



## **A “Question and Answer” Guide through the Adoption Process of Brenham’s Downtown Master Plan**

Should the City of Brenham adopt a Downtown Master Plan?

The City Council and the Brenham Community Development Corporation received input from interested stakeholders in the Downtown and community that the City of Brenham should allocate funds for the creation of a master plan to help facilitate economic development, encourage revitalization, and plan for the development of Downtown. In the summer of 2011, the Council and BCDC each allocated \$50,000 during the budgeting process to fund the creation of a master plan to achieve these goals. This plan is a result of Community input on needs and City staff as worked to facilitate this process.

What is a master plan?

A master plan should guide (wanted) change (as a result of public input), but is not so in depth as to thoroughly investigate, review, and discuss every component of the plan that is recommended to help guide that change. This happens during the implementation of the specific components of the plan. After the plan is adopted, it becomes a document of master ideas based on the wants and needs of the community as it was expressed during the planning process. If a component of the plan is deemed worthy to implement once it has been investigated, reviewed, and discussed, then it’s implemented. If a component is decided to not be in the best interest of *all* the citizens within the City of Brenham after investigation, review, and discussion, then it’s not implemented.

What discussions and planning has occurred during the Master Planning process?

The master plan document was created based on public input. Many meetings have been held to gather this input. For the past several months, the City’s goal has to been to complete the Master Planning process by June of 2012. In addition to the public meetings held in the planning process, all concept plans, and draft documents were placed online and additional public comment invited. A Steering Committee of Brenham and Washington County citizens was formed to oversee the formulation of the draft plan and to ensure it was a citizen driven plan rather than a consultant driven plan.

The specifics of these meetings include:

*Tuesday, November 1, 2011* – A meeting specifically inviting the Downtown business and property owners to meet with the Consultants hired to create the master plan.

*Monday, January 23, 2012* – 1st Public Workshop was held (and facilitated by the Consultants) to gather input from citizens on the future community vision for Downtown. Information regarding the Master Plan was placed on the City of Brenham's website on February 10<sup>th</sup> of 2012.

*Thursday, February 16, 2012* – A meeting facilitated by the Steering Committee to review the questions posed by the Consultants at the 1<sup>st</sup> Public Workshop was held, as well as gather additional input from those citizens that could not attend that first workshop.

*Tuesday, April 10, 2012* – 2<sup>nd</sup> Public Workshop was held and facilitated by the Consultants to present the concept, or framework, plan they created as a result of the input they received. The concept, or framework, plan, as well as the Consultants presentation, was placed on the City of Brenham's website after the meeting.

*Monday, May 7, 2012* – City Leaders meeting was held and facilitated by the Consultants to review, in depth, the plan. This was a joint meeting for the Main Street Board, Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council. The purpose of this meeting was so the City leaders would have a good working knowledge of the plan as we move towards adoption of the plan. The draft plan was placed on the City of Brenham's website on May 8<sup>th</sup> of 2012 and currently remains on the website today for public review and comment.

*Tuesday, May 29, 2012* – Extra informational meeting regarding the Master Plan is to be held, specifically for Downtown business and property owners.

*Thursday, June, 21, 2012* – Scheduled consideration of the Master Plan by City Council.

What changes and/or improvements are to be made in the Downtown Area?

The plan covers a lot of changes or improvements to be considered for the Downtown area. Before implementation of any specific changes or improvements are to be made, after the adoption of the plan, City Staff, the Main Street Board, Planning and Zoning Commission, and City Council must all prioritize the recommendations within the plan. Some components of the plan may be implemented within the next five years, while other components may take 10, 15, 20, or 25 years to implement. Additionally, some components of the plan may never be implemented after investigation deems them to be impracticable for the City of Brenham. A master plan is meant to guide City staff and leaders as they work on changes that give Downtown cohesiveness and facilitates the economic development and revitalization that the community, as a whole, has expressed it wants. *However, adoption of the plan is not the same as funding projects or passing new regulations; it is only a suggestion from citizens that the City explore these possibilities.*

What revisions to the Zoning Ordinance and other development regulations will be adopted, including use restrictions? Additionally, what other regulations or restrictions on property would be imposed regarding improvements, maintenance, and the use of buildings and property within Downtown would be adopted?

The Master Plan does recommend amendments to the zoning regulations as well as adopting other regulations; *however the document does not make those amendments*. It is meant to guide City staff, City Boards and Commissions, and ultimately City Council when considering these types of regulations.

All amendments to the Zoning Ordinance must follow the procedures outlined within the Zoning Ordinance. For amendments to the text of the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning and Zoning Commission must review the proposed changes, hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council. Additionally, these proposed changes are notified in the newspaper. Zoning District changes follow the same procedures, with the addition of notification of all property owners included within the zoning district proposed to be changed, as well as property owners that own property within 200 feet of the proposed new zoning district, by mail.

As with all ordinances the City Council considers, that either amend existing regulations or adopt new regulations, a public hearing must be held and reading of the new ordinance must occur twice before the ordinance can be adopted.

These procedures ensure there is opportunity for the public and affected property owners to give input on the proposed changes before those changes are voted on.

It is also important to note that currently, the existing building code adopted by the City of Brenham allows for enforcement of many codes as it pertains to the maintenance of a building, especially if it's deemed a public nuisance. Additionally, the Zoning Ordinance also regulates uses of all property within the City of Brenham. The City of Brenham has adopted the 2003 ICC Building Codes and the Zoning Ordinance adopted by the City of Brenham is posted online, at the City of Brenham's website.

What enforcement mechanisms would be adopted including fines and/or penalties against property owners or business owners for non-compliance?

If a property owner or business owner does not comply with adopted Building Code or Zoning Ordinance regulations, then a citation can be issued. Building Code violations carry a maximum fine of \$500.00 plus court costs while Zoning violations carry a maximum fine of up to \$2000.00 plus court costs per day. These fines are set by the Municipal Court Judge, if a citizen is found guilty of the violation.

What are the costs of the proposed improvements within the plan as they are implemented?

There are many capital improvements shown in the plan and each proposed improvement will have to be broken into a specific project and an estimate for that project completed. Costs for capital improvements can vary from year-to-year. These proposed capital improvements would have to be weighed against other capital improvement needs within the City as they compete for funding.

How will those costs be paid? (new taxes, fees, assessments, etc.)

The plan suggests possible municipal revenue streams that should be investigated to pay for proposed capital improvements. Any new taxes, fees, or assessments would have to be approved and adopted by the City Council and a public hearing and input process would be followed. Review of the municipal revenue section of the Master Plan will fully explain all available options the State legislature has granted Cities when raising monies for capital improvement expenditures within a designated area or district.

What involvement, if any, will Washington County have?

County governments are limited in what powers they have by the State legislature and what they are mandated to do also limits the resources they have. However, there is a section of the Master Plan that outlines different partnerships that can be formed with the City for the revitalization of Downtown. It is important to remember that this Master Plan is a City initiated plan and will mostly be used by City leaders.