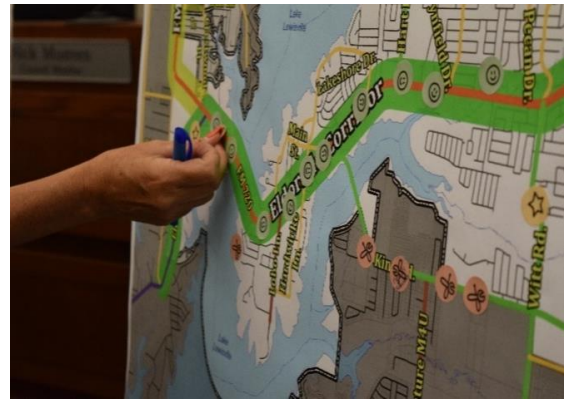# Town of Little Elm Comprehensive Plan 2017

Future Land Use and Population Projection Update

June 13, 2024

LITTLE ELM

FOR CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION ONLY

NOT INTENDED FOR PUBLICATION

Executive Summary

In March 2024, the Town of Little Elm engaged the services of Freese and Nichols, Inc., the firm who helped the Town create the 2017 Comprehensive Plan, to update targeted sections of the 2017 Plan. The sections, presented in more detail below, primarily addressed the Future Land Use map, densities associated with various residential categories, and future population projections.

The purpose of the update was the right-sizing of future growth numbers to inform other Town planning initiatives, the most immediate being a 5-year impact fee update. As the Town anticipates a broader update to its Comprehensive Plan in the near future, this land use update is considered an interim step to provide the Town with the data it needs to further immediate planning initiatives.

Updates to the 2017 Comprehensive Plan are encapsulated within this document and are limited to the following (page references below refer to the 2017 Plan, not this document):

1. **Update the Future Land Use Map Shown on Page 120**: Development data and other inputs were used to create a Future Land Use Map that updates the 2017 map.

2. **Update the Future Land Use categories shown on Pages 119, 121-123**: The future land use categories of the current Comprehensive Plan were updated to reflect recently-approved developments and trends that have developed in the Town since 2017. Additionally, dwelling units per acre (DUA) were added for each future land use category.

3. **Update the Town's Projected Population and Capacity on Pages 175-179, 181-184**: based on data provided by the Town and public sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the North Central Texas Council of Governments, updates were made to the Town's projected population and capacity under the current Comprehensive Plan. These were updated to reflect growth and growth rate changes since 2017.

Results show that build-out population of the Town increased from approximately 93,000 population to approximately 107,000. Of the additional residents expected in Town Limits, the land use changes considered in this update contribute approximately 1,700 additional residents. This means that land use changes contribute only 12% of the total increase in build-out population (1,700 out of 14,000 people), with the remaining anticipated increase from 2017 resulting from growth in ETJ population, along with the 4,648 undeveloped lots platted as of the date of this report. With more lots on the ground compared to 2017, the future population of the Town can be predicted with more accuracy compared to projecting vacant areas based on presumed maximum density. The unbuilt lots currently existing equate to 13,981 additional residents (compared to 6,789 residents projected from vacant lots in 2017). This is a difference of 7,192 additional persons compared to 2017.

No other explicit or implicit changes are intended to the 2017 Plan other than those outlined above, nor does this document recommend any specific alternation to the implementation of the 2017 Plan Vision and Goals based on the data presented in this document. The Vision of the 2017 Plan along with its areas of emphasis remain as adopted in 2017:

> *"The Town of Little Elm is a distinct and desirable lakeside destination for all people to live and play while enjoying a safe, vibrant and welcoming community."*

Future Land Use Plan (current page 119)

Land Use Categories	Max. DUA*	Description
Residential		
Estate Residential	1	Single-family homes with lot sizes of one acre or greater
Ranchette Residential	2	Single-family homes with lot sizes of 15,000 sq. ft. to 1 acre
Low Density Residential	5	Single-family homes of varying lot sizes that are smaller than 15,000 sq. ft.
Medium Density Residential	10	Townhomes or Duplexes
High Density Residential	25	Apartments and Condominiums
Mixed Residential	8	Range of single family from large lot to patio homes to townhome transitions to neighborhood commercial
Neighborhood	4	Appropriate transitions to existing neighborhoods with respect to densities, screening and buffering within new neighborhoods
Public Use		
Public/Semi-Public	0	Educational, governmental, or institutional uses such as schools, hospitals, places of worship or community organizations etc.
Parks and Open Space	0	Community parks, recreational facilities, cemeteries, and open space and private recreation
Floodplain/CORP properties	0	Conservation area based on FEMA map and CORP properties
Non-residential		
Retail/Commercial	0	Establishments providing merchandise for retail or commercial sale and professional, corporate, or administrative offices
Special Uses		
Lakefront District	32	A mixture of civic, park, cultural, retail, and residential uses, which is designed to be a focal point of the community
Special Planning Area 1	0	"Hilltown" area with redevelopment potential
Special Planning Area 2	7	"Preston on the Lake" area with redevelopment potential
Special Planning Area 3	7	Lakefront area with mostly residential redevelopment potential
Mixed Use	32	Vertical and horizontal mix of residential, non-residential and public uses

Dwelling Units Per Acre

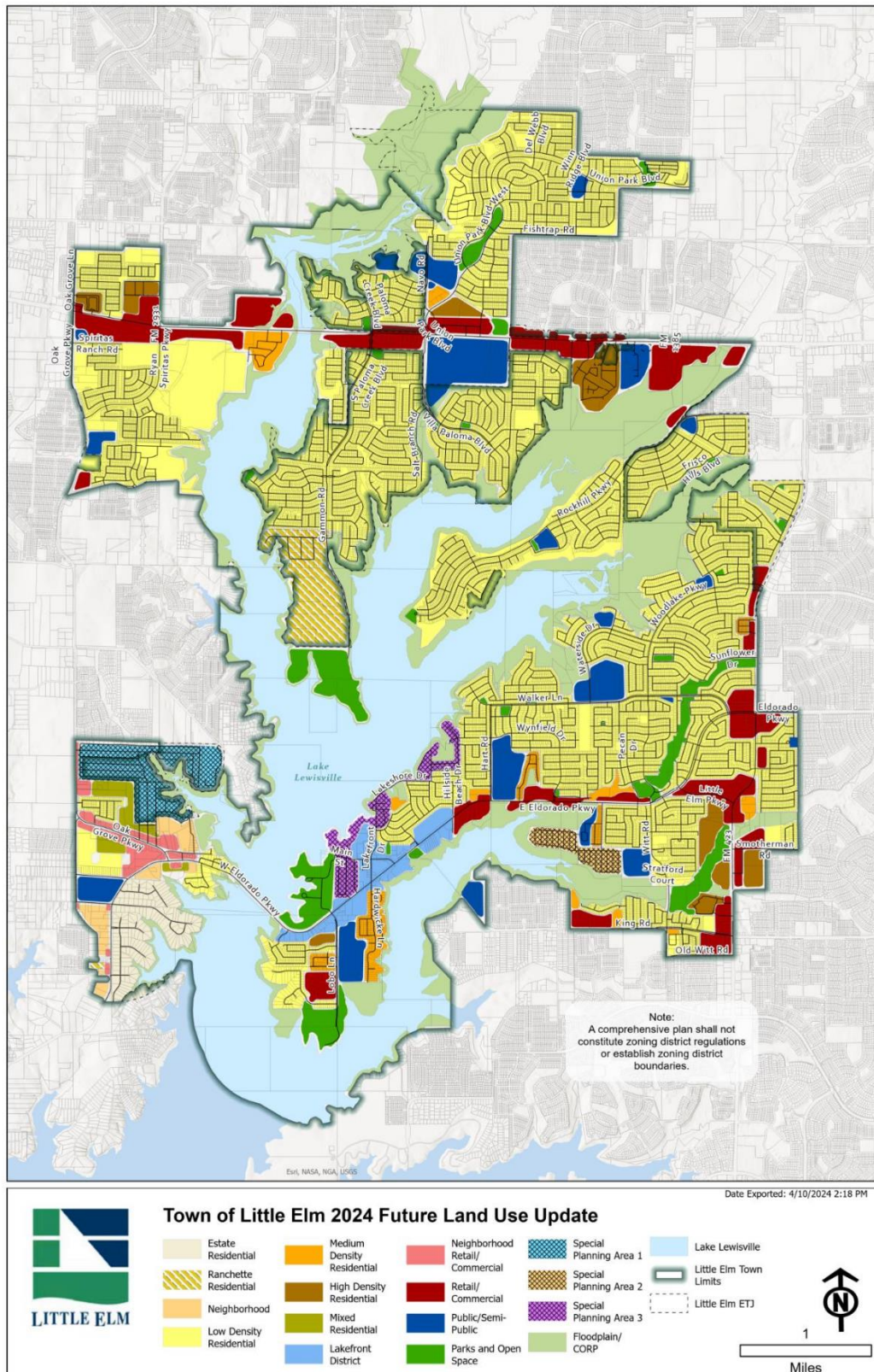## Future Land Use Map (current page 120)

Figure 1: Updated Future Land Use Map

## Special Planning Areas (current pages 121 and 122)

Special Planning Area 1

The area currently has several large vacant tracts, several heavy commercial uses, a small church, and a large mobile home subdivision (with several hundred lots covering approximately 240 acres). With the proximity to the lake and access to Eldorado Parkway and Oak Grove (FM 720), this area will likely see demand to develop the vacant land and possibly redevelop the existing mobile home subdivision. As land values increase and Oak Grove (FM 720) is improved to six lanes, the area may see greater interest from developers wanting to purchase land for either new development or redevelopment for both non-residential and residential purposes. It is desirable to have this area to be coordinated into one unified development when development and redevelopment occur. Finally, it is important to recognize this area's potential to change and how it might be different in 10 to 20 years.

Special Planning Area 2

The area designated as Special Planning Area 2 is currently a quality manufactured home park, with concrete street and sidewalks. The 2008 Future Land Use Plan shows this area as manufactured home development. However, during the 2017 Comprehensive Plan public input process, manufactured homes were identified as one of the least desired uses in the Town. By using the Special Planning Area 2 designation, the Plan recognizes that this area can remain a quality manufactured home park, but also recognizes that the park's land owner may wish to redevelop the site in the future. If redevelopment occurs, it is envisioned to be redeveloped with recreational and single-family detached uses.
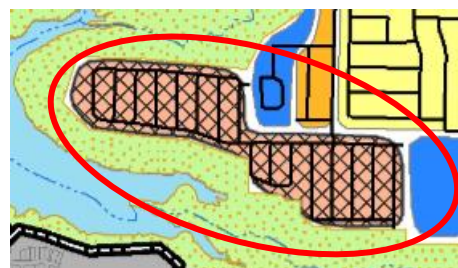
Special Planning Area 3

A large part of Special Planning Area 3 has lake frontage. The area contains attractive lots facing the lake, suitable for "move-up" homes. Many of the existing homes originally started as lake cabins or lake rentals and are smaller than what the market currently builds or demands. Residential redevelopment is highly likely in the northern part of this Special Planning Area 3.

An activity hub is envisioned in the southern part of the planning area due to the area's proximity to the school, the park and retail/commercial lots.

Future Land Use Map Calculations (current page 123)

Consisting of the largest amount of land, around 37 percent of the future land uses is Low Density Residential. Lake Lewisville and floodplains constitute a large percentage of land. The next largest land use category is Retail/Commercial comprising of about 5 percent of the total land uses.

Land Use	Acres in Town Limits (TL)	Percentage (TL only)	Acres in ETJ	Total	Percentage (TL + ETJ)
Estate Residential	225	2%	10	235	1%
Ranchette	4	<1%	217	221	1%
Low Density Residential	4,683	32%	1,763	6,446	37%
Medium Density Residential	186	1%	0	186	1%
High Density Residential	243	2%	15	258	1%
Retail/Commercial	864	6%	43	907	5%
Lakefront District	198	1%	0	198	1%
Mixed Residential	69	<1%	0	0	0
Neighborhood	85	<1%			
Special Planning Area 1	73	1%	188	261	2%
Special Planning Area 2	73	<1%	0	73	<1%
Special Planning Area 3	125	1%	0	125	1%
Public/Semi-Public	559	4%	53	612	4%
Parks and Open Space	469	3%	25	494	3%
Floodplain/Corp Properties*	2,363	16%	670	3,033	17%
Lake Lewisville	4,174	29%	14	4,188	24%
Total	14,498	100	2,997	17,495	100

Projected Population & Capacity (current page 175)
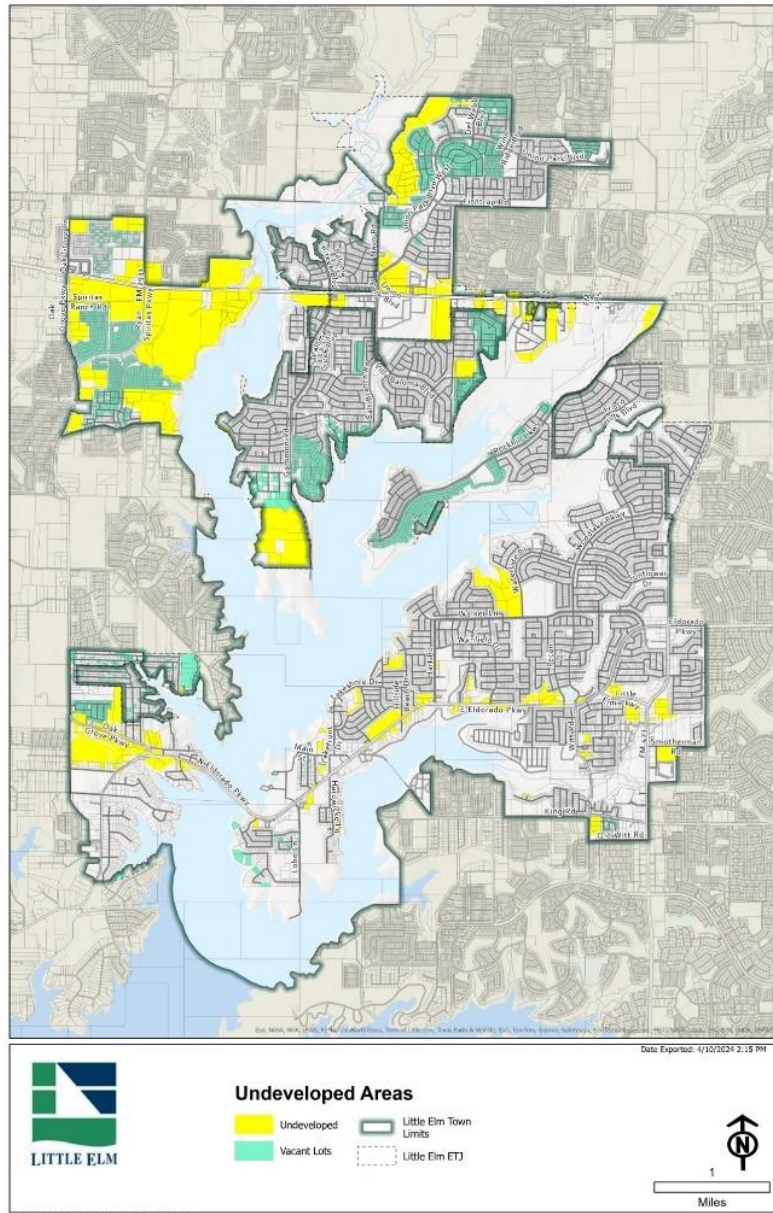
Figure 2 : Current Undeveloped Areas in Town Limits and ETJ

It is important to know how many people will ultimately live in Little Elm. To plan for the community effectively, the Town needs to understand the future demands that citizens will ultimately place on municipal services. For instance, if the Town were planning to expand the public library facility, it would be important to know how many citizens may ultimately use the library. This size of the Town's ultimate population projection could influence the size of the library facility and types of services available.

In addition, it is also important to know how fast the population of Little Elm will grow. Projecting population growth is crucial to determine the need and timing of capital improvements to serve future development. Municipalities across Texas have adopted growth projections to base when future capital projects and other service needs are required.

For the purposes of this discussion, it is necessary to define the area in which the future population of Little Elm will live. The defined area is the Town limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

Updates to 2017 Map by FLUP Category (new page)
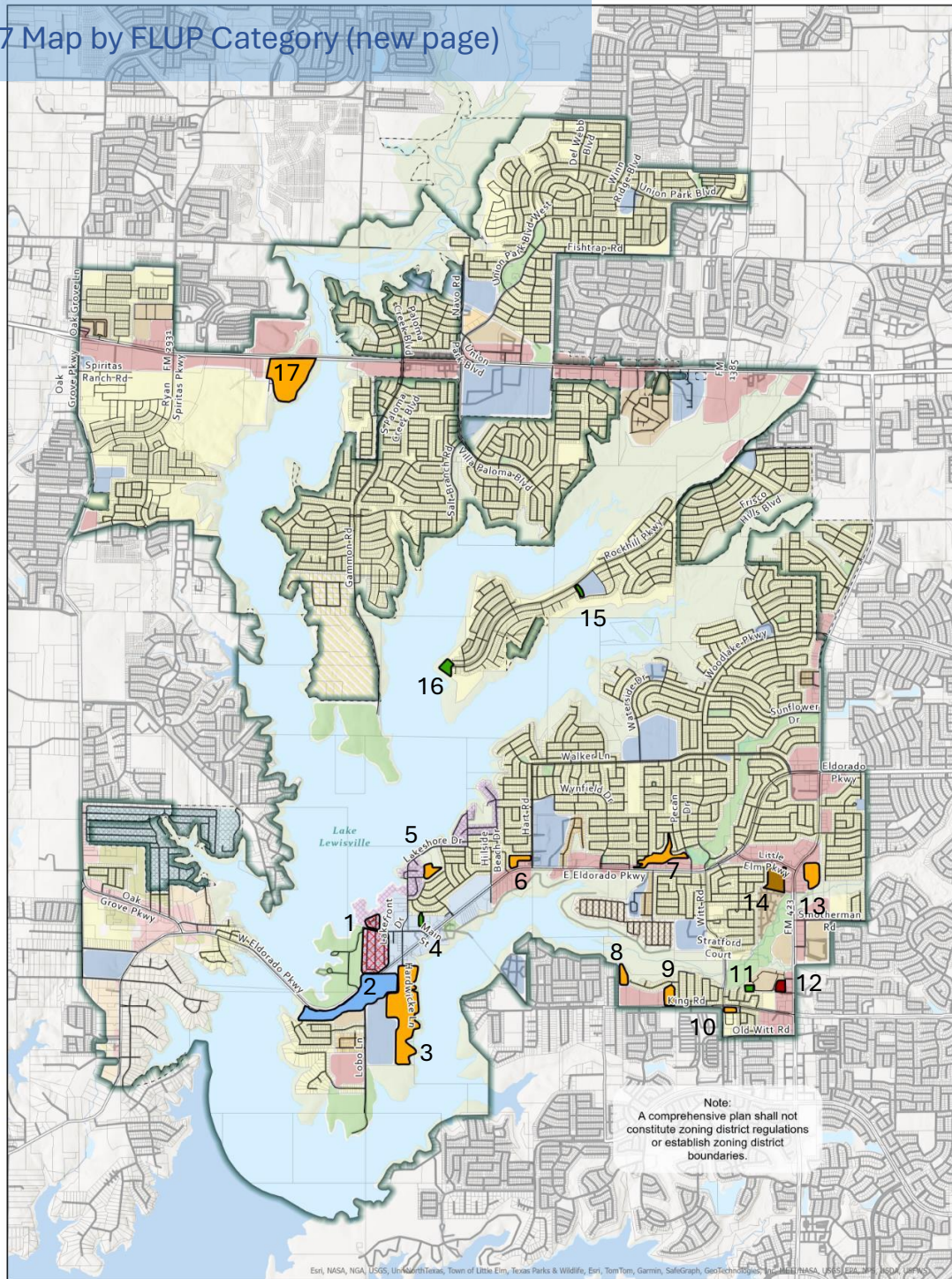
Figure 3: Future Land Use Changes by Area

Summary of Land Use Map Changes (new page)

Table 1: Areas of Change from 2017 FLUM

Change Reference (previous page)	Former LU Category	New LU Category	Area of Change (acre)
1	Redevelopment	Redevelopment	38.0
2	Retail/ Commercial and SPA 3	Lakefront	63.1*
3	Low-Density Res.	Medium-Density Res.	63.0
4	Lakefront	Parks and Open Space	1.7
5	Parks and Open Space	Medium-Density Res.	4.6
6	Retail/ Commercial	Medium-Density Res.	5.4
7	Parks and Open Space	Medium-Density Res.	14.4
8	Retail/ Commercial	Medium-Density Res.	4.2
9	Retail/ Commercial	Medium-Density Res.	6.1
10	Low-Density Res.	Medium-Density Res.	2.0
11	High-Density Res.	Parks and Open Space	1.7
12	High-Density Res.	Retail/ Commercial	3.2
13	Retail/ Commercial	Medium-Density Res.	10.6
14	Retail/ Commercial	High-Density Res.	11.8
15	Low-Density Res.	Parks and Open Space	1.5
16	Low-Density Res.	Parks and Open Space	4.1
17	Retail/ Commercial	Medium-Density Res.	45.2
TOTAL AREA OF CHANGE (ACRE)*			268.6

*includes 12 acres of future redevelopment within Lakefront District

Existing Vacant Area by FLUP Category (Current page 176)

Figure 4: Future Land Use Map (Developable Land/Vacant Lots Only)

Ultimate Capacity (current page 177-178)

The ultimate capacity, or build out, of the Future Land Use Map refers to the number of people that could potentially live within the planning area if the Town were to develop exactly as it is portrayed. The reality is that many changes will likely occur to the Future Land Use Map over time and the planning area encompasses a large amount of vacant land that will take generat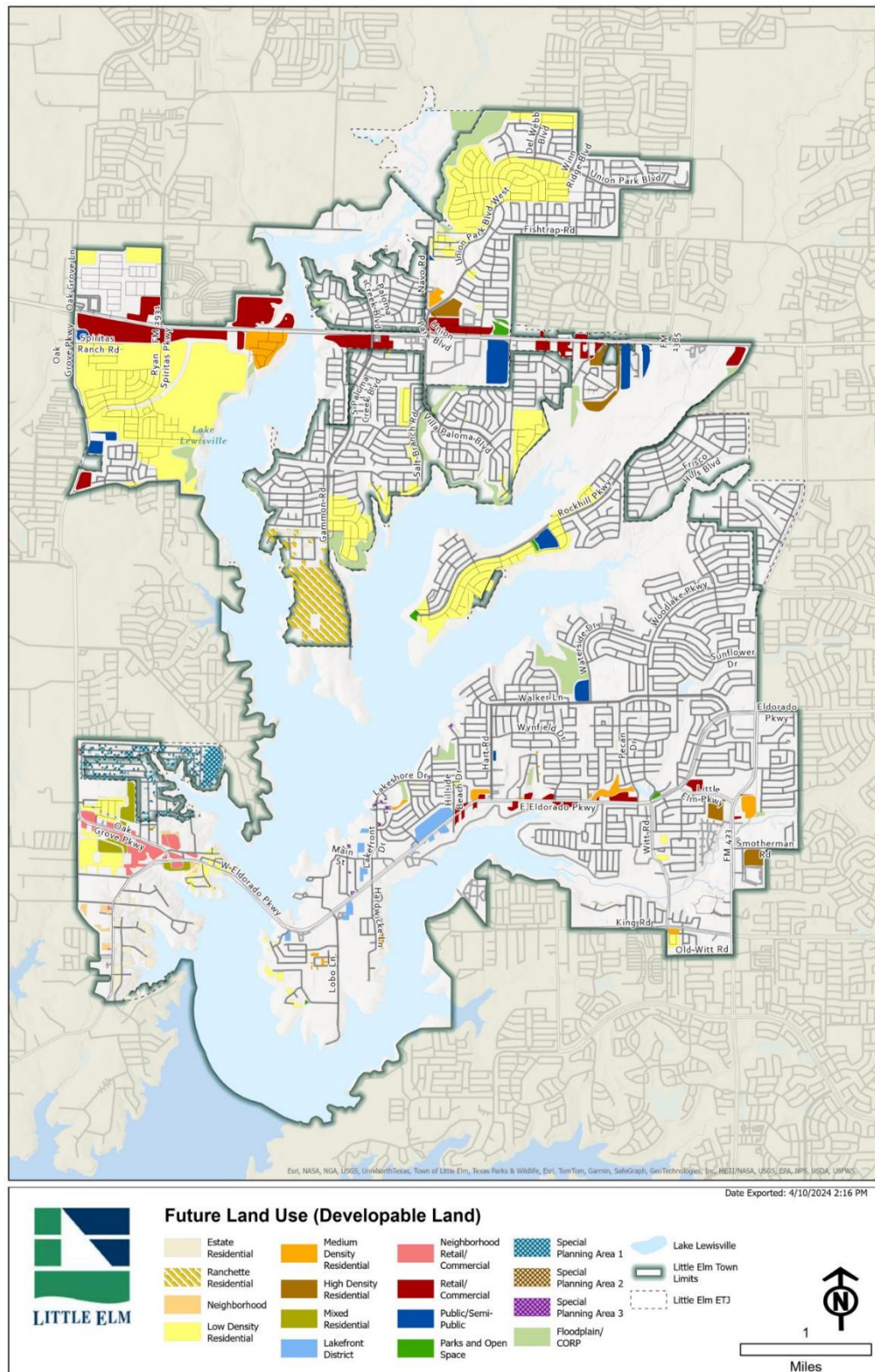ions to develop. The ultimate capacity, therefore, is primarily used for planning purposes and helps to put some numbers behind the colors in terms of how many people could live within the town. The ultimate planning area is town limits and the ETJ minus the Aubrey agreement area.

The ultimate capacity in **Table 2** is calculated by taking the vacant residential areas and multiplying by the approximated dwelling units per acre, persons per household and occupancy rates to calculate how many new residents the FLUP can accommodate. New residents are added to the existing population to reach the ultimate capacity.

Table 2: Calculating Ultimate Capacity

Vacant	Vacant Area/Lots	ROW Reduction	DUA	Occu-Rate[1]	PPH	Housing Units[2]	Total Households[3]	Total Population[4]
Estate	0	0.1	1	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
Ranchette	111.0	0.1	2	0.94	3.2	200	188	601
Low Density Residential	494.0	0.2	5	0.94	3.2	1,976	1,857	5,944
Medium Density Residential[5]	114.0	0.15	10	0.94	3.2	646	607	2,915
High Density Residential	53.0	0.3	25	0.94	1.7	928	872	1,482
Mixed Residential	31.0	0.15	8	0.94	3.2	211	198	634
Neighborhood	3.0	0.2	4	0.94	3.2	10	9	29
Lakefront[6]	49.0	0.3	32	0.94	1.7	1,098	1,032	1,754
Special Planning Area 2	0.0	0.3	7	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
Special Planning Area 3	1.0	0.3	7	0.94	3.2	5	5	15
Vacant Area Subtotal						5,072	4,768	13,373
Total Vacant Lots	4,648			0.94	3.2	4,648	4,369	13,981
Added Residents Total								**27,355**
Current Population in ETJ	8,333 (lots)	0.1	n/a	0.94	3.2	8,333	7,833	**25,066**
Current Population in Town Limits (January 1, 2023), NCTCOG								**54,866**
Ultimate Capacity (Current pop in Town Limits + Current pop in ETJ + Vacant area future pop) _1: Occupancy rate increased from 92% in 2010 to 94% in 2020 – 2: Adjusted Area times DUA – 3: Units times Occupancy Rate 4: Households times Persons Per Household – 5: Includes 38 acres of future redevelopment - 6: Includes 12 acres of future redevelopment_								**_107,286_**

Based on the calculation, Little Elm can expect a population of more than 107,000 when it is completely built-out. The number may change based on upcoming shifts in housing trends or redevelopment. Compared to the 2017 Plan, this represents a build-out increase of approximately 14,000 residents. A significant portion of this increase is explained by an increase in ETJ population. Whereas the 2017 Plan predicted 15,000 new residents in the ETJ, the current population is over 25,000 with an additional 4,100 residents still expected in the future (**Table 6**).

When considering only residents within the Town Limits, the increase from 2017 is mainly due to existing vacant platted lots, which increased from just over 1,000 in 2017 to more than 4,600 in 2024 (each lot is assumed to produce a household with 3.2 persons), and expected increases owing to Future Land Use Map changes and density changes, along with redevelopment of portions of the Lakefront, as described in **Figure 3** and detailed in **Table 2** and **Table 5**.

An important consideration associated with the ultimate capacity is the timeline. It is important to gather an understanding of when the Town will become built-out based on the projected growth rate. It helps the Town to determine an anticipated growth rate and types of development that the Town envisions for the next few decades. **Table 7** takes several Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) figures into account for this purpose.

10-year forecast (current page 179)

Projecting what Little Elm's population will be in the next 10 or 20 years is challenging due to the fact that there are so many variables that may affect the rate of population growth. However, it is important to provide an analysis of what is most likely to occur. The best method to predict the Town's growth is to consider the vacant area within the current Town limits and then add the population from the ETJ. What has been determined to be "most likely" is based on three factors – the population growth of other cities in Little Elm's region, the rate at which the Town has been growing in the past few years and known residential developments that are anticipated to be built in the next ten years within the Town limits.

Past Growth Rate (current page 179)

A Town's past growth rates are often the best indicator of future growth rates. **Table 3** and **Table 4** show Little Elm's population, numerical change, and compound annual growth rate of recent years and by decade.

From 2017 to 2023, Little Elm grew consistently. The Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) was 6.9% 6.2% from 2017 to 2023, down slightly from 6.9% from 2010 to 2017.

Table 3: Population Data in Recent Years

Year	Population	Population Change	Percent Change	CAGR
2017	38,250			
2018	42,040	3,790	9.9%	
2019	44,530	2,490	5.9%	
2020	46,453	1,923	4.3%	6.2%
2021	48,198	1,745	3.8%	
2022	51,635	3,437	7.1%	
2023	54,866	3,231	6.3%	

Source: NCTCOG Population Estimate; US Census Bureau

From 1970 to 2020 Little Elm experienced periods of phenomenal growth. Between the years of 2000 and 2010, Little Elm grew over 500 percent, and again more than doubled its population between 2010 and 2020. The 40-year CAGR was 10.28% (**Table 4**).

Table 4: Population Data by Decade

Year	Population	Population Change	Percent Change	CAGR
1980	926			
1990	1,255	329	35%	
2000	3,646	2,391	190.5%	10.28%
2010	22,200	18,554	508.9%	
2020	46,453	24,253	109.2%	

Source: US Census Bureau

New Residents (current pages 182 and 183)

This section analyzes how much population can be added to the Town's boundary and in the extra-territorial jurisdiction.

Town Limits

Table 5: New Residents in Town Limits

Vacant	Total Area/Lots	ROW Reduction	DUA	Occu-Rate[1]	PPH	Housing Units[2]	Total Households[3]	Total Population[4]
Estate	0	0.1	1	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
Ranchette	0	0.1	2	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
Low Density Residential	477.0	0.2	5	0.94	3.2	1,908	1,794	5,739
Medium Density Residential[5]	114.0	0.15	10	0.94	3.2	646	607	2,915
High Density Residential	49.0	0.3	25	0.94	1.7	858	806	1,370
Mixed Residential	31.0	0.15	8	0.94	3.2	0	0	634
Neighborhood	3.0	0.2	4	0.94	3.2	0	0	29
Lakefront[6]	49.0	0.3	32	0.94	1.7	829	779	1,754
Special Planning Area 1	0	0.3	0	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
Special Planning Area 2	0	0.3	7	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
Special Planning Area 3	1.0	0.3	7	0.94		5	5	15
Vacant Area Subtotal						4,245	3,990	12,456
Total Vacant Lots	3,579			0.94	3.2	3,579	3,364	10,766
Added Capacity								**23,222**

1: Occupancy rate increased from 92% in 2010 to 94% in 2020
2: Adjusted Area times DUA
3: Units times Occupancy Rate
4: Households times Persons Per Household
5: Includes 38 acres of future redevelopment
6: Includes 12 acres of future redevelopment

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Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction

Table 6: New Residents in the ETJ

Vacant	Total Area/Lots	ROW Reduction	DUA	Occu-Rate[1]	PPH	Housing Units[2]	Total Households[3]	Total Population[4]
Estate	0	0.1	1	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
Ranchette	111.0	0.1	2	0.94	3.2	200	188	601
Low Density Residential	17.0	0.2	5	0.94	3.2	68	64	205
Medium Density Residential	0	0.15	10	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
High Density Residential	4.0	0.3	25	0.94	1.7	70	66	112
Mixed Residential	0	0.15	8	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
Neighborhood	0	0.2	4	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
Lakefront	0	0.3	32	0.94	1.7	0	0	0
Special Planning Area 1	21.0	0.3	0	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
Special Planning Area 2	0	0.3	7	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
Special Planning Area 3	0	0.3	7	0.94	3.2	0	0	0
Vacant Area Subtotal						338	318	917
Total Vacant Lots	1,069	n/a	n/a	0.94	3.2	1,069	1,005	3,216
Added Capacity								**4,133**

1: Occupancy rate increased from 92% in 2010 to 94% in 2020
2: Adjusted Area times DUA
3: Units times Occupancy Rate
4: Households times Persons Per Household

Growth Rate Scenarios (current page 184)

The NCTCOG population estimate for January 1, 2023 is 54,866.

The 2017 plan used a compound annual growth rate of 5 percent as the "most likely" growth rate Little Elm will experience over the next ten years. 2023 population was predicted in the 2017 Plan at 51,259, which turned out to be very similar to the NCTCOG population estimate of 54,866 on January 1, 2023. **Since growth over the past seven years followed a similar CAGR to the growth predicted (5.29%), a future ten-year rate of 5.0% CAGR remains the most likely scenario.** With this growth rate, Little Elm's population is projected to be around 90,000 in the next ten years.

Table 7: Growth Rate Scenarios

1.50%		2.5%		5.0%		10.0%	
Year	Population	Year	Population	**Year**	**Population**	Year	Population
2023	54,866	2023	54,866	**2023**	**54,866**	2023	54,866
2024	55,689	2024	56,238	**2024**	**57,609**	2024	60,353
2025	56,524	2025	57,644	**2025**	**60,490**	2025	66,388
2026	57,372	2026	59,085	**2026**	**63,514**	2026	73,027
2027	58,233	2027	60,562	**2027**	**66,690**	2027	80,329
2028	59,106	2028	62,076	**2028**	**70,024**	2028	88,362
2029	59,993	2029	63,628	**2029**	**73,526**	2029	97,198
2030	60,893	2030	65,218	**2030**	**77,202**	2030	*Buildout*
2031	61,806	2031	66,*849*	**2031**	**81,062**		
2032	62,733	2032	68,520	**2032**	**85,115**		
2033	63,674	2033	70,233	**2033**	**89,371**		