



ENVISION RICHARDSON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW COMMENTS

MAY, JUNE, AND JULY 2023

The following is a summary of responses to questions posed in interviews of representatives from various Richardson stakeholder groups. Twenty-one individual and small group interviews involving approximately 55 stakeholders were conducted between May 31st and July 6th, 2023. Questions covered a broad range of topics relevant to Richardson, supplemented with targeted questions focused on the specific interests and expertise of each group being interviewed. Stakeholders interviewed represented:

- Richardson City Council
- Richardson City Plan Commission
- Cultural/Faith-Based Groups
- Richardson Chamber of Commerce
- Corporations
- Small Businesses
- Neighborhood Associations
- Education Providers
- Partner Organizations
- Nonprofits
- Real Estate Professionals

The questions below are the ones used in most of the interviews. This document is meant to be a summary of the responses to these most-asked questions, not a transcription of all the responses throughout the 20+ interview sessions.



1. Describe Richardson today in terms of what's working well and what's not.

Working well:

- Richardson is being proactive in responding to the challenges of a mature community.
- The City is well-managed. Services are reliable and high-quality. Staff is professional and responsive.
- City leaders and private business owners are willing to innovate to achieve great things.
- The City has a long tradition of planning; zoning has been used effectively to preserve neighborhoods and separate incompatible uses.
- Richardson is easy to reach from anywhere in the metroplex.
- The city is perceived as safe.
- Richardson is a supportive, tight-knit community—a place where you can live, work, and play. The community works collaboratively, and citizen involvement is encouraged.
- Neighborhoods remain strong and stable, partly due to the City's focus on property maintenance/code compliance. The Home Improvement Incentive Program has had a positive impact on neighborhoods as well.
- Educational institutions are a major asset.
- The community has diversity worth celebrating.
- The parks and open space system and special events are impressive; progress is being made on the city's walking/biking infrastructure.
- There are plenty of gathering spaces/"third places" in Richardson and a variety of restaurants which serve cuisine from all parts of the globe.
- The City has a pro-business attitude; the assumption of economic development responsibilities by the City organization is a positive step.
- Big business has been/continues to be an anchor for the community. New business is welcomed.



- The City is taking advantage of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities.
- The City maintains good relationships with DART, local educational institutions, the North Texas Municipal Water District, and other county, regional, and state partner agencies/organizations.

Not working well:

- Maintaining aging infrastructure (streets, alleys, etc.) and addressing water supply and wastewater treatment issues will become even more important to Richardson and the entire region in the future. It will impact the local and regional economy.
- The City's identity/brand needs to be refreshed/updated. Its image as the Telecom Corridor is stale. Richardson needs to become more of a place, a destination.
- Entertainment, restaurants, attractions, and experiences are missing.
- The CORE District needs to be more welcoming.
- It is difficult to compete with cities like Frisco, McKinney, Plano, and Southlake for new and emerging mid-size companies.
- There is a lack of vacant land to attract new development.
- There needs to be more diversity in the local economic base (less emphasis on the semiconductor industry).
- Aging/Underperforming commercial space—office, retail, warehouse—needs to be repositioned to be viable in the market. Adaptive reuse of existing buildings should be a major part of the solution.
- There is a lack of high-end retail in Richardson.
- The “face” that the City presents along its southern border needs to be improved.
- Increases in the cost of living have led to a shortage of attainable/workforce housing. This lack of reasonably priced housing affects both private corporations and public organizations (including the City of Richardson) as they try to attract and retain quality employees.



- There is a lack of connectivity within the city. Walkability needs to be improved and the pedestrian environment needs to be enhanced.
- DART's schedule is not convenient. Commuting by bus can take more than twice as long as driving because of multiple stops and transfers. The weather makes waiting at a station or a bus stop uncomfortable for regular commuters.
- Changing demographic conditions present many challenges—access to transportation, finding employment, locating attainable housing, finding affordable childcare, lack of health insurance, multicultural issues, and difficulties associated with an aging population, among others. These challenges are not only experienced by immigrant households. Other low-income families and individuals in Richardson face the same issues.
- It is difficult to reach/communicate with certain groups in the city because of language and cultural barriers. Better ways of getting/sharing information need to be identified so that all residents are aware of the services available to them. Volunteers may be able to help.
- Cultural and interfaith groups need a space for meetings and events.
- Mental illness and homelessness are impacting the community and appropriate solutions have yet to be identified.
- Federal and state regulations are interfering with cities' ability to function as the citizens have come to expect.
- The City needs to partner more with UTD and find ways to involve their students.

2. What word(s) or phrase(s) would you use to describe the most desirable future for Richardson in the next 20 to 25 years?

Vibrant	Attractive
Diverse	Desirable
Inclusive	Unique
Innovative	Cosmopolitan
Forward-thinking	Connected
Solutions-oriented	Convenient
Mature	Safe



Adaptive	Pedestrian-/Bike-friendly
Evolving	Community-oriented
Intentional	Family-friendly
Equitable	Carbon neutral
Resilient	Attractive as a destination
Flexible	Celebrating
Relevant	High-energy
Dynamic	Involved/Engaged
Thriving	Premiere
Fearless	Welcoming
Where business, family, and nature thrive	
A place with housing choices for all, including higher-density options	
A place with a small-town feel	
A community of boutique neighborhoods that successfully integrate parks, housing, and convenient retail and service uses	
Where business seeds are planted	
A good place that can be even better	

3. How do you get around in Richardson and the region today? In what way(s) do you see transportation needs changing in the future, if any? What role should alternative transportation options (DART rail, bus service, rideshare services, bike lanes, trails, etc.) play in the City’s overall mobility strategy?

- The community benefits greatly from a high degree of regional access—Central Expressway, Bush Turnpike, and LBJ Freeway. This is important in a variety of ways, including bringing workers to and from jobs in Richardson.
- All travel modes are important, especially as the population of the region continues to increase.
- DART service has had a major impact on the city; however, most people still use personal vehicles as their primary mode of transportation.
- Few people take the train to work except to Downtown Dallas; it is used as a means of traveling to destinations such as the State Fair, downtown events, or jury duty.



- DART's decision-making tends not to favor businesses. Their focus seems to be on getting disadvantaged persons to services and the elderly to their destinations. Schedules don't make it convenient to use for local trips. There should be more information and promotion of DART's on-demand services.
- There is a need to develop better connections between stations and jobs (Arapaho Transit Center to destinations in the IQ District, for example) or other destinations (neighborhoods to restaurants or other attractions). A system for the first mile/last mile connection for riders, typically provided by bus or shuttle service, needs to be developed.
- Bus service tends to be inconvenient because of the need for multiple transfers and the possibility of scheduling problems. Also, disabled passengers face special challenges when using the bus.
- Younger people will likely be the segment of the population more open to making regular use of transit.
- There is excitement about Silver Line service to the airport. Its use for daily commuting will be limited, although it could be helpful for UTD students, especially with extended hours to serve the campus.
- Cycling and walking will probably always be used predominantly for recreation in Texas rather than for commuting, largely due to weather conditions; nonetheless, there is a desire for the completion of the trail system and the provision of amenities such as shade, lighting, water fountains, safety features, etc. to make these activities more attractive to users.
- Safety enhancements and pedestrian improvements are seen as important for walking and biking as well, along with wayfinding devices and safe connections for pedestrians and cyclists trying to travel between destinations such as neighborhoods and nearby special districts with retail and restaurants, or between parks and neighborhoods.
- A reassessment/reduction of the City's parking requirements might also encourage more walking and biking.
- In the future, provisions for electric vehicles, autonomous vehicles, and vehicles requiring vertical take-off and landing may need to be part of the mobility mix. Thought should be put into providing for these additional modes now.



- The widening of Central Expressway through Richardson should be avoided.

4. Given that the city is almost built out and much of the housing stock and building inventory is decades old, how does Richardson continue to grow and stay relevant in the region economically and remain a desirable place in which to live/work/have a business?

- Richardson should strive to remain a live/work/play community.
- The community should embrace its diversity and multiculturalism as an asset.
- Renovation, revitalization, and repurposing will be an important part of resiliency and relevance. To preserve the character of the city—particularly its neighborhoods, but also in commercial areas—redevelopment and rebuilding should not be the first or only/preferred strategy.
- The City’s effort should be concentrated on districts and sites that present special opportunities that encourage corresponding private sector activity and investment. One of the strategies that might be used to encourage reinvestment could be the assembly of parcels by the City to create development sites.
- There is a strong desire to maintain the high level of amenities and the quality of City services in the years ahead to help ensure continued success.
- More flexibility in zoning and permitting requirements might encourage new development activity.
- The possibility of converting non-residential buildings to creative residential uses should be explored.
- Incentives are a way to attract desirable development, but they should be used creatively and carefully and managed wisely. Commercial building upgrades should be incentivized.
- Attention needs to be paid to attracting, supporting, and retaining small businesses, which are major job creators.
- Strategically placed residential development at rail stations, on infill commercial parcels, and in older shopping centers should be considered.
- Retail space should be reduced/concentrated in key locations to make all centers more viable.



- Placemaking will be important to Richardson’s identity and image. Provisions for programming/activation and long-term maintenance should be factored into the planning for these enhanced spaces.
- The future of commercial office buildings/parks needs to be reimagined. Existing office environments need to be highly amenitized to compete successfully in the marketplace. This applies not only to the buildings themselves, many of which have become functionally obsolete over time, but also to the nearby surroundings, which need to be energized to include restaurants, green spaces, activities, and places to socialize after work to make the employee’s drive to the office worth it. City incentives may be required in order to make these upgrades, possibly through grants for façade upgrades, common area improvements, other amenities, etc.

5. Are there existing areas or developments in the city that make you proud/that the City should be proud of? What makes those areas/developments special?

- Most often mentioned:
 - CityLine
 - Lockwood District
 - University of Texas at Dallas
 - Spring Creek Nature Area (forest in the heart of the city)
- Others included:
 - The Eisemann Center
 - DFW Chinatown
 - Eastside
 - Two Creeks
 - Richardson Restaurant Park (especially Old 75)
 - Brick Row
 - Sherrill Park Golf Course
 - Northside at UTD



- Lennox Center
- Campbell Road west of Central
- Cottonwood Park (particularly the inclusive playground)
- Lennox Center
- Hopes are high for the CORE area and the IQ District.
- Neighborhood entry features bring neighborhood identity and pride.

6. Are there existing areas or developments in the city that cause you concern? If so, why? What should be done with those areas/developments?

- West Spring Valley (Central Expressway to Coit Road; emphasis on elevating and enhancing)
- Belt Line/Plano (all four corners; especially the vacant Sears building, the concentration of fast-food restaurants, and the property that extends east to Yale)
- West Arapaho (from Central west through the Tom Thumb shopping center; future of the center if the grocery store were ever to exit)
- Richardson Heights Shopping Center (several ownership changes over the years)
- Coit Road corridor (Promenade and Dal Rich centers; opinions differ on this corridor)
- Hill Streets (east of Greenville between Arapaho and Apollo; could be an opportunity for workforce housing)
- Apartments on Prestonwood (south of Spring Valley between Central Expressway and Sherman; aging and off the beaten path)
- Plano/Arapaho retail center (northeast corner; portions are two-story)
- Breckinridge area (one opinion that the area lacks destinations other than the park)
- The older neighborhoods south of the CORE (in danger of further decline)
- Plano/Buckingham (older retail centers)
- Como Motel (does not fit the image of the future of the corridor)



- There is concern that the retail/restaurant uses in the CORE will not attract families, a necessity for sustaining those businesses and the area as a whole. Improvements in the pedestrian realm (more trees) and outdoor dining options (patios, food trucks) could help the area become more of an attraction. Traffic in the area should be slowed. Public space in the CORE will need to be programmed.

7. Are you satisfied with the range of housing options available in Richardson right now? If not, what's missing? How do you see housing needs changing over the next 20 years? How important is the availability and affordability of housing to you?

- The range of housing choices in Richardson today is too limited. The lack of entry-level and workforce housing (homes for recent college graduates, young families, employees trying to move to Richardson, and people such as teachers, nurses, police, and firefighters) is of particular concern. This is an issue for employers as they try to recruit new employees and this lack of housing could change the makeup of neighborhoods and affect local schools. Some type of incentive programs, not necessarily sponsored by the City, may be required to make housing attainable for these people and their families.
- Housing choices need to be freshened up, modernized. The Envision Richardson Plan should be flexible in terms of both housing type options and locations for these new housing products.
- Denser housing is seen as a means of attracting more attainable/workforce housing and supporting the retail businesses Richardson residents want. Smaller unit/house sizes would be acceptable to achieve the density which may be required for affordability.
- There is a divergence of opinions on the appropriateness of alternative housing styles in Richardson neighborhoods. There is a strong desire to protect and preserve the character of existing neighborhoods; however, there is some sentiment that new housing concepts could be appropriate in those same areas (especially since there's so little vacant land) perhaps with limits that would prevent the concentration of these denser housing types and/or their location within or along the edges of neighborhoods, and that if alternative housing styles are allowed in one neighborhood, they should be allowed in all. Zoning



changes would be required for this to happen. The possibility of subdividing a large home into two or more smaller units did not receive much support.

- Some said they preferred owner occupancy housing rather than rental property; others felt rental housing is not a problem as long as the property is well-maintained.
- Townhomes, condominiums, and small, detached homes in pocket neighborhoods were viewed as appropriate in the right location.
- Mid-rise to high-rise housing could be acceptable if not near existing neighborhoods.
- Duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes, especially if they could be separately owned, could be added to the mix rather than more apartments. If done properly, accessory dwelling units (ADUs) might work in existing neighborhoods, but the impacts would need to be considered carefully.
- Creative, non-traditional housing types would be appropriate in the IQ District, including both new construction and the conversion of office and/or warehouse space to residences or live/work units. Besides jobs and affordable housing, music, art, and other placemaking elements need to be injected into the area to make the district attractive to creatives and tech workers.
- Mixed-use environments focused on central greens, plazas, or other open spaces with pedestrian and bike accessibility could be part of the solution.
- Developments with a mix of unit types, including some with affordable rentals, have recently been approved by the City.
- The conversion of hotels/motels to workforce housing (as recently approved for the former Hyatt House extended stay hotel) was viewed favorably.
- Part of the lack of supply of for-sale housing in Richardson is that many older residents choose to stay in their homes after their children are grown. Because there are not many affordable options in Richardson for seniors who want to downsize and live independently, this leaves fewer units available for purchase by people and families trying to enter the market.
- Because of the limited amount of on-campus housing at UTD, students are renting elsewhere, including in the more affordable single-family neighborhoods south of the university. This shrinks the supply of attainable housing in these



areas for families and others wanting to move to Richardson. The Silver Line should broaden the area from which students can conveniently commute.

- There is also a lack of executive housing in Richardson.
- For current homeowners, the Home Improvement Incentive Program has proven very popular and very effective at encouraging reinvestment in existing homes and should be continued and perhaps updated/expanded.
- The City's historical position on refusing federal housing money needs to be re-examined.

8. Is Richardson doing enough to protect and improve the natural environment? If not, what should the City be doing?

- The City is largely perceived as doing well by investing in parkland, including major open spaces such as Spring Creek Nature Area and Breckinridge Park, and small facilities like Durham Park, median plantings, and pocket parks. Additional tree plantings on public and private property and seizing opportunities for more parks and open spaces were favored, including in older neighborhoods in south and west Richardson where there is less open space than in newer parts of the community.
- Water supply and wastewater treatment challenges are already on the rise and may reach a critical point in the next 10 years or so. The end users of water—citizens, corporations, institutions—need to be made more aware of these issues and be encouraged not only to minimize waste, but also to limit pollution and chemical infiltration from lawn maintenance activities. Water contamination (from construction activity) and creek maintenance are issues and more current assumptions as to existing development conditions should be applied in the review of engineering plans for new construction.
- Both the City and private developers should be required to meet high development standards and use greener, more eco-friendly construction methods and materials. Allowances for pervious paving surfaces could help reduce stormwater runoff. The City's landscaping requirements contribute to aesthetics and the environment.



- Greater usage of transit will not only reduce traffic, but also improve air quality, and building housing at higher densities and closer to transit is part of the strategy.
- Residential recycling should be incentivized or somehow encouraged to increase participation.

9. What is your opinion of City services and facilities today? How will these services and facilities need to evolve in the future to meet the needs of Richardson residents and businesses?

- Opinions regarding City services were nearly all positive, with special comments on solid waste, including a desire to maintain the type and frequency of service currently offered—twice-weekly trash pick-up, typically in the alley, using bags rather than rolling bins for trash placement, weekly BABIC service. Police and fire services received a number of compliments, as did other staff, who were generally described as helpful, professional, collaborative, and solutions-oriented, but also overworked due to the inability to fill open positions in some departments.
- Infrastructure maintenance will continue to be a major challenge. The City must plan ahead in order to keep up.
- When possible, existing facilities, including parks, should be renovated and refreshed using sustainable, eco-friendly materials and techniques, rather than being torn down and rebuilt. Parks equipment should be updated periodically as well.
- The new Public Safety Complex and new City Hall will be important assets for the future.
- Decisions should be made regarding whether there is a need for additional fire stations and a police sub-station.
- Non-English speakers should be made aware of the services available to them.
- The location of the NTMWD transfer station on Lookout east of Plano Road is not popular with some and there is a desire to consider alternate locations.
- There was some concern over the lack of code enforcement in retail centers in East Richardson and inconsistent enforcement in neighborhoods.



10. In your opinion, what should the main goal of the Envision Richardson Comprehensive Plan Update be? How will this plan be most helpful to you?

- The goal of this effort should be to develop an updated plan with high community acceptance based on input from diverse stakeholders in all parts of the community. Listening needs to be a major component of the planning process.
- It should provide a variety of opportunities for providing input, accommodating different languages where possible, making special efforts to reach minority communities, and providing ways to stay connected throughout and beyond the end of the planning process.
- The Plan should reinforce the community feel that exists in Richardson today.
- It should provide strong guidelines for future decisions on housing, multi-modal transportation, adaptive reuse/reinvestment, and other land use, infrastructure, and community facilities decisions.
- The Plan should be:
 - Focused on the long term;
 - Flexible and innovative;
 - User-friendly and easy to understand;
 - Focused on diversity and inclusion;
 - A means of increasing citizen involvement and understanding of the benefits the city offers;
 - Less intent on telecom as the city's major industry, more accommodating to other categories of business, and supportive of businesses of all sizes, including small- and medium-sized companies;
 - Conducive to a refreshing/modernizing of the city's image;
 - Helpful to the development community;
 - Aimed at filling the empty buildings throughout town and retaining existing companies; and



- Supportive of the assets that have made Richardson the thriving community it is today—neighborhoods, educational institutions, the hospital, transportation, etc.
- The Plan should be a central resource that incorporates and/or reflects aspects of various other plans and studies that have been developed previously, such as the work done on the Enhancement/Reinvestment Areas identified in the 2009 Plan and the Active Transportation Plan.
- The Plan should identify zoning requirements and other regulations that might need reconsideration/revision after the Plan is adopted, as well as specific locations, such as the Reinvestment Areas, that warrant more detailed study.
- It should ensure that neighborhoods are treated equally.
- There should be a focus on maintaining the infrastructure.
- It should help preserve the City's reputation as a place of excellence.
- The Plan should focus on areas and issues that the City can influence and change and not try to do the job of state or federal government.
- An implementation strategy with clear action items and responsibilities must be part of the Plan.

11. Is there any other advice or information you can share with us as the City plans for the next 20 to 25 years?

- The Plan should help create community. It needs to be developed with input from diverse perspectives—people with different and relevant expertise, people with various backgrounds and interests. City leadership should be more diverse as well.
- Recent legislative changes will limit cities' ability to address issues which have been within their purview in the past.
- The City should focus on quality-of-life issues and not be distracted by state or national politics.
- All parts of the community deserve attention—no neighborhood is more important than any other and none should bear too much of the burden for



change in the future. The goal should be to achieve positive outcomes in all parts of the community.

- There is a divergence of opinions about the need for a City natatorium and the possibility of a recreation center in the Breckinridge area; each issue received only a comment or two.
- The City needs to guard against the possibility of homeless encampments in parks and open areas to preserve the safety and quality of life for Richardson residents who use these facilities and to prevent the accumulation of trash.
- So that citizens can follow along with the Plan and its implementation, the City should create a digital dashboard for monitoring progress.
- The City's plan review/permitting process should be made more flexible. Reviewers should be granted some decision-making latitude.
- An interactive map that would allow citizens to monitor the progress of construction projects on city streets, alleys, sidewalks, etc., would be a useful tool.
- There is a need for more venues in Richardson for family gatherings such as birthday parties, graduation parties, etc.
- Infrastructure projects need to incorporate Smart City technology.
- The needs and interests of citizens need to be balanced against the needs and interests of developers.
- The City should use technology to make information and services more accessible to citizens.
- Many people, particularly those new to Richardson from other nations and cultures, struggle with finding jobs and housing, becoming aware of existing services, making connections with others in the community, and generally fitting in and being successful. The language barrier contributes to the problem. A Diversity and Inclusion Committee should be established by the Council to understand and possibly help to address some of these issues, create events, and bring people together.



- The majority of the households accessing social services in Richardson are not immigrant families. There are likely more families in Richardson that could be classified as “the working poor” than most people realize.
- Educational institutions are having to step into the gap to help fill social services needs for children and their families. Addressing mental illness needs and homelessness are particularly challenging.
- Requests for potential new City services:
 - Free Wi-Fi citywide
 - Easily accessible list of approved contractors for home repair, etc.