



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **City of Melissa Holds Strategic Planning Retreat**

Melissa, TX – The Mayor, City Council, City Staff and representatives of the Melissa Independent School District, Melissa Industrial and Economic Development Board, Melissa Community and Economic Development Board, as well as other community leaders all gathered at the Melissa Ridge Intermediate School Band Hall on Thursday, November 12, 2009 for a strategic planning retreat to discuss the vision and strategies for taking Melissa forward.

The retreat was in follow up to efforts that began in September when City Administrator Jason Little approached Dr. Sherman Wyman's *Managing Economic Development* class soliciting assistance for the City of Melissa in developing a strategic plan to assist the City in its Economic Development efforts. The Masters students of the University of Texas at Arlington School of Urban and Public Affairs have been given the semester to conduct the visioning process and deliver a strategic plan that includes a clear vision for the City of Melissa's economic development focus, as well as strategies and action steps the City should take to accomplish the vision for Melissa.

The first step in the process was to setup a strategic planning "committee" made up of community leaders who would be a part of a SWOT analysis by students. The leaders were all asked questions about the City of Melissa and its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Once all the interviews had been conducted, the students came together and consolidated all the answers to come up with a list of answers for each question.

The retreat began with a reading of all the results of the interviews to the committee, plastered around the room, allowing the participants to see how other people answered the questions and served as a base for the rest of the retreat. Facilitator David Tees began the visioning process by asking each attendee for the one thing that he or she were most proud of about Melissa. City of Melissa Mayor Reed Greer said he was "most proud of the fact that there is an overall sense of wanting to be involved and the Melissa offers something for everyone to participate in."

The students then led the participants through exercises in visioning where each participant painted their own vision for Melissa in 2015. These visions are what the students will take back to their class in order to arrive at a good, working vision statement for Melissa. After the visioning exercise, the group broke off into two groups to develop strategies to accomplish a common vision. Each participant submitted approximately two strategies that were then voted on to come up with the top six from

each group. Afterwards the group came back together and joined their top strategies together. For each strategy the group came up with action steps with a timetable for completion and assigned responsible parties. These action steps will be the needed steps to complete the strategies to reach the ultimate vision of the City of Melissa.

Some of the most common themes of the night were connectivity and communication. Mayor Pro-tem Dan Trott stressed the importance of making sure the residents of Melissa feel a part of a larger community and not just their individual neighborhoods and subdivisions and voiced the importance of physical connectivity with hike and bike trails linking the neighborhoods to the Town Center.

The evening was assessed by City Administrator Jason Little as an opportunity to set a course to generate momentum as the City enters the New Year. In early 2010, the City plans to unveil its new updated website as well as a new avenue of communication that will allow citizens to stay connected to what is happening at City Hall and in the City of Melissa. Additionally the City will be preparing for a move to the New City Hall facility in the summer of 2010.

The students will take all the information gathered at the retreat and write a final report that states a clear vision, strategies to attain the vision, and the actions to complete the strategies. The final report and vision from the students is due back to the City Council in mid December.

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