

Focus Group 4 Meeting Summary

July 23, 2024



City of Tomball

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

ABOUT THE MEETING

The fourth Focus Group meeting for the Tomball Comprehensive Plan was held on July 23, 2024, at Tomball City Hall. The Focus Group is made up of 17 community stakeholders representing various agencies, neighborhoods, and businesses. In addition to the Focus Group members, City staff from the Community Development Department, the Mayor, some City Council members, and community members attended the meeting. The consultant team from Freese and Nichols, Inc. (FNI) facilitated the meeting.

The meeting began with a project update and a review of the revised future land use map, economic development recommendations, and downtown recommendations based on feedback from the previous meeting. Then, the Focus Group discussed the proposed housing strategies, community character, neighborhood enhancement, and draft transportation assessment. The meeting closed with final thoughts and next steps.

Photos from the Meeting



DISCUSSION

The following notes are a transcription of the comments made during the meeting.

Economic Development

The draft economic development strategies were revised based on the feedback received in the previous meeting. The Focus Group provided additional comments on the changes that were made. The economic development strategies can be found in the agenda packet.

Discussion Notes

- Tomball has enough wedding venues. The City needs a conference center.
 - The City loses a lot of business because there is not a conference center. People who come to stay in Tomball go to Vintage Park or Spring for events and spend tax dollars there.
 - All the hotel owners are ready to work together to have a shared shuttle service for a conference center.
 - The preferred location for the conference center is downtown. However, the group is open to considering a different location within the city limits, provided that the facility is conference-sized and has multiple breakout rooms.
 - The Chamber of Commerce and City Council have also heard about the need for a conference center from various community members. The need for a conference center was also discussed at the City's previous Council meeting.

Future Land Use Map

The future land use map was revised based on feedback from the focus group. The consultant team presented the revised map, and the Focus Group provided additional comments or questions. The revised map can be found in the meeting presentation and agenda packet.

Discussion Notes

- Change properties directly adjacent on the north of Hufsmith Road from rural residential to neighborhood commercial. The changes should follow the parcel boundary.
- Keep properties adjacent to Zion Road rural residential.
- It is difficult to differentiate between high-density residential and medium-density residential designations on the map, with the hatching overlaid designating the proposed changes on the map.
- Change the area south of Agg Road and west of Persimmon Street from mixed-use to neighborhood commercial.
 - Property owners along Persimmon Street were under the impression that this area was to be developed as industrial, which is on the current land use plan.
 - Would prefer a similar development to the one going in on the corner of Persimmon Street and Agg Road.
- The group would like a written summary of proposed changes to the future land use map posted on the project website for public review.

Housing

The consultant team presented the housing assessment and proposed strategies to meet the housing needs of the Tomball community. The Focus Group provided comments or questions. The draft housing assessment and strategies can be found in the agenda packet.

Discussion Notes

- Is there a correlation between population and the amount of low income in a City?
 - Generally, it is contextual because it is hard to find standards due to varying income levels in different communities.
- Are the housing statistics for both the City of Tomball and ETJ?
 - The housing statistics only reflect the numbers for the City of Tomball.
- Do we need to propose this many starter homes?
 - The public engagement, focus group, and market assessment highlighted the need for more missing middle housing options such as townhomes, patio homes, etc.
- With small tracts, are there going to be more restrictions?
 - There are issues with accountability and enforcement.
 - One way to promote the type of desired development is to explore the creation of architectural standards for the Unified Development Code Update. Building materials cannot be regulated by the city, but there are other standards that can be incorporated.
- Do we know the absorption rate of the neighborhoods in Tomball?
 - The consultant team does not have that information at this time.
- There are concerns about people not being able to afford and being approved for homes in Tomball.
- Need to focus on the look, feel, and upkeep of the apartments. Explore strategies to mandate the look of apartments for the Comprehensive Plan and the Unified Development Code.

Community Character and Neighborhood Enhancement

The consultant team presented the draft strategies for enhancing community character and neighborhoods in Tomball. The Focus Group provided comments or questions. The draft community character and neighborhood enhancement strategies can be found in the agenda packet.

Discussion Notes

- Gateways
 - The focus groups identified the following locations for branding signage on major gateways.
 - Coming in from the city limits to SH 249.
- Wayfinding signage in Old Town should also be included.
 - Locations for proposed wayfinding and branding signage in Old Town are shown in the Old Town Recommendations Map included in the agenda packet.

- Do we have design and engineering recommendations for locating wayfinding signage?
 - Engineering and design standards for proposed signage will not be included as part of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Other potential destinations in the City the wayfinding signage can include:
 - Stadium
 - Museum
 - Baseball Fields
 - ISD facilities

Transportation

The consultant team presented the transportation assessment and draft transportation strategies. The Focus Group provided comments or questions. The draft transportation strategies are included in the agenda packet.

Discussion Notes

- What is the relationship between the City and the County?
 - The City needs to maintain a good relationship.
 - Both Zion Road and Cherry Street are county-owned.
- Connections from the Martin Luther King Jr. Park to the Community Center are proposed.
- Need walkways from Old Town to the swimming pool.
- Need to put more sidewalks and bike paths.
 - Specifically, on Ulrich Road north of Hufsmith Road.
- The City was awarded a federal grant for an engineering jump-start project on Persimmon Street, Cherry Street, and Hufsmith Road.
 - Sidewalks are proposed on these roads as part of the grant.
- The City is hoping to get additional grants next year.
- Can we have some type of trolley on the adjacent block on both sides of Main Street, similar to the trolley in Galveston?
 - It can connect Old Town destinations to existing public parking in Old Town.
- Can we propose a parking garage in Old Town?
 - It is something that can be considered. A small 2-story garage could be appropriate.
- Need more trails.
- Need to address traffic issues.