



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2015 Local Government Excellence Awards Program
Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form
(All programs nominated must have been fully operational for a minimum of 12 months, prior to January 31, 2015)

Deadline for Nominations Extended to March 30, 2015

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (select only one):

- Community Health and Safety
Community Partnership
Community Sustainability
Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: City of Hutto Comprehensive Plan

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: Hutto, Texas

Jurisdiction population(s): 22,000

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented for at least 12 months prior to January 31, 2015, to be eligible. The start date [on or before January 31, 2014] should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: November Year: 2013

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington, September 2015. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Karen Daly

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Hutto, Texas

Name: Micah Grau

Title: Assistant City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Hutto, Texas

Name: Erika Ragsdale
Title: Senior Planner Jurisdiction: City of Hutto,
Texas

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Karen Daly
Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Hutto,
Texas

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“Setting the Table for the Future”
*Dinner Conversations with the City Focusing on
The City’s Comprehensive Plan*



City of Hutto, Texas
ICMA – Community Sustainability Awards

Summary: The City of Hutto, Texas began working on the development of its first comprehensive plan for the community in 2013. Hutto was in need of an overarching document unifying the city’s existing master plans. After conducting a high level review of the City’s existing planning documents, the City’s Development Services Department set out to create a comprehensive plan for the City of Hutto that captured the culture of what Hutto is today and the vision of what it will become in the future. The process was “Setting the Table for the Future” as City staff set out to involve the community in imagining Hutto in 2040. Two public meetings and a social media involvement campaign were utilized to gather input. The first meeting, “Setting the Table for the Future,” was a progressive dinner hosted by the City that was live-streamed on the internet and incorporated other social media interaction. The second event, “Choosing Your Course,” was a follow-up discussion to seek further direction and clarification on the input the City had received. The City’s use of social media and a virtual meeting to reach and interact with more residents made this project very unique.

Plan Development

To gather input from the community and public on the comprehensive plan, the City of Hutto hosted a series of public meetings to engage and excite the citizens, local business owners,

and other community organizations. As a fast growing, young, and hard working community of nearly 22,000, we had to find creative ways to engage the public and get them involved in the process of planning for the future of their community. Hutto is located in the Austin MSA. Its population has grown 1500% over the last fifteen years from a population of 1,250 according to the US Census to 22,000 in 2015. It is a young, educated community with 40% of the population in the 25 – 44 year age range. Engaging a community that primarily works outside of the city would be a challenge. We needed to create a fun, thought-provoking process that would create open and honest dialogues about Hutto’s future and that would encourage individuals to take time out of their busy lives to participate. The Dare to Dream team, a group consisting of the Mayor and staff members from the organization, took on the challenge of engaging residents to begin talking about Hutto’s future.

To meet the challenge, the team dubbed the process “Setting the Table for the Future” to invoke forward thinking, big picture ideas. We created a two-part series of meetings to engage the community in dialogue about our community’s future that included a virtual companion meeting to allow those not able to attend to still participate. The first part, “Setting the Table for the Future,” was the initial public workshop held in September 2014. The purpose of this initial dinner conversation was to present broad topics and gather input on the future of the Hutto community. Those topics included the environment, community development, infrastructure, parks, transportation and social equity. A follow up conversation, “Choosing Your Course,” was held in February 2015.

Plan Implementation

Planning for the “Setting the Table for the Future” event began months in advance. The team working on the project wanted to create an event that would be fun and invoke thoughtful

conversations about the community. To that end, the group created an event that used a progressive dinner theme. Each topic included a course and allowed residents to enjoy some of Hutto's local cuisine while engaging in spirited conversations about Hutto's future.

To host the event, the City utilized meeting space at the new East Williamson County Higher Education Center. The location provided great views, was modern, and represented Hutto's future. The City live-streamed the event on YouTube.com and solicited feedback on the City's social media sites to engage those unable to attend in person. Approximately 40 individuals engaged in the live-stream and web discussion that evening. A Facebook Page (www.facebook.com/futurehutto) was set up to help promote the event and pose evocative questions.



In attendance were over 50 individuals including representatives from different neighborhoods, local business owners, new and longtime residents, and individuals from other community organizations. Attendees first gathered in the center of the room for introductions and to receive instructions for the evening. Participants then broke into small groups of 10-12 individuals for facilitated dinner table discussions. Each table included a City staff facilitator and

an individual to gather notes. Each group rotated to a new table after 25 minutes and were treated to a new course of the meal and a new topic.

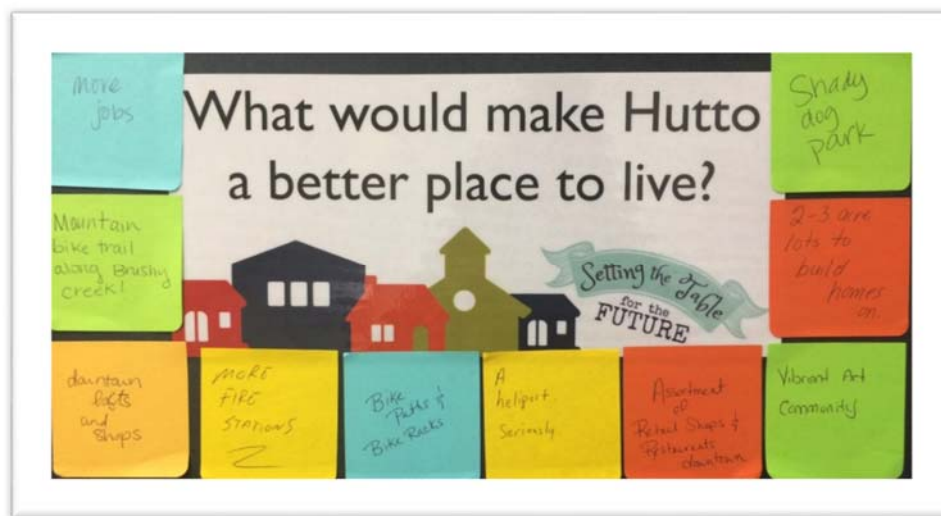


On February 13, 2015, over 25 residents attended “Choosing Your Course for the Future,” a follow-up to the September workshop. At this gathering, City staff shared updates on the comprehensive plan development, specifically how public feedback had informed the plan so far. Further input was necessary from residents to affirm the draft goals, and determine specific objectives for the goals. Residents had the option to discuss three of four topics: quality of life, community, resiliency, and mobility. Each discussion was led by two city staff, who asked participants how they think Hutto should reach its goals. About half of the participants had attended the previous workshop, which gave them the context and background to provide the specific input needed. Those who had not attended the September workshop contributed equally-valuable imagination and inspiration. Many online participants shared their input on Facebook during and after the event. The name “Choosing Your Course” was a play on the original food-themed title event “Setting the Table for the Future,” and it was very relevant as we were seeking input on the future direction of the city.

The costs to host both events were minimal compared to the input that we received. Rental of the facility was free, and supplies and food totaled around \$700. City staff facilitated the event, table top discussions, and live-streamed the event at no cost.

Feedback and Lessons Learned

The comprehensive plan development process has been a rewarding experience for the Hutto community. The dialogue and citizen engagement has been tremendous. The discussions created great excitement for the future possibilities in Hutto, and citizens have become more engaged as they are empowered to make a difference in their town. Through the process, we have identified new citizens to serve on the City's boards and commissions and have selected others to attend the Hutto Citizens' University program.



The feedback gathered through the two community forums as well as through social media and "Pop-up Planner" (the City's Senior Planner has visited local Hutto establishments to allow individuals in the community to comment on aspects of the comprehensive plan) will help shape Hutto's future. Most importantly, the method engaged citizens in a positive process where they could see the results of their discussions and know that they were playing an important role in shaping Hutto's future.