you," said Larissa Brown, chief planner for Goody Clancy. "Tyler has been growing very fast and this makes it a critical moment, the perfect moment, to develop a plan. What you need to do is capitalize on things you've already started. All communities face change, whether they like it or not. A comprehensive plan just gives you policy guidelines for physical change so that it will be positive."

Community input and information will be crucial to build a workable plan, Ms. Brown added.

To glean public input, officials will immediately begin work on a special Web site to provide information, post meeting schedules, display maps or graphics, post draft documents and collect public responses.

There will also be project newsletters, displays, a public opinion survey, citywide vision workshops, neighborhood open houses and working

group meetings.

Other information will be gained through interviews with community leaders and stakeholders, and close study of existing data, such as maps, studies and reports.

Analysis will include areas such as socioeconomic, environmental, cultural, community character and zoning codes.

"It's very important that the plan belong to the people who live and work and have businesses in Tyler," Ms. Brown said. "We are offering lots of different ways for people to get involved — the purpose of a plan is to get accepted."

### PLAN COMPONENTS

Officials predict the completed project will have recommendations for immediate, interim and future actions, based on Tyler 21 vision and goals.

In the second phase, committee participants will be asked to focus on specific target areas to obtain information, which include:

- Transportation and traffic congestion mitigation — This plan is designed to improve conditions on South Broadway Avenue, south of Loop 323. Key issues will focus on existing conditions, growth management, urban design, access management, traffic signals, transportation, land use and incorporation of Master Street Plan.

- North End Revitalization — This plan will focus on strategies for housing development, rehabilitation, commercial development, transportation improvements, neighborhood amenities and possibly a community development corporation or similar non-profit development entity. Key areas include: assessment of existing conditions, market analysis, mixed-income housing strategies, commercial/retail development, transportation, parking, open space and parks.

- Downtown Master Plan — This plan will be based on work already conducted by Heart of Tyler Main Street and participating stakeholders. Key issues include: analysis of existing conditions, market analysis, design guidelines, housing strategies, commercial/retail development, transportation and parks, arts and culture, manager and programming.

- Historic Preservation — This plan will be designed to enhance and promote historic character. Key components include: reviews of existing historic district homes, landmark information, preservation priorities, potential landmarks or districts and preservation strategies.

- Open Space and Recreation — This plan will include existing inventories, previous plans and future projects regarding parks, trails, open space and water recreation, including Lake Tyler, Lake Tyler East and Bellwood. Key areas will include assessments of the following: existing services and preferred goals, meeting future needs, improved connectivity for bike, pedestrian trails, park development, Lakes Master Plan, recreational opportunities, open space, property use and design character.

- Housing and Community Identity — This plan is designed to focus on improving residential quality of life to include urban design, neighborhood image and commercial fringes. Officials plan to address issues such as existing organization and structure; neighborhoods in need of preservation; protection and rehabilitation; and development trends. Key issues will focus on growth management, rehabilitation and infill, connectivity strategies, design guidelines, affordable housing needs, affording housing production strategies, commercial evaluation, commercial design guidelines.

- Public Facilities and Services — This plan will focus on existing plans for the airport, fire stations and potential locales for municipal facilities. Key focus areas also include extending water plan into 5-mile extra-territorial jurisdiction and identifying future needs and city sites.

Areas incorporated into these plans include extra-territorial jurisdiction and annexation; economic development planning; and future land use.

Final phases put all this information together to form individual plans for each study area, followed by implementation and creation of a final document.

Lastly, but equally important, is a total rewrite of the zoning codes, officials said.

"I am not concerned that Tyler won't continue to grow over the next 20 or 30 years," the mayor said.

"What I am concerned about is how that growth will take place. Now is the time to step in and decide what kind of city we will leave for our children and grandchildren."