

# ***The Woodlands Governance Project Geographic Workshops Summary Report***

*December 2005*

*Prepared by:*

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*The Woodlands Governance Project  
Geographic Workshops Summary Report*

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*NOTE: Results represent a summary of individual participant opinions and do not constitute a statistically- valid sample of community attitudes or desires.*

## **A. Overview**

The Woodlands Governance Steering Committee (GSC) adopted a three-tier governance alternatives evaluation process. GSC has completed the first of three phases of the process – the Tier I Evaluation. The Tier I process included a review of ten years of community surveys, conducting seven Small Group Discussions, developing and adopting Core Governance Values, development of a Core Governance Values evaluation matrix, and a GSC exercise to determine if any Governance Alternatives should be eliminated at this phase. The result of Tier I evaluation is that all eleven Governance Alternatives, reorganized into four categories would be discussed by the public during the Tier II Evaluation. More details about these alternatives can be found in the Governance Alternatives Report.

Tier II Governance Alternatives Evaluation began with a series of four community-wide workshops. A total of 78 people attended the Geographic Workshops and 54 submitted input forms. The overall response to the presentation and subject matter was very positive. Appendix A includes the Workshop Agenda, Fact Sheet Handout, Workshop Evaluation, and Comment Form. The PowerPoint presentation is included on the website [www.thewoodlandsgovernance.com](http://www.thewoodlandsgovernance.com).

## **B. Input Form and Event Evaluation Highlights**

Fifty-four participants submitted a workshop input form. Following is a summary of all combined responses from the four sessions. Individual group results and comments can be found in each report.

### **What is your opinion of the Core Governance Values that have been developed?**

Strongly Agree	30.2%
Agree	62.3%
Not Sure	7.5%
Disagree	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0.0%

Based on what you know today, please provide us with your opinions about the four Governance Alternatives Groupings. Please check your response and provide any comments.

	Should continue to be explored	Should not continue to be explored	Not sure at this time
<b>Current Structure</b>	40.8%	44.9%	14.3%
<b>Annexation</b>	28.6%	59.2%	12.2%
<b>Incorporation</b>	96.3%	0.0%	3.7%
<b>The Woodlands Solution</b>	75.0%	8.3%	16.7%

### Geographic Workshop Event Evaluation

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Topic	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	83.3%
Packet/Handouts	0.0%	12.8%	51.1%	36.2%
Group Size	20.5%	20.5%	34.1%	25.0%
Meeting Facilities	0.0%	2.1%	51.1%	46.8%
Length of Meetings	0.0%	9.1%	59.1%	36.4%
Presenter/Facilitator	0.0%	0.0%	43.9%	56.1%

**Should the workshop process continue to be used to educate citizens and receive input from the community?**

Yes 98.1% No 1.9%

**Note:** Following is a summary of the comments received at the Geographic Workshops. The workshops were widely advertised and 78 people attended. The results should not be interpreted as a statistically-valid sampling of community-wide direction. This report is intended to be a “summary” of individual comments received. The workshops’ goal was not to develop consensus on potential governance options. As the governance process evolves, there will be more public input opportunities to prioritize and select a preferred governance option(s).

# APPENDIX A

# The Woodlands Governance Process Geographic Workshops Agenda

## LOCATIONS:

**November 8, 2005; 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.**  
Montgomery College, Room B 102  
3200 College Park Drive

**November 9, 2005; 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.**  
Grace Presbyterian Church  
8989 Woodlands Parkway

St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church  
Parish Life Building, Room #205  
7801 Bay Branch Drive

Montgomery Public Library  
South Branch  
2101 Lake Robbins Drive

## Agenda

The purpose of The Woodlands Governance Process is to utilize a public and stakeholder education and feedback process to determine the preferred, viable governance option(s) for The Woodlands and develop an action plan for implementation.

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. The Woodlands Governance Presentation
  - ✓ Overview of Governance Process
  - ✓ Governance Core Values
  - ✓ Governance Alternatives
  - ✓ Tier I Evaluation Process Results
- III. Governance Alternatives Facilitated Discussion
- IV. Review of Next Steps and Public Involvement Opportunities
- V. Completion of Brief Input Survey and Event Evaluation

ADJOURN

### ***What is the Woodlands Governance Process?***

The Woodlands Governance Process is entering its next phase as the community continues to explore future governance alternatives. The Governance Steering Committee (GSC) consisting of representatives from 11 key community stakeholders and the general public has been meeting throughout the summer to set the stage for a three-tier evaluation process to select the preferred governance alternatives. The evaluation process is scheduled for completion in July 2006.

### ***What is the mission of The Woodlands Governance Project?***

Utilizing a public and stakeholder education and feedback process, determine the community's preferred viable governance option(s) for The Woodlands and develop an action plan for implementation.

### ***Why is Governance an Important Issue Now?***

Four principal reasons have been identified:

- The centrality of The Woodlands Development Company's role will diminish as The Woodlands approaches completion.
- The existing annexation moratorium agreement with the City of Houston is set to expire in 2011.
- The Woodlands may need a more clearly defined governmental structure and presence to participate in and influence regional planning and policy.
- The size and population of The Woodlands may necessitate changes in local governmental structures.

### ***What are the Core Values related to the Governance Options?***

One of the first steps in the governance process was to review all past community surveys and conduct a series of focus group meetings to understand what is important today and in the future about The Woodlands. Based on this understanding, the community will evaluate governance options related to these core values as well as other evaluation criteria that will be developed as the process evolves.

### ***Definition of Success! (A statement describing the future of The Woodlands if we are successful)***

The Woodlands honors its original vision as one of the country's most desirable communities and serves as a model for planned development and environmental protection. Residents feel honored to live in such a special place. The community, tucked within the forest, remains a great place to raise a family and has unsurpassed recreational amenities, services, and quality educational and employment opportunities. It is a community of strong, diverse neighborhoods offering a variety of lifestyles. Neighbors look out for one another and the hometown events, festivals, and amenities are a source of pride and identity. As residents return each day or from a long trip, the reaction is always the same – a deep sigh, content smile and whisper – I am home!

### Core Governance Value

#### **A community that preserves its natural environment**

- The forests, trees and wildlife are an important component of the community's ambiance and identity.
- Preserving open space and developed pathways as well as ensuring water quality/quantity and low noise levels are desired.

### Core Governance Value

#### **A thriving community connected to a dynamic region**

- Continuing to expand services, retail, and cultural amenities within The Woodlands so people don't have to leave for any reason.
- Providing opportunities to work at quality jobs within The Woodlands reduces traffic congestion, noise, and air quality issues as residents don't have to leave daily to work.
- The Woodlands participates and influences regional planning and development to ensure minimal regional impact on the community.

### Core Governance Value

#### **A community that plans for future generations**

- The Woodlands was built upon a strong planning ethic and this visionary planning must continue to ensure that our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren can and want to live in the community.
- Development standards are created and consistently enforced maintaining quality neighborhoods and commercial areas resulting in strong property values and an attractive community.
- Efficient service delivery and infrastructure is provided to meet the current and future needs of the community.

### Core Governance Value

#### **A community that controls its destiny**

- There is a structure where local decisions are made by The Woodlands on issues that directly impact the community and to ensure that decisions can be made to meet local needs.
- The Woodlands can exercise its political influence and clout as well as externally representing the community to ensure that needs are recognized and met.
- The community has the ability to mobilize the necessary financial resources to address community needs.

### **How can I stay involved in The Woodlands Governance Process?**

Your input is very important as this process continues to evolve. There will be many public events where your ideas and thoughts about the future of The Woodlands governance will be discussed.

- Get information or register on-line at [www.thewoodlandsgovernance.com](http://www.thewoodlandsgovernance.com)
- Contact Audra Koester Thomas at 281.210.3808 or [akthomas@catw-tx.org](mailto:akthomas@catw-tx.org)
- Participate in upcoming community events

# Geographic Governance Workshops Input Form

**Please print your responses and turn in before you leave – Thank You!**

**What is your opinion of the Core Governance Values that have been developed?**

\_\_\_ Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Not Sure \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree

What would you add or change? \_\_\_\_\_

**What are the top three issues you feel future governance should address?**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

**Based on what you know today, please provide us with your opinions about the four Governance Alternatives Groupings. Please check your response and provide any comments.**

	Should continue to be explored	Should not continue to be explored	Not sure at this time
<b>Current Structure</b>			
<b>Annexation</b>			
<b>Incorporation</b>			
<b>The Woodlands Solution</b>			

Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to be in our database and be contacted about future events, please complete:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

[www.thewoodlandsgovernance.com](http://www.thewoodlandsgovernance.com)

## The Woodlands Governance Project Geographic Workshop Event Evaluation

Please take a moment to provide us with some feedback regarding your participation in The Woodlands Governance Project Geographically Based Workshop. Your input is important to fine-tune the process and improve future public events. Thank You!

- PLEASE PRINT -

**Please check the selection that applies.**

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Comments
Topic					
Packet/Handouts					
Group Size					
Meeting Facilities					
Length of Meetings					
Presenter/Facilitator					

**What did you like most about your participation in the Workshop?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What did you dislike or would change?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Should the workshop process continue to be used to educate citizens and receive input from the community?**

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

**Why?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Other Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU!**

# APPENDIX B

*NOTE: Results represent a summary of individual participant opinions and do not constitute a statistically-10 valid sample of community attitudes or desires.*

**Geographic Governance Workshop Summary Report**  
**November 8, 2005 Montgomery Community College**  
**Facilitator: Curt Dunham, PSA, Inc.**  
**Support Staff: Judy Faulkner**

The Woodlands Governance Process is entering its next phase as the community continues to explore future governance alternatives. The Governance Steering Committee (GSC) consisting of representatives from 11 key community stakeholders and the general public has been meeting throughout the summer to set the stage for a three-tier evaluation process to select the preferred governance alternatives. The evaluation process is scheduled for completion in July 2006. Public input is critical to the overall governance process. A series of four Geographically Based Governance Workshops were held on November 8 and 9, 2005. The following is a summary of comments made at this event. This information will be presented to the GSC to assist in the Tier II governance alternative evaluation process.

**Number of Participants: 20**

**What are the key issues that The Woodlands Governance needs to be able to address?**

- Tax issues and changes to costs
- Ratio of tax dollars raised here and how much leave and don't come back
- Local control of our quality of life issues
- How we would lose revenues if annexed by Houston
- Simplification of the entire governance structure and dealing with all of the multiple jurisdictions
- Ways to provide independence and autonomy
- Identify if any potential annexing city has the ability to maintain our level of service and amenities
- Include other decision-makers from the region in our planning
- Ensure there is a seamless transition to what ever form of governance is recommended so that services will not be disrupted
- Bring the preferred options to the public via referendum
- Collaborative planning needs to be done with all stakeholders

**What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Four Governance Alternative Groupings?**

**Current Structure**

- It seems to work well now but is not understood by most people
- It works now because much is run by the Operating Company. When they leave, what will happen?

- There is an imbalance between the associations, older neighborhoods and growing areas, different assessment rates
- Assessments are not tax deductible, basically raises our actual costs
- Do not have ordinance making ability (e.g., noise, nuisances, etc.)
- Some people are not represented or underrepresented
- Houston is still lurking and is always looking for more money. Bad PR to put “City of Houston” manhole covers here!
- Police protection is not as effective as it could be and there is not much we can do about it with the current structure
- Difficult to deal with transportation issues

### **Annexation**

- There are no advantages
- Depends on who would annex us
- More taxes and charges, less services, just look at Kingwood
- We could be forced to take over someone else’s debt and retirement plan obligations
- Decisions made for other parts of the annexing city might be very bad for The Woodlands
- Ordinances of annexing city could supercede our covenants that seem to work well
- We now have someone to call, we would lose that
- Lack of responsiveness of the big city

### **Incorporation**

- Would simplify the government structure but may not if not done right
- Interim steps would need to be taken in order to consolidate services
- Could replace a workable situation with a new bureaucracy
- Would give us some local control over our leadership, we can vote them out
- Could fragment the community if not done properly, if done in stages, which would be first?
- Would give us ordinance making authority and the ability to enforce the rules
- Probably cost us more and add liabilities
- Would probably cost less than being part of Houston
- Would be difficult since Houston does all of its business through the legislature
- What would happen to water costs?

### **The Woodlands Solution**

- It must be better than the other three
- The word “solution” implies that there is a problem. Maybe a different name would be more appropriate like “creation” or “plan”
- Must be innovative

*NOTE: Results represent a summary of individual participant opinions and do not constitute a statistically-12 valid sample of community attitudes or desires.*

- Low tax alternative
- Provide local control at a minimum cost
- Provide what we need while minimizing bureaucracy
- Ensure a “small and friendly” governance
- Maintain our quality of life
- The structure needs to be unifying not dividing
- Assessments should be tax deductible
- Visionary thinking and upholding the original vision
- Identify innovative financing methods to address specific needs
- Ensure a representative government (look at districts, etc.)
- Can The Woodlands become its own county and provide the services we want?

### **How should the potential governance options be evaluated?**

- Detailed cost analysis of each option
- Structure of costs, equity among taxpayers
- Determine the benefits of each option
- Determine who is in charge (e.g., ombudsman, committees, etc.)
- Determine how much the option supports the core values
- Does the option include maintaining all of the existing services
- How many other organizations will we be reliant upon for each option?
- Financial ramifications of contracting services or taking them over
- Determine how representatives will be selected/elected
- Area-wide representation, it needs to be balanced
- How well does the structure meld together the various stakeholders and economic interests? They will all need to be on board to get anything done
- What is the level of flexibility to meet community needs?
- Need to have the ability to make decisions
- How the roads will be maintained
- Preferred tax rate structure
- Outline county tax issues, what we pay in and what we get back
- Identify Operating Company issues, can they impede us?

## **Geographic Governance Workshops Input Form Summary**

*NOTE: Results represent a summary of individual participant opinions and do not constitute a statistically-13 valid sample of community attitudes or desires.*

## What is your opinion of the Core Governance Values that have been developed?

Strongly Agree	14.3%
Agree	78.6%
Not Sure	7.1%
Disagree	-0-
Strongly Disagree	-0-

## What would you add or change?

- At this time, nothing
- Too general

## What are the top three issues you feel future governance should address?

- Keeping Houston out
- Simplify the structure
- Reduce bureaucracy and cost
- Preserving natural environment
- Ensuring quality of community – recreation, environment, etc.
- Independence
- Cost
- Quality of life – trees, services, parks
- Cost/tax changes
- Local control of quality of government issues
- How final decision is arrived at
- Governmental form
- Determine intentions of annexing jurisdictions
- A conclusion
- Cost
- Quality of life
- No annexation by Houston
- Cost effectiveness of assessments/taxes
- Future plans to accommodate growth
- Quality of life
- Uniting of the total community, involve residents in decision-making
- Keep the good elements of our current system and improve them
- Create a system of including all county and other principals involved in decision-making
- Simplicity of structure
- Taxation/benefits
- Localization of control and accountability
- Tax structure and equality

- Simplification of hierarchy in government
- Opportunity for individual's concerns to be heard
- Maintain natural environment
- Maintain quality
- Costs, money
- Taxation – low cost and structure
- Independence – no to annexation
- Representation
- Cost issues of each alternative
- Quality of life

**Based on what you know today, please provide us with your opinions about the four Governance Alternatives Groupings. Please check your response and provide any comments.**

	<b>Should continue to be explored</b>	<b>Should not continue to be explored</b>	<b>Not sure at this time</b>
<b>Current Structure</b>	63.6%	18.2%	18.2%
<b>Annexation</b>	7.7%	69.2%	30.8%
<b>Incorporation</b>	100.0%	-0-	-0-
<b>The Woodlands Solution</b>	75.0%	16.7%	8.3%

**Comments:**

- Start working on legislation to allow incorporation
- Thank you for all the hard work put into the “process” so far. I recommend that a referendum be considered when a workable list of governance options is ready
- Too little currently known to make a decision
- Thoroughly enjoyed the meeting
- Creativity and innovation are key to our future!
- I would like to be invited to the January forum!

## The Woodlands Governance Project Geographic Workshop Event Evaluation

Please check the selection that applies.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Comments
Topic	-0-	-0-	23.1%	76.9%	
Packet/Handouts	-0-	7.7%	53.8%	38.5%	
Group Size	7.7%	7.7%	53.8%	30.7%	
Meeting Facilities	-0-	-0-	33.3%	66.7%	
Length of Meetings	-0-	-0-	66.7%	33.6%	
Presenter/Facilitator	-0-	-0-	30.7%	69.2%	

### Comments:

- Group too small, need more people
- Handouts need more detail
- Very responsive group

### **What did you like most about your participation in the Workshop?**

- Good review of all areas for me
- Presentation and group participation
- Input from participants
- Audience participation
- Good introduction to a complex problem
- Freedom to share
- Listed main cost problems
- Listed on paper our input in front of the group
- Education! I learned about our current governance and where we are headed in the future
- Ability to have a voice
- Explanation of possibilities
- Very informative as to what is being planned for the future of The Woodlands

### **What did you dislike or would change?**

- Need more hard data in the future
- Need to understand financial implication of TCID, RUD, lease payments from utilities, county taxes under various proposals
- Showed decisions on governance needs to be made and move on

**Should the workshop process continue to be used to educate citizens and receive input from the community?**

Yes 92.3 No 7.7%

**Why?**

- Open good discussion
- To fully inform residents
- I thought it was great but so few people showed up. Other avenues must be used, especially the newspaper
- An effective tool to gather community input
- What alternative is there?
- Our governmental organization is complicated and every effort should be made to increase understanding
- Public should have the opportunity to be informed
- Put the results out and let community know about it before you have more meetings

**Other Comments:**

- Would like to be notified to register for the January event
- Very helpful

**Geographic Governance Workshop Summary Report  
November 8, 2005; St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church  
Facilitator: Peggy Fiandaca, PSA  
Support Staff: Holly Steinke**

The Woodlands Governance Process is entering its next phase as the community continues to explore future governance alternatives. The Governance Steering Committee (GSC) consisting of representatives from 11 key community stakeholders and the general public has been meeting throughout the summer to set the stage for a three-tier evaluation process to select the preferred governance alternatives. The evaluation process is scheduled for completion in July 2006. Public input is critical to the overall governance process. A series of four Geographically Based Governance Workshops were held on November 8 and 9, 2005. The following is a summary of comments made at this session. This information will be presented to the GSC to assist in the Tier II governance alternative evaluation process.

**Number of Participants: 19**

**What are the key issues that The Woodlands Governance needs to be able to address?**

- Determine what is politically feasible
- Determine the action steps for implementation
- Local control and ordinance making ability
- True costs vs. benefits
- Case study of what really happened with the Kingwood annexation
- Regional representation and influence
- Alignment – are there other cities that may want to align with The Woodlands on incorporation if legislative action is needed
- Determine what residents are paying to the counties and for what. If we incorporate, what will we have to pay or continue to pay. Determine it within the context of the “real” situation.
- Determine what The Woodlands is worth per household to the City of Houston.
- Determine and communicate in which ways are we different than Kingwood or Clear Lake.
- Clearly define what will happen if the City of Houston would annex The Woodlands.
- This is the time to create an opportunity for governance in The Woodlands.
- Need to focus on the “end” when The Woodlands reaches 125,000 and The Woodlands Development Company is no longer operating (within the next ten years).
- We need to know what the entities’ reason for exercising their annexation rights; understand the “driver” or why Houston would want to annex The Woodlands.

## **What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Four Governance Alternative Groupings?**

### **Current Structure**

- Development Company is moving on soon and so many of the community festivals and activities conducted in The Woodlands are hosted by them. They use these activities for marketing reasons. These will go away or become another organization's responsibility. These events are important community events and an important component of what makes The Woodlands unique.
- Dependency on the Development Company is great and it will be difficult to move away from this.
- It seems this option would not provide a defense against being annexed.
- The current structure does not provide for strong legal enforcement. The area relies on the county for enforcement and that is limited. The Woodlands needs the ability to write our own ordinances and have the ability to do enforcement.
- This alternative lacks the ability of The Woodlands to do park rules enforcement or police protection.
- Current structure does not allow tax deductions for assessments and fees paid to the variety of quasi-governmental entities.
- I like the fact that the current structure has strong covenants enforcement.
- Services provided by private entities may be cheaper and more efficient.
- The current structure sets a standard that maintains quality. The Woodlands is visibly different than other areas (e.g., pathways, tree maintenance).
- I don't think we can continue to provide the quality of services when the community is at a population of 125,000 people
- Concerned about our ability to provide services when the growth within the region will continue to impact the community.

### **Annexation**

- If The Woodlands was to be annexed by Shenandoah it would be okay but only a small portion of the community is within Shenandoah's ETJ.
- There is no good reason to be annexed by the City of Houston.
- The Woodlands would lose its political voice if annexed into Houston due to the sheer size of the city.
- There is a concern that The Woodlands property values would not be maintained.
- The Woodlands would experience a loss of quality and efficient services.
- The Woodlands could bribe Houston for something if they agreed not to annex.
- If The Woodlands could ask Houston to annex and if they turn us down the community could incorporate. People expressed concern about taking that chance.
- Taxes paid would become tax deductible.
- WCA would continue to have a voice because the association owns a lot of land.

- Annexation may offer The Woodlands more influence on regional issues such as representation on the Metro Board as well as the various business development groups.
- The hurricane situation pointed out that the City of Houston does not understand or have an interest in the northern portion of the area.
- The Woodlands has grown so far beyond the original vision developed by George Mitchell that annexation should not be considered the only option.

### **Incorporation**

- Privatization of the fire and police department would be a good thing (e.g., Spring Valley).
- The ability to provide enforcement would increase.
- It may cost more. Need to determine the true costs and ability to generate revenues.
- It would provide another layer of government.
- It would provide ordinance making ability.
- I would be willing to pay more for more control.
- The alternative provides the opportunity to contract for services.
- Need to understand the various organizational structures related to incorporation (e.g., strong Mayor and Council, City Manager form, etc.).
- Incorporation would be a defensive move and provide the ability to add services to meet the community's needs.
- City of Houston may not want to annex The Woodlands any more but political machines have gotten worse and will change in the future. The desire to annex or not will change and The Woodlands has no choice without incorporation.
- Provides local control of taxation.
- There are a lot of issues that must be overcome – debt ratios and taxing ability.
- The Woodlands community values are clear and if we are to preserve them then The Woodlands must be proactive and incorporate so we have direct control over our destiny.
- Need to be able to identify the boundaries of an incorporated community. That might be challenging.
- Provide the ability to open recreational areas that are currently off limits to residents.
- Provide the ability to better coordinate with the River Authority.
- Concerned that the community would lose public transportation services.

### **The Woodlands Solution**

- May be incorporation with privatization of services.
- Enhanced enforcement must be a part of this solution.
- Ability to have direct input on new development proposals.
- Ordinance making capabilities.
- Legal ability to do enforcement.

*NOTE: Results represent a summary of individual participant opinions and do not constitute a statistically valid sample of community attitudes or desires.*

- May want to consider establishing a “Commercial-Like Entity” where the citizens are “stockholders” in the community.
- Concerned that people are so busy that they may not take ownership or actively participate in an alternative like the one mentioned previously (i.e., commercial-like entity).
- Want all the advantages of a formal governmental entity without the disadvantages of bureaucracies (waste, mismanagement, etc.).
- Ability to collaborate with other governmental entities (i.e., recognized as a legal and equal player at the table).

### **How should the potential governance options be evaluated?**

- True costs
- Maintaining the environment we live within which comes with a cost; what does it cost
- Public safety to ensure that the community is well protected
- Any alternative should allow that residents and the environment come out ahead vs. the Development Company, TCID or MUDs only.
- Local Woodlands control
- Impact on quality of life for residents and business environment

## Geographic Governance Workshops Input Form Summary

### What is your opinion of the Core Governance Values that have been developed?

Strongly Agree	38.5%
Agree	53.8%
Not Sure	7.7%
Disagree	-0-
Strongly Disagree	-0-

### What would you add or change?

None noted

### What are the top three issues you feel future governance should address?

- Quality of life
- Taxes
- Governance
- Preservation of the community
- Quality of life
- An affordable place to live
- Preservation of “The Woodlands Way”
- Preservation of the environmental and aesthetic qualities of The Woodlands
- Local control
- Clearly define level of services that are desired and achievable
- Establish long-term financial estimates
- Assess viability of the options from political and cost of implementation standpoint
- Unified governing entity
- Maintaining/enhancing quality of life and identity

**Based on what you know today, please provide us with your opinions about the four Governance Alternatives Groupings. Please check your response and provide any comments.**

	Should continue to be explored	Should not continue to be explored	Not sure at this time
<b>Current Structure</b>	27.3%	54.4%	18.2%
<b>Annexation</b>	30.0%	70.0%	-0-
<b>Incorporation</b>	100.0%	-0-	-0-
<b>The Woodlands Solution</b>	72.7%	9.1%	18.2%

*NOTE: Results represent a summary of individual participant opinions and do not constitute a statistically-valid sample of community attitudes or desires.*

**Comments:**

- Excellent presentation
- Not sure what The Woodlands Solution is, very real as an alternative
- Ability of The Woodlands to control its destiny is paramount
- I believe that all four alternatives should be considered with one overriding concern to maintain the identity and quality of life

# The Woodlands Governance Project Geographic Workshop Event Evaluation

Please check the selection that applies.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Comments
Topic	-0-	-0-	18.2%	81.8%	
Packet/Handouts	-0-	9.1%	54.4%	36.4%	
Group Size	18.2%	36.4%	18.2%	27.3%	
Meeting Facilities	-0-	-0-	54.5%	45.5%	
Length of Meetings	-0-	10.0%	50.0%	40.0%	
Presenter/Facilitator	-0-	-0-	40.0%	60.0%	

## Comments:

- Group size could have been better
- Meeting was not too long

## What did you like most about your participation in the Workshop?

- Interaction and sharing of ideas and concepts
- Informal, interactive atmosphere
- Group was small enough to have a good discussion
- A complex subject very clearly presented. Well done!
- Group participation
- Well organized, good input
- To the point
- Number of sessions attended and locations
- Interactive - hearing

## What did you dislike or would change?

None noted

## Should the workshop process continue to be used to educate citizens and receive input from the community?

Yes 100% No 0%

## Why?

- Community involvement
- Good, open democratic way to address the issues
- To get more involvement
- Because any change is going to need to be sold to the community
- Informed people make good decisions

*NOTE: Results represent a summary of individual participant opinions and do not constitute a statistically valid sample of community attitudes or desires.*

- The more people that get involved the more ideas come out and the best choices will come to the top

**Other Comments:**

None noted

**Geographic Governance Workshop Summary Report**  
**November 9, 2005 Grace Presbyterian Church**  
**Facilitator: Curt Dunham, PSA, Inc.**  
**Support Staff: Rebecca Thorpe**

The Woodlands Governance Process is entering its next phase as the community continues to explore future governance alternatives. The Governance Steering Committee (GSC) consisting of representatives from 11 key community stakeholders and the general public has been meeting throughout the summer to set the stage for a three-tier evaluation process to select the preferred governance alternatives. The evaluation process is scheduled for completion in July 2006. Public input is critical to the overall governance process. A series of four Geographically Based Governance Workshops were held on November 8 and 9, 2005. The following is a summary of comments made at this session. This information will be presented to the GSC to assist in the Tier II governance alternative evaluation process.

**Number of Participants: 13**

**What are the key issues that The Woodlands Governance needs to be able to address?**

- Water supply for the future
- Wastewater treatment and sanitation
- Maintaining services
- Security; fire and police
- Signage regulation
- Deed restriction and control
- Maintaining the environment and quality of life
- Local decision-making ability
- Unified covenants structure
- Democratic process for decision-making
- Support for the education system
- Tax and finance issues
- Communications between the public and government/government and public
- Traffic
- Hospitals and medical care
- Disaster planning and recovery
- Public transportation
- Architectural and building restrictions
- Zoning

## **What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Four Governance Alternative Groupings?**

### **Current Structure**

- Not a practical alternative since the Operating Company will be leaving and is currently the hub of the community
- Assessments are not deductible which actually raises our taxes
- 125,000 people need a government, something needs to be done
- Something needs to fill the void when the Operating Company leaves
- Could only work if the moratorium agreement was extended permanently
- Merging the associations is a possible option
- If we don't do something, we will always have the fear of the unknown (someone could annex us or worse)
- Things around us could change, those in power could change their minds
- We currently have a series of fiefdoms where there is no central point of decision-making
- Growth could make the current set-up ineffective
- A special body to take over the maintenance of the community could be created by the legislature

### **Annexation**

- Loss of local control
- Sense of community could be lost
- Degradation of services
- Delaying or putting-off decisions
- Could become fragmented
- Double taxation or worse
- Loss of The Woodlands' identity
- Possible lower taxes (I think Kingwood's went down)
- The financial implications are big

### **Incorporation**

- Provides fulfillment of The Woodlands vision as a community
- Can we afford it? What are the financial tradeoffs of maintaining our quality of life?
- There are big political hurdles to get there
- Would provide a representative government of people that live and work here
- Tax issues would need to be researched
- Taxes would be deductible

- Decisions could become more complex and there could be more layers to go through
- Going from a corporate (The Woodlands Development Company) to a public body – could open the door to more special interests
- Increase the number of elected officials
- More local control of politicians and officials (we can vote them out)

### **The Woodlands Solution**

- Must be a body that can focus on maintaining the quality of life in The Woodlands
- The Definition of Success presented earlier needs to be met by whatever this becomes
- Must have a sound financial plan and be reasonable from a tax standpoint
- Able to provide basic services at the level we expect and provide more if we choose
- Could be the current structure with something superimposed over it
- Must have the flexibility to increase level of service if the community desires
- A simple structure with lots of energy

### **How should the potential governance options be evaluated?**

- Net cost to home/property owners over the long term – a clear tax structure
- Look at the political feasibility
- Ability to meet desired service standards
- Ability to maintain our quality of life
- Illustrate the “whole” tax picture
- Is it doable?
- See what other communities have experienced in the same situation
- Will the alternative last and stand the test of time?
- Based on all of the pluses and minuses, reach a sum decision
- Using community involvement and discussions. Dialogue must be socialized and understandable

## Geographic Governance Workshops Input Form Summary

### What is your opinion of the Core Governance Values that have been developed?

Strongly Agree	38.5%
Agree	53.8%
Not Sure	7.7%
Disagree	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0.0%

### What would you add or change?

- Signage for meetings and workshops, dig into the costs of the alternatives

### What are the top three issues you feel future governance should address?

- Law enforcement
- Maintaining the overall quality of life
- Local control
- Preventing annexation by the City of Houston
- Minimize the impact on The Woodlands from the poor planning now underway in south Montgomery County (e.g., FM 1488 mess coming from FM 2978 mess)
- Maintaining/improving current quality of life – trees, low noise, parks, shopping, jobs
- Maintaining quality services
- Enforcement of ordinances and covenants
- Maintaining environment
- Annexation – how to stop it
- Privatization of services – police, fire, etc.
- Control costs – possibly reduce some services
- No costs of options and methods
- How to not become part of Houston
- How to include the mall and commercial buildings
- Maintaining current standards
- Formal/legal structure of governance
- Longevity of governance option
- Privatization of police and fire services
- Zoning committees
- Architectural review committees
- Taxes
- Public safety

- Representation
- Maintain quality of life here
- How to avoid annexation by Houston
- Cost versus benefits
- I strongly recommend incorporation – we need control
- Ordinance making ability
- Taxing authority, real estate and retail sales
- Control of public safety
- Quality of life
- Cost of new government
- Possible options

**Based on what you know today, please provide us with your opinions about the four Governance Alternatives Groupings. Please check your response and provide any comments.**

	<b>Should continue to be explored</b>	<b>Should not continue to be explored</b>	<b>Not sure at this time</b>
<b>Current Structure</b>	23.1%	61.5%	15.4%
<b>Annexation</b>	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%
<b>Incorporation</b>	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>The Woodlands Solution</b>	72.7%	9.1%	18.2%

**Comments:**

- Go forward with incorporation
- Is there any way to “buy out” the City of Houston’s ETJ? I’d be willing to pay them a one-time “tax” to get them to give up their annexation option
- As part of The Woodlands Solution consider the “neighborhood council” program practiced by the City of Simi Valley, CA. Their mayor and city council are part-time executives. These councils review all new developments before they go to the local planning commission.
- Annexation is not an option – I’m sure!
- We need to use our collective brain power to prevent Houston from annexing our community!
- Would like to help research different forms of governance, and to survey residents for preferences
- Need to consider Harris County and their school system (versus CISD)

*NOTE: Results represent a summary of individual participant opinions and do not constitute a statistically-valid sample of community attitudes or desires.*

## The Woodlands Governance Project Geographic Workshop Event Evaluation

Please check the selection that applies.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Comments
Topic	0.0%	0.0%	18.2%	81.8%	
Packet/Handouts	0.0%	9.1%	54.4%	36.4%	
Group Size	18.2%	36.4%	18.2%	27.3%	
Meeting Facilities	0.0%	0.0%	54.5%	45.5%	
Length of Meetings	0.0%	10.0%	50.0%	40.0%	
Presenter/Facilitator	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%	

### Comments:

- Need more people

### What did you like most about your participation in the Workshop?

- Good background for ease of presentation
- Good facilitator
- Knowledgeable facilitator, well informed participants
- Everyone had a chance to participate
- Open discussion, different views and experiences. Former WCA officers were here for us
- The ability to express my views, consider others' views, etc.
- Informative, very new to The Woodlands
- Excellent presentation and participation

### What did you dislike or would change?

- Need more data and information about core services
- Some (a few) dominated (but hard to control)
- Schedule follow up meeting
- Need more data. Would like to see Tommy Williams and Rob Eisler at the meetings – teleconference or in person – we need to hear from them and applaud efforts!
- Need more folks to participate

**Should the workshop process continue to be used to educate citizens and receive input from the community?**

Yes 100.0% No 0.0%

**Why?**

- It works and citizens/taxpayers/assessment payers should have voice
- In addition, there need to be informational forums
- Informative
- Consensus building will drive successful transitions. We need a large 50,000 plus consensus!
- We need to get as many people involved and energized as possible
- To keep The Woodlands from being annexed by Houston

**Other Comments:**

- Would like more informed explanations of what is required for incorporation to be approved. It is the best option and should be investigated in depth ASAP – Thank you!
- Thanks for allowing me to participate
- Great workshop

**Geographic Governance Workshop Summary Report  
November 9, 2005; Montgomery County Public Library  
Facilitator: Peggy Fiandaca, PSA, Inc.  
Support Staff: Kellie Hall**

The Woodlands Governance Process is entering its next phase as the community continues to explore future governance alternatives. The Governance Steering Committee (GSC) consisting of representatives from 11 key community stakeholders and the general public has been meeting throughout the summer to set the stage for a three-tier evaluation process to select the preferred governance alternatives. The evaluation process is scheduled for completion in July 2006. Public input is critical to the overall governance process. A series of four Geographically Based Governance Workshops were held on November 8 and 9, 2005. The following is a summary of comments made at this session. This information will be presented to the GSC to assist in the Tier II governance alternative evaluation process.

**Number of Participants: 26**

**What are the key issues that The Woodlands Governance needs to be able to address?**

- Ensure cost efficient services being provided to residents
- Policing – as the community grows, providing adequate public policing will become a greater issue because with more population comes crime and speeding. There needs to be a bigger police presence in The Woodlands.
- Consider as a governance option – Township form of government
- Need to spell out very specifically the public services that should be provided; there will be needs for improved gas, electricity, etc.
- The lack of the ability to make our own laws for such things as fireworks

**What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Four Governance Alternative Groupings?**

**Current Structure**

- Does not allow for a taxing structure to ensure adequate revenues
- Does not allow for the community being “proactive” in governing
- The current structure is heavily dependent upon volunteers
- Inability to provide adequate law enforcement
- The current structure allows the community to purchase additional law enforcement
- Policing is a concern regarding the current structure because there are very few officers in the area for the population
- The current structure is getting “messy” because the community is getting larger in population making it difficult to manage and meet the community’s needs

*NOTE: Results represent a summary of individual participant opinions and do not constitute a statistically-valid sample of community attitudes or desires.*

- Inability to put the needed “teeth” into The Woodlands covenants
- Lack of enforcement capabilities of the covenants; do not have the legal ability to enforce to the level the community desires
- There is a lack of a “unified umbrella” or elected council of individuals governing the community; lack of an office where “the buck stops here”
- The Woodlands organizational chart (if you can find one) is very confusing; lack of understanding of who does what and that there are too many organizations responsible for the many different governing responsibilities
- Open meetings act and rules should be followed for community business
- Need to consolidate services; there would be a cost/benefit to consolidation; would need to understand the implications of consolidation
- There might be a reduced role of the Village Associations if the structure changed; would like to see a role for them as the governance changed
- TWA is not answerable to the residents because it is still controlled by the developer
- Developer has too much control over infrastructure, pathways, etc.
- Developer has done a good job to date but concerned about when they leave
- There needs to be a governing entity that is answerable to the “people”
- The current structure does not adequately plan for the time when the developer walks away from the community

### **Annexation**

- Not interested in being annexed into the City of Houston
- Houston is too big and The Woodlands would lose their identity and uniqueness
- Houston is too far removed from The Woodlands; there is a lack of understanding of the community
- There would be a decrease in effectiveness of services being provided (i.e., police, fire, etc.)
- Many people chose to locate in The Woodlands to get out of the City of Houston
- I resent that everything (e.g., federal funding) is going to the inner city poor – this impacts our taxes
- It may cost The Woodlands money to “buy off” Houston not to annex the area on a permanent basis and it would be worth it
- Partial annexations would be a problem and leave a very disjointed service delivery and governing system

### **Incorporation**

- Would allow The Woodlands to proactively plan for its future
- We are a master planned community and we should be proactive in planning for our future
- It would allow us to control our own destiny
- It may be more expensive; I would like to understand the true cost implications

- It would be challenging to implement; I would like to understand the legislative challenges to incorporating
- I would be concerned that “too small a group of people would be governing” if we incorporated; today a large number of volunteers are involved in various aspects of governing and making decisions and I like that
- Staged incorporation might need to be examined
- Determine if it is possible to incorporate without increasing fees/taxes

### **The Woodlands Solution**

- May want to utilize districts to meet the community’s needs (e.g., police force, fire, etc.); it would be a less centralized form but would provide the needed services; cooperation and coordination issues would have to be addressed
- Whatever solution would need to provide us “local control”
- All stakeholders would need to buy into the solution because they have a direct financial impact of any solution selected
- Provide the community as much information as possible
- Consider a “township” form of government and determine if it would work for The Woodlands
- Consider a regional form of government other than what we have today

### **How should the potential governance options be evaluated?**

- Cost implications; cost/benefit analysis; people may be willing to pay more if the benefits of incorporating are important to the community
- Ability to have local control
- Identify if and what it would cost to pay off the City of Houston not to annex us
- Determine and present the specific costs and benefits that come with annexation
- Need to see governance models from around the country; compare and contrast these models with The Woodlands; examine the range of governance structures; use indicators of success (e.g., financial, size, etc.)
- Examine what happened in the Kingwood annexation by Houston; are there some lessons to learn

### **Other comments/questions**

- Where and how does the community vote on the preferred governance option?
- Need to include a map on the website where the ETJ boundaries are located
- Include Dr. Gaines credentials on the website
- Communicate with the public about the governance model that Dr. Gaines has produced
- Is there the capacity on the website to hold an interactive community forum on the governance topic?

### **Geographic Governance Workshops Input Form Summary**

## What is your opinion of the Core Governance Values that have been developed?

Strongly Agree	35.7%
Agree	57.1%
Not Sure	7.1%
Disagree	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0.0%

## What would you add or change?

- Under controlling our own destiny, emphasize value of larger numbers of active residents. It's a unique environment to develop citizenship skills
- You're on the right track

## What are the top three issues you feel future governance should address?

- Public safety
- Maintain property values
- Mobility
- Services
- Costs
- Involvement by citizens
- Covenants are not enforced, we need law making ability
- All "governance body" meetings should be open to public. No more secret groups like WCSC and TWC
- What do the residents want?
- Where are these options working well?
- When can a change be implemented?
- How the final decision will be made out of options left? (vote? By GSC?)
- Cost
- Control of local issues/services
- Values of community (enforcement/implementation)
- Policing/security
- Financing/tax issues
- Local governance structure
- Security for the residents
- Funding
- Incorporation
- Regional form of government
- Cost of services
- Quality and quantity of amenities provided (fire, police)
- Politics
- Cost of services
- Quality and quantity of services
- Politics/type of government

- Form of government
- Services to be provided

**Based on what you know today, please provide us with your opinions about the four Governance Alternatives Groupings. Please check your response and provide any comments.**

	<b>Should continue to be explored</b>	<b>Should not continue to be explored</b>	<b>Not sure at this time</b>
<b>Current Structure</b>	50.0%	42.9%	7.1%
<b>Annexation</b>	50.0%	35.7%	14.3%
<b>Incorporation</b>	85.7%	0.0%	14.3%
<b>The Woodlands Solution</b>	78.6%	0.0%	21.4%

**Comments:**

- Excellent presentation
- A modified form of incorporation with a super-council overall. Perhaps with private contracts for various services
- Final option should be subject to vote by population of The Woodlands
- Very interested in hearing more about The Woodlands Solution. I am from/live in College Park/Harper’s Landing and there is much concern about annexation and incorporation and where we fall into these options. We’ve been told by some that we’ll be included and not “left behind” but I don’t see how that would be possible with ETJs related to Conroe
- I would like more information on creation of additional districts to prevent incorporation
- The GSC has done a great job in this study. I am impressed and wish to thank each one of them for their time and dedication
- Group leader was good
- Need costs and details for above

# The Woodlands Governance Project Geographic Workshop Event Evaluation

Please check the selection that applies.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Comments
Topic	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	92.3%	
Packet/Handouts	0.0%	25.0%	41.7%	33.3%	
Group Size	30.8%	30.8%	30.8%	7.6%	
Meeting Facilities	0.0%	7.7%	61.5%	30.8%	
Length of Meetings	0.0%	0.0%	61.5%	38.5%	
Presenter/Facilitator	0.0%	0.0%	46.2%	53.8%	

## Comments:

- Group size should have been more

## What did you like most about your participation in the Workshop?

- Gained a lot of useful and valuable information concerning the decisions to be made for the future of The Woodlands
- Hearing different perspectives, facilitator did a good job of listening
- Ability to express opinion and hear others' opinions
- Good input from attendees
- The open format, with strong direction from presenter
- Nearly everyone participated
- The interchange of ideas among the attendees
- Good group presentation and discussions
- Openness

## What did you dislike or would change?

- More people attending
- Meeting times
- The meeting seemed close to being out of control at times. This may be more of a problem with larger group
- Need hard facts in order to come to conclusions and make judgments
- Narrow the topic
- A bit more specifics on cost of various governance options

## Should the workshop process continue to be used to educate citizens and receive input from the community?

Yes 100.0% No 0.0%

*NOTE: Results represent a summary of individual participant opinions and do not constitute a statistically valid sample of community attitudes or desires.*

## **Why?**

- Very important to spread the word to get people involved
- It's the only way to receive community wide feedback
- Also include polling of the community
- We need to feel we have a place to go to voice opinions and explore options
- Citizens should be part of our future
- The future of The Woodlands should be controlled by the entire community
- Participatory/town hall form of government is good citizenship and good for the community
- Too many people are clueless
- Need more residents to participate
- Encourage better/larger participation
- Local smaller groups – better interaction, local meeting places

## **Other Comments:**

- Good workshop