The Woodlands Vision

The Woodlands, our dynamic hometown within a natural forest, is known for its balance between man and nature. We are a thriving business community and a premier destination for visitors—a place where generations live, work, learn and play. The Woodlands...

...is a place where we feel safe and secure.  
...achieves prosperity by promoting economic development and quality of life.  
...cultivates the relationship between urban needs and George Mitchell’s vision of environmental sustainability.  
...provides premier services and activities, superior educational opportunities, a diversity of jobs, vibrant public spaces, integrated mobility options, public activities, cultural events and entertainment for all.  
...is a place that welcomes everyone from everywhere to grow and thrive.

The Woodlands Township Mission

We fulfill The Woodlands vision by:

- Protecting the well-being and safety of our residents, visitors and businesses.
- Achieving the highest standards in service delivery.
- Partnering with others to sustain the vitality of our region.
- Communicating with our constituents and partners.
- Attracting and retaining a talented and innovative staff.
- Serving as the community’s political voice.

- Powering economic growth through community investment.
- Promoting continued vitality of neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- Maintaining transparent governance.
- Serving as financial stewards of the community’s resources.
- Evolving a governance structure to meet our goals.
- Promoting sound environmental policy.
- Collaborating with community partners to promote public events and cultural activities.
- Collaborating with community partners to improve mobility throughout The Woodlands.
This publication provides an overview of the financial status of The Woodlands Township. Specifically, this overview provides a summary of what we accomplished as an organization in 2019, our current financial status and the issues and opportunities that lie ahead over the next five years.

In 2010, The Woodlands Township, a special purpose district, became the local government provider for the majority of municipal-type services in The Woodlands. The fully-elected Board of Directors and Township staff are committed to providing quality customer-friendly services along with programs and policies to promote economic development, enhance property values and enhance quality of life in The Woodlands. Since inception, the Township has been able to build a financial model that provides for top quality services at a low property tax rate and sufficient reserves to provide for replacement of capital infrastructure, as needed. Prudent fiscal management has allowed the Township to balance revenues and expenditures while maintaining or enhancing services, maintaining excellent bond ratings and low debt per capita ratio, and maintaining appropriate reserves. This solid financial strategy has allowed the Township to provide core services while also providing the flexibility to respond to unexpected events and changing economies.

As we look to the future, I am happy to report that The Woodlands Township outlook continues to be very promising. As a governmental entity, our financial position is strong, and the Township’s economic growth potential is strong.

I will be retiring from full time employment at the end of April 2020, and this will be the final Annual Summary of Accomplishments that I submit as The Woodlands President/General Manager. Over the past 14 years, it has been my pleasure and honor to serve The Woodlands community in positions with the Community Associations of The Woodlands and The Woodlands Township. Throughout my tenure, I have had the pleasure of working with outstanding Directors and exceptional Board Leadership. I have also had the privilege of working with an exceptional senior management team and a very talented and dedicated group of employees.

It has been a pleasure to serve the Board and The Woodlands community.

Sincerely,
Don Norrell
President and General Manager
The Woodlands Township
The Woodlands Township is the governmental entity dedicated to meeting the needs of The Woodlands residents and businesses. The Township encompasses approximately 28,000 acres with a population of more than 118,000 people, nearly 2,200 businesses and a tax base valuation of more than $20.5 billion.

The Township staff and publicly elected Board of Directors are committed to public safety and exceptional levels of customer service. Together, they responsibly fulfill the governance needs of the community while promoting the economic development of The Woodlands and providing services that enhance property values.

The Woodlands Township’s financial model is unique among local governments. The Township offers its residents enhanced services and amenities at a higher level than most communities, but at a lower tax rate than most local governments. Since 2010, the Board has been able to reduce the property tax rate from 32.8 cents per $100 of valuation to only 22.4 cents per $100 of valuation, while still maintaining sufficient reserves for replacement of capital infrastructure as needed.

The Woodlands Township Board of Directors continues its efforts to grow sales tax and room tax receipts through investment in community infrastructure and promotion of The Woodlands through The Woodlands Convention and Visitors Bureau, known as Visit The Woodlands. The popularity of The Woodlands for shopping, dining and special events confirms it as a top entertainment venue for residents and visitors alike. The sales and room tax paid by visitors is a major contributor to the low property tax rate The Woodlands residents enjoy.

Public safety is a top priority for the Township. Since 2009, a substantial commitment of resources has been invested in law enforcement and fire services. As a result, The Woodlands is one of the safest places in the country to live, work and play.

The Township contracts with Montgomery County Sheriff's Office and Harris County Constable, Precinct #4, to provide community-policing services. In 2019, this arrangement provided a total of 122 personnel assigned to The Woodlands in eight residential and community policing zones and one tourism zone. The Woodlands also provides additional overtime funding for law enforcement services as needed throughout the year.

The Township is highly proactive about public safety. It sponsors multiple public safety programs and continues to foster strong relationships with local law enforcement. Neighborhood Services focuses its efforts on the safety of residents and businesses through its award-winning Woodlands Neighborhood Watch program.

Residents, businesses and visitors receive excellent fire and first-responder services through The Woodlands Fire Department. The Woodlands Township employs 170 personnel in The Woodlands Fire Department. They provide fire protection and first-responder services from eight strategically located fire stations and the Emergency Training Center. The Woodlands has an ISO rating of 1 (the highest rating assigned by the ISO), largely due to the Board of Directors’ goal of providing the community with the highest level of fire services.

The Township also provides a high level of community services, resulting in clean, well-maintained roadways and neighborhood entries. Parks and Recreation provides maintenance to the extensive network of parks, pathways, athletic fields, and pools as well as recreational programs. The number of parks and pathways will increase in 2019–20, as the Village of Creekside Park approaches completion.

Covenant management is integral to the beauty and aesthetic harmony of The Woodlands Township. Strong covenant enforcement will continue to be a high priority as the community matures and redevelopment occurs.

The Woodlands Township continues to inform its residents of Township events and activities through a variety of methods. The Woodlands Community Magazine, a free monthly publication, is delivered directly to all homes in the Township and maintains its high readership. The Township continues to provide a weekly newsletter, Talk of the Township, highlighting the latest Township news and events. In addition, the Township maintains an official Facebook page, www.facebook.com/thewoodlandstownship, Twitter account @TheTownshipTX, Instagram @TheTownshipTX, LinkedIn company page, www.linkedin.com/company/thewoodlandstownship and TheWoodlands311 app.

The Township website continues to provide the public with a wealth of information. With news releases, a calendar of events, bid postings, meeting agendas and minutes, recreational programming information, emergency notifications and a detailed budget, it has become a primary source of information for the entire community. Live videos of the Board of Directors meetings are available on the site, as are archived meeting videos.

The public can also stay informed by attending Township Board of Directors meetings and/or other committee meetings at Town Hall. Being informed of such meetings is easy due to the Township agenda process. Meeting agendas, meeting minutes and complete summaries of issues posted for Board consideration are readily available on the website.

Success of The Woodlands Township

The Woodlands Township benefits from the vibrant Texas economy and state government policies that encourage business investment and job creation. In addition, The Woodlands is located just north of Houston, the hub of the nation’s energy industry.

The Woodlands master plan and covenants provide a highly desirable environment for residents and businesses while helping to maintain property values. Existing as well as relocating businesses find The Woodlands amenities and quality of life help to attract and retain top quality employees.

The Township Board of Directors contributes to The Woodlands success by establishing strategies and policies for maintenance of the community, upgrading community facilities as needed, supporting a vibrant business environment, encouraging community involvement, and promoting community events that...
generate the revenues used to reduce the property tax rate.

Of the total Township revenue base, about 64 percent comes from sales tax, room tax, user fees and grants. Since 2010, the revenue collection from these revenue sources has grown, while the property tax rate has declined.

**Business Development Continues in The Woodlands**

The Howard Hughes Corporation announced on December 30, 2019, the acquisition of prime commercial assets from Occidental. The transaction includes two Class A towers rebranded as The Woodlands Towers at The Waterway, which total approximately 1.4 million square feet of office space, and a 125,000-square-foot warehouse. The acquisition also includes 9.3 acres of prime, developable land located in The Woodlands Town Center bordering The Woodlands Waterway and fronting Interstate 45 North, providing the opportunity for meaningful future commercial development in the heart of The Woodlands.

Occidental will continue its presence at The Woodlands Towers at The Waterway, and will lease back 100% of the larger, approximately 808,000-square-foot tower at 1201 Lake Robbins Drive and 100% of the warehouse for 13 years. Occidental President and CEO Vicki Hollub said, “It was important to us, and many of our employees, to maintain a presence in The Woodlands and we are pleased to have signed a 13-year lease to remain in the community.”

The Howard Hughes Corporation announced it will be growing its own presence in The Woodlands, relocating its corporate headquarters from Dallas, TX into the approximately 595,000-square-foot tower at 9950 Woodloch Forest Drive.

The Howard Hughes Corporation acquired the two former Chicago Bridge & Iron Company (CB&I) Class-A office buildings, situated on the northern end of Hughes Landing. Totaling 257,025 square feet, the two buildings are located on 12.92 acres on the north side of Lake Woodlands at 2103 Research Forest Drive, with approximately 3.4 acres of the total site designated for future development opportunity. The Howard Hughes Corporation repositioned the campus as Lake Front North in Hughes Landing. Arena Energy will be the largest tenant with 87,231 square feet at Lake Front North.

Warmack Investments has started construction of a six-story office building in The Woodlands. The speculative 140,000-square-foot office building is located at 9709 Lakeside Blvd. on the Research Forest Lakeside campus. The new office building will have a restaurant and fitness center on-site. The office project is scheduled to be completed by August 2020.

Alight Solutions, a leader in technology-enabled health, wealth and Human Capital Management solutions, has signed a 180,000-square-foot build-to-suit lease for a new building, developed by The Howard Hughes Corporation along New Trails Drive in the Research Forest area. Completion is expected in early 2020.

The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center has opened its new, three-story, 208,000-square-foot facility at State Highway 242 and Fellowship Drive. The outpatient clinic houses supportive services, treatment and diagnostic and screening services.

Cinépolis Cinema opened its first location at Creekside Park Village Center, making Creekside Park the first village in The Woodlands with its own theater. Cinépolis Cinema is located in a new 12-acre retail development, Creekside Park West, within the center, developed by The Howard Hughes Corporation. The luxury dine-in theater includes 11 wall-to-wall screens, full-service food and beverage service at every luxury reserved recliner, a full
bar and a scratch kitchen. Along with the approximately 42,370-square-foot movie theater, Creekside Park West will include new retailers, restaurants with outdoor patios and a gathering courtyard, complete with outdoor fountain seating.

Primrose School of The Woodlands at Hughes Landing launched August 12, 2019 at 1720 Hughes Landing Blvd. Primrose is an accredited early childhood education school that serves children from six weeks to kindergarten and offers summer camps.

Construction is nearing completion on Two Lakes Edge in Hughes Landing, the second multifamily development in Hughes Landing. Two Lakes Edge is an eight-story, 386-unit, luxury apartment building with retail and a restaurant planned on the ground level. Health and wellness is a major component of this project. Two Lakes Edge will provide an expansive fitness center with state-of-the-art equipment, a large yoga room, coupled with an outdoor fitness lawn. In addition, the property will provide multiple kayaks and bikes for complimentary use by its residents.

The Howard Hughes Corporation has started construction on a second multifamily residential project in Creekside Park Village Center in The Woodlands. The new multifamily residences will be located at 8440 Creekside Green Drive, at the northeast intersection of Creekside Green Drive and Kuykendahl Road. Comprised of six buildings, the 360-unit luxury community will be located at the entrance of Creekside Park Village Center with an expanded forest preserve along Kuykendahl Road. The residential buildings are all four-story urban designs with elevators. Ground level apartments will include private, fenced yards.

The Howard Hughes Corporation has started construction on a new multifamily project in The Woodlands Town Center at the southeast intersection of Six Pines Drive and Timberloch Place. Adjacent to The Millennium Waterway, the seven-story multifamily building will feature 163 apartment residences as well as townhomes.

Wulfe & Company continues to develop East Shore Place, located at Grogan’s Mill Road near East Shore Drive. A two-story building with 49,000 square feet has been completed that will include retail, restaurant and professional space on the ground floor and specialty office and medical space on the second floor. Leases so far include Toasted Yolk Café, 4,347 square feet; Play Street Museum, 2,729 square feet; Over the Moon vegan ice cream, 1,598 square feet; and Juice Girl, 640 square feet. East Shore Place has a 9,000-squarefoot Frost Bank building and a four-level parking garage. A freestanding restaurant is also planned.

The Woodlands Area Economic Development Partnership facilitated a Texas Enterprise Zone Program for Huntsman Corporation’s remodel of their headquarters building in The Woodlands. This project represents over 500 retained jobs.

Visit The Woodlands
Visit The Woodlands (convention and visitors bureau) is charged with the following strategic initiatives: Partnership Collaboration & Growth, Enhance & Protect The Woodlands Brand, Increase Retail Spending and Support Room Absorption. Per the organization’s mission, Visit The Woodlands hosted Rendezvous South and several Connect familiarization tours and international familiarization tours in 2019.

In addition, the organization conducted 21 site tours, serviced 94 groups and led 73 meeting connections in order to increase the Township’s Hotel Occupancy Tax and Retail Sales Tax. A new marketing campaign entitled “We Hear That A Lot” positioned The Woodlands brand to both leisure and meetings visitors in a dynamic way. Strategic ad placements in 2019 included Texas Highways, Texas State Travel Guide, Houstonia, Food & Wine Magazine, Town and Country and Texas Meetings + Events and Smart Meetings. The Woodlands has 14 hotels with 2,250 in inventory each and every night. The Woodlands hosts major corporate meetings as well as signature events such as Copa Rayados Internacional Soccer Tournament, Lunar & Planetary Science Conference and IRONMAN North American Championship. Visit The Woodlands released high impact display through advertising campaigns to promote The Woodlands and its signature events, to include The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival and The Inspire Film Festival. Visit The Woodlands launched 80 blogs, the Insider’s Guide and the Hotel Book Program.

Strategic partnerships in 2019 brought outstanding opportunities including hosting the United Airlines Latin America Country Executives as well as the United Airlines Mexico sales managers. International sales and marketing continue to be a strong market for The Woodlands. 2019 brought a U.K. and Germany mission attending World Travel Market as well as
Summary of 2019 Accomplishments

Completion of 2020 Budget and Five-Year Plan

A Board pre-budget and strategic planning process was conducted in early May of 2019 to discuss strategic issues and objectives in accordance with the Township’s vision, mission and strategic plan and to develop information to assist the Board in the budget and financial planning process.

The 2020 adopted budget lowered the property tax rate from 22.73 cents per $100 of valuation to 22.4 cents per $100 of taxable property value, which includes a continuation of base level services and funding for Board-approved budget initiatives. The 2020 Budget continues to prioritize public safety and community maintenance while providing enhanced services and preparation for future growth. The Woodlands Township is committed to its residents and businesses in creating a community that enhances quality of life while increasing overall value.

Over the past eight years, the Township has built a financial model that provides top quality services at a low property tax rate and with sufficient reserves to provide for replacement of capital infrastructure as needed.

For full details regarding the Township’s 2020 budget, please visit www.thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov/budget. Due to changes in property tax legislation during the State’s 2019 Legislative Session, the Township’s budget process will begin earlier in 2020 than in previous budget cycles. Budget workshops for the 2021 budget will begin in early August 2020.

The 2019 adopted property tax rate, which funds Fiscal Year 2020, is 22.4 cents per $100 of valuation. This is a reduction in tax rate from the 2018 rate of 22.73 and the 2017 tax rate of $0.2300 per $100 of valuation. The adopted tax rate was set at the “effective tax rate” as defined by property tax law.

Property Tax Rate

Tax Rate Per $100 Valuation

The current property tax rate is 22.4 cents per $100 of valuation.

Niche.com gives The Woodlands high rankings

In 2019, Niche.com ranked The Woodlands among the top places to live and raise a family in Texas and the United States. Niche is a team of data scientists and others who evaluate data sets to produce rankings, reports and in-depth profiles to help people review where they would like to live and go to school. The Woodlands ranked as the #1 place to live in Montgomery County and the #2 place to raise a family in America.

Sales Tax and Hotel Occupancy Tax

Sales tax and hotel tax make up 50 percent of Township revenues. The majority of these taxes are paid by visitors. Sales tax revenue has increased by $4.6 million over the past five years, growing from $50.1 million in 2014 to $54.7 million in 2019, or 9%.

Hotel occupancy tax revenue also continues to grow, increasing from $7.4 million in 2014 to $9.2 million in 2019, or 24%. Two new hotels opened in The Woodlands in 2016, bringing the total number of hotel facilities to 14 and increasing the overall room capacity in the area.

Promotion in Mexico with two missions planned in 2020.

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Paying down debt and refinancing saves Township $4.3 million

In 2019, the Township Board authorized the refinancing of bonds that resulted in total present value savings of $4.3 million. The Township’s financial condition and bond rating remains strong and, coupled with recent interest rate reductions, allowed the Township to take advantage of significant debt service cost savings for The Woodlands residents.

The Woodlands Township refinanced $39.91 million of bonds originally issued in 2010. The refinancing resulted in gross savings of $4.8 million (net present value savings of $4.3 million) and reduced annual debt service payments by $788,000. Additionally, the Township was able to liquidate an existing debt service reserve balance of $2.3 million to retire a portion of the sales and hotel occupancy tax bonds issued in 2010. The reserve is no longer required due to The Township’s excellent credit rating and financial position.

The refinancing included $19.030 million of sales tax and hotel occupancy bonds, which have a maturity date of 3/1/2027. The bonds were refinanced at an interest rate of 1.464 percent, compared to an average rate of 4.0 percent on the original bonds. Refinancing resulted in net present value savings of $1.762 million, or 7.5 percent. General obligation bonds totaling $20.880 million were also refinanced. The new interest rate is 1.720 percent, compared to an average rate of 4.039 percent on the original bonds. The net present value savings is $2.513 million, or 11.2 percent, and the bonds will mature on 3/1/2030.

Continuation of an Incorporation Planning Study

In 2017, the State of Texas adopted legislation that clears the way for future incorporation of The Woodlands, if desired by the community. While authority was granted to incorporate under existing statutes for The Woodlands Township and Regional Participation Agreements to which the Township is a party, state law did not provide specific statutory language for incorporation of an area with the population and size of the Township. The 2017 legislation was passed to clarify existing state statues and to pave the way for a smooth transition from the Township’s current form of government to a municipal government.

A provision was also included that upon the calling of an incorporation election by The Woodlands Township Board of Directors, the election order would include the initial not to exceed property tax that sets a maximum tax levy for the new city, which would then be approved by voters.

Regional Participation Agreements (RPAs) were put in place in 2007 with the City of Houston and the City of Conroe protecting The Woodlands from annexation, and allowing The Woodlands to determine its future governance.

In early 2018, the Township Board engaged in a comprehensive study of incorporation, which is ongoing. In an effort to fully engage the public, the Board has held planning sessions throughout the study to provide an opportunity for the consultants to provide updates on the study and to provide the public an opportunity to provide feedback to the Board at each of the meetings.

During these planning sessions, the consultants have reported on frequently asked questions, overall project updates, base financial model assumptions, financial model questions, comparative findings, and presented draft benchmarking research regarding revenue and municipal programs in comparison to the data of peer cities in Texas. Studies performed to date include the best practices analysis, zoning and covenant review, street condition analysis, a review of municipal utility district (MUD) operations, and law enforcement analyses.

In addition to the regularly held meetings, an Incorporation Planning Study website has been launched at www.thewoodlandsincorporationstudy.com to provide an overview of The Woodlands Township, FAQs about the study, past meeting videos and more. Residents can access current Incorporation Planning Study information, including study results and assessments, and past presentations.

The next phase of the incorporation study will involve preparation of a final financial model, determination of a maximum initial tax rate that would be required if the Township Board were to call an incorporation election, and a public outreach program to provide information to educate and to survey the community.

The choice of whether or not to incorporate ultimately lies in the hands of The Woodlands voters. If the residents vote to incorporate, they must also vote to approve the initial maximum tax rate. Both must pass for The Woodlands to become a general law city, prior to consideration of becoming a home rule city.

Township approves transition agreements with Montgomery County

The Woodlands Township Board of Directors approved transition agreements with Montgomery County related to the potential future incorporation of The Woodlands. These agreements are key to operationalizing transition plans and ensuring public safety and public works continue at the same levels of service residents enjoy today.

The Board approved a First Amended Interlocal Agreement that provides a three-year transition agreement for law enforcement services at incorporation. The agreement would provide that the existing Township law enforcement contract services would continue following incorporation and that the Township would transition 22.5 county funded positions to Township funding over a three-year funding phase in period following incorporation.

In addition, the Board approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) providing for the continuation of county-provided road maintenance services for the
The Township continued to provide Covenant Administration for properties subject to the Community Standards Committee and the Development Review Committee, and TWLDC will pay the Township $300,000 per year for those services.

The Township assumes management and administration of streetscape maintenance with TWLDC funding $300,000 per year for their share of costs to maintain areas in the Town Center and the Township funding the cost to maintain the rest of the community.

The Township and TWLDC will continue to fund new public parks, pathways and other public amenities.

**Streetscape Maintenance**
The Woodlands Township mows and maintains several hundred miles of road rights of way, in addition to more than 400 village and neighborhood entries. These areas are maintained on various schedules depending upon the adopted frequency standards.

The goal with the maintenance program is to be in harmony with nature; therefore, maintenance standards and schedules were developed around this philosophy. For example, neighborhood entries will have improved landscapes with manicured groundcovers and irrigated grass along with native shrubs and strips of forest; while the roadsides will be left as much as possible to the natural progression of Mother Nature, with some help of wildflower planting and mowing approximately 18 times per year beginning after the wildflower season.

This maintenance is currently a partnership between The Woodlands Township and The Woodlands Development Company through a streetscape contract. In 2019, the Township Board approved the Assignment and Assumption of Services Agreement regarding community-wide streetscape services, which became effective January 1, 2020.

**Texas TreeVentures Aerial Adventure Course now open**
Texas TreeVentures, a program of The Woodlands Township, opened in Spring 2019. The adventure course was designed to take into account the topography, trees, terrain, existing site facilities and synergy with the George Mitchell Nature Preserve to provide a diverse experience for various skill levels and that could have the potential for future expansion. Located on the campus of the Recreation Center at Rob Fleming Park, 6464 Creekside Forest Drive, Texas TreeVentures is a challenge-by-choice aerial adventure course for individuals 6 years old and up. There are certain restrictions and supervision requirements. Texas TreeVentures offers general admission, group rates (12 or more climbers), birthday party options, corporate events and more.
Township and community partners fund Mitchell highway designation

Community leadership in The Woodlands came together in 2019 to recognize the founder of The Woodlands, George P. Mitchell, with special signage along Interstate Highway 45. This signage will be seen by millions of travelers to and through The Woodlands for years to come. Joining with the Township in honoring the late founder of The Woodlands are Visit The Woodlands, The Woodlands Area Chamber of Commerce and The Howard Hughes Corporation.

Legislation that was authored by Representative Steve Toth, co-authored by Representative Will Metcalf, sponsored by Senator Brandon Creighton, and signed into law by Governor Greg Abbott in 2019, designated a portion of Interstate 45 in Montgomery County from the Harris-Montgomery County line to State Highway 242 as the George P. Mitchell Memorial Highway.

The legislation required TxDOT, subject to a grant or donation of funds, to design and construct markers indicating the designation as the George P. Mitchell Memorial Highway and any other appropriate information and to erect a marker at each end of the highway and at appropriate intermediate sites along the highway. The signs were installed in late 2019.

Development of Cultural Arts Designated Area

The Township Board approved the logo, branding, boundary map and signage for The Waterway Arts District, embracing the cultural arts development in The Woodlands. Currently, The Waterway Arts District defined area, which is located in Town Center, is host to multiple events and venues that promote the arts, and special projects such as the art benches along The Waterway. This effort is part of the vision of The Woodlands Township Board of Directors and has not received State of Texas designation as an arts district.

Township, Pavilion enter potential development and operation of new performing arts center

In December 2019, The Woodlands Township Board of Directors approved a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Center for the Performing Arts at The Woodlands (The Pavilion) for potential development and operation of a new performing arts center in The Woodlands Town Center.

This is a non-binding MOU for the purpose of developing studies and information for consideration of a final binding agreement between the parties.

The concept plan is to look at a potential performing arts center located next to The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion on what is known as the “Gold Parking Lot.” The current concept includes a 1,500-seat theater performing arts facility; a 200 to 400 seat multi-purpose venue; rehearsal, classroom and practice spaces; public gallery space; and outdoor space to accommodate receptions. The desired facility size is estimated at approximately 100,000 square feet. The facility is projected to cost approximately $71 million, which would be funded through a combination of public and private sources. A final development agreement is not expected to be implemented until the estimated capital funding for the project has been committed.

Enhanced Communication

The Woodlands Township recognizes the importance of connecting with residents, businesses and visitors through a variety of platforms and continues to expand the methods with which the public can receive information and notices. In addition to the Township’s website and The Woodlands Community Magazine, the Township has an official Facebook page, Twitter account, Instagram, LinkedIn company page, YouTube channel, Facebook pages specifically for the Parks and Recreation Department, Township Neighborhood Watch and Texas TreeVentures and a Twitter account for the Transportation department.

Residents have many choices to keep in touch with the Township, including following the Township on social media, subscribing to communitywide emergency notifications, or subscribing to the Township’s weekly e-newsletter, Talk of the Township, for important news alerts and information on upcoming events and recent activities. To get connected with Township communication channels, please visit www.thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov/stayinformed.

Emergency Preparedness

The Township continues to promote emergency preparedness through increased communication to encourage residents and businesses to be prepared during hurricane
season and throughout the year. Aside from personal preparedness tips, this also includes special messaging encouraging the community to stay informed via The Woodlands Township’s “Stay Informed” and “Emergency Resources” links, located on the homepage at www.thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov. There are many alert tools on The Woodlands Township’s website and through the Township’s social media marketing as well. Key and necessary information is sent out via all of these channels before, during and after a storm to help residents to stay prepared and informed during hurricane season.

Residents are also encouraged to sign up for a service called SMART 911, which is located at www.smart911.com. This service is free, private and secure, and allows citizens to create a Safety Profile of valuable information for 9-1-1 call takers only in the event of an emergency. Customized information delivered directly to first responders includes medical information; special conditions; names, ages and pictures of family members; home and work addresses; phone numbers associated with family members; information about pets; access information (gate codes, garage codes); description of vehicles; and emergency contacts. This is not a Township service, but is contracted through County services.

The Woodlands Township hires new fire chief
After more than 14 years of service to The Woodlands Township, Fire Chief Alan B. Benson retired in May 2019. Chief Benson led the fire department through many natural disasters in The Woodlands including Hurricane Ike and Hurricane Harvey.

After an extensive, nationwide search, The Woodlands Township named a new fire chief, Chief Palmer Buck. Formerly of the Austin Fire Department, Chief Buck has 37 years of experience in all aspects of the fire service and is a proven leader with extensive operations and command experience.

The Woodlands Fire Department is staffed with full-time, commissioned firefighters/ emergency medical technicians who are on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Department has excellent teams who are fully trained to respond to a wide variety of emergencies including collapse rescue, fires, hazardous materials emergencies, high-angle rescue, medical calls, swift water rescue, trench rescue and more. The Woodlands Fire Department celebrates over 40 years of service with eight permanent fire stations, a state-of-the-art Emergency Training Center and an ISO rating of 1, the highest in the industry.

**Communications Towers Project**
In late 2018, the Board approved phases three and four of the installation of microwave equipment and radio towers for the enhancement and improved reliability of the fire department emergency communications network. This project was completed mid-2019. The communication towers play a critical role in emergency situations for The Woodlands Fire Department, allowing for reliable communications throughout a disaster. The communication towers will provide a dependable communication link that is typically not affected by construction or power outages.

**Transportation / Mobility**
In 2012, as a result of the 2010 U.S. Census and the creation of the Conroe/ Woodlands Large Urbanized Area (UZA), several transportation and mobility topics impacting The Woodlands Township began to emerge.

The Woodlands Township and the City of Conroe were designated as co-direct recipients of federal transit funds for the new large urban area. With this role, the Township assumed direct responsibility for The Woodlands Express and the Town Center Trolleys. While the Township now bears greater responsibility for financial reporting and grant management, it continues to contract for transportation services.

The Woodlands Township does not have statutory responsibility or authority over planning and building roadways and highways. The responsibility for the roadways in The Woodlands rests primarily with Montgomery and Harris Counties. However, the Township Board of Directors is interested in developing a better understanding of transportation and mobility projects impacting the community. The Township will continue to explore ways to improve mobility and consider options that allow the Township to be more involved and partner with the counties in support of improvements that enhance The Woodlands community.

**Transportation Services**
The Township continues to contract with First Class Tours as the bus operator for The Woodlands Express park and ride service and with Brazos Transit District for the operation of the Town Center Trolleys. In addition, the Township continues to contract with Montgomery County Senior Rides/Meals on Wheels for demand-response transportation and provides supplemental service through an agreement with Interfaith’s transportation program for seniors.

**The Woodlands Express New Services for 2019**
The Woodlands Township’s Park and Ride bus service, known as The Woodlands Express, began offering three new services in 2019: a new 8 a.m. run from the Sterling Ridge Park and Ride Lot, a new stop at The Texas Medical Center, and a stop in the Museum District. In addition, The Township continues to contract with Montgomery County Senior Rides/Meals on Wheels for demand-response transportation and provides supplemental service through an agreement with Interfaith’s transportation program for seniors.

The Woodlands Express service provides a comfortable, convenient and economical way to commute to downtown Houston and beyond. Destinations include the Texas Medical Center, Greenway Plaza, as well as
the Central Business District of Houston. Scheduled service is provided Monday through Friday, excluding holidays from three Park and Ride locations in the Woodlands. The Woodlands Express also offers mobile ticketing, a “Where’s My Bus” locator app and a Twitter feed for updates.

The Woodlands Express Weekend Rides to the Rodeo
Residents and visitors of The Woodlands and surrounding areas now have an easy and convenient way to enjoy the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. In 2019, the Township Board initiated the new special event service to provide weekend rides to the rodeo. The Woodlands Express, the Township’s Park and Ride transportation service to Houston, headed to NRG Stadium on weekends during the rodeo, offering riders an opportunity to enjoy all the festivities without driving and parking concerns. This was a special service, and therefore The Woodlands Express regular tickets were not valid and round-trip reservations were required.

National Night Out Takes First Place
The Township Neighborhood Watch was honored by The National Association of Town Watch for their efforts during the 2019 National Night Out Campaign, with first place in Category #2 for populations 100,000 to 300,000. The Township also collaborated with the State of Texas, which took first place in its category. The Woodlands Township has been participating in National Night Out since 1990, and it has been producing award-winning crime prevention programming since 1984. The National Night Out campaign in The Woodlands offers many opportunities for neighborhood camaraderie, including a Community Safety Expo event, public safety open houses and resident-hosted National Night Out parties.

Township earns Gold Medal for parks and recreation
The Woodlands Township received one of the most prestigious awards for parks and recreation professionals in the United States. The National Recreation and Park Association’s (NRPA) Gold Medal Award honors communities throughout the United States that demonstrate excellence in long-range planning, resource management and innovative approaches to delivering superb park and recreation services with sound business practices. The Township Parks and Recreation Department received the Class III Gold Medal category for populations of 75,001 – 150,000.

The Township Parks and Recreation Department consistently receives accolades for excellence, including:

• The 2019 Texas Gold Medal Award presented by the Texas Recreation and Park Society (TRAPS) to exemplify commitment and dedication in the field of recreation and parks
• The 2019 Promotions and Marketing Excellence Award (also awarded by TRAPS) in recognition of the department’s high-quality marketing program for the aquatics programs and services
• The 2018 TRAPS Arts and Humanities Award and Lone Star Programming Award
• The distinction of being named to Aquatics International Magazine’s Best of 2017 list for its innovative approach to addressing lifeguard staffing

The Parks and Recreation Department operates and maintains numerous facilities and amenities including:

• Over 220 miles of hike and bike paths
• 14 community pools and 5 spray grounds
• Thousands of recreational programs, including the all-new aerial adventure course, Texas TreeVentures
• More than 60 high-quality special events
• Facilitates the provisions of its services through three pillars of service – equity, conservation and health and wellness

The Woodlands Township Parks and Recreation Department represents the first community in the Houston region to earn the NRPA Gold Award.

Plant for Pollinators program
In 2019, the Township launched a new Plant for Pollinators initiative that aims to protect monarchs, bees and all varieties of butterflies. The program identifies opportunities for reintroducing milkweed to our natural green spaces and areas that can be protected for pollinator habitat. It encourages and supports residents to plant pollinator gardens—in a yard, on a balcony or patio, or at their school, facility, business or place of worship. The program is coordinated by the Township Environmental Services Department.

Plant for Pollinators was developed in response to the decline in the monarch butterfly population during the past 20 years due to habitat loss, pesticide and herbicide overuse and disease. Monarchs, bees and butterflies are essential to the environment and play a critical role in the food supply.

Parks and Recreation Survey
In early 2019, the Township conducted a survey to gather community input for the Parks and Recreation Department. Survey questions included specifics related to sports fields, competitive swimming, parks, pools, trails and amenities.

The goal of the survey was to understand the needs and wants of the community, and prioritize them for possible implementation. In addition to an online survey to understand the needs of the general public, the study also included meetings with numerous groups including the Village Associations and local sport, recreation and community groups.

The Woodlands Township Board Changes Daily Pool Fees
In response to resident feedback, The Woodlands Township Board of Directors held special meetings in early August 2019 to discuss pool fees and operations. Following a public hearing, the Board changed the daily pool fees for residents and non-residents at community pools and aquatic facilities.
Beyond. During the coming year, staff will focus efforts on the following objectives:

There are a number of objectives, initiatives and issues that will need to be addressed by the Board and community in 2020 and beyond. During the coming year, staff will focus efforts on the following objectives:

**Looking Forward in 2020**

There are a number of objectives, initiatives and issues that will need to be addressed by the Board and community in 2020 and beyond. During the coming year, staff will focus efforts on the following objectives:

**2021 Budget and Five-Year Plan**

The Township will develop the 2021 budget in keeping with the Five-Year Plan. In this process, the Township will consider the impact of community growth and make any required budget changes and continue to monitor changing economic conditions and consider adjustments if necessary. Additional initiatives for 2021 will be determined during the budget planning process.

**Continuation of the Incorporation Planning Study**

In 2018, the Township Board of Directors contracted for an Incorporation Planning Study. In 2020, the consulting team will continue to work with the Board of Directors to complete a comprehensive process to facilitate public understanding of options and costs / benefits that may be associated with changing from the current governmental structure to an incorporated municipality.

**Drainage Task Force**

The Woodlands Township does not have direct responsibility for or authority over drainage issues in the community. In 2016, the Board initiated a task force to advocate for Township residents and businesses and facilitate discussions with other entities that have direct responsibility for drainage in order to resolve drainage concerns. Following Hurricane Harvey in 2017, this task force received increased cooperation from partner agencies to investigate and resolve drainage concerns, particularly related to flooding mitigation in the Spring Creek watershed. The task force includes representatives from The Woodlands Joint Powers Agency, The Woodlands Municipal Utility Districts, the San Jacinto River Authority, the Harris County Flood Control District and the Federal Emergency Management Administration. The work of the task force is expected to continue throughout 2020.

**Community Services**

Community maintenance, including roadway and neighborhood entry maintenance, continues to be a priority for the Township. Management of covenant standards is key to maintaining property values, and will become more challenging as the community matures. The Township continues to actively pursue covenant violations through the legal process. Waste removal and recycling services in the Township will continue to be provided to residents through a new contract with Waste Management in 2020. The Township is unique in that waste removal and recycling is funded through the property tax levy. In most cities, the cost of these services is paid directly by residents through a separate fee.

**Water Safety Program Partnership**

In 2019, The Woodlands Township Neighborhood Watch partnered with Montgomery County Hospital District, the YMCA and Texas Children’s Hospital to launch a new water safety program called S.P.L.A.S.H.—Swim, Play, Learn and Stay Healthy. The initiative focuses on drowning prevention and the steps that every family can take to ensure water safety.

**Tech Free 4 Me Driving Village Challenge**

In 2019, the Township Neighborhood Watch held a Tech Free 4 Me Driving Village Challenge, with a goal of helping to reduce the perils of distracted driving. The program utilized SAFE 2 SAVE, an independent mobile app that encourages users to avoid using their phone while driving. Residents were invited to download the app, enter their Village Code and begin earning points for driving tech-free. Points accumulated while driving safely can be redeemed for discounted and free items at local and online businesses. While the challenge is over, the app is free and available via the App Store and Google Play.

**Recruitment of new Township President and General Manager**

The Township’s long term President and General Manager will retire at the end of April. The Township Board has enlisted professional services for recruitment of the Township’s next leader. The President and General Manager oversees all departments and responsibilities, including human resources, neighborhood services, parks and recreation, legislative initiatives, transportation, public safety and law enforcement, among other duties. Responsibilities include the operating and capital improvements budgets as well as the implementation of strategic plans, goals, and objectives to meet the public service needs of residents and businesses in The

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**Parks and Recreation Wins National Award**

**Plant for Pollinators**

**Tech Free 4 Me Driving Village Challenge**
Woodlands Township. Recruitment for a new general manager is underway.

**Drainage Task Force**
In 2016, The Woodlands Township created the Drainage Task Force to address drainage concerns created by large rainfall and flood events such as the 2016 Tax Day event, the 2016 Memorial Day flood and the flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey in 2017. The task force includes representatives from all area agencies that have responsibility or authority over planning, managing or maintaining drainage systems serving The Woodlands Township area.

The Drainage Task Force will continue to advocate for Township residents and businesses and to facilitate discussions with the entities that have direct responsibility for drainage in The Woodlands. In 2020, the Task Force is anticipated to continue to focus on drainage concerns and flood mitigation related to the Spring Creek watershed.

**Non-Property Tax Revenues**
Maintaining a strong sales tax and room tax base is important to the community as a way of maintaining a low property tax rate. With over $61.4 million in sales tax and room tax collections projected in 2019, the continuation of this revenue base is important to the maintenance of a low property tax rate.

**Maintenance of Covenant Standards**
Maintenance of high property values and resident satisfaction come from the maintenance of property standards through the enforcement of the Covenants and Standards. As the villages in The Woodlands age, the community may see increased covenant issues involving property maintenance. Effective and timely covenant enforcement will be critical to the maintenance of quality and well-maintained neighborhoods.

**Transportation / Mobility Issues**
With the growth to date in The Woodlands and surrounding areas, the region is experiencing increased transportation and mobility challenges, including traffic congestion on the major thoroughfares throughout The Woodlands and particularly in the Town Center area during the holiday season, concert events and festivals.

Voters in Montgomery County and Harris County approved county road bonds in 2015 for mobility improvements throughout the area, and projects from these bond issuances are anticipated to provide some transportation improvements in the Township. However, for the long term, a considerable investment will need to be made to roads in The Woodlands area and only a small portion of the funding has been approved at this time. In addition, capacity improvements to the I-45 corridor are desperately needed. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is conducting a planning study known as a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study for the I-45 North corridor between Beltway 8 in Harris County and Loop 336 South in Montgomery County, which includes The Woodlands area. The Township does not have responsibility or authority over these mobility improvements, but will continue to work with the responsible entities on behalf of Woodlands residents.

The Township will also continue to review effectiveness and efficiency of Township transportation programs, including the Town Center Trolley and The Woodlands Express park and ride service.

**Repair to Fountains at Waterway Square**
The Woodlands Township owns and operates The Fountains at Waterway Square, which includes the park, stage, plaza and a state-of-the art dancing water and sound fountain system that some consider a focal point for numerous community celebrations and events, and serve as a prime focus of the 2.5-mile Woodlands Waterway. In early 2018, a major repair was identified. The repair project is ongoing and includes repairing the “bowl” of the fountain and replacing the existing equipment with new robotic water features and a new nonproprietary control system.

**Preliminary Master Plan for Township-owned Property**
The Township completed purchase of an 11.6-acre tract of land located on the southwest corner of Grogan’s Mill Road and Lake Woodlands Drive in 2015. The purchase of this property will enable the Township to plan for future governmental needs. The site may be suitable for the development of a centralized complex that could accommodate a city hall, a police station, municipal court, a local governmental services center and/or other important local government public use facilities. Preliminary planning for the site will continue as the Township considers future governmental and civic facility needs.

**Comprehensive Plan for Fire Stations**
The fire department currently has three fire stations and the Emergency Training Center that will require major upgrades over the next few years. During the budget workshops for the 2020 Township Budget, the Board of Directors authorized the development of a comprehensive construction plan of the facilities to provide guidance of the resources needed to address the facility issues and department needs. The comprehensive facility plan will include Fire Stations 3, 4, 5 and the Emergency Training Center.

**Law Enforcement**
The Township will continue to monitor law enforcement needs in the Montgomery County and Harris County (Village of...
The Township applied for a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Commuter and Transit Pilot Program grant through the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) to initiate a route to the Energy Corridor through The Woodlands Express park and ride program.

H-GAC has awarded the grant to the Township and the Township Board authorized funding up to 50 percent of the grant match needed to initiate the pilot program, with the remaining 50 percent of the match to be funded by the Energy Corridor District. Upon implementation, the pilot program will provide weekday round-trip park and ride bus service between The Woodlands and the Energy Corridor. This will be the first suburb-to-suburb park and ride commuter service in the Houston region. Planning for initiation of the pilot program is underway and the service is anticipated to begin in mid-2020.

The Township Board approved special weekend service to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo through The Woodlands Express, the Township’s Park and Ride transportation service to Houston. This special event service will ferry riders to NRG Stadium each weekend during the rodeo, allowing rodeo-goers to enjoy all of the fun without all of the frustration of parking and driving. This service will be available only on weekends during the rodeo and reservations are required.

The Township will continue to explore the possibility of transferring trolley operations and transit assets, including six (6) trolleys and park and ride facilities, from The Brazos Transit District to The Woodlands Township. The Township currently contracts with Brazos Transit District for trolley operations and leases the park and ride facilities.

During the budget process, the Board designated funding for a pilot program for the addition of an aeration device to cool the temperature of a community pool during the regular pool season. The outcome of the pilot study will be presented to the Board for additional consideration.

The Township has an ongoing program to renovate, upgrade and update older parks to include compliance with new regulations and standards, and more current amenities that are in keeping with new park trends and resident requests. The next major renovation will be initiated in 2020, with a planning and design phase for the renovation of Falconwing Park.

The Township’s first and only universally accessible playground, located at Bear Branch Park adjacent to the Recreation Center, is scheduled for renovation in 2020. The goal of a universally accessible playground is to provide a safe place where children of all abilities can play together and that are developmentally appropriate for children with and without disabilities. While all Township playgrounds meet accessibility standards at the time of installation, a universally accessible playground goes beyond those standards to ensure access and ability to use the entire playground.

The Township will continue to monitor changes in economic conditions that may impact revenue sources. The Township continually reviews revenue sources to be proactive in making any necessary changes to the Township’s financial plan and to mitigate any negative economic impacts.

Recognizing the importance of quality services, the Township will continue to look for ways to increase effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery programs. High levels of service in the Township are critical to preserve the quality of life enjoyed by The Woodlands residents.
The Woodlands Township Town Hall
2801 Technology Forest Boulevard, The Woodlands, Texas 77381
281-210-3800

Parks, Recreation and Environmental Services
8203 Millennium Forest Drive
The Woodlands, Texas 77381
281-210-3800

The Woodlands Township Recreation Center at Bear Branch
5310 Research Forest Drive
The Woodlands, Texas 77381
281-210-3950

The Woodlands Township Fire Department
281-367-3444

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