

# Workshop in Justin Examines Dallas-Fort Worth Growth and its Effects

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JUSTIN – Adults were able to dream about the future and play with Legos at a weekend workshop at Northwest High School.

At the Vision North Texas workshop in Justin, (from left) Ron Furtick, Lorenzo Littles, Nathan Reddin and Michael Graves use Legos to represent houses and jobs. Population growth in four counties was examined this weekend.



GARY PAYNE/DMN

Participating in a Vision North Texas workshop, city and business officials and community members examined population growth in Denton, northern Tarrant, Parker and Wise counties, and how it affects the environment and the quality of life in those areas.

Mark Cunningham, planning director for the city of Denton, was among those who attended the Saturday workshop.

Mr. Cunningham said what participants were trying to create with their plans were dream scenarios. He was part of a group that wanted to preserve open space and develop a "live and work" atmosphere, as opposed to one in which residents work and commute. For those who must commute, his group envisioned a commuter rail line to alleviate traffic.

The workshop was the fourth and final in a series sponsored by Vision North Texas, a private-public partnership headed by the Urban Land Institute's North Texas District Council, the North Central Texas Council of Governments and the University of Texas at Arlington.

According to Council of Governments estimates, the population in the region's central 10 counties will grow to 9.1 million by 2030.

How land is developed and where people choose to live will have significant effect on the area's quality of life, from environmental impact to traffic congestion, Vision North Texas officials say.

There's so much growth and potential, particularly in this area, that "we want to get it right," said Karen Walz, the partnership's project manager.

The results of the workshops will be evaluated and compiled into a report, Ms. Walz said.

Ellen Yost of Vision North Texas estimated that 85 people from the partnership's northeastern subregion participated in Saturday's workshop.

The workshops were designed to get ideas from people and develop priorities that area cities may consider in planning for future growth.

Eight teams were each handed a large map of the northeastern region and a different number of Lego building blocks to create a scenario for the future. The blocks were color-coded, with one orange block representing 625 houses and a blue block representing 1,000 jobs. Teams stacked the blocks like skyscrapers to signify growth-intensive areas.

"Live Life Linked" was the theme of Mr. Cunningham's group. His group's top priorities included improving mobility and alleviating traffic, keeping the air quality healthy and maintaining natural resources, like the Greenbelt Trail, he said.

Participants also focused on outlining area needs to accommodate growth. Under the scenarios developed, about 88 percent thought the most important issue was conserving the region's water supply, followed by minimizing road congestion, protecting water quality, improving air quality and conserving energy.

*Editors Note: Steve Houser, Chair Dallas Urban Forestry Advisory Committee is an advisor to Vision North Texas.*