

October 22, 2004

Re: **District 4 Neighborhood Roundtable Meeting (August 19, 2004)**  
**Response to Issues and Comments**

Greetings:

Thank you for your attendance at the District 4 Neighborhood Roundtable meeting held on August 19, 2004 at Vines High School. I very much appreciate your patience regarding the completion of this response letter. On behalf of City Council, we applaud your interest and involvement in our community. We value your comments and look forward to working with you in maintaining a strong city and excellent quality of life.

The following is a synopsis of the issues discussed at the meeting as well as some additional information regarding the District 4 area:

**Traffic Mobility and Safety**

As voiced at the meeting, some of the most important issues facing Plano today relate to traffic. Traffic mobility and safety are valid concerns among our citizenry and are priorities with City Council and staff.

Over the past four years, mobility and safety has improved due to close collaboration between departments responsible for the design, operation, maintenance, and enforcement of roads. Safety-related programs are reviewed annually to ensure that the needs of changing demographics and traffic patterns throughout Plano are met.

- 1 **Signal Timing** - The City's Transportation Division oversees an ongoing program that retimes traffic signals in response to changing traffic volumes/patterns. Staff works with adjacent cities to foster uninterrupted traffic flow across City limit boundaries. Using state-of-the-art technology, 194 traffic signals are monitored throughout the City and timing plans are changed when needed to minimize vehicle stops and delay. This fall, staff will begin upgrading all traffic signals with new traffic control technology. The new equipment will increase the flow and safety of traffic by reducing even further the number of stops drivers make. Staff has also started using advanced technologies that are better at changing a traffic signal when a car is present. The equipment allows the signal to operate when road maintenance and other construction would cause the signal to fail. Through use of these advanced technologies, traffic monitoring cameras, and coordination with police patrols, quick and effective response to traffic collisions, significant travel-time savings, and improved air quality are attained.
  
- 2 **Speed Limits** – Speeding is a common problem that is of high concern to the Transportation Division. The Transportation Division posts speed limit signs in clear view as soon as a driver turns from a higher speed road onto a lower speed road to

ensure all roadway speed limits are easily seen and understood. Often these signs become obscured by vegetation as the seasons pass. Our street maintenance crews work to restore their visibility as part of their routine maintenance activities. If by chance the City maintenance crews have not addressed a sign problem you are familiar with, please report it by calling the Public Works Department at (972) 964-4101.

To help manage overall traffic speeds, the Transportation Division conducts periodic speed studies along roads to validate the appropriateness of posted speed limits. We also coordinate with the Police Department on deploying radar speed trailers in residential neighborhoods and along major roads. These trailers show approaching drivers what their speeds are and helps keep overall traffic speeds down. Another way to help keep neighborhood speeding down is to participate in the Safe Streets Program. This program uses neighborhood participation and specially designed traffic management devices (speed humps, traffic diverters, etc.) to help manage neighborhood speeding. Locations within District 4 that are currently undergoing Safe Streets Program projects are: Travis Road, Crossbend Road, Silverstone Drive, Country Place Drive, Ranier Road, and Parkhaven Drive. If your neighborhood is interested in participating in this program, please contact the Safe Streets Program Coordinator by calling (972) 941-7151. Problems with speeding vehicles can also be reported directly to the Police Department's Traffic Enforcement Unit by calling (972) 208-8055 or by completing a Special Enforcement Request (SER) that is further explained on page 3 – Community Partnership.

### **Traffic Enforcement**

The highest public safety priority in the City of Plano is traffic safety. The Plano Police Department utilizes a three-pronged approach to addressing this problem: strict enforcement, education and awareness, and partnership with the community.

- 1 **Enforcement** – Last year, the Plano Police Department issued 78,969 traffic citations, compared to 77,781 issued the year before. Of those citations, 24,192 were issued for speeding violations and 4,311 were issued for red light violations. As a result of the Police Department's enforcement actions, the total number of collisions within the City of Plano has dropped more than 6% as compared to the same time period last year.

Since 2000, the Plano Police Department has participated in a Texas Department of Transportation STEP (Selective Traffic Enforcement Program) grant to increase enforcement efforts. This grant has allowed the Plano Police Department to increase its enforcement of red light violations by utilizing state funds to pay additional officers to work intersections throughout the City. Officers focused their enforcement efforts on the intersections with the highest rates of collisions. In November 2003, the Police Department began a new STEP grant that allows them to continue to focus on red light violations and will also allow them to increase the enforcement of speed limits throughout the City.

The Police Department also participates in the Texas Department of Transportation's "Click it or Ticket" campaign. The purpose of this campaign is to increase the use of safety belts. The campaign consists of public service announcements and high intensity enforcement during the Memorial Day Thanksgiving holiday periods.

- 2 **Education and Awareness** – The Police Department's Traffic Unit spearheads the

efforts to increase the awareness of drivers in the City of Plano. The Traffic Unit conducts numerous seminars and classes regarding traffic safety. Additionally, the unit has developed an educational video titled "In a Blink of an Eye", which addresses the dangers of red light running. During the spring season of every year, the Traffic Unit partners with the high schools to educate students on the dangers of drinking and driving. Recently, two traffic officers became certified as Child Safety Seat Inspectors. These two officers now provide inspection and instruction of child safety seats to citizens. The Police Department also periodically distributes traffic safety information to Plano residents via their utility bills.

- 3 **Community Partnership** – In order to maximize our responsiveness to the traffic safety problems of the City of Plano, we must create an atmosphere of cooperation with our citizens. The Police Department actively seeks input of motorists who travel the streets of Plano through the use of their web site and a telephone reporting system. As mentioned earlier in this letter, motorists can report dangerous drivers and red light runners by calling (972) 941-LITE (5483), or by sending a message to the Police Department utilizing the department's web page at [www.planopolice.org](http://www.planopolice.org). Furthermore, citizens can report dangerous areas and request extra enforcement through the use of a Special Enforcement Request (SER). An SER can be completed by contacting the Traffic Unit at (972) 208-8055, through the web page at [www.planopolice.org/contact/ser.htm](http://www.planopolice.org/contact/ser.htm) or by stopping in at the main station at 909 14<sup>th</sup> Street or the Joint Use Facility at 7501A Independence Parkway.

## **Crime**

- 4 **Property Crime** - From time to time the City may experience unexpected spikes in the number of Burglary of Motor Vehicle offenses and other property crimes. When these spikes occur, the Patrol Division and the Criminal Investigation Division coordinate enforcement and surveillance efforts in an attempt to identify, apprehend, and deter these types of violations. Our Crime Analysis Unit identifies the time, day of the week, and locations most frequently victimized in order for us to deploy our resources more effectively. Strategies such as surveillance, baiting, bicycle patrol, and saturation patrol have proven to be effective. Additionally, we have found a large number of these offenses involve unsecured vehicles and property left in vehicles. Citizens can reduce their risk of being victimized by criminals by locking their vehicles and removing valuables from plain view.

The majority of residential burglaries in the City of Plano are the result of open garage doors. Often these offenses occur during the day while the owner is doing yard work or other chores. Because these are crimes of opportunity, they are easily prevented and deterred. The Police Department has taken efforts to educate citizens as to the risk of leaving property unattended in a vehicle, as well as leaving garage doors unsecured through the use of utility bill inserts. Additionally, officers patrolling alleys routinely contact residents who have left their garage doors open. Citizens interested in learning more about protecting themselves from criminal acts can contact the Crime Prevention Unit at (972) 941-2431 or (972) 208-8045.

- 5 **Nuisance Crime** - Offenses such as barking dogs, loud music, and parties impact neighborhoods and individuals' enjoyment of their homes. The Police Department is committed to ensuring all residents are free from disturbances that interfere with this enjoyment. In order for a police officer to take enforcement action, the officer must

witness the offense or obtain information from a witness that observed the violation. The witness to the offense may be required to testify in court. Also, citizens can contact the Municipal Court directly and swear out a complaint against individuals for committing nuisance violations. When reporting a nuisance violation, the Police Department encourages callers to provide the location of the offender as well as their own name, address, and phone number.

Animal Services has produced a pamphlet in response to the concern of a barking dog nuisance, which outlines responsibilities of pet ownership and helpful hints for addressing barking dogs. These pamphlets are being distributed to HOAs, at special events, and as a letter insert to homes that have been identified with concern of barking dogs. You can obtain a copy of this pamphlet by calling (972) 964-4371.

- 6 **Solicitation and Handbill Distribution** - Neighborhood solicitation was another issue identified at the meeting. Solicitation and handbill distribution on private property is governed by Plano City Ordinance 11-145. By ordinance, (a) "It shall be unlawful for any person to conduct commercial solicitation upon residential property within the City, without first obtaining a written permit as prescribed..." Further, Ordinance Section (d) states, "It shall be unlawful for any person to distribute or cause to be distributed...any handbill upon any residential property if requested by anyone thereon not to do so, or if there is placed on such premises in a conspicuous place upon or near the main entrance to the residence, a weatherproof card, not less than three inches (3") by four inches (4") in size bearing the words "No Trespassing", "No Peddlers", "No Advertisement", "No Solicitation", "No Handbills", or any similar notice indicating in any manner that the occupants of such premises do not desire to have any such handbills left upon their premise. The letters on such cards shall not be less than two-thirds (2/3) of an inch in height."

The Police Department will respond to solicitation violations. It is incumbent on the resident to get a good description of the solicitor for identification purpose. If the solicitor is found in the area, he/she may be cited for not having the required permit, or if identified by the resident for violation of the solicitation ordinance. You will find a 'Common Questions and Answers on Solicitation' pamphlet attached to this letter for your use.

- 7 **Crime Watch** – An excellent crime prevention tool available to you is participation in your neighborhood Crime Watch Program. The Crime Prevention Unit of the Police Department is very active with these groups. If you would like to join your neighborhood's 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. Further information related to the Police Department can be found on their website at [www.planopolice.org](http://www.planopolice.org).

### **Zoning and Development Activity**

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. Historically, the City of Plano has been development-friendly. Non-residential development helps fund City streets, water and sewer facilities, parks, police and fire stations, schools and other public improvements that citizens value as important to a good quality of life. However, development-friendly

does not equal lower standards or the waiving of requirements. City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission have adopted very stringent development policies. All projects are subject to the same high standards.

The City of Plano has always sought a balance between the interests of homeowners and the business community. We encourage developers and neighborhoods to openly communicate and seek ways to ensure beneficial and compatible development.

Although state and federal legislation and court precedents define many of the practices in our planning policies and regulations, the Planning Department is committed to keep all citizens informed of potential development projects within the City. For example, notices for zoning cases are mailed 15 days prior to the first hearing instead of the 10 days required by state law, and homeowners associations (those registered with the City) within 1500 feet of zoning cases receive written notice by mail. A complete list of all zoning cases, site plans and plats submitted for review are posted on the Planning Department page of the City's web site at [www.planoplanning.org](http://www.planoplanning.org), aired on Plano cable channels A-30 and B-58, and are 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, (972) 941-7151, so that citizens may call to get more information about the proposed zoning action. Homeowner comments are welcomed and encouraged in the development review process to help us achieve a well-developed community.

**1 Land Studies, Preliminary Site Plans and/or Final Site Plans** – For your information, the following properties in the District 4 area have land studies, preliminary site plans and/or final site plans approved:

- Northeast corner of Coit & Mapleshade – 16 Screen Regional Center and Arcade
- Northeast and Northwest corners of Mapleshade & Maplelawn – Medical Office Condominium
- Northeast corner of Plano Parkway and Coit – Conversion of Alcatel Offices to John Paul II Parochial High School
- Southeast Corner of Plano Parkway and Independence – 250-unit, 4-story, Independent Living Facility
- 81-acre Tract on the west side of Coit, west of existing Wal-Mart Super Center – Office, Restaurant and Retail

**2 Vacant and Underused Retail Buildings** – In 2002, the cities of Carrollton, Richardson, and Plano jointly produced a report entitled Retail Study of Underperforming and Vacant Retail Areas.” This study explored a number of issues relating to the retail industry, the local economy, and the opportunities for improving current conditions. Upon completion of the study, each city had the responsibility of identifying and implementing those recommendations that were most applicable to its needs. Plano began by trying to reduce the amount of existing retail tracts of land that remain for future development. The City Council passed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance that give it the authority to review and approve requests to convert vacant properties from retail to residential uses. One 15 acre tract has already been

converted and several others are pending review by the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council. The next step is to develop incentives to encourage property owners to reinvest in existing shopping centers and/or demolish and redevelop them for more viable uses.

- 3 **Affordable Housing** – The City has recognized the need for affordable housing for many years and has done what it can to address the situation. We have approved numerous zoning changes over the years for smaller lots in order to reduce the cost of new housing. The City also provides grants to housing providers to enable them to buy land on which to build affordable housing. To preserve the existing affordable housing we have, the City provides low-interest home improvement loans to low-income homeowner. For more information regarding these programs, please contact Neighborhood Services at (972) 941-7151 or visit them online at [www.planoplanning.org/neighserv/index.htm](http://www.planoplanning.org/neighserv/index.htm).

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### **Code Compliance**

Specialists proactively inspect their assigned areas, as well as respond to citizen concerns relating to Zoning Ordinance and City Code. These inspections are performed for owner and tenant occupied properties. Most of Property Standards' informational brochures distributed to residents are printed in both English and Spanish to ensure information concerning the most common code violations, requirements, and regulations reach the vast majority of our citizens. Protecting the health, safety, and welfare of citizens through adherence to City codes and ordinances, and maintaining property values to prevent neighborhood decline are the primary goals of the Property Standards Department. Code and Ordinance related issues that Property Standards respond to include, but are not limited to:

- 1 Parking on unimproved surfaces,
- 2 Junked motor vehicles on private property,
- 2 Low tree limbs and branches,
- 3 Trash and debris,
- 4 Numerous residents/overcrowding,
- 5 High grass and weeds,
- 6 Open storage of goods or materials,
- 7 Home occupation regulations,
- 8 Non-permitted garage sales,
- 9 Substandard structures, and
- 10 Fence maintenance.

As the City matures, concerns regarding maintenance of all properties, including vacant and rental properties, become paramount. Focus on regular and thorough inspections of aging apartment complexes and vacant retail developments has increased to effectively address safety concerns and general upkeep of these areas. Occupancy limitations are determined by calculating required floor area for each occupant. Due to the need to obtain access for interior inspections and verifying the actual number of tenants, it is often a difficult and complex method to determine whether a property meets compliance. When a concern is received by the Property Standards Department, an inspection request is assigned to the appropriate specialist who then inspects the property within two business days. After the initial inspection is completed, the complainant will receive a follow-up status report from the specialist if contact information is provided. Callers may remain anonymous if they wish.

When most violations are observed, the property owner and/or occupant are notified by mail. A notice of violation letter is issued, noting the violation and the timeframe in which the property owner should come into compliance. For high grass/weeds and trash/debris, only one annual notice is required. In these instances, the property owner may not receive additional notifications prior to immediate abatement of subsequent violations. If a property owner chooses not to comply with the request, the City may contract to have the work completed at the owner's expense and/or a notice to appear before municipal court may be issued.

To provide increased service levels, Property Standards Specialists are assigned to work one Saturday per month. Doing so provides the opportunity to witness activity that may not occur during regular business hours, such as non-permitted garage sales, parking on unimproved surfaces and violation of the City's home occupation regulations. As necessary, staff will also rearrange work schedules to monitor activity occurring outside regular business hours.

Property Standards also works jointly with other City departments including Police, Solid Waste, Planning, and Building Inspections to address property maintenance. A database is being created to regularly monitor closed service stations, shopping strip centers and other vacant properties. As a result of the City's Budget Contingency Plan, funding for the Rental Licensing and Inspection Program was cut; however, routine exterior inspections of rental units throughout the City will continue. Interior inspections will also be performed on a complaint basis.

Property Standards may be contacted at (972) 941-7124 or at [http://www.planotx.org/prop\\_stds](http://www.planotx.org/prop_stds) for questions and/or to report violations.

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

The City has an aggressive construction/rehabilitation/maintenance program to keep roads, brick screening walls and drainage systems operating at their optimum. Staff makes great effort to coordinate these projects (City crews, utilities, and private contractors) to prevent undue delay and congestion to motorists. The inspection team in both the Engineering and Public Works Departments are assigned to ensure that contractors are providing the City of Plano with the highest quality of work delivered and within the City's construction standards. Problems involving street/alley or screening wall construction may be reported to the Public Works Department at (972) 769-4140.

The City of Plano is scheduling pavement repairs along several major thoroughfares in the District 4 area.

The following roadways are scheduled for repairs.

- 1 On Ohio Drive from Hwy 190 north to Rasor Road - Work began in July, 2004.
- 2 On Alma Drive from 15<sup>th</sup> Street north to Hedgcoxe - During the first quarter of 2005.
- 3 Independence Pkwy from Plano Pkwy north to Parker Road - To begin in spring of 2005.
- 4 Coit Road from 15<sup>th</sup> Street north to Mc Dermott Drive - To begin during the summer of 2005.

Residential areas currently receiving street and alley repairs are:

- 5 Neighborhoods bordered by Plano Pkwy on the S, Alma on the E, 15<sup>th</sup> Street on the N and Coit on the W. These areas are currently under construction and will be completed in the fall of 2004.
- 6 Neighborhood bordered by Parker Road on the N, Central Expressway on the E, 15<sup>th</sup> Street on the S and Custer Road and Independence Pkwy on the W. Construction began in October 2004.
- 7 Neighborhood bordered by Parker Road on the N, Coit Road on the E, Preston Road on the W and Plano Pkwy on the S. Construction is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2005.
- 8 Neighborhood bordered by Spring Creek Pkwy on the N, Independence Pkwy on the E, Coit Road on the W and Parker Road on the S. Construction is scheduled for the spring/summer of 2005.

The City has several locations where screening walls along major thoroughfares are being replaced or receiving improvements.

- 9 Coit Road from Parker Road south to Irving Drive is being landscaped and repaired on the east side of Coit Road. Construction is in progress.
- 10 Parker Road from Coit Road to Jeremes Landing - South side of Parker Road wall is completed.
- 11 Parker Road from Custer Road to Carriage Lane - South side of Parker Road wall is completed.
- 12 Independence Pkwy between Parker Road and Spring Creek Pkwy - Sections of wall along the east roadway will be reconstructed during the summer of 2005.
- 13 15<sup>th</sup> Street - Painting of the wall along the south side will be done in areas of need during the summer of 2005.

## **Parks**

- 5 **Liberty Recreation Center** – Liberty Recreation Center located at 2601 Glenclyff Drive opened to the public on June 1, 2004. The formal grand opening ceremony was held on June 17 in conjunction with the Picnic in the Park concert held at the site. The 30,000 square foot recreation center provides a double gymnasium, weight room, cardiovascular fitness room, aerobics/dance room, game room, locker rooms, several classrooms, and an outdoor swimming pool. A softball field is also located on the seven acre site that is adjacent to the existing 10 acre Liberty Park. Incidentally, the Liberty Park pavilion which was constructed in 1976 is scheduled to be replaced with a new pavilion with similar architectural style as the Liberty Recreation Center. Construction of the new pavilion is scheduled to be completed by late spring of 2005.
- 6 **Big Lake Park/Chisholm Trail** - At the meeting, the Park Services Manager

discussed maintenance concerns at Big Lake Park/Chisholm Trail with two groups. There were concern with lake bank erosion, as well as shoreline vegetation and a tree that had blown over in a storm. There were also concerns with the siltation in Big Lake.

It was explained that Big Lake will be dredged and restored in fiscal year 2005-2006, pending budget approval. Plans and specifications are being prepared in 2004-2005. The maintenance level of the area around the lake and throughout Chisholm Trail must be balanced between a “highly groomed” approach and a completely natural/native approach. Native vegetation must be allowed to grow to prevent erosion, allow trees to regenerate in the creek corridors, and provide habitat for wildlife. However, some shoreline must be mowed and trimmed to allow access and visibility to the lake edge, as well as present a good image for the neighborhood.

The Big Lake Park area is approaching 30 years old. Restoration and updating the site will be considered as the Capital Reserve Fund budget is prepared in future years.

Residents may call (972) 941-7263 or complete a service request form online at [www.planotx.org](http://www.planotx.org) if there are further concerns about park and/or trail maintenance. Parks and Recreation staff is also available to receive input and discuss matters at area homeowner association meetings.

### **Libraries**

**Haggard Library Expansion** – Haggard Library closed to the public on July 16, 2004 to make way for its expansion. The construction of the parking lot is currently underway and work on the building has also begun. This library expansion project is scheduled to be completed in August 2005.

## **Environmental Health**

**Air Quality** - In addition to Environmental Health initiatives, the City of Plano has taken a very proactive approach to air quality by using alternative fuels in City vehicles. Here are some of the things that we are already doing to help promote cleaner air:

- 1 The City has 63 vehicles operating on Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG), or propane, which is an alternative fuel.
- 2 The City has approximately 35 pieces of small engine equipment operating on propane, which allows operation on ozone action days. This equipment produces substantially less pollution than those operating on gasoline.
- 3 The City owns six hybrid-electric vehicles operating in its fleet. These are Super Ultra-Low Emissions vehicles that obtain greater gas mileage while emitting extremely low tailpipe emissions.
- 4 In order to defer use of petroleum products, the City began propane vehicle conversions in 1994. Initially, over 30 light-duty vehicles were converted, with more added during subsequent years.
- 5 In 1996, the City began exploring propane use in heavy-duty and light-duty applications. The use of propane fuel in these types of vehicles and equipment greatly lessened the pollution generated by their use. For example, the City currently operates two dump trucks on propane. The City also has numerous lawn and garden equipment that operate on propane which greatly reduces emissions when compared to gasoline counterparts.
- 6 In the mid-1990's, the City adopted an ozone action policy whereby City vehicles and equipment were fueled prior to 10:00 a.m., so as not to contribute to the formation of ozone through refueling.
- 7 The City's Equipment Services Division also participates in Earth Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, Clean Cities, and other public relations activities. They bring alternative fuel vehicles to these events to educate the public about its practicality and emissions reducing capabilities.
- 8 The City has been an active member of the DFW Area Clean Cities Coalition whose goal is to promote the use of alternative fuels in order to lessen America's dependence on foreign sources.
- 9 In 1996, when original equipment manufacturers (OEM's) began to produce alternative fuel vehicles direct from the factory, the City began writing specifications requiring vehicles to be at least Low Emission (Certified) Vehicles (LEVs).
- 10 In 1995 and 2001, the Equipment Services Division received the SuperStar Award from the Railroad Commission of Texas given to outstanding propane fleets.
- 11 In 1999, the Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Coordinator nominated the City of Plano Equipment Service Division for the National Highway Administration 1999 Environmental Excellence Award, in recognition for efforts to improve air quality in

the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. This nomination highlighted the Division's ongoing strides for having an alternative fuel program that is among the most aggressive in the Metroplex.

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Please contact Environmental Health at (972) 941-7143 if you have questions or comments about air quality.

### **Other Topics of Interest**

**Continued Community Outreach** - City Council is continually seeking and implementing new ways to better connect with citizens. Through working with homeowners associations, Council receives valuable input concerning issues specific to each development.

Quarterly Neighborhood Roundtable meetings also serve as a means to focus on a portion of the City at a time, allowing residents and business owners in a targeted area to share their specific interests and concerns. The Neighborhood Roundtable meetings are advertised on the City's web site, in area newspapers, on cable TV, by letter to HOAs and Crime Watch areas, and by individual post card notices sent to each residence in the targeted area. While the meetings are designed to focus on issues involving the targeted district, everyone is welcome to attend and participate.

In addition, a Multicultural Outreach Roundtable has been formed which seeks input and makes recommendations to the City Council on methods, practices, programs, and other means by which the City of Plano can effectively serve the entire community and meet the objectives of local government. The mission of the roundtable is to partner with City Council and the citizens of Plano encouraging understanding and participation in the government process while meeting the needs and desires of its diverse citizens.

A third outreach program that City Council and I recommend is the Plano Citizens Academy. This academy, open to residents of Plano 18 years and older, is a 10 session program that provides an educational and entertaining overview of all city service departments. The next Plano Citizens Academy class is anticipated to form in early 2005.

The City of Plano also hosts the Citizens Police Academy and Citizens Fire Academy as well.

For more information on the above Community Outreach programs, please visit [www.planotx.org/outreach](http://www.planotx.org/outreach) or call (972) 941-7747.

**Senior Citizen Tax Freeze – Property Tax Freeze for Property Owners Over Age 65 or Disabled:** On May 24, 2004, the City of Plano Council voted unanimously to approve a property tax freeze for homeowners over 65 years of age, their spouses, and the disabled. The tax freeze is effective beginning with the 2004 tax year.

### **Summary of Property Tax Freeze**

House Bill 136 became effective when the constitutional amendment proposed by House Joint Resolution 16 was approved by an 83% margin by the voters of Texas in a referendum in September of 2003.

Proposition 13, passed by the voters in September 2003, and is worded as follows:

*"The constitutional amendment to permit counties, cities and towns, and junior college districts to establish an ad valorem tax freeze on residence homesteads of the disabled and of the elderly and their spouses."*

The effective date for Bill 136 was January 1, 2004. The bill gives cities, counties and junior colleges the option to freeze the taxes they imposed on the homes of the elderly and disabled. The new law provides cities with the option to "freeze" ad valorem taxes for homeowners over 65 years of age, their spouses, and the disabled.

There are only two conditions that can increase the amount of the freeze: (1) if there are improvements on the property beyond normal maintenance and upkeep; and (2) if the property erroneously received an exemption to which it was not entitled in a prior year.

### **Public Information**

To contact City of Plano staff for further information and/or to generally keep abreast of the activities in our city, below is a list of various access methods that are available to you.

- 1 **Internet** - As stated previously, the City of Plano web site address is [www.planotx.org](http://www.planotx.org). To reach a particular staff member by phone, you may go directly to [www.planotx.org/topic.asp](http://www.planotx.org/topic.asp). For City staff email addresses, go directly to [www.planotx.org/ctystaff.html](http://www.planotx.org/ctystaff.html). The City web site provides valuable information about the services of each department. Functions of the City's site include viewing City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission agendas, submitting code enforcement concerns, and making online water bill payments.
- 2 **Publications** - Municipal information can be found on a daily basis at [www.planocitynews.com](http://www.planocitynews.com). This is the City's new initiative to provide more timely information in an electronic format.
- 3 **Cable TV** - Information regarding upcoming City activities and events is broadcasted on Plano's cable channels - A30 and B58.
- 4 **Public Library** - Information on upcoming City Council Meetings, as well as Planning and Zoning cases, is available at all Plano public libraries.
- 5 **Water Bill Inserts** - Another method the City uses to inform citizens of community events, activities, and resources is through water bill inserts. In total, there are 36 different reports, flyers and letters mailed each year with the utility bill.
- 6 **Current Studies** - It was suggested during one of our previous Roundtables that the City provide information on our web site regarding current studies in which we are involved. This excellent suggestion has been implemented. You may find the link entitled *Current On-Going Studies* on the front page of our web site.
- 7 **Email Newsletters** - The City of Plano is currently offering several auto subscriptions to newsletters which interested citizens can subscribe to via email. You may view and subscribe to these newsletters at [www.planotx.org/email\\_lists.html](http://www.planotx.org/email_lists.html).

On behalf of City Council, I would like to again thank you for taking part in the

Neighborhood Roundtable session held on August 19th. 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.

Sincerely,

Pat Evans  
Mayor

**1. What does the City's solicitation ordinance cover?**

The ordinance regulates solicitation in the City rights of way, the distribution of handbills, circulars, pamphlets, on property, and commercial peddlers who go door-to-door. City Code section 11-145

**2. Must solicitors obtain a permit?**

Yes, if they are engaged in commercial solicitation on residential property, a permit is required. The permit is obtained from the Police Department. The solicitors are required to keep a copy of the permit in their possession while they are engaged in solicitation. Solicitors are also required to have some identification of who they are and if they are soliciting on behalf of another. A person can request that a solicitor display the identification.

**3. What should I do to prevent solicitors from entering onto my property?**

The first step is for an owner to post notice on their property that soliciting is prohibited. The notice must be on a waterproof sign that is at least 3" by 4" in size bearing the words "No Solicitation" or "No Handbills", or any similar notice that clearly conveys that the conduct is not permitted. The letters on the card must be at least 2/3" in height. The notice shall be posted in a conspicuous place on or near the main entrance to the residence.

**4. What should I do if I have posted an appropriate no solicitation sign, and I still receive handbills?**

In order to effectively prosecute the solicitor or those responsible for the illegal solicitation of handbills, the owner must file a complaint with the City Prosecutor. The owner should also keep copies of the handbills that were left at the location, as that will be used as grounds to substantiate the citation as well as evidence if a trial is required. If the prosecutor determines that the evidence indicates a violation occurred, a citation will be issued to the violator. If the violator contests the citation, a trial is required and the resident will need to testify. Our past history in tracking these types of complaints indicates that most violators have elected to pay a fine instead of going to trial.

**5. How do I file a complaint?**

To file a complaint, please contact the Municipal Court Prosecutor's Office at 972.941.2056.

**6. Can a police officer issue a citation?**

Police officers cannot cite a violator unless the officer actually witnesses the offense.

**7. Is there a time limit with regard to solicitation?**

Solicitation for any purpose is not permitted between ½ hour before sunset and ½ hour after sunrise unless the solicitor is on the premises with the permission or invitation of the resident.