Summary of 2018 Accomplishments
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 2018, 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, such as Hurricane Harvey, which impacted our community in 2017.

In keeping with its policy of saving for future needs, in 2016, the Township Board created an incorporation reserve to plan for future costs should the community choose to incorporate as a municipality. In 2017, the Township successfully pursued legislative changes to allow a clearer path to Incorporation and transition from the Township to a new city. The Woodlands has had the ability to incorporate since 2014; however, state statutes did not provide for incorporation of a community as large as The Woodlands. With the new legislation, an incorporation election would also require that voters approve a maximum initial tax rate. To prepare the community for future governance decisions, the Township Board initiated an Incorporation Planning Study in 2018.

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 exceptional.

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 115,000 people, 2,100 businesses and a tax base valuation of more than $20 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 22.73 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, now 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 2018, this arrangement provides 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 167.5 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 2018–19, 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 eNewsletter, 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 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 a Township Board of Directors meeting and/or other committee meetings at Town Hall. Being informed of such
In September, Howard Hughes opened 125,000 square feet at Lake Front North. Arena Energy announced it leased 87,231 square feet at the landing. In December, Howard Hughes Corporation repositioned the two former Chicago Bridge & Iron buildings, situated on the northern end of Hughes Landing, to a multifamily development in Hughes Landing. Two Lakes Edge, an eight-story, 386-unit, luxury apartment building, opened in 2019. REACH Health & Wellness relocated from its previous location in the south 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 65 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.

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. Lake Woodlands Crossing Retail Center at 1900 Lake Woodlands Drive at the northeast intersection of Grogan’s Mill Road. The center is currently 78% leased. Total Wine & More opened its first location in The Woodlands at Lake Woodlands Crossing, serving as a co-anchor of the retail center. The liquor superstore chain offers a selection of 8,000 wines, 3,000 spirits and 2,500 beers along with mixers, bar accessories and gift items. ULTA Beauty relocated from its previous location in The Woodlands to also serve as co-anchor of the center. A restaurant specializing in healthy food choices will open in Lake Woodlands Crossing in 2019. REACH Stretch Studios, Beaux Toes, Main Squeeze Juice Company and Stickhouse serve as initial tenants.

Howard Hughes broke ground 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 expected completion of the project is spring 2020.

Executives from Howard Hughes and Primrose broke ground on the first early childhood school in Hughes Landing in November. Primrose is an accredited early childhood education school that serves children from six weeks to kindergarten and offers summer camps. Construction on Primrose School is underway with completion slated for 2019. The 10,000-square-foot building and playground will be located on Hughes Landing Blvd., adjacent to the Two Hughes Landing and Three Hughes Landing parking garages. Also, in Hughes Landing, Focus Optical signed a lease to expand their current location to 3,304 square feet, from its original lease space of 1,801, which they have occupied since 2016. With the expansion, existing retail space in Hughes Landing is 100% leased to date.

The Howard Hughes Corporation, and its wholly-owned subsidiary, The Woodlands Development Company, along with The Woodlands Township together announced the official conveyance of the Band Shell and Boardwalk at Hughes Landing® Park to The Woodlands Township. The Band Shell and Boardwalk projects were made possible by a Comprehensive Community Services Agreement between The Howard Hughes Corporation and The Woodlands Township under which both entities jointly contribute to amenities in the community, with full ownership eventually transferred to the Township.

Moviehouse & Eatery® will open its first location at Creekside Park® Village Center, making Creekside Park the first village in The Woodlands with its own theater. The theater is expected to open in winter 2019. Moviehouse & Eatery will be 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 will include 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 creekside services.
The Woodlands Waterway Completion

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 worked with several groups in 2018 to bring meeting and event business to The Woodlands in order to increase the Township’s Hotel Occupancy Tax and Retail Sales Tax. The Woodlands has 14 hotels with 2,250 in inventory each and every night. The Woodlands host major corporate meetings as well as signature events and meetings such as Copa Rayados Internacional Soccer Tournament, Lunar & Planetary Science Conference and IRONMAN North American Championship. Visit The Woodlands also worked to promote The Woodlands’ signature events, including: The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival and The Inspire Film Festival.

Sales Tax and Hotel Occupancy Tax

Sales tax and room tax make up 51 percent of Township revenues. The majority of these taxes are paid by visitors. Sales tax revenue has increased significantly over the past five years, growing from $45 million in 2013 to $54.6 million in 2018, or 21%.

Hotel occupancy tax revenue also continues to grow, increasing from $6.5 million in 2013 to $9.0 million in 2018, or 38%. 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.

Niche.com gives The Woodlands high rankings

In 2018, 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.
Summary of 2018 Accomplishments

Completion of 2019 Budget and Five-Year Plan

A Board pre-budget and strategic planning process was conducted in early May of 2018 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 2019 adopted budget lowered the property tax rate from 23 cents per $100 of valuation to 22.73 cents per $100 of taxable property value, which includes a continuation of base level services and funding for Board-approved budget initiatives. The 2019 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.

In 2018, Moody’s assigned an issuer rating of Aa1 to The Woodlands Township. The issuer rating reflects Moody’s credit assessment of the Township’s implicit general obligation credit strength and is used as a reference rating for the Township’s sales and use tax and hotel occupancy bonds (revenue bonds), which currently have a rating of A1. Although Moody’s routinely analyzes and publishes ratings for the Township’s revenue bonds, this is the first time the credit agency has released an issuer rating related to the Township’s general obligation indebtedness. According to Moody’s definitions, “obligations rated Aa are judged to be of high quality and are subject to very low credit risk. The modifier 1 indicates that the obligation ranks in the higher end of its generic rating category.” The only credit rating higher than Aa1 is Aaa. The Township received this rating in part due to its history of strong fiscal management with maintenance of healthy fund balance and liquidity; its large and diverse tax base, stable financial operations with sound reserves, and low debt and pension burdens; and its conservative budgeting and careful expense management that has contributed to stable financial reserves.

**Initiation of an Incorporation Planning Study**

Two bills were passed in 2017 during the 85th Legislative Session that clear the way for future incorporation of The Woodlands if desired by the community. While authority is 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 legislation was passed to clarify existing state statutes and to pave the way for a smooth transition from a Township 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, allowing The Woodlands to determine its future governance.

In early 2018, The Woodlands Township embarked on an incorporation planning study with two independent firms. As part of this process, the Township Board of Directors selected the Matrix Consulting Group as the lead consultant and selected The Novak Consulting Group to perform an independent analysis and best practices review.

The Township Board of Directors kicked off its future governance/incorporation planning study in April 2018 to involve Township residents in the dialogue of future governance options in The Woodlands. In an effort to fully engage the public, the Board scheduled two planning sessions per month 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.

Throughout the year, the consultants reported on frequently asked questions, overall project updates, base financial model assumptions, future financial model questions, and comparative findings and presented draft benchmarking research regarding revenue and municipal programs in comparison to the data of peer cities in Texas to be used in the Future Governance/Incorporation study. Studies performed to date include the best practices analysis, zoning and covenant review, law enforcement analysis, street condition analysis, and a review of municipal utility district (MUD) operations.

In addition to the regular meetings, an Incorporation Planning Study website has been launched at www.thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov/governance or 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. Additional improvements to the website are planned for 2019.

In September, The Woodlands Township held an Incorporation Planning Study Public Forum at The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel & Convention Center. More than 330 residents attended and heard presentations from the Township and its consulting team. The meeting was videotaped and is available on the Township website.

In November the preliminary results of the two independent financial analyses were presented at the Township Board’s planning session.

In December, in preparation of a final financial model regarding future governance to include robust public outreach, The Woodlands Township Board of Directors has engaged the Novak Consulting Group as the lead firm for the remainder of the project.

The next phase of the incorporation study will involve preparation of a final financial model based on the two independent analyses, 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, which was an item added during the last state legislative cycle. Both must pass for The Woodlands to become a general law city, prior to consideration of becoming a home rule city.

**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 2019.

**Township Officials Work with State, National Leaders on Flood Mitigation**

In response to Hurricane Harvey, in early 2018, officials with The Woodlands Township made personal visits with state and federal leaders in Washington, D.C. on behalf of The Woodlands residents to help in flood mitigation for the region.

Township Chairman Bunch and Director Rieser, who Chairs the Drainage Task Force for The Woodlands Township, joined other Montgomery County elected officials in Washington, D.C. to support additional federal disaster recovery funding following Hurricane Harvey.

Montgomery County and The Woodlands Township officials are working with the State of Texas and members of the Texas congressional delegation to fund a study of Montgomery County watersheds, including Spring Creek, to better understand local hydrology within the watersheds and to recommend steps that can be taken to reduce area flooding to homeowners and properties.

Shortly after the meetings in Washington, D.C., representatives from The Woodlands Township joined Montgomery County and other local officials at a meeting of the Hurricane Harvey Federal/State Housing Strike Team. The meeting included the State of Texas, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Texas General Land Office (GLO) and others and provided an opportunity for local officials to strategize on a long-term Hurricane Harvey disaster recovery action plan with state and federal agencies.

**Residential Survey**

The Township traditionally conducts a survey of The Woodlands residents approximately every two years to seek resident feedback on the community and their overall satisfaction with Township services and well as their suggested improvements. Results of the survey are typically used to assist in prioritizing funding and service initiatives during the budget process. The Township contracted with National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) to provide a low-cost, high-quality method to conduct market research for the community survey in 2018. The survey centers on community livability and includes questions about the quality of life in the community, local policies, rating of local government services and other topics to ensure the Township is meeting the expectations of residents. A random and scientific sample of households received invitations to participate. Results of the survey will be presented in a Public Meeting in early 2019.

**Reconstruction of Bear Branch Park Pool**

The existing pool at Bear Branch Park was severely damaged as a result of conditions created by a major storm event in April 2016. Based on expert analysis, the pool needed to be removed and a new pool constructed. The majority of the costs for reconstruction of the pool were funded through insurance proceeds. Bear Branch Pool officially re-opened in July 2018. Centrally located at 5200 Research Forest Drive, Bear Branch Pool features a large shallow end with play structure, a body slide in the deep end and the return of the beloved Orca slide. Some of the enhanced features of Bear Branch Pool include new lanes for lap swimming, an expanded deck, zero depth entry, a water play area for children, new restrooms with showers and expanded parking.

**On-site Kayak, Paddleboard Storage Offered at Boat House in Northshore Park**

The major renovation of Northshore Park completed in 2017 included the construction of a new 7,000-square-foot boathouse facility on the waterfront of Lake Woodlands. While the majority of the facility provides a home for the Rowing Club of The Woodlands and Parati Competitive Rowing through a public-private partnership, the Township also created a space for fee-based kayak and paddleboard storage in the The Woodforest Bank Boat House at Northshore Park. The Northshore Park Storage Facility offers quick and easy access to Lake Woodlands. Starting in 2018, residents can keep their equipment in a safe location, close to the water for ease of use. Access hours mirror the hours of Northshore Park. Spaces are limited and are offered on a first-come, first-served basis and reservations for storage must be made via Riva Row Boat House.

**Waterway Cruisers Removed from The Woodlands Waterway**

The Woodlands Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), known as Visit The Woodlands, contracted for the removal of the six Waterway Cruisers from The Woodlands Waterway. The Cruisers, which had been iconic symbols of The Woodlands Waterway for 15 years, had not been in operation since they were damaged during Hurricane Harvey.

**Swan Boats Launched on the Waterway**

The Woodlands Township launched 10 swan
pedal boats on The Woodlands Waterway in August. The swan-shaped boats are available to rent to the public and are located near Riva Row Boat House. Boats are permitted to travel the upper level of the Waterway from the turning basin at Riva Row Park to the east end of the canal but are not permitted in Lake Robbins. Within the first three months of operations, the revenues had covered the cost for the purchase of the swan boats.

**Construction of an Adventure Course at The Recreation Center at Rob Fleming Park**

In 2018, the Township awarded bids for the design and construction of an outdoor adventure course located at the Recreation Center at Rob Fleming Park. The adventure course will be known as Texas TreeVentures and the course design takes 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. Construction of the project included the course, course equipment, site renovation and tree house renovations. The adventure course is scheduled to open to the public in mid-spring 2019. Other amenities added to park areas adjacent to the Recreation Center at Rob Fleming Park in 2018-2019 include a dog park, playground and field lights.

**Cultural Arts Study**

In 2016, a contract was awarded to conduct a Cultural Arts Feasibility Study for The Woodlands to consider a need and/or support for a potential cultural arts facility that may house space for performing arts, a museum or other similar purposes. The first phase needs assessment and the second phase management / business plan and financial pro forma concluded in 2017. These initial phases determined a need and desire from the community for a science museum and a cultural arts facility. The Board authorized a third phase of the study to be completed in 2018, to look at project initiation, architectural programming, predesign analysis, and update of the business plan to consider a science museum and/or a cultural arts center. Phase III is a continuation of the feasibility study. Planning for a potential performing arts facility is still under discussion. No funding has been committed to building either facility at this time.

**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 feed (@TheTownshipTX), Instagram, LinkedIn and a Facebook page specifically for the Parks and Recreation Department.

In 2018, the Township added a Facebook page specifically for Neighborhood Watch (www.facebook.com/townshipneighborhoodwatch) to provide information to community members regarding crime prevention, personal safety tips and emergency preparedness planning tips. The Township also communicated through Facebook live videos during several events.

Residents have many choices to keep in touch with the Township, including following the Township on social media, subscribing to community-wide 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 at 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.

**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.

**Mobile Ticketing System for The Woodlands Express Park and Ride**

As part of continued enhancements to The Woodlands Express park and ride service, the Township launched a mobile ticketing app for riders of the bus service, a technology-based alternative to traditional paper tickets. Tickets can now be bought anytime, anywhere, using the new app.

The Woodlands Express Park and Ride service provides a comfortable, convenient and economical way to commute from The Woodlands to Houston, and also offers reverse commute. 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.

The new mobile ticketing app is available for free download in the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. Riders may purchase tickets on their smartphones anytime, anywhere and display them when boarding the bus. Riders using the app can pay for tickets using a credit or debit card, or via digital payment services such as Masterpass and Apple Pay. Both round-trip tickets and ticket books, which provide riders 20 round-trip tickets, are available. Once purchased, the tickets work offline and are stored in the app.

**Woodlands Express launches “Next Bus” tracking app**

The Woodlands Township continues to lead the Houston region in transit technology. Building on the recent successful release of its mobile ticketing app, The Woodlands Township has released a “Next Bus” tracking app for The Woodlands Express commuter bus service. Designed in partnership with transit technology firm Ride Systems, the app provides real-time information for passengers, including GPS-tracked bus location, estimated arrival times, stop information, notifications and more. Both new apps are the first of their kind in the region.

The Ride Systems app is free to download and available for iOS and Android in the App Store or on Google Play. For passengers already using the mobile ticketing app, the bus tracking feature is available in under “Trip Tools.”

**Town Center Trolleys expand service to Hughes Landing and launch trolley app**

In 2018, The Woodlands Township expanded the Town Center Trolley route to include service to Hughes Landing. The free trolleys provide transit to popular retail, entertainment and office locations along the 4.1-mile route connecting The Woodlands Mall, Market Street, Town Center, The Woodlands Waterway and Hughes Landing. Stops are conveniently located near retail and business locations, making travel seamless and efficient for residents and visitors when shopping, moving about during the work day or enjoying the many restaurants, concerts and activities in The Woodlands.

In addition to the added stops, riders can now track the Town Center Trolley in real time on a mobile device. The Ride Systems App can be downloaded for Town Center Trolley information including estimated arrival times, location, stop information, nearby attractions, service alerts and more. The app can be downloaded for free in the Apple (IOS) or Google Play (Android) store and installed on any smartphone. After installation, select “The Woodlands Township” from the menu to begin use.

**Pilot Program for Park and Ride Service to Energy Corridor**

In 2018, the Board authorized staff and consultants to prepare a grant application for the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Commuter and Transit Pilot Program for a route to the Energy Corridor and directed staff to seek additional funding from regional partners in the Energy Corridor to serve as the local match.

**Global Entry Enrollment Center**

In 2017, to assist local residents, the Township entered into an agreement to allow the use of Town Hall for a Global Entry Enrollment Center one to two days per month. U.S. Customs and Border Protection provides their own staff, data systems and related peripherals to conduct the enrollments and there is no direct cost to the Township. In 2018, the agreement was
amended to increase the operating days from twice a month to one day per week, occurring every Thursday.

**Township hosted September 11 Ceremonies**

The Woodlands Township hosted two ceremonies on September 11, 2018, to commemorate a day of remembrance and reverence in the community. The day was proclaimed as Patriot Day of Remembrance and First Responders Day in The Woodlands. With the federal government establishing September 11 as Patriot Day and National Day of Remembrance, and the Texas Government Code 662.050 proclaiming September 11 as Texas First Responders Day, these ceremonies help to officially acknowledge this day in The Woodlands.

**Public Safety Open Houses to Celebrate Public Safety Partnerships**

As an early kickoff to the National Night Out program, the Township hosted a Public Safety Open House at each of the eight fire stations in The Woodlands. The open houses provided opportunities to get an up-close look at fire apparatus, rescue units and the fire station, and allowed children to learn about fire safety and meet the firefighters who help keep neighborhoods safe. In addition, law enforcement personnel from the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office Crime Prevention Unit and Harris County Constable’s Office Precinct 4 joined in the fun to help educate the community.

**National Award for Neighborhood Watch**

The Township Neighborhood Watch was honored by The National Association of Town Watch for their efforts during the 2018 National Night Out Campaign, with third 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 theme party contest, sidewalk chalk art competition, a food drive in partnership with Interfaith of The Woodlands, I.D. the Burglar Village Challenge and the National Night Out Military Drive, and a related Community Safety Expo event.

**Hands-Only CPR Community Challenge**

In 2018, The Woodlands Township launched a series of Hands-Only CPR trainings through the Neighborhood Watch. These trainings were offered free of charge in partnership with The Woodlands Fire Department, American Heart Association and Montgomery County Hospital District. Nearly 800 people were trained in hands-only CPR through this community-wide initiative. The American Heart Association’s CPR guidelines include the option of Hands-Only CPR (without breath interventions). If performed immediately, Hands-Only CPR can significantly increase the chance of survival for a cardiac arrest victim.

**ISO 1 Rating Reaffirmed**

The Woodlands Township was initially awarded the Insurance Service Office (ISO) 1 rating on May 1, 2014. Very few communities in North America hold this prestigious rating. The community’s ISO rating is important to residential and commercial owners, as their insurance premium rate is directly affected by the rating. It is also a key component for corporations considering relocation to The Woodlands. Due to recent changes in scoring and reevaluation requirements, the Township authorized an ISO revaluation earlier than required in order to take advantage of the current state oversight and preserve the Public Protection Class 1 rating for an additional length of time. In mid-2018, the State Fire Marshal’s Office reaffirmed the Township’s ISO 1 rating.

**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 an existing contract with Waste Management in 2019; however, a bid process has been initiated for service provision when the existing contract expires. 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.
Looking Forward in 2019

There are a number of objectives, initiatives and issues that will need to be addressed by the Board and community in 2019 and beyond. During the coming year, staff will focus efforts on the following objectives:

2020 Budget and Five-Year Plan

The Township will develop the 2020 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 2020 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 2019, 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.

Retirement of Bonds backed by Sales Tax and Hotel Occupancy Tax

In late 2018, the Board authorized staff to proceed with obtaining the necessary documents for the defeasance of the Township’s Series 2010 Sales Tax and Hotel Occupancy Tax Bonds. The bonds were originally issued in 2010 for $12,175,000 to provide funding for the purchase and renovation of the Town Hall facility. The bonds became callable in March 2018. Final action to retire these outstanding bonds will be considered in early 2019.

Cultural Arts Study – Phase III

In late-2017, the Township Board approved entering Phase III of the Cultural Arts Feasibility Study, which is ongoing. During this phase, the consultant is exploring project initiation, architectural programming, pre-design analysis, and update of the business plan for a science museum and a cultural arts center. This remains an exploratory phase and no funding has been appropriated for construction of a project at this time.

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 2019, the Task Force is anticipated 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 $64.7 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 over the next five years. 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 the centerpiece of Town Center. Originally installed in 2008, The Fountains have been 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 and the Board spent considerable time considering options. Following negotiations with The Woodlands Land Development Company to allow the Township in the future to only be obligated to make repairs that maintain the fountain in a manner consistent with other fountains, lights and stages under the purview of the Township, the Board approved 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/Cultural Arts

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 public facilities such as a cultural arts center, visitor center or other local government public use facilities. Preliminary planning for the site will continue as the Township considers future governmental, cultural and civic facility needs.

Opening of the Adventure Course at The Recreation Center at Rob Fleming Park

The new adventure course to be known as Texas TreeVentures is scheduled to open to the public in mid-spring 2019. The course is currently under construction and Parks and Recreation staff continue to ramp up of the facility through hiring staff and implementing the business and operational plan.

New Sponsor for TRI – The Woodlands

One of the Township’s signature races is a sprint triathlon held in May of each year. TRI – The Woodlands that has been held annually for the past 15 years at Northshore Park and Lake Woodlands. Since the inception of the race, CB&I had been the title sponsor holding the naming rights and sponsorship title. CB&I recently moved its headquarters and relinquished the title sponsorship. Woodforest Bank has signed on as title sponsor for this event. The sponsorship will allow the triathlon to continue a premier event in The Woodlands, along with the help of thousands of our residents volunteering and participating each and every year.

Law Enforcement

The Township will continue to monitor law enforcement needs in the Montgomery County and Harris County (Village of Creekside Park) areas and adjust as necessary to retain high quality public safety services in The Woodlands.

Waste Collection and Recycling Services

The Township’s current contract for residential curbside waste collection and recycling services expires in January 2020. A bid process has been initiated to solicit a service provider for the next contract term.

Community Services

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.

Comprehensive Community Services Agreement/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 and as part of the Comprehensive Community Services Agreement, which is set to expire at the end of 2019.

**Water Conservation Planning**

Internal operations and practices for water conservation improvements will continue to be reviewed and the Township will continue enhanced educational programming and partnership with The Woodlands Joint Powers Agency (WJPA) to communicate water conservation to residents.

**Communication**

The Township will continue to enhance communication with residents and businesses, through social media communications, our mobile-friendly website, award-winning magazine and emergency communications.

**Communication 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. The microwave towers will provide a significant enhancement to our emergency communications network and implementation will dramatically reduce the effects of outages due to line cuts and power outages.

**Monitor Economic Conditions**

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.

**Pedestrian / Bicycle Master Plan**

The Township contracted for development of a master plan for bike/pedestrian needs in The Woodlands to review and make recommendations on improvements to the Township-wide network of existing facilities and to develop new facilities to provide for improved and safer bicycle and pedestrian commuting and recreational opportunities. The Board approved the master plan in October, 2016, to be used as a guide for future Bicycle / Pedestrian projects. The Township is awaiting a decision from the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) on an application for grant funding to assist in funding several pathway connection improvements.

**New Services for The Woodlands Express in 2019**

The Woodlands Township’s Park and Ride bus service, known as The Woodlands Express, will offer two new services in 2019. A six-month pilot program will add an 8 a.m. run from the Sterling Ridge Park and Ride Lot. Previously, the last morning run from Sterling Ridge left at 7:35 a.m. After six months, the Township will evaluate performance and decide if the new run will become permanent. In addition, a new stop will be added at The Texas Medical Center with pick up and drop off at the UT School of Dentistry, in front of the UT Health Building. This will be the new last and first stop in The Medical Center during morning and evening runs, respectively.

**Pilot Program for Park and Ride Service to Energy Corridor**

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. If additional funding is secured from regional partners in the Energy Corridor and the project moves forward, The Woodlands Express would add a daily commuter service to Houston’s Energy Corridor. The CMAQ grant would provide funding for this service for a maximum of three years with 80% maximum federal participation, and the Township would be responsible for a minimum 20% of net project costs.

**Development of Cultural Arts Designated Area**

Earlier this year, the Township tasked the Ad Hoc Economic Development Committee with developing a plan for Board approval to designate an arts district in The Woodlands. The committee’s proposal will include creation of district boundaries, naming, and creative material development that could be used in signage, marketing and promotion for the proposed development of an arts designated area. The Board approved a logo design; however, additional details and plans are still under development.

**Visit The Woodlands**

To establish The Woodlands as a leading travel destination for conventions with 600 to 800 delegates, Visit the Woodlands will continue to create awareness for The Woodlands and demonstrate the value of tourism, meetings industry, destination branding and strategic marketing to local residents, meeting planners, The Woodlands Township, Township Board, civic organizations, hotels, Economic Development Partnerships (EDP), merchant associations, regional destination marketing organizations, and valued community stakeholders.
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