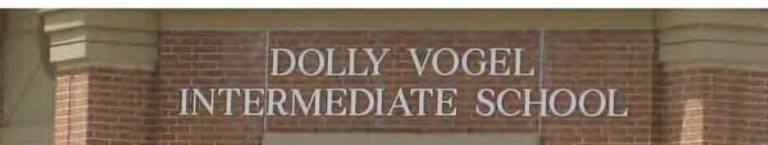




Chapter 5



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.

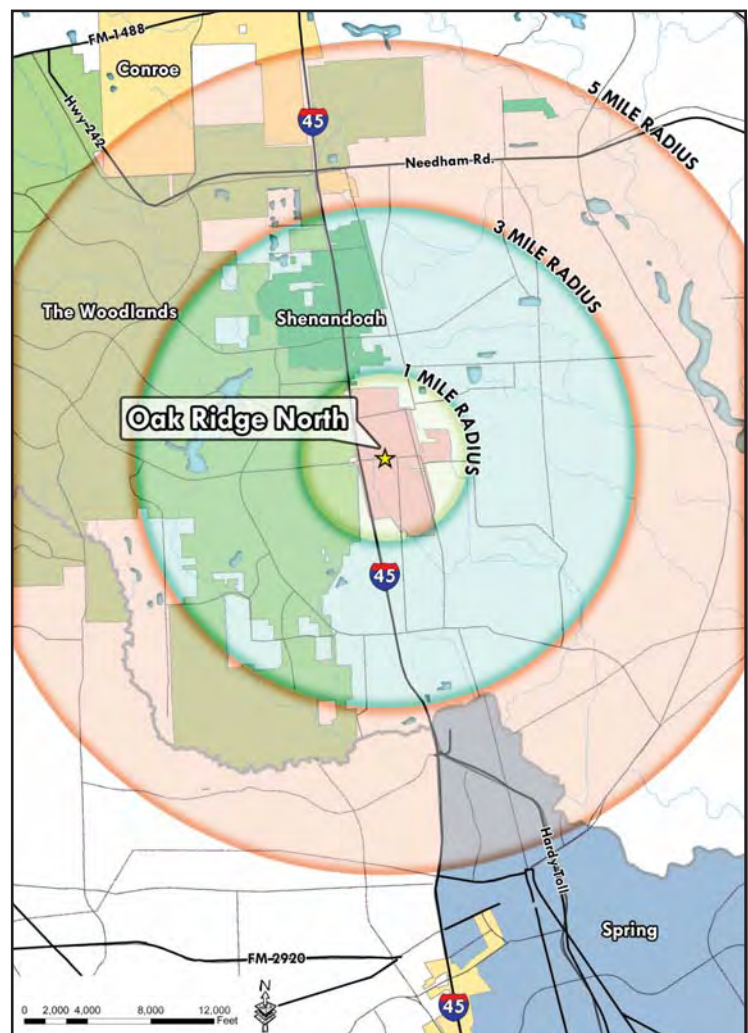


Figure 5-1 Central location of Oak Ridge North



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.

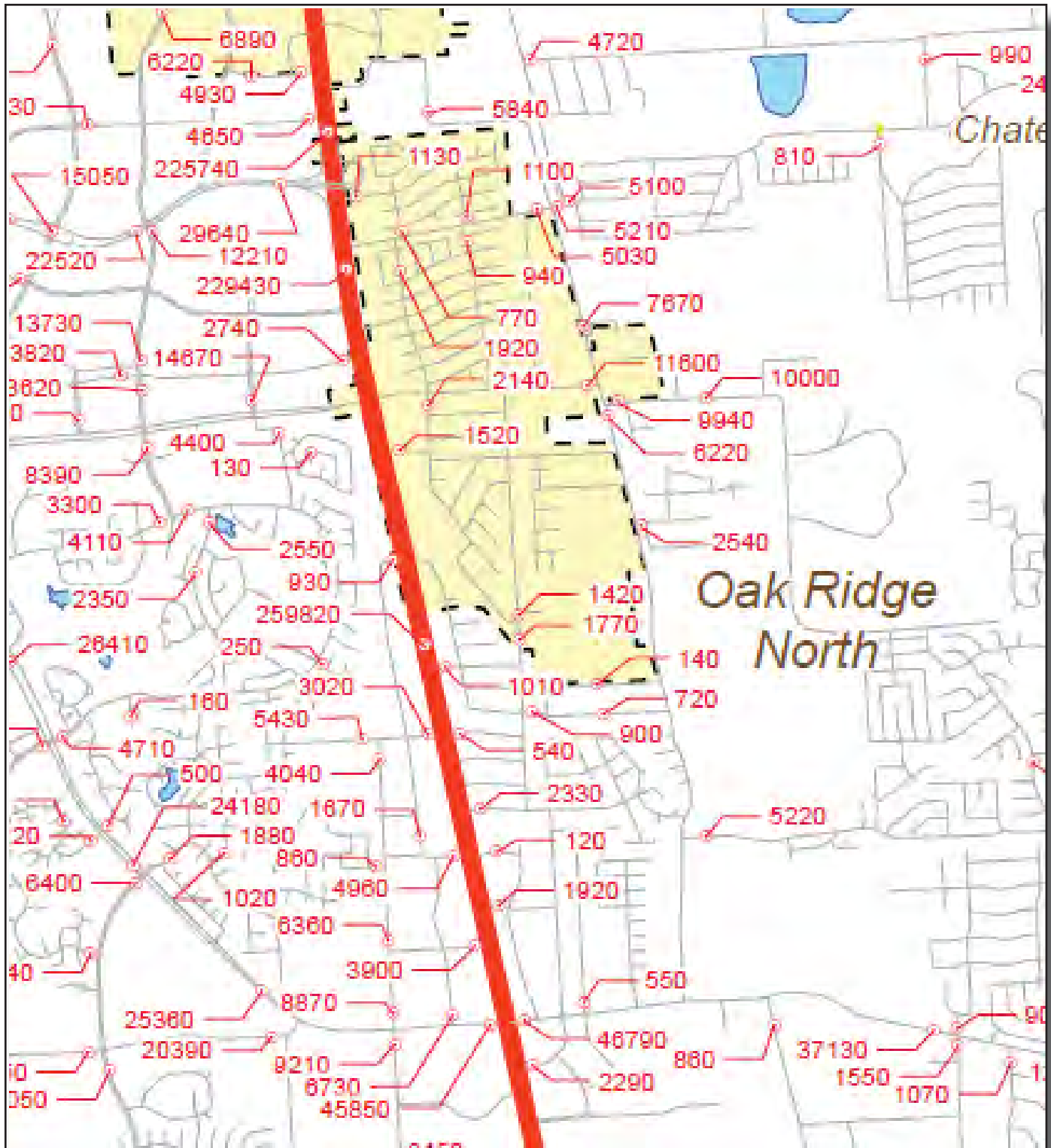


Figure 5-3 Area traffic Volumes around Oak Ridge North Source: TxDOT 2012
(counts collected late 2011)



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

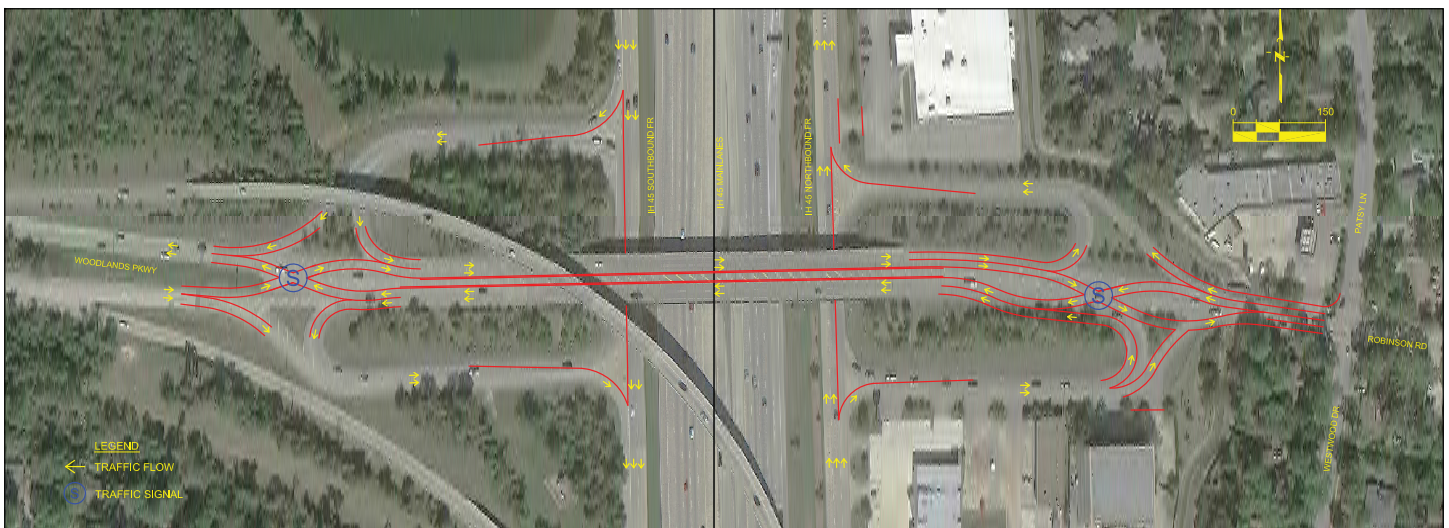


Action T - 2

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



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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

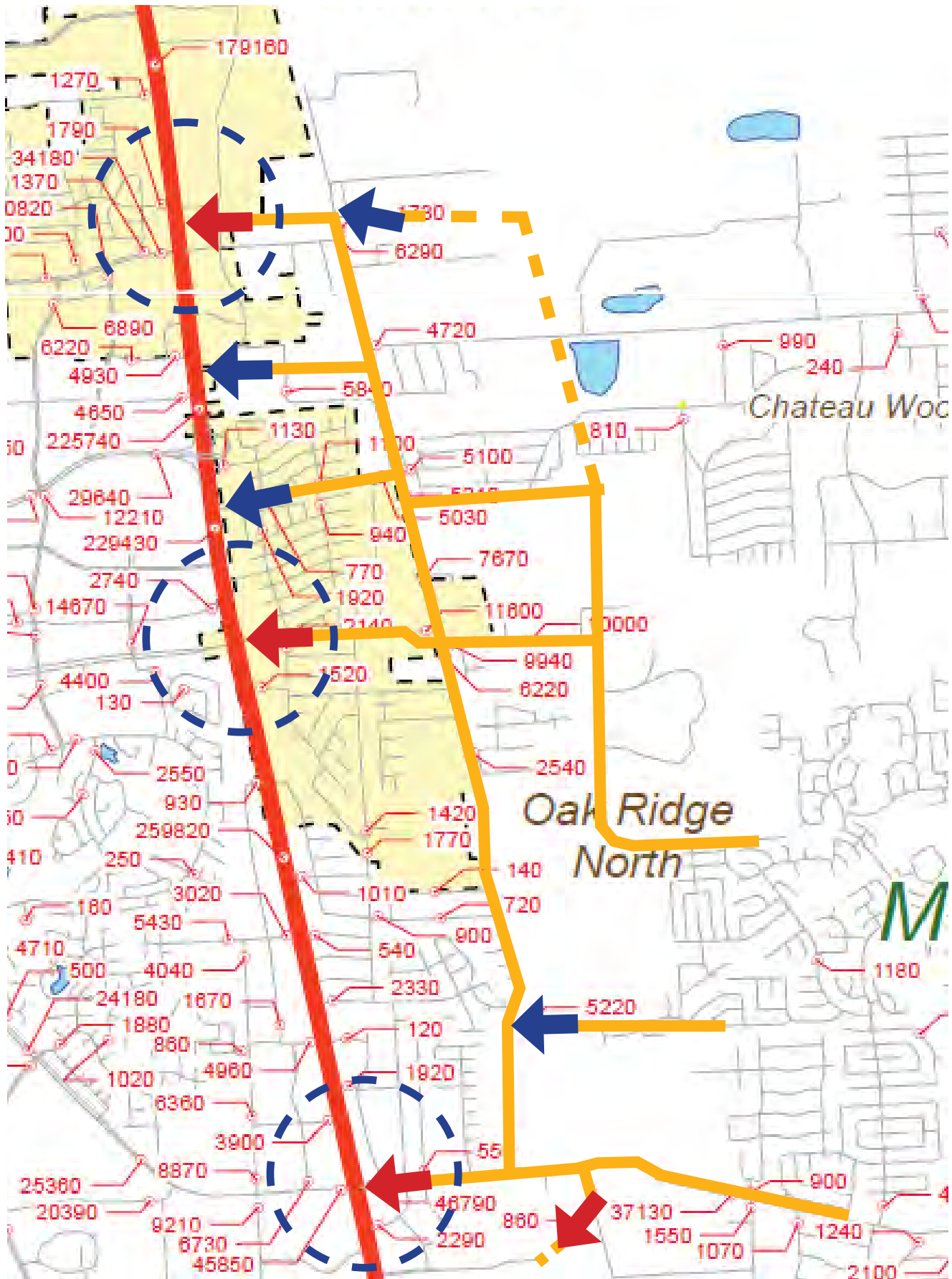


Figure 5-6 Area traffic counts, Source: TxDOT 2012



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

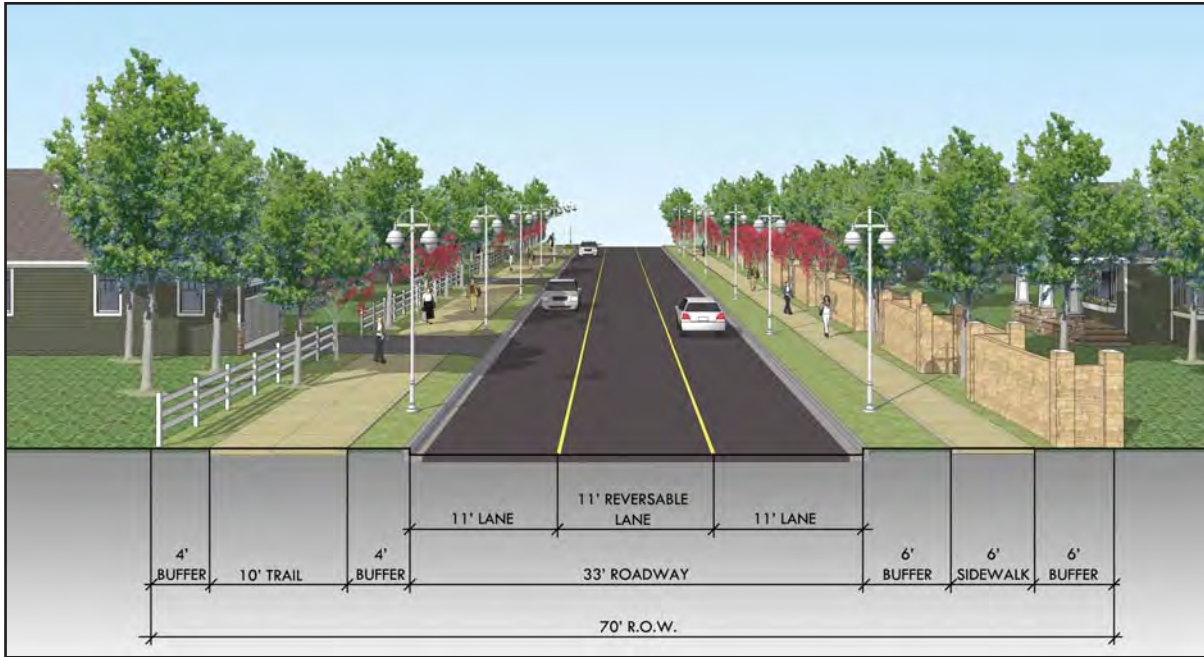


Figure 5-8 Proposed cross section of Robinson Road



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.

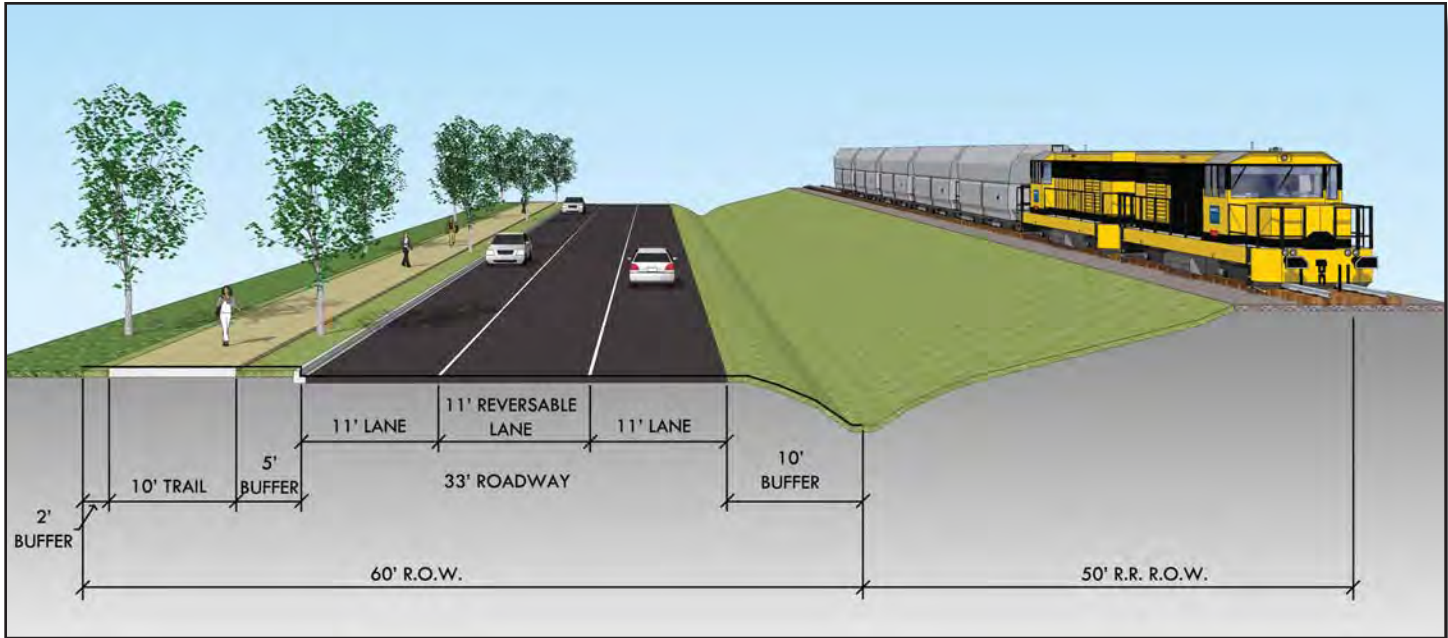


Figure 5-11 Proposed cross section of Hanna Road



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

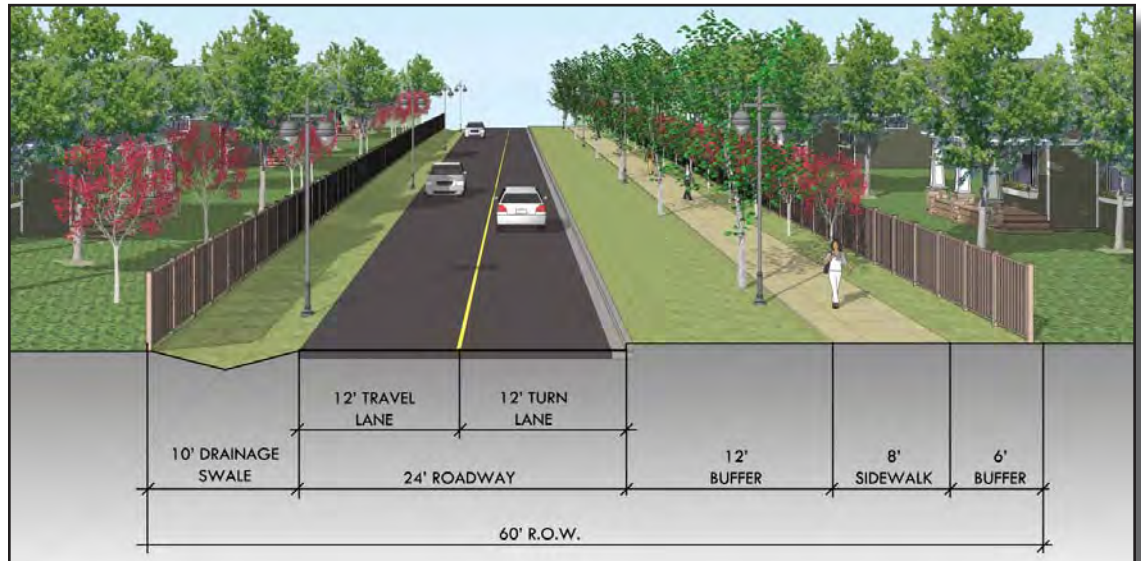


Figure 5-12 Proposed Woodson Road cross section

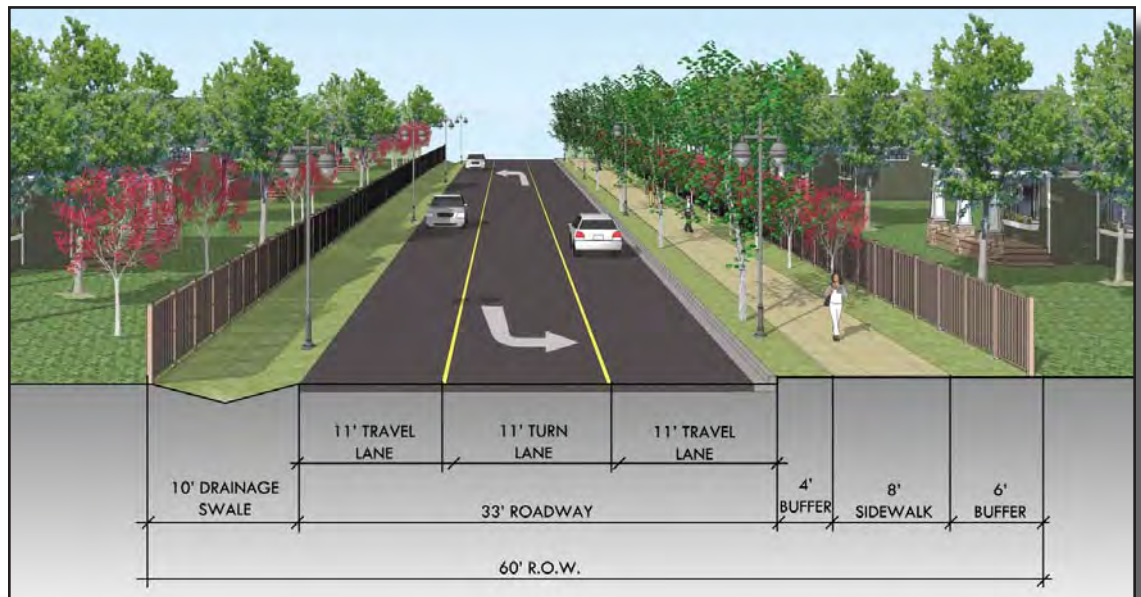


Figure 5-13 Proposed Woodson Road cross section with turning lane



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

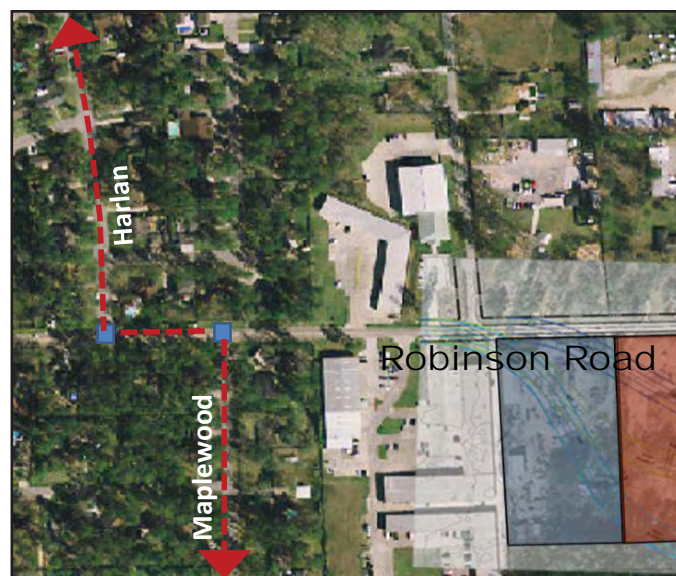


Figure 5-14 Current configuration of Harlan/Maplewood



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

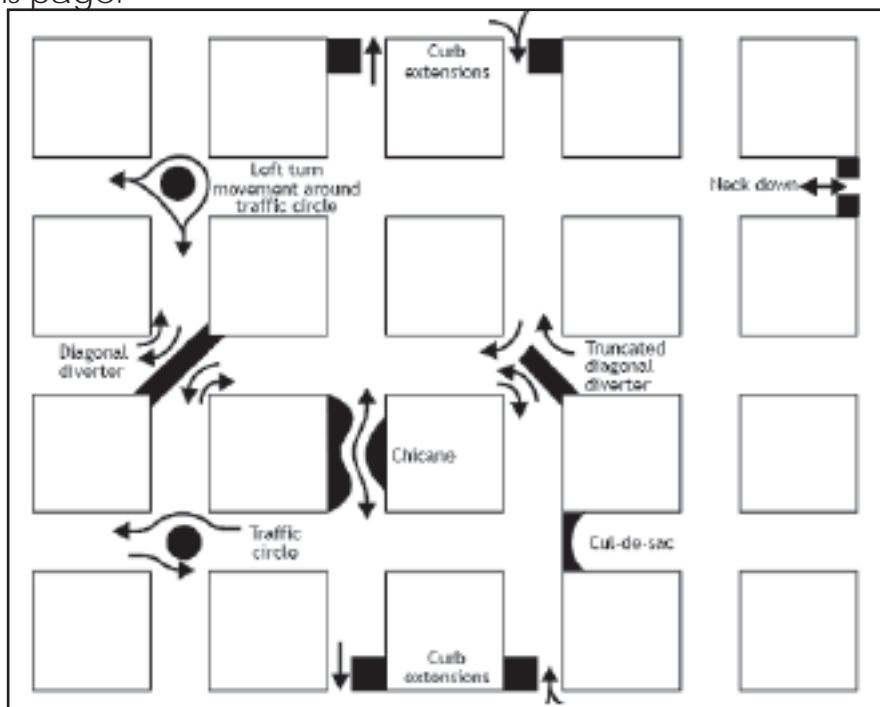


Figure 5-17 Traffic calming devices. Source: Federal Highway Administration



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

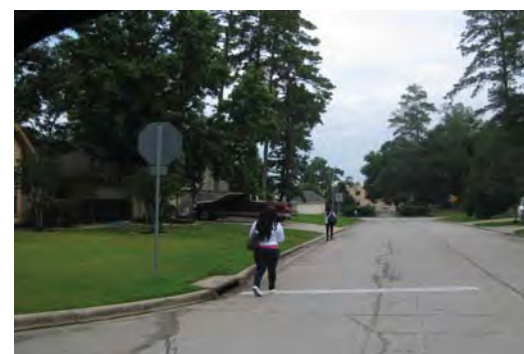
Reason for this action -

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.



Youth and teens currently walking and biking in Oak Ridge North

- ◆ 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;

CHAPTER 5 - TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS



Sidewalks



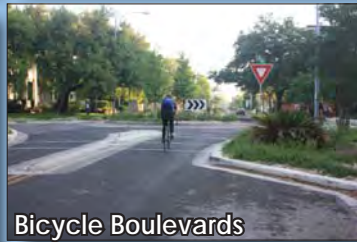
Sidepaths



Off-Street Trails



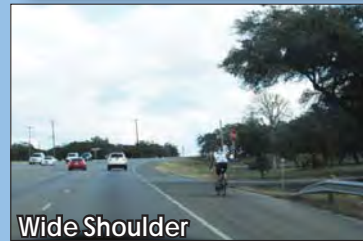
Bike Lanes



Bicycle Boulevards



Buffered Bike Lanes



Wide Shoulder



Wide Curb Lane

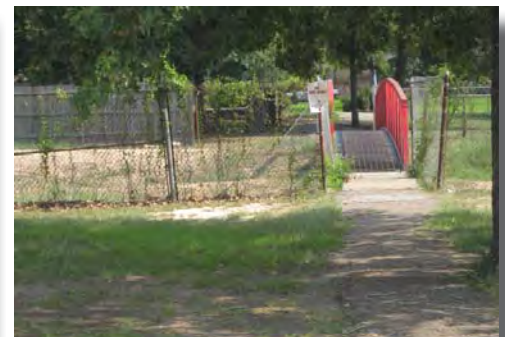


Shared Lane Marking

- ◆ 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

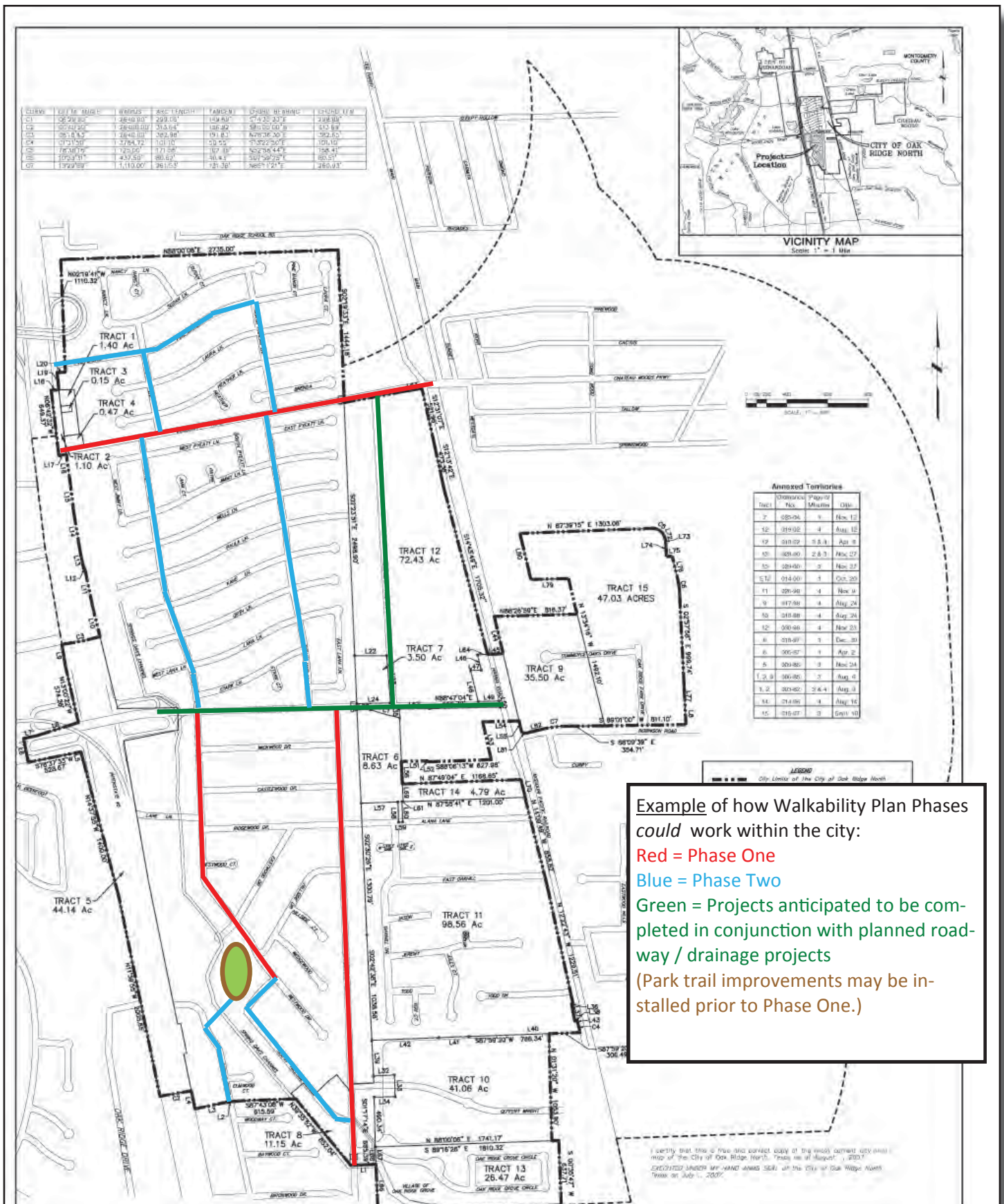


Figure 5-20 Sidewalk implementation in phases. Source: City of Oak Ridge North, study by Jones & Carter 2008



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**

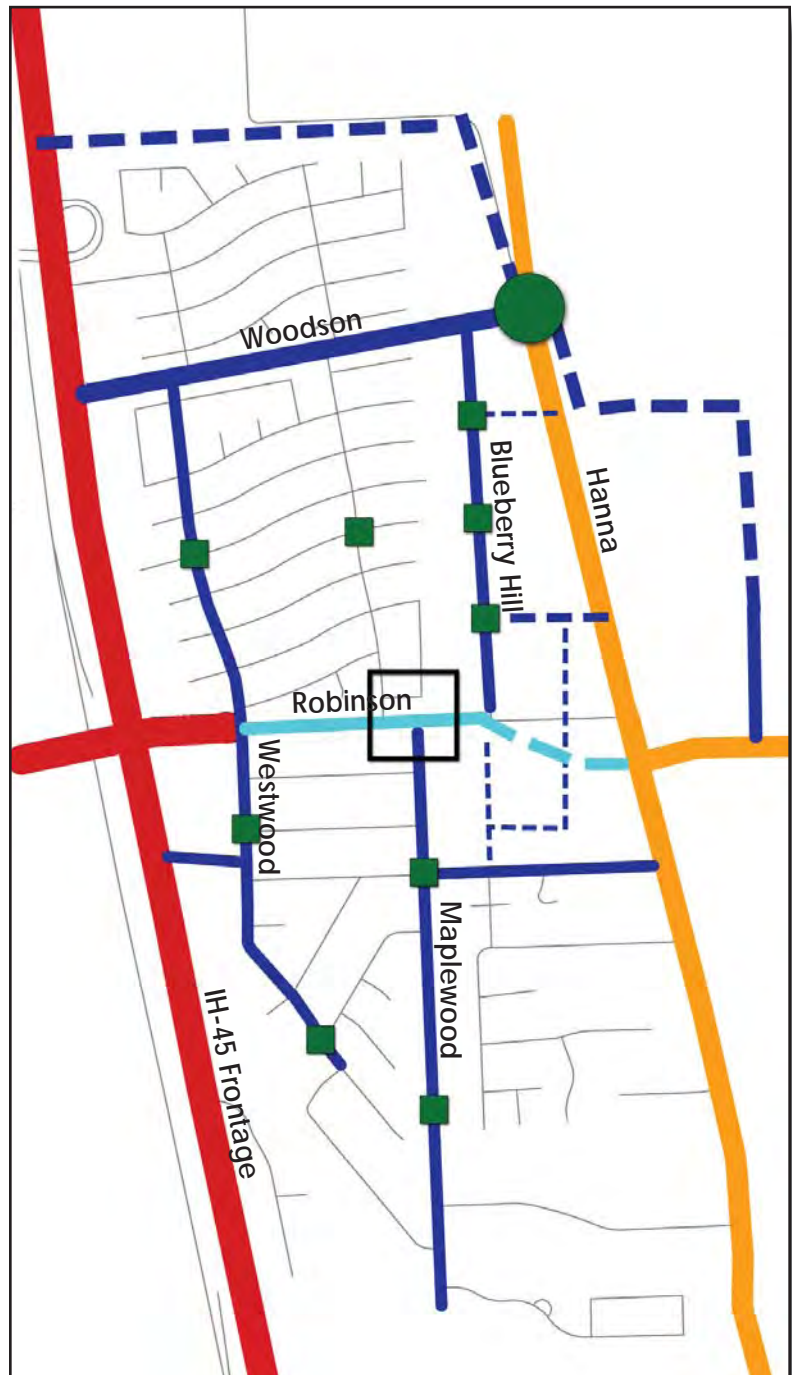
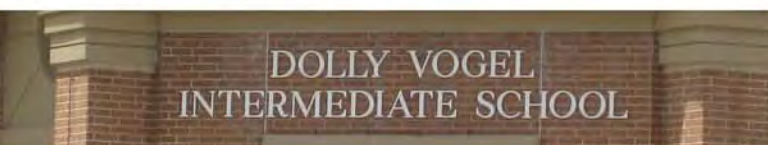


Figure 5-21 Future Transportation Plan



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.

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 freeway commercial shopping areas in Oak Ridge North

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%

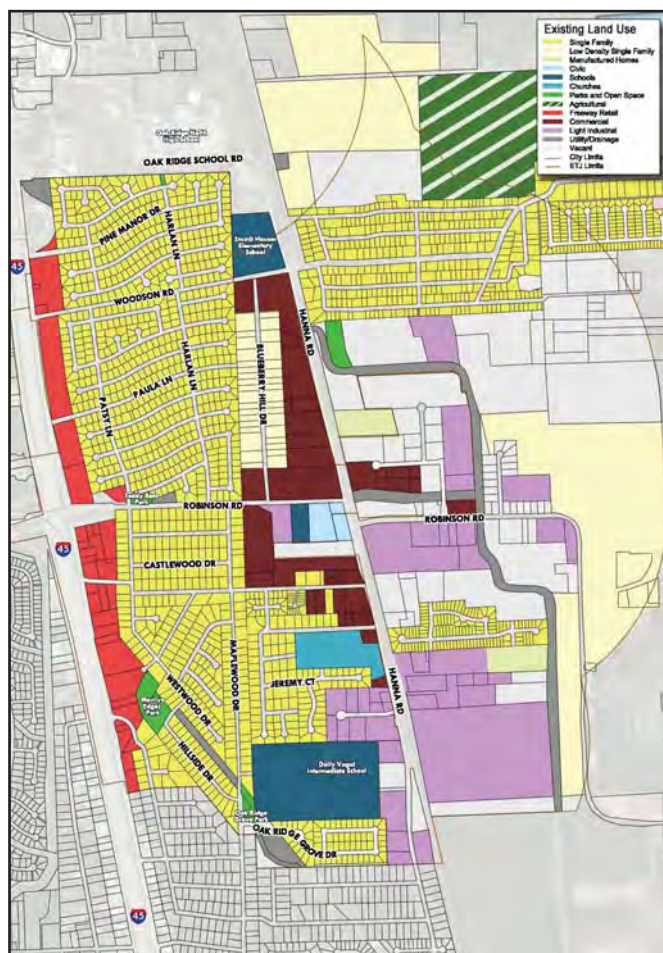


Figure 6-1 Existing land use



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




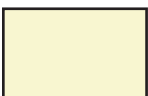

Economic Growth Objective #1 - Ensure long term economic sustainability by proactively seeking high quality retail and in-fill development to increase the City's sales and property tax revenue

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

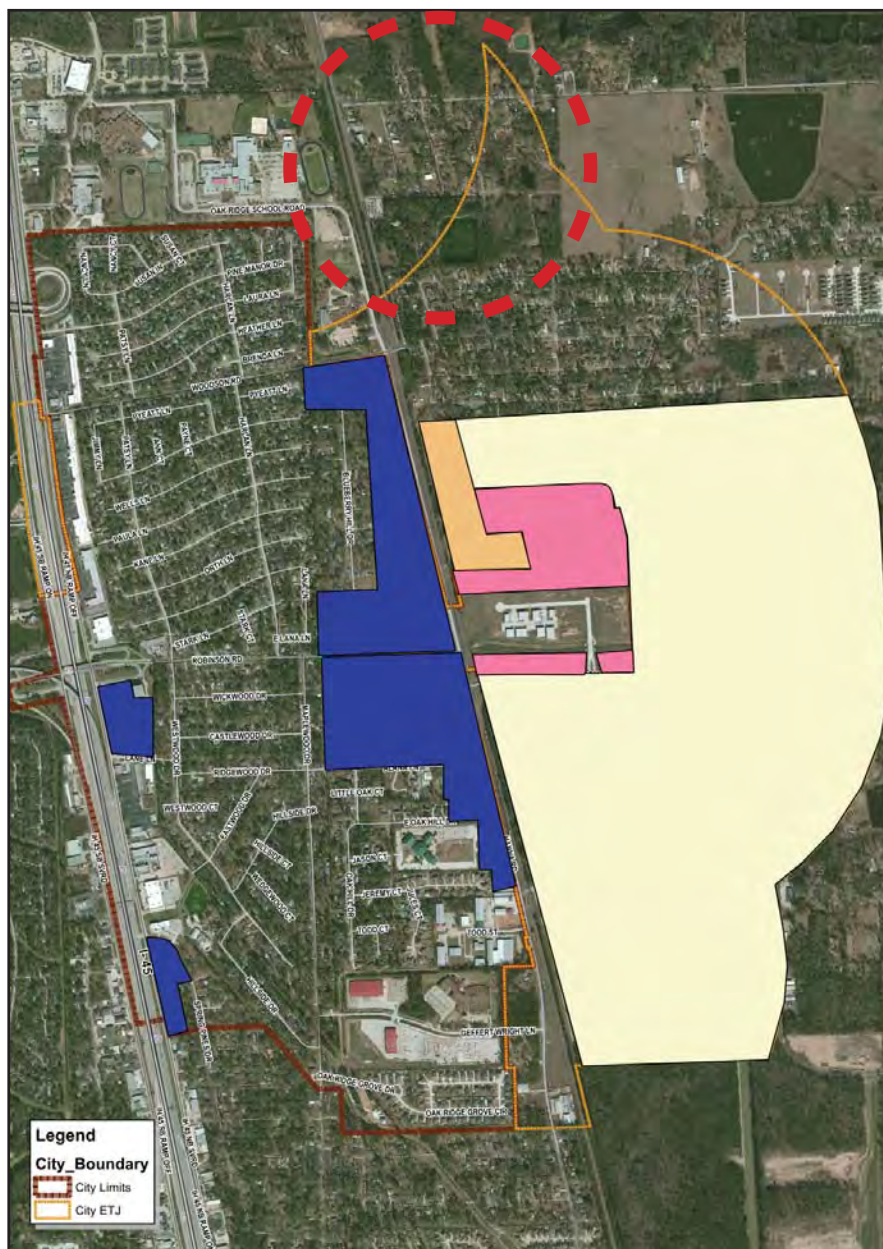
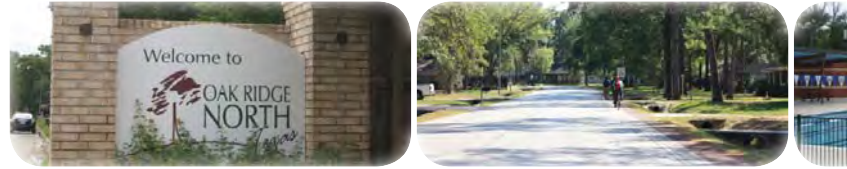


Figure 6-2 Potential growth areas



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.

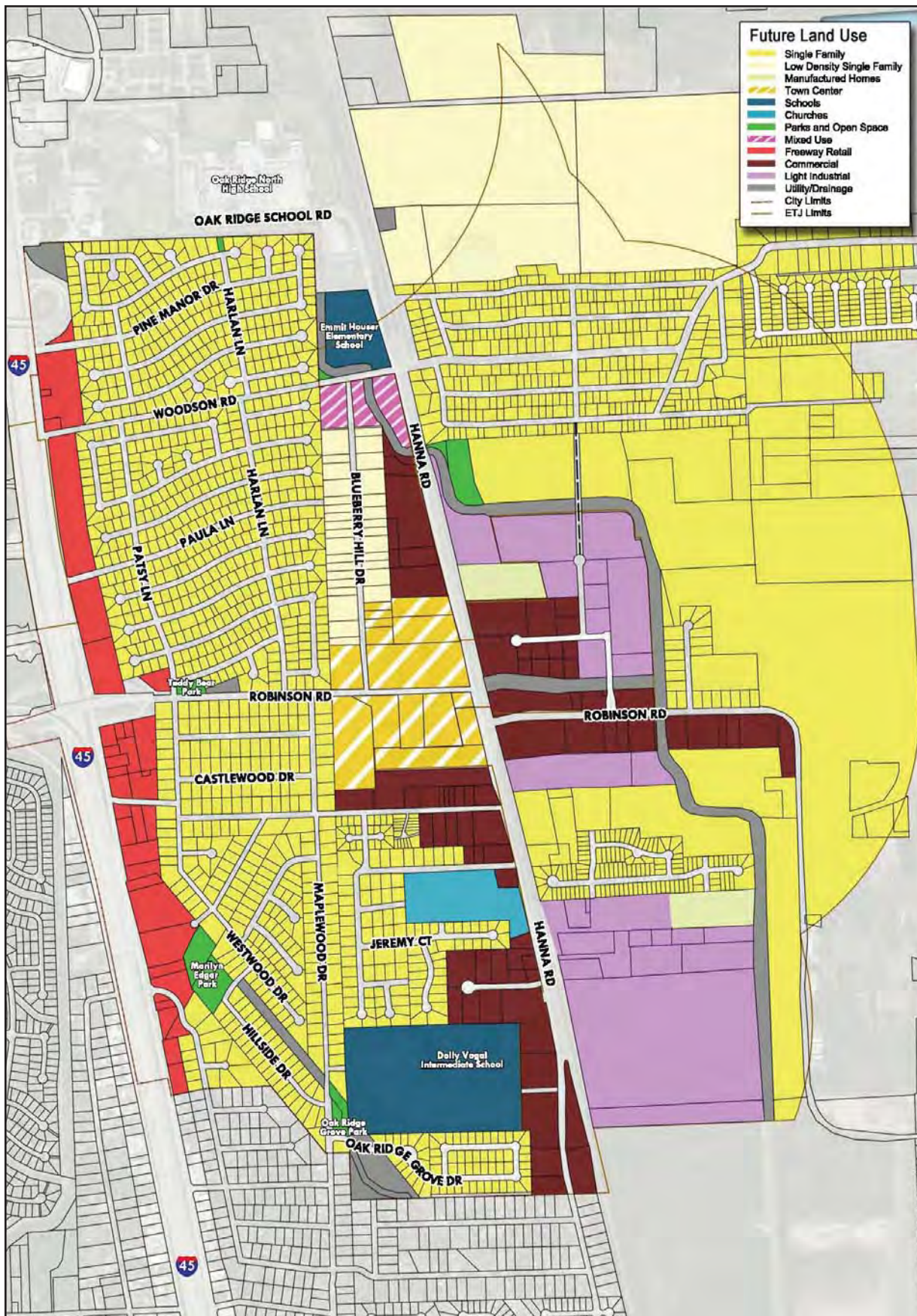


Figure 6-3 Future land use plan



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

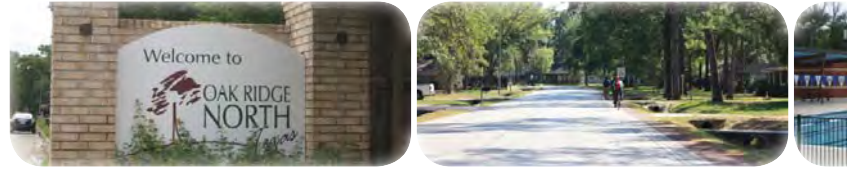
Timeframe for this action – short term

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



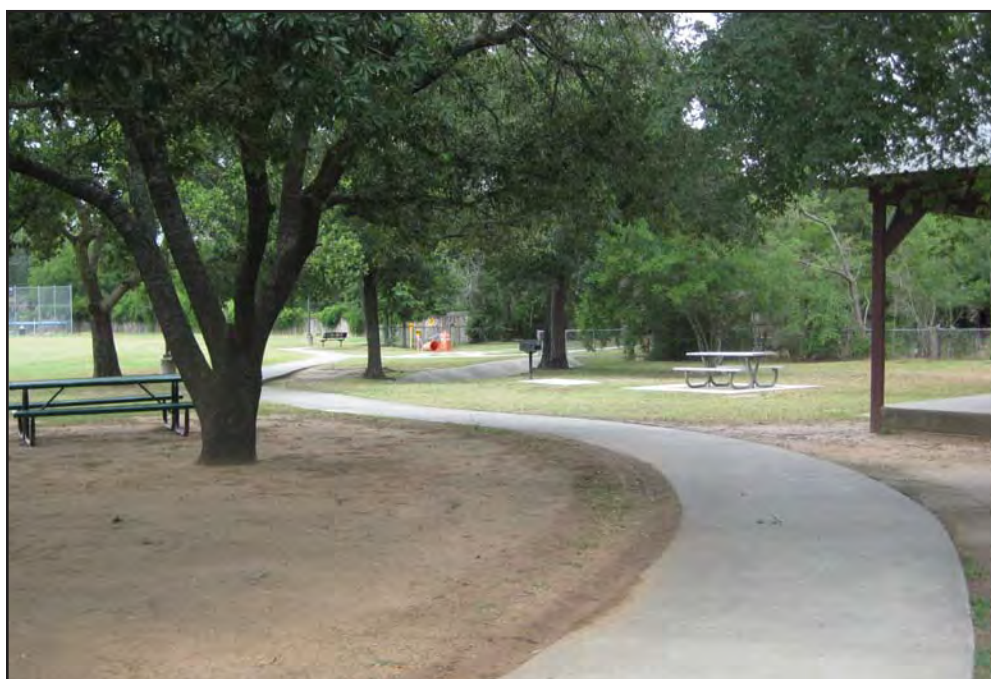


Parks, Trails and Civic Facilities

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

CHAPTER 7 - PARKS & CIVIC FACILITIES
RECOMMENDATIONS

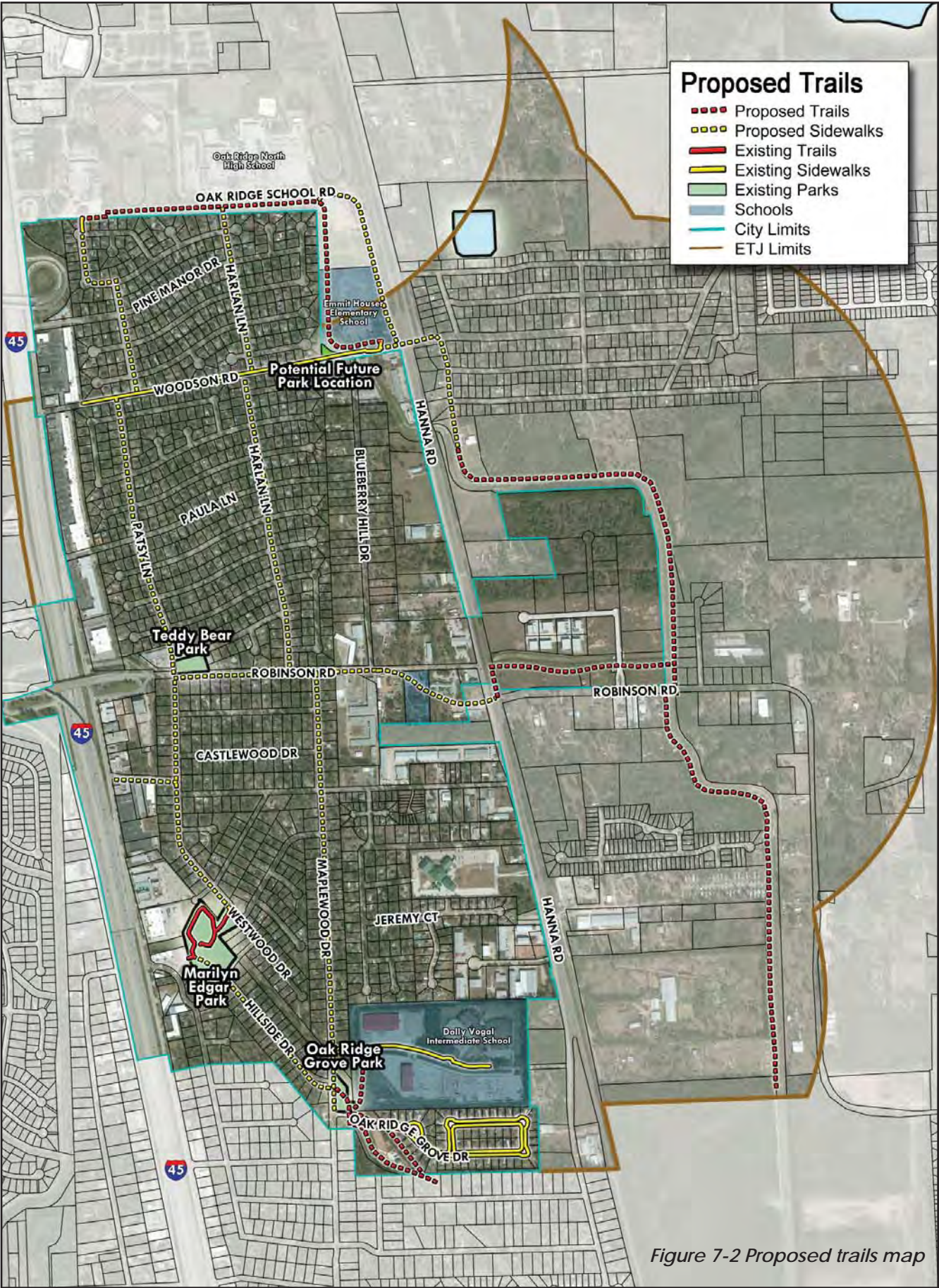


Figure 7-2 Proposed trails map



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



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

Figure 7-4 Expansion location for Marilyn Edgar Park



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)

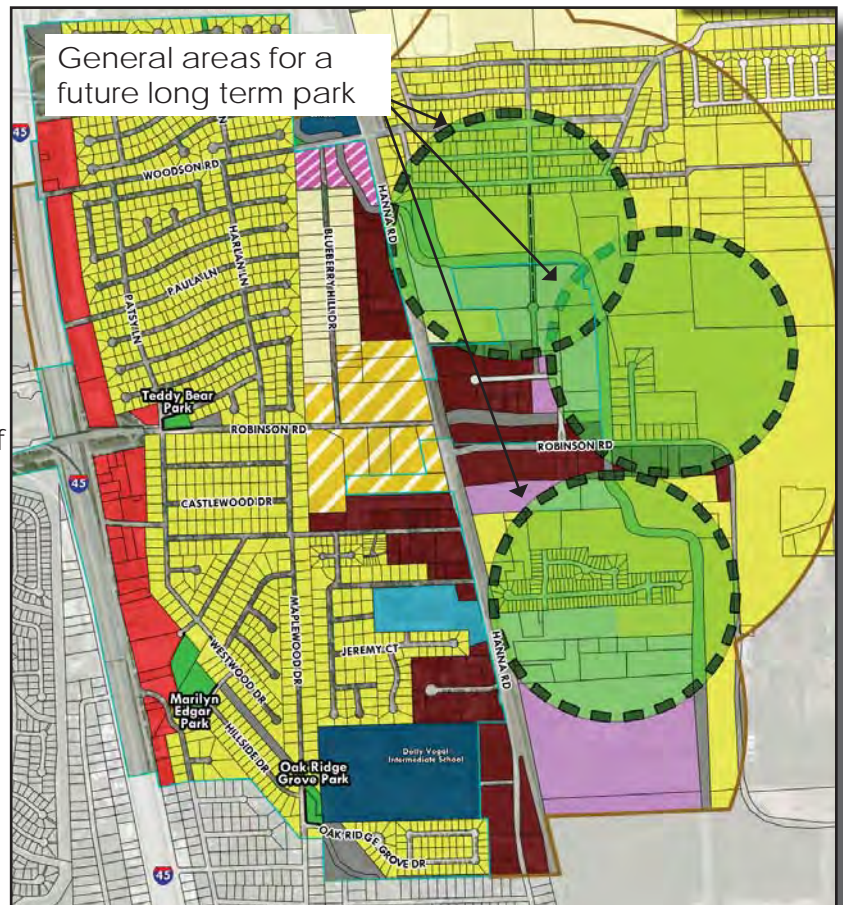


Figure 7-6 Potential locations for a future park

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



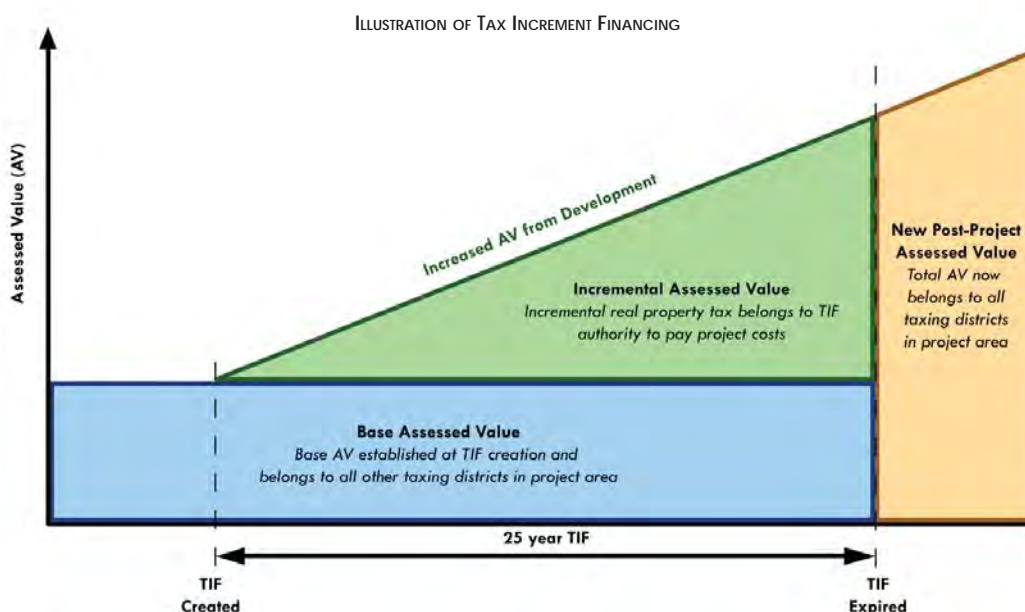
presence of one or more of the following conditions: a substantial number of substandard or deteriorating structures, inadequate sidewalks or street layout, faulty lot layouts, unsanitary or unsafe conditions, a tax or special assessment delinquency that exceeds the fair market value of the land, defective 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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