



EXPLORING NEW HEIGHTS:
QUALITY OF
PLACE REPORT
2017

The 2017 Quality of Place Report presents the wants, needs, and desires of the citizens of Harker Heights as expressed through participants of the Exploring New Heights Quality of Place Focus Group, attendees of various community civic organization question and answer sessions, members of the Harker Heights High School Knights of the Round Table, and citizens who attended National Night Out 2017. This report is meant to be a tool for current and future leaders of the City of Harker Heights.

Quality of Place Report 2017

City of Harker Heights City Council
Spencer H. Smith – Mayor
Hal Schiffman – Place 1 – Mayor Pro Tem
Steve Carpenter – Place 2
Jackeline Soriano Fountain – Place 3
John Reider – Place 4
Jody Nicholas – Place 5

Exploring New Heights Focus Group:

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Organizations Providing Input:

Kiwanis Club of Harker Heights

Knights of Columbus Council 9930

Harker Heights Chamber Vision Class

Lion's Club of Harker Heights

Rotary Club of Harker Heights

Rotary Club of Harker Heights – Satellite Club

Harker Heights High School Knights of the Round Table

Staff:

David Mitchell, City Manager

Lisa Youngblood, Library Director

Andrew McSweeney, City Administration Intern

Dear Mayor, City Council, Staff and Citizens:

We are honored to present this *Exploring New Heights: Quality of Place 2017* report to you. This report embodies the thoughts of the Exploring New Heights 2017 Quality of Place Focus Group, a number of civic organizations within the City, input from Harker Heights High School Knights of the Round Table, and citizens interviewed during National Night Out 2017. All of these groups were simply asked what they desired of their City absent any constraints. We wanted to know what would create that quality of place that is desired by our citizens. Our sincere hope is that the input in this report builds upon the successful Exploring New Heights' reports from 1996, 2000 and 2007. Staff members found the discussions to be enthusiastic and were energized by the zeal displayed by the many who provided input. We are extremely thankful for all who gave their time and energies to participate. Some of the issues brought up by citizens interviewed may be best handled by other organizations than the City, but they are listed in this report as they reflect the desires presented by citizens. This document is one source that provides data and guidance to the City regarding our citizens' desires and will help guide City operations, planning, and budgets.

Thankfully yours,

David Mitchell
City Manager

Lisa Youngblood
Library Director

Andrew McSweeney
Administration Intern

Exploring New Heights Quality of Place Report 2017

Introduction:

The City of Harker Heights has held focus groups periodically to determine the desires of citizens. Exploring New Heights' focus groups have been held in 1996, 2000 and 2007. In an effort to provide current information for the City Council, the City of Harker Heights held a series of focus groups from July through October of 2017 involving various citizens representing a wide range of demographics across the city. The City also sought input from civic organizations, Harker Heights High Knights of the Round Table, and citizens that attended National Night Out 2017. The citizens shared information to help elected officials, administrators, and staff understand the wants, needs, and desires of the citizens of Harker Heights.

The City held a focus group discussion every Monday from July 17th thru August 14th with 16 citizen participants. Additional focus groups were held at a number of civic organizations throughout the City. Harker Heights High School Knights of the Round Table provided input. The City also conducted interviews of citizens during National Night Out 2017. The focus groups and resulting report represent an exploration of current citizen desires. Participants provided information in the form of group discussion and question and answer. The sessions began with one simple question: What do you wish from your City? Staff intentionally refrained from providing constraints to the discussions and used probing questions to clarify input given.

The results exhibited in this report represent the unencumbered wishes and desires of those providing input to the report.

Participant Demographics

Sixteen participants took part in the Exploring New Heights focus group. Participants were almost evenly split between male and female. A wide range of age groups were represented and even included three teenagers. Five of the participants identified as military veterans. Two of the participants were local business owners. Almost all of the participants had been involved with one of the City's boards or commissions. Participants were evenly split between less than one year to seven years of residency, eight to twenty years of residence, and three participants indicating over twenty one years of residency.

While exact demographic data is impossible to extract through discussion based participation, civic group, the Harker Heights High School Knights of the Round Table, and National Night Out 2017 engagement brought further demographic diversity to the results presented in this report.

Findings

The following sections present the findings from discussions with the focus group, civic organizations, the Harker Heights High School Knights of the Round Table, and National Night Out 2017 attendees. From the information received, staff identified seven areas of interest:

Lake Town U.S.A. – Capitalize on Stillhouse Lake
 Communication
 Entertainment/Activities
 Shopping
 Restaurants
 Infrastructure
 Public Safety

These focus areas are not listed in order of preference or prominence. Instead, they are collections of ideas into groups of similar content.

Lake Town U.S.A. – Capitalize on Stillhouse Lake

Exploring New Heights Focus Group

- Utilize Stillhouse Lake and Dana Peak Park as a unique focal point for the City.
- Capitalize on and increase the use of Lake Stillhouse to create more business opportunities, spur community pride, and provide more activities for all ages.
- Negotiate with the Corps of Engineers for more control of and access to Dana Peak Park.
- Increase activities on or near the lake to include a bonfire and movie on the lake; 3K, 5K, 10K runs by the lake; fireworks; etc.
- Provide year-round access to the lake and related activities at Dana Peak Park.
- Develop shopping, eating, and a hotel with conference center near the lake to make Harker Heights a destination city.
- Provide rentals for lake recreation such as kayaks, canoes, boats, jet skis, paddle boards, etc.

Harker Heights Chamber Vision Class

- Make Dana Peak a focal point of our City.
- Build restaurants, housing, and shopping overlooking the lake.
- Hold city wide events such as fireworks over the lake, BBQ cook-offs, Wine Brew and Food Fest on or near the lake.
- Keep Dana Peak open all year.
- Provide for the rental of outdoor adventure equipment.
- Install a zip line course as an activity at Dana Peak Park.

Rotary Club of Harker Heights

- Develop a “city center” to attract business and people. (A local example would be “The Gin/Nolan Creek” in Belton)
- Promote the building of a nice hotel with conference center on the south side of I14/190 possibly by the lake.
- Use resorts and restaurants to increase the draw of Stillhouse Lake and bring in revenue.
- Create an events center located at the lake.
- Provide more events held at or near the lake.
- Look to negotiate with the Corps of Engineers to acquire Dana Peak Park and possibly develop it.
- Develop a city identity that incorporates the lake, activities, and families.
- Provide tax breaks and incentives to developers for economic growth near the lake.
- Focus on business development near the lake in addition to the already popular residential developments.

Communication

Exploring New Heights Focus Group

- Create or use a mobile app with push notification and citizen response monitoring for smartphones and tablets.
- Disseminate information throughout the community using a variety of marketing strategies.
- Encourage more media involvement in radio, newspaper, television, social media, etc.
- Hire a full time Public Information Officer.
- Provide an electronic sign near a main thoroughfare to display city information and news.
- Improve dissemination of information by the Police Department regarding various programs and crime initiatives.
- Conduct a market survey to provide city leaders and staff with up-to-date, accurate information of citizen wants and needs for Harker Heights.
- Provide light pole flags along FM 2410 for celebratory events such as 4th of July, Christmas, Festivals, etc.
- Determine the City of Harker Heights’ Brand that will reflect how people feel about the City and how the City will be known.

Kiwanis Club of Harker Heights

- Hold more town hall meetings as open discussions, as presentations of history, as updates on city projects, and as other varying formats to build an informed public.
- Provide better advertising of the City’s Drop Site and brush pick-up regulations.
- Provide better community and citizen education on property taxes. (Current events have made this essential)
- Expand the Evening Star Newspaper.
- Make previous editions of the “Exploring New Heights” reports available online.
- Provide a City volunteer coordinator/recruiter.

Harker Heights Chamber Vision Class

- Disseminate information throughout the City.
- Televise council meetings on a cable channel or record and provide recordings on the City's website.
- Work on an improved and varied social media presence.
- Offer a city app for phones and tablets with push notifications and citizen response functions.
- Combine efforts with the Chamber of Commerce to publish a monthly e-newsletter.

Entertainment/Activities

Exploring New Heights Focus Group

- Provide more things for teens to do within the City. Teen related events would have to be sensitive to financial concerns of families with teens. (This was repeatedly discussed. The teens specifically mentioned something like putt-putt, Spare Time, etc.)
- Provide indoor activities for teens such as gaming events, "geek" conventions, etc.
- Increase the number of annual festivals, and potentially look at one festival per quarter incorporating in current festivals.
- Establish holiday traditions that promote community participation and pride. One possibility mentioned was a path of Christmas trees in which each tree would be sponsored and decorated by an organization within the community.
- Account for safety and potential parking issues when planning community events.
- Add a water park to the city to include features such as a splash pad, lazy river, or wave pool.
- Develop Comanche Gap Park to become a unique, city attraction, and a gateway to Stillhouse Lake.
- Develop "ninja warrior" or rugged park.
- Increase indoor (bowling, laser tag, game room) and outdoor (archery, geocaching, etc.) activities for children.
- Support the creation of a live music venue that is reasonably priced with the potential to provide a music series and other outdoor events. Dana Peak Park may be the best location.
- Create a dog park that has a "wet" feature for dogs, or incorporate this into an existing park.

Kiwanis Club of Harker Heights

- Recruit a bowling alley for Harker Heights.
- Continue to support the new YMCA that has had a positive impact on the culture of our City.

Harker Heights Chamber Vision Class

- Provide more outdoor concerts.
- Promote the opening of a vineyard in Harker Heights.

Lions Club of Harker Heights

- Recruit a family entertainment center such as Main Event, Spare Time, etc.
- Add a skate park and bike park to existing parks, or create new ones.

- Provide a holiday ice skating rink.
- Keep the City pool open longer throughout the year.
- Add more outdoor basketball courts to the parks for public access.
- Add tennis or racquetball courts to the parks for public access.
- Bring a drive-in movie theater that will provide a safe family fun option.
- Keep the farmer's market open longer throughout the year, and add more vendors.
- Provide more holiday decorations and activities like our Santa on the firetruck.
- Host more community block parties in addition to "National Night Out."

Rotary Club of Harker Heights

- Add a water park similar to that of Lion's Park in Killeen for family entertainment.
- Promote and seek to bring in a bowling alley/games venue such as Spare Time in Temple.
- Incentivize a business such as Putt-Putt and game center's opening in Harker Heights.
- Create a city "personality" through events such as live music, plays in the park, etc.
- Provide the needed activities for teens, especially indoors.
- Add athletic fields with goal posts which can also be used for football or rugby in our parks.
- Provide lighted basketball and tennis courts at the parks.
- Promote family fishing in the accessible waters of the City, Stillhouse Lake, Carl Levin Park, and Nolan Creek.
- Look to bring in a minor league sports team affiliate for hockey, baseball, basketball, football, or soccer.
- Create specific rec-center hours that coincide with the hours school age kids are out of school.

National Night Out 2017

- Provide more volunteer opportunities.
- Provide more book related activities.
- Provide more monthly activities for kids.
- Build an indoor park for kids and families to meet the need for activities during inclement weather and for kids with special needs.
- Provide more family activities.
- Provide more teen activities to include activities not related to Harker Heights High School or a group membership such as a club, service organization, sports team, etc.
- YMCA kids want giant books and free ice cream!

Knights of the Round Table

- Develop a Boys and Girls Club Building in Harker Heights.

Shopping

Exploring New Heights Focus Group

- Give incentives to attract small businesses to the City.
- Add an antique/junk/thrift store or market for collectors and tourism.
- Bring in a craft store such as Michael's.
- Malls are problematic and failing ventures. They create a need for more shopping options.
- Provide unique shopping center options such as The Domain in Austin. (Market Heights does have opportunities)
- Bring in more clothing shopping options in Harker Heights, Marshall's, TJ Maxx, Neiman Marcus, etc.
- Bring a bigger, newer HEB.
- Capitalizing on the proximity of Stillhouse Lake can help to attract better shopping to Harker Heights.
- Bring in a higher end hotel to Harker Heights located on the south side of I14/190. The hotel should have a potential convention center/ballroom/restaurant.

Restaurants

Exploring New Heights Focus Group

- Attract a "higher end" restaurant that can provide an upscale experience for various occasions such as prom, homecoming, anniversaries, dates, Valentine's Day, and more.
- Provide more food trucks in a potentially unique experience such as a food truck park.
- Provide a restaurant that provides live music, potentially one that could host an outdoor music event.
- Hold a food truck competition.
- Hold a BBQ competition, chili cook off, and /or other food competitions.
- Provide more food options at festivals.
- Development near Stillhouse Lake will help to attract better eating options.
- Attract locally owned eateries.

Lions Club of Harker Heights

- Bring in a high-end restaurant.
- Bring in more casual sit-down eating.

Rotary Club of Harker Heights

- Bring in a Gattiland or Dave & Buster's style restaurant that provides entertainment and food.
- Bring in a casual family sit-down restaurant - a steakhouse would be nice.
- Bring in more healthy eating options (Souper Salad, etc.).
- Bring in a more upscale restaurant.

National Night Out 2017

- Bring in a restaurant like a Pappadeaux.
- Bring in a restaurant like a Long John Silvers.
- Provide more restaurant options.

Infrastructure

Exploring New Heights Focus Group

- Lights
 - Add more street lights and fix current street lights that are broken or burned out.
 - Some neighborhoods are too dark. Consider adding street lights to existing neighborhoods, and require them in new developments.
- Aesthetics
 - Improve visual appearance of Harker Heights' exits off of I14/190. You need to "Look good to be good."
 - Cover open land and sides of road with bluebonnets to beautify the city. Possibly work with schools and community organizations to disperse seeds.
 - Plant Crepe Myrtles along FM 2410 with flag pole holders between each plant to allow for displaying of flags for various occasions (4th of July, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Football Games.) This contributes to community culture and pride.
 - Clean up Business 190/Veteran's Memorial Blvd. The façade, parking lots, and signage need to be updated. Enforce City ordinances in this area.
 - Replace retaining walls on Mountain Lion need with a more permanent option.
- Code Issues
 - Consider City ordinance to lower signage on businesses (landscape signage).
 - No metal siding for businesses.
- Streets
 - Widen FM 2410 east past Harker Heights High School.
 - Warrior's Path needs a total facelift to include 8 to 10 feet sidewalks and a lower speed limit.
- Pedestrian Mobility
 - Build a walking bridge to connect South and North side of city. Consider walking bridge from Market Heights to Carl Levin Park.
 - Create an interconnected walking, hiking, and walking trail system for outdoor enthusiasts.
- Solid Waste
 - Provide a curb side recycling service.
 - Provide more hazardous waste drop-off options with more frequent dates and times.
- Other
 - Consider and improve parking during festivals.

Kiwanis Club of Harker Heights

- Aesthetics
 - Provide more "green belts" in developments. Preserve greenery.
 - Increase greenery along FM 2410 and I14/U.S. 190.
 - Lessen garbage on the streets.

- Code
 - Decrease the number of dilapidated cars visible in driveways and in front of houses.
- Streets
 - Provide better access to I14/U.S. 190 from Nola Ruth.
- Drainage
 - Improve drainage at Ann and Wren intersection.
- Pedestrian Mobility
 - Have more sidewalks in existing neighborhoods and across the city.
- Solid Waste
 - Provide curb side recycling, and compel people to participate.
 - The New Waste Management proposal for new single 96 gallon can and one day pick up is not an improvement for the City.
- Other
 - The limit of the City's ETJ (extraterritorial jurisdiction) is a concern.

Knights of Columbus Council 9930

- Code
 - Have high building standards for new construction.
 - Make sure that the City updates and follows a master zoning plan.
 - Provide more visible code enforcement.
 - Have strict code enforcement.
 - Make sure that vehicles, boats, RVs, and eyesores are not parked where they should not be in the streets.
 - Make sure tree branches are not hanging over streets.
- Streets
 - Construct a road connecting Modoc Drive and Rosewood Drive.
 - Install a sensor at the light allowing left turns toward Wampum Drive off of FM 2410.
 - Install sensors instead of timers on all traffic lights.
 - Veteran's Memorial and Roy Reynolds' intersection has a problem with the traffic sensor.
 - Limit chip sealing, or eliminate it all together.
 - Change out all street signs to the newer styles with lighting and/or reflecting colors.
- Drainage
 - Do not convey drainage using streets.
 - Review the City's entire drainage system.
- Pedestrian Mobility
 - Construct a bike lane from Skipcha to Killeen on Stagecoach/Mountain Lion.
 - Provide sidewalks closer to schools especially on both sides of Modoc and Union Grove areas.
- Solid Waste
 - Have garbage pickup of large items such as brush, furniture and debris.
 - Trash pick-up needs to remain two times a week. Some participants found once a week acceptable if recycling was a part of the services, but others insisted on two times a week pickup.
 - Curbside recycling should be added.
- Other
 - Create an industrial park to bring in industry and jobs.
 - Look at incentives to improve older buildings, properties, and businesses.
 - Bundle "Energy Star" and other State programs for businesses.

Lions Club of Harker Heights

- Streets
 - Improve on the turn lanes along FM 2410.
- Pedestrian Mobility
 - Extend sidewalks all the way down from FM 2410 to Indian Trail along Verna Lee Blvd.
 - Add a pedestrian bridge over FM 2410 from Harker Heights High School.
- Solid Waste
 - Provide bigger and more frequent recycle and shred days, or host a City clean-up day.
 - Provide more hazardous waste drop-off days.
 - Have curbside recycling
 - Yard waste containers, the city could compost and sell this waste.
 - Introduce a City program that will help citizens who are unable to do things themselves. Pick up limbs, large items for them.
 - Look to add a “brush truck” for brush and branch pick-up.
- Other
 - Open a city food bank in a visible area, possibly two throughout the city.
 - The City needs a conference center, larger meeting area.
 - Talk with KISD about how to reduce the size of class numbers at HHHS, and possibly add another High School.
 - Expand HHHS stadium so that it can be used for other events.

Rotary Club of Harker Heights

- Lights
 - Provide more lights in existing neighborhoods.
- Aesthetics
 - Plant fast growing trees such as Red Maples at City parks to provide shade and visually appealing with the changing of seasons.
- Code
 - Have better transitions and buffers between residential and business.
 - Have better code enforcement to encourage individuals to clean up streets of garbage, trim trees that are hanging over the road or blocking signs, etc.
 - Have better accountability for contractors and property management companies.
 - Concentrate on maximizing the usage of the little land we have.
- Streets
 - Develop a street improvement program.
 - Business 190 needs complete overhaul.
- Pedestrian Mobility
 - Provide more sidewalks.
 - Provide more bike trails and a connecting trail system throughout the City.

National Night Out 2017

- Other
 - Provide assistance from community members to mow lawns, fix windows, etc.

Knights of the Round Table

- Lights
 - Provide more lighting on streets, especially in Sutton Place.
- Aesthetics
 - Increase City beautification by encouraging people to take care of private and public property. Perhaps provide incentives.
 - Keep parks clean.
 - Clean up major highways and roadways.
- Streets
 - Fix the entrances to Market Heights on 2410 near Chick-fil-a as they tend to backup and stack traffic.
- Solid Waste
 - Provide curbside recycling since hauling to recycling center is too difficult.

Public Safety

Exploring New Heights Focus Group

- Property crime is on the rise with the increase in population. Police Department should focus and educate the population on this issue.
- The absence of sidewalks down Stillhouse Lake Road puts children walking to and from school in harm's way.
- Provide better flow of information from Police Department to citizens on various programs such as neighborhood watch.
- Build new Fire Station East of Stillhouse Lake Road down FM 2410.
- Use a City mobile app for smartphones and tablets that has push notifications to inform citizens of potential safety hazards.
- The City has seen and is experiencing changes in population, and the City needs to keep up with the changes by hiring more police officers.

Kiwanis Club of Harker Heights

- Provide better education on the Neighborhood Watch Program.
- Need new police cars.
- Need more police officers.
- Provide police body cams.

Lions Club of Harker Heights

- Since HHHS is an "open campus," more adult supervision is needed.

National Night Out 2017

- Have more access to Police Department
- Host more community events such as National Night Out where people can see PD and other City officials.

- Desire for kids not to be afraid of police officers.
- Respect Police Officers.
- Provide more Police Officers.
- More prayer needed.