



Aldine Service and Action Plan

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Background

The community of Aldine dates back to the 1800s when it served as an engine switching station for the International and Great Northern Railroad. Now known as the Missouri Pacific, the line and station spawned growth in the area both as a transportation hub and as a staging point for agriculture, dairy, cattle, and poultry shipments to distant markets.

Naturally, Aldine grew up as a farming community, and industry and infrastructure in the area was limited to the goods and services that sector supported.

Subsequent development near Aldine, however, has been less than beneficial. Bush Intercontinental Airport, one of the largest airports in U.S., was completed in 1968, and Greenspoint Mall and Beltway 8 both opened in the 1980s.

While all three contributed somewhat to growth in Aldine, the larger impact was to entice the city of Houston to annex each. Skipping over Aldine, the city redrew its boundaries to effectively surround the community on three sides. The net result left this still rural district sandwiched between the fourth largest city in the U.S. and its major international airport.

Lacking any city services - water, sewer, police, fire, or social - Aldine has since been hard pressed to compete economically with its neighbors to the north, south, or west. In fact, Aldine's aging water and sewer systems increasingly pose risks to the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens and the area's economic viability.

Today the district consists of approximately 15 square miles within northeast Harris County bordered roughly by Little York Road, Hardy Toll Road, FM 525, and U.S. Highway 59. Although portions of Halls Bayou and Greens Bayou run through the area, flood control and drainage infrastructure are insufficient.

Most water service is provided by six municipal utility districts, however, a significant number of residents continue to rely on private wells and septic sewer systems.

As of 1997, sixty percent of the population earned an average annual income below \$30,000. Unemployment in Aldine is currently 6.3 percent, .5 percent higher than the state average.

The population in Aldine has nearly doubled since 1970, from 27,286 to 50,188. Between 1990 and 2000 the area experienced a 29 percent increase in population. Also, population density is higher in Aldine, almost double, than communities of comparable size, such as Missouri City.

Aldine experienced a major shift in ethnicity between 1980 and 1990. In 1980 whites represented 60 percent of the population. By 1990, Hispanics represented 47 percent of the population, 22 percentage points higher than the state-wide average of 25.

The district is home to the 10th largest school district in Texas. Although persons over the age of 25 without a high school diploma remain high (37%), those over the age of 25 with a college degree have more than doubled in the last 10 years — from 6 to 14 percent.

Sixty-five percent of all homes in Aldine were built between 1960 and 1980. Home ownership is higher than in Harris County as a whole, however, home values are drastically lower than in other areas of the county.

In June 2001, the Texas Legislature and area voters created the Aldine Improvement District to address the issues facing this community. In creating the improvement district, the citizens of Aldine sought to:

- Present a unified voice for themselves to city, county, and state governing bodies
- Acquire maximum government services and supplement them where needed
- Render continuous, focused, and professional management of the area's needs
- Gain the authority to raise revenue for area improvements
- Enhance the area's physical, social, and economic well being.

In August 2001, voters of the district approved a one-cent sales tax that took effect on January 1, 2002 and is expected to generate annual revenue for the district of approximately \$800,000 - \$1 million.

Preface

The following plan sets forth a vision, goals, services to be rendered, and improvements to be made in support of the residents and business owners of Aldine. This plan and most of its supporting data are based on a comprehensive study conducted by the Harris County Community Development department in 1998.

This document seeks to apply the findings and recommendations of the *Aldine Community Development Plan* to the current efforts of the Aldine Improvement District.

Needs Assessment

Arguably the most important aspect of Harris County's *Aldine Community Development Plan* was the input and opinions it generated from the community. Therefore, the recommended *Action Items* that follow this section are based almost directly on the desires of the community as expressed in that plan.

The single exception is the public's desire for a community development corporation, which ranked as the top priority for both for county planners and community members. Although creating a CDC is still an option, the Aldine Improvement District's statutory powers and capacity enable this entity to address public needs in ways a CDC cannot.

The survey portion of the *Aldine Community Development Plan* included the input of more than 350 area residents (see Appendix A for a survey summary). Among four broad categories, respondents voted overwhelmingly to make their top priority "Building a Strong Foundation," which includes issues related to water, sewer, flood control, and mobility (roads, sidewalks, pedestrian and bike trails).

Residents also recognized the need for increased security and public safety, a cleaner and healthier community, and economic development.

The following *Action Items* will address these issues through the cooperative efforts of the Improvement District's board of directors, committee members, staff, residents, and business owners.

Water/Sewer Infrastructure

MISSION: *To provide Aldine citizens and businesses with safe, reliable, affordable drinking water and solutions for area wastewater and storm drainage deficiencies.*

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop a strategy to implement major, comprehensive infrastructure improvements to replace the existing piecemeal water/sewer system.
- Initiate the creation of a master plan for a district-wide water/sewer system.
- Create a foundation upon which subsequent district economic and physical development can occur.
- Develop supportive relationship with city, county, and state water/sewer entities.

PROGRAMS and PROJECTS:

1. On May 16, 2002 the Aldine Improvement District board of directors approved a grant application to the Texas Water Development Board and authorized matching funds of \$25,000 to develop a planning study for water supply and wastewater treatment facilities throughout the district. Total cost for the planning study is \$445,533. Through the efforts of State Representative Kevin Bailey, the District secured a number of in-kind pledges that will reduce district costs to \$25,000. A breakout of the in-kind contribution program is listed in Appendix B.
2. Upon approval of the TWDB grant, the district will compile hard data regarding needed facilities and infrastructure improvements, a schedule for implementation, alternatives for funding, and capital and operating cost estimates.
3. Pursue grants from other government entities for implementation of the plan. Potential sources of funding include: Harris County, the State Legislature, federal and state matching grants, municipal utility district bonds, and rate-payer revenue.

Transportation and Mobility

MISSION: *To utilize and improve existing resources to create a well-planned transportation system which effectively addresses current and future needs in the areas of mobility infrastructure.*

OBJECTIVES:

- Facilitate circulation networks and facilities for transit, vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle use which are safe, comprehensive and attractive.
- Provide resources for transportation and traffic flow studies and use available resources to assist in the design of certain mobility projects.
- Work with existing public, private and nonprofit entities to insure that the District is included in long- and short-term transportation planning efforts.
- Work with other governmental entities to develop an improved major thoroughfare and arterial system.
- Provide guidance and coordination with regard to both transportation infrastructure and design aesthetics.

PROGRAMS and PROJECTS:

1. Work with TxDOT and Harris County to develop and implement an improved thoroughfare system and secondary roadways that complement the corridors.
2. Develop and implement a transportation/mobility master plan for the District and integrate it into existing regional, county, and city planning efforts.
3. Work with other governmental agencies to positively impact the design of the major freeways to improve ingress/egress to the District and surrounding areas.
4. Prepare and implement design plans in partnership with TxDOT with regard to the aesthetics and overall look of the Corridors' overpasses, exit/entry ramps and landscaping.
5. Enhance amenities for pedestrians and cyclists by coordinating with regional, county, and city agencies on capital improvement plans, street and sidewalk standards, bikeways and facilities.

Security and Public Safety

MISSION: *To bring new investment to every aspect of the District by maintaining and enhancing a safe environment in both perception and reality with focused public safety and fire protection programs and an emphasis on redevelopment/investment opportunities to ensure that the District continues to be among the most desirable commercial areas in Harris County.*

OBJECTIVES:

- Advocate for improved fire protection and ambulance services for the District to cut emergency response times.
- Maintain supportive-role relationship with public safety agencies.
- Coordinate security efforts of public/private sectors.

PROGRAMS and PROJECTS:

1. Provide additional funding and focused attention on the safety needs of the area.
2. Build positive relationships between property owners and public safety agencies.
3. Assist property owners and public safety agencies in maintaining the image and reality of a safe, secure environment in which to work.
4. Obtain installation of streetlights where needed through a joint program with Reliant Energy-HL&P.

Environmental and Urban Design

MISSION: *To mobilize resources to address current and future infrastructure, development and open space needs of the growing Aldine CID area in order to attract and retain employees, increase values and facilitate business development.*

OBJECTIVES:

- Coordinate actions with Harris County Flood Control District to protect neighborhoods and businesses from flood events as well as to develop green spaces and recreational areas within floodplains.
- Work with existing public, private and nonprofit entities to insure the District is included in long-and short-term planning efforts as well as to initiate support and coordinate public, nonprofit and private improvement actions.
- Provide technical assistance and information to property owners and managers on projects that will improve the quality of the work environment in the District.
- Create District identity, visual continuity and inviting streetscapes through improvements in landscaping, street furnishings and visual elements for the commercial community.
- Develop a multi-year tree-planting program to create a network of “green corridors” along roadways and facilitate the creation and development of a system of parks, trails and open spaces connected throughout and adjacent to the District to serve employees and nearby resident populations.
- Preserve and protect natural resources such as the region’s forested areas and watersheds.

PROGRAMS and PROJECTS:

1. Advocate for and support the development of conservation programs that focus on employer/employee-based waste and emissions reduction and recycling that bring about a quality work atmosphere.
2. Develop and implement an *Urban Design and Master Plan* program that addresses landscaping, street-scaping, lighting, bus shelters and seating, parks, trails and open space, integrating them into existing regional and county planning to create a District identity.
3. Prepare basic development, renovation and maintenance information, assistance and guidelines for property owners, managers and investors to use in evaluating, planning, implementing and managing projects within the District.
4. Work cooperatively with neighborhood and municipal utility districts to develop and enhance neighborhood resources and assets.

Neighborhood Clean-Up

MISSION: *Establish safe, effective, and quantifiable programs to keep Aldine clean, beautiful, and attractive. Programs will operate both independently and in collaboration with community groups, neighborhood organizations, schools, and churches.*

OBJECTIVES:

- Educate the public
- Reduce litter
- Eradicate graffiti
- Remove hazardous materials, heavy trash, and dangerous buildings
- Instill community pride

PROGRAMS and PROJECTS:

1. Develop an AISD “Clean Aldine” poster contest.
2. Request assistance from businesses and neighborhood organizations in litter removal via direct mail.
3. Utilize restitution workers to remove bandit signs.
4. Partner with the County for the installation of community garbage cans.
5. Sponsor graffiti paint-over program.
6. Partner with Harris County for periodic heavy-trash pick-ups.
7. Fund sweat-equity programs that generate matching funds.

Economic Development and Public Relations

MISSION: *Develop the District's sense of place and create opportunity to support and promote economic growth by creating and reinforcing positive perceptions of the District as an outstanding place in which to live, work, shop, visit, build or invest.*

OBJECTIVES:

- Devise and implement an aggressive economic development strategy that would increase jobs and business opportunities for citizens in the Aldine ID area, thus positioning Aldine ID among other fast-growing suburban areas like Fort Bend County, The Woodlands, Greenspoint and others.
- Present a positive image of the District through a comprehensive, multi-year, multi-media *Image/Public Relations Program* coordinated at both the local and state levels.
- With property owners and managers, corporations and others, develop projects to enhance Aldine ID's competitive market position, including a well-planned major employment center with office, retail, and other commercial centers.
- Build relationships with metropolitan Houston, state and national electronic and print media to highlight the District as an efficient, effective, successful commercial and business center.
- Communicate to our constituents -- property owners and managers, tenants and the general public -- the services available through the District.
- Act as a "clearinghouse" for the accumulation and dissemination of information, which will assist the brokerage community in identifying the District as a successful, "ready-to-do-business" center of commercial groups.

PROGRAMS and PROJECTS:

1. Implement a total *Public Relations/Image Campaign* that will improve the public perception and increase public awareness of the District.
2. Provide financial participation in Aldine Scholarship Foundation.
3. Conduct research and create the District's marketing materials to meet the needs of current and prospective property owners and tenants, employers, brokers, meeting planners and the general public.
4. Provide public relations and marketing support to the District's Transportation, Public Safety and Environmental and Urban Design efforts.
5. Create an Aldine ID District website and regular newsletter to be made available to

employees, employers, nearby residents and the general public.

6. Establish the District as a clearinghouse for information, including upcoming events in the District, press clippings, demographics and brochures about the area.
7. Boost business locations by identifying specific areas of involvement with the Greater Houston Partnership.

Leadership Training

MISSION: *Provide leadership training for citizens in area grassroots organizations to improve communication methods and effectiveness.*

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide training in strategic planning, team-building, and direct action organization
- Develop new communication systems among groups
- Secure sweat-equity investments and matching grants for community projects
- Stimulate the formation of new grassroots organizations

PROGRAMS and PROJECTS:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive, assets-based community training program to nurture and sustain the development of grassroots leaders.
2. Coordinate efforts of civic groups and the district in seeking grants and other sources of funds to conduct community improvement projects.
3. Provide technical assistance to emerging groups in the creation of formal organizations.

Project Staffing and Administration

MISSION: *Provide effective, efficient support services to District programs, including transportation, public safety, environmental and urban design, business development and public relations, at the least possible cost.*

OBJECTIVES:

- Respond to the day-to-day needs of the District while initiating plans for long-term stability and growth.
- Utilize human and financial resources in an efficient manner to accomplish the service and improvement plan.
- Advocate for the District's fair share of county and state services.
- Provide oversight and management that are responsive to the needs of all the District's property owners.
- Seek volunteer participation in the District's programs from all sectors of property owners who comprise the District.
- Administer the projects of the District in a way that will serve as an example for other areas and management districts to follow.

PROGRAMS and PROJECTS:

1. Accurately reflect the costs of providing services in each program area through a carefully monitored cost allocation system.
2. Provide annual financial audits that protect the financial integrity of the District and help ensure the most efficient use of monetary resources.
3. Insure compliance with the Open Records Act and the Open Meetings Act of the State of Texas.
4. Maintain an efficient level of office technology to ensure the fullest utilization of all available resources.
5. Monitor and evaluate administrative systems and procedures to maximize the utility of available resources.

Appendices

Appendix A.

Survey Summary 1998 Aldine Community Development Plan

Released in the summer of 1999, the Harris County Community Development Department's *Aldine Community Development Plan* includes past and current demographic data, numerous opinion surveys, specific recommendations for improvement, and project priorities.

The weight and authority of this study stems directly from its reliance on area residents, business owners, and civic leaders for input. In addition to a 33-member "Community Vision Team," made up of local business and community leaders, the study includes opinions and recommendations from more than 350 area residents who met with county planners throughout the district over a four-month period.

Survey methodology was to sponsor "town hall" type meetings with roughly 20 civic associations throughout the district.

Summary Survey Results	# responses	percent
• Category Rankings by Priority		
1. Foundation (water, sewer, flood control, roads, sidewalk, trails)	407	37%
2. Services (education, public health, safety, youth services)	281	25%
3. Places (housing, community facilities, parks, urban design)	235	21%
4. Work (employment, job creation, work force development)	184	17%
• Top 10 individual issues facing the community (out of 100)		
1. Sidewalks throughout neighborhood	93	8.4%
2. Streetlights throughout community	81	7.3%
3. Sewer and drainage improvements	78	7.0%
4. Better Public Transportation	31	2.8%
5. Street widening, repairs, and maintenance	28	2.5%
6. Street lights in neighborhoods	27	2.4%
7. Community Center for youth/community activities	26	2.3%
8. Attract new businesses, industries, and corporations	24	2.1%
9. More pocket parks	23	2.0%
10. Maintenance of ditches and culverts	22	1.9%
• Top three positive aspects of the community		
1. Nearby county library, parks, and churches	7	4.3%
2. Friends and family nearby	4	2.4%
3. Good stores and gas stations	4	2.4%
• Top three negative aspects of the community		
1. Sewage, drainage, water, and flood control problems	27	16.6%
2. Poor condition of homes, yards, and neighborhoods	10	6.1%
3. Poor condition of ditches and roadside shoulders	9	5.5%

Appendix B.

Texas Water Development Board Grant and In-Kind Contributions

<u>In-kind contributions</u>	<u>type</u>	<u>amount</u>
Aldine ID	cash	\$25,000
Bracewell & Patterson L.L.P.	legal services	\$76,950
Harris County	mapping/engineering services	\$68,760
Texas On-site Wastewater Assoc.	inspection services	<u>\$67,500</u>
		= \$238,210
Texas Water Development Board	grant	<u>+ \$207,323</u>
Total Planning Project cost		= \$445,533