CHAPTER 1 COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Introduction

Understanding the history and existing conditions is crucial in planning for the future of Converse. The purpose of this chapter is to acquaint the reader with this Comprehensive Plan and present existing conditions including ongoing planning efforts, demographics, physical features, and economics that will impact development in Converse.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a long-range planning tool intended to be used by decision-makers, municipal staff, and the local community. The plan will direct the community's growth and physical development for the next 20 years. The comprehensive plan is written for various audiences, including Converse residents, elected and appointed officials, and technical professionals. The State of Texas has established laws dictating the way that incorporated communities can ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their citizens through a comprehensive plan. The Texas Local Government Code (TLGC) Chapter 213 states:

"The governing body of a municipality may adopt a comprehensive plan for the long-range development of the municipality... A municipality may define the relationship between a comprehensive plan and development regulations and may provide standards for determining the consistency required between a plan and development regulations."

What will the Comprehensive Plan Accomplish?

It Will:

- Engage local residents in the decision-making process and achieve consensus for the future vision for Converse and its ongoing development needs.
- Ensure public facilities can accommodate future growth and development.
- Foster coordination between public and private investment sectors.
- Minimize potential conflicts between land uses.
- Ensure the long-term protection and enhancement of the community's visual image and appearance.

Legal Basis For Planning

State law grants municipalities the power to regulate land use, provided these regulations are based on a plan. The authority to create a comprehensive plan is established in Chapters 211, 212, and 213 of the Texas Local Government Code (TLGC). Chapter 211 enables municipalities to adopt zoning, while Chapter 212 authorizes them to regulate subdivisions within city limits. Although a comprehensive plan is not a zoning ordinance, it guides future decisions on development, infrastructure, and land use, serving as a foundation for zoning decisions under Chapter 211. Unlike some states, Texas does not require cities to maintain a comprehensive plan, but Chapter 213 allows them to adopt one to support sound development and promote public health, safety, and welfare. This flexibility enables Texas cities to create a customized, long-term blueprint suited to their needs.

How will the Comprehensive Plan be used?

The comprehensive plan is a long-range planning document that City leadership and staff should reference to guide development regulations and policy decisions. It can be used in a variety of ways for different City departments. The comprehensive plan is not a regulating document, such as the zoning ordinance or subdivision regulations; however, the recommendations will influence City regulations, policies, and budgeting that are updated more frequently. The comprehensive plan should be revisited every five to 10 years to ensure the plan recommendations are meeting the community's current needs. Below are a few ways the City will use this Plan.

City Administration

City administration uses a comprehensive plan as a long-term blueprint to guide growth, development, and resource allocation, directly influencing the city's Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs) and budgeting processes. The plan provides a basis for evaluating development proposals and aligning them with zoning standards and the community's vision. It also shapes policies and ordinances that support overarching goals, ensuring consistency in city operations. By identifying and prioritizing infrastructure needs—such as roads, utilities, and public facilities—the plan helps guide CIPs, which in turn inform the annual budget.

Planning and Community Development

The Planning and Community Development Department will primarily use the Future Land Use Map to review zoning cases and prepare staff reports for the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council. While compatibility with the Future Land Use Map is important, it should not be the only criterion to recommend approval or denial of a zoning decision. Other critical review criteria include the provision of adequate infrastructure, transportation connectivity and access, topography considerations, land use adjacency, growth management principles, etc.

Public Works/Engineering

Public Works and Municipal Engineering departments rely on the comprehensive plan to direct infrastructure projects and align with the city's long-term vision for growth and the needs of the community. The plan helps prioritize infrastructure improvements in areas targeted for development or preservation, ensuring that roads, water lines, sewers, and stormwater systems are upgraded to meet projected population demands. Additionally, the planning process will identify opportunities for the City to improve development regulations that impact the decision making process for the public works and engineering departments.

Parks and Recreation

Like the Engineering Department, the Parks and Recreation Department will primarily use the Future Land Use Map and population projections to plan for future park, recreation, and open space facilities. These facilities should be strategically located within neighborhoods and near other public uses. The Comprehensive Plan works with other master plans, like the Parks Vision Study adopted in 2016, to identify the location of park facilities and improve connectivity through the use of trails and other means.

History of Converse

The area around Converse has a deep Indigenous history, primarily shaped by the Coahuiltecan people, who lived as semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers across South Texas for thousands of years. In the early 1700s, Spanish settlers established missions near San Antonio, such as Mission San Antonio de Valero (the Alamo) in 1718, drawing Indigenous groups like the Coahuiltecans into mission life. Other groups, including the Tonkawa and Lipan Apache, also moved through this region. Over the 1800s, European American settlers expanded into Texas, further displacing Indigenous populations.

In the 19th Century, the region was primarily occupied by German and Mexican settlers due to its abundance of black, saturated, flint rock soil, ideal for farming. This provided fertile land to produce cotton in the area. Converse, a small town at that time, was founded in 1877 due to railroad construction, with railroad tracks being laid down for the Galveston-Harrisburg railroad, later becoming the Southern Pacific Railroad.

The town was named after Major James Converse, the engineer responsible for developing the railroad, who, in 1872, laid out the four original lots comprising Converse. The railroad created the means to ship agricultural products such as cotton, corn and dairy to distant markets, providing the region with an economic boom. This growth aided in the development of the City's first post office, created in 1892 by Ferdinand Simon and Son, along with a brick store and a saloon. [1]

1 Texas State Historical Association. (n.d.). Converse, TX. In Handbook of Texas Online. Texas State Historical Association. Retrieved November 7, 2024, from https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/converse-tx

The City experienced rapid growth, marked by a surge in industrial development during the early 20th Century, with the arrival of the Featherlite Block Company Plant and the Ewing-Records Steel Plant. In 1929, Randolph Air Force Field was established northeast of Converse. Two years later, the facility was designated as a flight training facility for the U.S. Army Air Corps. Randolph Air Force Base has continued to be of vital importance for Converse, with 3,361 veterans living in the City as of 2022.

After World War 2, Converse continued to experience a growth and development boom due to continued activity at Randolph Air Force Base, which in 1947 was home to several German scientists in the area for "Operation Paperclip," an aviation medicine program.

Converse was formally incorporated as the 15th incorporated suburban City of Bexar County on March 25, 1961. In 1972, City Hall was developed, and three years later, City Park and the community swimming pool were formally dedicated. [2]

2 Alamo Colleges District. (2008). Converse, Texas: A historical overview. Interactive History Project, Palo Alto College. Retrieved November 7, 2024, from https://pacweb.alamo.edu/InteractiveHistory/projects/rhines/StudentProjects/2008/converse/sttemplate.html

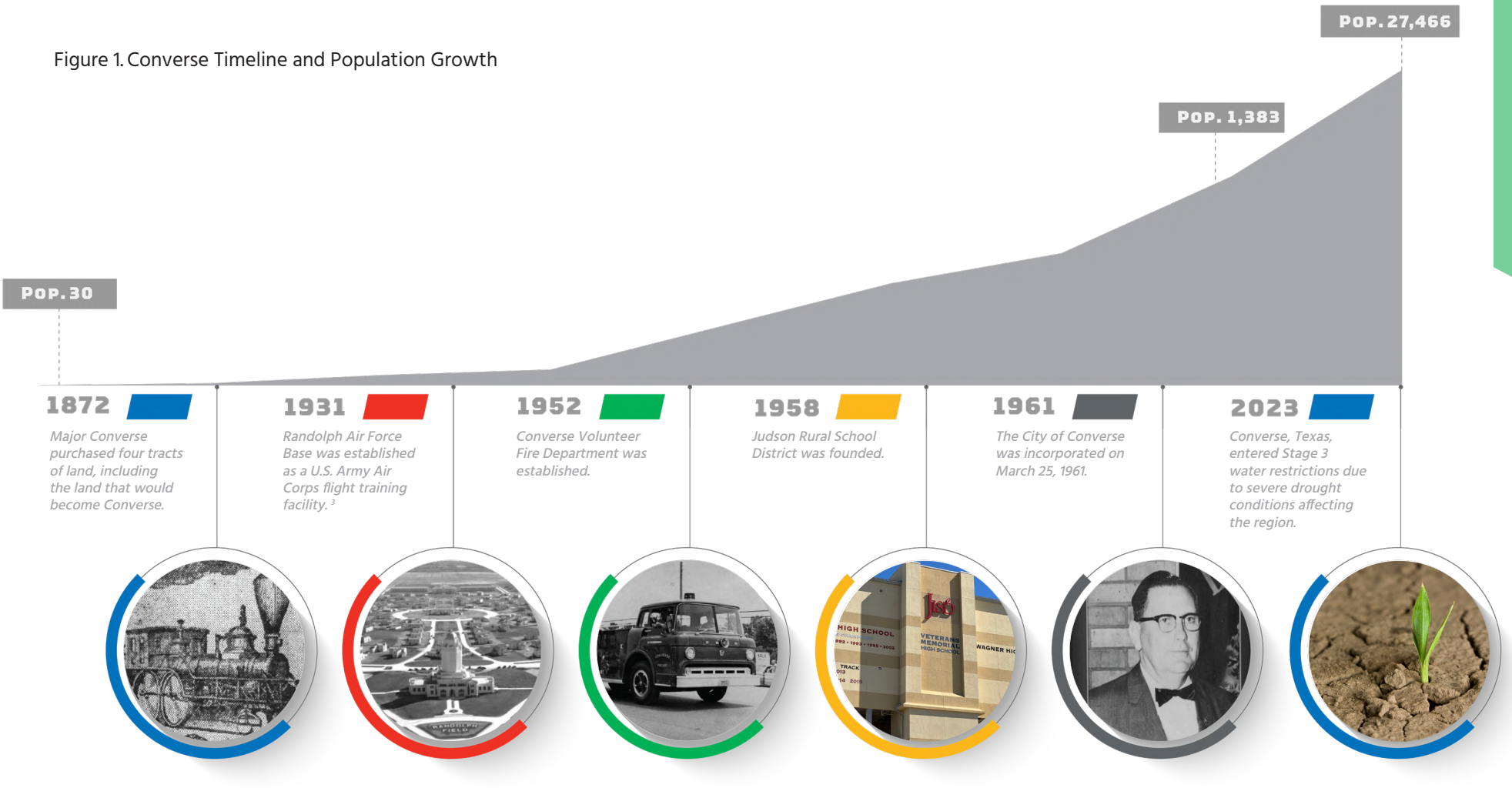
Construction began on JBSA-Randolph, then known as Randolph Field, in 1928, with the base being officially dedicated in June 1930. In 1931, Randolph Field officially opened as a training facility for the U.S. Army Air Corps. The base played a crucial role in training pilots during World War II. In 1947, after the establishment of the U.S. Air Force as a separate service, Randolph Field was renamed Randolph Air Force Base. The base continued to serve as a significant training facility during the Cold War and subsequent years after. In October 2010, Randolph Air Force Base merged with Lackland Air Force Base and Fort Sam Houston to create Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA). Today, Randolph Air Force Base is home to the 12th Flying Training Wing and is integral to the Air Education and Training Command (AETC). The base has continued to be of vital importance for Converse, with 3,361 veterans living in the City as of 2022.

JBSA-Randolph has participated in a number of planning efforts with Converse and other surrounding cities. These efforts include the JBSA-Randolph Joint Land use Study in 2015 and the JBSA-Randolph AICUZ Study in 2017. These plans were created to guide planning and development to ensure future land use compatibility around the base.

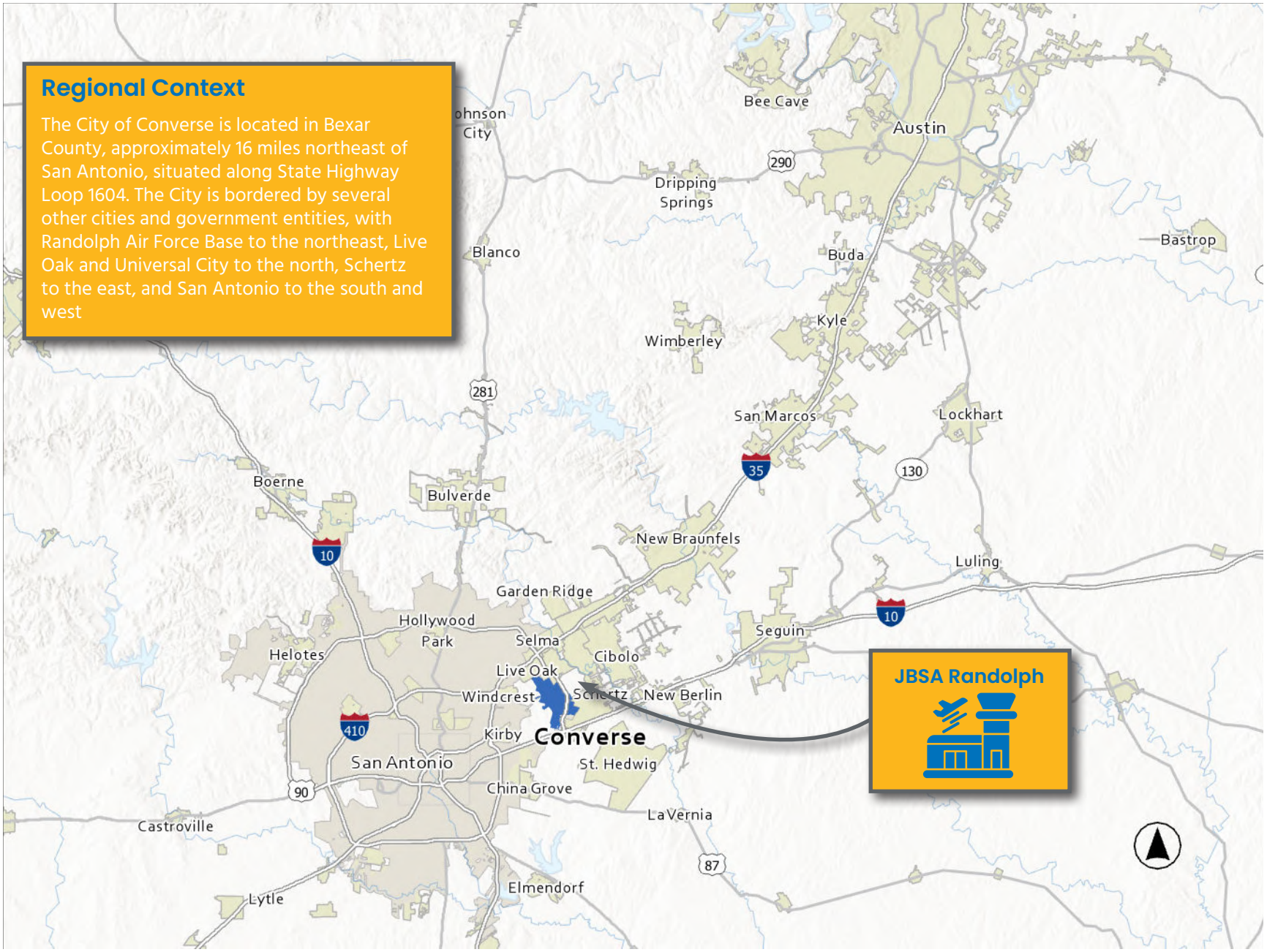
Source: JBSA Randolph

Converse Timeline

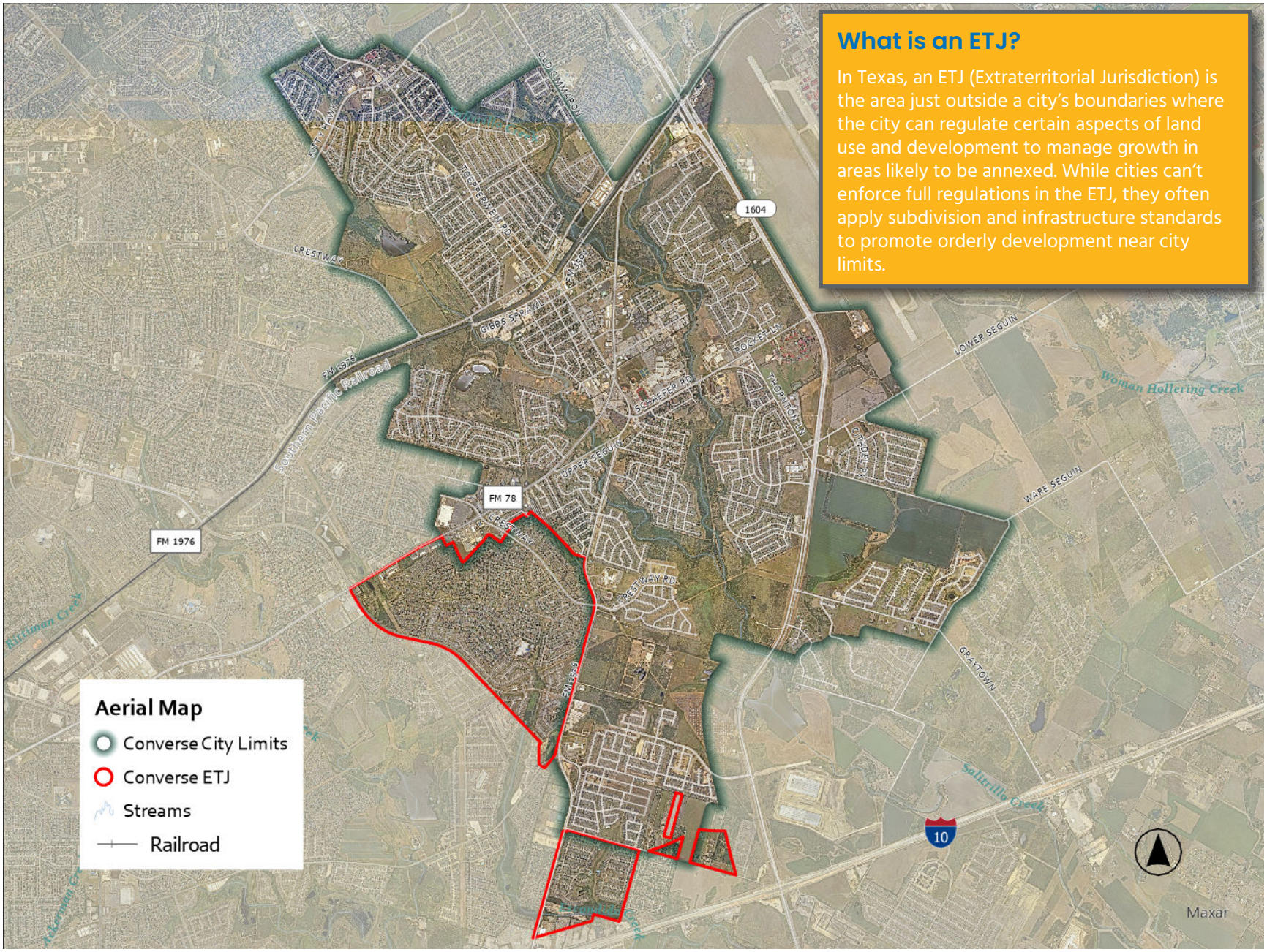
Figure 1. Converse Timeline and Population Growth



3 Texas State Historical Association. (1976). Randolph Air Force Base. In Handbook of Texas Online. Texas State Historical Association. Retrieved January 17,2025, from https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/randolph-air-force-base



Map 1. Regional Context



Map 2. Aerial Map

Current Conditions

Converse is Growing.

Converse grew by 15,958 residents between the year of 2000 and 2020. The Texas Water Development Board projects that Converse will add an additional 5,133 residents by the year 2040. This increased growth has led to a number of positive impacts such as greater economic development and infrastructure updates for the City. However, this can also lead to issues with traffic congestion and avaliability of housing.

+5,133 People by 2040

Tight Housing Market.

There is a low level of vacancy in Converse with only 1.9% of housing units being left vacant. This is much lower than the state wide average at a 10.0% vacancy rate. This low-level of vacancy is an indication of a tight housing market with fewer avaliable units to rent or buy than is being demanded. According to the Zillow Home Value Index, the median home price in converse rose from $187,870 in January 2020 to $255,685 in September 2024, representing a 36.1% price increase.

36.1% Increase in home prices since 2020

Family Friendly

Converse has seen significant growth recently, attracting both young individuals and families, with a population reaching 31,183 as of July 2024, marking a 9.4% increase since 2020. The median age in Converse is 33.8 years, reflecting a relatively young demographic. Additionally, 30.3% of residents under the age of 18, showing a strong presence of children and adolescents. The City hosts 9,653 households, averaging 2.89 people each, and 6,793 families, with an average family size of 3.43 members.

30.3% Under the age of 18

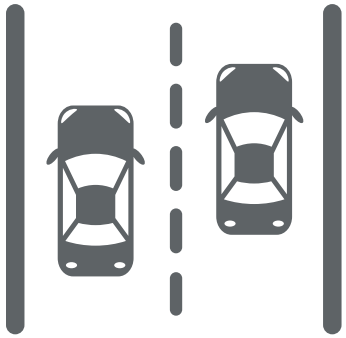
The Land Crunch.

The number of avaliable acres for development/redevelopment in Converse has been decreasing over the past twenty years, with only around 3 square miles (28%) of vacant or undeveloped land left out of the total 10.9 square miles that comprise the City Limits and ETJ. This remaining developable space must be shared among competing uses with a high demand for greater housing production, commerical spaces for retail and resturants, and industrial development.

Living Local, Working Distant

Converse has very few residents who work within the City. In 2021, only 226 workers lived and worked within the city limits of Converse. This only constitutes a little over 1% of employed workers. However, 10,610 workers, or a little under 75% of employed workers, live in Converse but work elsewhere. This can have a number of negative implications for local tax revenues, transportation infrastructure and congestion, and overall community engagement from local residents

3 sq. miles of vacant or undeveloped land in City limits and ETJ



75% of Converse workers work outside of the City

Physical and Abstract Features

Natural Features

Converse lies primarily on gentle, rolling terrain typical of the South Texas plains, which provides a relatively flat landscape across much of the area. This subtle variation in elevation plays a significant role in the city's drainage and flood risk. Lower elevations near Salitrillo Creek, a prominent watercourse running through Converse, are particularly susceptible to flood events, especially during heavy rains.

The soil profile in Converse reflects a mix of clay loams and sandy soils common in the South Texas plains. These soil types influence everything from vegetation patterns to stormwater absorption and erosion potential. Clay-rich soils in certain areas can limit water infiltration, increasing surface runoff, which, in turn, may heighten flood risks around waterways and low-lying neighborhoods. This risk is reflected in the 100 and 500 year flood hazard area shown in Map 4. Physical Constraints.

The Edwards Aquifer, located west of Converse, has a regional influence, particularly concerning water quality and availability. This proximity to a major aquifer means that groundwater regulations and protective measures, such as managing impervious surfaces and controlling chemical runoff, may play an increasingly important role in planning and development within Converse.

Constructed Features

Much of the land within the city limits of Converse consists of single-family homes stitched together by a few key corridors, primarily FM 78 (Old Seguin Rd.) and Loop 1604, which serve as the main transportation routes through the area. These corridors not only provide vital connectivity within Converse but also link it to nearby cities, including San Antonio. Residential neighborhoods, largely composed of suburban single-family homes, are interspersed with new multi-family developments to accommodate the growing population. Many of the City's key commercial areas are located along FM 78.

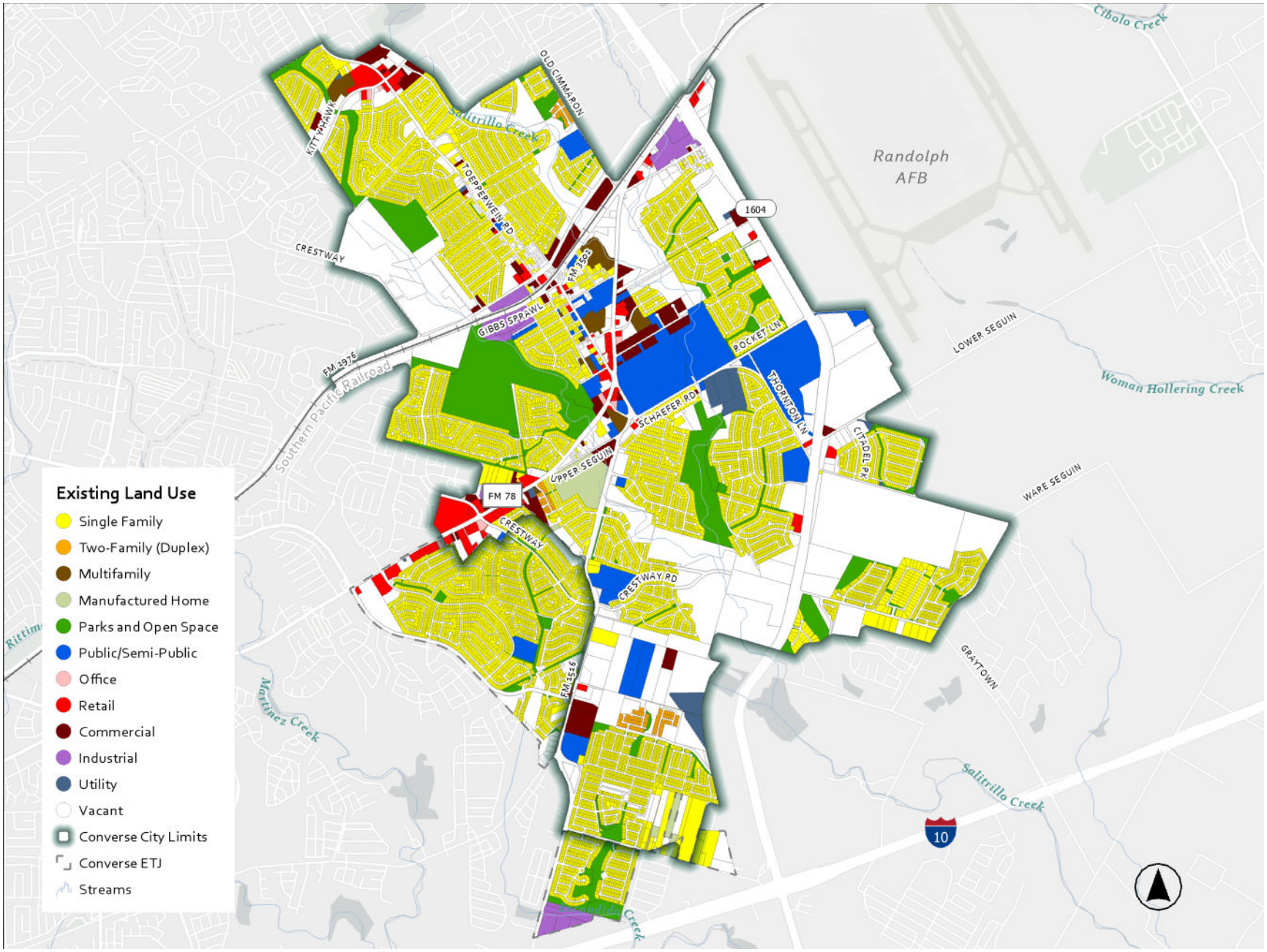
Public amenities, including Converse City Park, community centers, and the Converse library, are centrally located within Converse and are within walking distance of several legacy neighborhoods. Additionally, the San Antonio Water System (SAWS) manages the City's water and wastewater infrastructure, with recent upgrades to meet the growing demand.

Sidewalks, shared use path, bike lanes, and pedestrian crossings are gradually being added to primary streets such as Seguin Rd. and Tepperwein Rd. Large, regional projects such as the Loop 1604 Expansion and FM 78 Corridor Enhancements are also taking place at the time of this plan's writing.

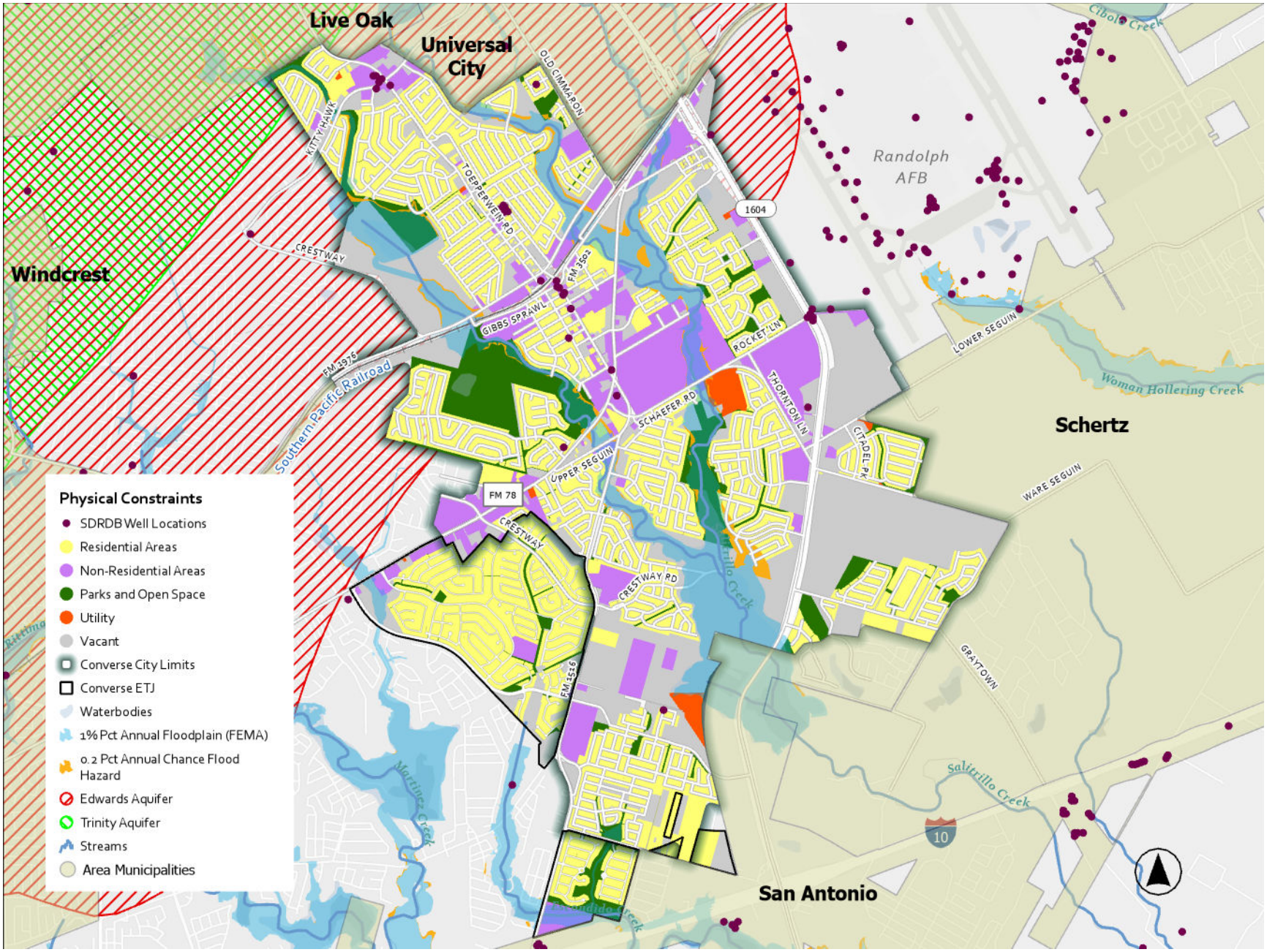
Jurisdictional Features

Converse, Texas, spans approximately 7 square miles within its city limits, and it has a relatively small, 3.9 square mile ETJ that is comprised of the Meadowbrook Neighborhood directly southwest of Converse and several smaller neighborhoods on Converse's southernmost point. Within this ETJ, Converse can set subdivision standards, such as street layouts, connectivity, and drainage to ensure that new developments align with city infrastructure and growth plans while preparing the areas for eventual annexation.

The City provides essential services, including water and wastewater systems managed in partnership with the San Antonio Water System (SAWS), public safety through local police and fire departments, and education via the Judson Independent School District. Regionally, Converse collaborates with neighboring cities, Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO), and Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to manage roadway infrastructure projects, particularly along corridors like FM 78 and Loop 1604.



Map 3. Existing Land Use



Map 4. Physical Constraints

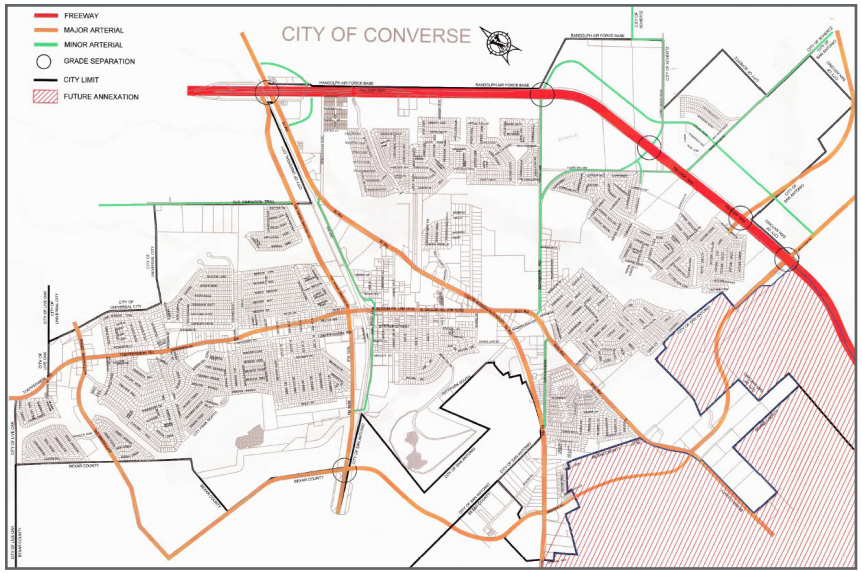
Previous Planning Efforts

Municipal Planning Efforts

Major Thoroughfare Plan (2012)

The City of Converse Major Thoroughfare Plan (MTP) was developed and approved by the Converse City Council in 2012. It is a long-range plan for identifying needed roadway connections as well as for classifying existing thoroughfares for future improvements and adequate right-of-way reservation.

The plan focuses primarily on major thoroughfares and connections throughout the City and Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), including the identification of freeways and major/minor arterial roadways.



Map 5. Converse MTP (2012)

1604 Commercial Corridor Plan (2014)

The 1604 Commercial Corridor Plan was initiated by the Converse Economic Development Corporation (EDC) in 2014. In this plan, parcels along Loop 1604 from FM-78 to IH-10 were identified for commercial, residential, multi-family, industrial, recreational and institutional development.

The primary objective of this plan was to serve as a policy document to guide design, improvements and economic strategy to revitalize the Loop 1604 corridor within the City limits and ETJ. Some of the recommendations for Converse included:

- The development of a 1604 Commercial Corridor Overlay District.
- The acquisition of proposed future ETJ from the City of San Antonio.
- The creation of development incentives for anchor tenants within the corridor.
- The implementation of a marketing strategy to lure commercial businesses to the area.

Park Vision Study (2016)

In 2016, the Center for Urban and Regional Planning Research (CURPR) at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) worked in conjunction with the City of Converse to develop a vision plan for the City's parks system. The study assessed the system's existing assets and suggested proposals in which to improve the City's park system and programming.

These included constructing a 17-mile trail network connecting the two City parks and a proposed third park along the drainage ways of Salitrillo Creek. It was also suggested that City programming and physical infrastructure be improved with a greater number of recreation fields, increased parking, an amphitheater, and the construction of a dog park.

Converse 2040 Study (2017)

In 2017, the Center for Urban and Regional Planning Research (CURPR) at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) conducted a study to develop a vision for the future, as Converse's population was anticipated to nearly triple with the 2017 ETJ annexation agreement with the City of San

Antonio. In this plan, the research team came to several recommendations, including:

- Establishing a Converse Planning Department.
- Creating a Downtown District to serve as the cultural center of Converse.
- Implementing a Unified Development Code (UDC) to tie together various City codes and regulations.
- Creating three distinct overlay districts targeting the downtown, historic preservation and commercial corridors.
- Developing a City brand using formal City gateways, signage and wayfinding.
- Upgrading existing City facilities to account for the population growth.

5-Year Strategic Plan (2019)

In 2019, the City Council, City Manager, and department heads of the City of Converse participated in a strategic planning process to develop a five-year strategic plan. This plan identified department successes and challenges and proposed initiatives to address them. Within each initiative was an associated cost and year for implementation. The central priorities for the City Council in the Strategic Plan were:

- Replace Outdated Infrastructure
- Improve Department Efficiency
- Revise Municipal Code
- Address Local Resident's Perception of Increased Crime
- Increase Resident Awareness of City Resources
- Improve City Appearance

Regional Planning Efforts

Alamo Area MPO Mobility 2050 Plan (2022)

In 2022, the Alamo Area MPO, which includes Bexar County, which Converse is a part of, released its strategic plan to account for area growth while preserving the region's quality of life and standard of living. In the Mobility 2050 Plan, current trends are identified, progress over the previous three years is outlined, future projects are explored, and project funding is addressed.

Alamo Area MPO FY 2023-2026 TIP Plan (2022)

The Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) outlines several significant projects for Converse, aimed at enhancing road capacity, safety, and accessibility. Key projects include expanding Topperwein Road from a two- to four-lane roadway, featuring a continuous center turn lane, sidewalks, and a bike lane/multi-use path. Similarly, FM 1516 will be upgraded from a two-lane to a four-lane divided highway, complete with bike lanes and sidewalks.

Rocket Lane is also set for expansion, with the addition of a center turn lane, sidewalks, and a multi-use path. In addition, the Greenway Trail Phase II project will introduce a shared-use path, while the Crestway Road reconstruction will improve operations, including new bike lanes and sidewalks, to create a more connected and accessible Converse.

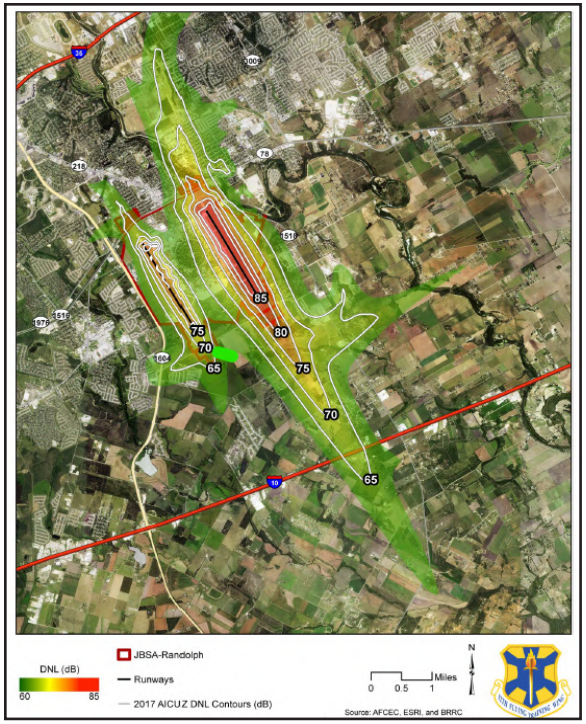
JBSA-Randolph Joint Land use Study (2015)

In 2015, Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph (JBSA-R) entered a land use study with cities and counties surrounding JBSA-R to guide planning and development to verify future land use compatibility. This resulted in strategy recommendations in legislation, policy, planning and zoning, coordination and communication, acquisition, and outreach. In the study, it was advised that the City of Converse:

- Update City code to limit height, artificial lighting, and developments that generate dust, smoke or steam within the approach or departure zone of JBSA.
- Create a Military Overlay District surrounding JBSA-R to coordinate local development outcomes.
- Involve JBSA-R in long-range utility infrastructure and capacity planning efforts to minimize military operational impacts.
- Amend local zoning to prohibit the clustering of residential land uses in APZ I and APZ II.
- Address sound attenuation surrounding JBSA-R in existing and new construction through updated building techniques, codes and the creation of a noise easement.

JBSA-Randolph AICUZ Study (2017)

The Randolph Air Force Base updated the region's 2008 Air Installations Compatible Use Zones (AICUZ) study due to anticipation of operational changes and improvements in noise modeling software.



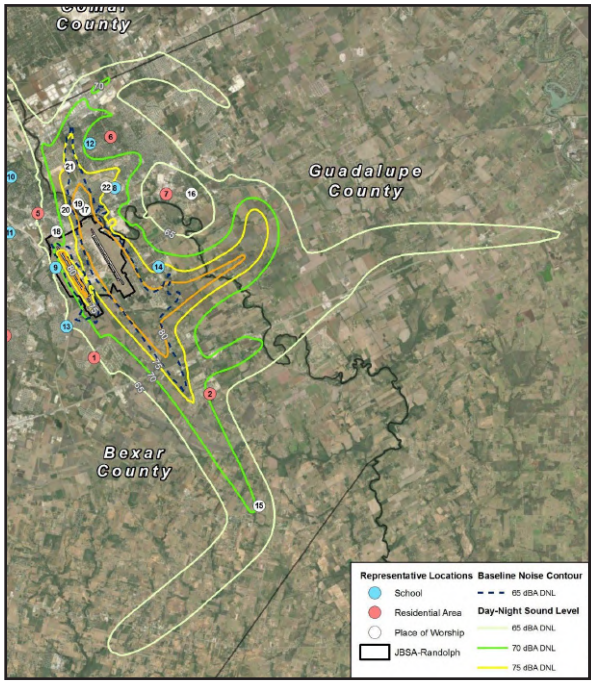
Map 6. Existing JBSA-Randolph Airfield Noise Contours

Base San Antonio (JBSA) Regional Compatible Use Plan (RCUP)

The JBSA RCUP aims to ensure that community development is compatible with the continued military mission of JBSA installations. The plan provides strategies to address issues related to land use for communities located adjacent to JBSA airfields. These issues include runway flooding along JBSA-Randolph and fragmented ability to implement land use controls surrounding JBSA installations.

Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for T-7A Recapitalization at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas

The FEIS supports the Secretary of the Air Force's plan to upgrade T-38A training sites, starting with JBSA-Randolph, and considers improvements for T-7A training at JBSA. It evaluates options, including taking no action, and uses existing data plus early T-7A test results to estimate noise and air quality impacts. Since T-7A aircraft haven't yet flown in San Antonio, the FEIS relies on T-38A parameters and initial T-7A test data, with plans to refine projections as training begins and more data is collected. Map 7 shows the noise contours for the Proposed Action from FEIS modeling.



Map 7. Proposed Action Noise Contours

Public Engagement Process

10 Stakeholder Meetings

4 CPAC Meetings

2 Council Briefings

Preliminary Survey Results

Why do people choose Converse?

The top reasons were housing affordability (58%), the low cost of living (20%), and the appeal of the local lifestyle (16%). Others noted they were born and raised in Converse or they moved to Converse due to military assignments near JBSA-Randolph.

S

Strengths

Residents feel that proximity to JBSA-Randolph, Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC), the City of San Antonio, and major highways is a great strength. Additionally, residents feel that Converse is a relatively affordable place to live and still maintains a small town feel.

O

Opportunities

Opportunities for Converse lie in addressing residents' concerns about traffic congestion, crime, infrastructure limitations, and potential overcrowding as the city grows.

Key improvements include enhancing road maintenance and expanding infrastructure to manage future demands, along with supporting city employees and first responders to strengthen community safety.

Beautifying the City through green spaces and improved aesthetics presents an opportunity to elevate Converse's identity, while residents' calls for more retail options—particularly sit-down restaurants—highlight a chance to enrich local amenities.

Supporting Resident Prosperity

Suggestions included providing more retail, entertainment, and service options locally (64%), supporting local businesses (51%), and creating higher-wage job opportunities (37%). Many respondents also felt that offering transportation alternatives to car ownership and enhancing educational resources would benefit the community.

Future Housing Priorities

Respondents indicated a preference for housing that accommodates older residents looking to downsize, service industry and blue-collar workers, and families, and generally ensuring a mix of attainable and varied housing options. Respondents preferred traditional single-family homes (61%), single-family starter homes (46%) and large-lot luxury housing (29%).

Transportation and Mobility Priorities

Many residents want to move around Converse through local streets that accommodate bikes, cars, and pedestrians and high-capacity roadways. Other popular choices included a connected sidewalk or trail network and innovative transit options like rideshares and public transportation.

Infrastructure Investment Priorities

Respondents prioritized road improvements, traffic reduction, and enhanced water and sewer system infrastructure. There was also strong support for drainage and flood prevention improvements, making infrastructure resilient to extreme weather, and providing greater access to parks and trails.

Community Values and Vision Statements

A City with Access to Vibrant Public Spaces

Residents highly value parks, open spaces, and community gatherings that create a "small-town" feel within Converse. There is strong support for enhancing these spaces with more activities and events, as well as expanding parks and recreational areas. This big idea focuses on fostering a sense of belonging through accessible, enjoyable spaces where people can connect, relax, and celebrate the unique character of Converse.

> "The variety of activities in the city parks and open spaces is a real strength."

A Community with Safe and Convenient Transportation

Residents indicate a need for improved transportation options that provide safe, accessible alternatives to driving. Residents are asking for better-lit sidewalks, bike lanes, and pedestrian-friendly streets. This big idea aims to make Converse a more walkable and bikeable city, reducing reliance on cars and enhancing safety, connectivity, and convenience for residents of all ages.

> "Provide local transportation alternatives that do not require vehicle ownership."

A Destination and a Place to Call Home

Residents expressed a strong desire for more local shopping, dining, and entertainment options to reduce the need to travel outside Converse. Expanding retail and entertainment within the City would enhance convenience, support local businesses, and create a vibrant social environment. This big idea emphasizes developing local amenities that bring more opportunities for shopping, dining, and recreation to the community.

> "We need more convenient access to retail, services, and entertainment options in the city."

A City with Growing Prosperity

Community members highlighted the need for higher-wage jobs, housing affordability, and local business support. This big idea focuses on strengthening economic opportunities by supporting small businesses, encouraging higher-wage employment, and maintaining affordable housing options, ultimately building a prosperous community for all.

> "Expanding job opportunities and attracting employers could help more residents work closer to home."

A Place with Future Ready Infrastructure

Many residents are concerned about the city's capacity to handle flooding and extreme weather. Improving drainage, updating water and sewer systems, and investing in resilient infrastructure are major priorities. This big idea focuses on building a city that is prepared for environmental challenges, ensuring that Converse can protect its neighborhoods, reduce flood risks, and provide reliable services to meet future needs.

> **Roads, flooding, and water supply are top concerns for Converse's future.**

Community Values and Vision Statements

- A City with Access to Vibrant Public Spaces
- A community with Safe and Convenient Transportation
- A place with Future-Ready Infrastructure
- A Destination and a Place to Call Home
- A City with Growing Prosperity

Big Ideas

- *Creating Vibrant Community Spaces by Enhancing Greenspace, Building Dynamic Neighborhoods, and Cultivating Community Character*

- *Supporting Mobility Choices by Improving Multi-Modal Accessibility, Improving Connectivity, and building Resience*

- *Strengthening Community Resilience by Expanding Green Infrastructure and Prioritizing Infrastructure Investments that Support Fiscal and Environmental Sustainability*

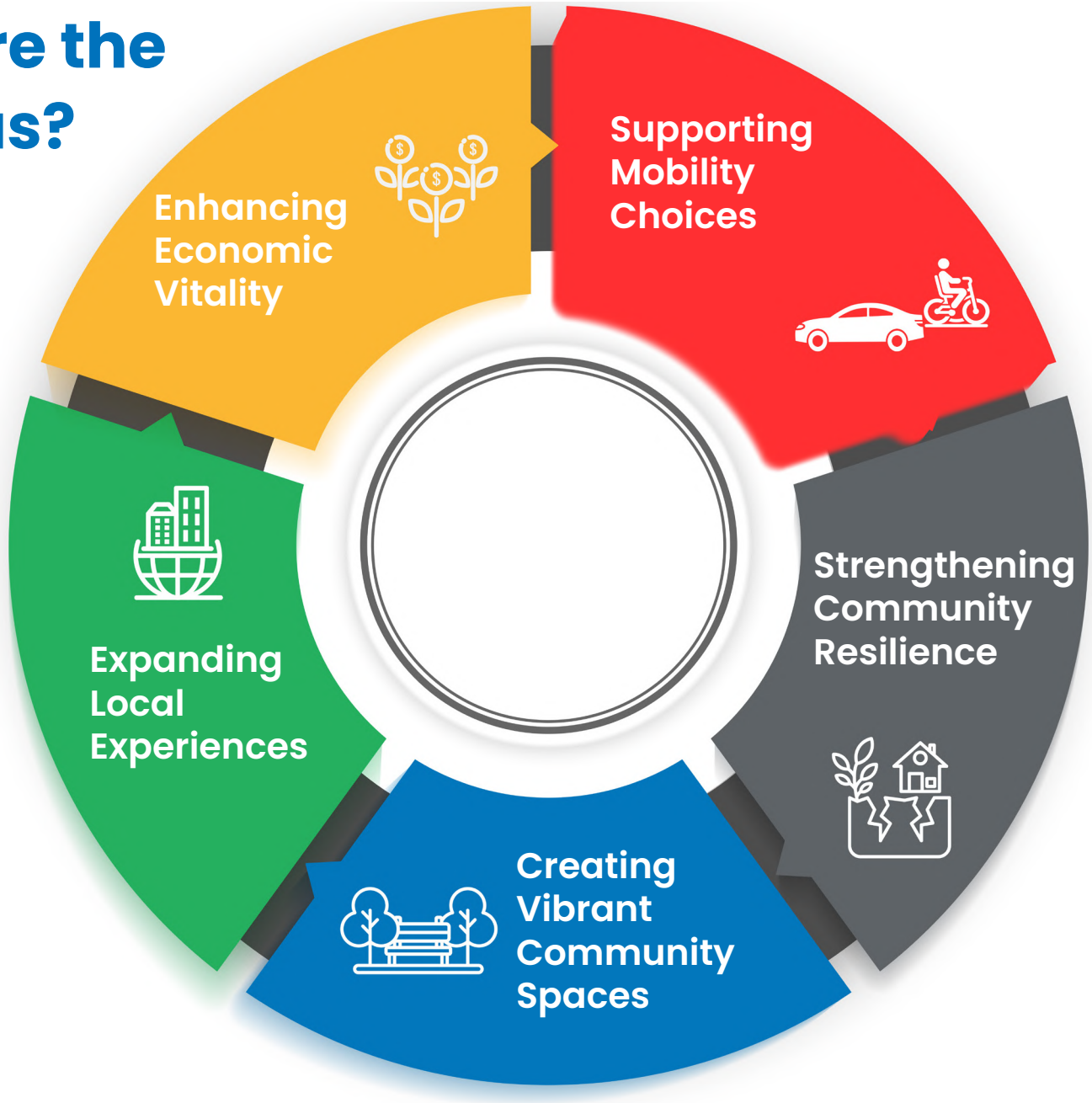
- *Expanding Local Experiences by Strengthening Commercial Districts and Cultivating Authentic Spaces*

- *Enhancing Economic Vitality by supporting attainable housing, keeping high-skilled jobs in Converse, and maintaining a stable property tax base*

Strategies

Actions

What are the Big Ideas?



Creating Vibrant Community Spaces

Description

Vibrant community spaces help foster connections, support local events, and enhance the City's unique character. These spaces include parks, gathering spots, pedestrian-friendly areas, and any other public realm areas where residents can come together. This section describes the nexus between the big idea and the way that each strategy will help to accomplish the big idea.

Strategy 1.1 Enhancing and Expanding Greenspace

With approximately 539 acres of parkland, Converse already surpasses the national average of 10 acres per 1,000 residents (NRPA). However, the quality, programming, and accessibility of these spaces are just as crucial as acreage alone. Studies from the University of Chicago further indicate that access to well-maintained green areas can reduce resident stress by up to 15%, with structured programming (e.g., community events, sports leagues, and fitness classes) fostering social connections and promoting physical health (Wolch et al., 2014).

Strategy 1.2 Build Dynamic Neighborhood Nodes

The majority of housing in Converse is currently single-family, yet there is a growing demand for diverse housing types to meet the needs of families, young professionals, and seniors. A recent study by the Joint Center for Housing Studies (2022) reports that communities with diverse housing options, such as townhomes and mixed-use developments, increase neighborhood vibrancy and walkability, reducing reliance on personal vehicles by 10-15%. [1]

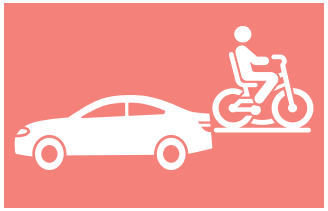
Additionally, studies by the Urban Land Institute show that neighborhoods with a variety of housing types can experience a 20% increase in local economic activity, as mixed-use developments promote foot traffic and support nearby businesses (ULI, 2021). For Converse, a crucial strategy in creating vibrant community public spaces is to update adjacent land uses to help create dynamic nodes around existing public realm investments.

1 Joint Center for Housing Studies. (2022). The state of the nation's housing 2022. Harvard University. Retrieved from https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/state-nations-housing-2022

Strategy 1.3 Build Community Spaces with Character

Community spaces that reflect a city's unique culture and identity are valuable both socially and economically. Data from the Project for Public Spaces (2021) suggests that cities with vibrant, character-rich public spaces see 20-25% higher visitor engagement and attract a diverse range of businesses, which contributes to a resilient local economy. In Converse, enhancing key corridors, nodes, and parks with distinctive designs, local art, and programming can set the City apart as a destination.

Supporting Mobility Choices



Description

Offering a range of mobility options, such as safe biking paths, and pedestrian-friendly streets, is crucial for Converse as it aims to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and create a more connected community. By supporting multiple transportation modes Converse can reduce reliance on cars, making it easier for residents to access work, school, and other daily needs. This section describes the nexus between the big idea and the way that each strategy will help to accomplish the big idea.

Strategy 2.1 Improve Multi-Modal Accessibility

Enhancing multi-modal accessibility in conjunction with land use policies is key to building a transportation network that supports diverse needs and reduces the need for cars for daily trips. Multi-modal networks incorporate various forms of transport—walking, cycling, regional transit (VIA), and micromobility options — which provide alternatives to private vehicles. Research by the American Planning Association (APA) reveals that cities designed with strong multi-modal options experience 15-20% reductions in vehicle trips and significantly lower congestion levels (APA, 2022).

Strategy 2.2 Improve Connectivity and Mitigate Congestion

Improving connectivity and mitigating congestion in suburban environments requires a strategic shift from a traditional hierarchical transportation network toward a more interconnected, non-hierarchical street grid. Hierarchical networks—those dependent on large arterials and collector roads—often lead to congestion and increased travel distances by funneling all traffic through limited routes. This structure induces demand, as limited options force residents to rely on these larger roads, creating a cycle of expanding roadways and increasing congestion. A study from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) supports that non-hierarchical networks, or fine-grained grids, help distribute traffic across many routes, reducing the burden on primary arterials and lowering congestion by up to 20% (ITE, 2020). Additional studies further indicate that enhanced connectivity through a grid structure reduces vehicle miles traveled (VMT), as it enables shorter, direct routes, thus decreasing travel time and emissions (Levine & Frank, 2021).

Strategy 2.3 Create a Resilient Transportation System

Building a resilient transportation system means integrating green infrastructure principles and sustainable design to ensure long-term adaptability and reduce overall environmental impacts. Green infrastructure—such as permeable pavements, bioswales, and roadside rain gardens—not only manages stormwater but also prevents flooding and erosion that can damage roadways and disrupt transit. The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) highlights that using permeable surfaces and vegetation in road design can reduce runoff by up to 70%, preserving infrastructure integrity and reducing maintenance costs (ASCE, 2021).

Enhancing Economic Vitality

Description

Building prosperity in Converse means developing economic opportunities that benefit residents, from high-skilled job creation to ensuring that housing is attainable. As the city grows, fostering economic resilience and inclusivity is essential to creating a stable and thriving economy that uplifts all residents. This section describes the nexus between the big idea and the way that each strategy will help to accomplish the big idea.

Strategy 3.1 Support Attainable Housing Options

Converse can expand housing accessibility by maximizing existing spaces for entry-level single-family homes and "missing middle" housing types, such as duplexes, townhomes, and small multi-family units. For young families and first-time buyers, these starter homes provide an accessible pathway to homeownership, meeting a crucial demand in the community. Research by the National Association of Home Builders suggests that these varied, smaller-scale housing options can reduce overall housing costs in areas with limited land availability. [1]

Strategy 3.2 Keep high-skilled jobs in Converse

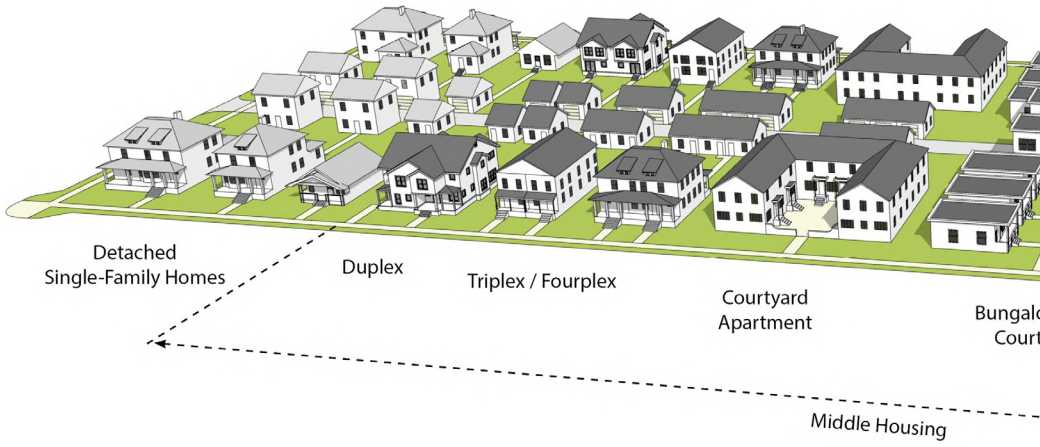
With a reasonable amount of vacant commercial land, Converse has an opportunity to develop spaces that retain or create high-skilled jobs locally, reducing the need for residents to commute outward and directly boosting the City's prosperity. By attracting industries such as technology, healthcare, and professional services to these spaces, Converse can generate meaningful employment options aligned with the skills of its residents.

According to the Brookings Institution, cities with robust local employment in professional fields see a significant increase in economic retention, as residents spend more on local services, retail, and amenities, which in turn stimulates the local economy and enhances overall prosperity.[2] Developing vacant commercial land into modern office spaces, flexible work hubs, and mixed-use developments may allow Converse to capture economic benefits that might otherwise leave the City.

Strategy 3.3 Maintain a Stable Property Tax Base

Maintaining a stable property tax base requires a focus on fiscally productive land use patterns that maximize revenue without expanding costly infrastructure obligations. Suburban expansion often creates a financial strain, as new developments require roads, water, sewer lines, and other services that increase long-term maintenance obligations. By concentrating on infill development and strategically densifying existing areas, Converse can use its current infrastructure more efficiently, allowing the City to grow without disproportionately increasing maintenance costs.

Figure 2. Missing Middle Housing Diagram

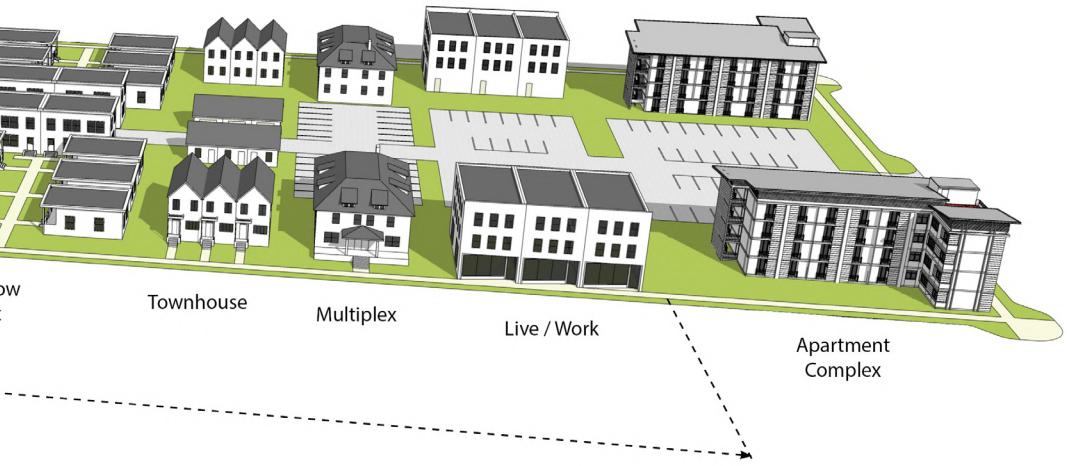


1 National Association of Home Builders. (n.d.). What is the missing middle of housing? NAHB. Retrieved from https://www.nahb.org/advocacy/industry-issues/land-use-101/tools-and-research/tools-pages/what-is-the-missing-middle-of-housing

2 Brookings Institution. (n.d.). Talent-driven economic development: A new vision and strategic agenda for regional and state economies. Brookings. Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/articles/talent-driven-economic-development-a-new-vision-and-strategic-agenda-for-regional-and-state-economies/

Topic Of Interest: Missing Middle Housing

Missing middle housing refers to a range of housing types between single-family homes and large apartment complexes, offering diverse, smaller-scale options compatible with residential neighborhoods, such as duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes. In Converse, these housing options can help meet the growing need for attainable housing while preserving neighborhood character, accommodating families, young professionals, and seniors seeking smaller, more affordable homes as the city's population grows.



1a

Duplex (7-14 units per acre). Two housing or dwelling units on a lot, usually attached via a shared wall. Similar in character and style to single-family detatched housing.

2a

Townhouse (11-16 units per acre). Usually tall narrow houses (often 2 or more stories) with one unit on a small single lot, with minimal setbacks and shared walls.

3a

Triplex/Quadplex (15-35 units per acre). Often similar in character to a large single family detatched home, but contains 3 or 4 units, often accessed from a single internal hallway.

4a

Bungalow/Cottage Court (19-35 units per acre). Multiple small houses or cottages arramged to define a shared courtyard. The Courtyard replaces each unit having a private yard..

Expanding Local Experiences

Description

Increasing local experiences—such as dining, shopping, entertainment, and community events—allows residents to engage more deeply with their city, reducing the need to travel outside Converse for recreation and amenities. This focus helps to retain local spending within the city, which supports small businesses and enhances economic stability. This section describes the nexus between the big idea and the way that each strategy will help to accomplish the big idea.

Strategy 4.1 Strengthen Commercial Districts and Neighborhood Centers

Strengthening Converse's commercial districts and neighborhood centers can expand local experiences by making more efficient use of land and encouraging development that brings residents closer to shops, restaurants, and community services. Studies by the Urban Land Institute have shown that land use policies prioritizing mixed-use, compact development in neighborhood centers can increase economic activity and reduce the need for car-based travel. Implementing policies that support diverse land uses in these areas allows residents to meet daily needs within a shorter distance, which, according to Smart Growth America, can boost local retail sales by 20-30% while reducing traffic congestion.[1]

Strategy 4.2 Cultivate Authentic Spaces that Reflect Community Identity

Creating spaces that embody Converse's community identity requires thoughtful planning across land use, economic development, and transportation domains. Policies that encourage diverse housing—such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and "missing middle" housing—support neighborhood stability by allowing residents across income levels to stay rooted, helping to prevent displacement. Enhancing accessibility through walkable streets, bike paths, and regional transit connections further enriches neighborhood life by making local areas easy to navigate and enjoy.

Zoning that prioritizes small, locally-owned businesses and culturally significant spaces can help produce a unique commercial character that resonates with residents. Supporting neighborhood markets, pop-up events, and community-centered businesses can create spaces that feel authentically "Converse," strengthening local identity without overwhelming influence from large, non-local developments.

1 Smart Growth America. (2019). Foot traffic ahead 2019: Ranking walkable urbanism in America's largest metros. Smart Growth America. Retrieved from https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/foot-traffic-ahead-2019/

Strengthening Community Resilience

Description

Strengthening resilience in Converse involves building infrastructure and services that can withstand and adapt to challenges, from natural disasters to economic shifts. In addition to infrastructure investments, it is crucial that the community is strengthened to rebound better in the wake of such events. This section describes the nexus between the big idea and the way that each strategy will help to accomplish the big idea.

Strategy 5.1 Implement Green Infrastructure Solutions

Green infrastructure solutions, such as bioswales, rain gardens, and permeable pavements, help absorb rainwater at the source, reducing strain on conventional stormwater systems. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that green infrastructure can capture up to 80% of stormwater runoff, decreasing flood risks while enhancing groundwater recharge. This has the dual effect of improving groundwater recharge rates, but also helps prevent pollutants from cars or commerical uses from infilitrating groundwater or flowing into streams, rivers and other surface water bodies

Strategy 5.2 Manage Stormwate and Reduce Flood Risks

Effective stormwater management solutions, such as upgraded culverts, detention basins, and constructed wetlands, are crucial for minimizing flood risks in Converse. By controlling stormwater flow and allowing for controlled release, these systems reduce peak runoff volumes that can overwhelm drainage systems during heavy rains. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) highlights that properly managed stormwater infrastructure can reduce flood damages by up to 80% in vulnerable areas, preserving property and public safety. Furthermore, by diverting and treating stormwater before it reaches waterways, these measures help prevent contaminants from entering streams, rivers, and reservoirs, protecting local ecosystems and water quality.

Strategy 5.3 Future Focused Water Policy

To secure a reliable water future for Converse, efficient water use must be embedded in both urban infrastructure and development standards. This strategy prioritizes upgrades to water infrastructure, such as modernizing pipes or implementing smart metering to reduce water loss and detect leaks quickly. New developments should be guided by updated code standards that promote efficient water use, including requirements for water-efficient landscaping, permeable surfaces to improve groundwater recharge, and low-impact stormwater systems to reduce runoff.

Strategy 5.4 Prioritize Infrastructure Investments that Support Fiscal and Environmental Sustainability

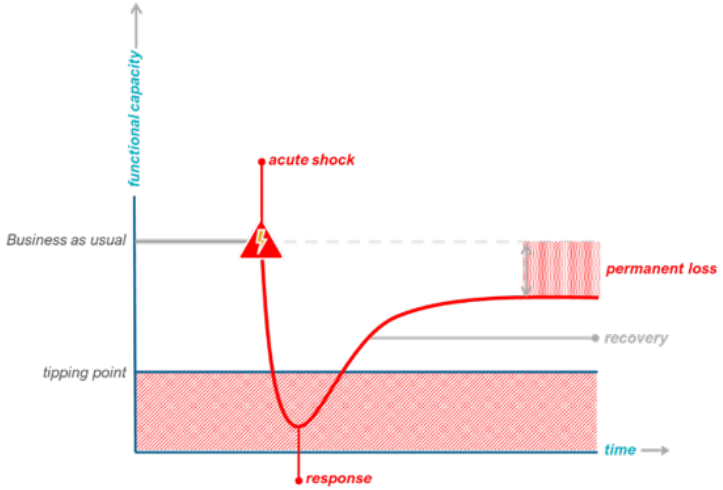
To promote fiscal and environmental sustainability, Converse should focus infrastructure investments on compact, resource-efficient projects that reduce long-term costs and environmental impact. Studies from Smart Growth America demonstrate that cities prioritizing compact infrastructure save up to 38% in costs compared to low-density expansions, which require more extensive and costly infrastructure networks (Smart Growth America, 2021). Nationally, cities are increasingly facing unsustainable maintenance obligations; the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) estimates that U.S. cities have an infrastructure funding gap of over $2.6 trillion (ASCE, 2021). This trend underscores the importance of targeted investments in areas with existing infrastructure to prevent future fiscal burdens.

Resilience Dashboard

What is Resilience?

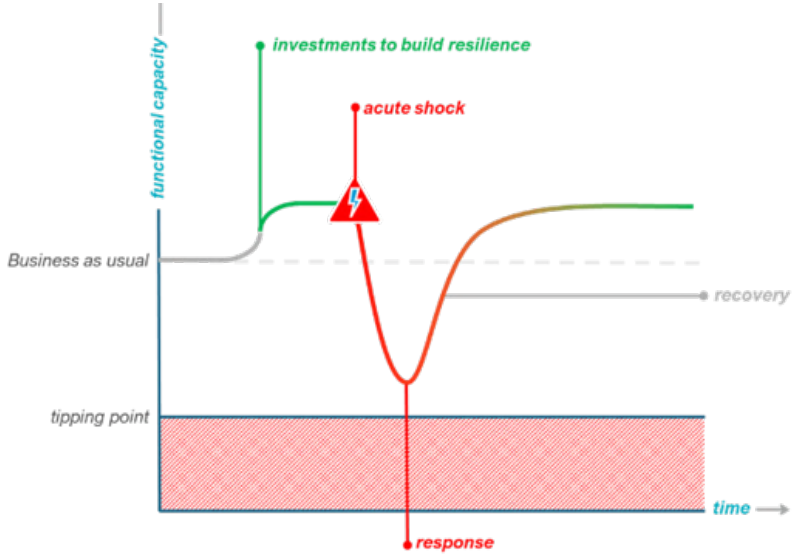
Resilience, as defined by FEMA, involves the capacity to anticipate and prepare for potential threats and hazards, adjust to evolving conditions, and withstand and quickly recover from disruptions. In the context of planning, resilience takes into account both sudden shocks, like extreme weather events, and ongoing stressors, such as prolonged water shortages, which a community faces. It involves identifying the potential social, economic, and environmental impacts of these challenges and exploring strategies for mitigation or adaptation to reduce their adverse effects.

Figure 3. Conventional Recovery Scenario



A system of community operates at a steady state (business as usual) until an impact event, such as an acute shock occurring or a long term stressor finally reaching a breaking point. If the capacity or function of that system drops below a "tipping point", the system or community attempts to recover, but experiences permanent losses.

Figure 4. Resilient Recovery Scenario



Investing in resilience projects that improve the overall conditions of systems and communities increases their baseline capacity and functional level prior to an impact event. From this higher baseline, the same event still requires a period of recovery, but irreversible damage and permanent losses are minimized.

Hazard Assessment

The Converse resilience dashboard offers an overview of the current risk landscape affecting the City of Converse. This tool, along with other risk assessment data, should be integrated into the site planning and design stages for any public facility within the City to ensure comprehensive consideration of potential risks.

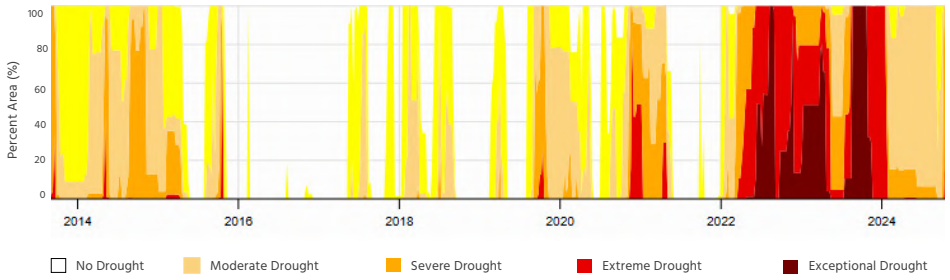
Flooding

Between 1993 and 2020, Bexar County, which includes the City of Converse, experienced over 240 flood events, leading to 25 fatalities and causing $29.8 million in property damage. In the City, high-risk areas encompass those within or adjacent to the 100-year and 500-year floodplains identified by FEMA, particularly near Salitrillo Creek. To mitigate risks, it is recommended that public facilities be situated outside both the 100-year and 500-year floodplains. Additionally, it is crucial to ensure that surrounding infrastructure is adequate to prevent potential flooding risks.

Drought

From 1996 to 2020, Converse recorded 36 drought events, averaging one drought every two to three years. Drought is a persistent hazard in the Central Texas Region, particularly in Converse. Public facilities can address drought challenges by implementing water recycling systems that repurpose water from sinks and showers for non-potable uses such as irrigation. Additionally, landscaping with drought-resistant plants and native species can help conserve water.

Figure 5. Bexar County Drought Conditions 2014-2024



Source: U.S. Drought Monitor

Extreme Heat

Between 1971 and 2000, Bexar County, which includes Converse, experienced an average of 7 hot days per year, defined as days with maximum temperatures exceeding 100 degrees. By 2040, this number is expected to rise to nearly 30 hot days per year. Additionally, by the same period, average summer temperatures are projected to increase from a daytime maximum of 94.7 to 97.3 degrees. To mitigate risks, public facilities should be equipped with adequate cooling systems to manage rising local temperatures, and facilities should be designed with enough capacity to serve as relief centers for residents facing hardships due to extreme heat events.

Winter Storm

In February 2021, the City of Converse was significantly impacted by the extreme weather brought by Winter Storm Uri. During this event, the city experienced extremely low temperatures near the single digits, along with snowfall and ice accumulation. This resulted in the closure of roads and businesses, as well as prolonged power and water outages. This storm was not an isolated incident; between 1996 and 2021, over 12 winter storm events occurred county-wide. Public facilities should be outfitted with adequate sources of backup power, insulation and weatherproofing. Facilities should also be designed with enough capacity to serve as centers of relief for residents who are facing additional hardship because of the extreme weather.