3.0   Introduction

Webster is "Linked to the Future" as the City commits to planning proactively for what lies ahead. In planning for its future, the City faces the challenge of preserving and enhancing its existing character and environment, while balancing the increasing demands of future growth and development. Prior to envisioning Webster's future, consideration must be given to its past and present.

The Community Profile is an introduction to the City documenting existing conditions and traits of the community, including data related to its regional setting, local features, population, employment, economics, and demographics. An important component of the Community Profile is the population projection for the year 2040 which will be used throughout the Comprehensive Plan to project future land use and infrastructure needs. An understanding of existing population characteristics and future population projections is essential in determining anticipated growth and resulting demands on the community and its facilities, services, and infrastructure.

3.1   History of Webster

3.1.1:   Early Development

The area known as "Webster" had its origin in a small farming settlement that was formed in the 1870s called "Gardentown." This name was originally chosen to inspire land speculators to invest and relocate to the area. James Webster, a Galveston steamboat operator, transported English settlers from the Port of Galveston to Gardentown. In 1879, Webster was honored by his passengers who renamed the village for the man who conveyed them to their new home, calling it "Websterville." A post office was established in Websterville in 1882 and ten years later, the modest town was subdivided and officially named Webster.

3.1.2:   Japanese Influence and the Rice Industry

Through an invitation from the Houston Chamber of Commerce in 1903, Sedito Saibara (1861-1939), native to Japan and former president of Doshisha University, immigrated to Webster. Saibara found the area to be ideal for growing rice, so he settled in the area and sent for his family and friends. His eldest son, Kioaki Saibara (1884-1972), brought with him the superior shrike rice from Japan, which was responsible for significantly augmenting rice production. Another Japanese immigrant, Mitsutaro Kobayashi, joined the growing Japanese community in Webster and became a successful vegetable and fruit farmer. Although traditional farming no longer occurs in Webster, Kobayashi Road is named after the early settler.

3.1.3:   NASA's Johnson Space Center

Webster remained a village until the City of Webster was incorporated in 1956. In 1960, the population was 329; however, with the arrival of NASA's Johnson Space Center in 1961, dramatic growth occurred. By 1970, the population had jumped to 2,231. Soon restaurants, hotels, shopping centers, aerospace companies, medical facilities, and the University of Houston at Clear Lake developed in the area. Johnson Space Center, with its workforce of 15,000 government employees and civilian contractors, continues to influence the region. Webster is known as the "Gateway to NASA" and is Space Center Houston's major municipal partner.

3.1.4:   Medical Center of the South

Webster's premier medical sector launched with the opening of Clear Lake Regional Medical Center in 1972 as the region's first major medical facility. Now known as HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake, the hospital features 595 beds and a workforce of 2,200. Webster's medical community totals 700 beds, a workforce of 5,300 employees, and accommodates 1.8 million patients annually.

3.1.5: Central Business District of Bay Area Houston

Located midway between downtown Houston and Galveston, Webster is recognized as the central business district of Bay Area Houston. While the City's population is over 11,000, the daytime population swells to more than 200,000 as the municipality's composition is 80% commercial. Thirty-two retail centers, more than 150 restaurants, numerous entertainment venues, and 20 hotels are located within the City. The City's primary commercial sectors are retail, dining, entertainment, medical, aerospace, technical, professional services, and hospitality.

3.2   Regional Setting

Webster is located in Harris County on the Texas Gulf Coast, southeast of Houston, and 24 miles northwest of Galveston. Located along U.S. Interstate 45, the City is bordered by Houston to the north, League City to the south, Friendswood to the west, and Nassau Bay to the east. The City serves as the "Gateway to NASA," and the entire region is known as "Bay Area Houston."

3.3   Historical and Future Population

Past and current population characteristics are import-ant in understanding a community and planning for its future. The advent of NASA's Johnson Space Center served as the catalyst for Webster's initial population growth in the 1960s. A second wave of growth occurred from 1990 to 2000 (Figure 3.1).
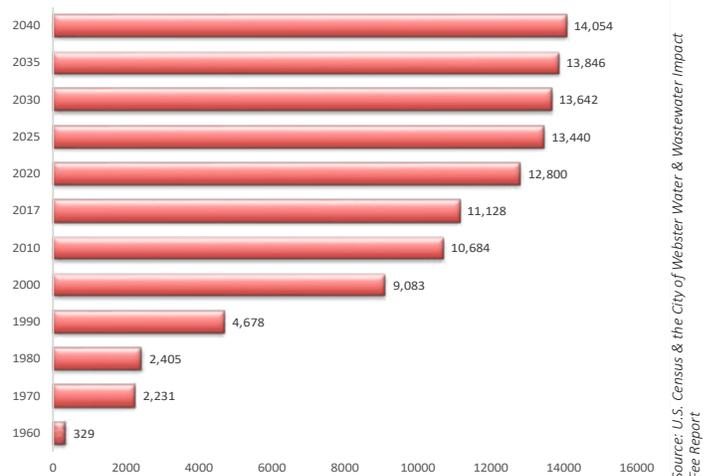
Figure 3.1 City of Webster Historic and Future Populations

3.4   Residential, Commuter, and Visitor Population

The Webster community is substantially larger than its residential population indicates due to those who work, dine, conduct business, frequent the medical center, enjoy entertainment, and visit the City. Webster is largely commercial as its market is regionally drawn from a 30-mile radius that includes more than 3.6 million people. Major corridors within Webster show substantial daily traffic counts. U.S. Interstate 45, known as the Gulf Freeway, averages 250,000 vehicles per day. Bay Area Boulevard, with its dense array of businesses, accommodates 100,000 vehicles daily.

Figure 3.2 - Major Corridors Daily Traffic Volumes

More than 75,000 vehicles use NASA Parkway daily. Average daily traffic counts on these central arterials illustrate that Webster is a super-regional city despite its relatively small residential population (Figure 3.2).
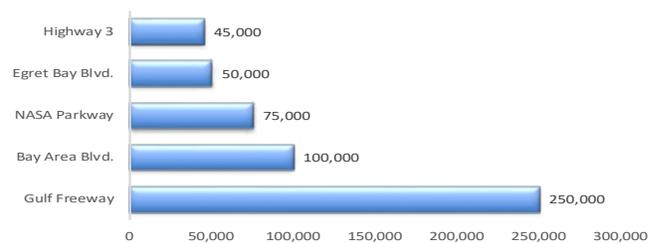
3.5   Economy

The City of Webster is the central business district of Bay Area Houston, with 80% of the land area of the City occupied by commercial uses. The predominance of commercial establishments has created a local economy that generates $3.17 billion in sales annually, with the leading sectors being healthcare, retail, and professional/technical services (Figure 3.3, p. 8). The City of Webster continues to accommodate growth in these sectors to create a healthy, yet sustainable, economy (Figures 3.4 and 3.5, p. 8).

Webster's diverse and vibrant economy provides an opportunity to attract quality jobs in multiple fields and professions. While the retail, dining, and entertainment sectors command the highest concentration of jobs, the top paying positions are found in the manufacturing, professional, scientific, technical, and wholesale trade sectors. Due to the size of its workforce and relatively well-paying salaries, the health care sector provides the largest payroll

in the City. A stable, relatively well-paid workforce plays a role in attracting a variety of complementary retail, dining, and entertainment venues to the community.

During the past decade, Webster has become prominent as the retail, dining, and entertainment capital of Bay Area Houston, the medical center of the south, and the aerospace capital of the United States. Webster's strategic location, key industry sectors, super-regional market, and business-friendly environment contribute to the City's commercial viability.

3.5.1: Retail and Entertainment

Webster's strong retail core benefits from its central location with exposure and access along key corridors. Webster's trade area is considered to be "super-regional," consisting of 3.6 million people residing within a 30-mile radius. Webster's retail strength is highlighted by some of the top-performing stores within the entire Houston Metropolitan Statistical Area. Several restaurants located in Webster are the top-performing locations nationally, while several retail stories are the top performers of their chain in Texas. Webster's desirable location and thriving retail climate continue to attract new retail, dining, and entertainment venues.

3.5.2: Medical

Webster's medical center encompasses a two-mile radius spanning NASA Parkway, Texas Avenue, Blossom, Orchard, Medical Center Boulevard, and Highway 3. The district is easily navigable with free parking and patient-friendly access. Webster's medical community employs over 5,300 people and accommodates 1.8 million patients annually. Webster's largest hospital, HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake features 595 beds and a staff of more than 2,000. The Heart and Vascular Hospital is the only hospital south of Houston's Medical Center devoted to cardiology.

3.5.3: Aerospace

Located just one mile east of Webster, NASA's Johnson Space Center is a major economic and employment multiplier in the area. Johnson Space Center employs over 15,000 federal and contract employees and generates over one billion dollars of economic activity. In addition, numerous ancillary companies are located in the area in support of NASA's mission. Leidos' 55,000 square foot facility in Webster supplies just about everything astronauts aboard the International Space Station (ISS) touch, wear, consume, and do – as this company ships more than 400,000 pounds of supplies annually to the ISS. Nanoracks, headquartered in Webster, continues to make aerospace history with its Bishop Airlock, the first commercially developed and privately owned component installed on the ISS that literally opens a bigger door for supplies, experiments,
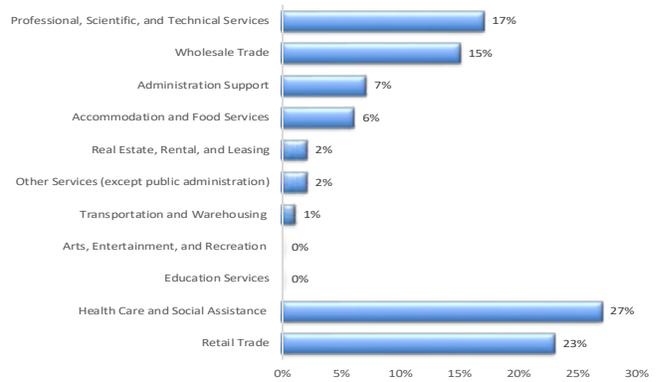
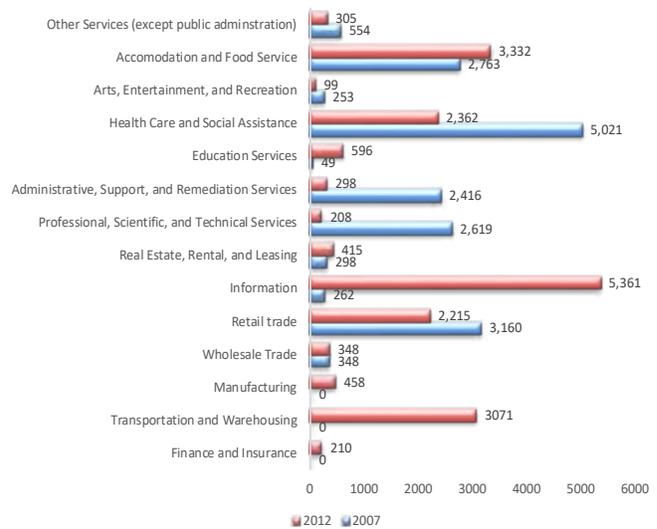*Figure 3.3 - City of Webster's Sales Economy*

Source: 2007 &2012 U.S. Economic Census

Figure 3.4 - Number of Employees by Industry
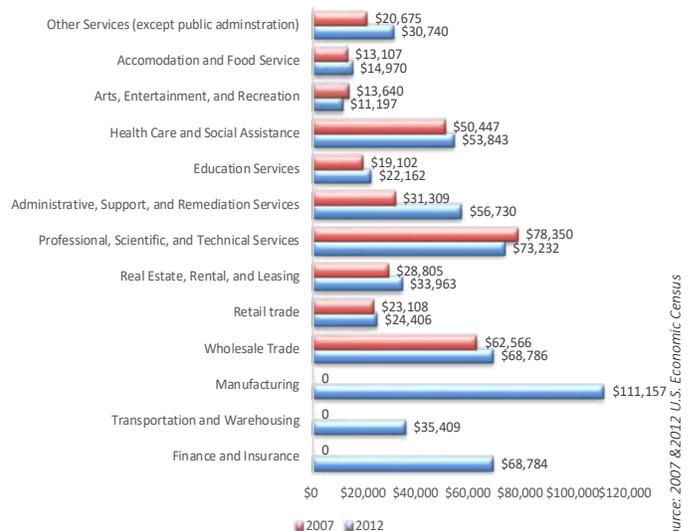
Source: 2007 &2012 U.S. Economic Census

Figure 3.5 - Average Income by Industry

and payloads. Ad Astra Rocket Company, headquartered in Webster, has been revolutionizing space exploration and transportation through its development of plasma technology and advanced electric propulsion systems. Stinger Ghaffarian Technologies (SGT), with two Webster locations, develops, tests, fits, and maintains an inventory of spacesuits. TRACLabs, headquartered in Webster, is renowned for its advanced robotics and automation research and development.

Webster benefits from its relationship and proximity to NASA's Johnson Space Center and the growing number of aerospace, engineering, and technology companies that are attracted to the region due to the work that NASA performs in space exploration, research, and science.

3.5.4: Tourism

Tourism is a top economic driver for the Webster economy, as its central location adjacent to NASA's Johnson Space Center and close proximity to both downtown Houston and Galveston Island results in a large number of visitors. The City's 20 hotels host in excess of 240,000 room nights annually, generating over $24 million in annual hotel revenue. Webster is home to numerous restaurants, name-brand retail, and entertainment venues that add to the attraction of overnight visitors.

Webster enjoys an exclusive multi-year agreement with Space Center Houston, NASA's education center and space museum. With over one million visitors in 2019, Space Center Houston continues to be a major tourism draw to the area. Webster's hotels, retail, dining, and entertainment venues are the direct beneficiaries as all marketing and website material of Space Center Houston directs visitors to Webster's venues exclusively.

Webster's unique positioning midway between downtown Houston and Galveston, with exposure and access along Interstate 45, contributes to the City's tourism vitality. The top tourism market for Webster is the Dallas-Fort Worth region and visitors drive to the Webster/Clear Lake area to visit Space Center Houston and Galveston beaches. The City capitalizes on research and data provided by the State of Texas and Space Center Houston and infuses advertising dollars to generate a significant return on the City's investment.

Webster's tourism sector benefits from its position as the medical center of the south, the aerospace capital of the United States, and the central business district of Clear Lake, as patients in the medical center stay in Webster hotels, while business travelers in the medical, aerospace, and engineering fields conduct business activities and attend conferences, training, and special events.

3.6   Demographic Information

3.6.1: Racial and position

The City of Webster is a diverse place to live and work. Webster is a majority-minority community with 41.4% of the population being Caucasian, 38.2% Hispanic or Latino, and 15.5% African American. From 2010 to 2017, the percentage of the population classified as White decreased by 4.0% while the Hispanic or Latino population increased by 4.0%, and the Black or African American population increased by 3.3% (Figure 3.6). The City of Webster, like the Houston-Galveston region, is expected to become increasingly more diverse.

3.6.2: Age and Gender Distribution

The population of the City of Webster is relatively young with more than half of the City's residents under the age
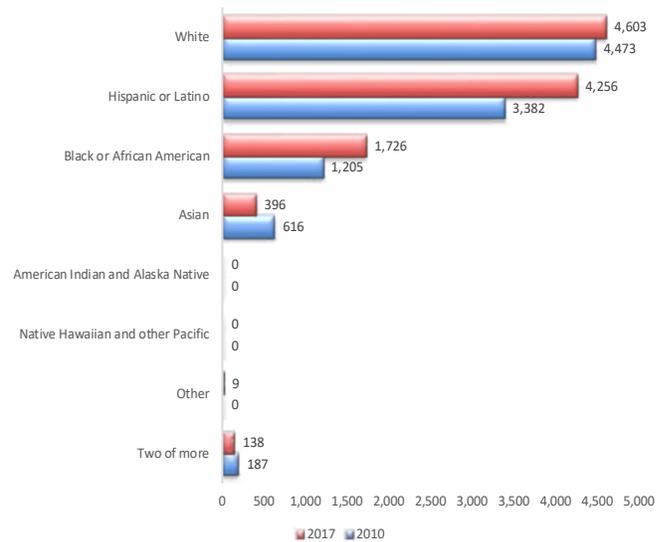

Figure 3.6 - Racial Composition

Source: 2010 &2017 American Community Survey

	2010	2017	Change
0-19 years	2,357	2,850	493
20-34 years	3,980	4,115	135
35-54 years	1,872	2,455	583
55-74 years	1,075	1,168	93
75 years and older	571	540	-31
Total Population	9,854	11,128	1,274

Table 3.1 - Age of Population

Source: 2010 U.S. Census and 2017 American Community Survey

of 35. While the male/female ratio is relatively equal, the number of residents in the different age groups varies (Table 3.1, p. 9).

3.6.3: Household Income

As the Webster economy has continued to grow and diversify, the household income has steadily increased. The median household income in Webster has increased from $49,375 in 2010 to $50,592 in 2017, an increase of 2.5%. In addition, the number of households below the federal poverty level decreased from 22.5% in 2010 to 19.7% in 2017. Those households making less than $25,000 per year decreased by 35.4% while those making more than $25,000 increased by 14.6%. Households making between $50,000 and $74,999 accounted for the largest category of household income, representing one-quarter of Webster households. (Table 3.2)

	2010	2017	Change
Less than $10,000	276	186	-90
$10,000-14,999	408	187	-221
$15,000-24,999	614	465	-149
$25,000-34,999	463	707	244
$35,000-49,999	513	688	175
$50,000-74,999	1,130	1,097	-33
$75,000-99,999	525	488	-37
$100,000-149,999	497	500	3
$150,000-199,999	81	128	47
$200,000 or more	12	73	61

Source: U.S. Census

Table 3.2 - Household Income

3.6.4: Educational Attainment

Webster's level of educational attainment, among those age 25 years and over, closely mirrors that of Harris County. In Webster, 80% of the population has a high school diploma or higher. This is statistically the same percentage as in all of Harris County. Those with Bachelor's degrees or higher are 28% of the population, which is slightly below the Harris County percentage of 31%. Those with Associate degrees or higher constitute 37% of the population, the same percentage as Harris County. However, the level of educational attainment in Webster has declined slightly since 2010, with the percentage of those with Associates degrees or higher having declined from 39% to 37% and the percentage of those with Bachelor's degrees or higher having declined from 32% to 28%. (Table 3.3)

	Webster 2010	Webster 2017	Harris County 2017
Population 25 and older	5,879	6995	2,864,864
Less than 9th grade	329	930	311,982
9th - 12th grade no diploma	400	437	245,616
High School Graduate	1,434	1,345	668,154
Some College, no degree	1,393	1,695	586,375
Associate's degree	447	635	178,496
Bacholor's degree	1,422	1,319	559,393
Graduate or Professional degree	454	634	314,848

Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Table 3.3 - Educational Attainment

3.6.5: Labor Force

Unemployment rates for the City of Webster and Harris County are displayed in Table 3.4 – Labor Force. Webster has an estimated 6,841 residents in the civilian labor force, with 71.9% employed. The City of Webster's 2017 unemployment rate of 5.4% is just over the rate of 4.3% of Harris County. According to the American Community Survey, roughly 476 residents were unemployed but still looking to join the workforce. (Table 3.4)
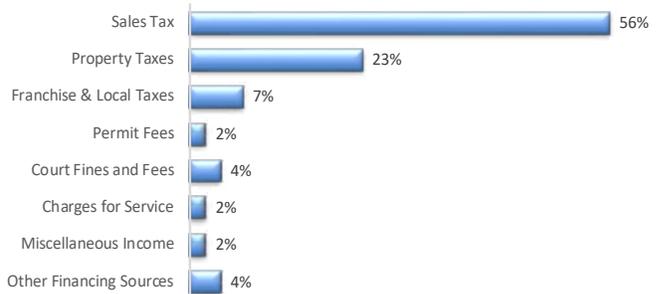
3.7 General Fund Revenue

The City of Webster is unique in that substantially more revenue is generated from sales tax than from property tax which enables the City to maintain a comparatively low property tax rate. This is a reflection of its high proportion of commercial, retail, dining,

	Webster	Harris County	Webster %	Harris County %	% Difference
Population 16 years and over	8,847	3,430,347			
In labor force	6,841	2,331,045	77.30%	68.00%	9.30%
Civilian labor force	6,833	2,329,584	77.20%	67.90%	9.30%
Employed	6,357	2,180,392	71.90%	63.60%	8.30%
Unemployed	476	149,192	5.40%	4.30%	1.10%
Armed Forces	8	1,461	0.10%	0.00%	0.10%
Not in labor force	2,006	1,099,302	22.70%	32.00%	-9.30%
Unemployment Rate			7.00%	6.40%	0.60%

Source: 2017-2018 City of Webster Adopted Budget

Table 3.4 – Labor Force

and entertainment venues. As displayed in Figure 3.8, sales taxes account for 56% of general fund revenue, followed by property tax at 23% of general fund revenue. It is important to the City to maintain a strong retail economy and commercial tax base to maintain the low property tax rate. (Figure 3.8)
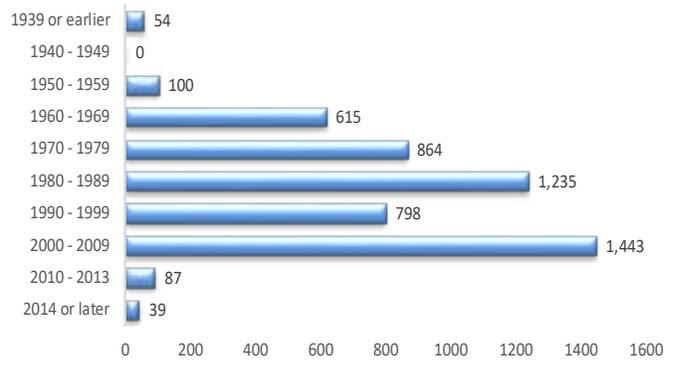
3.8 Housing

The City of Webster has had several residential building booms during its development history. Approximately 23.59% of housing was constructed from 1980 to 1989, followed by 28% during the period of 2000 to 2009 (Figure 3.9). According to 2017 U.S. Census data, 86.3% of housing within the City is occupied. The homeowner vacancy rate is 7.2% as compared to a rental vacancy rate of 7.6%. Approximately 87.1% of housing in Webster is rental, whereas 12.9% is owner-occupied. Webster features a variety of apartment complexes, town-homes condominiums, and single-family residences. The City has 22 apartment complexes (4,879 units), three assisted living complexes (279 units), seven condominium complexes (490 units), and 890 single-family homes. (Figure 3.9)

Sales Tax: 56%
Property Taxes: 23%
Franchise & Local Taxes: 7%
Permit Fees: 2%
Court Fines and Fees: 4%
Charges for Service: 2%
Miscellaneous Income: 2%
Other Financing Sources: 4%

Figure 3.8 - General Revenue Funds

1939 or earlier: 54
1940 - 1949: 0
1950 - 1959: 100
1960 - 1969: 615
1970 - 1979: 864
1980 - 1989: 1,235
1990 - 1999: 798
2000 - 2009: 1,443
2010 - 2013: 87
2014 or later: 39

Figure 3.9 - Year Homes were Constructed

Webster benefits from its relationship and proximity to NASA's Johnson Space Center and the growing number of aerospace, engineering, and technology companies that are attracted to the region due to the work that NASA performs in space exploration, research and science. Here, Dr. Franklin Chang Díaz and Mayor Donna Rogers discuss the next milestones for the famous VASIMR® rocket engine that has already set new records.