

Our Hometown | Our Future



City of Oak Ridge North



Comprehensive Plan

June 2013



Our Hometown | Our Future

City of Oak Ridge North Comprehensive Plan



FINAL DRAFT JUNE 2013

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FOREWORD





Placeholder page for a copy of the adopted resolution

FOREWORD





June 19, 2013

Vicky Rudy
City Manager
City of Oak Ridge North
27424 Robinson Road
Oak Ridge North, Texas 77385

Re: City of Oak Ridge North Comprehensive Plan

Dear Ms. Rudy:

Halff Associates, Inc. is pleased to submit the comprehensive plan report for the City of Oak Ridge North. This document is the culmination of an extensive planning process over the past year involving key stakeholders, members of the advisory committee, City staff, City council officials, and most importantly, the citizens of Oak Ridge North. The plan's recommendations seek to achieve a sustainable future for Oak Ridge North while preserving the heritage and character of the community.

The citizens of Oak Ridge North envision a community that reflects its small-town feel, has a unique identity that everyone can relate to, and makes smart decisions about neighborhoods, transportation, recreation, and the economy in order to meet the needs of current and future generations. These are the building blocks of a city, and they are all related.

This document identifies opportunities and actions to fulfill the vision for Oak Ridge North, and make it a truly livable and unique community in Texas. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to have worked with you, your staff, and the citizens of Oak Ridge North.

Sincerely,

Halff Associates, Inc.

Jim Carrillo, FAICP, ASLA
Vice President, Director of Planning

FOREWORD





Acknowledgements

We would like to recognize the many individuals who put in a significant amount of their time to make Oak Ridge North's comprehensive plan a unique document that reflects the values of the residents of the City. This plan would not have been possible without the input, feedback, and support provided by Oak Ridge North's citizens and members of City staff who provided information and technical answers related to this comprehensive plan.

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FOREWORD





Chapter I

Introduction



The Importance of Planning

Oak Ridge North is our hometown.

It is the place where we value the friendliness of our neighbors and the feeling that each of us is important and counts for something. It is where we enjoy quiet streets, beautiful homes and wonderful parks. It is where we govern ourselves. We appreciate the fact that we have an extraordinarily approachable government, and that every resident of the City can make a difference and can be heard. Our smaller size is in fact our strength – every resident can and does make a difference.



And that is why we have prepared this Comprehensive Plan. We want to preserve our hometown, even as the nearby region around us changes. The plan assesses the challenges and opportunities. It looks at possibilities for the future. It plans for ways to accommodate changes without sacrificing the quality of life we enjoy today.

The Comprehensive Plan articulates the vision for the future of Oak Ridge North that respects the goals and priorities set by the citizens. This plan provides a road map of how you get there. It guides us in making policy decisions and prioritizes spending public dollars.

This plan looks at all the elements that make up a city: housing, neighborhood preservation, transportation, parks and recreation, retail and commercial businesses, a potential town center area, public services and facilities, and community identity. These are all building blocks of a city, and directly impact each resident of the community.

In order to accomplish the goals of this plan and realize the vision for Oak Ridge North, the City must coordinate with other cities and government agencies, with community partners, and with the citizens of Oak Ridge North. By working together toward common community goals, we will be more efficient.

Defining a Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan is a document that articulates a vision for the future of a community and outlines a set of goals, objectives, and actions to achieve the desired vision. It gives guidance for the growth of a community, providing direction to city staff, decision makers, property owners, businesses, developers, and residents in the choices and decisions they make.

A comprehensive plan:

- ◆ Tells a community what it looks like today (existing conditions)
- ◆ Establishes a vision of how the community wants to grow in the future
- ◆ Establishes goals and objectives to achieve that vision
- ◆ Identifies specific recommendations and actions to help achieve the vision and goals



- ◆ Provides a framework for policy decisions and the physical development of Oak Ridge North
- ◆ Covers a timeframe of about 10 to 20 years
- ◆ Is integrated with other planning documents, studies, and initiatives carried out by the city and surrounding entities

A comprehensive plan is NOT a zoning law, subdivision regulation, budget, capital improvement program, or any other regulatory document. It is meant to be the basis for the preparation of such documents.

Elements of a Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan is different than other city plans in that it does not focus on just one element of a community; rather, it evaluates all the components of a city and how they work together. The comprehensive plan elements include:

- ◆ Housing/Neighborhoods and City Infrastructure
- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Economic Growth and Community Identity/Branding
- ◆ Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Civic Facilities

The following pages describe the authority of comprehensive plans in Texas, how this plan is intended to be used, and the process for developing it.

Timeframe of The Plan

Typically, comprehensive plans look at a timeframe of 10 to 20 years. Using a longer timeframe allows a community to look at population growth further into the future and consider the long-term implications of actions and decisions. This does not suggest the plan should not be evaluated for another 20 years. In fact, plans should be reviewed every three to five years, with an update every five to ten years. A five year review allows a city to measure progress toward implementation and identify new priorities. A ten year update should include an evaluation of the goals and vision for the future of Oak Ridge North, which may result in adjusting goals, objectives, and actions.



City Planning and Regulatory Authority in Texas

This section is not a legal document, and it is not intended to provide legal guidance on land use regulation issues. It is only intended to provide a brief summary of legislative authority for land use planning and regulations among municipalities.

Across the United States, land use planning and regulation is upheld as a way to protect health, safety, and welfare. In early planning history, regulations tended to precede planning; but over time, comprehensive plans have become the controlling documents that guide growth-based decisions.

For the “purpose of promoting sound development of municipalities and promoting public health, safety, and welfare,” the Texas Local Government Code (LGC) permits municipalities to develop a comprehensive plan “for the long-range development of the municipality.” In Texas, the bulk of land use control falls on municipalities; and while comprehensive plans are not required in Texas, as they are in other states, municipalities across the State use comprehensive plans and the planning process to identify what they want and how to achieve it. Political leaders and decision makers use comprehensive plans as a foundation to establish development and land use regulations.

According to the LGC, municipalities may “define the content and design of a comprehensive plan.” The comprehensive plan:

- (1) may include but is not limited to, provisions on land use, transportation, and public facilities;
- (2) may consist of a single plan, or a coordinated set of plans organized by subject and geographic area; and
- (3) may be used to coordinate and guide the establishment of development regulations.

The LGC requires adoption or amendment of a comprehensive plan to include both a review by the city’s planning commission or department (if one exists) as well as a public hearing.

In addition, a municipality may define the relationship between a comprehensive plan and development regulations. Municipalities are given different authority to regulate land use and development depending on whether the property is within their full service jurisdiction or within the municipality’s extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ). Also, cities have different authority based on whether they are a home rule or general law city. Oak Ridge North is a general law city - meaning it is a smaller city (less than 5,000 residents) whose powers are limited in terms of annexation, municipal organization, and initiatives and referendums. General law cities are restricted to doing what the State has directed them to do.

According to the LGC, municipalities have the following regulatory authority when it comes to land use and development:

- ♦ Zoning, such as the height, size, lot coverage, lot size, density, and location of a building and lot (LGC, Chapter 211).



- ◆ Subdivision, how a property is subdivided and used (LGC, Chapter 212)
- ◆ Structures (including housing), as it relates to the building code (such as structural integrity and plumbing) as well as establishing building lines (LGC, Chapter 214)
- ◆ Certain business operations (LGC, Chapter 215)
- ◆ Signs

The Comprehensive Plan Process

Developing a comprehensive plan is a result of an extensive process involving analysis of existing conditions, public participation, and developing recommendations in the form of an action plan. There are four major steps in the process of developing Oak Ridge North's Comprehensive Plan:

1. Existing Conditions and Trends Analysis - The Planning Team worked with City staff, the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC), key stakeholders, and interest groups to conduct an initial inventory of the existing conditions and review trends and projections of growth in Oak Ridge North and the surrounding area. This process established a baseline from which to frame recommendations. It included reviewing and summarizing existing and recently completed planning documents, data collection, and exploring the Oak Ridge North community and its environment.

2. Public Engagement - This component of the process was ongoing throughout the entire planning effort. An advisory committee (CPAC) was established to guide the effort. Overall, the CPAC had 12 members representing a broad range of input. Throughout the planning process the CPAC met eight times to review input and existing conditions, develop ideas, and provide guidance to the Planning Team in creating the comprehensive plan.

In addition, a citizen survey was also available both by mail as well as on the internet that asked residents to identify the things they love about Oak Ridge North, the things that need improvement, and their priorities for the future of the City.

Two public workshops and one focus group meeting were held through which residents could provide input on the recommendations of the comprehensive plan.

3. Developing and Reviewing Recommendations and Plan Report - With ideas and input from residents and a baseline analysis of the current state of Oak Ridge North, draft goals, objectives, and recommendations were formed for each of the plan elements. These recommendations went through a series of reviews by City staff, the advisory committee, and the public.

4. Plan Adoption - Once the recommendations were vetted by the community, the report and recommendations for implementation were taken through the political process for approval. This included a presentation and public hearing to both the CPAC and City Council, and adoption by City Council.



How to use this plan

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that articulates a vision, outlines goals and objectives, and recommends actions. It ensures that new development and redevelopments of land, roads, parks, and public facilities are well-planned and occur in a manner that achieves the desired vision of the community.

The comprehensive plan requires action to implement the recommendations. This plan is ultimately a guiding document to the area's leaders and City staff regarding the day-to-day decisions on policy making, developments, and spending priorities. General actions that carry out the goals and objectives of this comprehensive plan include:

- ◆ Changes to the regulatory tools, such as ordinances and zoning map that influence how the built environment is created.
- ◆ Capital improvement investments such as roadways, utility infrastructure, sidewalks, parks and trails, and public facilities.
- ◆ Efforts and actions among City departments and other agencies that advance the goals and objectives of the plan.
- ◆ Partnerships with other parties, including other government entities, private land owners or developers, and other stakeholders or interest groups who can carry forward actions of the plan.
- ◆ Securing other funding resources such as public and private grants to supplement the local general budget.

In order to accomplish the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan, this document should guide all decisions by land owners, developers, government entities, city departments, political leaders with regards to the elements of this plan and other topics that will impact the future of the community.

Overall Guiding Vision and Goals

The vision statement of this comprehensive plan is that "Oak Ridge North will always be a premier place to live within the greater Houston area, appealing to both existing and new residents of all ages for its attractive, safe and well maintained neighborhoods, its unique town center, its many amenities, and for its well managed governance. Through superior management and thoughtful decision making, all residents are actively engaged in making Oak Ridge North what a hometown should be."

Values that the citizens of Oak Ridge North uphold, and that this plan seeks to preserve, include:

- ◆ Believing in fostering a hometown spirit, where neighbors know each other and work together to keep their neighborhoods strong;
- ◆ Respecting and preserving the value of neighborhoods as the foundation of what makes Oak Ridge North a great place to live;

Vision Statement

To be an economically dynamic community which provides a safe and unique quality of life where all residents can be actively engaged in making Oak Ridge North what a hometown should be.

Figure 1-1 Vision statement from 2006 Team City Community Development Plan for Oak Ridge North



- ♦ Wanting their government to work for its residents, always actively engaging and informing them to maintain a strong sense of community;
- ♦ Seeking to make the City economically strong and sustainable, so as to be able to maintain a high level of services;
- ♦ Believing in making our City attractive for residents of all ages, offering something for everyone, and for both longtime and new residents;
- ♦ Valuing its location and working with other area communities to make all of Southern Montgomery County a great place to live and work in.

Overall Plan Goals

The overall goals of this comprehensive plan are:

Goal #1 - Maintain small town character and sense of friendliness, even as the City grows and changes.

Goal #2 - Respond to area traffic needs in ways that do not negatively impact the quiet, calm character of the City.

Goal #3 - Preserve and enhance the attractiveness and value of the City's neighborhoods.

Goal #4 - Proactively promote, attract and support businesses, both those already in the City and new ones, to increase the City's property and sales tax base and keep the City economically strong.

Goal #5 - Actively seek to create a central "heart" of Oak Ridge North that mixes retail, living, and civic activities that is easily accessible to all residents of the City.

Goal #6 - Maintain and update the City's infrastructure as an integral component of the future economic success of the City.

Goal #7 - Create first class quality of life amenities that strengthen the perception of the City as a great place to live.

Goal #8 - Through careful and thoughtful planning, achieve home rule status within the next five to ten years (population increase from 3,200 to over 5,000).

How this Plan is Organized

This plan is made up of four main components:

1 Community Profile - This component describes the current state of the City of Oak Ridge North, such as population, demographics, and economic characteristics.

2 Public Engagement - This component describes the significant amount of effort put in on the part of Oak Ridge North's citizens and stakeholders to identify challenges and opportunities, and develop ideas to create a unique and livable community.



3 Goals & Recommendations - A series of goal statements for the various elements of the comprehensive plan were developed. These include economic growth, transportation, housing, community identity, civic facilities, and parks and open space. The general definition of a goal and recommended action is described below:

- ♦ Goal - A general statement of the desired state of the element towards which the City will direct effort.
- ♦ Recommended Action - A specific action or strategy to carry out to achieve a specific objective.

4 Implementation Strategy - The implementation component describes the strategy for seeing through the realization of the comprehensive plan, including a timeframe for specific actions, resources to enhance funding options, and important relationships and partnerships to advance implementation.

Oak Ridge North's Jurisdiction

The study area for the comprehensive plan includes the current incorporated area of the City of Oak Ridge North (the city limits) as well as the current extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

The incorporated area of the City of Oak Ridge North includes approximately 1.3 square miles, and the ETJ adds an additional 1.2 square miles. The map on the following page shows the current city limits.



Figure 1-2 Existing City Limits



Chapter 2

Community Profile



Oak Ridge North Community Profile

The Community Profile of the comprehensive plan is intended to give an overview of the historical and geographical context of Oak Ridge North, as well as evaluate the existing conditions, historical aspects, and projected trends for growth. The purpose of this section is to document the current state of the City, giving insight into the potential demand on city services, facilities, and needs for the community. It also helps to identify opportunities and challenges Oak Ridge North must consider in shaping how it grows.

History of Oak Ridge North

Development of Oak Ridge North started in 1964 with the building of a subdivision by Arkansas-based Spring Pines Corporation. Around this same time, IH-45 was completed and became the engine for economic and population growth. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many Houstonians fled to suburban communities like Oak Ridge North because of the accessibility and lower tax rates, and soon all phases of the community were built out. The Oak Ridge North community was especially attractive to home buyers because of the wooded lots. In 1974, the development of the Woodlands started, and in recent years it has become a major destination and employment base.

The community was incorporated in 1979, with an estimated population of 2,445 residents. Because of the energy and oil recession of the 1980s, Oak Ridge North did not experience any growth. The 1990 census population was estimated to be 2,454 – only a nine person growth from the time of incorporation.

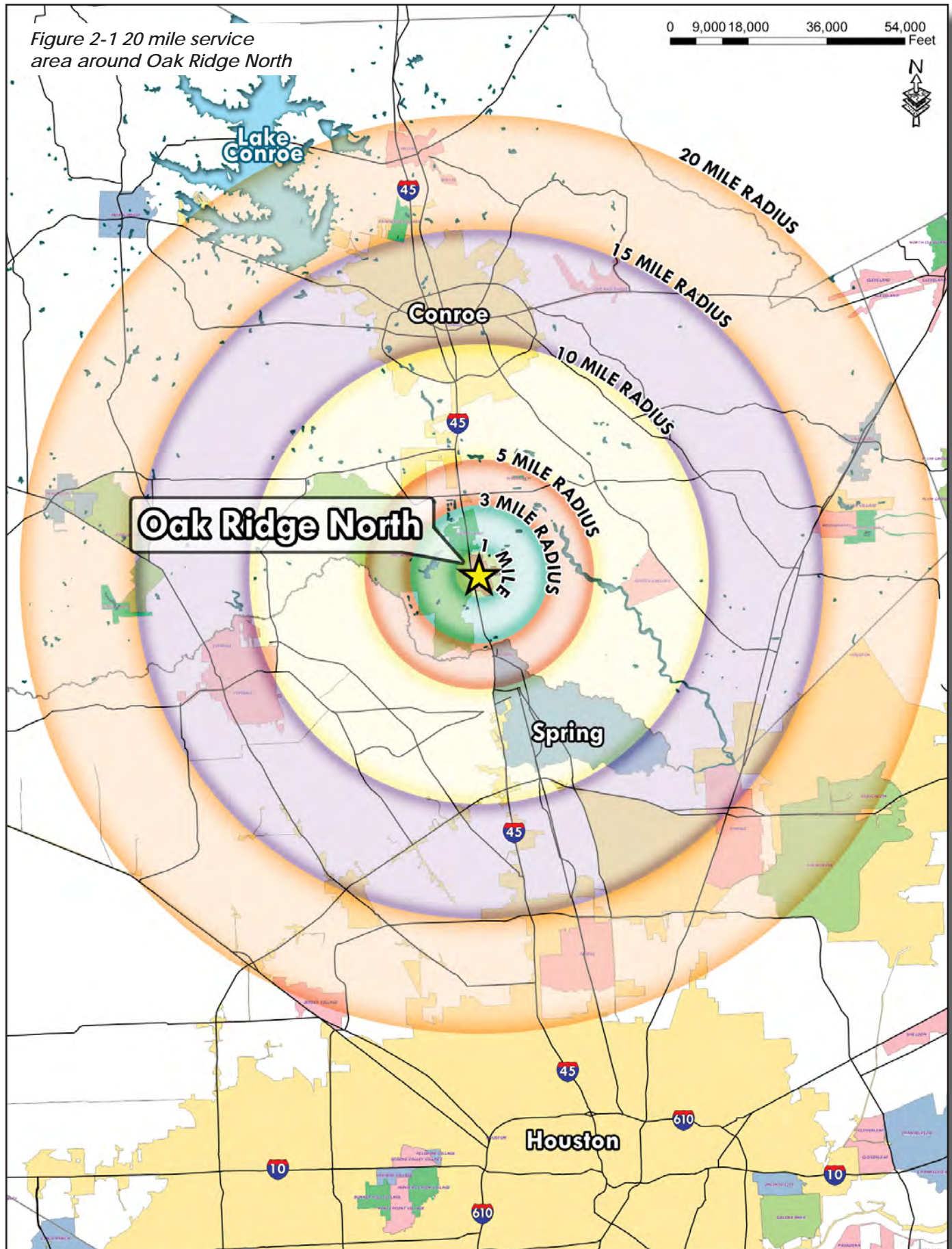
Regional Context

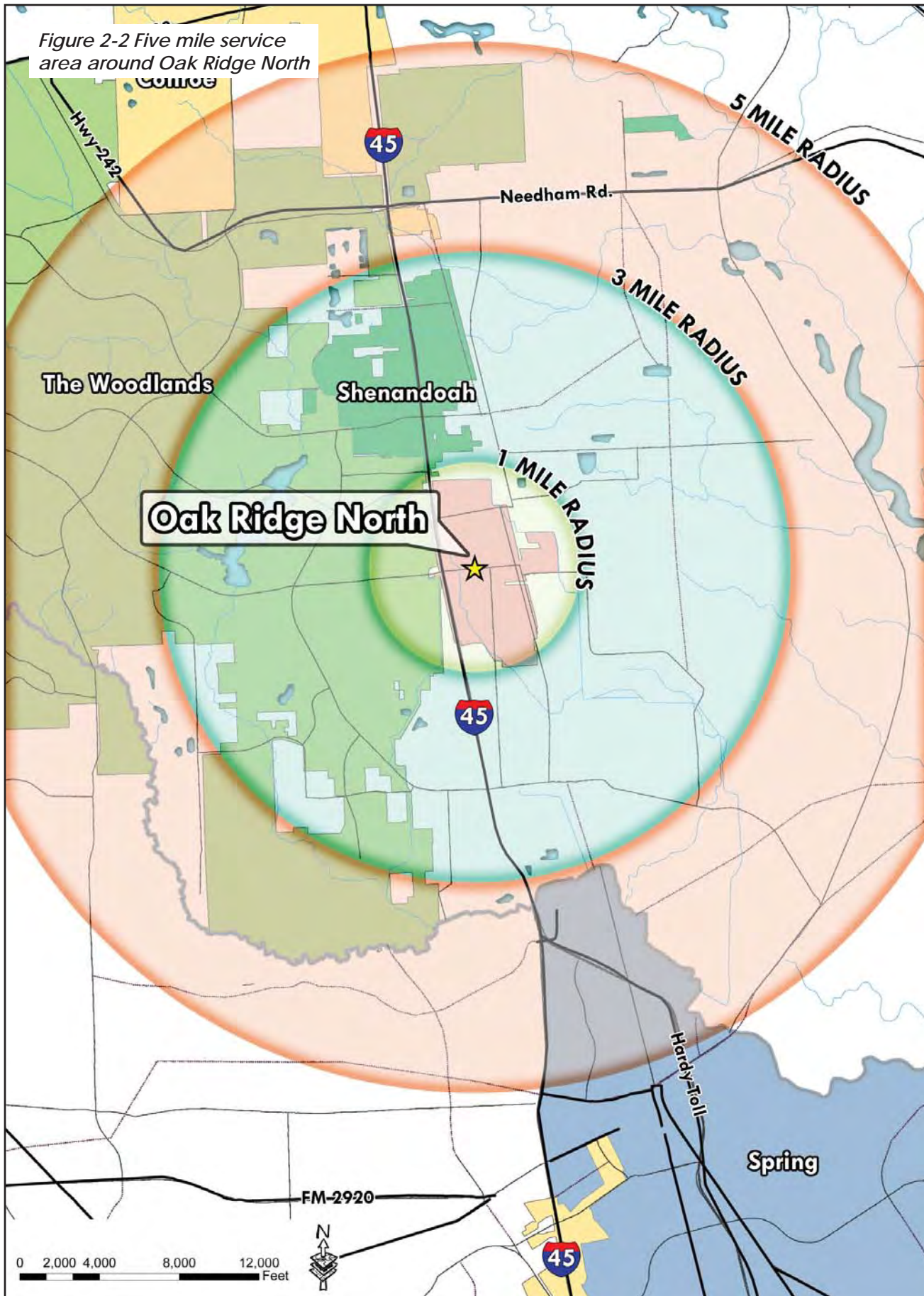
Cities are influenced and shaped by regional, physical, economic and social forces. By recognizing its position in the region, acknowledging these forces, and overcoming challenges, Oak Ridge North can benefit from regional opportunities as they occur.

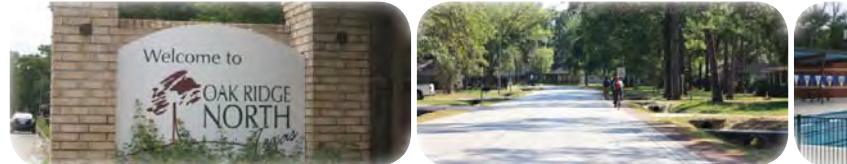
The City of Oak Ridge North is in Montgomery County, 30 miles north of downtown Houston and 10 miles south of Conroe (the county seat of Montgomery County). Montgomery County is part of the Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). A MSA is formed around urbanized areas with a population of at least 50,000. The Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown MSA includes Harris, Fort Bend, Montgomery, Brazoria, Galveston, Liberty, Waller, Chambers, Austin and San Jacinto counties.

Oak Ridge North is located in the southern portion of Montgomery County, along IH-45. By being adjacent to this major highway, as well as other major arterial roads and a railroad, Oak Ridge North has benefitted from the residential growth of commuters travelling to other nearby employment centers. The proximity to both Houston and The Woodlands gives residents of Oak Ridge North easy access to large marketplace areas. The City is also ideally located for economic development and retail revitalization.

The maps on the following pages show the regional context of Oak Ridge North.







Population Trends and Projections

Typically, establishing a base population for today is a critical component of a comprehensive plan. It is the foundation from which the projection of population growth extends, and influences the demand and need for future services. However, in the case of Oak Ridge North, the city has limited areas for population growth.

This section examines historical growth for Oak Ridge North, reviews recent trends since 2000, and establishes a base population using the 2010 US Census, and the 2012 estimate calculated by Nielsen Solution Center of 3,281.

Historic Population Growth

Because of its limited geographic size, Oak Ridge North has only had a small amount of growth in population since its incorporation in 1979. Meanwhile, Montgomery County has experienced tremendous growth in the past two decades, more than doubling in population from 1990 to 2010.

Table 2-1 Decennial Population Growth, City of Oak Ridge North & Montgomery County, 1980-2012						
	Oak Ridge North		Montgomery County		Oak Ridge North Share of Total Population	Oak Ridge North Capture of Growth
	Total Population	Annual Growth Rate	Total Population	Annual Growth Rate		
1980	2,445	-	128,487	-	1.90%	-
1990	2,454	0.0%	182,201	4.2%	1.35%	0.02%
2000	2,991	2.2%	293,768	6.1%	1.02%	0.48%
2010	3,049	0.2%	455,746	5.5%	0.67%	0.04%
2012	3,281	0.8%	-	-	-	-

Source: 1980-2010 decennial estimates from U.S. Census Bureau; 2012 - Nielsen Solution Center, The Retail Coach

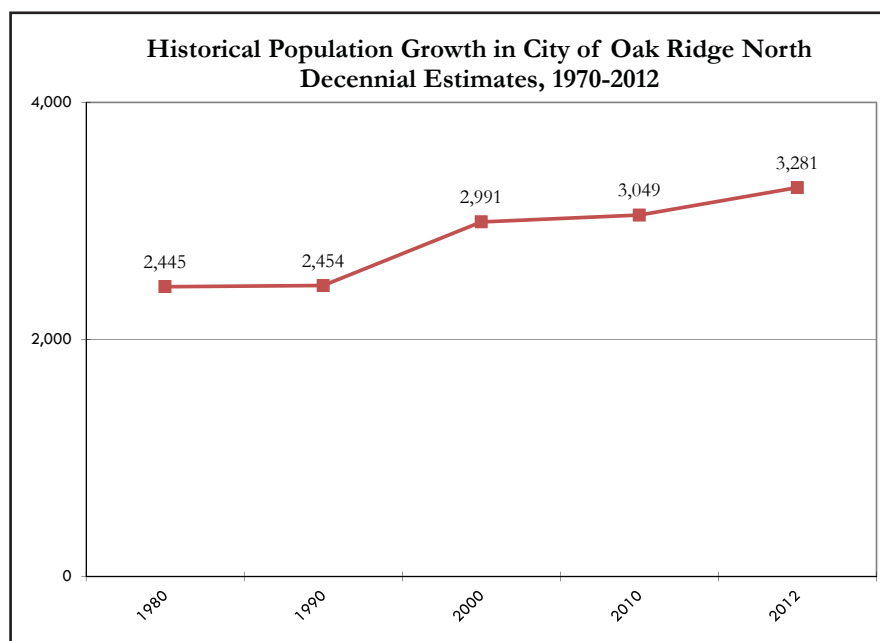


Figure 2-3 Historic population growth graph



Future Growth Potential

Some growth can be anticipated in Oak Ridge North, as new development and redevelopment occurs in in-fill areas of the City and the surrounding undeveloped ETJ. Population forecasts are based on the 2010 US Census population for the City of Oak Ridge North.

The graph shows the population projections for Oak Ridge North established by the Texas Water Development Board, who project populations of regions, counties and cities within Texas to plan for water demand. This growth scenario assumes the gradual annexation of nearby undeveloped ETJ areas controlled by the City, and projects that the City could reach a built out population of nearly 10,000 by 2060. More rapid annexation could result in build-out being achieved much sooner.

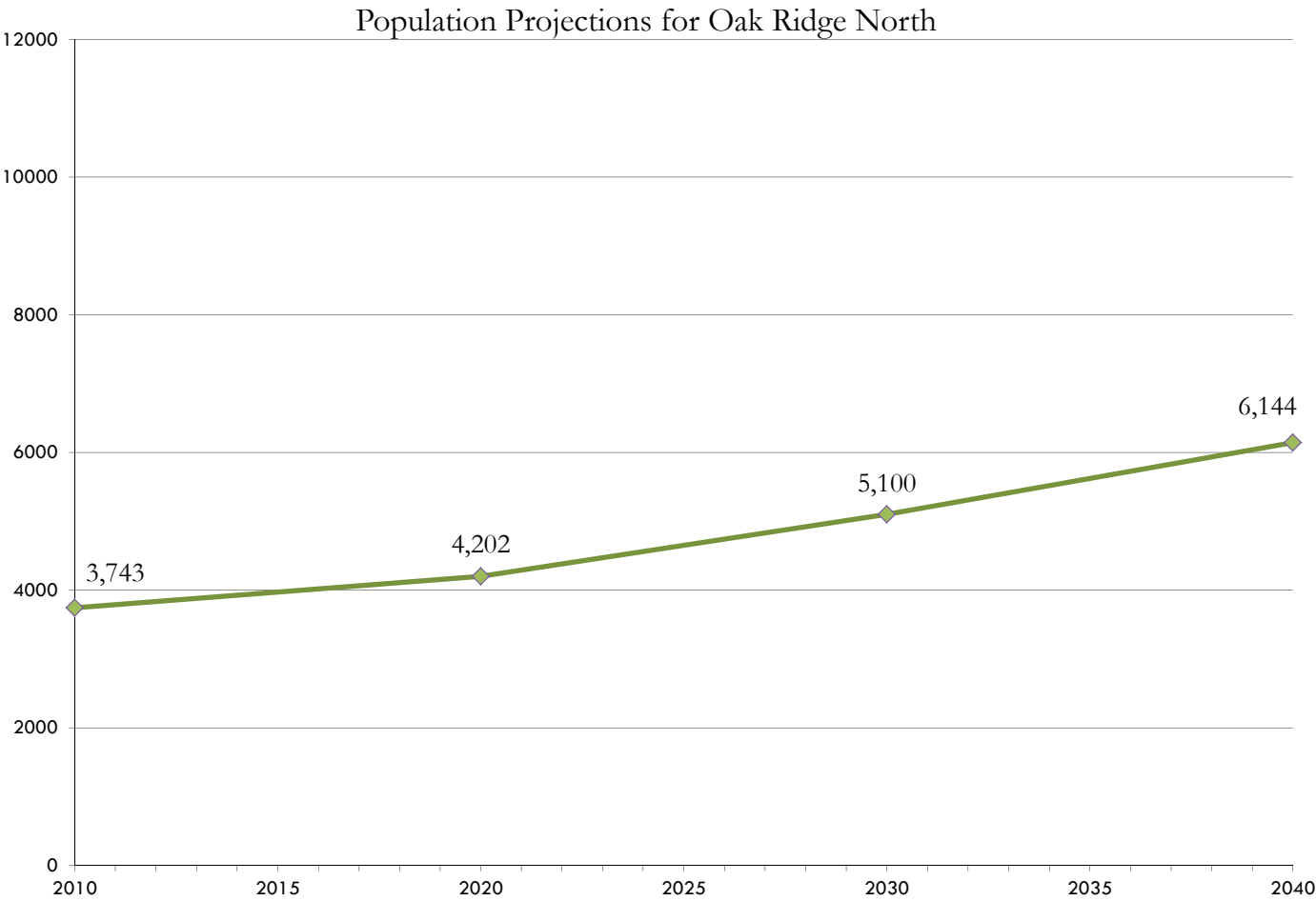


Figure 2-4 Projected population growth graph. Source: Texas Water Development Board population projections established April 2011



Demographics

The demographic information illustrated below represents the characteristics of the population, households, and workforce for Oak Ridge North. This information was obtained from the 2010 US Census and the Nielsen Solutions Center.

Age and Gender Distribution

The table and graph below illustrate the population distribution by gender and age. Evaluating the population by age helps the City understand what the needs and lifestyles are of the residents of the City. Generally, the Oak Ridge North Population is dominated by the Baby Boomer Generation. This population, which is roughly between the ages of 40 and 69, accounts for nearly half (approximately 47%) of the population in Oak Ridge North. The largest population segment is between the ages of 55 and 64, accounting for 18.3% of the population. Oak Ridge North has a much older population than Montgomery County and the State of Texas overall. Likewise, there is a smaller percentage of children and teens than the County and the State.

Table 2-2 Oak Ridge North Population by Age Distribution Trends, 1990-2012; Comparison to Montgomery County and State of Texas

	City of Oak Ridge North				Montgomery County 2010	State of Texas 2010
	1990	2000	2010	2012		
Total	2,454	2,991	3,049	3,281	445,746	25,145,561
0 - 19	26.2%	28.1%	23.6%	23.1%	30.1%	30.3%
20-44	36.5%	29.0%	23.9%	28.1%	32.8%	35.3%
45-64	31.5%	32.5%	34.8%	33.5%	26.6%	24.0%
65+	5.9%	10.4%	17.6%	15.2%	10.4%	10.3%
Median Age	38.7	41.6	46.7	43.8	36.1	33.6

Source: 1990-2010 decennial estimates from U.S. Census Bureau; 2012 - Nielsen Solution Center

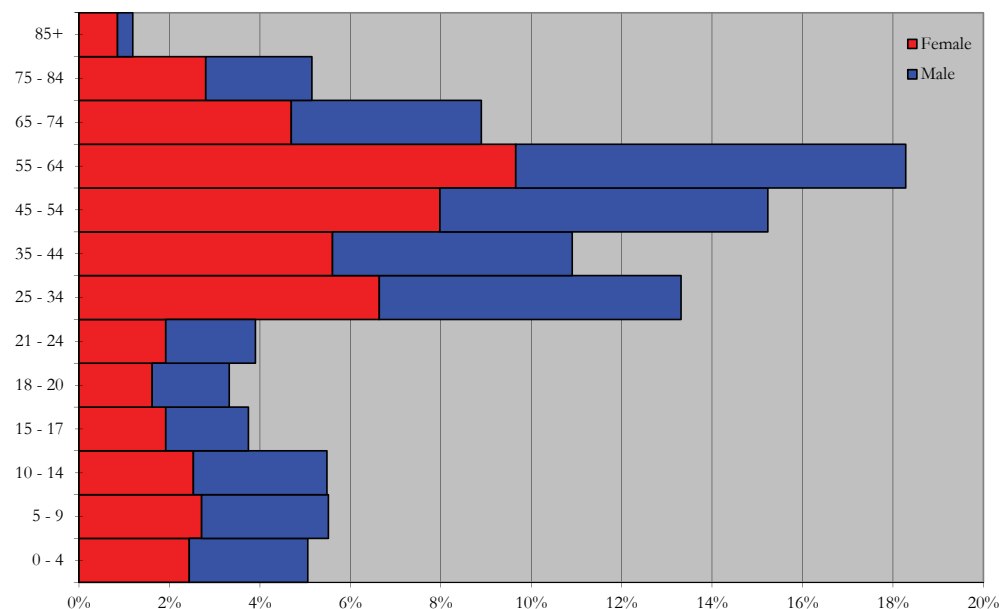


Figure 2-5 Population by age and gender. Source: Nielsen Solution Center, 2012



Racial and Ethnic Distribution

The Census data for the past three decades indicates that the racial distribution of Oak Ridge North is primarily white; however, the City also has a growing Hispanic population, with the Hispanic population growing from 2.9% in 1990 to 12.2% in 2012. (Note: the US Census considers Hispanic or Latino an ethnicity and not a race.) The table below portrays racial and ethnic distribution trends for Oak Ridge North.

Table 2-3 Racial Distribution for Oak Ridge North, 1990-2012

		1990	2000	2010	2012
Total Population		2,454	2,991	3,049	3,281
Racial Distribution	% White	97.5%	95.3%	93.8%	91.6%
	% Black	0.7%	1.3%	1.3%	2.1%
	% American Indian	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%
	% Asian	1.0%	1.2%	1.2%	1.5%
	% Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
	% Other	0.4%	1.0%	1.5%	2.7%
	% Multiple Races	0.0%	1.0%	1.7%	1.9%
% Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity (of any race)		2.9%	5.3%	10.2%	12.2%
Source: 1990-2010 decennial estimates from U.S. Census Bureau; 2012 - Nielsen Solution Center					



Household Characteristics

Since 1990, the median household size in Oak Ridge North has declined from 2.94 persons per household to 2.69 persons. Likewise, the share of households that were occupied by people living alone increased from 6.7% in 1990 to 15.9% in 2010. The median home value of owner-occupied homes has risen by 91.3% since 1990. The percent of renter occupied homes in Oak Ridge North is rising, and represents one of the most significant challenges facing the City. As many homes in the City approach 50 years of age, their owners may elect to rent them out and move to newer housing. Oak Ridge North residents expressed a clear preference to maintain a high number of owner occupied homes.

Table 2-4 Housing Characteristics in Oak Ridge North

	1990	2000	2010
Total Housing Units	811	1,045	1,174
Median Household Size	2.94	2.92	2.69
Single-Person Home	6.7%	10.3%	15.9%
Occupied housing units	791	1,024	1,131
% Vacant	2.5%	2.0%	3.7%
% Owner Occupied	91.5%	94.1%	92.9%
Median Home Value	\$87,500	\$117,900	\$167,400
% Renter Occupied	8.5%	5.9%	7.1%
Median Rent	\$657	\$754	\$897
<i>Source: 1990-2010 decennial estimates from U.S. Census Bureau</i>			

Table 2-5 Household Income for Oak Ridge North

Total Households	1,261	
Less than \$15,000	64	5.1%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	75	5.9%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	102	8.1%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	131	10.4%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	264	20.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	215	17.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	246	19.5%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	74	5.9%
\$200,000 or more	89	7.1%
MEDIAN		\$74,406
<i>Source: 2012 - Nielsen Solution Center</i>		



Economic Trends

In the recent economic downturn, Texas, and even more so the Houston/Woodlands area, has fared better than much of the country economically. The area's unemployment rate is one of the lowest in the entire Country. One challenge facing Oak Ridge North will be how to promote economic growth and development while preserving and improving the community's quality of life.

Labor Force of Population

The labor force participation rate for Oak Ridge North has declined over the past decade. The labor force participation refers to the share of the population 16 years and older that is employed or available for work (either in the armed forces, employed, unemployed, or actively seeking employment).

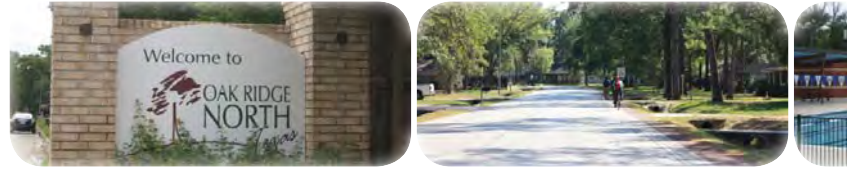
There has been an increase in only three categories of industry from 2000 to 2010 in Oak Ridge North:

- ♦ Manufacturing;
- ♦ Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing; and
- ♦ Agricultural, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining.

All other industries have had a decrease in the percent of the labor force working in them.

Table 2-6 Labor Force Characteristic Trends, 2000-2012

Industry Category	2000 Census	2006-2010 ACS	2012
Public administration	3.9%	2.4%	
Manufacturing	6.6%	9.0%	
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	10.5%	7.0%	
Educational services, health care, and social assistance	18.4%	17.1%	
Retail trade	12.4%	8.5%	
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	7.7%	11.7%	
Construction	5.9%	5.1%	
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	10.3%	7.9%	
Other services (except public administration)	3.3%	7.3%	
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations, and food services	5.6%	7.9%	
Wholesale trade	7.1%	5.1%	
Information	2.6%	1.6%	
Agricultural, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	3.7%	5.4%	
Total Labor Force	2,343	2,618	1,746
Labor Force Participation Rate	69.7%	65.9%	64.5%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2012 - Nielsen Solution Center			



Property Values

The appraised property values since 2000 were collected from the Montgomery County Appraisal District. The Market Value is for pre-exemptions (such as homestead, agriculture/farm, senior etc.) and the Taxable Value includes any of those exemptions. The City's revenue is based on the Taxable Value.

Table 2-7 City of Oak Ridge North		
Year	Market Value	Taxable Value
2000	\$142,572,552	\$116,268,473
2001	\$148,868,111	\$121,715,467
2002	\$195,941,375	\$143,192,146
2003	\$201,168,494	\$152,826,111
2004	\$204,313,265	\$158,781,266
2005	\$222,302,947	\$172,738,694
2006	\$230,533,759	\$181,692,427
2007	\$252,154,307	\$197,451,914
2008	\$284,266,042	\$223,284,458
2009	\$288,258,754	\$225,875,708
2010	\$282,744,835	\$222,737,244
2011	\$279,157,795	\$219,306,533

Source: Montgomery County Appraisal District

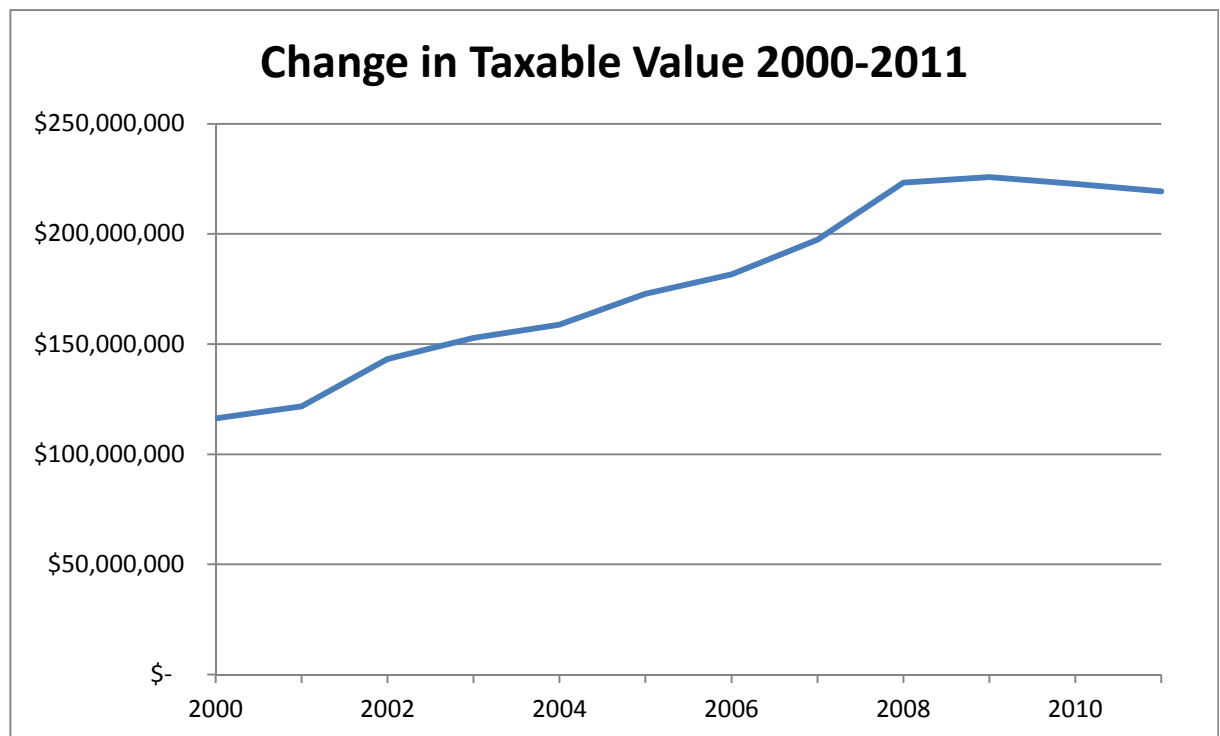


Figure 2-6 Change in taxable value, 2000-2011



Existing Plans and Studies

Part of any planning process includes understanding what other plans and studies have been conducted for the study area in the past. Recent planning efforts include the 2006 Community Development Plan conducted by the Entergy Corporation, and the 2004 Comprehensive Land Use Plan conducted by the University of Texas at Arlington School of Urban and Public Affairs. Below is a discussion of these planning documents and studies.

2006 Community Development Plan

The process of creating the 2006 Community Development Plan included a detailed SWOT analysis based on economic development, quality of life, and government services/community facilities. Recommendations were then incorporated that were made by local businesses, residents and community leaders. Recommendations were made for 11 broad categories which are still applicable today:

- ◆ Beautification - City facilities, business and residential property maintenance
- ◆ Public image, community identity and branding
- ◆ Relationship with CISD and local schools
- ◆ Community involvement
- ◆ Recreational opportunities
- ◆ Proactive City planning
- ◆ Infrastructure improvements
- ◆ Undeveloped and under-utilized commercial land
- ◆ Business retention and expansion
- ◆ Annexation
- ◆ Mobility

Examples of the recommendations of the 2006 plan that were also made during the development of this comprehensive plan include:

- 1c) Create a community support group to help maintain property for the elderly and/or sick.
- 2biv) Develop newcomer's welcome wagon/package.
- 2cii) Design and construct Oak Ridge North gateway entrances.
- 5c) Investigate the feasibility of creating a Town Center.
- 7e) Coordinate with TXDOT of the feasibility on the redesigning of Robinson Rd.

2004 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

The 2004 plan established goals and objectives to determine the direction of future growth in the City of Oak Ridge North. These goals were:



1 - The City should proactively pursue opportunities for commercial and office park development in the ETJ. The City should annex land in the ETJ to ensure that the needs of the City are met. Expansion to the east provides an opportunity to become a home rule city.

2 - The City should balance between residential and commercial land development.

3 - Economic development should be kept high to increase the City's tax base while providing additional employment opportunities.

4 - Infrastructure and utilities are nearing the end of their useful life. The City should start planning to improve existing infrastructure and increase the capacity to accommodate future needs.

One recommendation of the 2004 plan that this comprehensive plan also addresses is the redesign of Robinson Road. The 2004 plan recommended that Robinson should be increased to 4-lanes for the entire stretch, and that the intersection at the railroad tracks be straightened. The 2004 plan noted that this is especially important because of the expected growth and development that will take place in the ETJ. The plan also recommended that Robinson Road be zoned for commercial uses, not just residential, immediately off IH-45.

The 2004 plan also recommended a Town Center, which was proposed to be located on Robinson Road, east of Hanna Road. Proposed businesses could have included: daycare facilities, coffee shops or small restaurants, a drug store, small offices or clinics, a post office, specialty shops, and a new city hall. The plan also recommended offering residential housing units on the upper floors of the town center buildings, with commercial and retail on the ground floor.

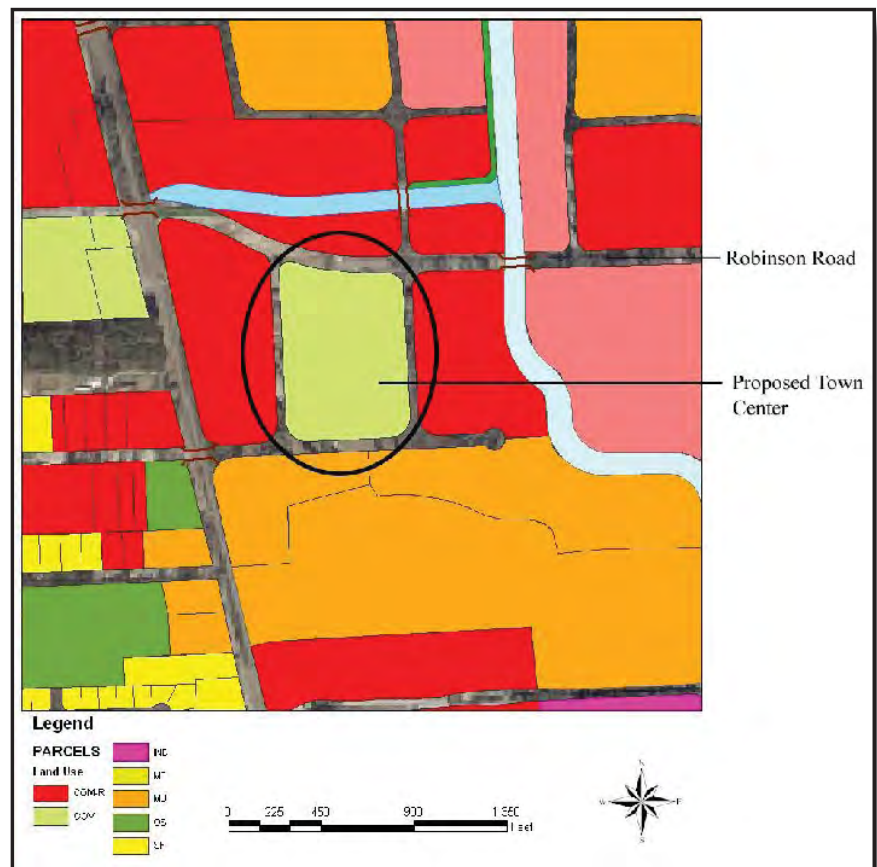


Figure 2-7 Town Center concept area. Source: 2004 Comprehensive Land Use Plan



Existing Land Use

Determining the land use of areas within a city is important because it guides long range development in the ETJ area, allows for decision making regarding road and utility infrastructure, and guides transition of key areas such as a potential town center area. The existing land use map is shown on the following page. The percentage of the total area within the City of Oak Ridge North and its ETJ that are within each land use category are summarized in the table below.

Table 2-8 Existing Land Use		
Land Use Type	City Limits Only	Planning Area (ETJ area only)
Low Density Residential	4.0%	19.9%
Single Family Residential	56.9%	20.7%
High Density Residential		
Manufactured Housing		1.9%
Institutional (schools & civic)	6.6%	1.9%
Churches	1.7%	
Freeway Retail	7.4%	
Commercial	10.8%	
Light Industrial	3.8%	17.9%
Drainage and Utility Corridors	1.6%	3.1%
Parks and Open Space	1.0%	0.5%
Vacant	6.1%	32.5%

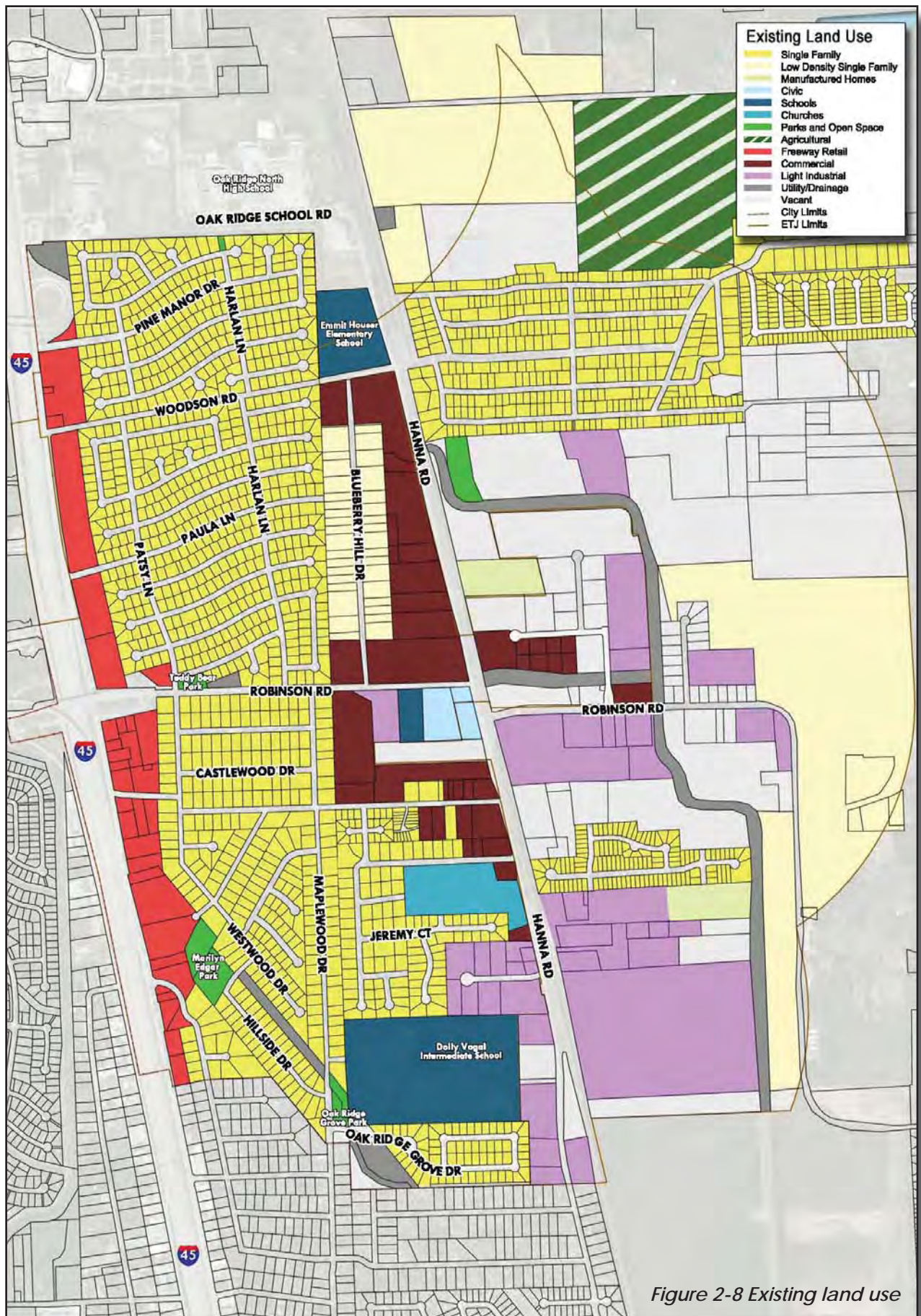


Figure 2-8 Existing land use



Chapter 3



Public Engagement





Public Participation Process

This Comprehensive Plan was crafted to respond to what residents of Oak Ridge North want to see happen. It creates a vision that responds to their hopes, concerns, and dreams of what Oak Ridge North should become in the future. To provide as much input as possible, an extensive public engagement process was developed as part of the planning process.

How was citizen input collected?

A variety of methods were used to collect citizen input. These methods were used to obtain input from many different points of view and to allow residents to participate as their schedules allowed. All of these methods yielded many diverse opinions, but also much agreement in terms of areas of concern. The results of all of these methods were compared and combined to develop a comprehensive view of how the City should respond to changes in the region around it.

The input techniques used included:

Oversight from the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee - A

12-member citizen advisory committee met eight times during the planning process and served as a sounding board for key recommendations of the plan.

A citywide mail-out survey - Sent to every home within the City limits, the survey was answered by 188 residents of Oak Ridge North.

An online survey - A link to the same survey was placed on the City's website, and an additional 190 responses were received. Responses to that survey very closely matched the results of the mail-out survey.

Kids survey - At the end of the mail-out survey, and also available online, there was a one page kids survey that parents of Oak Ridge North were asked to allow their children under the age of 16 to fill out. There were 26 kids survey responses.

An intercept survey - An intercept survey was conducted at the Fourth of July parade in 2012. Responses were received from both residents of Oak Ridge North and outside visitors. These responses initiated the planning process and generated an initial list of concerns and opportunities. A total of 115 responses were received.

Focus Groups - A focus meeting was held with residents to help refine key areas of the plan. Over 70 residents attended the focus group meeting.

Public Workshops - Two citywide workshops were held during the planning process. The first served to establish key values and principles that became the foundation for the plan, and the second helped confirm and refine many of the ideas developed as part of the plan.



Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

To help guide the planning process, a citizen based Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) was assembled by the Oak Ridge North city council. Members of the committee represented a diverse cross section of the City, from the economic development perspective to neighborhood interests. The CPAC met a total of eight times during the planning process and provided feedback

on everything from opportunities and constraints to guidance on public workshop meetings. CPAC members also participated in the citywide workshops and the focus group meeting.

Meeting #1 - Introductory meeting and description of the planning process

Meeting #2 - Review of existing conditions in Oak Ridge North

Meeting #3 - Discuss special elements; review and finalize citizen survey

Meeting #4 - Summary of public input findings

Meeting #5 - Review findings of special element recommendations

Meeting #6 - Review details of special element recommendations

Meeting #7 - Review draft plan document and action plan

Meeting #8 - CPAC approval of the draft plan document

The Citizen Survey

A citywide mail-out survey and a companion online survey were conducted as part of the planning process. The surveys were designed to examine residents' concerns and desires for the City of Oak Ridge North. A mail-out survey was sent to every household in the City of Oak Ridge North. The online survey was linked through the city's website and the planning website. Approximately 188 mail-out surveys and 190 online surveys were completed. Approximately one out of every nine residents in the City completed the survey.

Survey Results

Combined key results of the survey are shown throughout the next several pages.

How frequently do you use the following facilities or attend events?

Residents were given a list of different city facilities and events, and asked how frequently they used or attended them. The most frequent item was shopping within a five mile radius of Oak Ridge North, with 81% of respondents indicating they do this at least weekly. It then dropped dramatically to only 51% of respondents indicating that they shop at a local store in Oak Ridge North at least weekly. See Figure 3-1 to the right.



How frequently do you use the following facilities or attend events in or near the City of Oak Ridge North?

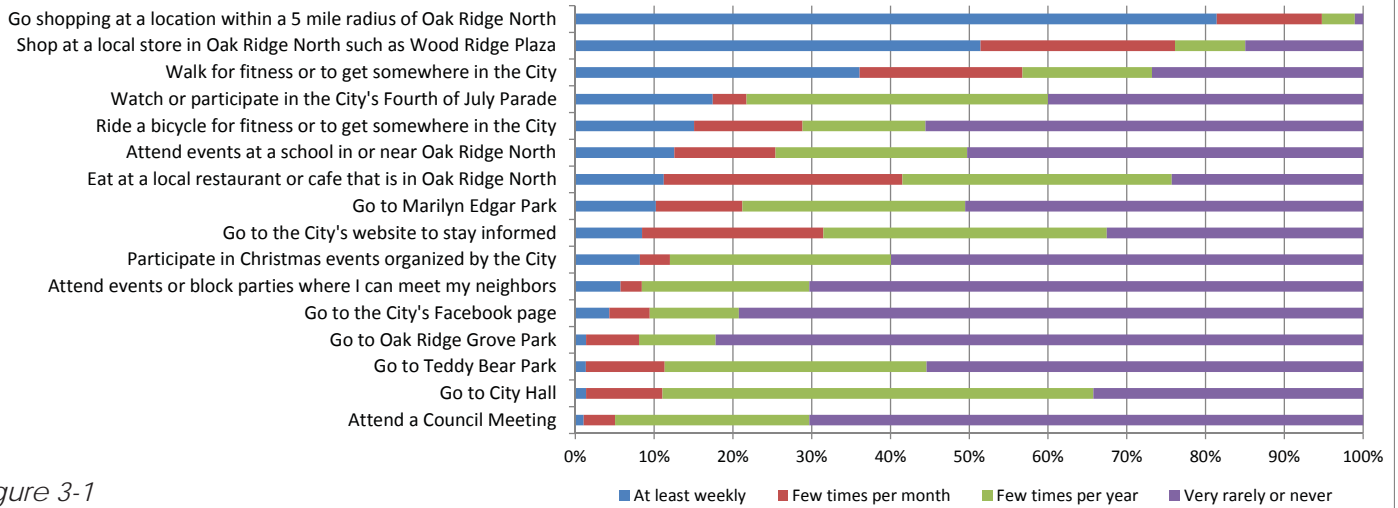


Figure 3-1

How satisfied are you with the quality of life in Oak Ridge North?

Overwhelmingly, 92% of residents said they are satisfied with the quality of life in Oak Ridge North. One benchmark for the City to strive to achieve is to increase the percentage of residents who are "very satisfied" (currently 43%) whenever a survey of the community is conducted in the future. Only 8% expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of life in the City.

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of life in the City of Oak Ridge North?

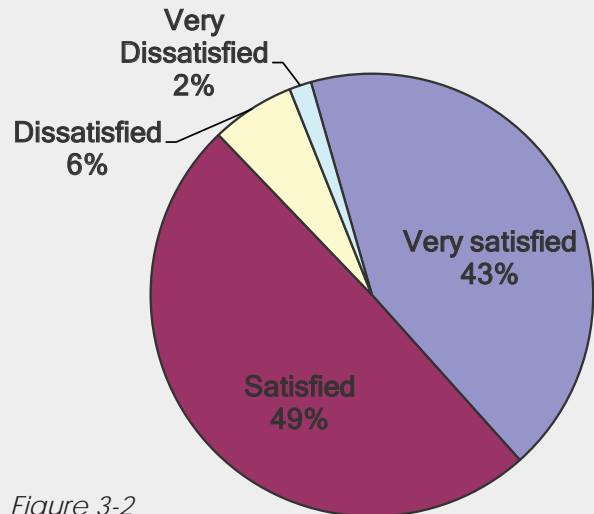


Figure 3-2

During the time you have lived here, do you think that as a community the City of Oak Ridge North has:

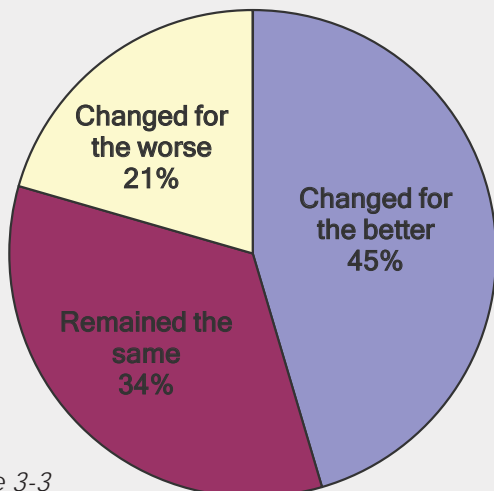
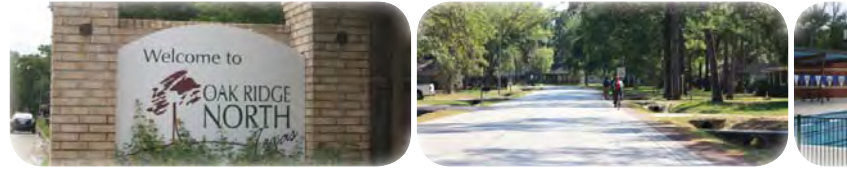


Figure 3-3

During the time you have lived here, how do you think that as a community Oak Ridge North has changed?

Only 45% of respondents felt that the City has changed for the better in the time that they have lived here. While implementing the actions of this comprehensive plan over the course of the next several years and decades, one benchmark should be to change the public perception so that the percent of residents who feel the City has changed for the better will be much higher, and the percent of residents who feel the City has changed for the worse will be significantly lower.



How likely or unlikely are you to remain in the City of Oak Ridge North for the next five years?

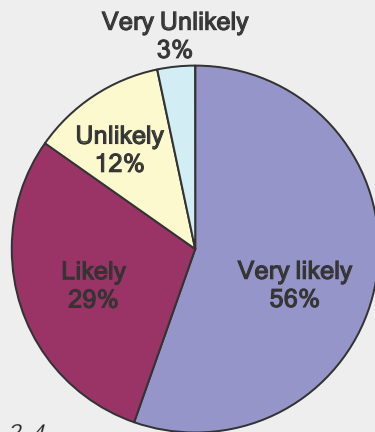


Figure 3-4

How likely are you to remain in Oak Ridge North for the next five years?

85% of respondents indicated they were likely or very likely to remain in Oak Ridge North for the next five years. Of the 15% who indicated they were not likely to remain, nearly 44% cited the reason for not staying was dissatisfaction with the community. Respondents could cite more than one reason for leaving the City. Other reasons for not staying in Oak Ridge North included retirement (30%), and the need for a smaller or larger home (28%) as shown in Figure 3-5.

Please tell us which of the following reasons is causing you to consider leaving the City of Oak Ridge North? Check all that apply.

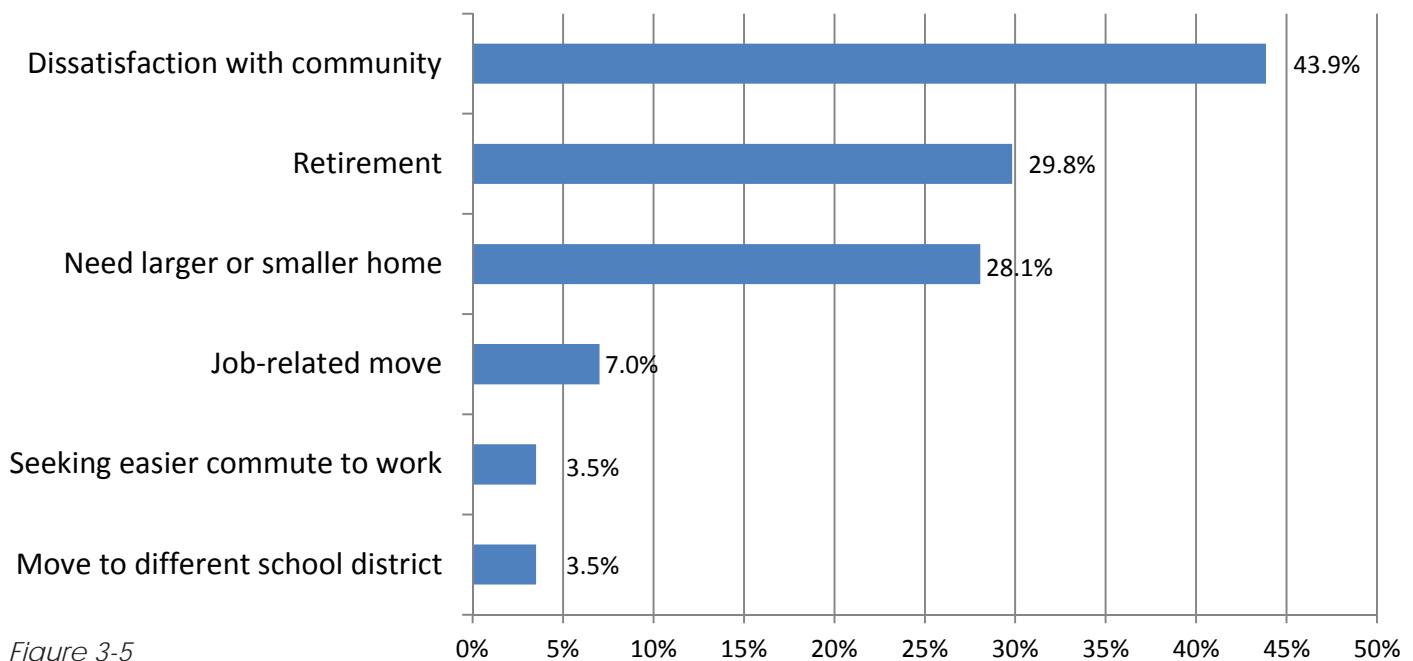
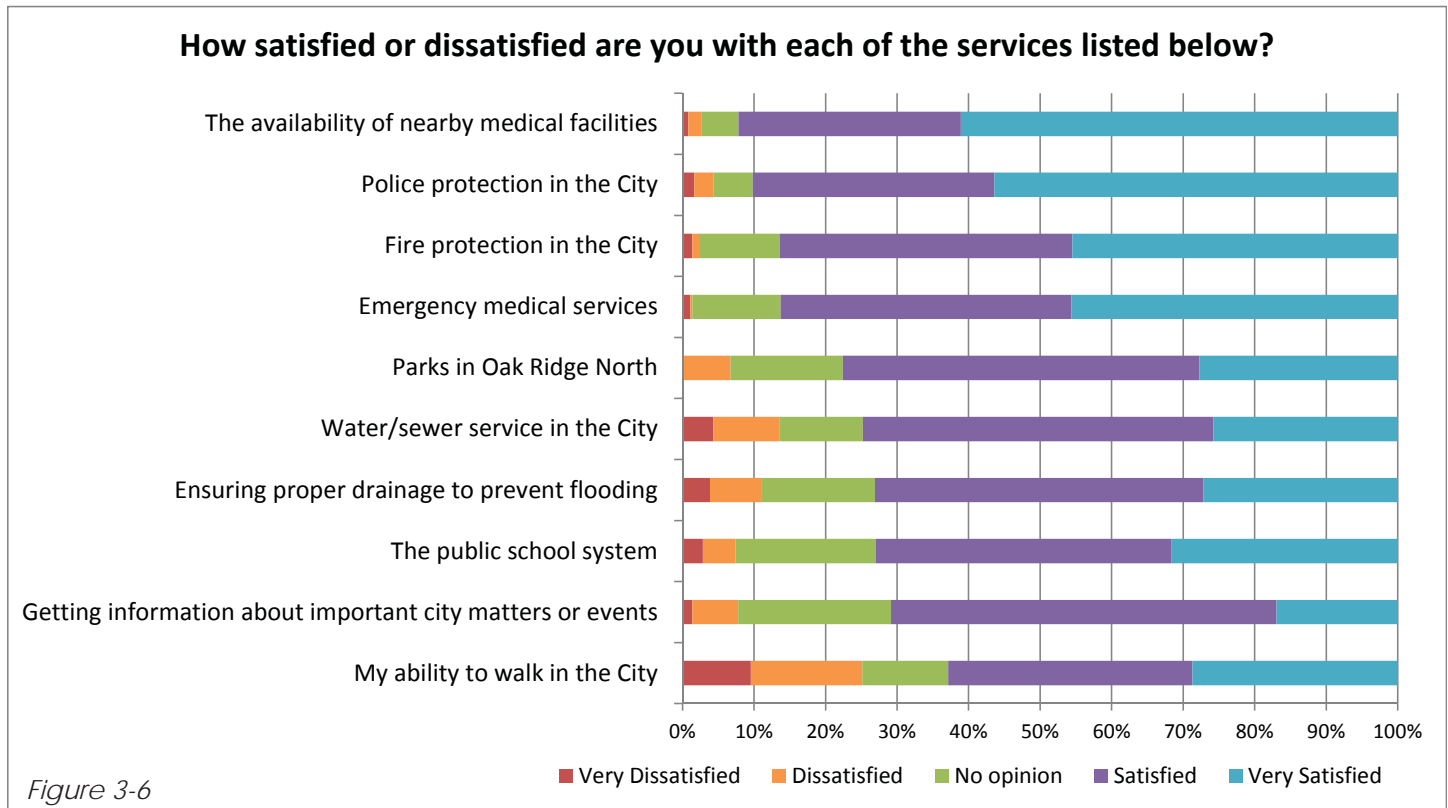


Figure 3-5



How satisfied are you with each of the services listed below?

Survey respondents were given a list of different city and non-city services and then asked to rate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with each one. The availability of nearby medical facilities, police protection in the City, fire protection in the City, and emergency medical services ranked the highest with more than 80% of the respondents being satisfied or very satisfied.



What one service should the City most focus on trying to improve?

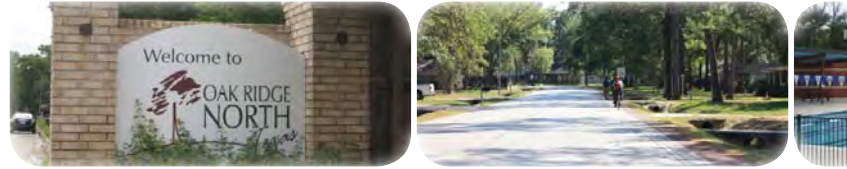
When residents were asked to select just one service from the list above that they feel the City should most focus on trying to improve, the number one services were code enforcement and traffic flow, both with a 23% response rate. The third highest was the availability of quality retail and commercial services, with a 13% response rate.

Code Enforcement.....	23%
Traffic Flow.....	23%
Quality Retail.....	13%

What one service should the City be the least concerned with improving?

Conversely, when asked what one service they felt the City should be the least concerned with improving, the number one response was art or cultural opportunities, with a 35% response rate. This was followed by library services (20%) and the availability of nearby medical facilities and police protection (both at 9%).

Art and Culture.....	35%
Library Services.....	20%
Nearby Medical.....	9%
Police Protection.....	9%



What are the most important elements to preserve in your neighborhood?

The two most important elements in terms of enhancing or preserving neighborhood character were (1) encourage owners to maintain the appearance of their homes to sustain property values and (2) having trees and attractive front yards. More than 90% of respondents indicated that these two elements were important or very important.

What are the most important elements to preserve or enhance in your neighborhood?

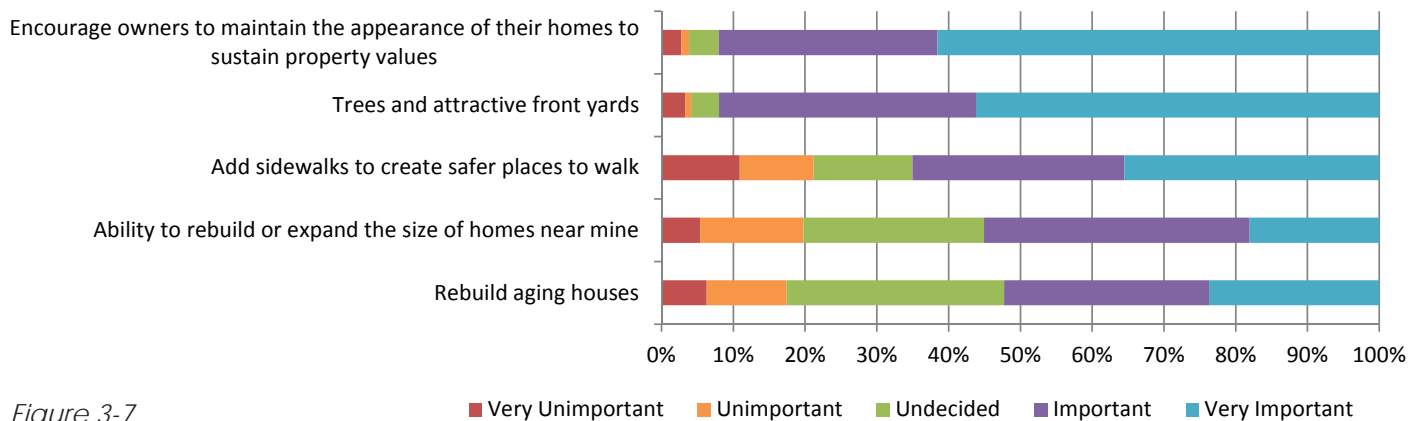


Figure 3-7

Comparing the condition of homes on your street

Survey respondents were asked to rate the overall condition of their home, and the overall exterior condition of the houses on their street. 96% rate their own home as being in either good or excellent condition. However, only 78% felt that the other houses on their street were in either good or excellent condition. 5% of respondents felt the other houses on their street were in poor condition.

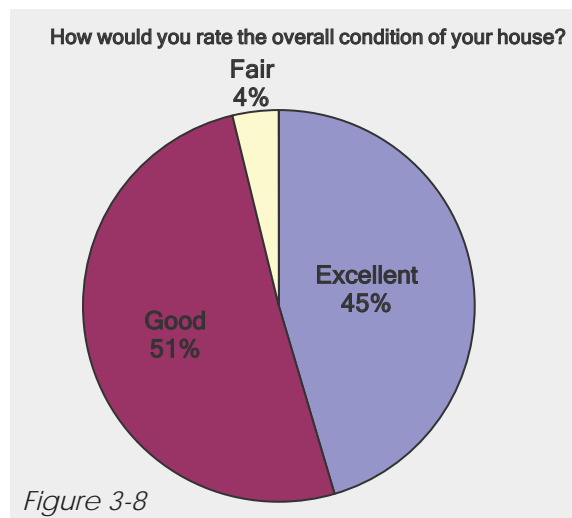


Figure 3-8

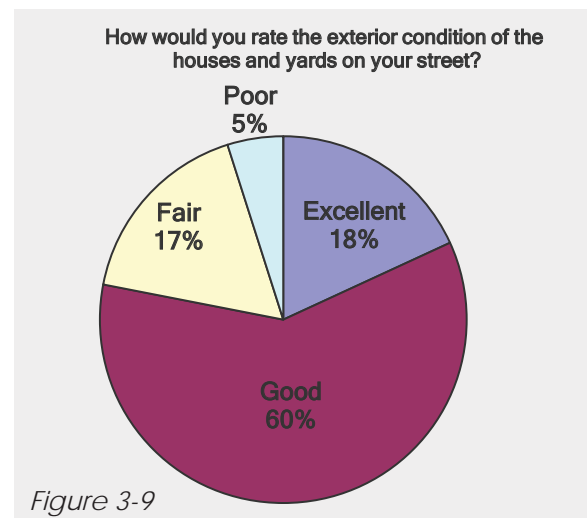
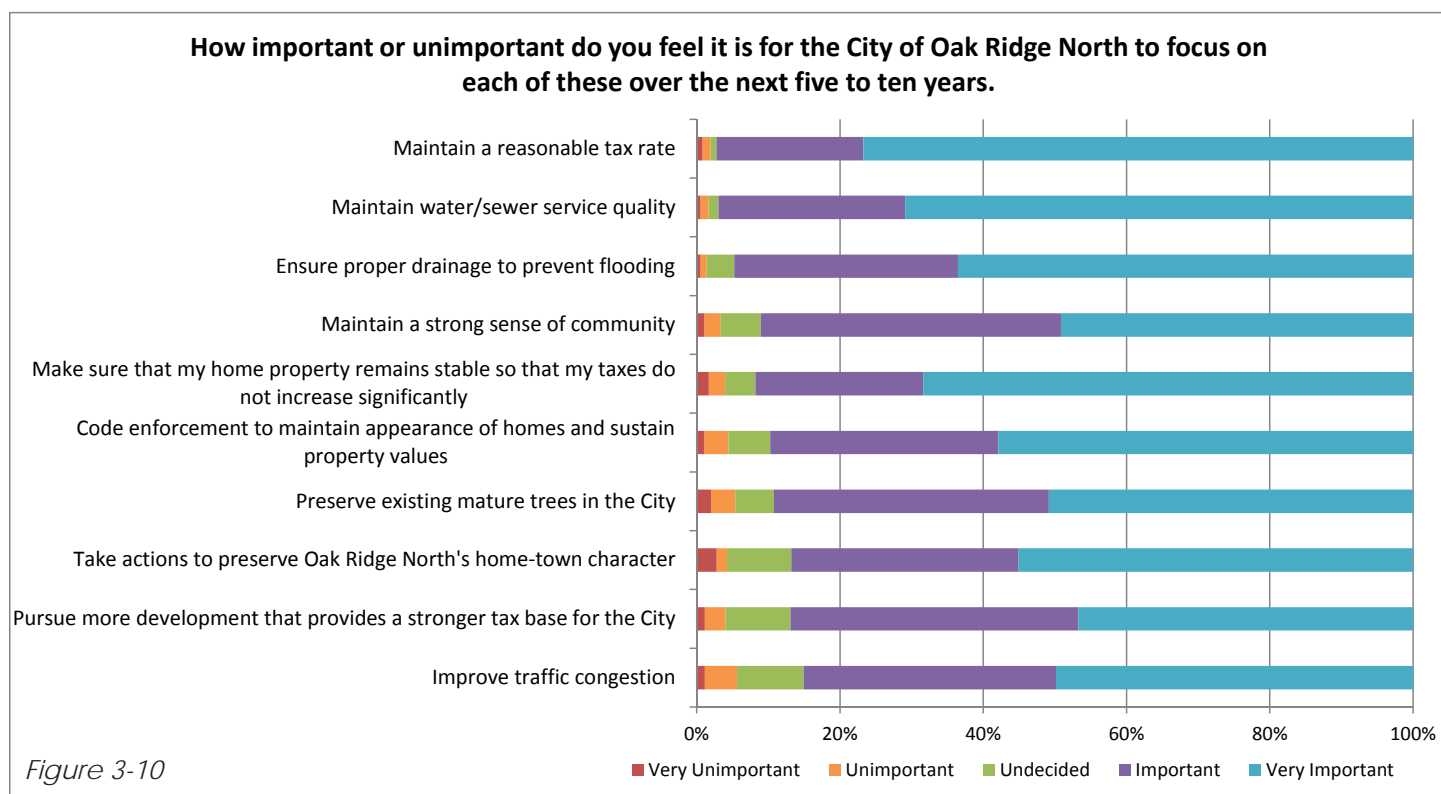


Figure 3-9



How important do you feel it is for the City to focus on each of these over the next five to ten years?

Respondents were given a list of potential issues related to living in Oak Ridge North. They were then asked to rate how important or unimportant it was for the City to focus on each one. The top ten most important issues are shown in the bar graph below. The number one issue was maintain a reasonable tax rate, with 97% of respondents indicating this was either important or very important.



Single key area that the City should focus on the most

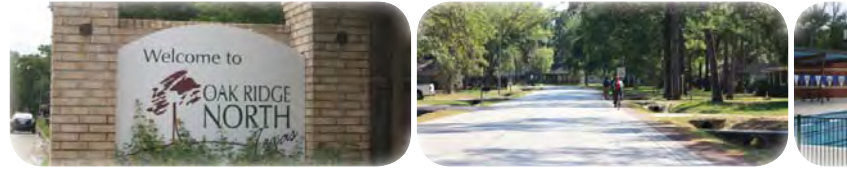
Residents were asked to select the one area from those listed above that they felt the City should focus on the most. The top three responses were:

1. Code enforcement (18%)
2. Maintain a reasonable tax rate (14%)
3. Have sidewalks and trails to walk or ride a bicycle (11%)

Single key area that the City should be least concerned with

Residents were also asked to select the one area that they felt the City should be the least concerned with. The top three responses were:

1. Increase art or cultural opportunities (28%)
2. Work with County to provide closer library services (14%)
3. Diversify the types of housing available (12%)



Transportation Issues

Respondents were given a list of different transportation issues that are currently impacting the City and were asked to rate how important it was for Oak Ridge North to address these issues in the immediate future. The five most important issues are shown in Figure 3-11.

Residents were then asked to select the one transportation issue they felt was the most important. The number one response was traffic congestion along Robinson Road, with a 31% response rate.

How important or unimportant is it for the City to address the following transportation issues ?

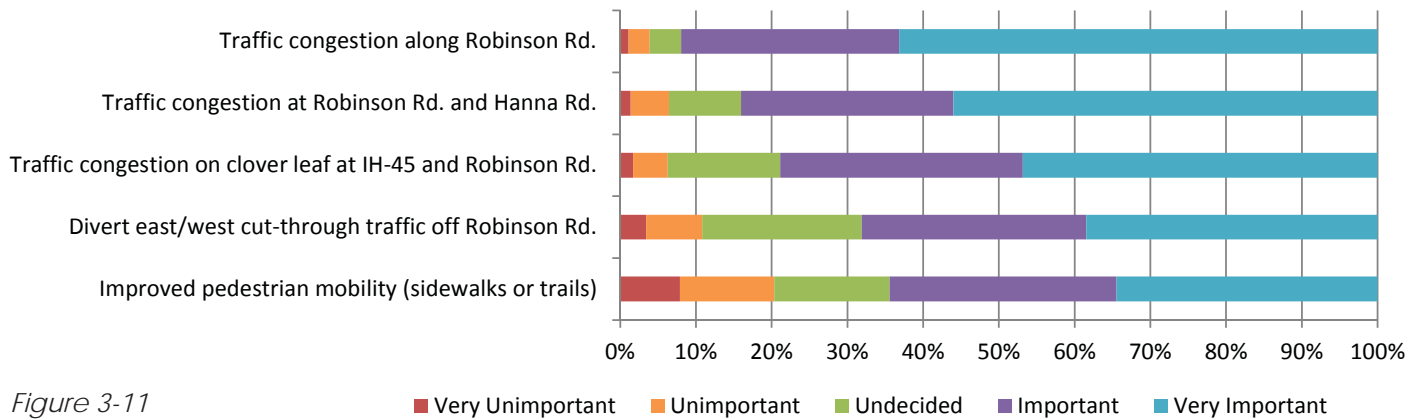


Figure 3-11

Park and Recreational Issues

Similar to transportation, respondents were given a list of different parks and recreational issues. They were asked to rate how important it was for Oak Ridge North to address these issues over the next five to ten years. The five most important issues are shown in Figure 3-12.

Residents were then asked to select the one recreational issue they felt was the most important. The number one response was add more trails or places to walk or ride throughout the City, with a 33% response rate.

How important or unimportant is it for the City to address the following park and recreational issues?

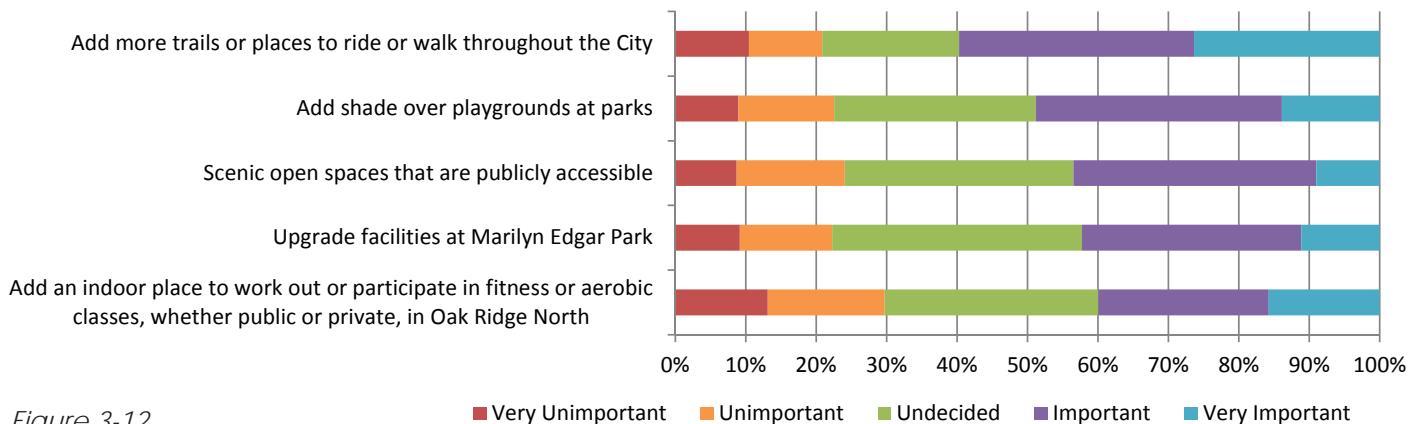
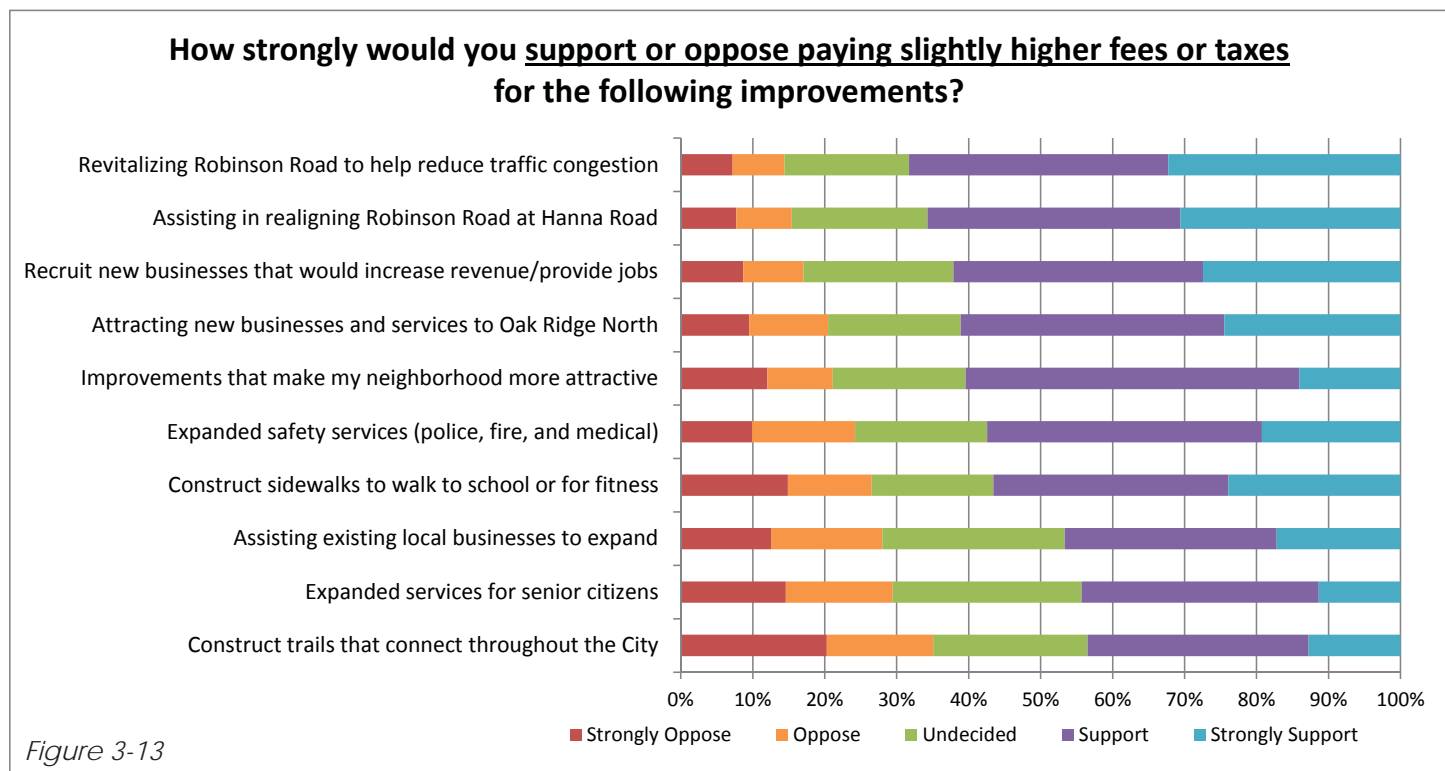


Figure 3-12



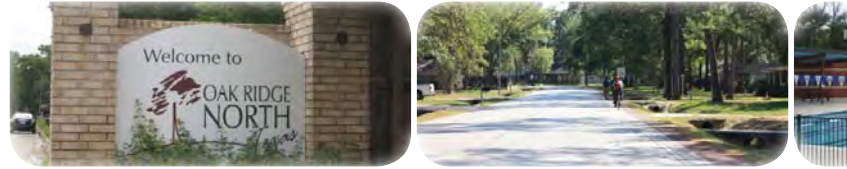
How strongly would you support or oppose paying slightly higher taxes to implement a variety of improvements?

Several key improvements that are needed in the City of Oak Ridge North were listed, and respondents were asked to indicate how strongly they would support or oppose paying slightly higher fees or taxes to implement these improvements. The higher fees or taxes could be in the form of increased property taxes, a bond election, or additional fees. The top ten most supported improvements are shown in Figure 3-13.



Residents were then asked to select the top three improvements they would be most likely to support. The response rates were as follows:

1. Revitalizing Robinson Rd. to help reduce traffic congestion (38%)
2. Construct sidewalks to walk to school or for fitness (32%)
3. Assist in realigning Robinson Rd. at Hanna Rd. to help improve traffic flow (30%)
4. Attract new businesses and services to Oak Ridge North (29%)
5. Expand safety services (police, fire, and medical) (27%)
6. Recruit new businesses that would increase revenue and provide job opportunities (25%)
7. Improvements that make my neighborhood more attractive (23%)
8. Construct trails that connect throughout the City (20%)
9. Improvements to slow traffic in my neighborhood (12%)
10. Expand services for senior citizens (10%)

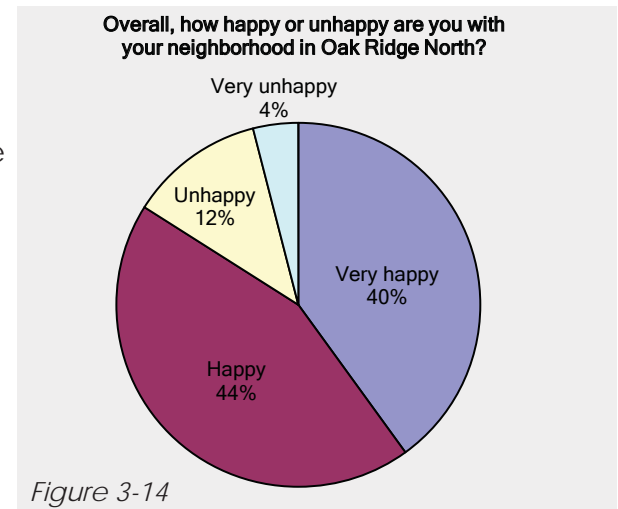


Kids Survey

The youth in a community are often times the primary users of city facilities such as parks, recreational programs, or community events. They often can have valuable suggestions on ways to improve those facilities or services. Children and teens can have a keen insight about what needs to be improved, what amenities are lacking, and what facilities are the most enjoyable. A one-page survey was at the back of the mail-out survey which asked parents to have their children under the age of 16 fill it out. The same survey was also available online.

How happy are you with your neighborhood in Oak Ridge North?

A total of 26 young residents of Oak Ridge North under the age of 16 answered the kids survey. Of those, 84% said they were happy or very happy with their neighborhoods and living in Oak Ridge North.



What do you like most about living in Oak Ridge North?

- ◆ I think it is really pretty in the area I live in and it's pretty much home to me.
- ◆ It's a good neighborhood and quiet
- ◆ The friendly neighbors
- ◆ Nice neighborhood, mostly good neighbors, and always are surround by policemen! Thank you for keeping us safe.
- ◆ The park
- ◆ A lot of my friends live here
- ◆ Pool plus safe neighborhood
- ◆ I can walk to school
- ◆ I like all the nice people
- ◆ Safety - great police department and my school
- ◆ Close to mall
- ◆ My house
- ◆ It's close to the school
- ◆ My gammie lives here too
- ◆ I like how I get to spend time with my dad
- ◆ It's quiet, peaceful, and occasionally very exciting (parade)
- ◆ It's a calm neighborhood with not many kids running around
- ◆ Close to park
- ◆ It is near my granny's house
- ◆ Park and trees
- ◆ Parks and trees
- ◆ That it's quiet and that I can walk or ride my bike to the stores and stuff
- ◆ I like it when the train comes by and I listen to it, and Oak Ridge is very pretty

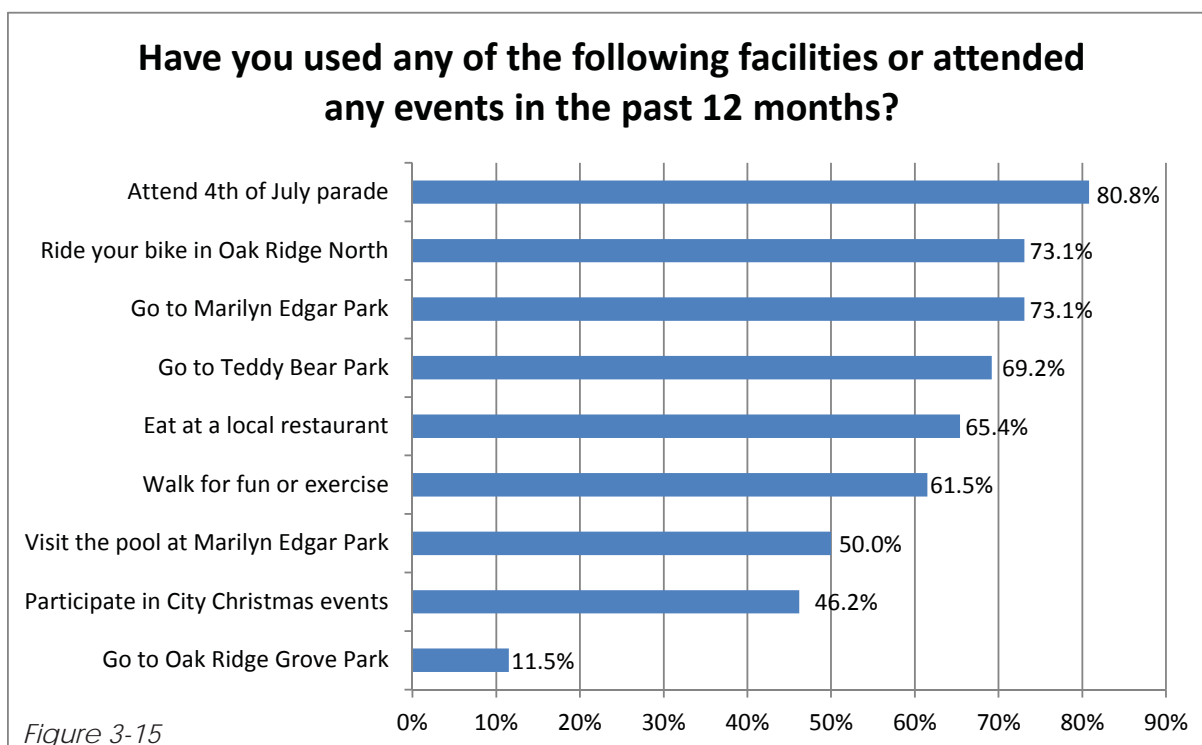


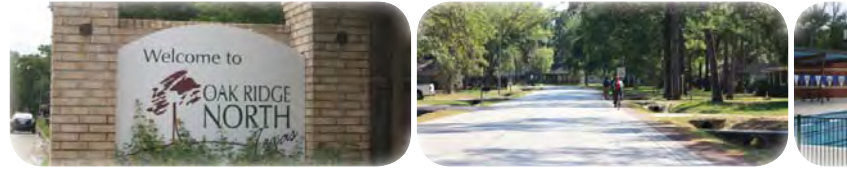
What do you not like about living in Oak Ridge North?

- ◆ I don't feel completely safe walking at night. It may just be me, though.
- ◆ The noise Oak Ridge school band makes during summer vacation.
- ◆ The only thing really is that there have been car robberies, which can be kind of spooky and unsafe.
- ◆ Cars going too fast
- ◆ Some houses are very old
- ◆ I don't feel secure because of the car theft, breaking and entering, etc.
- ◆ The fires and robberies
- ◆ No sidewalks
- ◆ No friends my age close by
- ◆ No kids, no sidewalks, no cool shops
- ◆ There are no sidewalks
- ◆ Cars drive fast
- ◆ Nothing
- ◆ No sidewalks
- ◆ No sidewalks
- ◆ Not enough kids on my street
- ◆ That you have to watch out for cars so much because they go too fast and don't look or stop and they run stop signs and stuff and that we don't have sidewalks
- ◆ Nothing

Have you used any of the following facilities or attended any of the following events in the past 12 months?

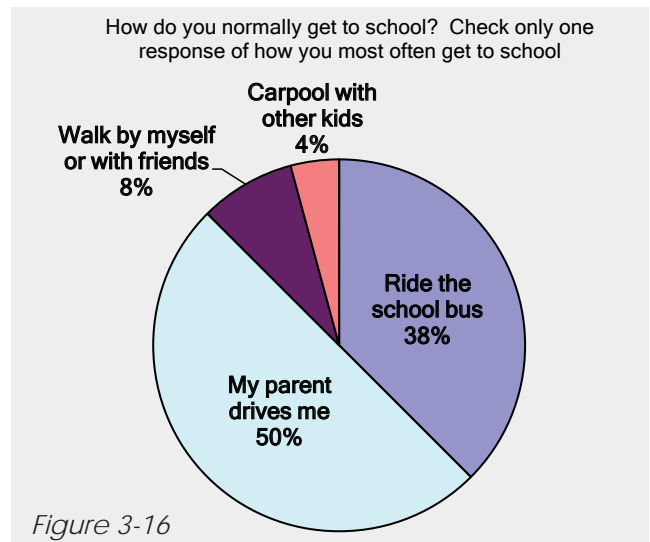
The more popular activities for the youth in Oak Ridge North were attending Fourth of July parade (80%), riding their bicycle (73%) and going to Marilyn Edgar Park (73%). Results are shown in Figure 3-15.





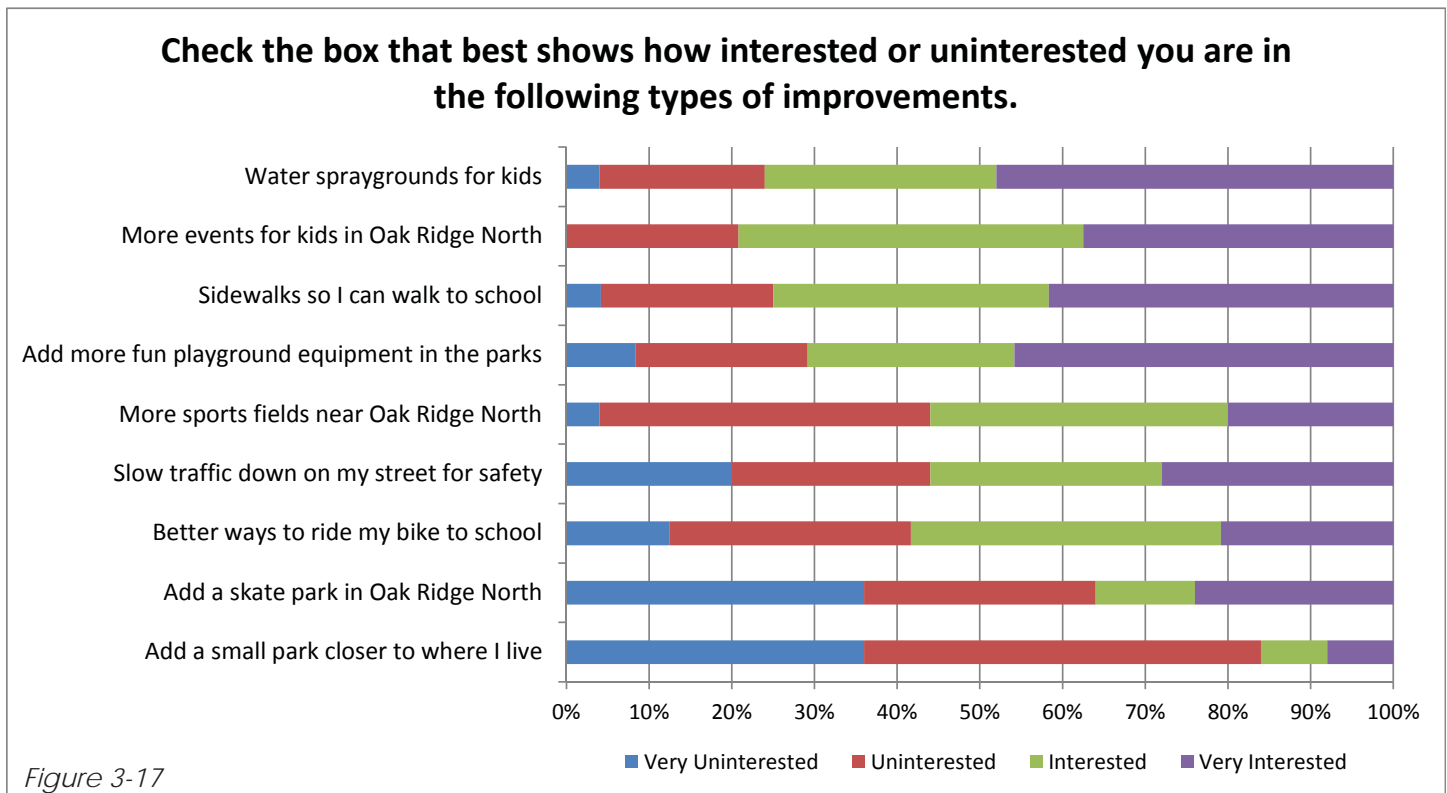
How do you normally get to school?

Young responders were asked how do they most often get to school. Half (50%) indicated that their parent drives them to school, followed by 38% who ride the bus. A small percent of the kids carpool with other children or walk by themselves or with friends. None of the kids who responded to the survey walked with their parent or rode their bicycle to school.



How interested are you in the following types of improvements?

Young responders were given a list of typical city improvements that could directly impact them. They were then asked to rate how interested or uninterested they were in each type of improvement. The most popular improvements were a water sprayground and more events for kids in Oak Ridge North (both had 19 responders either interested or very interested). The third-most popular improvement was adding sidewalks so that they can walk to school (18 interested or very interested). The results are shown in Figure 3-17.





Is there a place to go in Oak Ridge North for your favorite recreation activities?

When the young responders were asked if there was a place to go in Oak Ridge North to participate in their favorite recreational activities, 60% said no.

As a follow-up question, they were asked what are the reasons why they feel they cannot participate in their favorite activities in Oak Ridge North. The two most common responses were "I prefer to play at my house instead of at a park" and "I prefer indoor activities live video games, watching TV, etc." The results are shown in Figure 3-18.

Other write-in responses from the children included:

- ♦ Not sure if Oak Ridge North has it
- ♦ No kids to play with
- ♦ I don't have time (homework and other activities)
- ♦ No sidewalks, we like to ride our bikes and mom says there's too much traffic
- ♦ Too dangerous to go to the places by Flips because I have to cross Robinson

What are some of the main reasons why you might not be able to do your favorite recreation activities in Oak Ridge North?

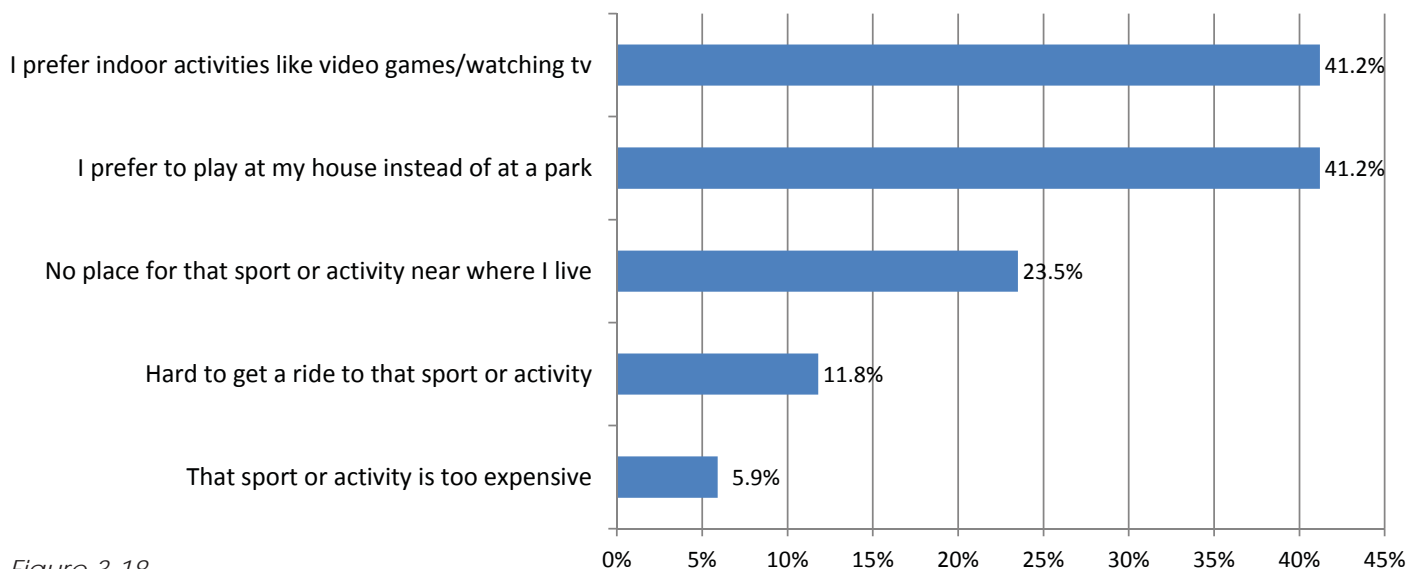


Figure 3-18



Intercept Survey

As part of the initial project kickoff, an intercept survey was done at the annual Fourth of July parade in 2012. This initial feedback helped set the stage for what citizens see as the issues and concerns living in Oak Ridge North and what the comprehensive plan should seek to accomplish. Feedback was received from over 115 people who completed the intercept survey. 33% were residents of the City of Oak Ridge North, and 67% did not live in the City. Some of the initial findings are listed below.

What are Oak Ridge North's strengths?

- ◆ Low taxes
- ◆ Strong police force/security
- ◆ Parks
- ◆ Big yards/curb appeal
- ◆ Trees
- ◆ Hometown feel/small town/friendliness/sense of community
- ◆ Location

What ideas do you have for improving Oak Ridge North?

- ◆ Sidewalks
- ◆ Annual neighborhood garage sale
- ◆ Upkeep of property and houses/enforce home restrictions
- ◆ Clean up commercial areas/shopping centers are ugly
- ◆ Bigger pool
- ◆ Resurface and widen roads
- ◆ More trees
- ◆ Traffic
- ◆ Develop more along Hanna
- ◆ Bicycle and walking areas
- ◆ Reduce water rates
- ◆ Traffic lights (Robinson & Hanna)
- ◆ Bathrooms by Marilyn Edgar pool smell
- ◆ Water park/splash pad
- ◆ Recreation – gym, tennis courts, racquetball, more pools
- ◆ Recycling program
- ◆ Uniform fencing ordinance

What do you consider to be Oak Ridge North's weaknesses?

- ◆ Need deed restrictions
- ◆ Offer online billing
- ◆ Need sidewalks
- ◆ Traffic
- ◆ Exposed drainage
- ◆ More entertainment
- ◆ Streets/pot holes
- ◆ Better lighting

What is the single most important item for the City to tackle in the next few years?

- ◆ Deed restrictions
- ◆ Traffic flow
- ◆ Zoning
- ◆ Road quality/repair
- ◆ Sidewalks
- ◆ Lower water bills/water rates too high
- ◆ Crime/drugs/drunk driving
- ◆ Growth
- ◆ Better looking commercial
- ◆ Webcast the council meeting
- ◆ Splash pad for the kids
- ◆ Bring businesses
- ◆ Cut city staff
- ◆ Tax base
- ◆ More schools/schools overcrowded
- ◆ Drainage ditches
- ◆ Do not eliminate 270 degree off ramp
- ◆ Robinson Road connections
- ◆ Keep parks nice



- ♦ Street lights in neighborhoods
- ♦ Underground utilities
- ♦ More parking
- ♦ More community event

What one or two words define your opinion of Oak Ridge North?

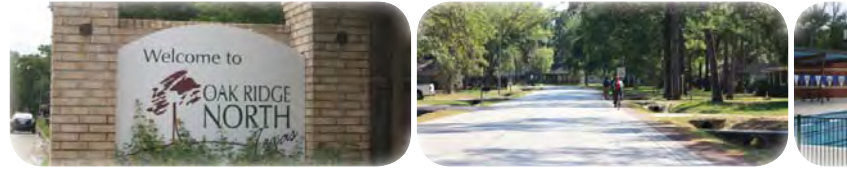
- ♦ Family home town
- ♦ Best kept secret
- ♦ Old time feel
- ♦ Quaint
- ♦ Unpretentious
- ♦ Well-kept city
- ♦ A nice community
- ♦ Outstanding cute
- ♦ The best
- ♦ Clean cut city
- ♦ Welcoming and fun
- ♦ Pretty
- ♦ Awesome
- ♦ Great neighborhood identity
- ♦ Small hometown
- ♦ Clean
- ♦ Friendly
- ♦ Clean and quiet
- ♦ Small town, big blessings

- ♦ Well-taken care of
- ♦ Outstanding
- ♦ Small town heroes
- ♦ Homey
- ♦ Close community
- ♦ Family oriented
- ♦ Pleasant place to live
- ♦ Good city
- ♦ Great place to live and work
- ♦ Old town, betterment of the community
- ♦ Safe, quiet
- ♦ Great!
- ♦ Lots of nature
- ♦ Nature friendly
- ♦ Down home
- ♦ Speed trap
- ♦ Nice little town
- ♦ Just keep driving
- ♦ Nice neighborhoods
- ♦ Calm
- ♦ Great community involvement
- ♦ Peaceful
- ♦ Wooded America
- ♦ Good infrastructure

Food Basket Intercept Survey

A brief intercept survey was conducted by one of the CPAC members in front of the Food Basket in Oak Ridge North in June 2012 which asked people what they liked or what they would change in the City. Some of the more common answers were:

- ♦ Convenient location
- ♦ Friendly neighborhoods/small-town community/quiet
- ♦ Good police presence
- ♦ Need more amenities/parks/sidewalks
- ♦ Streets need to be repaired/something to slow down drivers
- ♦ Increase small business development/more economic development
- ♦ Improve traffic on Robinson Road



Open Houses/Public Workshops

The mail-out survey and companion online survey provided a broad understanding of current citizen perceptions. To further expand those ideas, two community-wide open houses and one focus group meeting were held during the course of the planning process. These meetings helped generate specific feedback and ideas regarding issues and opportunities throughout all of Oak Ridge North.



Meeting #1 - Issues and Vision (October 2012)

Meeting format - The meeting began as an open house, where attendees (120+) could look at a range of illustrations and boards that described the existing conditions of Oak Ridge North and potential solutions for the future of the City. At these illustrations, participants had the chance to voice their opinion by using sticker dots to indicate what they liked or did not like.

A brief presentation was then given by the planning team about the conditions in Oak Ridge North and the purpose of doing a comprehensive plan.

Following the presentation, attendees broke out into smaller groups to discuss four key areas: what are the three most critical issues facing Oak Ridge North today; what would you like to see changed 20 years from now; what would you like to see remain the same 20 years from now; and what are top three types of retail stores that are missing or are not easily available in Oak Ridge North today?

The tables were self-guided, meaning that each table assigned someone to be the recorder who would lead the table through the discussion. At the end of the open house, each table presented their ideas to the four questions.

Results - Input from the meeting was gathered in two ways: (1) from the boards on which participants place their sticker dots to indicate their positive or negative opinions about different issues; and (2) from the small-group discussions.

What do you like most about living in Oak Ridge North? Meeting attendees cited convenience and location as the most popular reason for why they liked here (52 votes). Other popular reasons were safety and security (31 votes), and friendliness (23 votes).

What is the single most important issue for the City to address? Those who attended the open house felt that preservation of neighborhood value was the most important issue to address (23 votes). This was followed closely by traffic congestion (21 votes), and a strategy for Robinson Road (10 votes).

What characteristics do you like for a Town Center? Attendees were shown a variety of characteristics and amenities that a Town Center could offer, and were asked to select which one they liked best. The most popular characteristics were mixed use





retail/office space (27 votes) and public gathering spaces (10 votes).

How would you like to see Hanna Road transition in the future? Residents were shown options for potential uses along Hanna Road, and asked to select which uses they would support. The most supported choice was offer more restaurants (25 votes). Other uses that were supported were mixed use of retail/office/residential (16 votes) and offer more retail (11 votes).

What are the key issues in your neighborhood? One area of concern that was voiced by the residents of Oak Ridge North was the deterioration of their neighborhoods and homes. Meeting attendees were asked which neighborhood issues is the most important to them. Overwhelmingly, the number one issue was landscape/lawn care (42 votes). Other areas of concern were front facade/general maintenance (25 votes), add curb and gutters (17 votes), preserve mature trees (16 votes), slow vehicle traffic on neighborhood streets (14 votes), and allow replacement of older homes (11 votes).

What neighborhood solution do you support? Residents were then given a list of potential solutions that could be used to address those neighborhood issues. They were asked to indicate which solution they would support. The solution receiving the most support was incentives to encourage home repairs and routine maintenance (29 votes). Other supported solutions were adding sidewalks where feasible by the City (23 votes) and adding neighborhood gateways, pocket parks and landscape islands (13 votes).

What type of recreational facilities would you like to see added to existing parks? When meeting attendees were asked which type of recreational amenities they would like to see added to the existing parks in Oak Ridge North, the most popular response was for a splash pad/sprayground (19 votes). Other facilities the residents were interested in were amphitheater and community gardens (5 votes each).

There were a total of nine groups formed during the small-group discussion exercise. After reviewing and combining the answers from the nine groups, several common themes were revealed.

What one word or phrase best describes Oak Ridge North today?

- ◆ Friendly
- ◆ Hometown
- ◆ Family
- ◆ Safe
- ◆ Small
- ◆ Behind the times/dated

What are the three most critical issues facing Oak Ridge North today that need to be addressed?

- ◆ Traffic/traffic flow/traffic congestion
- ◆ Code enforcement
- ◆ Economic development
- ◆ Taxes
- ◆ Crime/communication from police about crime/security



In 20 years from now, what would you like to see changed in Oak Ridge North?

- ◆ Sidewalks/walking and bike paths
- ◆ Landscaping and appearance - clean and well kept
- ◆ Things to attract young adults (trails, etc.)

In 20 years from now, what would you like to see remain the same?

- ◆ Hometown feel/small town appeal
- ◆ Trees
- ◆ Police/fire departments
- ◆ Community activities

What are the top three types of retail stores that are missing or are not easily available in Oak Ridge North?

- ◆ Restaurants/dining options
- ◆ Boutique shops
- ◆ Hotel
- ◆ Dry cleaners
- ◆ Grocery store (alternative/larger)
- ◆ Ice cream/yogurt shop



Meeting #2 - Focus Group Discussions (February 2013)

Meeting format - The focus group meeting was attended by over 60 residents of Oak Ridge North. After a brief presentation explaining the purpose of the meeting, residents were asked to divide into groups based on one of four focus group topics they wanted to discuss. There was one focus group discussing parks and civic amenities, and two focus groups discussing transportation, neighborhoods, and economic growth each. In total, there were seven focus groups.

After the group discussion period, each group presented its results to all attending. A summary of the results of the individual group discussions is described below.

Results

Transportation Summary

There were two groups of residents discussing transportation issues in Oak Ridge North. The first group listed the top five transportation issues as being:

1. Traffic concerns along Robinson Road; and the intersection of Hanna and Robinson
2. Re-engineering ditches to add curbs and gutters





3. Traffic concerns along Woodson Road during school time
4. Robinson Road in Oak Ridge North should have places to walk and ride a bicycle; lack of sidewalks or places to walk citywide; and lack of places to safely ride a bike citywide
5. Crossing Robinson – north part of the City to the South part of the City is difficult; and intersection of Maplewood and Harlan is not aligned, hard to get across.

When asked to provide ideas or solutions to these concerns, the first group responded:

- ♦ The intersection of Robinson and Hanna should be rerouted
- ♦ Possibly turn houses on Robinson Road into commercial property with landscaping (example: Heights Blvd./Rice)
- ♦ If commercial property was allowed along Robinson Road, parking should be in the front of the businesses, not in the back. Or give people some designated place to park and make them walk to the places of business.
- ♦ Over time, Hanna Road and Woodson Road should both be widened somewhat accommodate more volume, but small town character should be maintained.

The second transportation group listed the top five issues as being:

1. Traffic concerns along Robinson Road
2. Intersection of Hanna and Robinson
3. Cut-through traffic along Robinson, leading to Imperial Oaks
4. Lack of sidewalks or places to walk citywide; and lack of places to safely ride a bike citywide
5. The north/south crossing at Woodson and Maplewood

The second group listed the following ideas as possible solutions to these issues:

- ♦ To address traffic flow on Robinson – add a traffic light at Maplewood and Robinson; install strategic traffic lights and turn lanes; and re-route Robinson Road.
- ♦ To improve the intersection of Hanna and Robinson, they suggested – controlled center lane on Robinson; more parking and improvements to City Hall; developing a community center; and adding more green space and parks.
- ♦ When asked about allowing businesses along Robinson and accommodating the parking, this group suggested that zoning needs to add for the appropriate amount of parking for allowed businesses.
- ♦ They suggested businesses – but not industrial in appearance – should be added to Woodson and Hanna.
- ♦ Sidewalks and bicycle facilities should be added north/south along Harlan and Patsy; one side of Maplewood such as in Shenandoah with the culverts and drainage; and walkway to Town Center and Market Street.
- ♦ Adjustments need to be made to – IH-45 feeder road intersection on west side going south; a signal installed at Woodson and Hanna; and beautify Woodson by adding paths
- ♦ One final idea the second group had related to transportation was a citywide repaving program.



Economic Growth Summary

Two groups of residents discussed economic growth issues in Oak Ridge North. The first group listed the top five issues as being:

1. The City needs to encourage new development that increases the city's economic base for all remaining undeveloped or under-developed areas.
2. New development in the city needs to be higher in quality (for example, all masonry, not metal buildings).
3. The City needs to add areas east of Hanna Road into the City.
4. New development with higher value needs to be encouraged at Robinson and Hanna.
5. The City needs to encourage more growth along Hanna Road.

The first economic growth group had the following ideas to address these issues:

- ◆ Annex areas east of Hanna Road.
- ◆ Create a town center with sidewalks, unique eateries, coffee shops, yogurt shops, outside cafes, and a movie theater.
- ◆ The first group did not want any apartments in Oak Ridge North, but felt town homes were okay as a type of higher density housing.

The second group focusing on economic growth rated the following issues as being their top concern:

1. The City needs to encourage more growth along Hanna Road; new development in the city needs to be higher in quality (for example, all masonry, not metal buildings); the City needs to encourage new development that increases the city's economic base for all remaining undeveloped or under-developed areas; new development with higher value needs to be encouraged at Robinson and Hanna; and redevelopment supported by EDC.
2. Where should higher density housing, like town homes, be allowed; and what types of uses and businesses would you like to see in a new town center for the City.
3. The City needs to add areas east of Hanna Road into the city; older freeway commercial areas need to be expanded; and what areas should be considered for annexation in the future.
4. Besides single family houses, different housing types like townhouses are needed in the City.
5. Allow more home business flexibility in homes along Robinson between Patsy and Maplewood.



This group offered the following ideas as solutions to these issues:

- ◆ Other concerns are attracting new businesses with a strong tax base, and redevelopment.
- ◆ The City should recruit selective businesses aggressively.
- ◆ Areas east of the railroad and south of Sawdust should be annexed in the future.
- ◆ A new town center should offer restaurants, boutiques, specialty shops, coffee shops, and an ice cream parlor.
- ◆ If offering higher density housing such as town homes, they should be added to the town center – but only if owner occupied (not renters).
- ◆ Other related issues this group was concerned about were freeway noise and the need for a sound wall, and having a quiet zone along the railroad.

Neighborhoods Summary

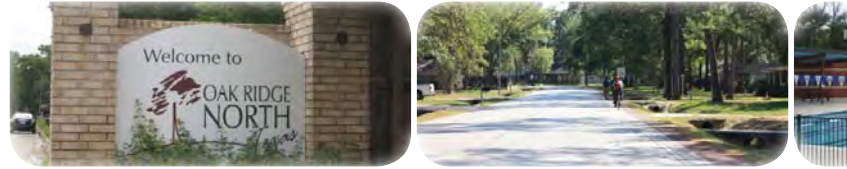
The top concerns of the first group discussing neighborhood issues were:

1. Aging homes, fences in disrepair, lack of appealing landscape, homes need refreshing and painting, etc.
2. Traffic: people who don't live in Oak Ridge North using our streets as thoroughfare; lack of sidewalks, paths for children; delays in leaving Oak Ridge North; congestion on Robinson, Hanna, Maplewood
3. Noise: especially during the winter and particularly since the fly-over.
4. Home value: none of us want to lose money on our homes, but certainly we want to maintain and increase.
5. Code enforcement – let's clean up the neighborhood. We need community service projects with all who are willing to help. We need a point person to receive requests, and to contact groups willing to help such as scouts, church youth groups, retired neighbors, etc.



The second group discussing neighborhood issues felt all issues were of concern to their group:

1. Homes that are not well taken care of; front yard or fence in disrepair; cars go too fast on my street; cut-through traffic; too much traffic on my street; I want my neighborhood and my home to grow in value; and homes in neighborhood are aging, need updating.
2. Need signs or markers identifying my neighborhood
3. Lack of park amenities close to my home; lack of green space close to my home



4. Nearby commercial areas
5. No sidewalks, have to walk in the street in my neighborhood; no trail to walk on near my home; delays getting out of my neighborhood; not much interaction with my neighbors on my street (would like to get to know my neighbors); my street doesn't have enough street lights; too much noise from freeway; I want my neighborhood and my home to retain their value, but don't want the value to go up too much because of taxes; I want my neighborhood to be distinctive; my neighborhood is pretty much like all the others in Oak Ridge North; no way for kids to walk or ride their bikes to school, even though the schools are very close.

The second discussion group for neighborhoods had the following ideas to improve these issues:

- ◆ Other areas of concern are outdoor storage; siding on homes; roofs; and the need to develop an HOA.
- ◆ The second group suggested code enforcement, creating an HOA, and creating proper codes could help resolve these issues.
- ◆ They suggested a splash pad for children be added to their neighborhoods.
- ◆ This group would participate in a new Homeowners Association to help enhance the value of the neighborhoods in Oak Ridge North.
- ◆ Other ideas relating to neighborhoods included: retail signage restrictions and commercial areas.

Parks and Civic Amenities Summary

A single group discussed issues relating to parks, trails, and civic amenities. They rated their top five concerns as being:

1. Not enough trails in the city
2. Marilyn Edgar Park needs upgrades
3. Oak Ridge North lacks a town center, a heart of the City
4. The City lacks decorative landscaping at its key gateways, specifically Lane Ln.
5. It is hard to get to the closest park near me without driving

The group had the following ideas to address these issues:

- ◆ Other facilities needed in Oak Ridge North are upgrades to the baseball field, and a sprayground
- ◆ Marilyn Edgar Park needs shade and more baseball fields
- ◆ The group felt a community center building should be added, and possible location could be next to City Hall (which could become the new town center location).



Other ideas the group had included:

- ◆ Adding curb and gutters in the neighborhoods, filling in the ditches with underground drainage, then using that space for sidewalks
- ◆ Add lights and restrooms at the baseball field
- ◆ Add lights to the tennis court
- ◆ Add a shade tarp to the parks
- ◆ Create a town center at the corner of Robinson and Hanna
- ◆ Create gateways with trees by the tracks, landscaping, painted sign, chevron fence

Summary of Key Findings - Many of the discussion topics in each group involved topic areas being discussed by other groups, and many common themes emerged from the discussion. These include:
The re-routing of Robinson Road to eliminate the jog along Hanna needs to happen, and a route generally crossing Hanna where east Robinson intersects Hanna was supported. Many groups also supported the idea of considering the re-development of this area into a town center for Oak Ridge North. Higher density housing such as town homes could be considered in this area.

Neighborhood discussion groups supported the need for increased enforcement of ordinances and codes to address homes in disrepair, but also supported the idea of encouraging the renovation or reconstruction of aging homes to sustain area property values. Neighborhoods should also consider forming neighborhood or Homeowner Associations to help encourage and assist in property upkeep.

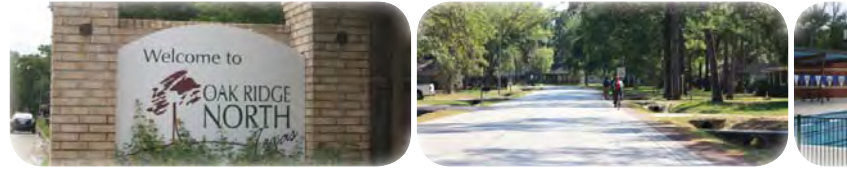
Multiple groups called for additional sidewalks and places to walk or ride bicycles.

Multiple groups also called for encouraging growth east of Hanna Road, and noted that the City should encourage the annexation of some of these areas over time.



Meeting #3 - Key Recommended Actions (April 2013)

Meeting format - All residents in the City of Oak Ridge North were invited to attend the final public meeting to review the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. The meeting was attended by over 110 residents. A detailed presentation was given which divided the recommendations into the categories of transportation and mobility, infrastructure, economic development and land use, neighborhood preservation, branding and community identity, parks and civic facilities, and public



safety. After the presentation, residents were invited to ask any questions or provide their comments and feedback. The results of the discussion are listed below.

Summary of Key Findings - Residents as a whole were supportive of the recommendations and the plan overall. Most of the comments received were in support of implementing the actions sooner, such as would it be possible to adjust the Hanna Road/Robinson Road intersection now instead of waiting another year for the regional mobility study to be completed in conjunction with Montgomery County and other entities. Other comments that were received included:

- ◆ Residents liked that the City is considering alternative traffic calming devices instead of the typical speed hump.
- ◆ Can the City look into a quiet zone or noise restriction for the trains? While this can be done, it is very costly because the crossings have to be re-engineered, the signals have to be redone, it would include more than just the Oak Ridge North crossings, and it is something that is done by the federal government and the railroad company.
- ◆ The citizens do not understand why the City is unable to enforce codes restrictions when it comes to neighborhood preservation and home maintenance. An educational campaign needs to be done so residents are aware of what the code says in terms of how high grass can be, what color homes can be painted, what type of fencing is allowed, and how the City can legally enforce some codes while other home maintenance issues are not within the control of the City's enforcement officer.
- ◆ Is there a way to incentivize businesses to give themselves the name "Oak Ridge North ..." instead of "The Woodlands ..." ?



Summary of Public Input - What Does It Tell Us?

Several prominent concerns and ideas were brought to light repeatedly during the public input process which include:

- ◆ Traffic is a major concern, especially related to Robinson and Hanna roads;
- ◆ Neighborhood preservation of value and revitalization is important;
- ◆ Attracting new retail and commercial development to the City (preferably higher in quality and character) is important;
- ◆ Trails and sidewalks need to be added for residents to have places to walk or ride a bicycle;
- ◆ Developing a "Town Center" for Oak Ridge North is an ultimate goal;
- ◆ Guiding the growth in areas east of Hanna Road is important, especially as those areas are annexed into the City;
- ◆ Completing the installation of gateway and identity features is important;
- ◆ Adding storm drainage throughout the City, especially south of Robinson, is needed;
- ◆ Infrastructure improvements are necessary and need to continue into the future;
- ◆ Designating appropriate areas for new housing should be done in conjunction with the future land use plan, and should be detailed in the type of housing and building/design requirements.



Chapter 4



Neighborhood Recommendations



Neighborhood Preservation, Enhancement and Community Identity

Residents of Oak Ridge North are passionate about their neighborhoods.

The spirit of "hometown" starts first with our homes. Just as they feel proud of their homes and neighborhoods, Oak Ridge North residents want their fellow neighbors to feel the same way, letting their homes express the pride that they feel for their city.

Unfortunately, not every property owner in the City is able to or even wants to invest as much in their home property. Whether because of fixed or limited resources, a lack of physical ability to keep up with the many small repairs and yard work that are needed, or simply a lack of caring, some homes in the City are in disrepair and are impacting other nearby properties. This angers those that do care and that do want to see their financial investment in their property rise.

Because it is among the most important issue to many residents of the City, this section is devoted to assessing neighborhood issues and recommending actions that address those concerns.



Existing Neighborhood Issues and Concerns

Almost 70% of the land area of Oak Ridge North is comprised of single family residential neighborhoods. With the exception of the retail strip along the IH-45 frontage road and the commercial area along Hanna Road and a small portion of Robinson Road, the remainder of the City is neighborhoods.

Homes range from smaller ranch style home buildings in the first areas to be built in the 1960s and 1970s to large two and three story homes built in the last two decades. Most are characterized by attractive front yards, well kept up facades, and many towering mature oaks and pines.

Neighborhoods in the City are generally divided into three areas, the southern area built initially, the central area built soon after the first, and the northern



CHAPTER 4 - NEIGHBORHOOD AND IDENTITY RECOMMENDATIONS



area built in the 1980s and 1990s. The most recent neighborhood in the City was built less than 10 years ago. Beyond a few duplexes, the City overwhelmingly consists of suburban style single family residences.

General Characteristics of the Southern Neighborhoods in Oak Ridge North

The first homes in Oak Ridge North date back to the mid 1960s, and were built in the southern sector of the City. These homes reflect the smaller ranch style housing that was becoming popular at that time. General characteristics of the area south of Robinson Road are as follows:

- ◆ The area is almost entirely built out, with no undeveloped single family lots remaining;
- ◆ Drainage in the entire area is handled via open swales. Most are natural with turf sides, but a few have concrete sides or bottoms to control erosion;
- ◆ There are no sidewalks in the area;
- ◆ There is significant mature tree growth in the southern area, although some dead or dying trees exist as a result of recent drought conditions;
- ◆ Property values in the southern area range from \$110,000 to \$200,000;
- ◆ The area is served by Marilyn Edgar Park and Oak Ridge Grove Park, but residents can also easily get to Teddy Bear Park along Robinson Road;
- ◆ Area middle school students go to nearby Dolly Vogal Intermediate School, but have to travel to the northern area of the City for elementary and high school;
- ◆ Street patterns are less direct than in the northern part of the City. Maplewood and Westwood are the primary routes for traffic through area neighborhoods; and
- ◆ Relatively direct access to the Food Basket for groceries can be one of the major strengths of these neighborhoods. If a Town Center is developed, homes in the area can have excellent access to any new Town Center amenities.

Because many of the homes in this area are nearing 50 years of age, a higher percentage are in need of repair. Many of these homes are also smaller in size, and homeowners may choose to move to a larger or more modern home rather than invest in their aging property.





General Characteristics of Neighborhoods in the Northern Areas of Oak Ridge North

Developed during the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, homes north of Robinson Road tend to be somewhat newer, but many are still over 30 years old. Homes in this area tend to reflect the larger home style trend that began during that time frame, and as a result property values are somewhat higher than the southern neighborhoods.



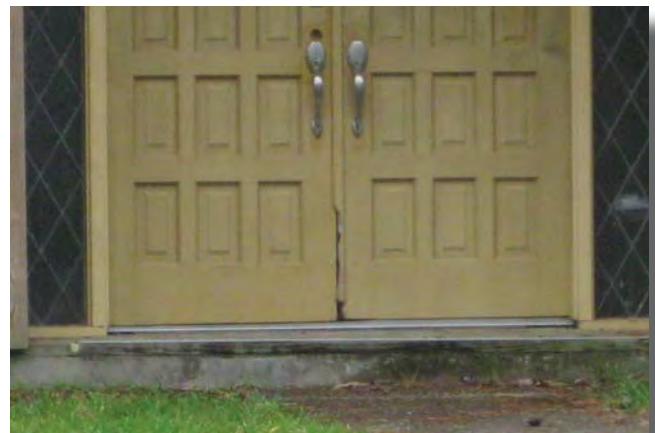
- ◆ The oldest homes in the area date to 1970s;
- ◆ The area is approximately 98% built out. Only a few undeveloped lots on Blueberry Hill remain;
- ◆ All streets north of Robinson Road are curbed with storm sewers, with the exception of Blueberry Hill Drive;
- ◆ Similar to the southern area, sidewalks were not included as the neighborhoods were being built;
- ◆ Significant mature trees have been preserved, and new trees have also grown to provide an extensive and extremely valuable tree cover;
- ◆ This area is served only by Teddy Bear Park. Marilyn Edgar Park is one to two miles distance from the majority of homes in this area;
- ◆ The area has excellent walking or biking access to Oak Ridge High School and Emmet Hauser Elementary School;
- ◆ Traffic flow through the area generally occurs along Woodson Road, Patsy and Harlan Lanes, and along Blueberry Hill Drive. Roadway patterns are direct and easy to navigate;
- ◆ Some replacement of older homes in this area is occurring, as well as renovations to some of the existing homes in the area;



◆ Generally, homes in the area tend to be in better condition than those in the southern area; and

◆ Because trees in this area are not quite as extensive as the southern area of the City, front yard landscaping tends to be somewhat more elaborate.

As in the southern area, higher home values occur further away from IH-45. While the entire area is effectively screened from the freeway, noise levels may have an impact on properties nearest to the freeway.



Examples of property upkeep concerns in neighborhoods throughout Oak Ridge North

Key Neighborhood Issues

Extensive resident input was received related to neighborhood issues, and this input focused primarily on the condition and appearance of some homes in the City. More specifically, key issues noted were:

- ◆ Location and accessibility are still major reasons why Oak Ridge North is a good place to live;
- ◆ Front facades and roofs of some homes are in need of repair and painting



- ◆ Recently foreclosed or unoccupied homes in particular are a concern to adjacent residents;
- ◆ Front yard landscaping is deteriorating or turf areas are dead;
- ◆ Concrete driveways and walkways are being uplifted by nearby roots and the subsequent cracking is unsightly;
- ◆ Outdoor storage of boats or recreational vehicles without screening is unsightly to other nearby properties.
- ◆ Residents are concerned that a combination of the issues listed above is impacting property values;
- ◆ Area realtors indicate that marketing homes in Oak Ridge North is somewhat more difficult than other nearby areas;
- ◆ Code enforcement by the City has not been as effective as it should have been in the past (but is now getting much better);
- ◆ Some owners of older properties may be reluctant to invest in them, perceiving that the market for those smaller older homes is not competitive with the newer homes available throughout the surrounding region;
- ◆ Many neighborhoods are perceived to be occupied by older residents. Concern was expressed that younger families may not see many amenities for them in Oak Ridge North. Oak Ridge North needs to be seen as a family friendly community;
- ◆ There are currently few if any controls on the size or lot placement of replacement homes, and some of these might be oversized or incompatible with the homes around them; and
- ◆ The City of Oak Ridge North needs to be seen as supportive of prospective home buyers who are willing to invest in the City by buying an older home and extensively renovating it or replacing it with a new home.

Neighborhood Objectives

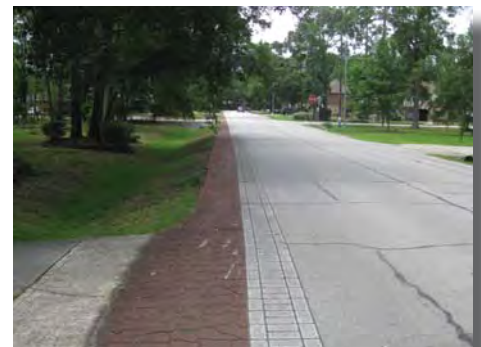
The following specific objections related to neighborhood preservation are established to help guide actions recommended by the Comprehensive Plan. These include:

Neighborhood Objective #1 - So as to preserve or increase home property values in the City, develop strategies to encourage or require owners of properties that need renovation or repair to improve their properties;

Neighborhood Objective #2 - Make Oak Ridge North homes an attractive choice for new residents or for reinvestment by existing owners;

Neighborhood Objective #3 - Develop strategies to attract new homeowners who are willing in upgrade or replace older homes in the City; and

Neighborhood Objective #4 - Increase amenities in all Oak Ridge North neighborhoods so that the City is recognized as an exceptional place to live.





Neighborhood Strategies

To respond to the concerns of residents regarding preservation of home values and to make Oak Ridge North's neighborhoods among the most sought after in the area, the following actions are recommended.

Action N - 1

Continue to aggressively pursue code enforcement efforts by City staff (addresses Neighborhood Objectives 1, 2 and 3).

Reason for this action - upkeep and improvements to area housing as it ages are important, and generally most homeowners recognize this and do their part. However, property and home resale values across an entire neighborhood may be affected by properties that are in disrepair. These stand out and can have a major impact on the homes around them. This concern was raised multiple times by Oak Ridge North residents.

The City of Oak Ridge North can have some impact by enforcing codes that are currently in effect. However, these are limited to items that have some impact on the health and safety of the occupants or nearby residents, or to some degree have an economic impact on others nearby. As a result, some repairs that deal more with appearance are beyond what the City can enforce.

- ◆ Continue to pursue enforcement activities for violations of the City's building standards codes.
- ◆ Hire an additional City staff member (or members if necessary) to identify and pursue resolution of code violations.
- ◆ The City can enforce violations that pertain to the general health and safety of all residents. Some general appearance items can also be enforced, but may still result in an appearance that is less than ideal. For example, tall grass above 12" in height may be a violation, but requiring that grass be kept very short and trimmed is not enforceable by the City.

Timeframe for this action - ongoing

Action N - 2

Assist City residents in establishing neighborhood associations or volunteer groups that can help with needed repairs (addresses Neighborhood Objectives 1, 2 and 3).

Reason for this action - All participants in the planning process also recognized that some homeowners may have physical limitations caused by illness or age and may simply not be able to perform simple upkeep duties. Other residents may have financial issues that make it difficult to pay for labor or supplies needed for the repairs.

Finally, it was strongly emphasized that many residents of the City specifically were attracted to Oak Ridge North because its neighborhoods do not have mandatory Homeowner Associations with high monthly or annual fees. There was no interest in setting up new Homeowner Associations, and legally it would be difficult to mandate participation.

With these considerations in mind, the following recommendations are made:



- ◆ Work with area residents to recruit and establish volunteer neighborhood groups or associations that can work with owners of substandard housing to improve their homes. Consider establishing groups that focus on three sub-sections (based on the three original development tracts). Tasks might include painting, small repairs, landscaping, tree trimming or removal, and even minor driveway or walkway repairs.
- ◆ These groups could also help recognize and educate homeowners regarding maintenance. They could:
 - Select homes and yards for quarterly recognition;
 - Serve as a conduit for grant funding from the City or other organizations;
 - Welcome new residents to the neighborhood;
 - Help organize volunteer efforts assist with minor façade improvement efforts such as painting or trim replacement(one a month or quarterly);
 - Periodically organize block parties and events to foster getting to know other neighbors; and
 - Serve as a liaison to City staff for code enforcement or to the Police Department for security issues.



Image source:
nps.org

Timeframe for this action – begin in 2013

Action N - 3

Create a small grant program that can provide assistance to homeowners with special circumstances to repair homes (primary funding by City of Oak Ridge North, distribution may be by volunteer groups or associations).

- ◆ Establish a grant program that could be used to improve properties that are in poor condition, and where the property owners have unique circumstances such as physical handicaps, age or illnesses that limit what they are able to do;
- ◆ Should be an amount adequate enough to fund improvements to three to four homes per year. However, this should not be viewed as a replacement for everyday maintenance;

Image source: www.waco-texas.com



CHAPTER 4 - NEIGHBORHOOD AND IDENTITY RECOMMENDATIONS



- ♦ The funds could be used to purchase supplies or specialty labor if needed;
- ♦ The volunteer groups (if officially recognized in some form) could serve as the conduit for the funding, helping candidates apply for the assistance and enlisting volunteers or inexpensive labor to help perform the needed repairs or improvements; and
- ♦ The City should establish criteria for selection (income, lack of ability to undertake repairs, severity of condition, type of repair, etc.).

Timeframe for this action – establish by the end of 2013, and start operations during the first quarter 2014.

Action N - 4

Incorporate housing redevelopment ordinance requirements and incentives (addresses Neighborhood Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4)

Reason for this action - Incentivize investment to renovate or replace older housing stock in Oak Ridge North. Older homes now approaching 50 years old may not be marketable in today's environment, and such a step would encourage new residents to establish roots in Oak Ridge North.

In addition to encouraging new residential investment, this step also protects existing homes and neighborhoods from renovations or additions that are incompatible with the neighborhood around them. Components of this action may include:



Arlington Home Improvement Incentive Program

The Arlington Home Improvement Incentive Program is designed to revitalize the community by:

- Encouraging homeowners to improve residential property conditions through capital improvements.
- Encouraging homeowners to make energy efficient improvements.
- Positively affecting the value of residential housing in the City.
- Demonstrating the City's commitment to invest in residential neighborhoods.

Incentive Payment

- A one-time rebate equal to ten times the amount of the increase in City taxes will be paid to the homeowner based on the property's pre-improvement and post-improvement appraised value. For the purposes of this program, the Tarrant County Appraisal District will determine the home's certified value.
- When the project has been completed, the rebate will be paid to the homeowner pursuant to the Incentive Agreement after April 1 of the first full calendar year.
- Rebates will be paid up to a maximum of \$5,000 per dwelling.



Incentive Example

- A home improvement project approved in March 2011 is completed in August 2011
- City property tax prior to improvements (Jan 2011): \$638
- The City property tax following improvements (Jan 2012): \$838
- The difference between pre- and post-improvements is \$200
- Total incentive received will be \$2,000, which is ten times the increase in taxable value improvements (\$200 X 10 = \$2,000)

Eligibility Requirements

- Homeowner must own the home, which must be located within the City of Arlington.
- Homeowner cannot be delinquent in taxes or other fees.
- Reconstruction or remodeling projects must cost at least \$20,000 and be completed within 24 months of project approval.
- Homeowner must submit an application to the City of Arlington Community Development and Planning Dept. prior to improvement, provide a cost estimate for the improvement project, consent to periodic inspections during construction and verify final construction costs.
- Homeowner must execute an Incentive Agreement with the City of Arlington.

- ♦ Establish maximum impervious cover to help govern home sizes that are incompatible with surrounding homes;
- ♦ Establish housing placement standards to maintain setback that is compatible with neighborhoods;
- ♦ Establish height setbacks (greater side yard and stepped second floor when adjacent to smaller home);
- ♦ Allow and encourage attached housing for related family members;
- ♦ Determine if subdivision of large lots is permissible;
- ♦ Develop incentives for redevelopment or major renovations. These could include fee waivers, fee reductions, tax abatements, etc.;



- ◆ Establish incentives to develop vacant lots. Currently there are seven south of Robinson Road; and
- ◆ Establish criteria for receiving incentives - determine what types of redevelopment or new development would be eligible for incentives, and what types of incentives might be offered. Determine if incentives would apply only to owner occupied renovations.

Timeframe for this action – within 1 year

Action N - 5

Update Subdivision standards and building code requirements (addresses Neighborhood Objectives 1, 2 and 3)

Reason for this action - Review and update standards for buildings in residential areas of the City. Standards that should be considered related to building materials, setbacks, variances that provide flexibility to preserve trees, and height limits. Areas that might be considered are as follows:

- ◆ Should masonry construction (i.e. brick or stone) be required for visible areas of new development or for redevelopment efforts exceeding 50% of the value of the home;
- ◆ Determine roofing types that might be allowed, such as tile roofs, metal, tin, etc.;
- ◆ Determine if driveway materials should be specified (for example, should driveways be concrete?);
- ◆ Require screening of boats and recreational vehicles that are stored in the front areas of a property or where visible from an adjacent street;
- ◆ For new development, encourage rear garages with side driveways;

Timeframe for this action – within 1 year approximately



Action N - 6

Investigate the feasibility of sound wall or noise abatement treatments for neighborhoods near IH-45 (addresses Neighborhood Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4)

Reason for this action - As IH-45 has been expanded, the volume of traffic has increased dramatically, and it severely impacts already existing neighborhoods near the

freeway. The sound impacts are not abated by the retail between the roadway and where the residences start. The sound volumes negatively impact property values and can lead to increased deterioration in those neighborhoods.

The City should work with TxDOT to review alternative solutions. If necessary, an independent assessment should be requested or obtained by the City. The preferable solution will be sound walls, since a much wider mass of vegetation is required to have any meaningful impact.

- ◆ Determine best placement and if easements are required along rear home property lines;
- ◆ Determine cost and potential grant or funding sources, as well as participation by TxDOT.

Timeframe for this action – feasibility and next steps initiated within one year



Action N - 7

Adopt a tree preservation ordinance, and include educational guidelines for tree preservation (addresses Neighborhood Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4)



Reason for this action

- the many beautiful trees throughout Oak Ridge North contribute significantly to the appearance of neighborhoods in the City. Consider any street in Oak Ridge North without the trees that are on it - some neighborhoods might begin to look like any other in other cities.

The drought in recent years has taken its toll on trees in the City, and has resulted in a number of dead trees which had to be removed. A more significant concern is that homeowners may remove large trees, not understanding the impact that tree removal may have on values in the area.

The following actions are recommended:

- ◆ Develop and adopt a tree preservation ordinance that requires the preservation of existing mature trees during development or re-development of either residential or non-residential development in the City;
- ◆ Establish significant incentives and disincentives for removing trees (with preference being for preservation rather than replacement with young immature trees);
- ◆ Identify species and sizes to be preserved;
- ◆ Publish and provide information to area homeowners and contractors regarding best practices for tree preservation;
- ◆ Encourage planting of new trees to keep the City's urban forest going;
- ◆ Train City staff in tree preservation best practices, and encourage residents to take advantage of new staff expertise; and
- ◆ Engage a trained arborist to provide expertise on an annual basis.

Timeframe for this action – within 1 year



Neighborhood and Community Identity

To compete in the area, neighborhoods in Oak Ridge North must continue to be seen as being above the average in the area. As discussed in the previous section, the quality and appearance of homes in each neighborhood is the single most important aspect of any neighborhood, and should be the primary focus of both residents and City staff.

However, additional neighborhood features may help set neighborhoods in the City apart from those in other nearby cities. These actions will require joint cooperation and funding by both residents and City staff. They include additional neighborhood landscape areas, sign "toppers" to identify neighborhoods, decorative street lighting, and sidewalk and trail installation.

Citywide, branding features such as smaller entry monuments and a larger citywide gateway feature should be planned for and funded.

Action B - I

Pursue development of a major branding feature at Robinson Road and the IH-45 Frontage Road

Reason for this action - Oak Ridge North is overshadowed by the office towers, flyover and gateway to The Woodlands at the



CHAPTER 4 - NEIGHBORHOOD AND IDENTITY RECOMMENDATIONS

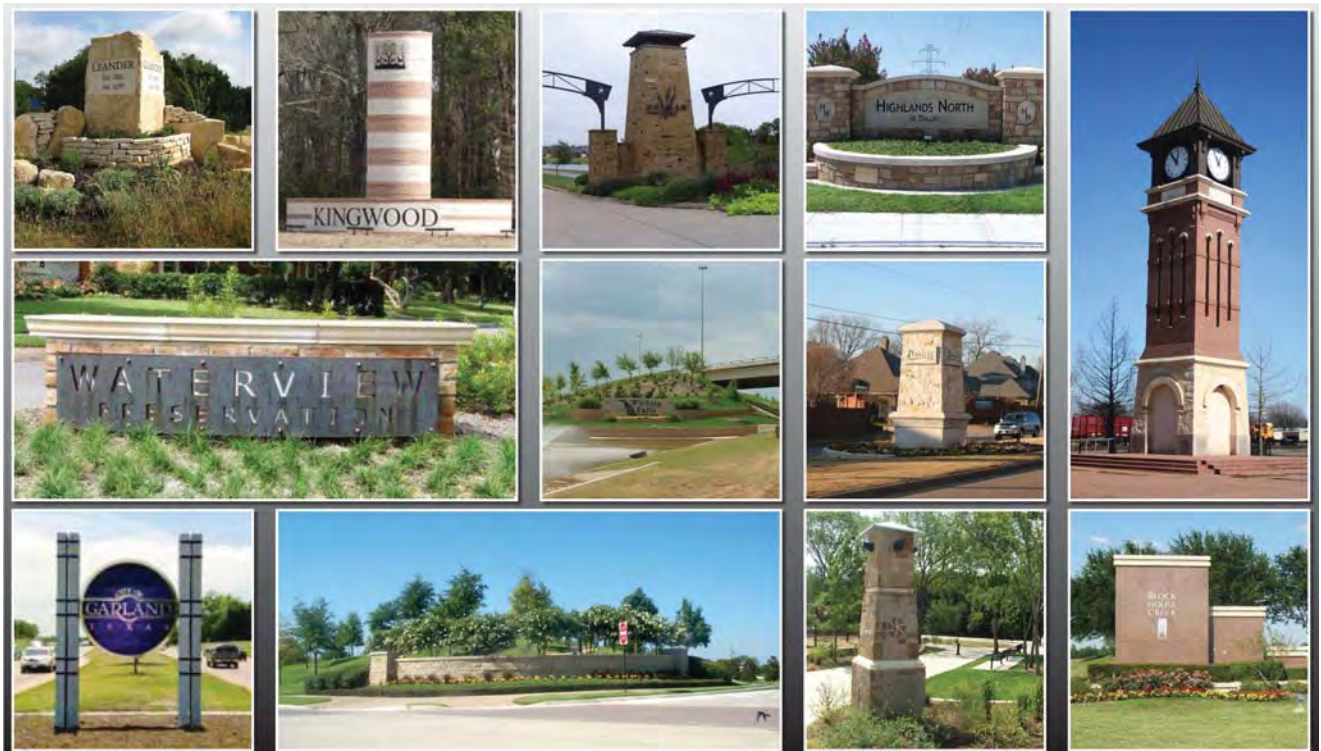
Woodlands Parkway and the Woodlands Town Center area.

Oak Ridge North can and should convey a different type of message to the 250,000 + vehicles passing by each and every day.

That message should be one of quality and pride in the City. A prominent and bold feature should be added that conveys a

strong sense of place and that denotes that a superb community quietly resides adjacent to the Woodlands. This can be accomplished by placing a gateway monument at the intersection of Robinson Road and the IH-45 frontage road. A preliminary concept for this feature is illustrated in Figure 4.10 on the preceding page. Key actions related to this item include:

- ◆ Work with TxDOT to evaluate placement of the monument on TxDOT right of way. This will require construction to TxDOT specifications;
- ◆ Develop to a height that is clearly visible to traffic on the adjacent freeway. Vertical height will be preferable to a horizontal design, since the intent is to announce the presence of Oak Ridge North along this corridor. It may be necessary to seek height variances from the typical height limits of 20' for such monuments;
- ◆ If feasible, consider additional features along Robinson Road before getting to Patsy Lane to further convey the sense of arrival in Oak Ridge North;
- ◆ Develop the monument in materials that convey a strong sense of quality,





permanence and timelessness. Typically, stone, brick or cast stone materials are used to convey those qualities;

- ◆ Incorporate lighting and base landscaping;
- ◆ Develop as one of the signature key features of the City. If necessary, delay implementation until the feature can be adequately funded;
- ◆ Consider partnerships and donations to help fund the monument; and
- ◆ Determine funding source and timing. This feature may be a component of Robinson Road improvements. Funding assistance may also come from the freeway area retail district, since this element can help generate attention for the freeway district.

Timeframe for this action – short term

Action B - 2

Continue installation of minor branding features (addresses Neighborhood Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4)

Reason for this action - smaller signs in strategic and very visible locations can serve to remind residents of the pride they have in their neighborhood. They can also quickly let potential buyers and visitors know that residents care about their City.

- ◆ A total of 10 signs at all entrances to the City are planned. Installation should continue at the rate of two to three per year, starting with signs at most visible locations;
- ◆ Ensure that signs convey a sense of quality, and are not selected just because they are less costly. These signs should capture the quality and pride expressed by residents of Oak Ridge North, and it is preferable to install fewer but higher quality signs rather than more but lower quality signs;
- ◆ As part of the installation of each sign, fund attractive landscaped areas and lighting at base of each sign, and ensure that a maintenance plan for each sign is developed;
- ◆ Upgrade adjacent background area fencing and landscaping where needed as part of the branding process;
- ◆ Incorporate "What a Hometown Should Be" slogan into the branding signs;
- ◆ Along the IH-45 frontage road, consider adding a "Thanks for visiting" sign at the northbound exit from the City; and
- ◆ As new signs are installed, eliminate current small pole mounted signs.

Timeframe for this action - ongoing, complete within three years







Action B - 3

Add neighborhood identity features that enhance the identity of neighborhoods and the City as a unique place to live

Reason for this action - smaller actions in strategic and very visible locations can serve to remind residents of the pride they have in their neighborhood. They can also quickly let potential buyers and visitors know that residents care about their City. Neighborhood Associations, if formed, should play a key role in implementing this recommendation.

- ♦ Over time, transition to unique street name signs
- ♦ Over time, incorporate signature street fixtures, traffic signal posts, etc.
- ♦ Partnering with neighborhoods, install neighborhood gateway signs and landscaped entry areas
- ♦ Work with residents to select names for neighborhoods

Timeframe for this action – begin in next one to two years, continue as funding is available

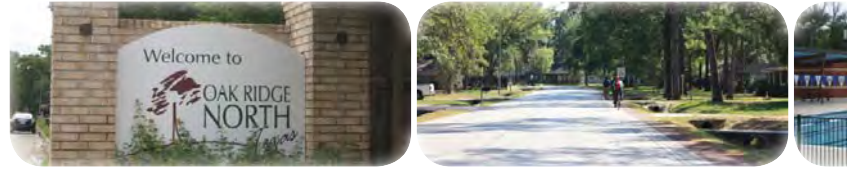


Example source: williamsparkneighbors.org



Example source: Bloomingtonindiana.gov





Infrastructure

Although not something that is a day to day concern of residents in Oak Ridge North, infrastructure plays a significant role in the economic strength of the City. Reliable water and wastewater systems, along with streets that are in good repair instill a sense of confidence in investing in Oak Ridge North for the long term.

Much attention has been given to infrastructure issues over the past few years, and plans and strategies have been developed to upgrade infrastructure systems in the City. This plan reinforces the need to continue to address and fund necessary infrastructure repairs and upgrades.

Infrastructure Objectives

Infrastructure Objective #1 - Provide up to date water and wastewater systems that more than adequately meet the needs of the residents of Oak Ridge North.

Infrastructure Objective #2 - Develop water and wastewater systems that are capable of accommodating growth in the ETJ (where not covered by other providers) and that can be expanded into those areas quickly.

Infrastructure Objective #3 - Continue to pursue cost effective water and wastewater systems that meets the needs of current and future residents of the system, but that are reasonable in cost.

Infrastructure Objective #4 - Develop water and wastewater systems that are capable of accommodating growth in the ETJ (where not covered by other providers) and that can be expanded into those areas quickly.

Infrastructure Objective #5 - Maintain all City streets in a superior condition.

Action I - I

As a high priority, continue ongoing upgrades to water and wastewater systems for current residents and customers

Reason for this action - upgrades are necessary to ensure that adequate capacity and flow is available. Preliminary engineering efforts have developed a sequence of actions to be taken to upgrade water and wastewater systems, especially for critical areas such as the freeway retail zone, and these should be funded and implemented as a high priority over the next few years.

- ◆ Continue to fund and construct improvements planned as part of the current 5 year Capital Improvements Plan.

Timeframe for this action – within 5 years



Action I - 2

Ensure superior water and wastewater service for potential growth areas near the City by conducting a feasibility study

Reason for this action - high quality growth in the ETJ areas is critical to Oak Ridge North's future, and if deemed necessary, the City should adjust its Capital Improvements Plan to add improvements that provide service for near term growth areas not currently within the City.

Near term, conduct a feasibility study to determine how nearby extra territorial jurisdiction properties might be served with water and wastewater service, and what the level of City investment will be. Use this study to help guide annexation decisions.

Timeframe for this action - continue to monitor, may be ongoing as necessary

Action I - 3

Conduct evaluation of storm water and drainage systems

Reason for this action - storm drainage systems in the City are critical to protect property values. Localized channels and storm sewer systems need to be evaluated and if necessary, upgraded. Key Storm drainage actions include:

- ♦ Implement drainage repairs along Hillside Drive and south of Robinson Road;
- ♦ Storm sewer evaluation north of Robinson Road;
- ♦ Evaluate storm sewer needs south of Robinson Road; and
- ♦ Evaluate need for Regional Detention (IH-45 Commercial)

Timeframe for this action – short to medium term

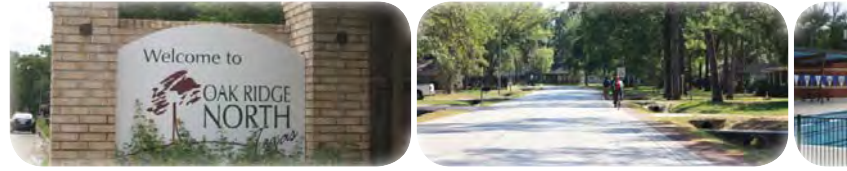
Action I-4

Complete citywide street overlay projects within the next five years

Reason for this action - periodic street overlaying is necessary to maintain a smooth driving surface. Overlays should be done proactively, rather than allowing the driving surface to deteriorate extensively and requiring even more expensive repairs. Street overlay efforts should include:

- ♦ Create phasing plan, starting with streets determined to be in most need; and
- ♦ Where feasible and appropriate, include high quality traffic calming improvements and enhanced pavement along with each specific overlay project.

Timeframe for this action – short to medium term



Public Safety Goals

Residents of Oak Ridge North were extremely satisfied by the level of public safety that they receive. The City should continue to monitor public safety needs, and ensure that equipment and personnel remain adequate.

Public Safety Objective #1 - Ensure that the City's Police Department continues to be adequately manned and equipped to provide a superior level of public safety

Public Safety Objective #2 - Maintain a balance between patrols in commercial areas and residential areas

Public Safety Objective #3 - Engage with newly created Neighborhood Associations to promote public safety actions

Action PS - I

Review annual crime statistics and enforcement efforts and adjust enforcement efforts accordingly

- ◆ Review manpower and equipment needs annually and adjust as appropriate
- ◆ Maintain balance between law enforcement efforts and other city needs
- ◆ Coordinate with Neighborhood Associations or representatives to identify hot spots and allocate resources to respond to those

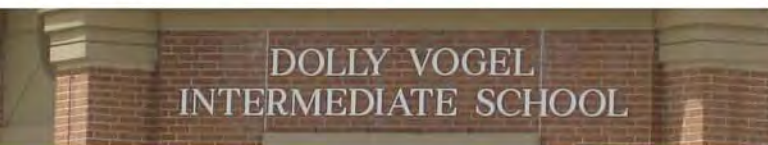
Timeframe for this action – continue to review annually



Chapter 5



Transportation Recommendations





Transportation and Mobility

The transportation network is a key form giver – for the vast majority of both residents and visitors, streets are the way we experience all parts of the City. Streets contribute to the character of Oak Ridge North, and essentially define the City.

A good transportation system that adequately moves people within and through the City is vital to its economic health. If traffic comes to a standstill in the City, businesses that are in the City suffer. Likewise, residents of Oak Ridge North want to be able to easily get to other nearby and regional destinations.

Transportation is more than just movement by vehicles – it embraces mobility via multiple modes, whether by car, by walking, or by bicycle.

Oak Ridge North is Influenced by the Greater Transportation System Around It

Time and time again during the development of the comprehensive plan, Oak Ridge North residents noted how much they love the location of the City and their ability to travel quickly to other area destinations, both near and further away.

Oak Ridge North is adjacent to Interstate Highway 45 (IH-45), the single most significant arterial in the area. While this proximity and quick access to IH-45 is an asset, it is also a liability, since there are many others that live outside of the City who must get to IH-45 as a means to travel to other destinations. That need for access to the freeway will only grow with time as the area fully develops.

As noted previously, the population of southern Montgomery County (within 10 miles) has exploded from a population of 247,000 in 2000 to a projected population exceeding 469,000 in 2016, a 190% change.

In the past, much of the attention given to the area's transportation system has been concerned with movements to and from The Woodlands. Often these improvements, in particular access to and from IH-45, have impacted traffic wanting to move to other area cities such as Shenandoah and Oak Ridge North. Recognizing the need to address regional transportation deficiencies, Montgomery County, the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) and other cities, including Oak Ridge North, are now focusing on the IH-45 corridor and southeastern Montgomery County.

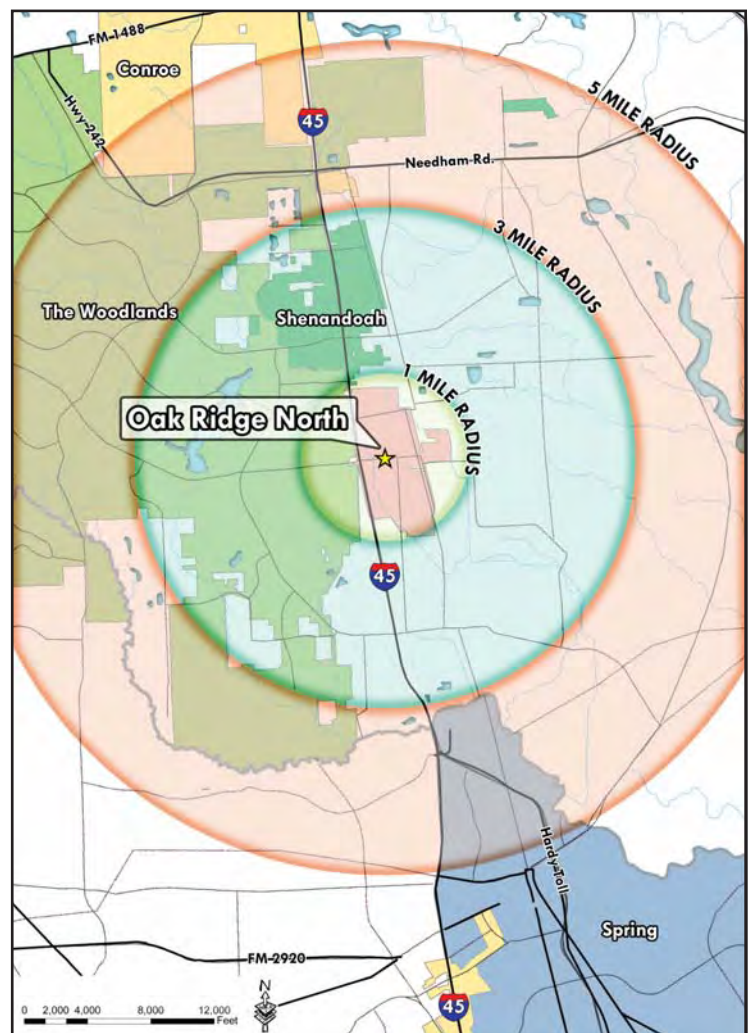


Figure 5-1 Central location of Oak Ridge North



Transportation Issues in Oak Ridge North



Figure 5-2 Imperial Oaks Conceptual Master Plan (Source: Imperial Oaks Development)

Traffic congestion was the issue of most significant concern to residents of Oak Ridge North. Congestion concerns revolved around five key issues:

1. The impact of regional traffic congestion on streets in Oak Ridge North;
2. Maintaining resident access to other area and regional destinations;
3. Facilitating movement within the City itself, and in particular between the north and the south portions of the City. This especially applies to easing congestion around key intersections, such as Patsy and Robinson Road;
4. Addressing potential changes to the ramping configuration along the IH-45 and Robinson Road intersections; and
5. Addressing non-vehicular movements within the City by walking and by bicycle.

Regional Traffic Demand Concerns

The snapshot of area traffic volumes included in Figure 5-3 on the following page illustrates the significant growth in regional transportation demand. Developed by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), area traffic volumes highlight the following regional issues:

- ◆ Woodlands Parkway is the major access and egress roadway into The Woodlands, averaging more than 65,000 vehicles per day in 2011;
- ◆ Imperial Oaks (master plan illustration in Figure 5-2 on this page) was initiated in the early 1990s, and has now matured with over 3,600 homes and an ultimate potential population exceeding 15,000 residents. The development has resulted in a huge increase in vehicle trip demands to eastern Montgomery County to and from IH-45;
- ◆ Imperial Oaks (and other fast growing areas around it east of IH-45) has limited routes back to IH-45;
- ◆ For most of these trips, Robinson Road through Oak Ridge North, and Rayford Road are the logical routes;
- ◆ Robinson Road is the logical route for Imperial Oaks traffic and eastern Montgomery County trips going to The Woodlands;
- ◆ Rayford Road just east of IH-45 is now in the vicinity of 50,000 trips per day; and
- ◆ Robinson at Hanna is now surpassing 11,000 trips per day, which exceeds the capacity of a two lane roadway.

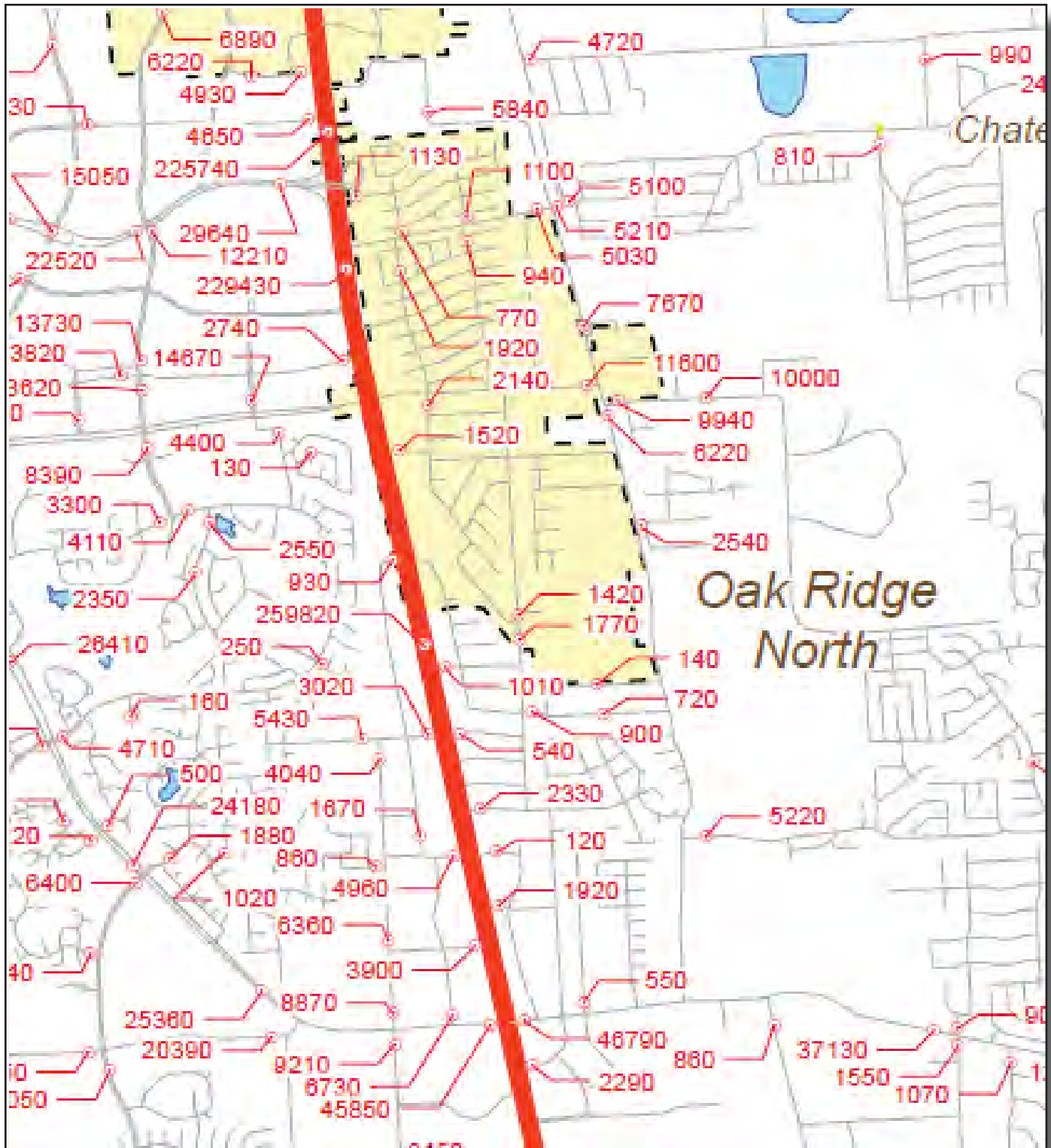


Figure 5-3 Area traffic Volumes around Oak Ridge North Source: TxDOT 2012
(counts collected late 2011)



Montgomery County continues to be one of the fastest growing areas in the entire United States, and that growth is projected to continue over the next decade. By 2016 Montgomery County is projected to have more than 550,000 residents, and the population within a 10 mile radius from The Woodlands and Oak Ridge North may grow to almost 470,000. The high rates of growth will lead to more demand on all area streets, and will require new roadway corridors to alleviate the burden on area roads such as Robinson and Woodson.

Maintaining access to other destinations in the region

Oak Ridge North residents also value their ability to get to area destinations easily. Easy access to IH-45 allows them to visit retail and dining opportunities throughout the area, and to visit cultural, sports and entertainment events throughout the greater Houston area. Residents emphasized that maintaining this easy access to IH-45 was a critical concern to them.

Facilitating movement within the City

Oak Ridge North residents are very concerned about their ability to travel easily within the City itself. The congestion along Robinson Road hinders their ability to travel between the northern and southern halves of the City. Congestion at key intersections such as Patsy/Robinson and Harlan/Maplewood also makes it difficult to visit friends or drive to businesses that should be an easy trip away.

IH-45 frontage road access to Woodlands Parkway/Robinson Road

To try to respond to ever increasing traffic loads on the IH-45 frontage roads, changes to the ramps from the frontage roads have been considered. These changes may ultimately make it harder for Oak Ridge North residents to access Woodlands Parkway and the retail and employment opportunities in The Woodlands. Residents of Oak Ridge North are concerned with making travel on the frontage roads better, but not at the expense of losing easy access to key area destinations.

Addressing non-vehicular modes of travel in Oak Ridge North

Residents of the City are very interested in places to walk in the City and in places where they can ride a bicycle. Concerns over the lack of sidewalks along key streets were mentioned repeatedly.



The Existing Street Hierarchy In Oak Ridge North

The following general classifications of streets can be found in Oak Ridge North. These street "types" follow national transportation practices, and are generally based on the volumes of traffic that a street is designed to accommodate.

Arterials – move large volumes of traffic between major destinations (typically in excess of 15,000 to 20,000 vehicles per day). These roads frequently prioritize mobility over accessibility. The Woodlands Parkway, small segments of Robinson Road, and the IH-45 frontage road are examples of arterial roadways in or near Oak Ridge North.

Collectors – provide the transition from arterials to local streets. They typically connect residential areas, local shopping and local destinations. These roads are designed to move traffic over short distances, and strive to balance accessibility and mobility.

Local Streets – provide access to properties, typically residential or local destinations. Local streets prioritize accessibility over mobility.

- **Major Arterial** - carries regional movements
- **Minor Arterial** – conveys movement from one local area to another
- **Local Collector** – conveys movement around the City and to areas adjacent to the City
- **Neighborhood Collector** – movement from one neighborhood to another
- **Local Streets** – movement within neighborhoods



Figure 5-4 Existing roadway network in Oak Ridge North



Transportation Related Objectives

Oak Ridge North residents clearly expressed their desire that area transportation and traffic congestion was their most important issue to address. Based on that input, the following transportation related objectives and actions should be followed.

Transportation Objective #1 – Maintain and strengthen connectivity to the regional transportation system.

Transportation Objective #2 – Work with regional entities to identify solutions to regional mobility that improve access to IH-45, but that also preserve the small town character of Oak Ridge North.

Transportation Objective #3 – Ensure that streets and thoroughfares within Oak Ridge North preserve the small town character of the City.

Transportation Objective #4 – Maintain low volumes of vehicular movement within neighborhoods in Oak Ridge North.

Transportation Objective #5 – Make it easier to move around Oak Ridge North by walking or bicycle riding.

Transportation Strategies

To address the transportation system objectives established by the comprehensive plan, the following strategies and actions are recommended.

Action T - I

Adopt a complete streets policy (addresses Transportation Objectives 1, 3, and 5)

Reason for this action - Complete streets are those that provide safe access for all users, including motorists, bicycles and pedestrians. Users of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street. Benefits of complete streets include:

- ◆ Creates more efficient streets that don't just depend on one mode of transportation;
- ◆ Ensures that current and future roadway improvements by any entity (private or public) provide balanced access to non-vehicular modes as well as vehicles;
- ◆ Results in greater attention being paid to facilities such as crosswalks, pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, promenades and accessible ramps;
- ◆ Creates a healthier and more vibrant community by encouraging walking and bicycling by Oak Ridge North residents of all ages, and forcefully speaks to a desire to achieve that goal; and
- ◆ Encourages younger residents of the City to walk or ride a bike to school, which will lead to more active and healthier youth.

Timeframe for this action – immediate (within 3 to 6 months). To facilitate implementation of this action, a sample complete streets resolution is included in the Appendices.



Examples of complete streets

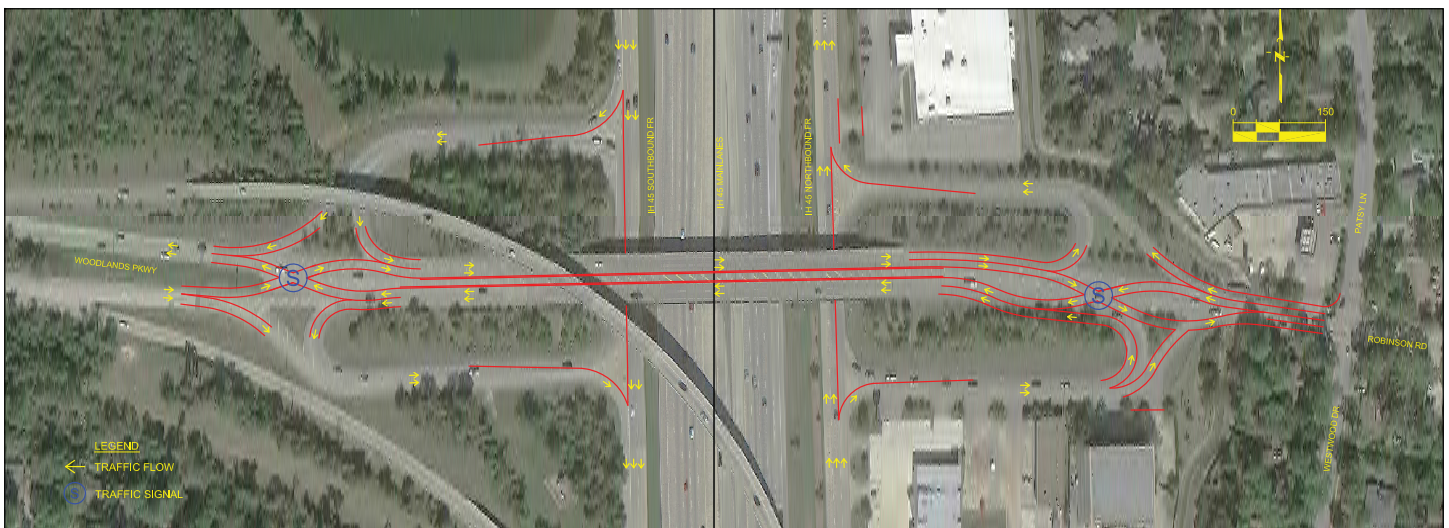


Action T - 2

Work with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to develop solutions to improve access to and from the IH-45 frontage roads at the Woodlands Parkway and Robinson Road (Addresses Objectives 1 and 2).

Reason for this action - Develop solutions to reduce weaving conflicts along the frontage road at the Woodlands Parkway and Robinson Road. The initial strategies introduced by TxDOT would resolve the conflicts by eliminating access from the frontage roads to westbound Woodlands Parkway. This alternative was perceived to negatively impact businesses and Oak Ridge North residents. The new alternative solutions includes installing a diverging diamond intersection, as shown in Figure 5-5.

Timeframe for this action – short term



JC JONES & CARTER, Inc.
ENGINEERS • PLANNERS • SURVEYORS
Texas Board of Professional Engineers Registration No. F-439
8701 New Trails Dr., Ste. 200 The Woodlands, Texas 77381 (281) 363-4039

CITY OF OAK RIDGE NORTH
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, TEXAS

DIVERGING DIAMOND INTERCHANGE
ROBINSON ROAD - PLANNING LAYOUT

Figure 5-5 TxDOT proposed re-configuration of Robinson Road and Woodlands Parkway



Action T - 3

Work with regional entities to develop regional transportation solutions that respect the small town character of Oak Ridge North (Addresses Transportation Objectives 1,2, 3, and 4)

Reason for this action - Almost all of the traffic congestion in Oak Ridge North is caused by non-resident motorists who are trying to get to and from IH-45 to areas east of Oak Ridge North. While residents of Oak Ridge North should be reasonable in recognizing the region's bigger picture transportation needs, other entities should recognize that improving mobility east of IH-45 requires regional solutions that extend well beyond the limits of what Oak Ridge North can do. In the near term, Montgomery County, the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) and area cities including Oak Ridge North should partner together to develop solutions that benefit all residents of the area and that treat Oak Ridge North residents fairly. In particular, regional transportation efforts should:

- ◆ Respect the unique role of Robinson Road directly in the middle of Oak Ridge North. Robinson Road effectively is the City's "main street" and regional transportation initiatives should not ignore the importance of Robinson Road to Oak Ridge North and turn it into a barrier that cuts the City into two halves;
- ◆ Identify multiple alternative routes between eastern Montgomery County and IH-45, and not just Robinson Road;
- ◆ Include improvements to Hanna Road within Oak Ridge North;
- ◆ Respect Oak Ridge North residents' desires to give Robinson Road a unique and friendly context, with facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as motor vehicles. The preferred Robinson Road configuration is discussed in Action T-3;
- ◆ Plan for the long term, not just immediate congestion. Multiple routes should be identified that will convey future volumes. Some of these improvements may be phased in over time, but they should be identified now so that property owners and area communities such as Oak Ridge North can plan for those improvements; and
- ◆ Identify regional funding resources that can be targeted and addressed.

Figure 5-5 on the following page identifies multiple potential routes which can address regional needs. In addition to Robinson Road, other access routes to consider should include:

- ◆ Major access routes at:
 - Tamina Road
 - Rayford Road
 - New routes near to but south of Rayford Road
- ◆ Secondary access routes at:
 - Woodson Road
 - Along drainage corridors south of Oak Ridge Elementary if feasible
- ◆ Improvements for Capacity:
 - Hanna Road
 - Richard Road

Timeframe for this action – within 12 to 18 months (pursue accelerated schedule) for regional study. After study is completed, continue regional partnerships to accomplish goals of the study.

CHAPTER 5 - TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

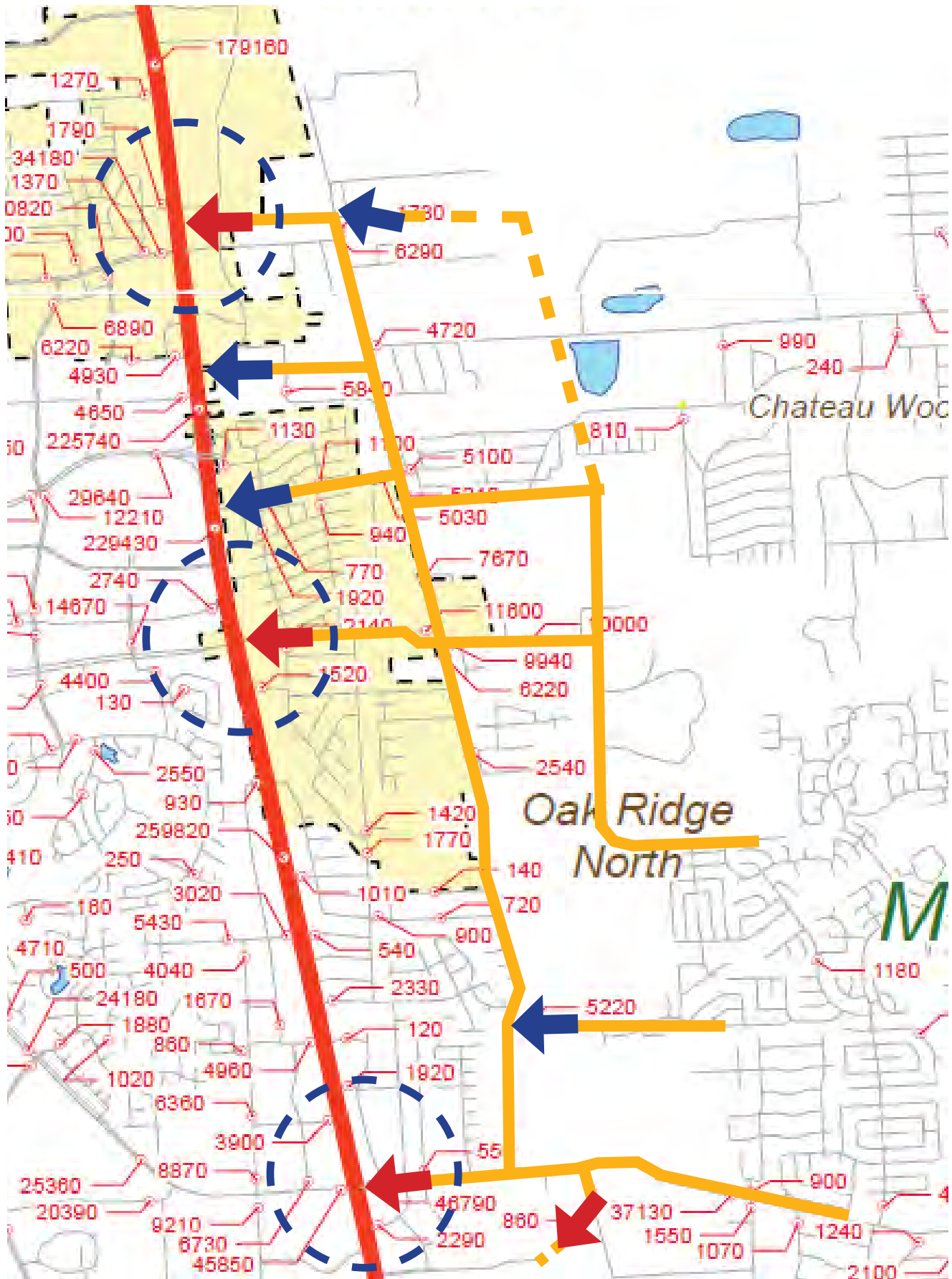


Figure 5-6 Area traffic counts, Source: TxDOT 2012



Action T - 4

Expand the vehicular capacity of Robinson Road to a reasonable extent that reflects its role as a neighborhood street and Oak Ridge North's "Main Street" with facilities for all users (motorized, bicycle and pedestrian). (Addresses Transportation Objectives 1,2,3,4 and 5)



Figure 5-7 Vision concept for Robinson Road



Reason for this action - congestion along Robinson Road is the single most significant concern of Oak Ridge North residents. In particular, residents want the bottleneck or "jog" at Hanna Road resolved. But residents also want the street to become a strong character and identity maker for the City. They do NOT want a typical four or five lane street designed for high vehicular capacity, but rather want the character and charm illustrated in Figure 5-6 on this page. When implemented this action should:

- ◆ Re-align Robinson Road west of Hanna Road to meet Robinson Road east of Hanna Road as shown in Figure 5-9. Work with property owners to facilitate the proposed alignment;
- ◆ Reconfigure Robinson Road to accommodate one additional lane of through traffic (from 2 lanes to 3 lanes east of Maplewood);
- ◆ Evaluate and if feasible implement a managed lane (reversible lane) option to allow two through lanes during peak demand times (see Figure 5-10);

CHAPTER 5 - TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

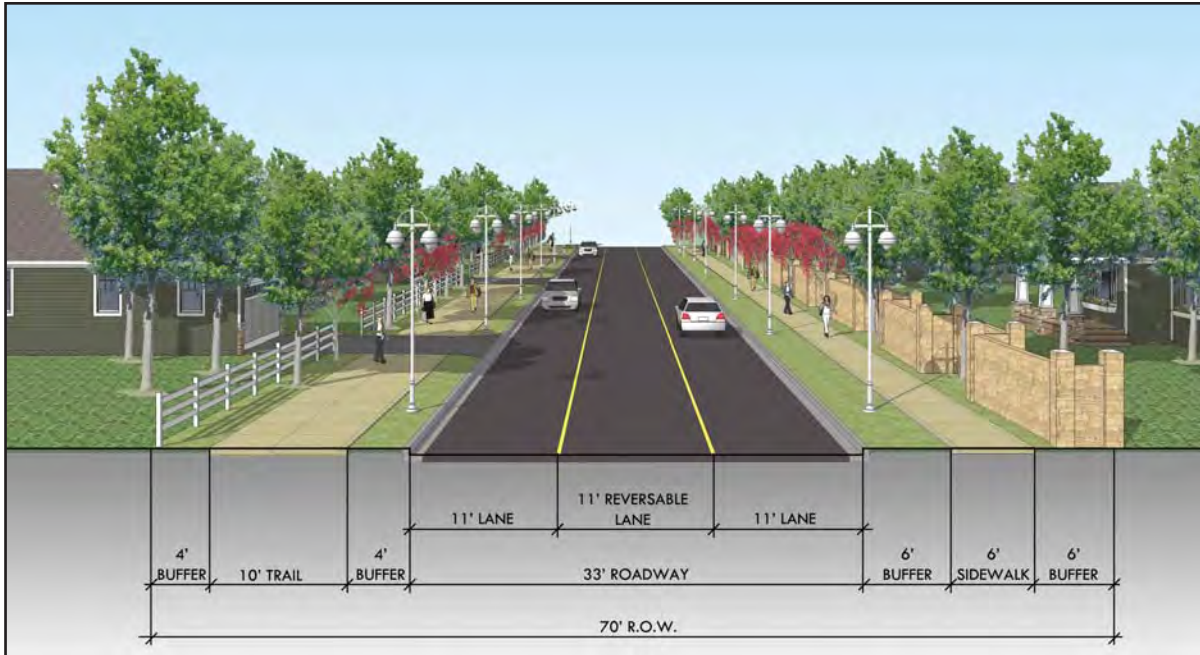


Figure 5-8 Proposed cross section of Robinson Road



Figure 5-9 Proposed realignment of Robinson and Hanna



Figure 5-10 Reversible lane signalization

- ◆ Improve capacity at the intersection with Patsy Road.
- ◆ Include additional left or right turn lanes at Hanna to increase capacity at the intersection.
- ◆ Keep speed limits along Robinson at 30 miles per hour to maintain the street as a pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment and to maintain the street's neighborhood feel.
- ◆ Intersection reconfiguration at Robinson and Hanna (consolidate to one intersection from two) – include one additional turn lane if deemed necessary.
- ◆ Evaluate the signalization of Maplewood and Harlan Roads into one synchronized signal to improve north/south movements across Robinson Road.
- ◆ Incorporate a major 10' esplanade sidewalk or sidepath along the south right of way of Robinson with decorative pedestrian scale lighting, fencing and other aesthetic amenities.
- ◆ Provide attractive enhanced pedestrian friendly crossing facilities at Hanna, Harlan/Maplewood and Patsy that exceed base requirements for pedestrians.
- ◆ Determine right of way requirements (if additional right of way is required).
- ◆ Work with regional entities to arrive at a balanced recommendation and to develop implementation strategies and funding sources.

Timeframe for this action – for initial study effort, 12 to 18 months (see Action T-2). For implementation of improvements, begin within two to three years.

Action T - 5

Enhance Woodson Road and Hanna Road within the City limits to add some capacity but also improve the pedestrian and aesthetic qualities of these streets (Addresses Transportation Objectives 1,2, 3, and 4)

Reason for this action - Woodson Road has average daily traffic volumes around 5,000 vehicles per day, while Hanna Road ranges between 5,000 and 7,000 +/- vehicles per day. As part of a regional transportation solution, consider improvements to these streets to moderately increase their capacity. These improvements could be considered to avoid over-widening Robinson Road.

Along with these improvements, additional pedestrian and bicycle facilities could be added to improve mobility within the City. Other aesthetic enhancements such as lighting and street trees should be considered to create a unique identity along Hanna and Woodson roads for Oak Ridge North.

For Hanna Road:

- ◆ Hanna Road is limited by the presence of a Union Pacific railroad corridor along its eastern right of way. Confirm the extent of railroad versus City/County right of way to be able to determine the right of way available for roadway improvements.

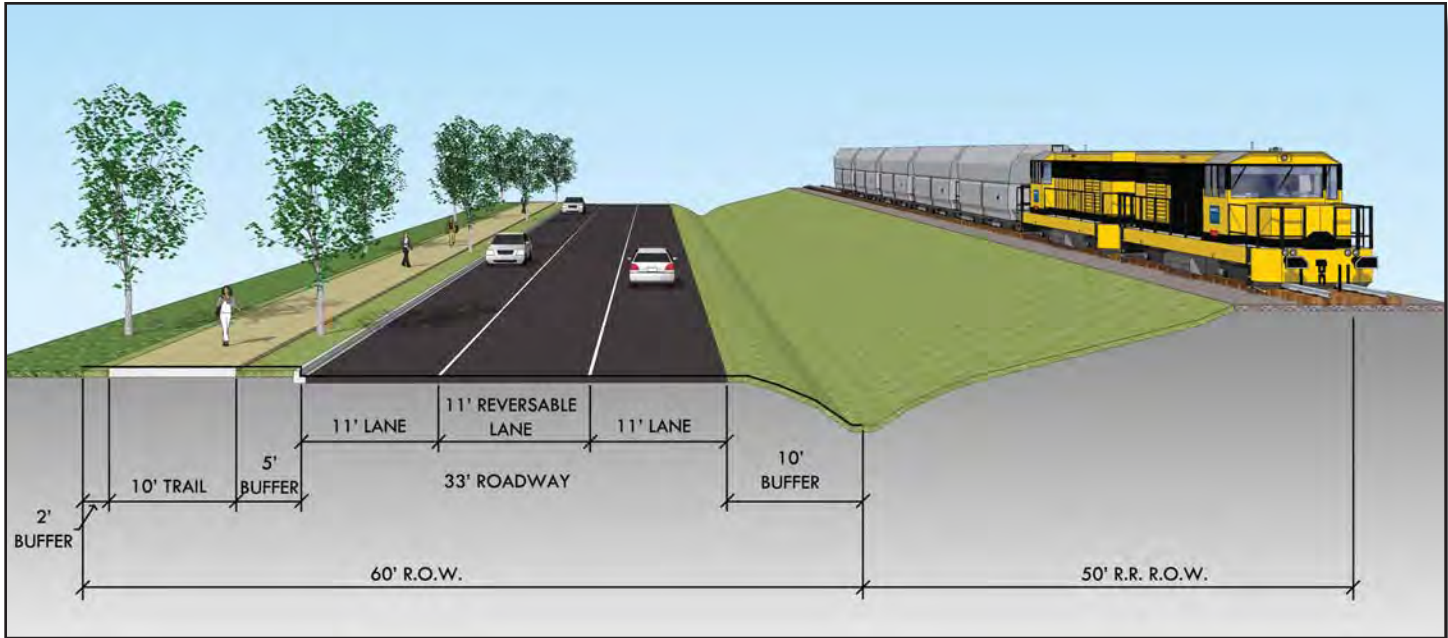


Figure 5-11 Proposed cross section of Hanna Road



Existing Hanna Road

- ◆ Over time, along the western right of away (non-railroad side) install underground storm drainage and develop sidewalks, decorative street lighting and street trees that enhance the appearance of the roadway.
- ◆ Add additional right or left turn lanes at Robinson if shown to result in significant capacity benefits.

Figure 5-11 on this page illustrates the proposed configuration for Hanna Road.

For Woodson Road:

- ◆ Add sidewalks, landscaping, decorative lighting, and street trees (as feasible) to enhance the aesthetic character of the road.
- ◆ Add left turn lanes at Patsy and Harlan Lanes to improve north/south movement through the City and improve the capacity of Woodson Road.
- ◆ Conduct evaluation to determine if adding turning lanes for movements onto Hanna Road is beneficial.



- ◆ As volumes increase, explore installation of signal lights at Patsy and Harlan intersections.
- ◆ Ensure that adjacent neighborhoods are adequately buffered from any increase in vehicular volumes.
- ◆ Figures 5-12 and 5-13 illustrate the two lane configuration and the added turn lane configuration at key intersections.

Timeframe for these actions - within next five years as demand grows, and/or as part of regional transportation improvements.

Existing Woodson Road

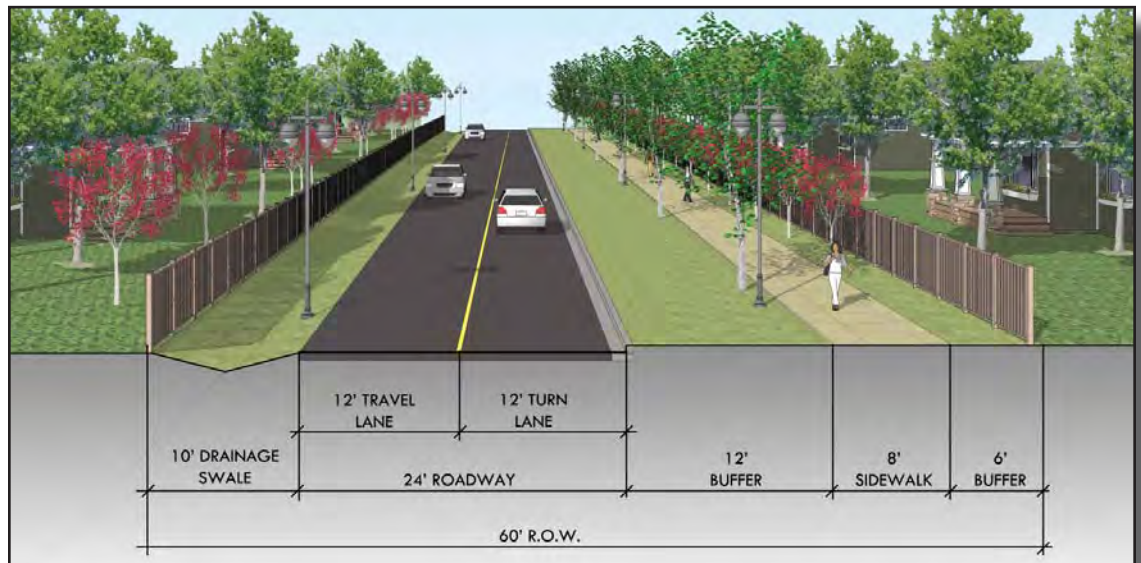


Figure 5-12 Proposed Woodson Road cross section

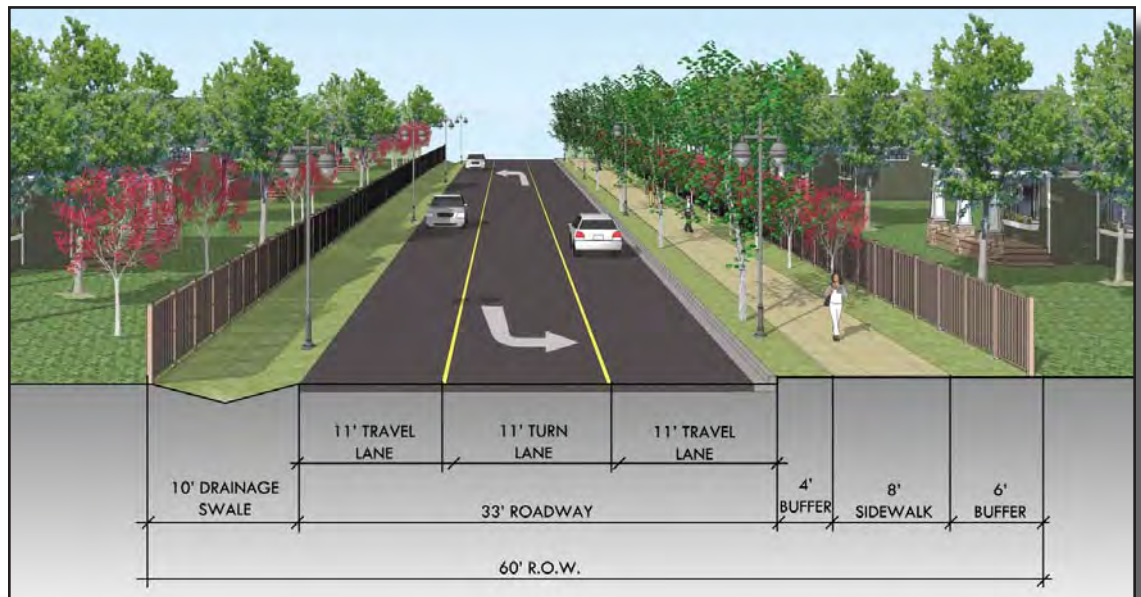


Figure 5-13 Proposed Woodson Road cross section with turning lane



Action T - 6

Evaluate strategies to facilitate north/south movements within Oak Ridge North at key intersections (Addresses Objectives 3 and 4).

Reason for this action - Within the City of Oak Ridge North itself, residents have expressed the need to improve north/south travel. Several key intersections such as Maplewood and Harlan were deliberately offset when originally developed in an attempt to discourage continuous traffic. However, as the city has matured, the offsets now make it difficult to get across Robinson and Woodson Roads.

Re-aligning the offset intersections was considered, but would result in the need to acquire multiple residential properties at each offset intersection at a significant cost. The preferred alternative is to consider paired and synchronized traffic signals to allow for more efficient movements through the intersections.

Key intersections in the City to be evaluated include:

A. Harlan/Maplewood offset intersection

- ♦ Evaluate paired signalization or re-alignment of intersection to allow north-south movement within the City, as shown in Figure 5-14.
- ♦ Consider as part of Robinson Road upgrade and area wide mobility study

Timeframe for this action – short term to medium term

B. Patsy/Woodson & Harlan/Woodson

- ♦ Evaluate need for signalization to facilitate north/south movement across Woodson Road as shown in Figure 5-15.

Timeframe for this action – short term to medium term

C. Patsy at Robinson

- ♦ Determine if placement of a free right turn both east and west bound from Patsy Lane would provide significant benefits at the intersection. Determine right of way needs to implement this recommendation.
- ♦ Potential turning movements are shown in Figure 5-16 on the following page.

Timeframe for this action – short term to medium term

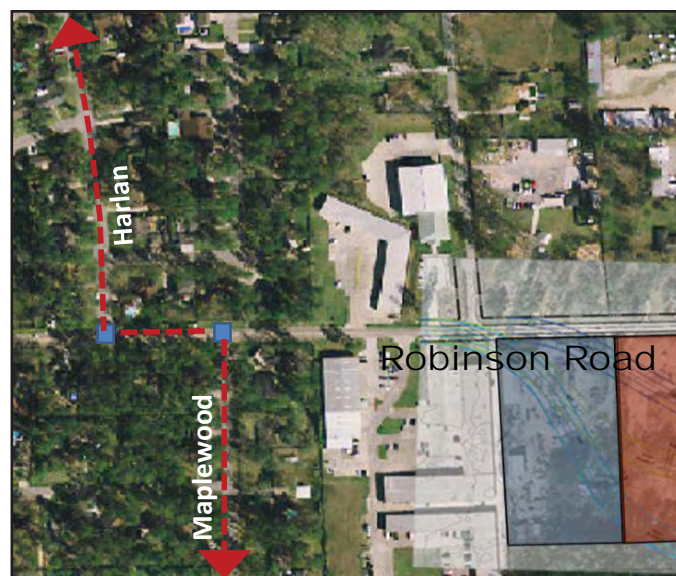


Figure 5-14 Current configuration of Harlan/Maplewood



Figure 5-15 Patsy/Woodson and Harlan/Woodson



Figure 5-16 Potential turning movement improvements at Patsy and Robinson



Action T - 7

Along neighborhood collector streets, consider traffic calming to ensure low traffic speeds and to improve walkability (Addresses Objectives 3, 4 and 5)

Reason for this action - On an as-needed basis, consider adding traffic calming elements to better control fast moving cut-through traffic along key north/south roads in the City. The traffic calming elements should be a step above traditional road humps or speed bumps, and could include traffic circles, chicanes, median deviators and other mechanisms that promote safer speeds within neighborhoods. A variety of types of traffic calming devices is shown in Figure 5-16 on this page.

Only streets that have a high potential for cut-through traffic should be considered. These may include:

- ♦ Patsy Lane, Harlan Lane, Westwood Road, Maplewood Street, and Blueberry Hill Drive.
- ♦ Any traffic calming installation should include landscaping and beautification components as shown in the images on this page. Maintenance of landscaped areas may be by neighborhood groups or by City staff.
- ♦ Traffic calming elements should be reviewed with and approved by neighborhood groups.

Timeframe for this action – short term where needed, to medium term only if needed

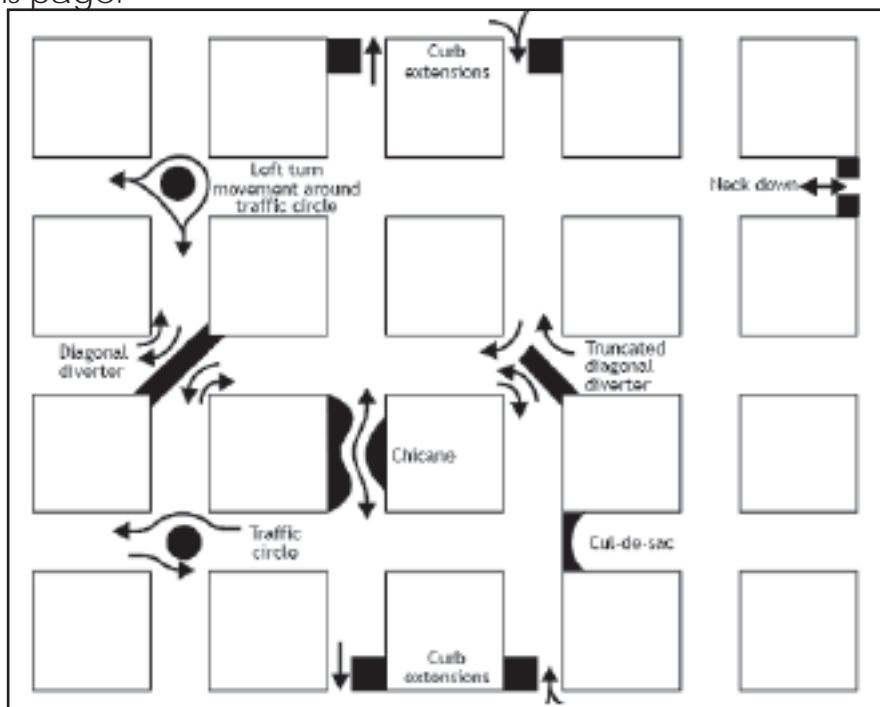


Figure 5-17 Traffic calming devices. Source: Federal Highway Administration



Traffic calming examples



Action T - 8

Develop a citywide network of wide sidewalks/sidepaths/ bicycle lanes to encourage non-vehicular local trips in phases (Addresses Objectives 3 and 5).

"No sidewalks, we like to ride our bikes and Mom says there's too much traffic"

"That you have to watch out for cars so much because they go too fast and don't look or stop and they run stop signs and stuff and we don't have sidewalks."

Quotes from Oak Ridge North Kids Survey responses, Fall 2012

Reason for this action -

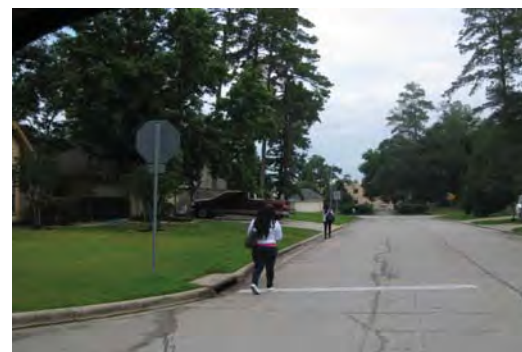
During the planning process, Oak Ridge North residents repeatedly requested that places to walk and/or ride bicycle be considered in the City. A highly visible network of sidewalks, trails and pathways announces clearly that Oak Ridge North has great streets and wonderful neighborhoods, and is a great selling point for the value of living in the City.

A network of trails is recommended in the Parks and Trails section, but on other streets in the City, sidewalks may be needed to create places to walk. Most neighborhoods in the City have no sidewalks, and the argument is made that with very low volumes of traffic on side streets, walking in the street is adequate.

Along streets with higher volumes of traffic and potentially higher travel speeds, sidewalks or clearly marked pedestrian facilities should be considered and added where feasible.

For bicyclists, striped bicycle lanes should be considered and added where feasible. For both sidewalks and bicycle facilities, consider and follow the guidance provided by the most recent American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guides for bicycle facilities and pedestrian facilities.

- ◆ Prepare a citywide sidewalk and bicycle lanes master plan (within one year)
- ◆ Along neighborhood streets, a 5' wide sidewalk is recommended. Where possible, provide a green strip between the road and the sidewalk. Although this may not be possible in all locations, it creates a more pleasant street appearance and a better walking environment;
- ◆ Along roads with no curbs, consider using stamped asphalt to create a contrasting walking and parking zone. At a very minimum, this helps distinguish the driving lane from areas where pedestrians might be walking;
- ◆ Focus initially on connections to area schools;
- ◆ Add major sidewalks/sidepaths along Robinson Road and Hanna Roads (as component of improvements to those streets);
 - 10' wide along Robinson Road (south side), 6' wide north side;
 - 8' to 10' wide along Hanna Road (west side) as part of future improvements;
- ◆ Consider adding 5' to 6' wide sidewalks along Maplewood, Patsy, and Westwood;
- ◆ Add 10' wide sidepath along Blueberry Hill Road;



Youth and teens currently walking and biking in Oak Ridge North

CHAPTER 5 - TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS



Sidewalks



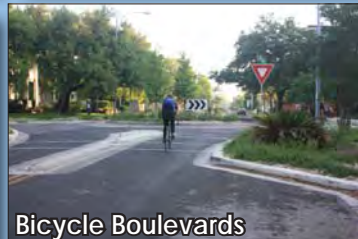
Sidepaths



Off-Street Trails



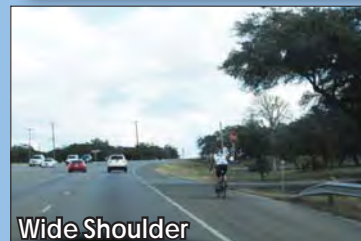
Bike Lanes



Bicycle Boulevards



Buffered Bike Lanes



Wide Shoulder



Wide Curb Lane

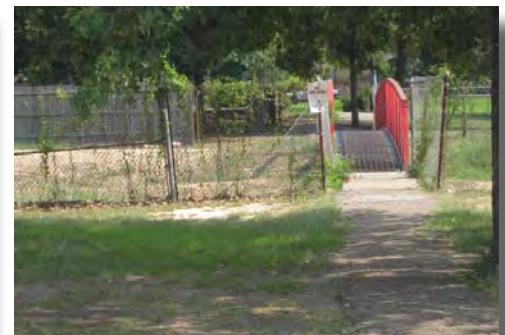


Shared Lane Marking

- ◆ Add 10' sidepath or buffered bicycle lanes along Lane Ln. to facilitate access to retail areas
- ◆ Maintain and enhance pedestrian bridge and trail crossings to schools along northern boundary of the City.

Timeframe for this action – ongoing over next five to ten years, completed within 10 years

Figure 5-18 Types of pedestrian and bicycle facilities.



Existing pedestrian bridge provides access to area schools.

Figure 5-19 Concept for walkways and potential traffic calming along Blueberry Hill Road

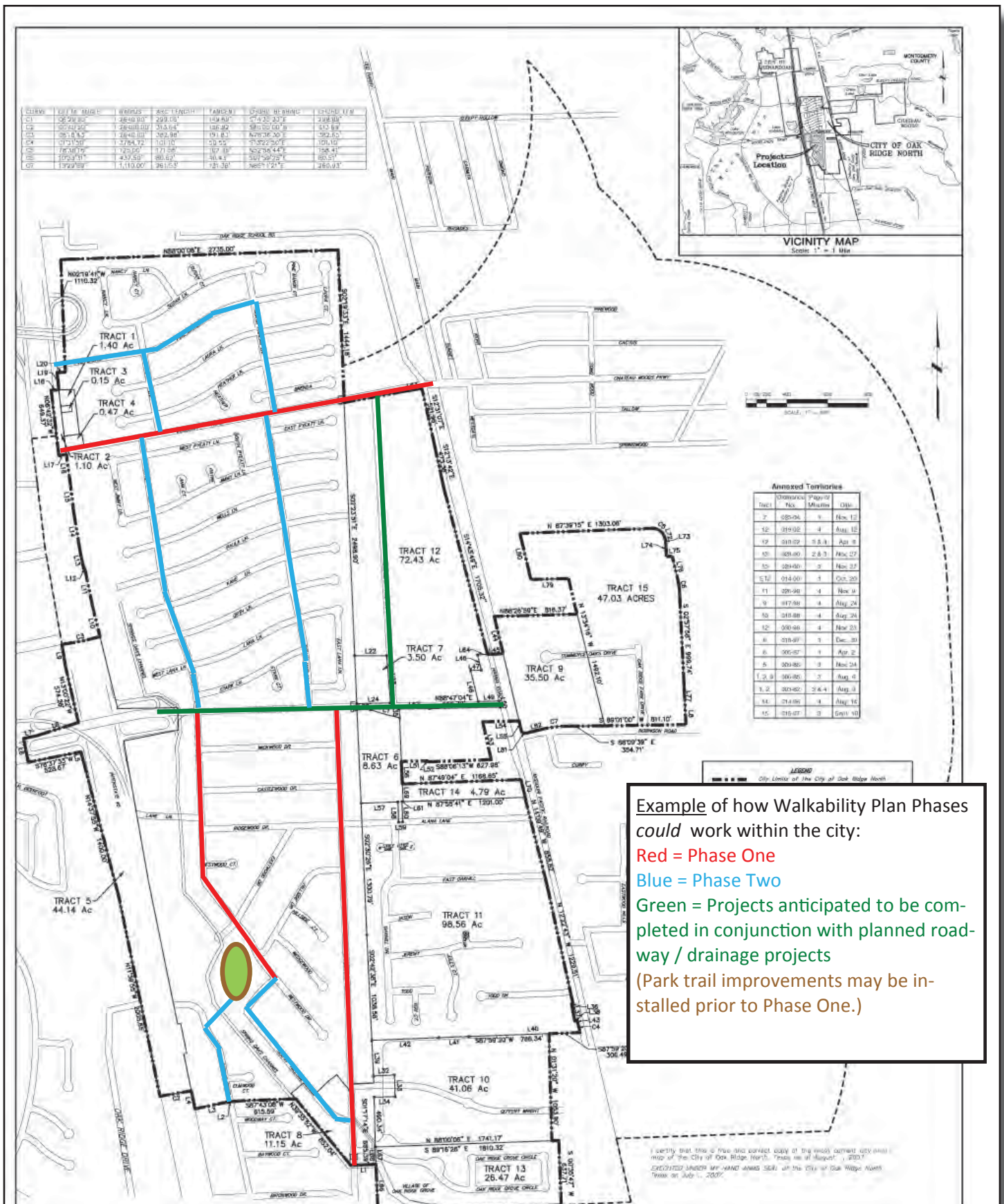


Figure 5-20 Sidewalk implementation in phases. Source: City of Oak Ridge North, study by Jones & Carter 2008



Longer Range Street Connections

As the existing City re-develops and as newer areas in the ETJ grow, establishing good roadway connectivity is imperative. The future transportation plan shown in Figure 5-22 on this page illustrates locations where additional street connections should be made. In particular, connections to a potential future Town Center area from surrounding neighborhoods will greatly increase access to the stores and cafes that might locate there. Future connections east of the railroad tracks can also help alleviate traffic congestion at Hanna and Robinson Road.

Consider developing a formal thoroughfare plan in the future to further solidify the alignment of future roadway connections.

Timeframe for this action – ongoing as development or redevelopment occurs.

- **Major Arterial** - carries regional movements
- **Minor Arterial** – conveys movement from one local area to another
- **Regional “Complete Street” Collector** – conveys movement both in Oak Ridge North and some external movement
- **Local Collector** – conveys movement around the City and to areas adjacent to the City
- **Neighborhood Collector** – movement from one neighborhood to another
- **Local Streets** – movement within neighborhoods
- **Traffic calming Installation**
- **Potential Traffic Circle Installation**

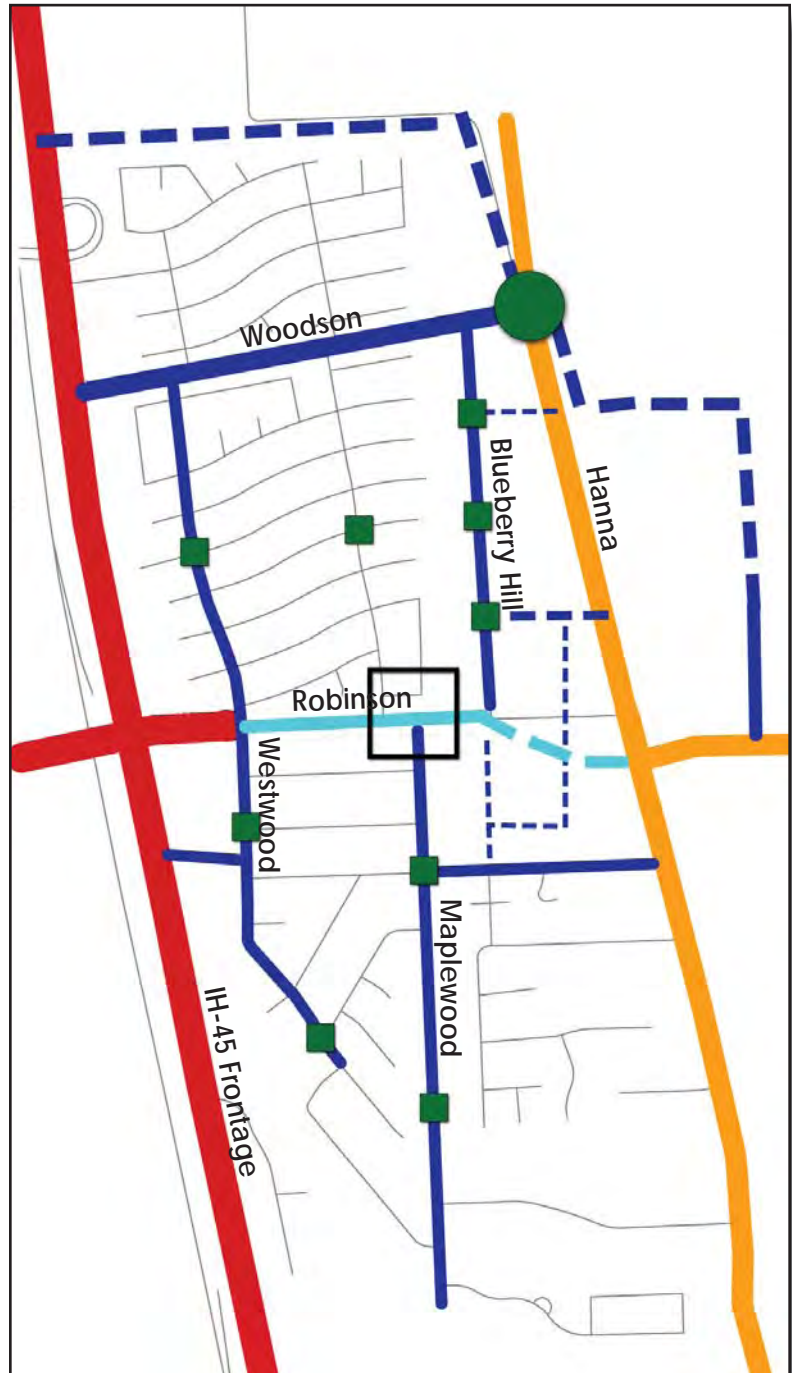
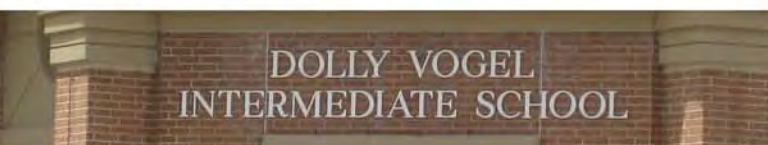


Figure 5-21 Future Transportation Plan



Chapter 6

Economic Growth Recommendations



Economic Growth

Because of its adjacency to IH-45, Oak Ridge North is the ideal location for economic development and business recruitment. Much of the City's current operating budget relies on sales tax, which largely comes from the freeway commercial areas. However, as discussed later in this section, expanding the commercial areas along Hanna Road and Robinson Road will help strengthen the City's tax revenue.



Existing Land Use

Much of the land in the City's ETJ is currently undeveloped. Since much of the City's growth is expected to occur in the ETJ, it behooves Oak Ridge North to reach a population of over 5,000 residents so that it can obtain home-rule city status. This would give the City much more power in regulating the development and redevelopment of the ETJ areas.



All areas designated as commercial or freeway retail are currently within the City limits. However, large portions of light industrial with manufacturing type businesses are in the ETJ.

Existing freeway commercial shopping areas in Oak Ridge North

Oak Ridge North currently has single family residential and low density single family residential within the City limits. Manufactured housing can be found in the ETJ. Currently, there is no high density housing such as condos or town homes in the City or ETJ.

Existing Land Use		
Land Use Type	City Limits Only	Planning Area (ETJ area only)
Low Density Residential	4.0%	19.9%
Single Family Residential	56.9%	20.7%
High Density Residential		
Manufactured Housing		1.9%
Institutional (schools & civic)	6.6%	1.9%
Churches	1.7%	
Freeway Retail	7.4%	
Commercial	10.8%	
Light Industrial	3.8%	17.9%
Drainage and Utility	1.6%	3.1%
Parks and Open Space	1.0%	0.5%
Vacant	6.1%	32.5%

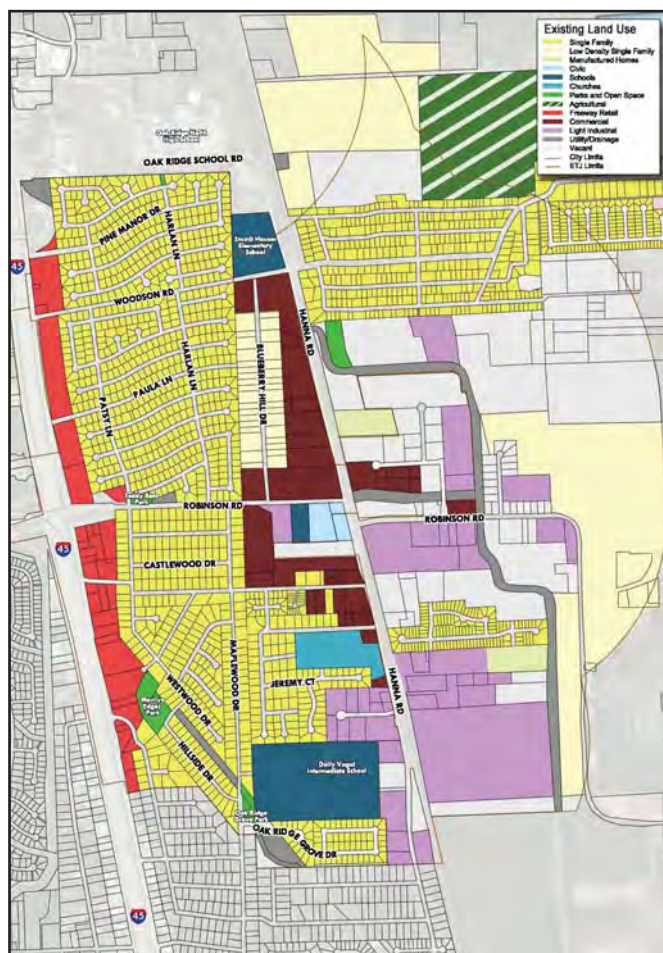


Figure 6-1 Existing land use



Current Economic Issues in Oak Ridge North

Economic development is critical to the City because the sales tax generated accounts for almost 58% of the City's general revenue for its 2013 operating budget. Essentially, that revenue goes to providing the kinds of amenities and services that Oak Ridge North residents want.

Given the size of the City and its limited geographic area, every little bit that is generated helps. As such, the City must get everything it can out of its non-residential area. Major economic issues impacting the City today are:

- ◆ Need to focus on retail along the IH-45 frontage corridor.
- ◆ Limited access from throughout the region is a major issue for area businesses.
- ◆ Older style metal buildings may be most cost effective, but may also make the City look as a less desirable place to build. Quality needs to now be as important as quantity.
- ◆ Certain areas, such as the area around City Hall, may have potential to be redeveloped to a higher level. This in turn can result in more property taxes as well as a higher sales tax base.
- ◆ Some local businesses in the area are now being branded as "The Woodlands (business name).". This can effect Oak Ridge North's image and make the City seem the same as or apart of the Woodlands.



Typical metal commercial building found in Oak Ridge North today

Objectives for Economic Growth




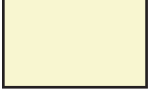

Economic Growth Objective #1 - Ensure long term economic sustainability by proactively seeking high quality retail and in-fill development to increase the City's sales and property tax revenue

Economic Growth Objective #2 - Improve the City's infrastructure, access and neighborhoods to serve as a catalyst in attracting new investment to the City

Economic Growth Objective #3 - Proactively seek new high quality development for undeveloped areas of the City and its extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ)



Potential Redevelopment or Growth Areas

-  **Inside the City Transitional Growth Areas** – Need to transition to more intense types of development, mixed use preferred
-  **Inside the City New Growth Areas** – New growth, encourage higher value, longer term uses
-  **Near term growth outside of the City** – will require access and infrastructure improvements, but warrant investment in the near future
-  **Longer term growth outside of the City** – require resolution of service agreements, significant infrastructure improvements. City should be prepared for short term actions if warranted
-  **Potential ETJ boundary adjustments with Shenandoah/Conroe** – consider boundary adjustments as appropriate

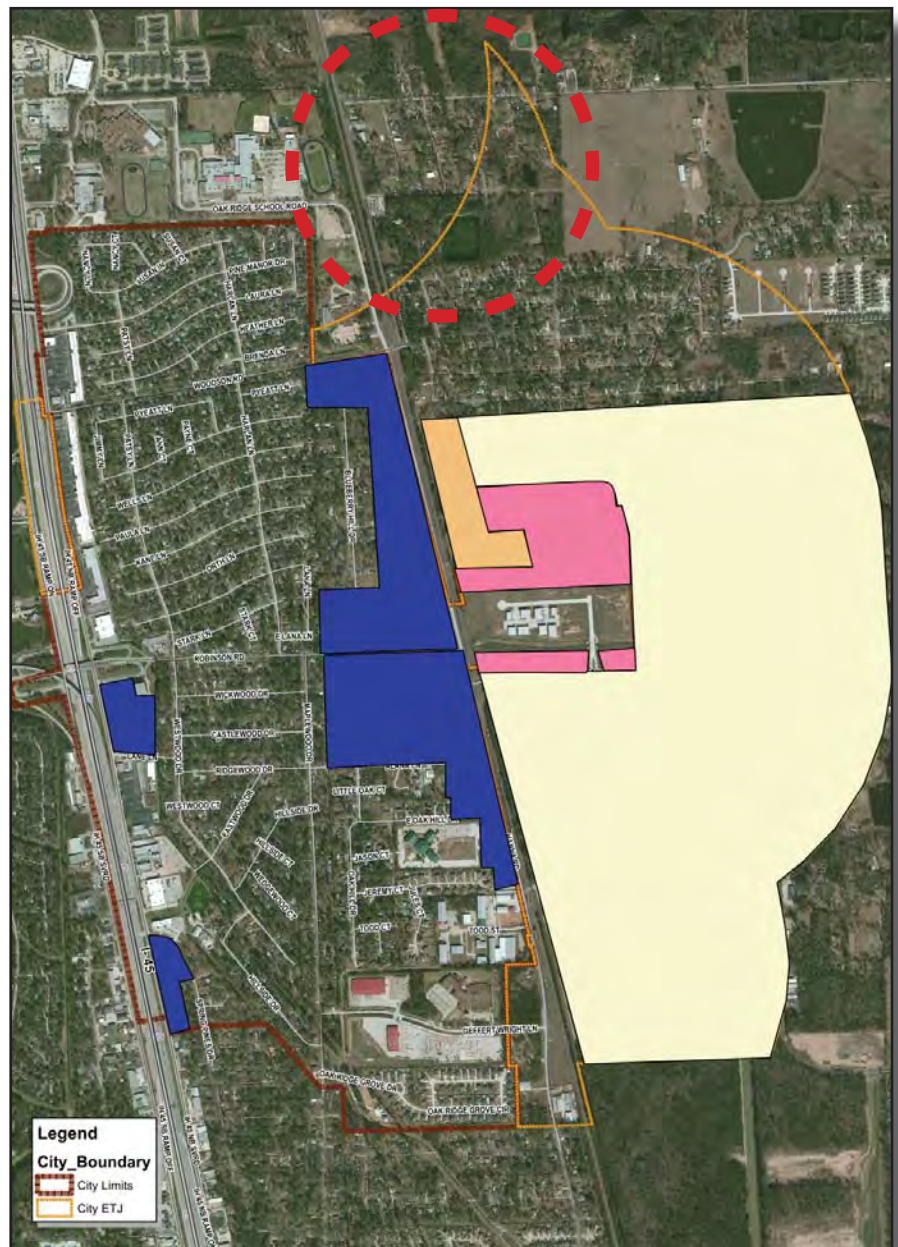
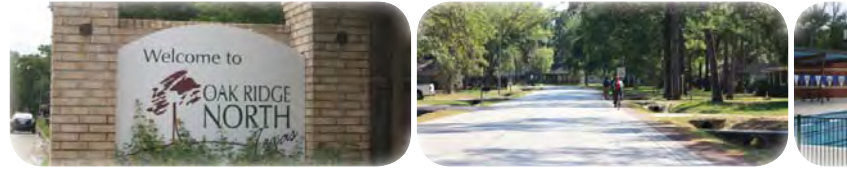


Figure 6-2 Potential growth areas



Future Land Use Plan

A future land use plan is developed for multiple reasons. First, it looks at long term growth and issues that could affect the entire area further down the road. Second, it identifies locations for a future “Town Center” which is a high priority recommendation of this comprehensive plan. Finally, the future land use plan for Oak Ridge North focuses on future growth to the east of Robinson Road, mainly in the ETJ.

Because of the City’s general law status, annexation in these areas will be voluntary. Annexation of some already developed neighborhoods in the ETJ area may also be difficult or longer term because of the more significant infrastructure needs in these neighborhoods. If appropriate and deemed beneficial to both the City and residents of the area, limited purpose annexation may be considered. This type of annexation would be to annex in the future because of the need to upgrade infrastructure.

The future land use plan is shown in Figure 6-3.

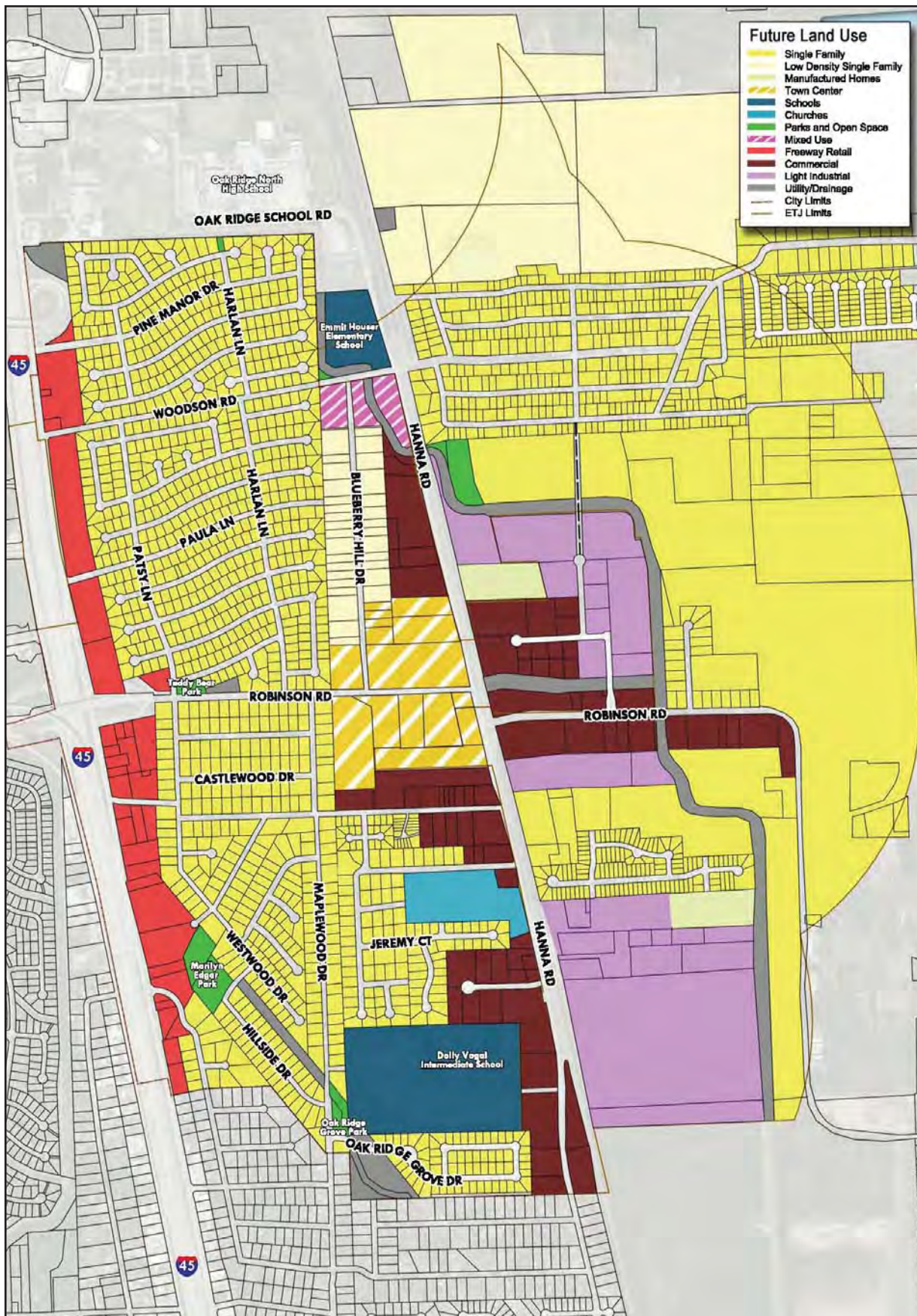


Figure 6-3 Future land use plan



Economic Growth Strategies

Action EG - I

Assist in the development of a “town center” area for Oak Ridge North

Reason for this action - With the potential re-alignment of Robinson Road and improvements to traffic flow, the area around City Hall may become a prime re-development area. The City should consider using this demand to elevate the quality of this area to begin the process of creating a true downtown and “heart” for the City. Figures 6.5 and 6.6 on this page illustrate what this might look like. Steps to implement this action are discussed on the following page, and include:

- ◆ Determine final alignment of Robinson Road
- ◆ Develop concept for Town Center and key requirements
- ◆ Implement new Town Center land use category and develop appropriate standards and requirements for the Town Center (more compact development, mixed use, require minimum 2 to 3 level floor heights, standards to promote walkability, parking and internal road requirements)
- ◆ In conjunction with area property owners, pursue development partners to finance and develop a town center
- ◆ Require high degree of walkability and connections to adjacent neighborhoods
- ◆ Determine City participation requirements and funding mechanism (Tax Increment Finance (TIF) or Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ), 380 agreement, etc.)

Timeframe for this action – short to medium term



Figure 6-4 Proposed Town Center location



Figure 6-5
Development
concept of a Town
Center



Figure 6-6 Concept
image of what the
Town Center could
look like

CHAPTER 6 - ECONOMIC GROWTH RECOMMENDATIONS



The character of a Town Center



Action EG - 2

Pursue recommendations to retain/recruit new retail to Oak Ridge North

Reason for this action - Retail is a significant part of the economy of Oak Ridge North, and sales tax revenue helps fund the type of City government and actions that residents of Oak Ridge North want. Actions to attract new retail growth to the City include:

- ♦ Pursue recommendations for potential retail gaps
 - Continue to promote the City via contacts and trade show exposure
 - Respond to inquiries facilitated by contacts
- ♦ Work with development entities to facilitate redevelopment of freeway properties
- ♦ Ensure that new developments incorporate high quality architecture, landscaping and signage
- ♦ Attract and retain job industries, including light industrial and manufacturing

Timeframe for this action – Ongoing, and continue to pursue both in the short term and longer term.

Action EG - 3

Proactively seek higher quality/high value developments/redevelopments for Oak Ridge North

Reason for this action - The larger region around Oak Ridge North has matured significantly over the past decade, and is now viewed as one of the most desirable places to be in the region. As a result, the City should now focus on attracting and requiring higher quality developments. New development that is constructed over the next few years can be expected to remain in place for twenty to forty years, requiring that it be done correctly today.

- ♦ Continue to utilize incentives to attract high quality developments to the City
- ♦ Enact zoning and development standard requirements that ensure high quality development and that provide stability for prior development investments
- ♦ Along Hanna and Robinson inside the City limits, transition to all masonry requirements (no metal buildings in the future)
- ♦ Develop area specific strategies for key redevelopment parcels

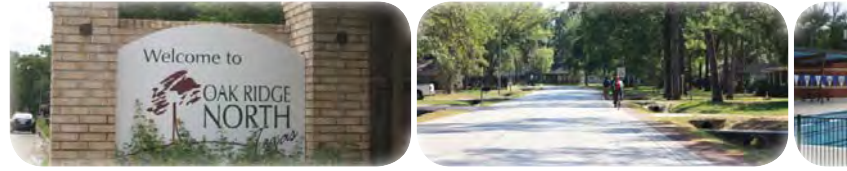
Timeframe for this action – short term

Action EG - 4

Short term - Allow for expanded home use occupations along Robinson Road between Patsy and the proposed Town Center

Reason for this action - As Robinson Road is transformed, the volume of traffic on the street may make it a better location for smaller home businesses. The flexibility to operate small businesses from their properties should be provided by the City. Some adjustments to home business regulations currently in place should be considered.

CHAPTER 6 - ECONOMIC GROWTH RECOMMENDATIONS



These may include:

- ◆ Revise City standards to allow for additional home uses
- ◆ Consider creating special overlay requirements or zoning category for lots fronting on Robinson Road
- ◆ Establish parking requirements and allowances for rear parking if necessary
- ◆ Develop incentives to promote shared driveways
- ◆ Establish standards for redevelopment types allowed along Robinson Road

Timeframe for this action – within one to two years



Examples of homes converted into professional businesses



Chapter 7



Parks & Civic Facilities Recommendations



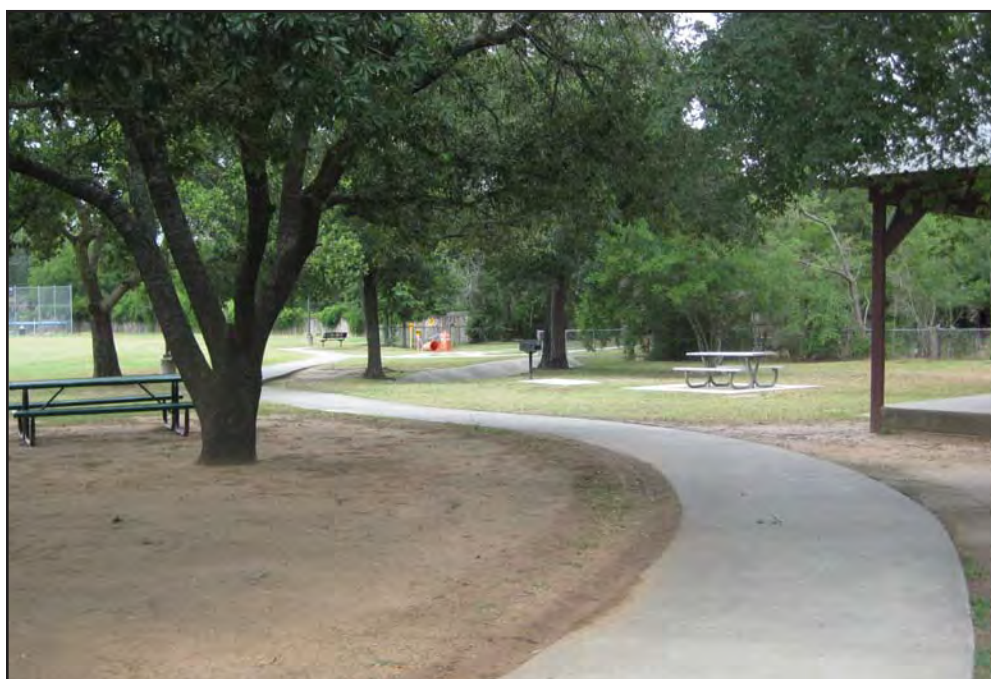


Parks, Trails and Civic Facilities

Well developed parks and civic facilities are often the first places that visitors notice in a community. In fact, parks are one of the most visible elements of a city government at work, and can instill a strong sense of pride in its residents. A great park system lets both citizens and visitors know that the leadership of the city is interested in providing the best for its citizens. The citizens of Oak Ridge North have long recognized that parks play an important role in the quality of life in the City, and that a strong parks system provides for a healthier environment, improves the well being of children and adults, and remind us every day about what is attractive and fun in our city.

This section assesses the opportunities for parks and civic facilities in Oak Ridge North, and what should be done to fill key needs to make the City an even better place to live. The recommendations of this section are intended to be implemented by the City of Oak Ridge North. Oak Ridge North is the primary governmental entity charged with providing recreational facilities for the citizens of the City. Ancillary recreational facilities are provided by Montgomery County and Conroe ISD on two elementary school campuses north of the City.

The City of Oak Ridge North currently has three park locations, which total 7.4 acres. The City recognizes the value of parks and trails, and the importance those amenities have in attracting new residents and sustaining existing residents. The City should seek to maintain a superior parks system by improving the amenities within existing parks and offering new park locations and new park amenities.



Existing parks in Oak Ridge North today

CHAPTER 7 - PARKS & CIVIC FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS



A summary of the existing park inventory is shown in the table below. The map on the following page shows the location of the existing parks.

The two elementary schools on the north side of the City, Oak Ridge Elementary and Emmet Houser Elementary, both have multiple playground amenities that provide additional recreational resources to the residents of Oak Ridge North.

Table 7-1 Oak Ridge North Park Inventory

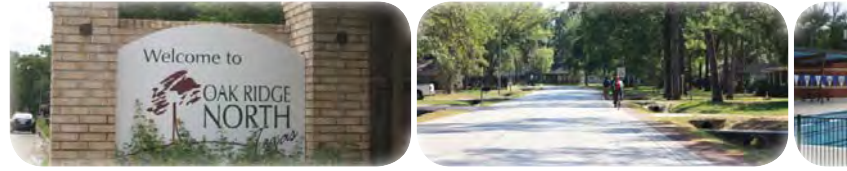
Park Name	Acres	BBQ Grills	Backstop	Baseball Fields	Basketball Court (# of goals)	Benches	Bicycle Rack	Drinking Fountain	Pavilions	Picnic Tables	Picnic Shelter	Playground	Restrooms	Swings	Swimming Pool	Trash Bins	Tennis Court	Sand Volleyball
Marilyn Edgar Park	5.9	1	1	1	6	14	3		3	19	6	2	2	2	1	6	1	1
Teddy Bear Park	0.9					5		1	1	7		2	1	4				
Oak Ridge Grove Park	0.6					1						1				1		
Total	7.4	1	1	1	6	20	3	1	4	26	6	5	3	6	1	7	1	1

Table 7-2 Existing Level of Service

Facility	Current Amount	Current LOS (1 facility per capita)	Target LOS	Current Deficit/Surplus
Park Acreage	7.4 acres	2.4 acres/1,000 residents	4 - 5 acres/1,000 residents	5.7 - 9.0 acre deficit
Baseball fields	1	3,281	2 per city	Deficit of 1
Backstops (practice fields)	1	3,281	4 per city	Deficit of 3
Pavilions	4	820	4 per city	No deficit
Picnic tables	26	126	Varies	Varies
Playgrounds	5	656	In every park	In every park
Swimming pools	1	3,281	1 per city	No deficit
Sand volleyball courts	1	3,281	2 per city	Deficit of 1
Basketball courts	6 goals	567	Varies	No deficit
Tennis courts	1	3,281	2 per city	Deficit of 1
Trails and sidewalks	2.23 miles	0.68 miles/1,000 residents	1 mile/1,000 residents	Deficit of 1.05 miles
Trails only	0.27 miles	0.08 miles/1,000 residents	1 mile/1,000 residents	Deficit of 3.01 miles



Figure 7-1 Location of existing parks



Parks and trails play an important role in defining the quality of life of any city. Throughout the public input process, and from field work reconnaissance, a number of parks amenities were noted as lacking in Oak Ridge North. **Recreational facilities that are lacking include:**

- ◆ Sprayground to attract young families;
- ◆ Amphitheater to hold community wide events;
- ◆ Pocket parks/gathering spaces, especially in the northern area of the City;
- ◆ Community garden;
- ◆ Skate park; and
- ◆ Community center for programs and classes.

Oak Ridge North is currently doing well in some areas such as having a highly used swimming pool, the number of playgrounds within the City, and amount of picnic pavilions and picnic tables that are available to residents. In order to meet the recommended level of service for park acreage however, the City would need to acquire 5.7 to 9.0 acres of parkland in the future. Also, as noted above, the City lacks different types of amenities within the existing parks. Furthermore, during the public input process the most common concern regarding parks was the expansion of Marilyn Edgar Park so it could accommodate more amenities and the renovation of existing facilities within that park.

Objectives for Parks, Trails and Civic Facilities

The objectives for parks, trails and civic facilities were developed from the technical evaluation of existing facilities, and from the citizen input that was received regarding this plan component.

Parks Objective #1 - Provide a balance of park facilities that serve both the older population of the City but that also serve younger families that are attracted to Oak Ridge North

Parks Objective #2 - Develop a first class walking and bicycle riding system throughout the City

Parks Objective #3 - Renovate and upgrade Teddy Bear and Marilyn Edgar parks

Parks Objective #4 - Develop park facilities that are highly visible and that help attract new residents to the City



Action P - I

Develop a plan for a first class walking/riding trails system throughout the City (by phases)

Reason for this action - Throughout the planning process, residents consistently requested more places to safely walk or ride a bicycle in the City.

- ♦ Develop a plan for trails citywide
- ♦ Replace Woodson 4' wide asphalt trail with 8' wide concrete sidepath as part of road improvements to Woodson Road
- ♦ Add 8' - 10' wide walking sidepath along Blueberry Hill Dr. part of traffic calming improvement
- ♦ Add walking trail connection from Marilyn Edgar Park to Lane Ln. (partially striped across parking areas, partially along drainage and undeveloped green space)
- ♦ Work with TxDOT to develop a pedestrian and bicycle connection from the east side of IH-45 to the Woodlands Mall area (cost and timeframe undetermined, but development within 5 to 10 years)
- ♦ Include amenity features and gateways for all new trails to create a memorable and first class system. Light trails for nighttime use

Timeframe for this action – within 3 years (one mile of trail per year)



Examples of different types of trails and trail amenities

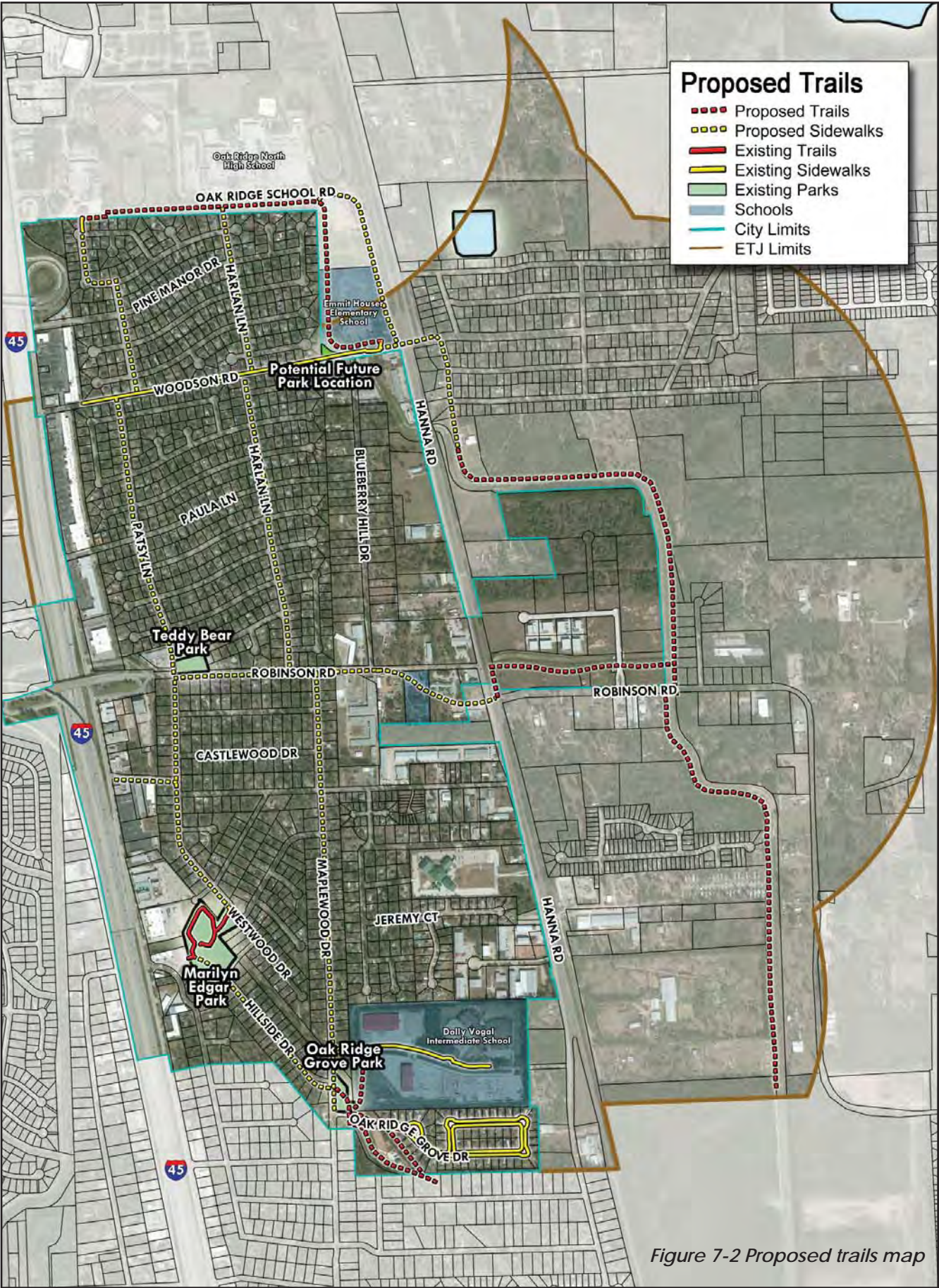


Figure 7-2 Proposed trails map



Action P - 2

Develop a new pocket park along Woodson Road to serve the far northern neighborhoods of the City

Reason for this action - Provides park access and serves the far northern neighborhoods of the City which are currently underserved in terms of accessible to parkland and recreational amenities.

- ◆ Size of park – approximately 1 acre
- ◆ Elements in new pocket park:
 - Walking trail (connections to trails along drainage and along Woodson Road)
 - Small shade pavilion, benches
 - Small play area
 - Fencing around entire park
 - Park sign
 - Landscape and shade trees
- ◆ Park should be highly developed to serve residents
- ◆ Add walking trail connection from Marilyn Edgar Park to Lane Ln. (partially striped across parking areas, partially along drainage and undeveloped green space)



Example of a pocket park

Timeframe for this action – within 3 years



Figure 7-3 Proposed location for a future pocket park

CHAPTER 7 - PARKS & CIVIC FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS



Action P - 3

Encourage and assist in the development of a new urban park as a focal point of the Oak Ridge North Town Center

Reason for this action - Will provide a citywide attraction and place for community events in the "heart" of the City.

- ◆ Size of park – approximately ½ to ¾ acre
- ◆ Elements in new pocket park:
 - Amphitheater or location for citywide events
 - Water features/fountain
 - Landscape and shade features
 - Seating areas

Timeframe for this action – within 5 years (or as Town Center area is developed)



Examples of urban parks



Figure 7-4 Expansion location for Marilyn Edgar Park

Action P - 4

Expand Marilyn Edgar Park

Reason for this action - Expansion will allow for more amenities to be added to the park and further enhance it as the City's premier park.

- ◆ Consider acquiring adjacent properties to expand Marilyn Edgar Park to serve as the premier park in the City
- ◆ Enhance the trail connection from Westway as the northern gateway into the park

Timeframe for this action – within 5 years



Action P - 5

Enhance the foot bridge area as a pocket park

Reason for this action - Will provide northern residents access to a pocket park, and will enhance the area that is significantly traveled by students accessing the schools.

- ◆ Enhance the small foot bridge park on the far northern edge of the City as a pocket park.

Timeframe for this action – within 5 years



Existing foot bridge



Figure 7-5 Location of potential pocket park near the existing foot bridge

CHAPTER 7 - PARKS & CIVIC FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS



Action P - 6

Consider the development of a community center/civic center

Reason for this action - Currently there is no facility in the City to accommodate residents for events, rentals, meetings, parties or reunions.

- ◆ Purpose – Citywide meeting location, may be built in conjunction with renovations or expansion of City Hall. May be built as public/private partnership
- ◆ Size of facility – 5000 to 10,000 sf
- ◆ Elements:
 - Large meeting room
 - Smaller meeting rooms
 - Classrooms or spaces for fitness classes
 - Exhibition gallery
 - Kitchen facilities



Example of a community center/civic center

Timeframe for this action – longer term, within 5 to 10 years

Action P - 7

Identify location for a future park site(s) to serve eastern ETJ area when annexation becomes more likely

Reason for this action - In the future, as the ETJ areas are annexed, the residents of those areas will be underserved in terms of park amenities.

- ◆ Park would serve residential areas to the east of Hanna Road
- ◆ Up to 5 acres recommended. Smaller park sizes are acceptable, but at least one park in this area should be larger to provide open space for active play and sports.
- ◆ Development in partnership or entirely by development entity(s)

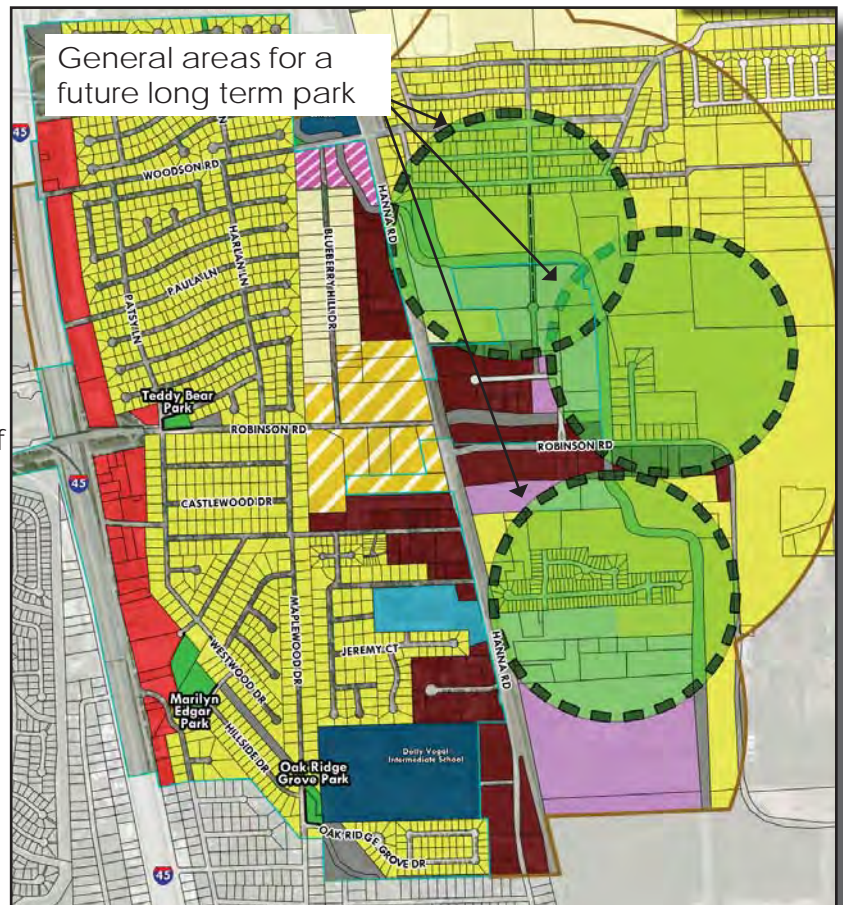


Figure 7-6 Potential locations for a future park

Timeframe for this action – longer term



Chapter 8



Implementation Strategy





Implementation Strategy

Earlier chapters of this comprehensive plan identify recommended actions to achieve the desired goals of Oak Ridge North. However, successful implementation requires more than simply going after an action. An implementation strategy identifies methods for strengthening execution of the recommendations.

In order to create a comprehensive approach to implementing this plan, the implementation strategy is organized into the following components:

- ♦ Public investment priorities
- ♦ Partnerships
- ♦ Funding mechanisms
- ♦ Regulatory mechanisms
- ♦ Monitoring progress

Principles of Implementation

Partnership driven. Almost all of the actions in this plan include the possibility of multiple partners, including the City of Oak Ridge North, coming together to make efforts happen faster and with more reliable funding. The City's role will be to bring those partners together and to create common themes and direction in implementation.

Significant citizen and stakeholder input. In order to engage the Oak Ridge North residents and ensure community buy-in, implementation of all actions related to this plan will be reviewed by the citizens of Oak Ridge North and will include extensive property owner participation.

Balance needs and desires. It is inevitable that conflict will arise between conflicting views and goals. Trade-offs are expected, but the City and community must work together to achieve the goals that promote the entire Oak Ridge North community.

Committed investment by both public and private sector. The City's role in implementing the comprehensive plan is to unify public and private interests and to guide all entities in one direction. Most of the major planned improvements will actually be constructed by the private sector as development occurs. However, there is a need for public investment to support private efforts.

Fiscal responsibility. As illustrated in this comprehensive plan, choices and investments have impacts on various components of a city. The City must recognize the extent of the impact of public investments and choices so that there are no unintended or significantly negative consequences against the vision or goals of the community. Use of public monies, including incentives, must result in significant public benefits that promote the vision for Oak Ridge North.



Public Investment Priorities

This section focuses on the key public investment opportunities to be implemented by the public sector, including the City of Oak Ridge North, Montgomery County, TXDOT, and any other public entity that may have a stake. These projects help create the foundation of the City in which to grow, and helps support private entities in their efforts to implement components of the comprehensive plan. These actions include investments in public infrastructure, such as sidewalks, roadways, and utilities; important changes to the regulatory framework to achieve the desired built environment; and efforts and investments toward key public facilities.

The importance of public investment. Investment is risky, particularly in the economic climate we live in today. Before private investment occurs, it needs to be reassured of the future conditions and status of an area. The City of Oak Ridge North needs to take the first step in making that reassurance by investing public monies in Oak Ridge North. Public investment not only creates a more appealing environment to generate private investment, but it also demonstrates to private investors the importance of Oak Ridge North to the City.

The tables on the following pages identifies the major physical improvement recommendations. Priority levels and a potential timeframe have been identified for each recommendation. These priorities and time line may be re-evaluated as new opportunities occur in the future.



Table 8-1 Transportation Actions

Action	Need for Action	Responsible Entity/ Potential Partners	Potential Timeframe
Adopt a complete streets policy	Provides safe access for all transportation users	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 3 - 6 months
Develop solutions to improve access to and from IH-45 at Robinson Rd.	Reduces conflicts along the frontage road at Woodlands Pkwy. and Robinson Rd.	TxDOT; City of Oak Ridge North	Short term
Work with regional entities to develop regional transportation solutions	Addresses traffic issues caused by non-residents traveling to/from IH-45 to area east of the City	City of Oak Ridge North; Montgomery County; Houston-Galveston Area Council	Within 12 - 18 months
Expand vehicular capacity of Robinson Rd. that reflects its role as Oak Ridge North's "Main Street"	Congestion along Robinson Rd. is the single most significant concern to residents	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 12 - 18 months
Enhance Woodson Road and Hanna Road	Consider improvements to moderately increase their capacity	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 5 years
Evaluate strategies to facilitate north/south movements at key intersections	Current intersection configurations make it difficult to get across Robinson Rd. and Woodson Rd.	City of Oak Ridge North	Short to medium term
Consider traffic calming along neighborhood collector streets	Lowers traffic speeds and improves walkability	City of Oak Ridge North	Short term where needed
Develop citywide network of wide sidewalks, sidepaths, and bicycle lanes	Citizens repeatedly requested more places to walk or ride a bicycle in the City	City of Oak Ridge North	Ongoing over the next 5 - 10 years



Table 8-2 Neighborhood Actions			
Action	Need for Action	Responsible Entity/ Potential Partners	Potential Timeframe
Aggressively pursue code enforcement efforts by City staff	Ensures that all homes in a neighborhood retain their value	City of Oak Ridge North	Ongoing
Assist City residents in establishing neighborhood associations or volunteer groups	Upkeep and improvements to homes are important	City of Oak Ridge North; neighborhood associations	Within 1 year
Create small grant program to assist in home repairs	Some residents are not available to physically or financially afford upkeep	City of Oak Ridge North; neighborhood associations	Within 1 - 2 years
Incorporate housing redevelopment ordinance requirements and incentives	Encourages new residents to invest in older housing stock	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 1 year
Update subdivision standards and building code requirements	Review and update standards for buildings in residential areas	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 1 year
Investigate the feasibility of sound wall for neighborhoods near IH-45	Sound volumes negatively impacts property values and can lead to increased deterioration of those neighborhoods	City of Oak Ridge North/TxDOT	Within 1 year for feasibility
Adopt a tree preservation ordinance	The mature trees throughout Oak Ridge North contribute significantly to the appearance of neighborhoods	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 1 year

Table 8-3 Branding/Community Identity Actions			
Action	Need for Action	Responsible Entity/ Potential Partners	Potential Timeframe
Pursue development of major branding feature at Robinson Rd. and IH-45	Gain recognition among the office towers, flyover bridges, and gateway into The Woodlands	City of Oak Ridge North/must meet TxDOT construction specifications	Medium term
Continue installation of minor branding features	Lets buyers and visitors know that residents care about the City	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 3 years
Add neighborhood identity features that enhance neighborhoods and City as a unique place	Reminds citizens of the pride they have in their neighborhoods	City of Oak Ridge North/neighborhood associations	Within 1 - 2 years; as funding is available



Table 8-4 Infrastructure Actions

Action	Need for Action	Responsible Entity/ Potential Partners	Potential Timeframe
Continue ongoing upgrades to water and wastewater systems	Insures that adequate capacity and flow is available for current and future residents and customers	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 5 years
Ensure superior water and wastewater service for potential growth areas	High quality growth in the ETJ areas is critical	City of Oak Ridge North	Ongoing as necessary
Conduct evaluation of storm water and drainage systems	Critical to protect property values	City of Oak Ridge North	Short to medium term
Complete citywide street overlay projects	Necessary to maintain a smooth driving surface	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 5 years

Table 8-5 Public Safety Actions

Action	Need for Action	Responsible Entity/ Potential Partners	Potential Timeframe
Review annual crime statistics and enforcement efforts, and adjust enforcement efforts accordingly	Maintain the extremely satisfied level of public safety that residents currently receive	City of Oak Ridge North	Annually

Table 8-6 Economic Growth Actions

Action	Need for Action	Responsible Entity/ Potential Partners	Potential Timeframe
Assist in the development of a "town center" area	Because of the potential re-alignment of Robinson and Hanna roads, this area could become a true downtown for the City	City of Oak Ridge North; potential developers	Short to medium term
Pursue recommendations to retain/recruit new retail	Sales tax revenue and retail is a significant part of the economy of Oak Ridge North	City of Oak Ridge North	Ongoing; both short and longer term
Proactively seek higher quality/high value developments and redevelopments	Developments constructed over the next few years can be expected to remain for 20-40 years	City of Oak Ridge North	Short term
Allow for expanded home use occupations along Robinson Rd. between Patsy and proposed Town Center	As Robinson Rd. is transformed, the flexibility to operate small businesses should be provided by the City	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 1 - 2 years



Table 8-7 Parks and Civic Facilities Actions			
Action	Need for Action	Responsible Entity/ Potential Partners	Potential Timeframe
Develop a plan for a first class walking/biking trails system throughout the City	Residents consistently requested more places to safely walk or ride a bicycle in the City	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 3 years (one mile per year)
Develop a new pocket park along Woodson Rd.	Provides park access and serves the far northern neighborhoods of the City	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 3 years
Develop a new urban park as a focal point of the Oak Ridge North Town Center	Provides a citywide attraction and place for community events in the "heart" of the City	City of Oak Ridge North; potential developers	Within 5 years (or as Town Center is developed)
Expand Marilyn Edgar Park	Expansion will allow for more amenities to be added to the park and further enhance it as the City's premier park	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 5 years
Enhance the foot bridge area as a pocket park	Provides a pocket park location for the far northern area of the City; enhances the area that is frequently used by students accessing the elementary and high schools	City of Oak Ridge North	Within 5 years
Consider the development of a community center/civic center	Currently there is no facility in the City to accommodate residents for events, rentals, meetings, parties or reunions	City of Oak Ridge North; private partnership	Within 5 - 10 years
Identify location for a future park site(s) to serve eastern ETJ area	In the future, as the ETJ areas are annexed, the residents of those areas will be underserved in terms of park amenities	City of Oak Ridge North	Longer term



Partnerships

Interdepartmental and interagency collaboration are critical components to strengthening implementation efforts. Federal-aid funding opportunities often require cooperation among local and regional agencies. By partnering with other agencies and organizations, funding resources can be utilized more efficiently and efforts will carry farther.

Moreover, the City of Oak Ridge North needs to create strong partnerships with private entities such as the development community, employers, non-profit organizations, and other entities that can help achieve the goals and recommendations of the plan. This will help create buy-in among the various affected entities and strengthen implementation efforts.

Many recommendations of this comprehensive plan require partnerships and collaboration with other City departments, public agencies, and organizations across the Oak Ridge North area and South Montgomery County region.

Table 8-8 Partnership Opportunities

Agency	Potential Role or Function
Public Departments and Agencies	
ORN City Manager's Office	Will oversee implementation of the plan, including guiding efforts and advising City Council and other departments on how decisions promote or impact the comprehensive plan. Will be critical in influencing the built environment by reviewing proposals and ensuring that development occurs in a fashion consistent with the City's ordinances and this plan. Should also guide any updates of the City's policy documents so they promote the goals of this plan.
ORN Public Works	Help influence the design, maintenance, and provision of public facilities such as roadways, infrastructure, and water and wastewater resources.
ORN Police Department	Key entity in maintaining a high standard of public safety in Oak Ridge North. The Police Department will also be an important partner in promoting civic engagement through community events.
Economic Development Corporation	Will play a significant role in promoting Oak Ridge North as an employment destination. This includes efforts toward improving and maintaining a high quality of life in Oak Ridge North.
Emergency Service Districts	Partners in ensuring a high level of public safety. These entities will also be valuable in efforts to promote civic engagement and public health to neighborhoods in Oak Ridge North.
Conroe Independent School District	Key entity in helping schools become a neighborhood center by increasing public use and access to schools.
TXDOT	A necessary partner in maintaining an arterial network that moves traffic efficiently while also balancing the community goals of a strong small town character and sense of place.
Montgomery County	A partner in a number of efforts, most importantly transportation, but also environmental protection and resource management.
Private Entities	
YMCA	Assist with expanding recreational opportunities.
Area builders and developers	Key players in forming the built environment.



Special Funding Mechanisms

Funding for implementing the comprehensive plan will come from a variety of sources, including local resources such as the general fund, which is supported by property and sales taxes as well as fees; voter-approved bonds; and federal grants. In addition, Texas law provides for a number of mechanisms to finance public improvements. The following discussion identifies potential funding opportunities and mechanisms that Oak Ridge North can use to assist with implementation.

Capturing Latent Sales Tax Potential

As discussed earlier, sales tax rates in Texas are capped at 8.25% (2% of which is available to local governments, counties, transit authorities, or special purpose districts). However, Texas law allows the creation of special purpose districts that can also levy sales taxes. This risks any future opportunity for the City to capture that sales tax revenue. Cities may also create special purpose districts that are funded through the sales and use tax for areas, including forming districts within a municipality’s ETJ.

The City of Oak Ridge North may want to consider establishing a special purpose district where there is latent sales tax capacity. This will allow the City to secure future and potential sales tax revenues for the City. Depending on the type of district, the City may have certain restrictions on using the funds. Typically, the formation of districts earmarks the revenue for either a certain area or particular use, such as hospital districts, water districts, or library districts. Although a district may result in restricting the use of any funds generated through a special purpose district, it allows the City to secure potential additional revenue in these areas.

Tax Increment Finance (TIF) / Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ)

A TIF District is a zone where certain property tax revenue generated in the district is reinvested back into the district through development of infrastructure. TIFs operate on the idea that public investment helps stimulate and grow property values, justifying the reinvestment of property taxes back into the district generating the revenue.

At the creation of a TIF, the assessed property value of properties of a defined area is set as the base value. Over the years, as the property values increase and property tax revenue increases, the property tax revenue generated by the incremental property value above the base is reinvested into the TIF district.

According to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, a TIF district may be created in two ways. First, affected property owners may petition the city and city council to create a TIF district (also known as a TIRZ). The petition must be submitted by owners of property that constitutes at least 50 percent of the appraised property value within the proposed zone.

A second way of creating a TIF is by a city council without the need for a petition. If not initiated by petition, an area may be considered for tax increment financing only if it meets at least one of the following three criteria:

- ◆ The area’s present condition must substantially impair the city’s growth, retard the provision of housing, or constitute an economic or social liability to the public health, safety, morals or welfare. Further, this condition must exist because of the



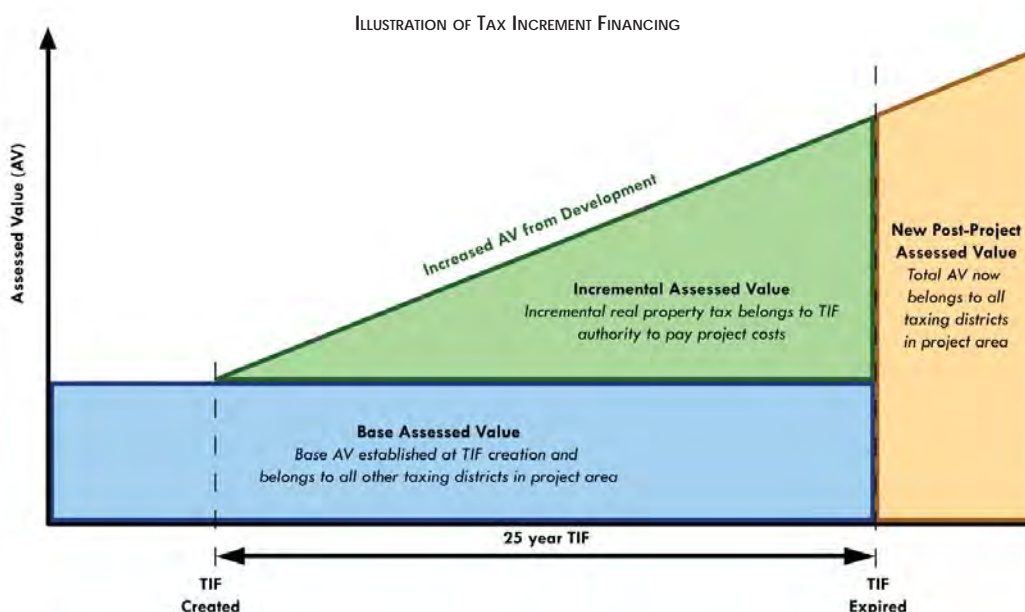
presence of one or more of the following conditions: a substantial number of substandard or deteriorating structures, inadequate sidewalks or street layout, faulty lot layouts, unsanitary or unsafe conditions, a tax or special assessment delinquency that exceeds the fair market value of the land, defective or unusual conditions of title, or conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other cause; or

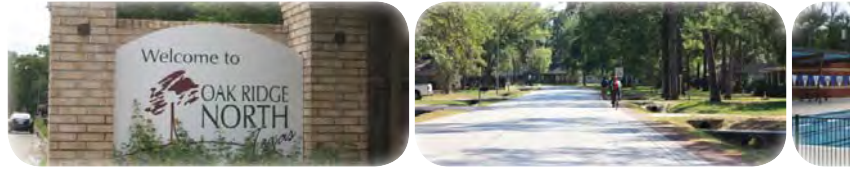
- ♦ The area is predominantly open, and because of obsolete platting, deteriorating structures or other factors, it substantially impairs the growth of the city; or
- ♦ The area is in or adjacent to a “federally assisted new community” as defined under Tax Code Section 311.005(b).

Within developed areas of the city, the reason usually cited to justify a TIF district is that the area’s condition substantially impairs the city’s growth because of a significant number of substandard or deteriorating structures or infrastructure.

The tax code places several further restrictions on the creation of a reinvestment zone for tax increment financing :

- ♦ No more than 10 percent of the property within the reinvestment zone (excluding publicly owned property) may be used for residential purposes. This requirement, however, does not apply if the district is created pursuant to a petition of the landowners.
- ♦ A reinvestment zone may not contain property that cumulatively would exceed 15% of the total appraised property value within the city and its industrial districts. The 2011 total appraised value of properties within the City of Oak Ridge North is \$219 million; therefore, any TIF district that is created must have a current value below approximately \$33 million.
- ♦ A city also may not create a reinvestment zone or change the boundaries of an existing zone if the zone would contain more than 15 percent of the total appraised value of real property taxable by a county or school district.





Development Incentives

Chapter 380 of the Texas Local Government Code allows the granting of certain economic development incentives by cities to encourage developers to build in their jurisdiction. Development incentives typically take the form of property tax abatements, loans or grants, commitments for infrastructure, or sales tax rebates.

The following discussion briefly describes incentive structures commonly used in communities in Texas to attract businesses and encourage development. However, this discussion should not serve as a formal Chapter 380 policy for incentive funding. The City of Oak Ridge North is encouraged to conduct further research and develop a formal Chapter 380 policy to guide decisions of funding incentives.

Property Tax Abatement - A tax abatement is an agreement between a taxpayer and a taxing unit that exempts all or part of the increase in the value of the real property and/or tangible personal property from taxation for a period not to exceed ten years. Abatements recognize the potential for other benefits of property development other than increased property value, such as job creation and sales tax revenue. Abatements are typically tied to job creation and value of the investment. Tax abatements would not work well with a TIF district, since a TIF relies on increasing property values to generate revenue while a tax abatement essentially freezes the property value.

Sales Tax Incentives - One type of incentive that Texas cities have used is sales tax incentives to develop commercial and retail projects. These agreements allow a city to attract development by refunding a portion of the sales tax the project generates back to the developer. The developer receives assistance to make the project viable, and the city benefits from growth in sales tax revenue, property taxes, and new jobs. The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts recommends the following guidelines concerning Sales Tax Incentives:

- ◆ Place a limit on both the percentage of sales tax granted to the developer and the total amount of the grant. For example, the grant could be limited to a portion of the sales tax generated by the development, up to \$1 million.
- ◆ The agreement should have a termination date depending in part on the developer's total investment.
- ◆ Milestones and deadlines should be included in the agreement to ensure that the developer completes the project according to the city's expectations. The city should include terms by which the developer could be considered out of compliance or in default of the agreement, and consider possible penalties such as reductions in the sales tax incentive.
- ◆ The city should consider including terms in the contract to remedy adverse impacts caused by the development, such as increased traffic and increased demand for law enforcement and utilities.
- ◆ Payment of grants under the agreement should be based on the net sales tax allocation, after adjustments and fees, and not due to the developer until the city receives the funds from the comptroller.



Regulatory Mechanisms

Public investment and improvements only go so far; creating the built environment of Oak Ridge North will be implemented in large part by the private community, including developers, community leaders, organizations, etc. Therefore, the City must take steps to create the right regulatory environment and incentives for private-sector development.

In order to achieve the goals outlined in the comprehensive plan, the City of Oak Ridge North must research and adopt the appropriate regulatory tools to influence private development in a way that creates the character and environment Oak Ridge North desires. There are a variety of regulatory tools emerging that have been shown to create a building or series of buildings that shape the public realm as much as they shape the area within the walls. These regulations focus on influencing the character and physical form of the building or site.

Recommended Changes to the Regulatory Framework

This comprehensive plan recommends amendments or updates throughout various parts of the UDC. Making piecemeal changes to the UDC and just tailoring bits and pieces of the regulatory code runs the risk of creating disjointed, complicated, and possibly inconsistent development standards. Given the significance and number of regulation changes recommended, it is now the opportunity to completely rewrite the UDC. This method is preferred because it can more thoroughly integrate recommendations of the comprehensive plan into the City's regulatory framework in a manner that is truly supportive, and will result in the vision and goals for Oak Ridge North being achieved. This will ensure comprehensiveness and continuity across all components of the development code.

This opportunity will also allow the City to more significantly change the type of zoning it utilizes. The current UDC utilizes conventional zoning; however, the comprehensive plan approaches land development and planning in a design-based or form-based manner that does not easily conform to conventional zoning standards.

Monitoring Progress

The Comprehensive Plan is a living document and should be updated periodically to assess progress, identify new opportunities, and re-evaluate goals and priorities. Plans are evaluated to obtain information that can guide future decisions. This plan identifies actions for each plan element to measure implementation. Data should be collected, reported, and evaluated frequently to evaluate ongoing progress and the appropriateness and effectiveness of certain actions.

Every 3 to 5 years, the City should evaluate progress towards implementation of the actions listed earlier. Additionally, a 10 year update allows the City to evaluate the goals and vision for the future of Oak Ridge North, which may result in adjusting goals, objectives, and actions.



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