

May 1, 2001

Re: **Area 7 Neighborhood Roundtable Meeting (March 29, 2001)  
Responses to Major Issues and Comments**

Dear

The City Council and I were very pleased with the turnout at our community outreach meeting at Schimelfpenig Library. We learned much from your comments and questions. We look forward to working with you to build a stronger city and a better quality of life. Following is a synopsis of the issues discussed as well as some additional information on each topic.

### **Traffic**

As voiced at the meeting, some of the most important issues facing Plano today relate to traffic.

**Congestion** - Rapid growth has increased traffic congestion, and transportation improvements must be balanced between development and need. Traffic flow is being improved through new road construction, intersection improvements and signalization throughout the City. At this time, the City has a program to install separate right turn lanes at the approaches to all major intersections. Developers as a requirement of city ordinances build most new roads, including arterial streets, when they subdivide and develop land. Because private land development is a fragmented process, it takes many years to fully develop the planned arterial street system. The City also builds arterial streets. This is a more expensive option because the City pays for right-of-way and improvements with little financial participation by private property owners. Road widening and intersection improvements are also City-initiated projects. City bond programs and funds received from state, county and regional sources are used to pay for these road projects. Project timing and funding are coordinated through the City's Capital Improvement Program.

Traffic signals are essential to managing traffic flow. Currently, most of the city's traffic signals are computer-coordinated and use signal-timing patterns that can change as the amount of daily traffic congestion changes. Last year the City began revising the timing patterns of its signals to improve the ability of a driver to travel without excessive stops. The result of this effort is reduced wear and tear on your vehicle, saved gas, and improved air quality. Video cameras are also used at a number of intersections in the City to monitor traffic flow. Several new cameras will be installed at intersections in the near future. At this time, however, Texas State law does not permit the use of cameras and photographs for the enforcement of red light violations. When and if this changes, the City will pursue this enforcement option.

The City uses criteria based on the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) to determine when a traffic signal is needed at a particular location. The criterion considers the amount of delay experienced by side street traffic, proximity of other signals, the speed of traffic on the road, and past reported traffic collisions. Intersections are routinely monitored and signals are installed when the criteria are met. These criteria were recently revised to allow more intersections to qualify for signalization.

A Traffic Engineer is specifically assigned to oversee the City's Neighborhood Traffic Management program. This program works with citizens and homeowner associations on specific traffic problems such as determining the need for traffic calming devices in areas. If you would like more information, please call the Engineering Department at (972) 941-7151.

**Violations** - It was also voiced that the City should continue to take a tough stance on traffic violations. I wish to assure you, City Council and the Police Department place traffic safety as a high priority. As such, the following initiatives have been implemented:

- ◆ **Two additional officers have been assigned to the Traffic Unit for fiscal year 2001.** - Motorcycle officers are extremely effective at traffic enforcement and the Department will have a total of nine with the new additions.
- ◆ **Red Light Hotline** – Citizens can call directly to the Traffic Unit at (972) 941-LITE and report motorists running red lights. The Department will identify the registered owner of the vehicle and send them a letter outlining the complaint and explaining the program.
- ◆ **Red Light/Speeding Pledge Card** – The Department is educating citizens by asking them to read a short narrative describing the red light and speeding problems in our community and the consequences of these violations. Citizens are asked to sign a card pledging they will drive courteously and not violate traffic laws.
- ◆ **Warning Signs** – Red warning signs have been placed at the top 10 red light crash intersections in the city, indicating the number of red light citations issued at that particular intersection to date. Additional signs have been placed at all city limit sites. These signs are updated quarterly.

- ◆ **Decoy Patrol Car Program** – The Police Department has increased its enforcement and visibility at high accident locations throughout the city. Unmanned patrol cars have been strategically positioned near these locations. This allows traffic officers freedom to work enforcement elsewhere and still provide a deterrent effect in high violation areas. Rotated on a regular basis, violators will not know if the intersection they approach is monitored by a manned or unmanned squad car.
- ◆ **Red Light Enforcement Grant** – The Police Department has taken advantage of a state sponsored grant allowing officers to work in an overtime status enforcing signal light violations at the top 20 accident-prone intersections in Plano.
- ◆ **Commercial Vehicle (Rock Haulers/18 Wheelers) Inspections** – The Police Department currently has 12 officers certified as Department of Transportation Commercial Vehicle Inspectors. These officers are allowed to stop commercial vehicles for the purpose of performing safety inspections in areas such as brakes, radar detectors, fire extinguishers and weight limits. Citations are issued when measures are not met. The Department strives to perform commercial vehicle inspection operations at least once per week, focusing on random major thoroughfares throughout the city.
- ◆ **Increased Fines** – Last year, the Plano Municipal Court raised the minimum fine for a red light violation from \$50 to \$100. Effective April 1, 2001, the fine for a red light violation in which an accident was involved was raised from \$100 to the state maximum of \$200. The fine for a minor driving under the influence of alcohol was raised from \$200 to \$500.

### **Zoning and Development Activity**

The City of Plano has utilized various programs to manage the extraordinary growth that we have experienced for the last thirty years. For example, developers may not create new residential or commercial additions that do not have basic public facilities such as water and sanitary sewer lines, street access and storm drainage facilities. City policies require that the developers pay the lion's share of the cost for basic infrastructure improvements through direct construction, water and sewer impact fees and neighborhood park fees. These fees, in addition to capital improvement bonds, have allowed the City to also build the necessary public facilities such as libraries and fire stations to serve the new growth.

Please be assured, the City of Plano is committed to protecting the rights of neighborhoods, as well as developers, to pursue their interests within the established legal framework of procedures and standards. The City strives to inform neighborhoods of proposed development and provide the opportunity for neighborhoods to express their desires and concerns to public decision-making bodies. The City of Plano continues to encourage developers and neighborhoods to openly communicate and seek ways to ensure beneficial and compatible development.

Information regarding requested zoning changes within a particular area is sent to nearby homeowner associations. In addition, information on new zoning and development requests is placed on the City's Internet home page [www.planotx.org](http://www.planotx.org) and the Plano cable channels (TCI channels A-30 and B-58), and is also available in the public libraries. Although not required by state law, applicants for zoning cases in Plano must place a zoning sign on the property notifying the public of the pending zoning action. The City gives a small sign to the applicant for specific use permit requests. For larger tracts of land, the applicant must contract with a sign company to have a large wooden sign erected on the property. All of the signs give the Planning Department's phone number, so that citizens may call in to get more information about the proposed zoning action.

The City sends written notices 20 days in advance of the public hearing for a zoning case, although state law only requires 10 days advance notice. The City elected to extend this time so that homeowner groups would have more time to learn the details of the case and meet with the property owners to discuss their concerns. The notices are sent to property owners within 200 feet of the affected property, as required by current state law. Notices are also sent to the presidents of homeowner associations that are within 1500 feet of any request for rezoning. The president of the Plano Homeowners Council receives a notice of all zoning cases that have been requested.

Below is a list of various media and access information you may find useful in keeping abreast of development activity in our city.

- ◆ **Publications**  
Information is carried in the Friday edition of the Dallas Morning News, (Page 2 of the Plano Section, Plano City Briefs).
- ◆ **Cable TV**  
Information on upcoming development and zoning cases are listed on Plano's cable channels - A30 (in Plano) and B58 (in Dallas). Planning & Zoning Commission meetings are broadcast live every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month at 7 p.m. Plans are underway to begin live broadcasting of the P & Z Worksessions as well.
- ◆ **Public Library**  
Information on upcoming development and zoning cases is available at all Plano public libraries.
- ◆ **Internet**  
The City of Plano's web site address is <http://www.planotx.org>. A list of new development applications and zoning applications can be found on the City's web page under the "Meetings/Agendas" section. Click on "Tentative Items for Future Meetings" to access this list. The list is available approximately two weeks before the cases are scheduled for the Planning & Zoning Commission agenda.

◆ **Training**

The Planning Department sponsors several classes throughout the year on zoning and development issues. These classes are specifically tailored for homeowner association representatives. If you would like more information regarding these classes, please contact the Planning Department, at (972) 941-7151.

## **Property and Housing Issues**

**Neighborhood Preservation in East Plano** - For several years the City has been upgrading streets, utilities and storm drainage systems in the older subdivision in the eastern part of Plano. Many of these subdivisions are eligible for housing rehabilitation programs funded by the City's share of the Federal Community Development Block Grant program. The City typically assists between 50-60 homeowners annually with repairs funded by this program. To promote homeownership, the City also offers down payment assistance for eligible first-time homebuyers.

Two years ago the City also started a Neighborhood Planning program. City staff works with each participating neighborhood to identify needed improvements, usually for increased code enforcement, street and alley repair, traffic and speeding problems, and general clean-up of properties and parks. Through this partnership, each neighborhood concentrates on eliminating specific problems that plague their particular areas. Concentrated code enforcement also takes place in these areas, and the City organizes neighborhood clean-up campaigns with additional dumpsters and bulk waste collections.

**Junked and Abandoned Vehicles** – Junked vehicles are those that have an expired license or registration and are wrecked, dismantled, or inoperable and parked for more than 72 hours on public property or 30 consecutive days on private property. The owners of these vehicles may be cited and be required to appear in municipal court. If the City wishes to remove a junked vehicle that is visible from the public right of way, it must first hold a public hearing to determine if the vehicle is a nuisance by showing it is a safety or fire hazard, invites vandalism, reduces the property value, and produces urban blight. Abandoned vehicles are those left on public or private property without the consent of the real property owner. The vehicle must be inoperable, at least eight years old and be parked for more than 48 hours. You may call the Police Department's non-emergency number at (972) 424-5678 to report vehicles that are a nuisance.

## **Homeowners Associations**

City Council is continually seeking and implementing new ways to better connect with the citizens. Through working with homeowners' associations, Council receives valuable input concerning issues specific to each neighborhood as well as issues affecting our City as a whole.

### **Infrastructure Construction, Repair and Maintenance**

The City's Capital Improvement Program is proactive in keeping the streets in good condition. Street improvements for the Area 7 roundtable include:

- ◆ **Independence Parkway from Parker to McDermott** - Widening of road from four to six lanes.
- ◆ **Hedcoxe from Custer to Preston** – Widening of road from four to six lanes. Project currently under design.
- ◆ **Bass Alley Reconstruction** – West of Alma on the north side. Replacement of existing alley pavement.
- ◆ **Pleasant Valley Sewer** – North of Spring Creek. Replacement of existing sanitary sewer.
- ◆ **Spring Creek Parkway from Custer to Preston** – Street lighting will be completed summer 2001.
- ◆ **Legacy between Falcon and Quarry Chase Trail** – The construction of a screening wall on the north side will begin early summer 2001.

With regard to street repair, state law mandates any project exceeding \$15,000 must be competitively bid and the bid awarded to the lowest “responsible” bidder. Many factors may be considered when determining a “responsible” bidder, such as: safety record, quality of previous work, ability to perform requested work, etc. All street repair contracts include a one-year maintenance bond covering deficiencies in workmanship and materials.

Asphalt street repairs are usually temporary in nature. They are made to restore the serviceability of the roadway until permanent repairs can be made. To request a street repair, please call the Public Works Department at (972) 964-4104. The Public Works Department investigates all calls for street repairs. The volume of traffic, the facilities served by the roadway, and the severity of damage is considered when repairs are prioritized.

Also, the City has a program of targeted improvements in which designated neighborhoods are identified on a scheduled basis. California Street, specifically mentioned at our meeting, is included in one of the scheduled areas for improvements to be made in 2001.

Additionally, a new web page is dedicated to the City of Plano's Capital Improvement Program and features a status interactive map. This web page offers citizens information on street closures, status of CIP projects, and City contacts for each project. You can find this information at <http://www.planogis.org>.

## **Parks, Creeks and Medians**

Litter throughout the city is always a challenge. Unfortunately, spring rains exacerbate litter in the parks as the debris is washed into the creeks. If you wish to report a litter problem, please call (972) 941-7263 and a work order will be routed to the appropriate maintenance area. As mentioned specifically during our meeting, a work request for Jack Carter Park has been initiated and the park will be investigated for clean-up needs.

It was proposed during our meeting, in an effort to help alleviate the litter problem, perhaps the City of Plano should initiate Adopt-a-Park and Adopt-a-Creek programs similar to what is done with the Adopt-a-Highway program. I am pleased to report the Plano Parks Foundation and Keep Plano Beautiful currently have programs in place to address all of these needs. If you or your organization is interested in adopting a park or a creek, please contact the City of Plano Parks Department at (972) 941-7263 and you will be directed to the appropriate person to discuss specifics of the programs.

**Independence Parkway Median** – As noted during our meeting, AT&T has an existing easement that runs in the median of Independence from Spring Creek Parkway to Clymer, north of Legacy. AT&T has refused to allow the City to place standard landscaping in this median which includes trees. In working with various homeowners, the City's Parks Department has agreed to plant wildflowers in this section of the median. Due to recent construction in this area, the flowers will be sown in the fall.

## **Public Safety**

**Traffic Violations** – I would like to re-emphasize City Council's initiatives aimed at reducing red light and speeding violations in our City. City Council is dedicated to resolving these important safety concerns by supporting the Police Department with the following efforts:

- addition of two traffic officers this fiscal year;
- launching of a red light hotline;
- creation of a red light/speeding pledge card to educate citizens and gain compliance;
- installation of red light warning signs at the top 10 crash intersections and city limits;
- participation in state assisted red light enforcement grant;
- certification of twelve officers as commercial vehicle inspectors; and
- implementation of a decoy patrol car program.

**Citizens Handicap Parking Patrol** – On March 26, 2001, the Plano Police Department launched a new program to combat illegal handicap parking. The Citizens Handicap Parking Patrol is a cooperative effort between the citizens of Plano and the Plano Police Department, which allows trained volunteers to issue parking citations for handicap parking violations. The volunteers are provided citation books, identification signs for their vehicles, orange vests, and a camera prior to going on patrol. This program brings enforcement to those persons violating the law and helps ensure those in our city who are handicapped will have a place to park. The Plano Police Department will train and supervise those who wish to participate in the program. Should you be interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact Sergeant A. D. Paul at (972) 941-2581.

**Crime Watch** - The Crime Prevention Unit of the Police Department is very active with neighborhood Crime Watch. If you would like to join your neighborhood's Crime Watch program or would like to begin a Crime Watch program in your area, please contact the Crime Prevention Unit at (972) 941-2431. A Crime Prevention Officer will be happy to assist you with any questions you may have.

The city of Plano continues to be one of the safest cities in the state of Texas and the United States with populations over 100,000 in which to live. Since the 1990 census, the city of Plano has experienced a 70% increase in population. During this same period of time, major crime (homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, theft, auto theft) have increased by only 18%. But more importantly with the explosive population growth, the rate of major crime per thousand citizens has actually decreased 28% since 1990. Most recently, Plano was ranked as one of the top 25 safest cities in the U.S. with population over 75,000.

**Emergency Warning System** – Information about the City of Plano Emergency Warning System is distributed to the community in many ways, including: City Briefs, monthly utility billing inserts, cable TV, and on the City of Plano web site [www.planotx.org](http://www.planotx.org). The Public Safety Communications Department takes advantage of several community events to further educate the public about the warning system. These events include the Balloon Festival, homeowners associations meetings, and police and fire citizen academies. For your convenience, a copy of the Community Warning System information from our web site has been included in this letter. Should you have any questions regarding this system, please contact C. J. Howard, Fire Department Emergency Manager, at (972) 941-7604.

Your City Council places public safety as a high priority and continues to allocate resources to this area during budgetary considerations to ensure we maintain a safe, secure environment for our community.

## **OTHER TOPICS OF CONCERN**

**Placement of Street Name Signs** – There was a question called in after our meeting that concerned the distance street signs are placed from intersections. Street name signs in Plano are generally placed on top of stop signs at intersections. Ninety percent of municipalities handle street signs in this manner. Otherwise a large number of additional posts must be erected to accommodate the signs. Because the posts for stop signs must be placed a certain distance from the intersection to allow for a vehicle's safe stop, at times it may difficult to read a street name when traveling on major thoroughfares. However the City of Plano places very large street name signs on the signal light structures at all major thoroughfares to assist motorists with directions.

**Cinemark at Legacy** – No additional entrances are planned at this time for the Cinemark at Legacy theater. However, as surrounding property is developed, additional driveways will be provided for these buildings which will also provide more access to the theater and ease the traffic congestion in the area.

**Wal-Mart** – In 2000, the Planning & Zoning Commission approved plans for the Wal-Mart neighborhood grocery development at the northeast corner of Independence Parkway and

Hedgcoxe Road. The company has not started construction and its plans for the property at this time are not known.

**DART** – After conducting public hearings and performing a site selection analysis, the DART Board voted in November 1999 to locate and fund a Light Rail Transit (LRT) station just south of SH 190 in the City of Richardson. The City of Plano is working with DART, TXDOT, and the City of Richardson to finalize the technical design of this facility. Construction is scheduled to begin later this year, and the station is expected to be operational in 2003.

The Plano Transit Village is currently under construction with service scheduled to partially open in fall 2001. The rail stop facility, when it opens in 2003, will be less than 300 feet from the historic Interurban Station Museum and will provide trains arriving and departing at 10-minute intervals.

In the fall of 2000, the DART Board voted to locate a bus transit center near the North Dallas Tollway in the area of Tennyson Parkway. This Northwest Plano Transit Center station is now in the stages of public hearings and preliminary funding for land acquisition and construction. Total costs for this project is estimate at \$6.5M. The project construction is expected to be complete in three years.

With regard to the request for shelters at bus stops, shelters are typically constructed at locations where significant ridership (approximately 50 passengers per day) has needed access to the public transit system. In addition, adequate street lighting, landscaping, and periodic monitoring by public safety, is required to make the location an attractive and safe point to embark/disembark. Exceptions to this DART policy, which is applied to all 13-member cities, may be explored by calling the City of Plano's DART Liaison at 972-941-7151.

**Spring Creek Parkway as Future Major E/W Thoroughfare** – Many years ago Plano City forefathers developed a major street network plan to move significant amounts of traffic quickly and safely through the city. The developed plan, called the Plano Thoroughfare Plan, identifies Spring Creek Parkway as the major east/west expressway road through the city. This route is also identified on the Regional Arterial Plan developed in partnership with the Dallas area Council of Governments. Major features along this road include planned interchange grade separations at SH 121, Dallas North Tollway, Windhaven, Preston Road, Coit Road, Independence Parkway, Custer Road, US 75, and Jupiter Road.

The City is currently conducting a traffic study of needed interchange grade separations along Preston Road. Included in this study is the planned grade separation at Spring Creek Parkway. As future traffic increases on Spring Creek cause unacceptable traffic delays and congestion, other planned grade separations along this road will be evaluated. If studies show a public benefit from constructing these facilities, possible funding sources will be identified, feasibility studies and cost estimates prepared, and public hearings will be conducted.

Again, on behalf of the City Council, thank you for taking part in the Neighborhood Roundtable session. It is only through feedback such as yours that we can continue to be the All-America City that attracted so many of us here. In closing, I would like to encourage you to continue exercising your voice in the community by voting on May 5<sup>th</sup>!

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Best regards,

Jeran Akers  
Mayor

JA/cp

attachments