

PlanoFuture synopsis.

In the fall of 2014, the City of Plano released a draft of a new comprehensive land use plan for the City of Plano dubbed the “Plano Tomorrow Plan” (PTP). The document was full of soaring prose for the wonderful city of Plano and its future. However, as citizens studied the PTP more closely, they became alarmed by its call for urbanization, for “high intensity development” and for the re-development of many areas to include high-density residential mid-rise residential construction and urban mixed-use developments throughout the city. Less than 7% of the land in Plano was undeveloped at the time, most of which was identified as commercial use under the existing comprehensive plan. Just as alarming, Plano city planners and management had long told the citizens that Plano would “top out” at a total population of 270,000 to 280,000 people. The population of Plano already exceeded 270,000, there were many projects under construction or approved that would add at least 10,000 more residents. It appeared that the PTP, if fully carried out could add 40,000 to 60,000 more people.

The citizens asked how the plan was developed and the city pointed to a survey of Plano residents (the water bill survey) that it said showed the respondents supported the Plan. The citizens reviewed the survey and its results. The citizens determined that, in spite of heavily slanted questions intended to produce a desired result, the responses of the citizens clearly showed that they did not agree with the urbanization of Plano and the proliferation of high density development.

The citizens organized and began to spread word of their concern. PlanoFuture.org was created to inform the community and express concerns. As a result of this effort, the citizens of Plano began to focus on the Plan and communicate their concerns to the city. Over 1,000 letters, emails and messages were sent to city officials expressing concerns and disagreement. Hundreds of citizens turned out for multiple meetings of the planning & zoning commission to express opposition to parts of the Plan. The city responded by modifying the language to play down references to urbanization and high-intensity use and high-density development, however the citizens soon realized that the city had only changed the words while nothing of substance had changed in the Plan. Although Plano already had 30,000 apartments and another 10,000 approved or under construction, the citizens believed that the Plan would result in an additional 20,000 to 40,000 high density apartments over its 20-year horizon. The citizens produced presentations and a word by word mark-up to show the amendments they felt should be made to the Plan and also asked the city to specifically define and limit how many apartments could be built under the PTP. Over 300 citizens turned out at the city council meeting in October 2015 to express opposition to the plan. The City Council passed an ordinance adopting the PTP anyhow.

In the following 30 days, the Citizens gathered over 4,000 signatures on a petition to require the city to put the Plan to a vote of the citizens. Fewer than 1,900 were required to force this vote. The city refused to acknowledge the petition. This left the citizens with no choice but to sue the city to require it to count the petition and hold the vote. The citizens raised over \$20,000 in small donations to fund the legal fight. While the city argued that for “technical legal reasons” it was “impossible” to hold a referendum on the Plan, the actions of the city and court rulings to date have shown the opposite is the case. The City has used every means it can think of to prevent or delay the courts from ruling on the matter because it is afraid of the result. The City tried to argue in court that only it could decide the citizens claims. When the court disagreed and found against the City, the City appealed the district court’s ruling to the Texas Court of Appeals. The city has hired two high-powered outside law firms to argue its case and fight the citizens in addition to its own extensive in-house legal team.

On February 23, 2017 the Appeals Court denied the City’s appeal, ruling the District Court does have the jurisdiction to order the City Secretary to perform her duty to present the petitions to the City Council. The Appeals Court did dismiss the City Council from the lawsuit until the City Secretary presents the petition and they have an opportunity to withdraw the ordinance or hold a referendum on the ordinance.



Citizens attend City Council meeting to express their opposition to the Comprehensive Plan.

Future High Density Apartments Under the Plan

