Section 8

Active and Engaged Partnerships

8.0 Introduction

In addition to recommendations on future land use and basic infrastructure discussed in previous sections, the Comprehensive Plan also contains a number of core plan goals. These core plan goals give further definition to, and guidance on, important issues for Thornton’s future. These are listed below and illustrated in Figure 8-1:

- Quality and Diverse Neighborhoods
- Plentiful Quality Jobs
- Healthy City with Great Amenities
- Active and Engaged Partnerships

While no specific major strategies and key policies for the core plan goal of Active and Engaged Partnerships are listed in this section, they are integrated into the three previous sections.
The Comprehensive Plan is an ambitious vision for the future of Thornton. It is intentionally not based on current fiscal projections of revenues, as to do so would have the effect of constraining the vision to only what the City could afford to pay for using conventional funding means. Instead, the Plan was intended to represent a vision which would stretch the imagination of the citizens. It was purposefully created to identify a wide range of programmatic and physical improvements in order to achieve the vision of a city of great neighborhoods, jobs, and amenities. While visionary, fiscal reality must be recognized if the Plan is to become a reality. Key to this will be the creation and nurturing of a number of other partners to assist in implementing various aspects of the Plan. Simply stated, the Comprehensive Plan cannot and should not be viewed as being implemented solely by the City.

8.1 Current Opportunities

A key characteristic of sophisticated communities is their ability to encourage partnerships. Community partnerships thrive in an environment where individuals and organizations feel motivated to invest their time and resources to help develop a higher quality of life for all stakeholders in the years to come. In essence, the individual or organization becomes vested in the future of the community.

There are three categories of partners which Thornton is encouraged to utilize. Some of these partners currently exist, some marginally exist, and others are non-existent. The categories include: other public and government agencies, non-profits including those with a targeted objective and those with broader community objectives, and finally private or corporate partners. These partnerships are illustrated and identified in Figures 8-2 and 8-3.

8.2 Important Needs

To achieve the aggressive vision that is reflected in this Comprehensive Plan, Thornton must become more adept at forging
Active & Engaged Partnerships

Figure 8-2: Thornton Partnerships

Figure 8-3: Partnerships Necessary to Create a City of Quality and Diverse Neighborhoods

PUBLIC/GOVERNMENT
- City
- County
- State
- Federal
- Regional Transportation District
- School District
- Library District

NON-PROFIT GROUPS
- Arts Council
- Sports Mkg. Group
- Economic Development
- Historic Preservation
- Cultural Organization
- Chamber
- Community Development Corporations
- Neighborhood Organizations
- Faith-based Organizations

PRIVATE/CORPORATE
- Developers
- Lending Institutions
- Suppliers (e.g. The Home Depot)
- Property Owners
- Local Businesses
- Others
and nurturing partnerships in order to share in the financing and implementation of many of the ideas reflected. If these partnerships cannot be effectively created, much of this Plan cannot be achieved.

8.3 Core Recommendations

Partnering with individuals or organizations comes with implied costs to City Council and City administration. The establishment of a partnership may require an initial financial investment in order for it to grow strong enough to be a valid entity. A second cost implication relates to the transfer of decision making authority regarding the particular effort or initiative. Such costs, however, are more than adequately offset by the increased capacity in leadership, manpower and financial resources.

Partnerships are important to this plan because:
- The City does not have the resources to accomplish the Comprehensive Plan vision alone.
- They enhance community capacity to achieve Comprehensive Plan goals.
- They provide marketing, promotional, and outreach opportunities.
- They provide accountability for “tasks” and “projects” outlined in plan recommendations.
- They strengthen grassroots support for various initiatives, and, in turn, provide stronger community support to achieve the long-term vision.

Partnerships Necessary to Create a City of Quality and Diverse Neighborhoods

One of the fundamental neighborhood policies that the City has deployed over the past several years is to invest in programs that maintain the stability of the community’s older developed areas. This includes active code enforcement and other programmatic endeavors. Additionally, the City has reinvested in infrastructure maintenance and upgrade of
streets, sidewalks, and public landscape features. As existing neighborhoods age, it will be important to build community capacity through partnerships with the individual neighborhoods in order to undertake neighborhood revitalization. The community is getting too large for the City itself to be directly involved in every neighborhood stabilization and maintenance effort. To facilitate the creation and capacity building of these neighborhood associations, the 2007 Comprehensive Plan recommended that an organization be created within the City administration that focused on neighborhoods. This was accomplished with the creation of the Neighborhood Services Division within the City Development Department in May of 2008.

A second kind of partnership recommended for neighborhoods is with a Community Development Corporation (CDC) to take the lead on neighborhood stabilization and revitalization efforts. This CDC would have the authority to collect funds and participate in targeted reinvestment and development at the neighborhood level. Another function of the CDC would be to conduct neighborhood leadership capacity training, sponsor neighborhood celebratory events, and other neighborhood pride building actions.

A third level of partnerships is formal relationships with non-profit groups to assist needy and elderly homeowners in “paint-up, fix-up” programs. In neighborhoods with elderly or financially challenged homeowners, programs such as the City’s “Help for Homes” are excellent ways to support individuals that could not otherwise physically perform or afford minor maintenance. To be even more effective, these types of partnerships should be expanded into a comprehensive program that has predictable times of engagement and progress.
Partnerships Necessary to Create a City of Plentiful and Quality Jobs

Thornton has been successful in expanding its retail sales tax base through the attraction of a number of diverse retail developments. What is desired in this plan is to diversify the job base from its heavy emphasis on retail employment to other forms of employment in office, distribution, and manufacturing.

The Economic Development Department has created a short-term strategic plan that runs through the end of 2012. This plan outlines the strategy needed to diversify Thornton’s job base. Included in this plan is a list of local and national partnerships necessary for success in this effort. The Economic Development Department will also be creating a long-term (5 year) plan for economic development in the City.

Partnerships Necessary to Create a Healthy City with Great Amenities

Amenities are key to the vision of this plan. They are not viewed as luxuries but rather important elements. The provision of the amenities cited is a conscious strategy to attract higher forms of development and create a higher quality of life for the citizenry of Thornton. These amenities must have partnerships to assist in funding, maintenance and programming. There are several important partnerships needed to create a “Healthy City with Great Amenities”.

The first partnership is with developers. These corporate partners must be encouraged to create or fund the construction of additional community amenities which will, in turn, improve future development opportunities in Thornton.

Another important partnership related to amenities is the Thornton Arts, Sciences, and Humanities Council (TASHCO). This organization is fundamentally important to encouraging Arts funding as well as programmatic leadership. This group could take the lead on developing the vision and securing
funding for the Thornton Placemaking Heritage Trail. Additionally, the City can collaborate with this group on shaping and implementing the creation of a Civic Arts District.

The vision for the Sports and Wellness District is fundamentally tied to creating a Sports Marketing Group for this district. Modeled after similar community non-profit Sports Marketing organizations, this entity would actively market the facilities for regional and national tournaments and events. National examples of this type of organization exist.

A final critical partnership would include the development of a “Thornton Community Foundation.” This non-profit foundation should actively solicit corporate and private funding and be a source of gap financing for desired public amenities.

Community foundations are tax-exempt charitable organizations created by and for the people of communities throughout the United States. Once established, the foundation enables people with philanthropic interests to easily and effectively support community issues. Typically, a community foundation will have paid staff that oversees, markets, and manages the foundation’s resources and outreach programs. The staff is often led by a local board of trustees who establish guidelines, foundation goals and other capital campaigns. These two groups (the paid staff and the board of trustees) should have intimate knowledge of the issues, opportunities, and resources that define the community, enabling them to play a key role in addressing community challenges.

The establishment of a community foundation provides a niche outlet to address both current and future community needs. Often the foundation will act as a community voice that encourages volunteerism and participation in local projects and initiatives. Through the establishment of a community foundation, future growth for charitable projects will be possible. Activities such as a community endowment and resources for matching grant funding will be more accessible to address a broader range of community needs.