

OAK RIDGE 2045

A CENTURY OF HERITAGE, A FUTURE OF PROMISE

City of Oak Ridge Comprehensive Plan

Draft March 2026



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Table of Contents

Vision and Goals.....1

Future Land Use 15

Community Elements.....41

Small Area Plans..... 83

Implementation..... 117

Appendix A: Engagement Summaries

Appendix B: Community Snapshot





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CHAPTER 1

VISION AND GOALS

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Introduction

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A city's comprehensive plan can be defined as a long-range planning tool that is intended to be used by city staff, decision-makers, and residents to guide the growth and physical development of a community over the next 10-20 years. The state of Tennessee has established laws regarding how incorporated communities can maintain their residents' health, safety, and welfare through a comprehensive plan; this plan follows that direction to help the City of Oak Ridge City plan for the future.

How is a Comprehensive Plan Used?

The Oak Ridge 2045 Comprehensive Plan (Plan) is a high-level tool for Oak Ridge to guide future policy and development decisions. The Plan should ultimately serve as a roadmap for both everyday decisions and long-term strategies. The City should refer to the recommendations outlined in the Plan for daily decisions such as considering zoning and development requests, acquiring land, and investing in new infrastructure or public facilities. For developers or investors, the Plan provides broad concepts and policies that encourage and promote growth in accordance with the community's vision. It also provides some certainty about public opinion and policy, which helps with City decision-making.

The Oak Ridge 2045 Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a living document that allows flexibility for political, economic, physical, technological, and social conditions, as well as any other unforeseen circumstances that may ultimately influence and change the priorities and perspective of the community. To help the Plan continue to reflect the goals of the community and remain relevant, it should be reviewed on a regular basis to evaluate if the goals, objectives, and recommendations are still applicable.

Building on City BluePrint

Between 2017 and 2019, the City of Oak Ridge underwent a process to create a long-range development plan known as the City BluePrint. The City BluePrint was developed with broad community participation and with more than 1,800 ideas from the community to establish an over arching theme, "uniquely Oak Ridge." The plan further established clear values and goals for the community that provide guidance for the Planning Commission to guide development and policy decisions to align with the vision for Oak Ridge. Among these values is the desire for smart growth that leverages existing infrastructure for new development.

This Comprehensive Plan builds on the success of the City BluePrint and incorporates many of the goals, values, and elements from the City BluePrint. As part of the process for creating the Oak Ridge 2045 Comprehensive Plan, plan elements were reevaluated and updated based on current community input. Furthermore, this 20-year Comprehensive Plan lays the groundwork for the City's continued growth by fostering sustainable development, enhancing community engagement, and maintaining Oak Ridge's unique character, while allowing the community to reach for the future.

History

Oak Ridge is one of three unique cities established under the Manhattan Project. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, East Tennessee was chosen for its high-quality water and abundant land, ideal for developing nuclear sites and chemical plants in valleys separated by ridges. Initially named Site X, or the Clinton Engineer Works, the city was named Oak Ridge as it lay on the south slope of Black Oak Ridge. The “Secret City”, as it was later known, became a beacon of job opportunities, drawing numerous families and becoming the fifth-largest city in Tennessee. During its early years, the population peaked at 75,000 in August 1945, however it quickly decreased after World War II ended and has remained relatively static for decades. In the last few years, ongoing efforts to foster growth and revitalization have started with major economic development success.

After the 50th anniversary of the City, the International Friendship Bell was brought to Oak Ridge to symbolize freedom, peace, and remembrance. Weighing 8,000 pounds and cast in Kyoto, Japan, the Bell represents the unity and friendship between Japan and Oak Ridge. It remains a significant tourist attraction and continues to promote its message of unity for future generations.

Oak Ridge is also renowned for its education system, ranging from its highly respected K-12 STEAM school system to the pioneering scientific research programs at the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education, in addition to having the largest college campus for Roane State Community College. The Scarboro 85 holds historical significance in desegregation, achieved in September 1955. The Scarboro 85 includes a group of African American students becoming the first attendees of a previously all-white school in the southeastern U.S., marking a significant step in the civil rights movement. The City remains a hub of research and innovation, with the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Y-12 National Security Complex continuing the legacy of scientific breakthroughs. The Department of Energy is a key partner in these collaborative efforts, addressing national needs through various initiatives.



Friendship Bell



Jackson Square



Scarboro 85

Regional Context

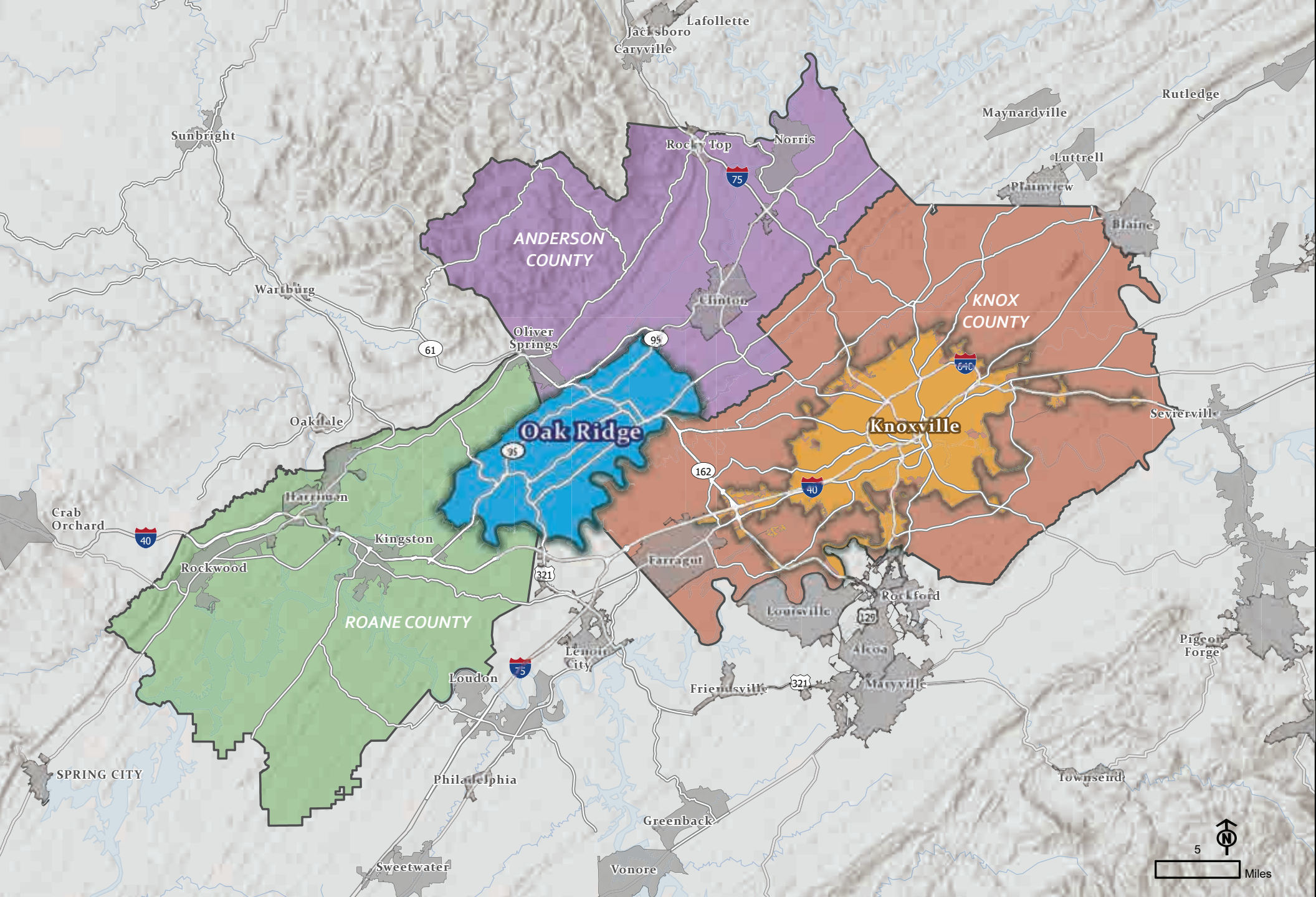
The planning process involves not only looking at a specific community, but also evaluating the region that influences many aspects of the community. The region around Oak Ridge varies greatly in topography, development intensity, and population density. Each of these, and many other factors, contribute to the environment in which the City needs to plan.

Located 22 miles from Downtown Knoxville, Oak Ridge is part of the Greater Knoxville Metropolitan Area. The relationship between Oak Ridge and the Greater Knoxville Metropolitan Area is integral to the region's overall development. Oak Ridge's proximity to Knoxville has fostered a symbiotic relationship where both cities benefit from shared resources and collaborative efforts. The scientific institutions in Oak Ridge, such as the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, have established strong partnerships with the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, driving innovation and attracting higher education opportunities. This collaboration has strengthened the local economy and positioned the region as a hub for scientific research and technological advancement.

The establishment of Oak Ridge during World War II was pivotal for the region, attracting population growth and economic development for the entire area. Both Anderson and Roane counties were formed from parts of Knox County; however, Knox County, Anderson County, and Roane County continue working closely on regional efforts that contribute to enhancing infrastructure, transportation networks, and economic initiatives. The interconnectedness of these counties helps planning decisions be made with a comprehensive understanding of the regional context, ultimately supporting sustainable development and improving the quality of life for residents.



Oak Ridge Turnpike



Map 1. Regional Context

Overview of Engagement Efforts

The planning process began with community engagement to gather input about the existing conditions in the City from residents and stakeholders who know Oak Ridge best. Public input was collected through a variety of methods to provide different ways for the community to participate and attempted to reach all segments of the population. Engagement methods were also used to gain broad feedback, which helped to identify issues and opportunities to shape the vision and goals that guided this Plan, as well as input on specific items, which helped steer various Plan elements and approaches for the future of Oak Ridge. This chapter provides a summary of the key themes, vision, and goals identified through the process. Detailed meeting summaries from each of the events are located in the Appendix.



Engagement Methods

Public engagement is vital to developing stakeholder relationships and instilling trust and support in the decision-making process. Public input was collected through various methods to provide different ways for the community to participate including the Municipal Planning Commission, community open houses, community engagement events, and an online survey. All of the input received helped to identify issues and opportunities to shape the vision and goals that guided this Plan.

City Council and Planning Commission

The role of the City Council and Planning Commission is to guide development and make policy decisions. Planning Commission led the process for this Plan and was heavily involved in the project. City Council was also involved throughout the process. Staff and the project team provided updates to the City Council and Planning Commission throughout the planning process to keep them informed on project progress, as well as obtain feedback on specific items.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholders possess a unique perspective based on their experience living and working in Oak Ridge. The planning team held stakeholder interviews to facilitate in-person conversations about the needs of the City. These stakeholders included business owners, major employers, property owners, residents, and local organizations, with participants varying in age, race, ethnicity, residential tenure, business types, and neighborhood for a diverse range of input.

Ambassador Program

The ambassador program amplified the voices of underrepresented groups to build connections throughout the communities of Oak Ridge. Ambassadors were tasked with connecting residents of the City with Plan information and providing effective feedback and input during the engagement process.

Youth Involvement Program

The youth involvement program built partnerships with students on urban planning and community engagement, using tools and activities to take action throughout the planning process. The planning team and City Staff provided in-person support to meet and work with the school district to continue engagement with youth.

Online Survey and Project Website

A project website was available where the public could learn about the project, review project materials, and submit feedback throughout the process. An online survey was also used to gather input from the community about the future of Oak Ridge. The survey asked questions about the Blueprint process (and existing conditions for the future). The survey was available throughout the planning process.

Community Meetings and Outreach Events

Various community meetings and outreach events were held to allow the public to learn about the project and provide feedback on the Plan. Outreach events included traditional community meetings, virtual meetings, pop-ups at existing community events, public hearings, and input boards distributed throughout the City. The purpose of these meetings and outreach events was to provide ample opportunities for the public to participate in the planning process and provide feedback about the Plan recommendations.

Key Themes

The following key themes summarize the major takeaways from the various public input sources, including the online survey, in-person engagements, ambassadors, stakeholders, and commission meetings. These themes give a sense of the community's priorities in aligning with the vision statement and goals.



Attracting and Retaining Residents

Development Trends and Opportunities

Natural Resources and Recreation

Retail and Entertainment

Uniquely Oak Ridge

Housing Affordability and Livability

Transportation Connectivity and Mobility

Workforce and Economic Vitality

Infrastructure

Being Uniquely Oak Ridge

The Blueprint process outlines “Uniquely Oak Ridge” as a value the City and its residents embrace. This theme continues to represent the vision statement and the priorities desired in terms of physical, social, and economic conditions for both the present and future. The people who call Oak Ridge home are remarkable for their exceptional community spirit, broad-mindedness, and sense of responsibility. The diversity of people that the Manhattan Project produced has shaped a culture of tolerance and altruism. One does not have to be born here to be an Oak Ridger, a concept that redefines “community.”

The Blueprint’s civic engagement educated, provided clear communication, and encompassed broad outreach throughout the community. Citizen engagement and community buy-in are vital keys to a successful plan. Based on outreach during the planning process, the values and goals from the Blueprint process remained consistent.

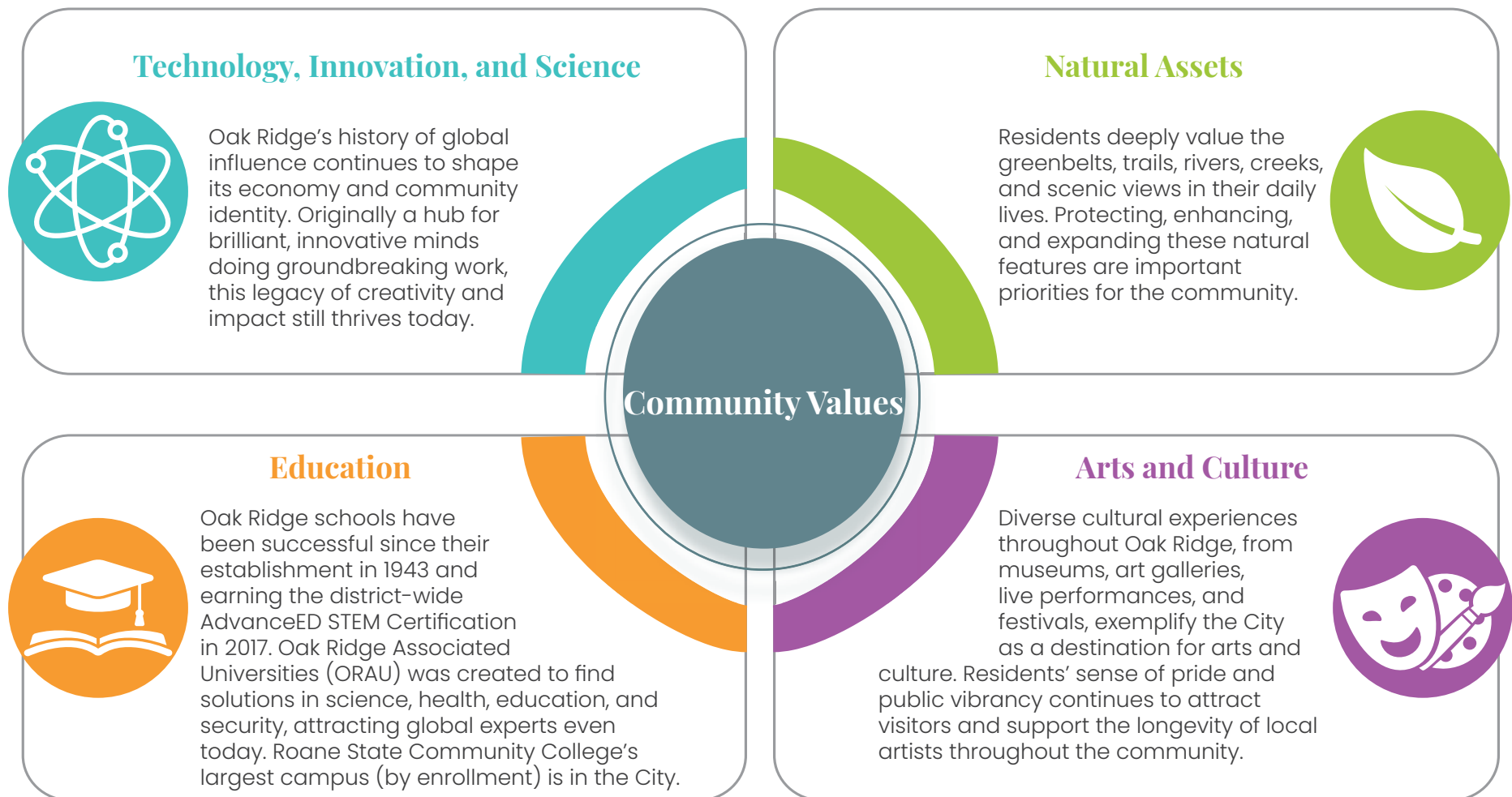
What are some things that you consider uniquely Oak Ridge?

- “The river, the labs, the topography, the people.”
- “The nuclear industries – allows a relatively small city to have a much larger impact.”
- “Science, History, Schools, Rowing, Community Involvement, Historical Jackson Square.”
- “Manhattan Project background, International population, Lots of Scientists. Good School System.”
- “Our very unique history.”
- “Rowing! Support for nuclear energy/research/etc.”
- “Celebration of greenways and green spaces.”



Oak Ridge Values

The values for the Oak Ridge community were established during the Blueprint process, incorporating key themes from public input. These values have been reinforced and expanded throughout this process, are deeply rooted in the Blueprint, and are supported by the goals outlined within it. Together, the values and goals form a cohesive framework that guides the community's development and progress. Below are themes used to shape the values of the community.



Over-Arching Vision and Goals

Numerous public engagement events played a role in shaping the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan by ensuring that the voices of residents, stakeholders, and local organizations were heard and incorporated. Through stakeholder interviews, community meetings, pop-up events, and online engagement, community members helped identify priorities and challenges. Community feedback has guided the development of a vision and goals that reflect the communities unique needs and wants.

Goals

Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability

To maintain desired public services, Oak Ridge must expand its economic and tax bases, including retaining federal employees as residents. Additionally, diversifying businesses and industries, including small and local enterprises, will enhance economic stability, offer more choices, and support population growth.

Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place

Creating a distinctive city center and improving Oak Ridge's physical definition will stimulate population and economic growth. Attracting quality amenities and enhancing public facilities will make Oak Ridge more appealing, fostering community vibrancy and a unique identity.

Improve Connectivity & Mobility

Oak Ridgers want better sidewalks, trails, and safer roads, but the large city center blocks require massive redevelopment, making it hard for small businesses to start or expand. Improved connections and access, quality housing, and historic preservation can enhance the quality of life, boost development, and support population and economic growth with comprehensive urban planning policies.

Vision Statement

The Vision Statement should succinctly and vividly describe the community as it ideally will exist in the future. Essentially, this statement describes what it looks and feels like in Oak Ridge in 2045. This statement is intended to guide both the comprehensive planning process as well as the City's future more broadly.

"Oak Ridge embraces its role as a global beacon of technological innovation while respecting the tradition and heritage that has led to today. By nurturing our rich history of arts and culture, the natural environment, and education; we will pursue sustainable growth which maintains and enhances the integrity of what makes our community special."

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles provide overall direction for Oak Ridge to achieve the community's direction, vision, and aspirations.

Mix of Land Uses

Integrating residential, commercial, and recreational spaces encourages walking and biking, fosters community interactions, attracts foot-traffic-dependent businesses, and boosts property values and tax revenues in downtown areas.

Strong Physical Identity

Placemaking, widely practiced today and championed by Projects for Public Spaces, involves creating vibrant public destinations that leverage local community assets to enhance people's health, happiness, and economic well-being.

Transportation Choices

Enhance street connectivity with smaller block sizes in commercial and mixed-use areas, design multi-modal streets for various transportation modes, and protect the transportation network so that development and transportation mutually support one another.

Range of Housing Opportunities

Diverse housing options can optimize infrastructure use, enhance affordability, support varied populations, and boost commercial activity during evenings and weekends.



Community Resiliency

In urban planning, resiliency is the capacity of city individuals, institutions, businesses, and systems to survive, adapt, and grow amid various challenges, often related to emergency preparedness, financial stability, protection of assets, carbon footprint reduction, energy efficiency, and affordability.

Walkable Community

Promote walkability by mixing land uses, creating safe and inviting pedestrian corridors, and incorporating ADA accessibility, shade trees, street furniture, lighting, signage, and sidewalk-facing building entrances into streetscapes.



Infill Development

Encourage new development closer to or within existing developed areas to efficiently use infrastructure, boost property values and tax base, provide job and service proximity, and support walkable, multi-transportation communities in light of the costs of urban sprawl.

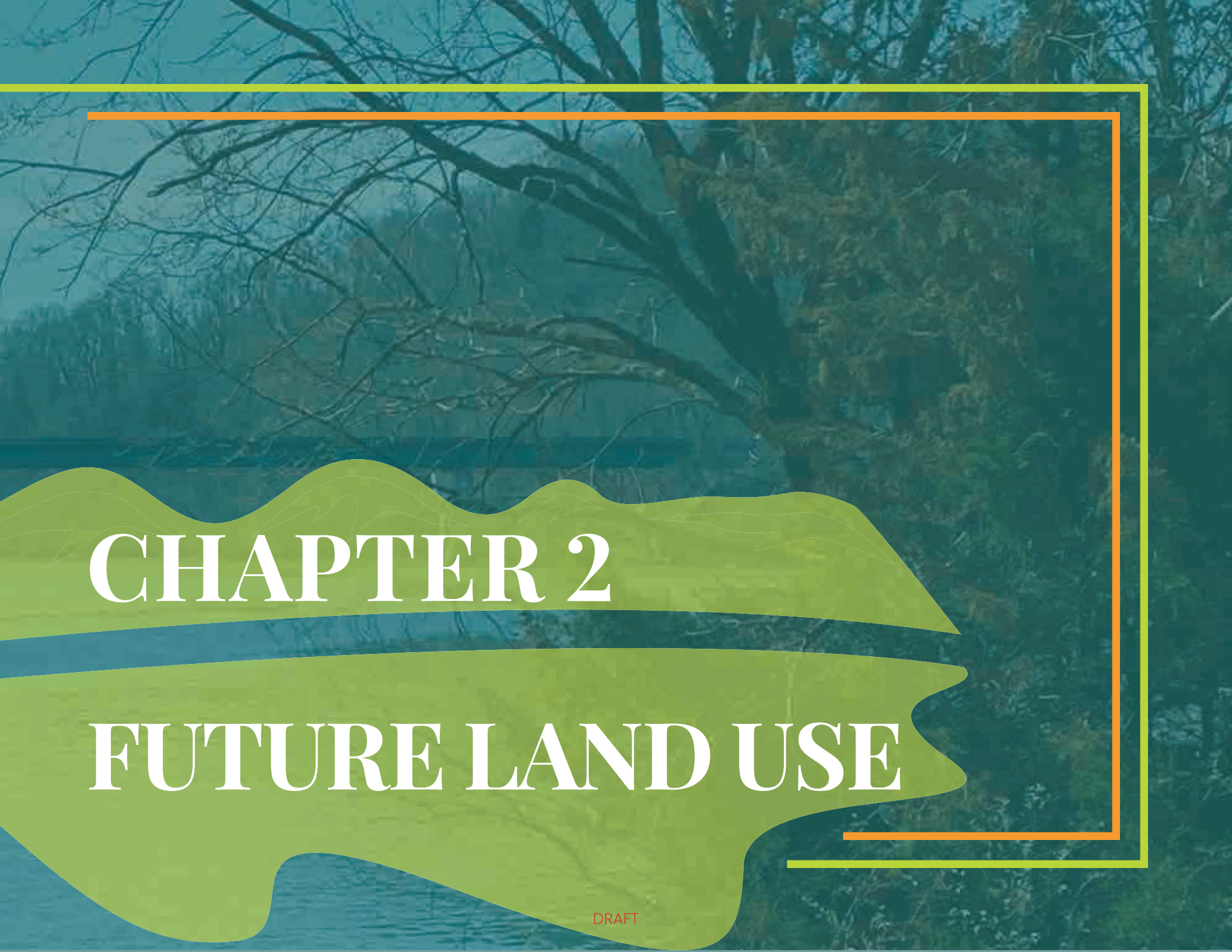
Preservation of Open Space, Natural Beauty, & Critical Environmental Areas

Protecting open space enhances property values, environmental quality, and health benefits by preserving habitats, natural beauty, and directing growth to developed areas, while counteracting air pollution, erosion, and water pollutants.





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The background of the slide features a photograph of a tree with bare branches over a body of water. A large, light green wavy shape is overlaid on the lower half of the image. An orange border is present, consisting of a horizontal line at the top and a vertical line on the right, with a horizontal line at the bottom that is partially obscured by the green shape.

CHAPTER 2

FUTURE LAND USE

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Land Use and Infrastructure

Promote development patterns that encourage a mix of land uses, efficient infrastructure, and preservation of open space in order to support a range of housing, employment, and transportation options.

Introduction

One way to think about a city is to consider its “urban spatial structure.” Spatial structure has to do with the shape of a city, or how it is organized on the landscape. Is it spread out or tightly knit? How are its major land use groups organized? Are industries concentrated in one general area, dispersed, or clumped in a few concentrations? Convenient access to services, cost of public services, and quality of life are all examples of things that can be affected by the spatial structure of a city. Land use distribution helps define the City’s structure.

After the Manhattan Project, Oak Ridge maintained its characteristic greenbelts and compact neighborhoods, each with schools and commercial services. A key consideration is that the water and sewer system, originally built to serve 75,000 people, now requires replacement and upgrades. Over time, the population has declined to just over 32,000, and many non-residential uses within neighborhoods have disappeared. Despite this shift, the water, sewer, and electrical systems still require ongoing maintenance and upgrades.

More than half of the area within the incorporated municipal limits of Oak Ridge is owned and managed by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The reservation, once about 70,000 acres is now about 33,000 acres. Within that, the DOE has four key sites: Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Y-12 National Security Complex, K-25 History Center (East Tennessee Technology Park), and the DOE Administration Building on Administration Road.

Within the 33,000 acres, there are areas that the DOE may want to hold on to for the foreseeable future, while others could eventually be transferred into private ownership. Additionally, certain portions might be designated for preservation as open space.

New housing, services, and work places should be concentrated within already urbanized areas that can accommodate higher density development to limit sprawling development that other parts of the region have seen. Aging commercial developments, underutilized warehousing, and largely unused parking lots are among redevelopment opportunities that would not require major infrastructure extensions, and would assist in increasing property values. Focusing on efficient land development will help the City maintain cost-effective service delivery and increase activity close to existing businesses and employment centers.

It is imperative to align the built environment with adequate infrastructure and services, such as water and sewer, police and fire, emergency preparedness, and community facilities. To do this, coordination of planning and implementation is critical between all City departments, as well as the school district.

This chapter outlines Future Land Uses and potential growth areas that are intended to promote sustainable development patterns that support economic vitality and community growth.

What is a Future Land Use Map?

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is a key component of the Comprehensive Plan. The FLUM provides a road map for future development in the community. The FLUM is developed by considering recent socio-economic and demographic changes, gathering community input on issues and priorities, and making informed predictions about future growth. Moreover, the topography and existing development patterns play a crucial role in determining future land use as the City of Oak Ridge continues to grow.

The FLUM is general in nature and intended to be viewed as a guide for every property in the City. It is understood that existing land use, zoning, and future land use will not all match or necessarily align. By following the FLUM as a guide, the City can help achieve goals outlined in this Comprehensive Plan.

Future Land Use Map	Zoning Map
Purpose	
- Recommended use of land and the character of development in the community to achieve long-range goals - High-level, general development plan	- Basis for applying specific land use regulations and development standards - Micro-level, site-specific focus
Use	
- Guidance for rezonings, special use permits, and other decisions - Identifies common goals for residents and business owners	- Regulates development - Dictates what is allowed where and specifics for land development - Is the law
Input and Consideration	
- Inventory of existing land uses - Elected and appointed officials - Community input and ideas - Data and best practices - Map can be updated through a recommendation from Planning Commission and action by City Council	- FLUM is referred to for general guidance - Other community policies, such as economic development, redevelopment, flood prevention, etc. - Map can be updated through a recommendation from Planning Commission and action by City Council

Figure 1. FLUM Vs. Zoning Map

Existing Land Use and Growth Areas

The City features a diverse range of land uses and existing developments, from historic neighborhoods and commercial corridors to advanced research facilities and wooded parkland. Due to much of the City already being developed, there are limited remaining opportunities for large-scale private development.

Most areas of Oak Ridge are not expected to experience substantial change or growth. For instance, the Legacy Neighborhoods may see some infill housing, renovations, and limited growth, but overall, these areas will largely retain their current character. Likewise, substantial portions of Federal property are projected to remain unchanged.

Conversely, properties situated along major roadways—such as the Oak Ridge Turnpike and S. Illinois Avenue—and select Federal lands present opportunities for redevelopment and major infill development, particularly for commercial and mixed-use projects that will foster future growth. The small area study section of this Plan offers a more detailed analysis of several locations identified as having the greatest potential for future development.

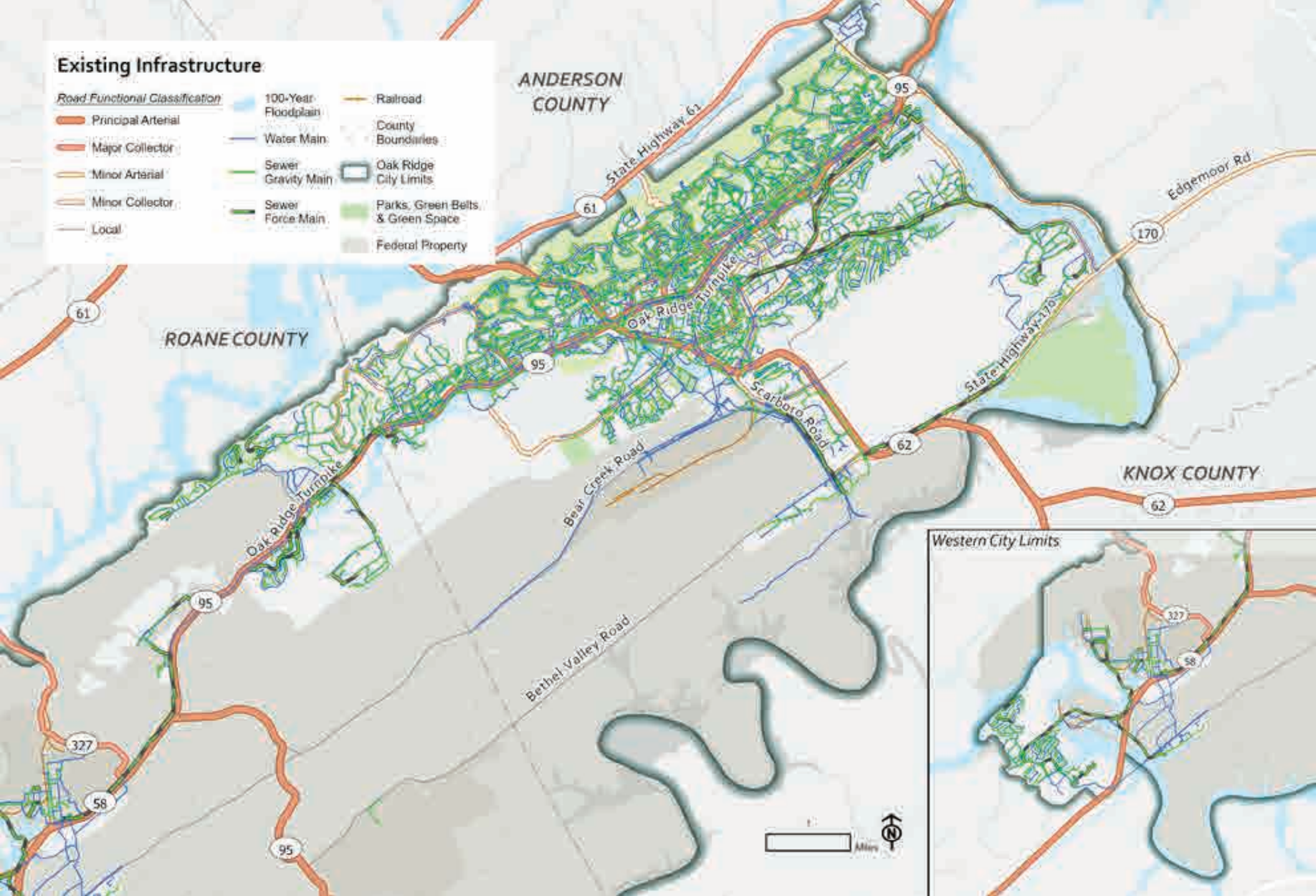
Property that is currently under Federal ownership may become available for development in the future, so it is essential for the City to proactively consider these properties as part of its long-term planning. Any release of such land for development should be a collaborative process with the City, helping to align property use with local priorities and vision. Maintaining the natural beauty and unique character of these areas must remain a central focus when assessing future use. Should these properties be transferred to private ownership, they should be preserved as open spaces accessible for community recreation and enjoyment.

The Three Bends area and the ED-6 property are particularly distinctive and merit in-depth analysis through targeted small

area plans. This approach will allow for a deeper understanding of each site's specific opportunities and challenges, and how best to protect and integrate their environmental assets into any future development. Special attention should be given to preserving environmentally sensitive zones, habitats for endangered species, and important scenic viewsheds in all planning efforts.

Furthermore, the commercial and mixed-use zones identified on the western side of the City should undergo comprehensive small area planning. This will help direct how the land can be used efficiently to meet the needs of current and future residents, improving overall quality-of-life and supporting the diversification and resilience of the local economy.





Map 2. Existing Infrastructure Map

Future Land Use Map

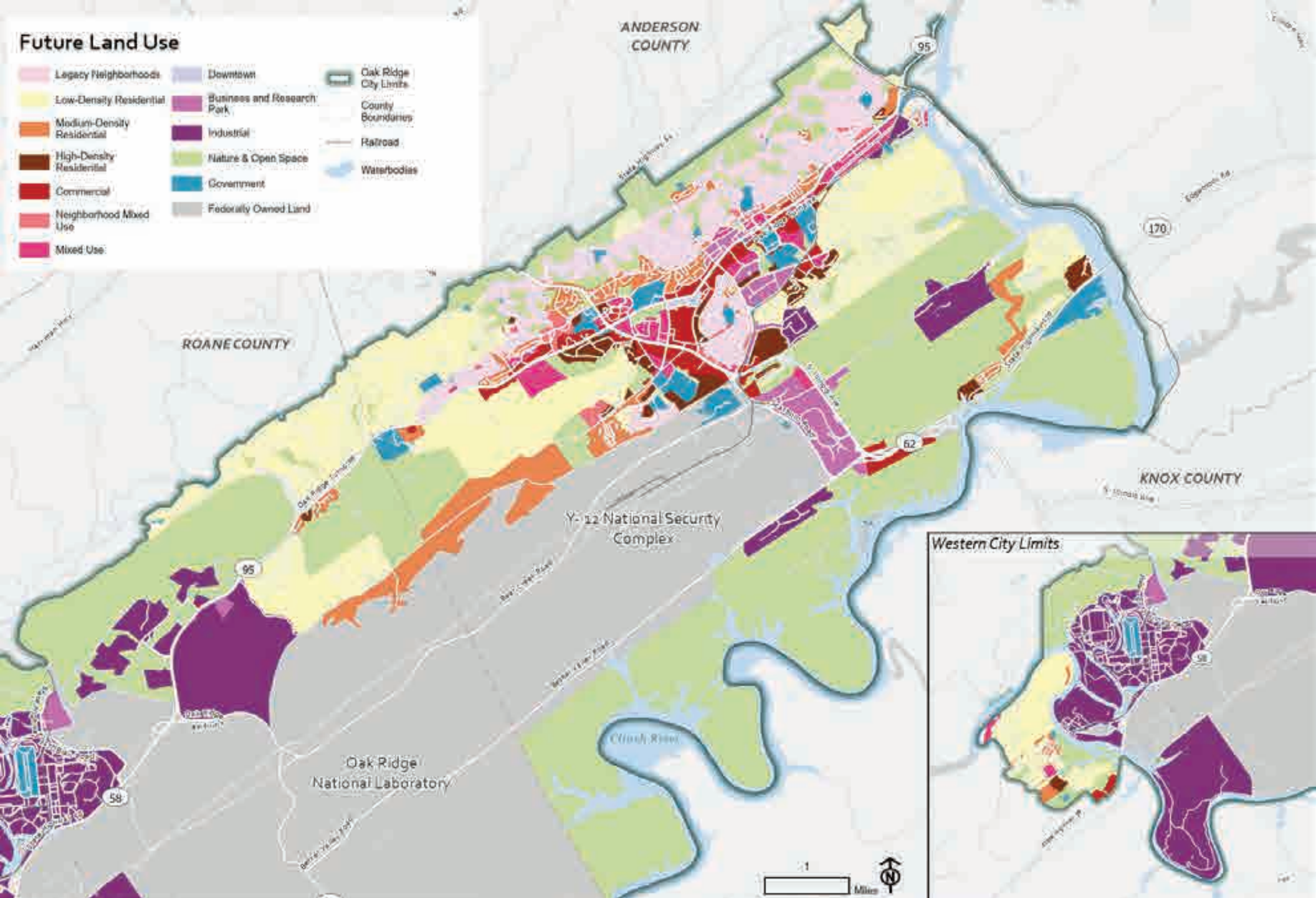
The FLUM for Oak Ridge identifies fifteen land use categories that range in intensity of land use and development. The percentage breakdown of each future land use category is listed in Figure 2. Building on the Existing Land Use Analysis, future land use categories address new development and anticipated redevelopment within the scope of the City's goals.

The Future Land Use Map is an essential tool for planning Oak Ridge's future development decisions and character. The City's vision and goals drive this Plan's land use descriptions and recommendations, remaining mindful of market data and best practices. A Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is used to guide policy decisions regarding housing density, land use separation or integration, and future development.

The FLUM included in this plan illustrates the desired growth pattern expressed by Oak Ridge's residents, business owners, and other stakeholders. Most of Oak Ridge is not expected to experience significant growth or change, particularly in residential areas and Federal property. However, there are opportunities for expansion and creation of commercial and mixed-use development, particularly along major corridors.

Land Use Category		City Limits	
		Acreage	%
	Legacy Neighborhoods	1,788	3.0%
	Low-Density Residential	5,953	10.0%
	Medium-Density Residential	1,133	2.0%
	High-Density Residential	579	1.0%
	Commercial	686	1.0%
	Neighborhood Mixed-Use	160	<0.1%
	Mixed-Use	542	1.0%
	Downtown	23	<0.1%
	Business and Research Park	647	1.0%
	Industrial	5,048	9.0%
	Nature and Open Space	16,730	29.0%
	Government	851	1.0%
	Federally Owned Land	19,232	34.0%
	Other (Waterbodies)	3,965	7.0%
Total		57,337	100.0%

Figure 2. Future Land Use Map Acreages



Map 3. Future Land Use Map

Future Land Use Dashboards

Future Land Use Dashboards provide staff, appointed officials, and elected representatives with a one-stop location for information related to the future land use categories established in the FLUM. The components of each dashboard are described below. Numbers assigned to each component may be referenced with the corresponding dashboard example.

1 Intent and Character

Each category section begins with a general description of the land use category, providing narrative details about the overall intent and land use make up of each category. The descriptions are a framework for how each area is expected to develop or redevelop in the future.

Descriptions are accompanied by sample imagery to help visually demonstrate the look and feel of the category. Each category will vary in development type, mix, intensity, and scale, as noted in the dashboards and appropriateness tables following the description.

2 Appropriateness Table

The appropriateness tables show the ratio of residential and non-residential uses expected for that category as well as the expected mix of development types present under each of those. These uses can take the form of several different development types; for example, an office use could appear in a complete neighborhood, an employment center, a shopping center, or an activity center, depending on its scale, form, and context.

The appropriateness of each development type within a land use category is illustrated using a scale of 0–4 shaded dots.

- **0 shaded dots:** Not appropriate
- **1–2 shaded dots:** Appropriate under given conditions
- **3–4 shaded dots:** Overall appropriate



3 Photo Examples

Photo examples are provided for each land use to provide visual illustration of the type of development appropriate for the land use.

4 Density, Intensity, and Scale

Density

A housing or dwelling unit is defined as a self-contained space that meets all basic living requirements, including designated sleeping and living areas, along with at least one bathroom and kitchen. A 4-bedroom house is one dwelling unit and a studio apartment is also one dwelling unit.

The term density refers to the number of dwelling units or jobs located in a specific area, noted as an amount per acre. This Plan uses dwelling units per acre (DUA) to measure residential density. Each category will have a target range of densities appropriate for that land use.

Intensity

Intensity refers to how much of a property or lot is built on, with either buildings or associated development such as driveways and parking areas. For the purpose of this Plan, intensity is defined as:

- **Low:** lot coverage of 50% or less
- **Medium:** >50% to <75% lot coverage
- **High:** 75-100% lot coverage

Scale

Scale refers to the height of the buildings on a property or lot. The topography of the lot in relation to its surrounding elements should warrant additional height considerations. For the purpose of this Plan, scale is defined as:

- **Low-Rise:** 1 to 3 stories
- **Mid-Rise:** 4 to 6 stories
- **High-Rise:** 7+ stories



5 Development Types

Each category also includes a set of identified development types and will have a primary or most desirable development type, accompanied by secondary types with varying levels of appropriateness. This strategy allows the City to be flexible to accommodate market demands that may change from time to time. Although primary types should remain consistent throughout the life of the Plan, secondary types have the flexibility to change so long as they complement the primary type.



Single-Family Detached Homes

A single-family detached home contains one dwelling unit on a lot in a single standalone building. Generally, they are the largest lots of all residential development types with low density, scale, and intensity. Single-family detached homes may include an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) that is clearly secondary to the main property unit.



Duplex, Triplex, and Quadplex Homes and Townhomes

This development type is two to four multifamily units in a stacked or otherwise connected configuration. This development type also includes townhomes, which are single-family attached units arranged in a building group.



Multifamily

Multifamily is five or more units contained within a single building, with units usually stacked on top of each other. Usually, the individual units are for rent (apartments), but may be for sale (condos). A higher-density multifamily development may include multiple buildings on the lot, creating a complex.



Neighborhood Commercial

Neighborhood Commercial is less intense commercial development, such as local retail, offices, and restaurants, to serve residents at a neighborhood scale. These uses promote walkability and 10-minute neighborhoods, which are neighborhoods that provide residents with access to essential amenities/services within a 10-minute walk from their home.



Office

The office development type includes buildings designated specifically for office use. These buildings can range from low-rise to high-rise depending on circumstances. Offices in mixed-use buildings with general commercial businesses are encouraged to support economic activity.



General Commercial

General Commercial is more intense and large scale commercial development such as big box stores, chain restaurants, offices, and hotels usually located along major thoroughfares. General Commercial uses provide needed services for the regional population, as well as travelers passing through the area.



Light Industrial

Light Industrial is manufacturing, processing, assembly, warehouse, and similar uses that do not generate nuisances (noise, odor, dust, etc.) and are able to house the entire operation inside the building, meaning there are no materials/products being stored or work happening outdoors. They may also produce less heavy truck traffic than “heavier” industry.



Heavy Industrial

Heavy Industrial includes industrial uses (manufacturing, processing, assembly, warehousing and similar) that do not fit under Light Industrial above and include more intensive operations on site. This may include outdoor activity and storage or uses that need physical separation, such as certain nuclear businesses.



Parks and Open Space

This development type consists of parks, recreational facilities, and open spaces. Generally considered appropriate within all land use categories. Park design should be contextually sensitive and provide the types of amenities appropriate for the surrounding land uses. This means parks and open spaces in residential versus non-residential areas may be very different.



Civic

This development type includes government buildings or centers and open spaces surrounding government buildings or centers. These uses are usually located centrally in a city or town and are aesthetic in their nature, often having scenically designed landscapes, fountains, gazebos, or ornamental decorations to feel welcoming for all community residents.

Legacy Neighborhoods

Legacy neighborhoods represent some of the City’s earliest residential areas. These neighborhoods are traditionally designed curvilinear suburban developments, featuring smaller lots with standard 5’ setbacks on all sides.



Non-Residential

25%

Residential

75%

Residential Density
4 to 8 DUA
Intensity
50–75% Lot Coverage
Medium Intensity
Scale
1 to 2 Stories
Low–Rise



Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	●●●●●	
Townhomes + Quadplex	●●●○	Most appropriate as a transitional buffer to more intense uses such as commercial or high density residential.
Multifamily	○○○○○	
Neighborhood Commercial	●●○○○	Commercial uses that do not generate significant nuisances and that directly serve adjacent neighborhoods such as retail, restaurant, or small-scale office uses are most appropriate.
General Commercial	○○○○○	
Office	●●○○○	
Light Industrial	○○○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○○○	
Parks and Open Space	●●●●●	Parks and open space uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	●●●●●	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.

Low-Density Residential

Low-Density Residential areas are suburban neighborhoods with single-family homes on larger lots, featuring deep setbacks and a spacious character. Townhomes and neighborhood commercial uses may be appropriate within this designation.



Non-Residential 5%

Residential 95%

Residential Density
Up to 5 DUA

Intensity
0-50% Lot Coverage
Low Intensity

Scale
1 to 2 Stories
Low-Rise



Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	●●●●●	
Townhomes + Quadplex	●●●●●	
Multifamily	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Neighborhood Commercial	● ○ ○ ○ ○	Commercial uses that do not generate significant nuisances and that directly serve adjacent neighborhoods such as retail, restaurant, or small-scale office uses are most appropriate.
General Commercial	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Office	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Light Industrial	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Heavy Industrial	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Parks and Open Space	●●●●●	Parks and open space uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	●●●●●	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.

Medium-Density Residential

This category supports a diverse range of housing types that bridge the gap between traditional single-family neighborhoods and higher-density multifamily and commercial developments.



Non-Residential 10%

Residential 90%

Residential Density
6 to 12 DUA

Intensity
50–75% Lot Coverage Medium Intensity

Scale
1 to 4 Stories Low/Mid-Rise



Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	● ● ● ● ●	
Townhomes + Quadplex	● ● ● ● ●	
Multifamily	● ● ● ● ○	Multifamily products that are similar in scale to single family development are preferred.
Neighborhood Commercial	● ● ● ● ○	Prioritizing small-scale neighborhood serving commercial uses with little traffic impacts and few nuisances are most ideal. Small scale office, retail, and restaurants are largely appropriate uses.
General Commercial	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Office	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Light Industrial	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Heavy Industrial	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Parks and Open Space	● ● ● ● ●	Parks and open space uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	● ● ● ● ●	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.

High-Density Residential

The High-Density Residential category allows apartments, townhomes, and mixed-use residential buildings in areas with ample existing infrastructure and proximity to commercial hubs.



Non-Residential 15%

Residential 85%

Residential Density
12+ DUA
Intensity
75-100% Lot Coverage High Intensity
Scale
1 to 4 Stories Low/Mid-Rise



Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	● ● ● ● ●	
Townhomes + Quadplex	● ● ● ● ●	
Multifamily	● ● ● ● ●	
Neighborhood Commercial	● ● ● ● ●	
General Commercial	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Office	● ● ● ● ○	Small-scale office spaces typically included in neighborhood commercial are appropriate in addition to larger format office developments as long as they are similar in scale to surrounding residential uses.
Light Industrial	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Heavy Industrial	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Parks and Open Space	● ● ● ● ●	Parks and open space uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	● ● ● ● ●	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.

Commercial

Commercial category includes large scale, regional commercial uses with larger footprints and market areas. Supporting uses, such as offices and lower intensity commercial spaces, are also encouraged within this designation.



Non-Residential 95%

Residential 5%

Residential Density
12+ DUA

Intensity
50-75% Lot Coverage Medium Intensity

Scale
5 to 9 Stories Mid-Rise



Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	○○○○○	
Townhomes + Quadplex	●●○○○	Should be located at the edges of Commercial areas and should have sufficient pedestrian linkages to commercial/retail centers.
Multifamily	●●●○○	Should be placed so that parking and circulation does not impact commercial uses.
Neighborhood Commercial	●●●●●	
General Commercial	●●●●●	
Office	●●●●●	
Light Industrial	○○○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○○○	
Parks and Open Space	●●●●●	Parks and open space uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	●●●●●	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.

Neighborhood Mixed-Use

Neighborhood Mixed-Use allows for a blend of small-scale commercial, residential, and community-oriented uses that serve surrounding neighborhoods. Development in these areas should maintain a pedestrian-friendly scale, with buildings designed to complement nearby residential areas.



Non-Residential 50%

Residential 50%

Residential Density
6-12 DUA

Intensity
50-75% Lot Coverage Medium Intensity

Scale
1 to 4 Stories Low/Mid-Rise



Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	●●●○	Should be located at the edges of Neighborhood Mixed-Use areas and should have sufficient pedestrian linkages to commercial/retail centers.
Townhomes + Quadplex	●●●○	Should be at a similar scale and intensity as retail nodes and used as a transition to lower density uses. Pedestrian connectivity to commercial areas is desired as well.
Multifamily	●●●○	Parking and circulation for multifamily should not conflict with parking and loading zones of retail/commercial uses. Pedestrian connectivity to commercial areas is desired as well.
Neighborhood Commercial	●●●●	
General Commercial	●●○○	Regional draws such as boutique hotels, small event venues, and specialty recreational businesses are most appropriate. Large scale, big box stores with large parking demands and allocations are not appropriate in this category.
Office	●●○○	Small-scale office spaces typically included in neighborhood commercial are appropriate in addition to midsize office developments as long as they are similar in scale to surrounding residential/retail uses.
Light Industrial	○○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○○	
Parks and Open Space	●●●●	Parks and open space uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	●●●●	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.

Mixed-Use

The Mixed-Use designation is intended to accommodate higher density residential and commercial uses, ideally connected with significant pedestrian infrastructure.



Non-Residential 50%

Residential 50%

Residential Density
12+ DUA

Intensity
75-100% Lot Coverage High Intensity

Scale
1 to 4 Stories Low/Mid-Rise



Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	●●●○	Single-family homes should be buffered from any more intense uses of land within the mixed use designation.
Townhomes + Quadplex	●●●●	
Multifamily	●●●●	
Neighborhood Commercial	●●●●	
General Commercial	●●●●	
Office	●●●●	
Light Industrial	●○○○	Light industrial uses with few nuisances such as small scale manufacturing may be appropriate.
Heavy Industrial	○○○○	
Parks and Open Space	●●●●	Parks and open space uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	●●●●	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.

Downtown

Downtown largely refers to the mixed-use areas along the Wilson Street corridor. This area is intended to support intense, multi use development that will become a central gathering place for the community.



Non-Residential 67%

Residential 33%

Residential Density
12+ DUA

Intensity
75-100% Lot Coverage High Intensity

Scale
No height limit



Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	● ○ ○ ○ ○	Most appropriate as transitional development patterns serving as a buffer to other uses.
Townhomes + Quadplex	● ● ○ ○ ○	Most appropriate as transitional development patterns serving as a buffer to other uses.
Multifamily	● ● ● ● ●	
Neighborhood Commercial	● ● ● ● ●	
General Commercial	● ● ● ● ●	
Office	● ● ● ● ●	
Light Industrial	● ○ ○ ○ ○	Small scale industrial with a retail component is acceptable.
Heavy Industrial	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Parks and Open Space	● ● ● ● ●	Parks and open space uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	● ● ● ● ●	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.

Business and Research Park

This category is intended to include non-federal businesses and research facilities that are clustered into cohesive developments.



Non-Residential 100%

Residential 0%

Residential Density
N/A

Intensity
0-50% Lot Coverage Low Intensity

Scale
Mid-High Rise (Up to 10 stories)



Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	○○○○○	
Townhomes + Quadplex	○○○○○	
Multifamily	○○○○○	
Neighborhood Commercial	●○○○○	Commercial uses that directly serve office uses are most appropriate.
General Commercial	○○○○○	
Office	●●●●●	
Light Industrial	●●●●●	
Heavy Industrial	●○○○○	Heavy industrial uses are appropriate provided they are separated from non-industrial uses and do not negatively impact surrounding properties.
Parks and Open Space	●●●●●	Parks and open space uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	●●●●●	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.

Industrial

The Industrial land use designation accommodates light and heavy industrial uses, including manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, and research facilities. These areas are intended for high-intensity operations that may generate noise, traffic, or other impacts.



Non-Residential 100%

Residential 0%

Residential Density
N/A

Intensity
0-50% Lot Coverage Low Intensity

Scale
Mid-High Rise (Up to 10 stories)



Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	○○○○○	
Townhomes + Quadplex	○○○○○	
Multifamily	○○○○○	
Neighborhood Commercial	○○○○○	
General Commercial	○○○○○	
Office	●●●○	Office uses that directly support industrial uses are most appropriate.
Light Industrial	●●●●	
Heavy Industrial	●●●●	
Parks and Open Space	●●●●	Parks are appropriate and open spaces are most appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	●●○○	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.

Nature and Open Space

This designation preserves environmentally sensitive areas, natural landscapes, and recreational green spaces that contribute to ecological health and community well-being. These areas may include protected forests, wetlands, floodplains, and public parks.



Open Space

100%

Residential

0%

Residential Density
N/A
Intensity
N/A
Scale
N/A



Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	○○○○○	
Townhomes + Quadplex	○○○○○	
Multifamily	○○○○○	
Neighborhood Commercial	○○○○○	
General Commercial	○○○○○	
Office	○○○○○	
Light Industrial	○○○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○○○	
Parks and Open Space	●●●●●	Parks and open space uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	●●●●●	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.

Government

The Government designation includes public buildings, and government owned land that support municipal, county, state, and federal functions. This category includes city halls, courthouses, and government service centers, as well as educational institutions, and public health facilities.



Non-Residential

100%

Residential

0%

Residential Density
N/A
Intensity
N/A
Scale
N/A



Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	○○○○○	
Townhomes + Quadplex	○○○○○	
Multifamily	○○○○○	
Neighborhood Commercial	○○○○○	
General Commercial	○○○○○	
Office	●●●●●	
Light Industrial	○○○○○	
Heavy Industrial	○○○○○	
Parks and Open Space	●●●●●	Parks and open space uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	●●●●●	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.

Federally Owned Land

This designation includes federally owned land, primarily industrial and research uses. Transferred land will be placed in a hold until necessary research is completed and formal Land Use designations are assigned, with the Planning Commission initiating its evaluation process within 90 days of becoming aware of an impending property transfer.



Non-Residential

100%

Residential

0%

Residential Density
N/A
Intensity
N/A
Scale
N/A

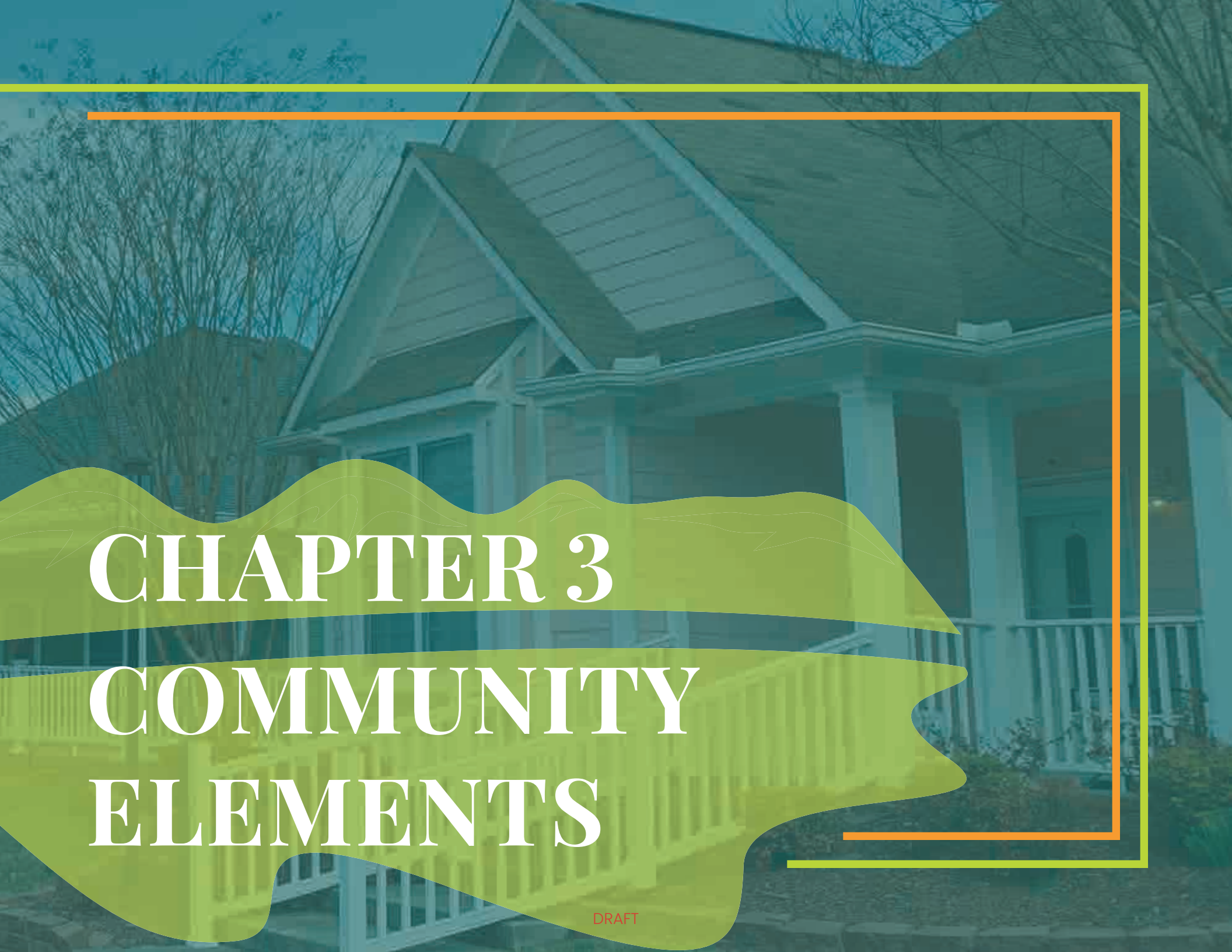


Development Type & Appropriateness		Compatibility Considerations
SFD, Duplex, ADU	○○○○○	
Townhomes + Quadplex	○○○○○	
Multifamily	○○○○○	
Neighborhood Commercial	○○○○○	
General Commercial	○○○○○	
Office	●●●●●	
Light Industrial	●●●●●	
Heavy Industrial	●●●●●	
Parks and Open Space	●●●●●	Parks and open space uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.
Civic	●●●●●	Civic uses are appropriate in all future land use designations.





DRAFT



CHAPTER 3

COMMUNITY

ELEMENTS

DRAFT

Introduction

As Oak Ridge continues to grow and evolve, it is vital to strengthen the foundational elements that contribute to a high quality of life for all residents. Shifts in population, housing demand, economic conditions, and environmental challenges call for thoughtful, balanced planning that promotes both growth and equity. By proactively addressing these core aspects of community life, the City can create conditions that benefit current residents while laying the groundwork for future generations.

The Community Elements chapter outlines the key components that support a thriving, resilient community. Each element includes a guiding statement that defines its purpose and goals, along with targeted recommendations and strategies to enhance community well-being. This chapter focuses on five essential topics:

- Housing and Healthy Neighborhoods
- Recreation and Natural Assets
- Transportation and Mobility
- Economic Vitality and Sustainable Growth
- Livability and Community Vibrancy



Housing and Healthy Neighborhoods

Access to safe, affordable, and diverse housing is a cornerstone of a healthy and equitable community. A balanced housing strategy must address the needs of current residents while preparing for future growth, demographic shifts, and changes in housing demand. A comprehensive approach to housing and neighborhood development will help Oak Ridge remain inclusive and adaptable. This includes expanding housing options for a range of income levels and household types and encouraging mixed-use and mixed-income development.



Recreation and Natural Assets

Preserving and enhancing access to natural assets is essential for a community. The City has forested areas, green spaces, and waterfronts that offer both ecological and recreational value. Thoughtful stewardship of these resources helps protect biodiversity, improve air and water quality, and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Well-maintained and accessible recreational facilities are necessary to encourage active lifestyles and provide equitable opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to engage with the outdoors.



Transportation and Mobility

A well-connected and efficient transportation system is essential to the daily functioning and long-term sustainability of a city. For Oak Ridge, this requires improving infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, enhancing public transit options, and addressing traffic safety and congestion concerns. Prioritizing these improvements can reduce dependence on single-occupancy vehicles, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and support healthier, more active lifestyles.



Economic Vitality and Sustainable Growth

By integrating economic vitality with sustainable planning principles, the City can build a more inclusive, resilient, and future-ready economy—one that supports prosperity while preserving the community's values and resources. Sustainable growth involves preserving natural resources, reducing emissions, and promoting energy efficiency in both public and private development. Equitable access to economic opportunity must remain a priority to help all residents benefit from the City's growth.



Livability and Community Vibrancy

Livability reflects the overall quality of life in a community—how well it meets the needs of its residents and supports their well-being. Vibrant communities are characterized by active public spaces, diverse cultural programming, and opportunities for residents to engage with one another through events, volunteerism, and local initiatives. For Oak Ridge, this is shaped by access to essential services, safe and attractive public spaces, cultural and recreational opportunities, and a strong sense of community identity.

Housing and Healthy Neighborhoods

Improve our housing stock to broaden choices, increase ownership opportunities, and enhance our regional market position, which will increase housing values and tax base.

Introduction

Oak Ridge enjoys strong job growth and security but that has not translated into accompanying population growth and new housing development. In fact, while employment growth outstrips most of the communities in the region, population has been virtually flat over the past several decades; however, in recent years the community has seen an uptick in growth and development interest.

Many of the housing issues of today are the same as those that existed when the Comprehensive Plan was updated in 1988. With over 65% of the housing stock built before 1979, and very few new housing starts, potential buyers have limited choices. The City is already working to improve the quality of older neighborhoods, and has implemented programs to expand Neighborhood Watch efforts. A rental registration program is underway to identify and track properties, and an Environmental Court was established with an Administrative Hearing Officer to provide judicial authority in reducing blight and crime.

The City has successfully used a variety of funding sources, including Community Development Block Grant funds, to further affordable housing initiatives. These efforts have also included using general funds for nuisance abatement to remove blighted buildings from neighborhoods. In addition, the Oak Ridge Land Bank—one of only a few in the state—is acquiring and reselling blighted properties to improve neighborhoods and increase home ownership.



Existing Housing Conditions

Past housing reports, feedback from major employers, and community input during this process point to several challenges, as well as hopeful solutions, regarding housing and neighborhood improvements. Among the needs that have been discussed are:

- More new housing options in the starter/move-up (\$150–300K) price range
- Working to have older neighborhoods seen as high quality with positive curb appeal
- Having a wider variety of housing choices for all stages of life

Although at different phases of implementation, significant activity has begun at three previously approved housing developments: The Preserve at Clinch River (formerly Rarity Ridge), Forest Creek Village (formerly Rarity Oaks), and Groves Park Commons. These developments collectively represent the potential for more than 3,000 new homes in Oak Ridge, with a range of housing types and lot sizes. As such, the objective of encouraging new housing that appeals to a large range of buyers and has price ranges that are desirable is starting to be met by current market forces. Of course, additional housing and additional housing types will still be needed to support a growing workforce in the community. Part of the solution for providing housing includes neighborhood improvements and community vitality, as these help support new housing and investments into current housing.

The Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce formed a housing committee to work on these issues and identify the best housing solutions. The committee represents public and private or non-profit sector entities involved in Oak Ridge housing issues. These discussions and the past planning efforts need to be leveraged and used to guide actions to improve the housing stock in Oak Ridge.

Working alongside the public school system and Roane State Community College can also be helpful to understand specific housing needs that students and employees may have to develop a plan to assist in fulfilling those needs.



Housing Approaches

Successful housing strategies involve a variety of techniques, both public and private, and require cooperative actions by property owners, tenants, the City, local organizations, and volunteer groups. While personal investment in property is a key component for attractive neighborhoods, the City may also positively impact and encourage private investment by creating and maintaining livable neighborhoods.

Historic Preservation

The essence of being uniquely Oak Ridge is woven into the City's very foundation—its overnight creation stands as one of the community's most defining and remarkable traits. Preserving historic housing in Oak Ridge plays a crucial role in maintaining the City's distinctive character and sense of place. The legacy neighborhoods, including the iconic alphabet homes and other historic buildings, contribute authenticity, charm, and a rich narrative to the City's built environment. While not everyone may choose to live in a historic home, given the unique challenges these properties sometimes present, Oak Ridge has resources and valuable information available for homeowners interested in updating or expanding their homes while retaining their historic integrity. By supporting the maintenance and thoughtful adaptation of these neighborhoods, Oak Ridge can help retain its heritage as a living, vibrant part of community life. The following are examples of funding mechanisms the City could use to support historic preservation efforts:

- Historic Preservation Fund (HPF)
- Tennessee Historical Commission
- Historic Development Grant (HDGP)



Housing Variety

Offering a range of housing types is essential for Oak Ridge to meet the needs of its varied residents. By providing options such as single-family homes, duplexes, townhomes, apartments, and mixed-use developments, the City can accommodate individuals and families at every stage of life and with different lifestyle preferences. This diversity not only offers choices at a range of price points but also supports both rental and ownership opportunities, making it possible for people with different incomes and housing needs to find a place to call home. Furthermore, integrating residential options near commercial areas, and in mixed-use developments, fosters vibrant, walkable neighborhoods and supports new businesses, helping to create a dynamic, inclusive community where everyone can thrive.

Increasing Density

Increasing housing density is vital for Oak Ridge as the City grows and adapts to changing needs. By focusing new development in well-planned, denser areas, Oak Ridge can make the most of existing infrastructure and limit unnecessary expansion into forested land and open spaces. Higher density supports a greater concentration of residents, which in turn energizes community life, provides a customer base for local businesses, and helps sustain public amenities. It also encourages walkable neighborhoods and reduces dependence on cars, making it more feasible for residents to access shops, services, and workplaces on foot or by bike. Ultimately, prioritizing density allows Oak Ridge to foster a vibrant, connected community while preserving the natural landscapes that contribute to the City's unique character. Public private partnerships (P3) can also be useful resources in developing higher density housing, including on publicly owned land, through funding and joint collaboration.

New Housing

As Oak Ridge's population continues to grow, it is essential to develop new housing options that can meet the community's evolving needs. Building a diverse range of housing by encompassing various styles, sizes, and price points creates opportunities for families, individuals, and newcomers to find homes that suit their circumstances. The City will need to work with partners in the public, private, and non-profit sectors to create more housing. By thoughtfully adding new homes, Oak Ridge can welcome future residents, support economic growth, and enhance the vibrancy of its neighborhoods. Integrating green spaces and community areas within these new developments further strengthens the sense of belonging and continues the City's tradition of fostering connected, thriving communities.



Recreational and Natural Assets

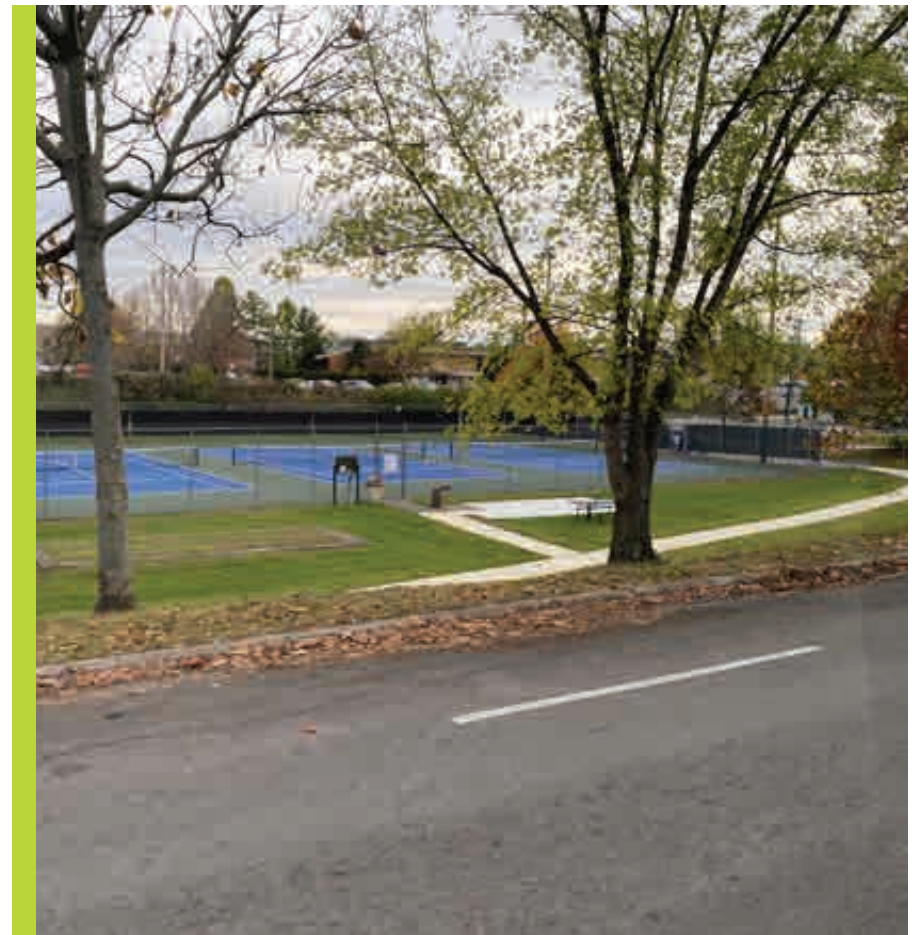
Maintain and expand a beautiful and healthy natural environment and recreational assets that are accessible to everyone.

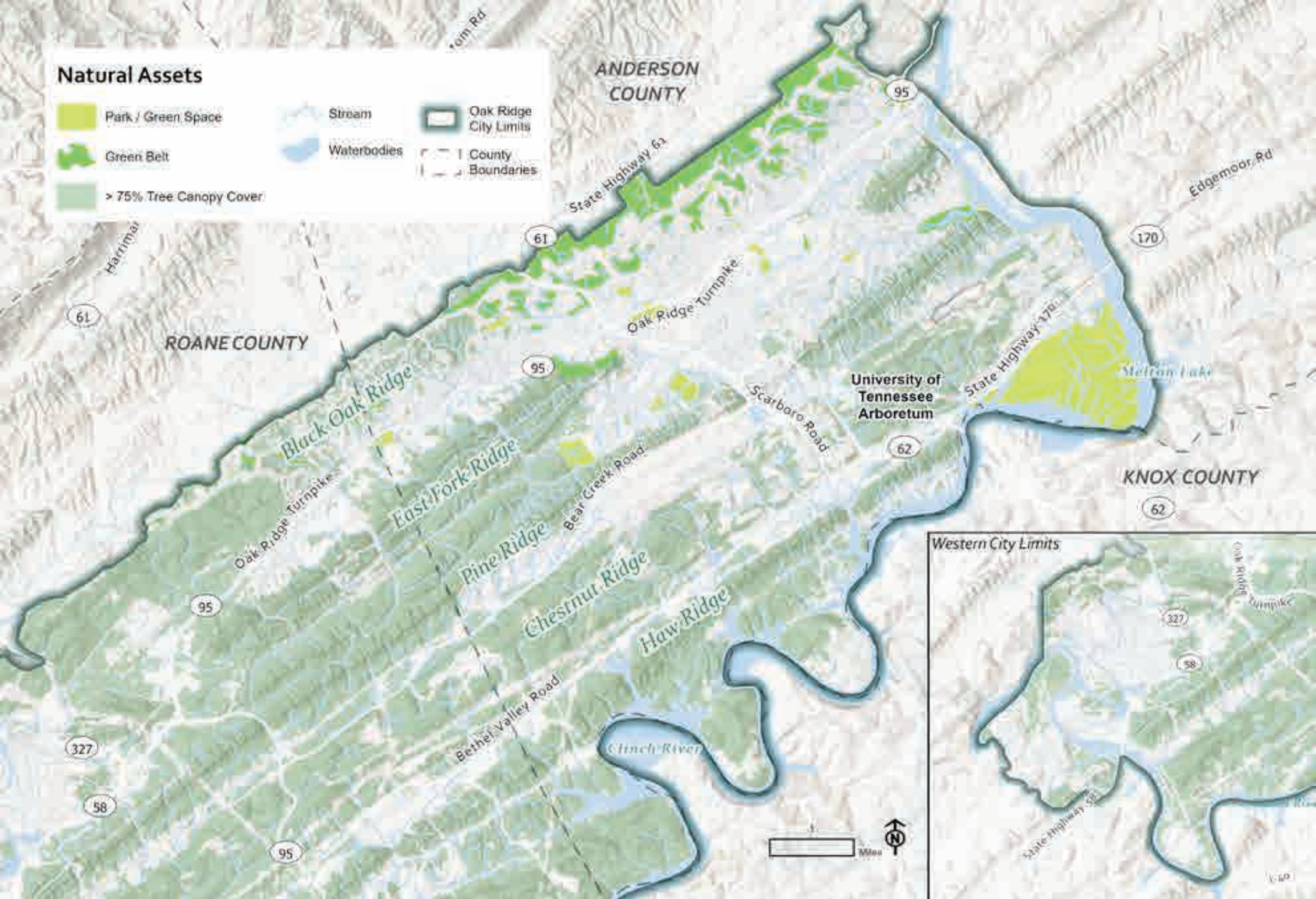
Introduction

Oak Ridge offers abundant natural open space and opportunities for outdoor, human-powered recreation and sports. Residents and visitors enjoy miles of greenways and trails for both walking and mountain biking, and several amenities that cannot be found in most cities. These include an outdoor public pool fed by a natural spring, accessible waterfront with one of the country's best competitive rowing venues, skate park, public golf course, disc golf courses, and an outdoor amphitheater. Overall, Oak Ridge boasts 150 miles of shoreline, 85 miles of greenways and trails, and a wealth of scenic beauty. Over 50% of the City has tree canopy that exceeds 75%, which has a tremendous impact on the community's natural beauty.

Figure 3. Parks, Green Space and Canopy Coverage Acreages

Categories	Acreage	%
Parks and Green space	1,306	2.3%
Greenbelt	1,341	2.3%
>75% Tree Canopy Cover	30,041	52.4%





Map 4. Natural Assets Map

Existing Recreational Facilities and Natural Areas

On the east side of State Route 62, the University of Tennessee (UT) owns and manages an area of 2,204 acres known as the Oak Ridge Forest. This site is the headquarters for the UT Forest Resources AgResearch and Education Center. The land is mainly used for forestry and wildlife research. This area also encompasses a 250-acre Arboretum, which is accessible to the public and includes 5 miles of interpretive nature trails, educational events, and an auditorium facility. Explore Oak Ridge, the convention and visitors bureau, estimates that more than 30,000 visitors visit the UT Arboretum every year.

In addition, portions of the Oak Ridge Reservation, managed by the Department of Energy (DOE), include recreation areas that allow full or limited access to the public. Clark Center Park includes a swimming area, boat ramp, playground, and ball fields. The area also contains the historic Freels Cabin (1820s), one of the first settlements in the area.

There may also be land set aside in the Three Bends area for wildlife conservation; however that is being explored in more depth to determine specific location and potential implications to future uses.

At the northwest end of the City along the Oak Ridge Turnpike, Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency manages another 3,000 acres in the Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement (BORCE), which is open to hikers and mountain bikers, and contains interesting plant and tree species, including some that are unusual for the ridge and valley region.

To the east of the BORCE, the North Boundary Greenway surrounds the City's Horizon Center Industrial Park, with main public access from the west guard house on the turnpike. This and other DOE lands periodically allow deer and turkey hunting.

Another protected area, Grassy Creek Habitat Protection Area, is part of the 1,200-acre peninsula owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority along the Clinch River, also known as the Clinch River Nuclear Site for potential power generation.

The generous system of public open spaces, trails, and parks throughout Oak Ridge is a legacy of the City's original plan, and continues to evolve. It enriches the quality of place, but also requires significant maintenance that stretches the resources of the Recreation and Parks Department. Oak Ridge can also leverage existing parks and open spaces to become a recreation destination through strategic marketing and community investment.



Key objectives for enhancing and improving natural assets:

Connectivity – The existing system of natural open spaces, trails, and waterways is somewhat disconnected, making it difficult to move from one area to another in some cases. Creating strategic connections among the community's natural assets to improve ease of access and use is critical. One great opportunity is using the linear spaces along streams and creeks as paths to connect open spaces and various natural assets to the property around them. This also helps maintain wildlife corridors to support native fauna.

Accessibility – It is imperative to design all improvements to natural and recreational assets with accessibility in mind, so that the widest array of citizens can enjoy these resources.

Safety – Parks, trails and open space allow residents to get outside and relax, but recreational sites should utilize principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) in parking areas, trailheads, parks, and other facilities to help users stay safe.

Environmental Quality – Plant materials, proper drainage and erosion control, and flood control measures improve air and water quality across the region. Cleanup of the past environmental impacts from the nuclear industry that have occurred over the decades to the local environment are ongoing and have made significant strides in resolving long-standing environmental issues and concerns. Additional work in this area is needed.

Aesthetics/Beauty – The community's natural assets provide an amazing backdrop, making Oak Ridge's context one of the most beautiful in the state. Proper maintenance of parks, streams, forestland, and open spaces will help keep the area beautiful and build community pride.

Preservation – The City is fortunate to be immersed in a federal reservation with over 25,000 acres of mostly untouched land. The preservation of the existing greenbelts and other natural areas help conserve these assets for generations to come.

Invasive Species Management – Ecosystem restoration through invasive species management is critical to maintaining the ecological integrity of natural spaces.

Future Planning – Having updated plans related to nature, environmental preservation, pedestrian/bicycle access, and parks and recreation are critical to keeping these efforts at the forefront of the community and using modern techniques to maintain high-quality open spaces. The City is working on creating a new Parks Master Plan, which will help identify park priorities and projects for the next 10–20 years.

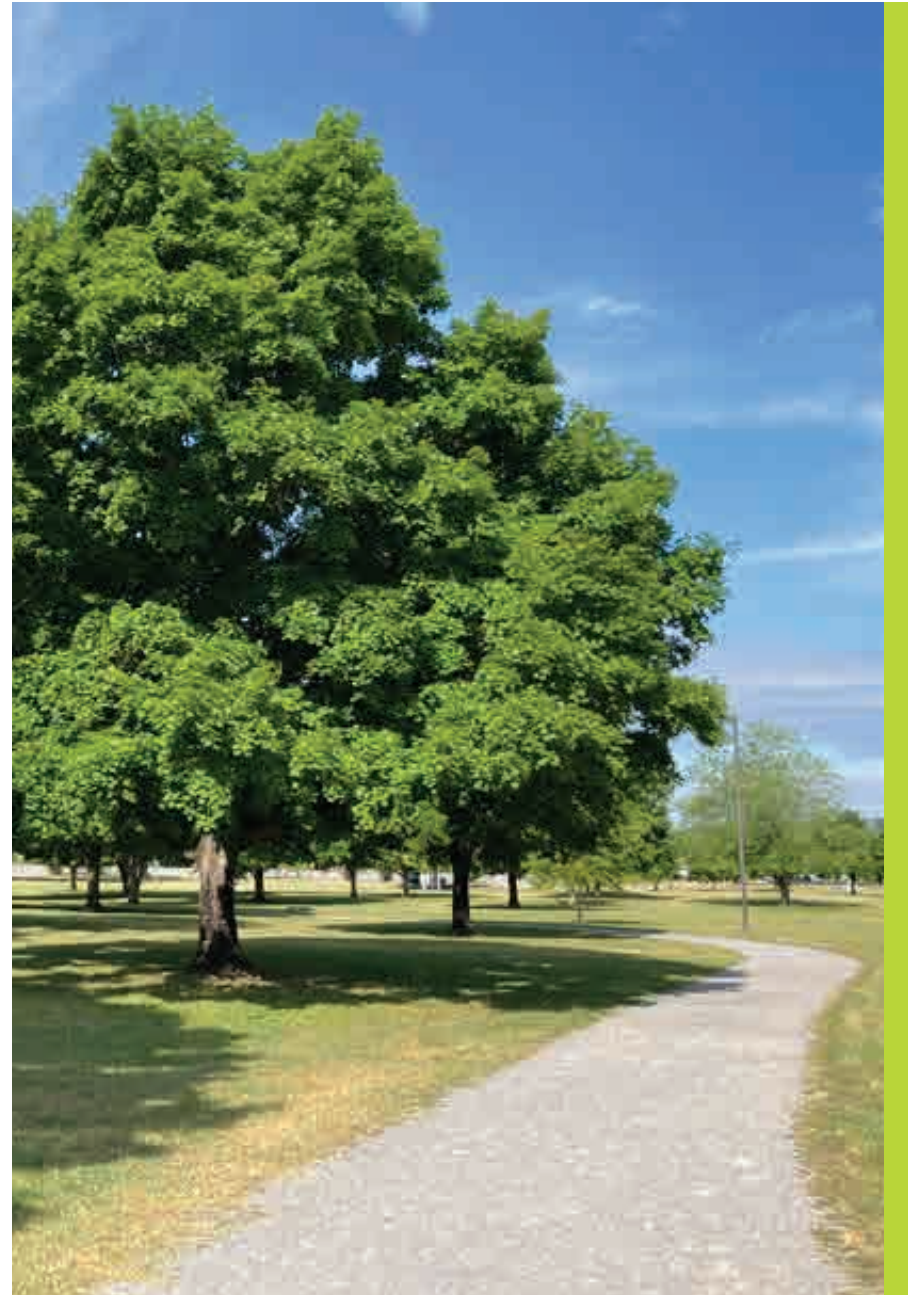


Parks and Greenways

The Natural Assets Guidebook explains connectivity as a concept to optimizing the full use of the region and all that it has to offer. Connectivity through trails, greenspaces, and blue spaces is vital for maximizing natural assets to provide a sustainable foundation for engaging residents, increasing economic development, attracting tourism, and promoting overall wellness. Access to natural assets and recreation helps to spur economic investment, creating a vibrant and thriving community. The following types of connectivity characteristics bridge diverse experiences for both residents and visitors:

- **Physical** – trails, greenways, blueways, sidewalks, and bike lanes
- **Visual** – green corridors, visible natural spaces, tree coverage, wayfinding, branding, and signage
- **Economic** – regional recreational amenities and sports venues that may result in overnight tourism
- **Emotional** – establishing identities around unique history, natural areas, geography, functions, and neighborhoods

Public open space is a critical element of community revitalization. For over 30 years Oak Ridge has focused on greenway creation to connect the community. Recently, Knoxville cooperated with Oak Ridge in the Greenway Master Plan to support connectivity between the two cities and provide access to the beauty of the natural areas with multi-modal transportation. Integrating green initiatives that support routes for pedestrians and bicyclists can increase more attractive streetscapes and improve the overall environmental quality of the City. Some examples include creating rain gardens to mitigate stormwater using green infrastructure, adding tree canopy throughout the City, and repairing streams that have been impacted by historic industrial operations. Encouraging green infrastructure throughout the City also assists in reducing pollutants, conserving natural areas, supporting native plantings, establishing lower-maintenance landscaping, saving energy, improving air quality, and increasing property values.

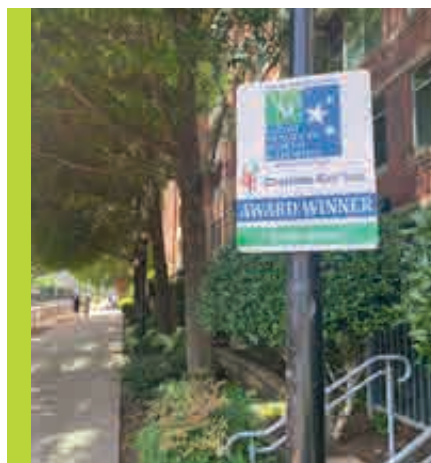


Blueways

Oak Ridge has the Pellissippi Blueway, which runs from Norris Dam to Melton Hill Dam, allowing multiple water access points. This blueway contributes to a sustainable quality of life for residents and visitors. The scenic aesthetic and tranquility appeal strengthen the potential of local waterways for reconnecting residents with nature. The waterways support aquatic and terrestrial life, so it is critical that forested riparian areas remain in good condition to help filter pollutants from entering the surface waters.

Rails to Trails

In 2017, the City of Oak Ridge planned a Rails to Trails project; an adaptive reuse of 4.85 miles of abandoned CSX railroad within the City to create a greenway. The full greenway will extend from Elza Gate Park at the Oak Ridge Turnpike, along Belgrade Road, Warehouse Road, Fairbanks Road, and Lafayette Drive across S Illinois Avenue to the Y-12 National Security Complex entrance on Scarboro Road. This initiative not only re-purposes existing infrastructure but also creates a unique opportunity for the community to engage in outdoor recreation.



Community Partnership

Partnering with local and regional organizations is key for supporting green initiatives within Oak Ridge. Environmental nonprofits, advocacy groups, civic clubs, and outdoor recreation groups can serve as vital partners for supporting green initiatives, gathering funding, and increasing public awareness. By creating strong relationships with these partners, the City can continue to maintain natural spaces that are accessible and beneficial to all residents.

Organizations

Many dedicated individuals and organizations assist by serving on the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board. This Board assists the Recreation and Parks Department by recruiting volunteers to maintain and improve facilities, promoting recreational events, and other supportive measures. The City's Environmental Quality Advocacy Board and the local organization Advocates for Oak Ridge Reservation are also key partners. Additional partners include sports associations, youth organizations, convention and visitors bureau, and groups such as:

Greenways Oak Ridge – Formed in the early 1990s, this group primarily advocates for a network of foot trails in the City, and was instrumental in creating paved, off-street pathways (Melton Lake & Emory Valley) and DOE patrol road greenways (Gallagher Bend & North Boundary).

Clinch Valley Trail Alliance (CVTA) – A newly-formed chapter of IMBA (International Mountain Biking Association). The group rose out of the ashes of the recently disbanded Friends of Haw Ridge, which was limited to trail work in Haw Ridge by charter. The scope of CVTA encompasses multi-use trails in all of Roane and Anderson counties.

Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP) – Originally formed to create and maintain the North Ridge Trail to provide a buffer on the north edge of the City. TCWP also manages the Oak Ridge Barrens State Natural Area adjacent to Jefferson Middle School, offering a trail system among rare and sensitive plant species.

Natural Environment

Stream Restoration

Healthy stream systems are foundational to ecological integrity, public health, and community well-being. Functioning riparian corridors support biodiversity by providing critical habitat, migration pathways, and protecting surface water quality. Native vegetation along stream banks stabilizes soil, filters pollutants, and moderates water temperature—conditions essential for sustaining aquatic species. These ecological services contribute to a resilient natural environment that can better withstand the impacts of climate change and urban development.

Beyond ecological value, restored streams enhance the visual character of neighborhoods and public spaces, offering scenic views and natural buffers that improve aesthetic quality. Stream corridors can serve as linear parks, greenways, and outdoor classrooms, while also supporting recreational uses such as walking, birdwatching, and environmental education. High-quality surface water is also vital for protecting downstream water supplies, reducing treatment costs, and supporting compliance with state and federal water quality standards. By investing in stream restoration and preservation, Oak Ridge can strengthen its environmental stewardship while creating attractive, multi-functional landscapes that benefit both people and nature.

Melton Lake

One of Oak Ridge's most prominent natural resources is Melton Lake; a popular regional destination for outdoor recreation. Rowing, cycling, paddling, and nature observation are just a few of the activities supported by the lake's open water and shoreline areas. It is an essential aspect of Oak Ridge's identity because of its incorporation into the City's parks and open space system and its close proximity to residential and civic areas. The lake is also home to the Pellissippi Blueway.

Melton Lake's surrounding ecological systems are essential for preserving water quality, sustaining wildlife, and improving forestland connectivity. In addition to offering natural buffers that enhance air quality, lower noise levels, and establish habitat corridors, these systems add to the lake's aesthetic appeal. Preserving and enhancing these areas will help Melton Lake remain a resilient and multi-functional natural asset, capable of supporting recreation and ecological functions. Melton Lake offers a unique opportunity to strengthen community ties to nature, while promoting sustainable land and water management.



View Protections

Oak Ridge is home to scenic mountain views, a natural feature that attracts both residents and visitors. However, certain developments can threaten these viewsheds and potentially block the surrounding mountain views from the community. It is critical to implement practices that safeguard the natural features and scenic beauty of Oak Ridge as a benefit to citizens and wildlife.

The City can work on creating an inventory of its scenic resources and prioritize viewsheds that need to be protected. Many communities use zoning overlays to protect scenic views by limiting development within viewsheds.

In addition to zoning, some communities protect scenic views by purchasing or accepting donations of land or development rights, educating the community, and partnering with private entities like non-profits, homeowner groups, and business owners.



Nature Integration

Integrating nature into Oak Ridge offers a wealth of benefits, from improving community health to enhancing environmental resilience. By fostering cohesion between natural and built environments, the City can promote cleaner air, cooler urban temperatures, and more inviting public spaces. Infrastructure that incorporates natural elements, such as rain gardens and bioswales, can effectively manage stormwater while beautifying neighborhoods and commercial areas. Expanding tree canopies along streets and parking lots not only provides shade and reduces heat but also supports biodiversity. Additionally, establishing pollinator gardens and planting native species throughout the City can create vibrant habitats for wildlife and increase nature educational opportunities for community members. These spaces can also result in long-term cost savings for municipal maintenance. Using nature-based strategies exemplifies how cities like Oak Ridge can harmoniously blend ecological preservation with urban development for the benefit of all residents.



Policy/Development Considerations

Preserving the natural environment of Oak Ridge will not only benefit current residents and visitors, but also benefit future generations. Oak Ridge can adopt policies and ordinances that encourage or require development to save green spaces, integrate natural features, and help reconnect the community with nature. This approach supports growth, while preserving one of the most important assets the community has—the beautiful mountains, trees, streams, and lake that are found throughout the City.

Examples of some policies or ordinances to help maintain a high-quality natural environment include requiring street trees, using Low Impact Development (LID) approaches when building new parking lots, increasing stream buffers and tree protection zones, and preserving wildlife corridors to avoid habitat fragmentation.



Transportation and Mobility

Provide a safe, attractive, and accessible network of mobility by improving vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities.

Introduction

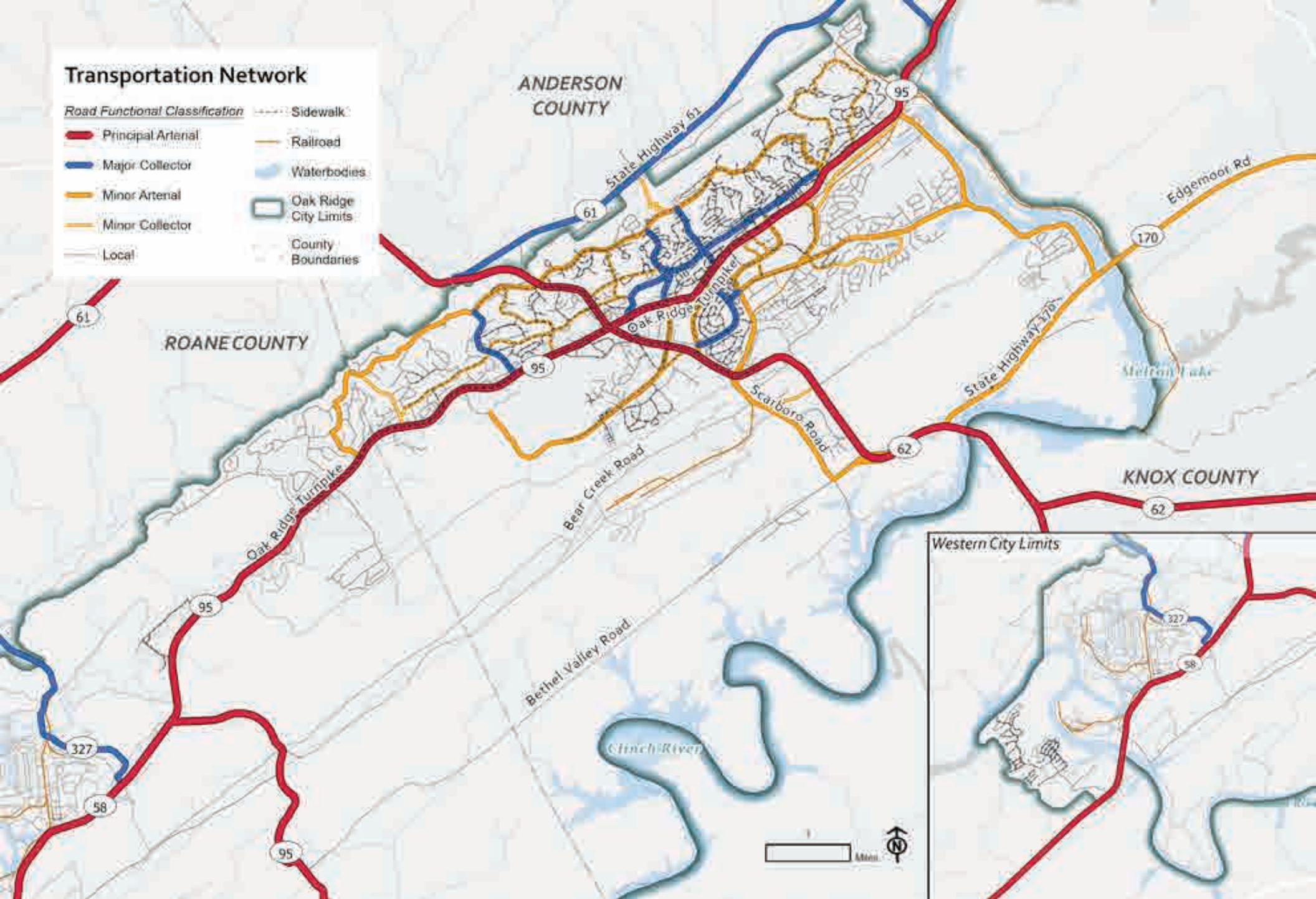
The transportation system in Oak Ridge involves the operation and maintenance of infrastructure that supports the movement of cars, bicycles, and pedestrians, as well as a portion of the regional system of mass transit, freight trucking, and trains. Safety and ease of mobility are important factors for each transportation project in the City. Mobility takes into consideration the users of transportation, such as their activities and lifestyle characteristics, which can help to reveal inefficiencies and inequities so that the system can be improved.

The Oak Ridge Traffic Safety Advisory Board (TSAB) assists the Public Works Department and City Council on local transportation decisions. System management requires coordination with the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) on major roadways owned and maintained by the state, and the Knoxville Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) for regional planning, support, and funding of major projects.

One of the benefits of being a planned city is that the overall street system works reasonably well. The arterials, Oak Ridge Turnpike and Illinois Avenue (State Route 62), carry large volumes of traffic. There is little traffic congestion outside of peak hours at key points of entering and exiting the City. New cross streets are recommended to increase connectivity throughout the city center and to encourage a more pedestrian-scale environment.

The most congested area in the City is the Solway segment of the Pellissippi Parkway, at the edge of the City's limits. People who experience the most consistent congestion are those who work in Oak Ridge but commute from outside the City. Long-term solutions to this problem are either for more Oak Ridge workers to live in the City or for the development of a regional transit service for workers commuting into the City that reduces the number of daily trips.

The focus of the transportation element in this Plan is on safety, connectivity, and linking different modes of travel. A good example of these elements is the proposed Rails to Trails project, converting the old CSX railway track into a paved pedestrian and bike trail that will run through the heart of the City. This trail would allow residential areas to be connected to work places, civic buildings, and community gathering spaces. Other projects, in addition to the Rails to Trails project, include a project to create links to other trails, such as the North Ridge Trail from Melton Hill Lake Park, a link to S Tulane Avenue through the Woodland neighborhood, and a link to the south using the DOEN Patrol Road. Trail use of that road would open up the potential for Scarboro, Grove Park Commons, and Burnham Woods to be tied in to the trail system.



Map 5. Existing Road Classification from TDOT

Street Connectivity

A well-connected street network supports transportation safety, increased pedestrian accessibility, and shorter commute times. The network should include walkable districts, such as a downtown, mixed-use developments, and neighborhood centers, which rely on a framework of local streets and sidewalks. Smaller block size and increased street frontage can provide better pedestrian access to shopping, parks and trails, and neighborhoods. Further assessment and recommendations on greenway trails will be part of the Parks and Recreation Master plan update, which is ongoing. The following recommendations are intended to improve street connectivity in Oak Ridge:

- Evaluate and amend, as needed, the Standard Construction Requirements and Details Manual with regard to Complete Street design for a safe combination of vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian use.
- Improve the network of street connectivity to provide better access and traffic circulation, and to promote efficient land development. Prepare a Major Road and Street Plan, to include:
 - New roads and intersections in the city center to create walkable blocks
 - Connector streets between existing neighborhoods on Edgemoor Road and Melton Lake Road to alleviate single access issues
 - Potential conversion of the perimeter road by Y-12 into a public east-west connector from Scarboro Road to Gum Hollow Road
 - Identification of freight transport routes, which may increase due to the new airport or industrial activity
- Actively participate in the regional TPO and provide oversight on TDOT projects that impact Oak Ridge, such as the proposed widening of Edgemoor Road and safety/congestion issues on State Route 62 in Solway, based on local land use and transportation plans and studies.



Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility

Pedestrian infrastructure characteristics such as connectivity, continuity, width, barriers, and overall condition can impact walkability and physical activity. Improved, connected, and safe sidewalks can positively impact people's decisions to walk more and create active and vibrant neighborhoods in Oak Ridge. Investing in local, state, and federal funding to access alternative transportation modes also supports residents who wish to age in place. The City has worked on previous planning efforts to evaluate trail connections to create more connectivity throughout the community, including on- and off-road options.

Incorporating active transportation options, such as walking and biking, serves as important elements of the community. By providing sidewalks, trails, and both on-road and off-road facilities, the City can link essential destinations like schools, parks, neighborhoods, businesses, and civic spaces. These additions create valuable alternatives for those who do not own a car or prefer not to drive, encouraging healthy and active lifestyles among residents.

Beyond individual benefits, active transportation options help foster a stronger sense of community by reconnecting people with one another and with their surroundings. Enhancing walkability and bike access also plays a key role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to a more sustainable future.

The original streets of Oak Ridge were primarily designed to offer a pleasant driving experience for motorists, with limited consideration given to cyclists or pedestrians. As a result, many roads lack sidewalks and are not suited for on-street cycling, making alternative solutions necessary. Off-street sidepaths and greenways present an excellent option for the City, providing wide, paved trails that can safely accommodate cyclists, pedestrians, skateboarders, and other non-motorized users. By establishing an interconnected network of off-street pathways that link key destinations throughout the community, Oak Ridge can enhance livability and improve quality of life

while respecting the distinctive character and historic design of its streets. Some corridors, such as the Oak Ridge Turnpike, can accommodate on-road facilities in a more traditional manner without having a negative impact on historic design elements. Although Oak Ridge was originally envisioned as a cutting-edge suburban community in the 1940s and not designed with all of these features in mind, the City can now embrace these improvements to adapt to modern needs and priorities.

The following graphic shows the relationship between roadway classifications and infrastructure needs to support multi-modal users:



Example of Bicycle Infrastructure

Safety

Transportation safety improvements encompass a broad range of strategies beyond traditional traffic calming measures. Local law enforcement can assist in providing insights into traffic safety and can work with the public to help identify the most problematic areas that should be prioritized for safety improvements. By understanding these critical locations, resources can be directed toward implementing targeted safety measures to reduce the likelihood of crashes and vehicular conflicts. These approaches aim to enhance safety for all road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.

Mapping fatal injuries, serious injuries, and minor injury crash locations is crucial for transportation planning and safety improvement efforts. Areas with a high number of fatal or serious injuries may justify immediate action, such as the installation of traffic signals, pedestrian crossings and islands, or improved lighting. Understanding the spatial distribution and severity of crashes can help the City prioritize future safety improvements. A few strategies are:

- Design streets for the desired speed instead of posting a slower speed limit
- Reduce traffic volumes through an interconnected network
- Separate modes of travel to reduce direct conflicts
- Prioritize vulnerable users through specific design features that provide a certain level of safety
- Utilize raised crosswalks, keeping the crosswalk at the same elevation as the sidewalk, in areas with high pedestrian usage

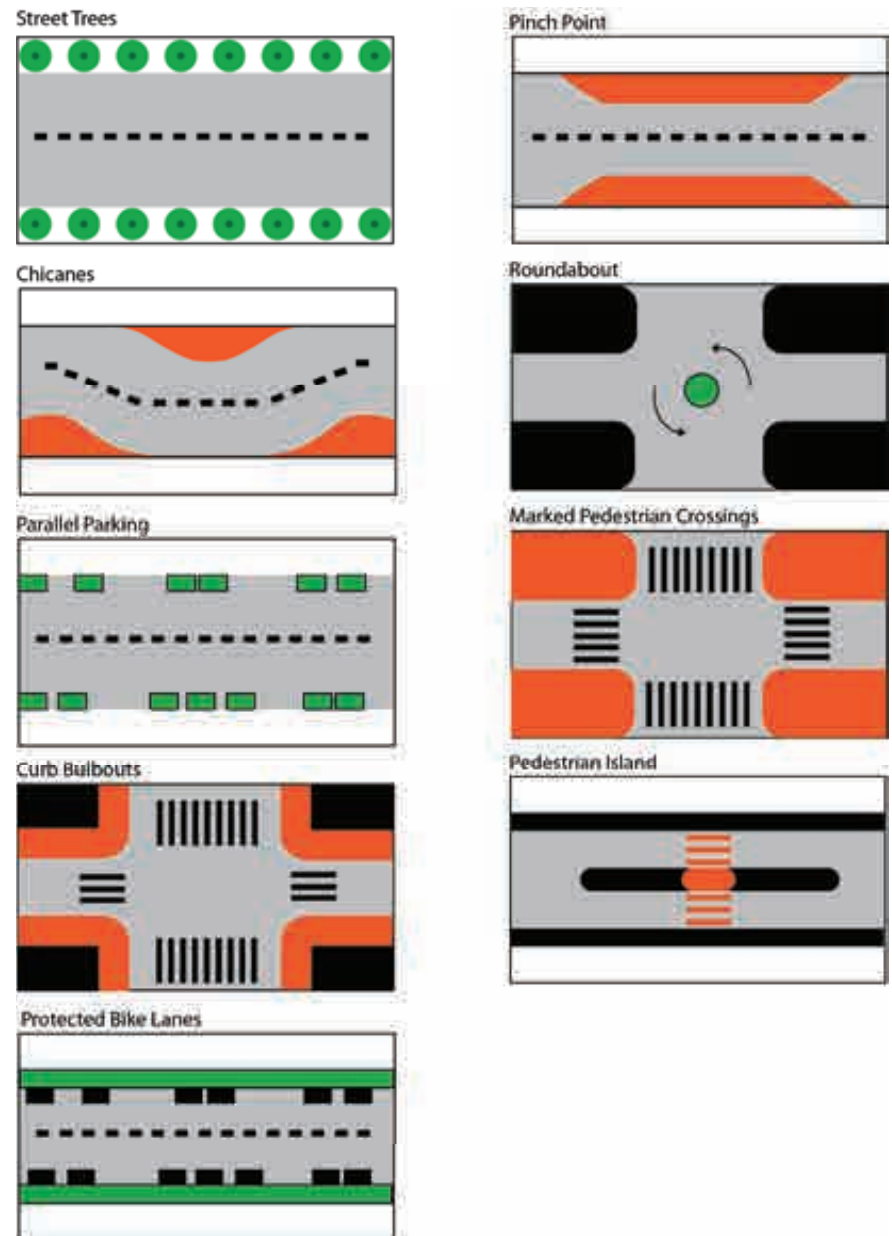


Figure 4. Traffic Calming Strategies

Design Street for the Desired Speed

Design streets to consciously or unconsciously encourage drivers to travel at safe speeds. This may involve using design elements such as narrower lanes, street trees, and curb extensions to visually narrow the roadway and encourage drivers to slow down. Conventional roadways with large roadway widths and significant clear zones may cause drivers to unconsciously increase their speed even when there is a low posted speed limit.

Reduce Traffic Volumes

Reducing traffic volumes may include implementing traffic calming measures, such as speed humps and chicanes, to reduce speeds and deter cut-through traffic in strategic locations. A more impactful approach, rather than simply widening lanes or pavements which can compromise safety, is to focus on enhancing connectivity, especially within subdivision regulations. This strategy can foster the creation of additional routes, dispersing the transportation load more evenly throughout the City.

Separate Modes

Separating modes of transportation is another key strategy that can help improve safety. This includes creating protected bike lanes that are physically separated from vehicle traffic, using pedestrian islands that provide safe crossing points, and installing off-road sidepaths, greenways, and trails for pedestrian use.

Prioritize Vulnerable Users

There are several strategies that can be implemented to prioritize the safety of vulnerable road users. Complete streets policies support the design of streets to accommodate all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists, by incorporating features such as protected bike lanes, pedestrian crossings, and traffic calming measures. Designing infrastructure with these users in mind, such as creating pedestrian-only zones and improving visibility through lighting and signage, can enhance safety.



Example of Separate Bike Lane



Example of Crosswalk and Pedestrian Refuge

Airport

The City of Oak Ridge is planning to build a new general aviation airport. The Oak Ridge General Aviation Airport is envisioned as a regional reliever facility, designed to meet two key goals: addressing the growing unmet need for general aviation services and improving access to the area's innovation corridor, known for advanced technology and research. Initial planning, research, and technical evaluations for the airport were conducted by the Metropolitan Knoxville Airport Authority (MCAA).

The Oak Ridge Airport will address current capacity limitations in the region and support expected future growth. The new facility will benefit the business, industrial, and tourism sectors, making Oak Ridge more accessible for business leaders and helping the City become a destination for technology companies.

In September 2020, MCAA transferred sponsorship of the project to the City of Oak Ridge through an assignment and assumption agreement. That year, the City officially took over sponsorship responsibilities.

The airport was originally slated for construction at the East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP) at Heritage Center. However, recent economic development activity requires selection of a new site. As of 2026, analysis of new potential airport sites is actively underway.

Building an airport will allow the City to capitalize on existing resources, strengthen the area's manufacturing sector, and diversify the economies of Oak Ridge and surrounding communities. The design and construction of this airport are expected to help attract new manufacturing investments and corporate headquarters.

Transit

Oak Ridge currently has a curb-to-curb fixed-route transportation service that operates six days a week called Oak Ridge Transit. This service is owned and operated by the East Tennessee Human Resource Agency (ETHRA), which provides regional transit options in a 16-county service area. This bus system is wheelchair accessible and gives priority to the elderly and people living with disabilities. The City historically receives an annual grant allocation from the Tennessee Department of Transportation and provides the local match to support the transit program, which has been a little over \$200,000 annually. Continuing to support Oak Ridge Transit through funding and allocating resources will help foster inclusivity and connectivity in the City.

The City has recently taken significant steps to address the growing transportation needs of the community. In June 2025 the City announced an allocation of \$150,000 toward a comprehensive transportation study. With an influx of new jobs anticipated in the area, particularly from companies like Orano and BWXT, the City is prioritizing this study to better understand and manage the impact on local traffic and public transit.

The transportation study will be conducted in phases over two years, starting with the development of a digital model to analyze current traffic patterns and predict future changes as new jobs are added. This model will not only help in understanding traffic flow, but will also assist in securing additional funding for transportation improvements. The study aims to encompass various modes of transportation, including pedestrian and bike connections, as well as public transit options.

The City is also exploring potential partnerships with other agencies to help fund the study, which will provide a clearer picture of how to integrate different transportation methods effectively. As Oak Ridge continues to grow, these initiatives will be crucial for maintaining efficient transportation systems that support both current and new residents.

Economic Vitality & Sustainable Growth

Create fertile ground for sustainable, healthy population growth by diversifying the economic and employment base and expanding quality housing choices.

Introduction

Even after being incorporated for over 60 years, the Department of Energy's (DOE) Oak Ridge Reservation still covers a little more than half the land area within the City limits, and activity is thriving. As one example, the Y-12 Nuclear Security Complex is recapitalizing factories with new technology, safety equipment, and enhanced security. The Complex is also adding a new Uranium Processing Facility, which on its own is one of the largest projects in Tennessee since the Manhattan Project (estimated \$6.5 billion and 2,000 new jobs).

The East Tennessee Economic Council produces annual reports detailing the positive financial impact that the DOE has on the region, including billions of dollars and over 40,000 full-time jobs. However, despite the number of jobs, visitors, and growth in both federally managed facilities and associated private businesses, until the past few years, the residential population in Oak Ridge has not changed significantly in decades.

Much of the job growth in Oak Ridge has come from two types of associated industries to work done on the DOE Reservation. Some is growth of new business firms that operate as contractors to carry out research or associated work in support of an ongoing project within the DOE. The second type consists of new businesses whose leaders build on previous experience working for the DOE to develop a new product or service.

A healthy economic future for Oak Ridge will require the

continuation of these kinds of spin off activities; however, a durable economy warrants a need for business diversification. This will require the application of innovation in a broader range of activities, including tourism, artists, industrial companies, writers, financial firms, and other businesses and entrepreneurs. Incorporating diverse industries into the City can allow for a long-term economy that supports a wide range of job opportunities. Making Oak Ridge a more interesting and pleasant place for young people to live and work will help facilitate a diversification of the workforce and continued growth of the community.

Heritage tourism is growing in Oak Ridge, and the industry is poised to expand. The City has been pulled back into the national limelight by the creation of the Manhattan Project National Historic Park (including the Oak Ridge, Los Alamos, and Hanford sites); the National Building Museum exhibition in Washington D.C. of the design and construction of the Manhattan Project; and the popular publication by Denise Kiernan, *The Girls of Atomic City*. New museums have recently opened, and the boards and foundations of existing museums are interested in working together.

It is an opportunity to revisit the Heritage Tourism Plan that was prepared for the City and the Convention and Visitors Bureau in 2007 to address the potential impact of tourism on the City's identity, economic and financial success, and continued viability. There is an opportunity to expand that plan to include recreational tourism opportunities to leverage the community's natural assets. Combining all tourism into one plan can help prepare the City to successfully expand this industry.

Background and Opportunities

History Focus

The City of Oak Ridge honors its deep-rooted history through the preservation and celebration of many significant sites and landmarks scattered throughout the community. Notable among these is the Manhattan Project National Historical Park, as well as the three remaining historic checking stations that stand as enduring symbols of the City's past. Oak Ridge's unique architectural legacy is showcased in its "alphabet housing"—residences designed by the John. B Pierce Foundation, ranging from Type A to Type H Cesto homes and additional flat-top designs. These homes, named sequentially by letter, reflected the size and occupancy of the families who lived in them, with earlier letters indicating smaller spaces for fewer residents. The City itself was designed by the renowned firm Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill.

In addition to its architectural heritage, Oak Ridge also celebrates symbols of peace and unity, including the International Friendship Bell. Cast in Kyoto, Japan in 1993 and hanging in A.K. Bissell Park, the bell represents the bond between Japan and the United States and commemorates the City's World War II legacy. Looking to the future, Oak Ridge aims to further embrace and incorporate its rich historic elements into new construction and public projects, safeguarding that its storied past continues to shape and inspire community life.



Recent Economic Development Announcements

Oak Ridge has recently experienced a surge in economic development activity, marked by several major announcements including the state's largest-ever announcement. In September, 2024, the State and Orano—a French nuclear fuel cycle corporation—announced the selection of Oak Ridge as Orano's preferred site to construct a multi-billion dollar uranium enrichment facility. This will lead to the greatest influx of private investment the City has seen in over half a century. Such economic momentum is driving a growing demand for new housing and commercial services to support the expanding workforce and community. The City remains at the forefront of nuclear research and technological innovation, with strong interest in research and development initiatives. The Department of Energy continues its cleanup efforts, opening up additional land for future industry expansions. The establishment of Orano's new American uranium enrichment facility and BWXT's plan for centrifuge manufacturing highlight Oak Ridge's role as a hub for advanced nuclear industry. These developments underscore the City's potential as a leader in both economic and technological advancement.



Federal Site In Oak Ridge

Since Oak Ridge was established in 1943 in support of the Manhattan Project, there has been a large and important U.S. Government presence in the community. Vital federal missions carried out in Oak Ridge encompass science, technology, education, national security and environmental cleanup. Collectively, the federal missions in Oak Ridge have a significant economic impact in the greater Oak Ridge region.

Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) is the largest science and energy laboratory for the U.S. Department of Energy. Among ORNL's areas of focus are supercomputing, biology and environment research, and energy, neutron, and physical science. ORNL attracts researchers from across the globe and has more than 7,000 staff, and welcomes thousands of users annually. Established in 1943 as part of the Manhattan Project, ORNL's legacy is rooted in groundbreaking research and public service.

Since 2010, ORNL has been awarded more than 1,100 patents and over 250 awards—more than any other national laboratory. ORNL supports a wide range of research through world-class user facilities serving universities, industry, and other institutions. With expertise and advanced equipment, ORNL develops innovative solutions in biology, energy, nuclear science, national security, neutron science, and supercomputing, guided by core values of integrity, teamwork, and excellence.

Y-12 National Security Complex (Y-12) is a premier manufacturing facility and is part of the U.S. Department of Energy's Nuclear Security Enterprise. With more than 8,000 employees, Y-12 plays a key role in ensuring the United States' national security and reducing global threats.

United Cleanup Oak Ridge, LLC (UCOR) leads the environmental cleanup effort on the Oak Ridge Reservation. Current efforts focused on excess facilities on both the ORNL and Y-12 campuses are performed by more than 2,000 employees.

Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU) is a not-for-profit consortium of more than 160 major universities. ORAU is a recognized leader in developing the nation's scientific and technical workforce through specialized programs such as STEM education, emergency preparedness and scientific assessments.

ORNL, Y-12, UCOR and ORAU are joined by and supported by hundreds of subcontractors with specialized services and individuals with unique expertise.

The City of Oak Ridge remains deeply committed to its partnership with ORNL, recognizing its impact on the community and scientific advancement. Together, they continue to strengthen ties, support innovation, expand educational opportunities, and drive economic growth—serving as a model for collaboration between communities and world-class research institutions.



Economic Opportunities

City-Owned Land

Land owned by the City can be a powerful catalyst for economic development. By strategically utilizing this land for development projects, Oak Ridge can attract businesses and developers, create jobs, increase property values, and enhance the culture of residents and visitors. The City can also dedicate appropriate land for housing development can help address housing challenges, increase the population of Oak Ridge, and support community stability. Innovation hubs and business incubators on land owned by the City can foster entrepreneurship and attract startups, driving economic growth and job creation.

East Tennessee Economic Council

The East Tennessee Economic Council (ETEC) is a regional, independent, non-profit membership organization founded in the early 1970s to help support the development needs of the original Manhattan Project site. ETEC works to foster economic growth in the region by building strategic partnerships and bringing together diverse sectors to advance federal missions locally. Collaborative efforts between ETEC and the City offer new opportunities to boost Oak Ridge's economy and sustain local businesses well into the future.

Oak Ridge Land Bank Corporation

The Oak Ridge Land Bank, established in January 2014 as Tennessee's first land bank, was organized after being approved as a local pilot program by the Tennessee Legislature in 2012. Guided by a Board appointed by the City Council, the Land Bank functions as the City's real estate arm—acquiring, holding, and managing properties to advance community goals and foster economic development. Actively supporting affordable housing initiatives, the Land Bank has helped with residential infill development projects and housing sales. The Land Bank's major current project involves

facilitating the development of a vibrant new downtown through the sale of over 6 acres to a private company for a public-private partnership (P3). The project aims to increase housing availability and stimulate further growth, transforming the Wilson Street corridor into a walkable, welcoming destination for all.

Business Diversification

Expanding and diversifying the City's economic base is crucial for the long-term resilience and sustainable growth of Oak Ridge. While the City has long been recognized for its contributions to nuclear research, development, and innovation; it is essential to pursue new avenues for economic growth. By leveraging assets such as the Methodist Medical Center, Oak Ridge can attract medical research initiatives and bioscience companies interested in affiliating with a top-tier medical facility. Tourism also presents significant opportunities for diversification, with the City's natural setting providing a prime location for outdoor events like rowing and mountain biking, as well as heritage tourism that celebrates Oak Ridge's unique history and culture.

Supporting local entrepreneurs and small businesses is another critical component, fostering a vibrant economy from within the community. Strengthening partnerships with Oak Ridge Public Schools and Roane State Community College enables the City to continue developing training programs that align with emerging industries and prepare residents for high-quality job opportunities.

Additionally, it is important to encourage new industries from a broad range of sectors to establish operations in Oak Ridge, further diversifying the local economy and creating primary job opportunities. Through these concerted efforts, Oak Ridge can build a robust and diversified economic foundation that secures its future prosperity, while still leading the world in nuclear research innovation.

Small Business Support

The City of Oak Ridge is dedicated to fostering a vibrant local economy by supporting entrepreneurs and small business owners. Local businesses play a crucial role in the economic health and vitality of Oak Ridge—driving job creation, encouraging innovation, and contributing to the unique character of the community. Recognizing this, the City works closely with the Chamber of Commerce, Oak Ridge Economic Development Initiative, and other organizations to help provide resources, guidance, and assistance to help small businesses thrive, from business planning support and educational opportunities to increased access to capital. Support should also be provided to creative makers and events where artists, crafters, and others can show their skills and collaborate on various initiatives and projects. These efforts are essential



for cultivating a diverse and resilient economy, assisting local enterprises to continue generating opportunities for residents and helping shape the future of Oak Ridge.

To further support the growth and success of local businesses, the State of Tennessee and larger organizations also offer access to a variety of funding sources and grant programs. Some key initiatives and resources include:

- **Fund Tennessee:** Part of the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI), this program features InvestTN (equity), LendTN (debt), and AssistTN (technical assistance) to provide financial support and guidance.
- **Tennessee Small Business Development Center (TSBDC):** Offers free resources and expert support for business planning, funding, and operational needs.
- **Pathway Lending:** Provides loans and advisory services, such as the Propel Loan for working capital and Sustainability Loans for environmentally friendly projects.
- **TNInvestco:** Delivers funding opportunities for businesses headquartered and employing the majority of their workforce in Tennessee.
- **State Enterprise Zones:** Designated geographic areas where governments offer tax incentives, regulatory relief, and other benefits to encourage business investment, job creation, and economic development.
- **TVA Performance Grant Program:** Available for businesses expanding or developing within the Tennessee Valley Authority region.
- **Fast Track Job Training Assistance Program:** Offers support for training new employees to build a skilled local workforce.
- **Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBEAP):** Delivers free, confidential help with environmental regulations and compliance.
- **Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Funding Opportunities Database:** A comprehensive resource listing numerous funding opportunities to assist small businesses.
- **Tennessee APEX Accelerator Program:** Assists businesses succeed in government contracting by providing free, expert guidance on market research, solicitation, and proposals.

Sustainable Growth and Development

Redevelopment/Infill Development

Redevelopment and infill development present compelling advantages for Oak Ridge, especially when considered as alternatives to developing greenspaces and wooded sites. By reusing already developed land and filling in vacant or underutilized properties within the City, these strategies help limit outward expansion, thereby preserving natural landscapes and important ecological areas. Concentrating growth in existing urban areas maximizes the efficiency of current infrastructure and supports a more compact, walkable community. This approach not only fosters a vibrant local economy by encouraging commercial activity—particularly from small and local businesses—but it also strengthens the City's tax base without imposing additional capital costs. Redevelopment and infill can transform neglected spaces into attractive, active destinations, enhancing the visual appeal and livability of the community.

Moreover, these development methods provide opportunities to incorporate environmentally responsible site designs, such as planting native species, increasing tree canopy cover, and implementing stormwater management practices to protect local waterways. Collectively, these benefits make redevelopment and infill development a sustainable and economically resilient choice for growth, while safeguarding greenspaces and wooded areas for future generations.

The small area studies incorporated into this Plan take a deeper look at the areas in the City that have been identified as the most suitable for significant redevelopment and that could have a major positive impact on the community.

Infrastructure

Oak Ridge is facing significant challenges stemming from its aging infrastructure, particularly in its electric, water, and sewer systems. Much of the utility infrastructure was installed rapidly in the early 1940s, and while the City has managed these systems over the past 80+ years by replacing components as they fail, this reactive approach is no longer sufficient to meet today's demands. Funding for proactive maintenance and timely replacement has been limited, leading to a system that is increasingly vulnerable to breakdowns. As infrastructure underpins both the quality of life for residents and the ability to attract and retain businesses, securing increased revenue and investing in preventative maintenance have become critical priorities.

To address these issues, Oak Ridge should adopt a more strategic and long-term approach to infrastructure management. The City would benefit from developing comprehensive master plans for its water, sewer, and stormwater systems, complete with prioritized steps for implementation. Similarly, the City's roads and sidewalks, especially in older neighborhoods, are in need of repair and modernization. Creating a detailed long-range transportation plan with clear action items would help guide future investments and grant applications, helping allocate limited resources effectively. City investment in infrastructure and regulatory decisions that offer fair, predictable, and cost-effective growth for developers can also be used as a tool to strengthen property values and desirability of development. Through careful capital planning and project prioritization, Oak Ridge can modernize its infrastructure, support economic growth, and maintain a high standard of living for its residents well into the future.

Downtown

Downtown areas are vital for economic development as they serve as the heart of a community, fostering economic activity, job creation, and cultural growth. They typically attract diverse businesses and encourage innovation through proximity and collaboration. Downtowns help diversify the tax base and support job creation as they are home to key landmarks, cultural institutions, and major employers.

In recent years, there has been a push from residents and City staff to establish a downtown for the City. Oak Ridge was originally designed without a downtown; however, a significant amount of interest exists in the community for a central gathering place to be created, allowing residents to come together, socialize, and engage as a community. Encouraging the development of interesting places and opportunities for socializing, such as entertainment venues, coffee houses, and breweries, can also aid in making Oak Ridge a more desirable community to young people. A downtown will also be helpful for tourism efforts, as many visitors have interest in coming to downtown areas for the vibrancy and unique community elements typically found in those spaces.

A key aspect of an established downtown is the Central Business District (CBD). This refers to a centralized geographic area that contains a dense cluster of commercial spaces, offices, and other entities that draw in substantial economic activity. A CBD is typically characterized by taller buildings, more intensive development, and highly walkable environment. For Oak Ridge, establishing a CBD could attract both small and large businesses near and around the Wilson Street area and connecting that space to A.K. Bissell Park. Higher-density commercial spaces in this area can allow for more small businesses to be developed, further diversifying the economy. This area should also include a high density of residential units, which will support the local businesses and create a vibrant atmosphere.



Examples of Downtown Development

Economic Development Toolbox

A variety of strategies can be implemented to encourage economic development. These strategies may be regulatory, programmatic, or physical in nature. Revitalization, community programs, and capital improvements can enhance the overall appearance, functionality, and value of the community, positively impacting the City. The following programs and techniques are recommended to promote improvements for Oak Ridge's economy. The strategies listed are not exhaustive; additional approaches not listed here may also prove effective. These strategies are intended to serve as a resource for common, effective, and appropriate solutions.

General Funds

Set aside money within the general fund specifically to use for projects related to reinvestment and revitalization.

Bonds

Bonds are debt securities issued by the City to fund projects that require repayment. In this case, funds could be used to fund capital projects that will attract new or expanded industries.

Low Interest Loans/ Subordination

The City may issue low interest loans for the purpose of stimulating economic activity within Oak Ridge. Loans are typically granted to small businesses that may have a harder time qualifying for affordable financing.

Incentives for Small Businesses

Small business owners promote the local economy by providing local goods and services, while creating a sense of place. Incentives may be small business loans, technical assistance, and/or expedited permitting.

Federal Transit Administration Grants

The Federal Transit Administration provides grants to local public transit systems to promote public transportation. A variety of grants are available annually.

Sales Tax Sharing

A sales tax sharing program is an arrangement made by the City to share or rebate a portion of retailers' taxes generated by retail sales with retailers, developers, consultants, or other local governments. This is done by incentivizing businesses to reinvest the reimbursed funds back into the local economy through improvements to their own business. These agreements benefit both the local government and the businesses taking part, as well as the people of the community.

Tax Increment Financing District (TIF)

A TIF is a special district where any increase in tax revenues caused by new development and higher property values is paid into a special fund to finance improvements. The purpose of a TIF is to

finance new public improvements in the area in which the funds originated. Potential improvements include wider sidewalks, utilities, public landscaping, lighting, environmental remediation, demolition, and historic facade improvements.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) Section 108 Loan Debt Program

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides CDBG funds through the Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program. The program provides financing for economic development, housing rehabilitation, public facilities, and other projects. Project costs can be spread over time and borrowers can take advantage of lower interest rates. Loans are typically large enough to pursue physical and economic revitalization projects capable of revitalizing entire neighborhoods.

Livability and Community Vibrancy

Foster characteristics and outcomes that create an attractive, safe, creative, welcoming community with a strong sense of being uniquely Oak Ridge!

Introduction

The remarkable identity of Oak Ridge is expressed in its history as a “Secret City” hidden away in the hills of East Tennessee that, fed by TVA power, helped to end World War II and usher in the Nuclear Age, and then became a leading international research center, bastion for diversity, and a pleasantly quirky and eclectic community. Aspects of this identity are not apparent in the built environment, so efforts are needed to highlight the City’s rich history in a visible manner.

Focusing on the characteristics of livability and community vibrancy is important for creating a distinctive, attractive community. In addition to improving housing choices, a key to achieving new residential growth is to provide more amenities, such as better shopping, dining, gathering spaces, and places of interest for all ages.

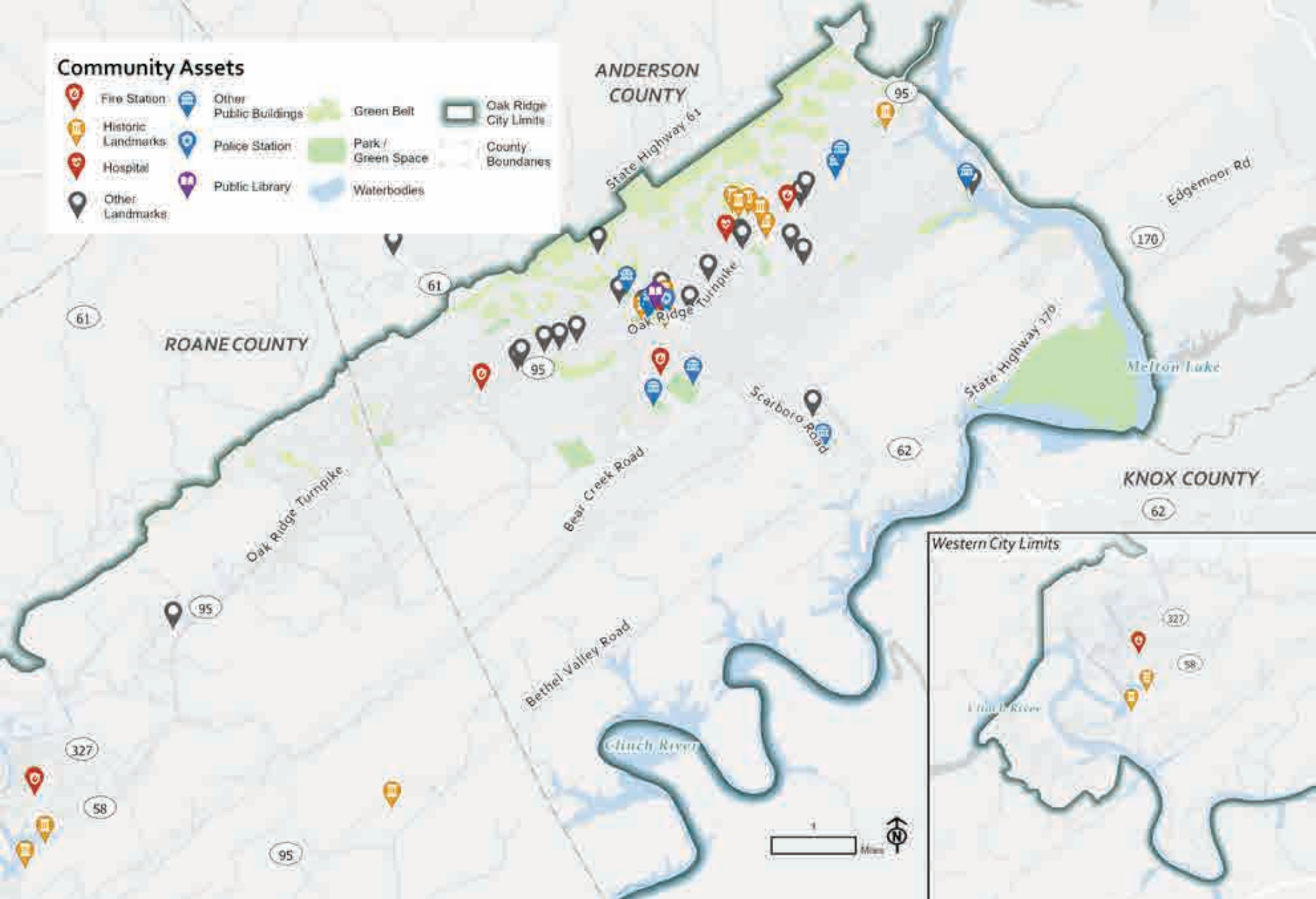
Community involvement in Oak Ridge is noteworthy and is foundational to a sense of community vibrancy. This involvement can be seen in the support of local people, schools, and organizations, which is regularly highlighted in the local media. Community organizations regularly partner together to achieve goals with diverse perspectives.

In addition, many citizen volunteers serve on the 17 official Oak Ridge boards and commissions that have been formed by City Council, including several advisory boards that are not always

found in other jurisdictions: Environmental Quality, Recreation and Parks, Traffic Safety, Senior Advisory, and Youth Advisory Boards.

Even though Oak Ridge is in many ways unique, its livability also relates to the health and character of Anderson and Roane counties, as well as the greater region. Institutions and organizations located within the community have positive regional impacts as well, such as the Methodist Medical Center and health system, Roane State Community College, East Tennessee Economic Council, and many others.





Map 6. Community Assets Map

Community Identity

Oak Ridge's identity is centered around its history; a city born out of innovation, secrecy, and scientific ambition in the midst of World War II. The City was created as a bold experiment in both innovation and collaboration to solve one of the greatest scientific challenges of the 20th century. That same spirit of innovation and legacy remain the cornerstone of the community's identity today, shaping its institutions and aspirations for the future. This foundation instills a unique sense of purpose and pride among its residents, helping to foster an identity that is "Uniquely Oak Ridge." The community recognizes that to remain relevant and resilient in the 21st century, it must continue to embrace new ideas, technologies, and approaches.

Business Collaboration

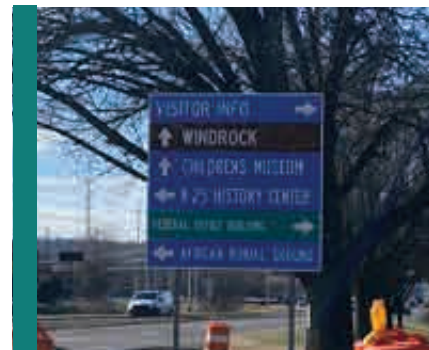
A defining feature of communities with a forward-thinking attitude is their capacity for collaboration. Innovation thrives when ideas flow freely between sectors, disciplines, and individuals. Urban innovation districts (clusters of research labs, universities, startups, and cultural institutions) embody this principle, serving as both physical and intellectual spaces where experimentation is encouraged.

The City can facilitate these synergies by creating policies that attract innovators, such as tax incentives for green technology projects or grants for social entrepreneurship. Public-private partnerships often yield results greater than the sum of their parts, leading to breakthroughs in renewable energy deployment, smart transportation, and digital literacy initiatives. These collaborations can become part of Oak Ridge's narrative, reinforcing a reputation for openness and ingenuity.

Branding, Wayfinding and Signage

Wayfinding signage involves a mix of images, monuments, and signs to establish where people are currently located. Strategically placed signage for pedestrian and vehicular use allows maximum visibility and utilization. Practical wayfinding elements will help visitors and residents quickly locate points of interest and access amenities. The design of signage throughout the City should maintain consistency and may include directional signage, roadway, and gateway signage and be branded specifically for Oak Ridge and celebrate the community's unique heritage.

Branding is a city symbol and slogan located on city-sponsored signage and public spaces to perpetuate a brand. It can be incorporated into gateway signage, street signs, district flags and other opportunities. Oak Ridge should identify districts that cultivate community pride and a sense of belonging among residents and visitors and include signage identifying these areas for visitors.



The City can honor and build upon Oak Ridge's rich history by incorporating branding elements that celebrate its innovative and distinctive past. These design elements can also be integrated into wayfinding signage, creating a cohesive visual identity across all City signage. By developing a comprehensive branding and wayfinding signage plan, the City can more effectively guide visitors to key destinations and inspire them to explore all that Oak Ridge has to offer.

Gateways

Gateways are features or streetscape elements that help orient visitors to the area and help signify an entrance to the City and are typically tied directly to branding and wayfinding; however, gateways may be unique and use a variety of techniques. They are found where the edges of districts meet or the type of thoroughfare changes (i.e., exiting a highway). There are two primary classes of gateways: major and minor gateways. Gateways should also incorporate the City branding elements into their design to continue the cohesive look and feel of all signage across the City and welcome visitors to Oak Ridge.



Example of Major Gateway

Major Gateways

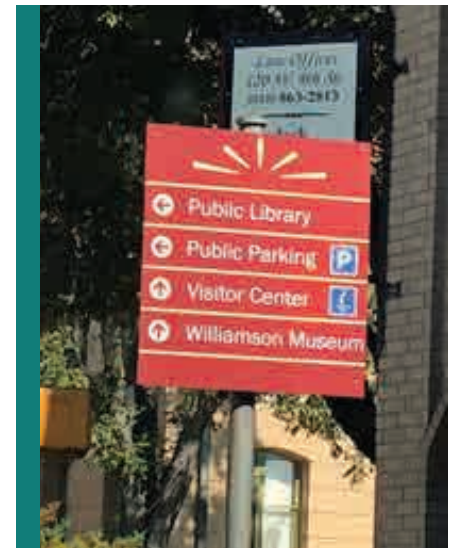
Major gateway features or elements are typically located on major thoroughfares such as highways. Due to the high speeds at which vehicles are traveling, major gateways are generally larger in scale and contain designs that allow travelers to understand they are entering the City. These entryways serve as great locations for gateway signage and monuments, inviting people into the community. Major gateways in Oak Ridge can include Oak Ridge Turnpike at the eastern and western City limits and Hwy 62 at the northern and southern City limits.

Minor Gateways

Minor gateways are meant to help create an identity for a community or neighborhood on the street level. These features should be designed in a unified manner to enhance continuity and link elements to major gateway features. Minor gateways in Oak Ridge can include entrances to cultural districts like the Warehouse District or Downtown Bissell Park.



Example of Minor Gateway



Example of Branded Wayfinding

Built Environment

What people see shapes their perception of the City and neighborhood. Appearance, including the materials used, the public space incorporated, and how inviting a place is, uniquely influences how people experience a space. Neighborhoods can sometimes be designated as special districts with unique design standards, giving them a unique feel and helping maintain their quality. There are several programs cities can utilize to enhance or maintain the quality of existing neighborhoods.

Innovation

To further embrace its unique identity the City should make innovation visible and experiential. The built environment offers an opportunity for showcasing Oak Ridge's commitment to innovation, scientific research, and forward-thinking. A few examples of how to achieve this include demonstration projects that showcase advanced manufacturing techniques, public spaces that implement smart infrastructure, or public art installations that capture current research at the ORNL. Using innovative technologies or building techniques as part of public projects can help tie the innovative spirit to the built environment.

Weaving innovative technology and techniques into the fabric of public and private projects is far more than a strategy for economic development, it is a statement of values and vision. As cities compete for talent, investment, and cultural relevance, those that intentionally cultivate a climate of creativity and experimentation set themselves apart. They become models for others to emulate, places where the future is not simply awaited but actively shaped. Oak Ridge has already done this in the past. Embracing this approach will help Oak Ridge re-energize the City while maintaining its community identity.



Public Spaces

The design elements seen and experienced in public spaces such as parks and plazas create a lasting impression on people who visit the area. Parks and open spaces are often where you will see families spending time in urban spaces. A vibrant city center is another example of a public space in which community members and visitors can spend time and socialize. The transformation of the Wilson Street Corridor into an urban streetscape with safe walking paths, sidewalk furniture, pedestrian lighting, and other elements is one way the City can work towards creating more inviting public spaces.

As the City considers strategies for public spaces, it is recommended to include a mixture of space types, scales, amenities and experiences. A large, open grass area is great for events and general play, but its location is removed from the daily visitors to the commercial core. Paved areas with movable furniture offer flexibility since the user can configure seating as they desire. Water features (e.g., fountains, splash plaza) attract people and can provide cooling opportunities, but the associated safety and maintenance must be considered during design. Smaller, scattered spaces help to create user options as they move through the area. Incorporating shaded seating, a variety of plantings, engaging art installations, universal accessibility for people regardless of their abilities or disabilities, and clear signage will help create exciting experiences and welcoming spaces for everyone. Safety, cleanliness, and maintenance should be prioritized in all public spaces.



Examples of Public Space

Public Art

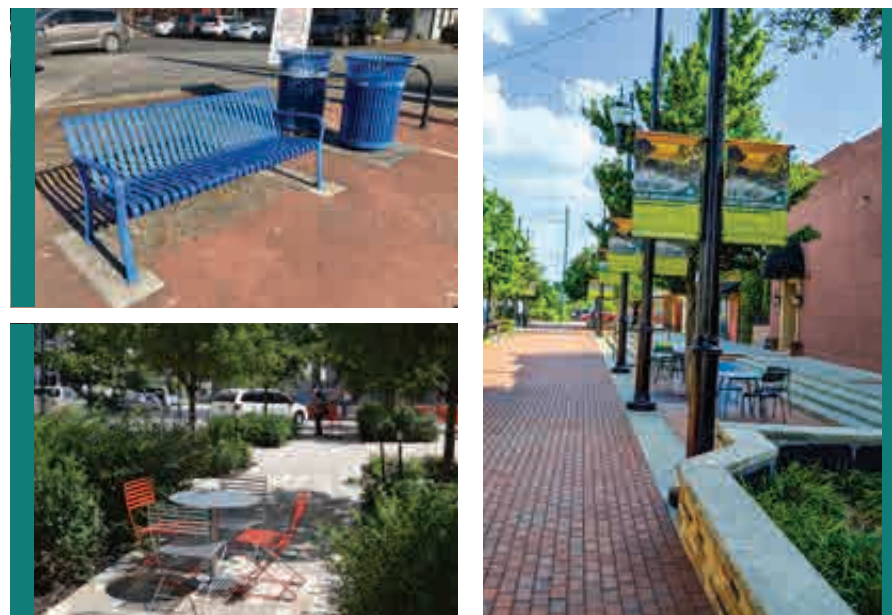
Public art can provide many functions and benefits throughout a community. It can also be used for special emphasis in a downtown setting. Public art provides opportunities to celebrate local history, culture, and artists. It can be used to effectively enliven buildings, parking lots, and other spaces lacking visual interest or a sense of place. Public art can be visual, educational, and interactive, taking forms such as gateways, signage, murals, and sculptures. Even functional elements like paving, benches, trash cans, and screening fences can be turned into distinctive art pieces. The City can consider creating a public art plan to identify strategic locations for permanent and/or temporary art installations in both small- and large-scale spaces. Art in public spaces should encourage people to stop and enjoy it. Interactive art is encouraged as it creates a unique experience while engaging viewers as active participants.

Site Furnishings

Site furnishings include elements such as seating, waste receptacles, planters, screens, shade structures, and tree grates. These elements should be visually appealing, commercial-grade, durable and made of vandal-resistant materials. They offer a chance to reflect the desired character of the community, whether it be historic, contemporary, eclectic, or another style. Furnishings can maintain a consistent aesthetic or allow businesses to express their unique identities through varied styles, colors, and designs along a block or in certain areas of the City. The heat conductivity of materials should be carefully considered when selecting benches, tables, and other surfaces that people will touch during summer months. The City should consider both movable and accessible mounted furniture in public spaces, while seating along a streetscape and at bus stops should be mounted to the pavement. Trash and recycling receptacles should be located at regular intervals along streets, at bus stops, and in all public spaces to make it easy and convenient for people to clean up after themselves. Bike racks should be placed at regular intervals along the street, at all public facilities, at key points of interest (e.g., grocery store, event venues), and at bus stops.



Examples of Public Art



Examples of Street Furnishings

Lighting

Effective lighting sets the mood, enhances safety and adds visual appeal during evening activities. It can help draw attention to art, benches, and other elements that help create a quality space. It also serves as an architectural feature that can either highlight the historic charm of an area or contribute to a modern, contemporary look. Thoughtful implementation is key, addressing different scales and complementing the surrounding context. This includes incorporating lighting for vehicular areas along streets, placing bollards at intersections and introducing pedestrian-focused lighting along key pedestrian pathways.

Lighting can also be used as art itself and for the sole purpose of highlighting special building or landscape elements. Decorative and accent lighting should be used sparingly, on iconic buildings and in major public spaces, to preserve the impact when it is used.

All lighting should follow Dark Sky principles to protect the nighttime sky and avoid negative impacts of lighting. Quality lighting is also important to create a safer nighttime environment by illuminating pedestrian crossing areas and reducing dark areas that may feel uncomfortable for people. Providing a well-lit pedestrian experience is key to increasing people's feeling of safety.

Pedestrian Connectivity

Pedestrian connectivity is critical to the character and health of the community. The pedestrian network should be connected with contiguous routes to various amenities within the community, allowing for ease of use. Pedestrian amenities such as public benches, landscaping, shade trees, and art features should be considered on specific routes to enhance the visual aesthetics of a given area and encourage people to use the routes. Some strategies to create more pedestrian-friendly streets within new developments include:

- Limit the length of the street blocks
- When possible, allow for utilities to be placed underground to minimize the visual clutter
- Ensure that sidewalks are wide and that canopy trees are located between the sidewalk and the curb for enhanced safety and shade
- Design streets in a grid pattern to increase pedestrian activity



Examples of Street Lighting



Examples of Pedestrian Connectivity

Street Trees

Street trees provide multiple benefits such as shade, heat island effect mitigation, air quality mitigation, traffic calming, aesthetics, stormwater management, and wildlife habitat, among other things. Providing shade along sidewalks greatly increases pedestrian comfort and, even along primarily vehicular corridors, shade can help reduce the ambient heat caused by paved surfaces. Larger tree species are ideal for providing shade; however, ornamental trees can also be used in select locations to provide visual interest and in locations where large trees may not fit. Ideally, street trees should include different species to create a more sustainable urban forest. Providing adequate soil volume is an important factor in determining the fate of street trees and allowing them room to grow large enough to provide shade. Today's best practices suggest 1,000 cubic feet of soil volume is necessary to support a thriving street tree in an urban environment. Soil volume can be provided in planting areas, tree wells/pits, or underneath walking surfaces with the use of suspended pavers. High-quality soil and room for root growth are critical to street tree success and should be prioritized.

Landscaping

Landscaping along streets and in public spaces helps to improve the micro-climate and the aesthetic of the area. Ornamental trees can be used to highlight pedestrian corridors, public art, monuments, or places of respite. Plant materials should be selected based on a species' ability to withstand and thrive in an urban context and the local climate and the maintenance requirements. Plant materials such as trees, shrubs, perennials, and ornamental grasses should include native species selected to provide year round interest during all seasons by selecting plants that vary in color, bloom, shape and texture. The use of planters with enhanced annual plantings should be focused in high-traffic pedestrian areas. In a both urban and suburban settings, landscaping should allow for unobstructed pedestrian movement and visibility.



Example of Residential Street Trees



Example of Urban Street Trees



Examples of Streetscaping

Placemaking

Placemaking is the action of creating a space that helps facilitate public interaction. Through design, location, and amenities, these places serve as focal points within a community and often help facilitate community identity and pride. Placemaking should incorporate landscaping that address the aesthetics and character of the community. Development patterns between residential and non-residential areas should include screening and buffering components to help protect the visual aesthetics of the community and mitigate light, noise, and other nuisances. Examples of placemaking areas include, but are not limited to, neighborhood parks, public pavilions, lifestyle centers, town centers, and shopping centers.

Parks, Open Space, and Gathering Places

Parks, open space, and recreational facilities are tangible ways to enhance the visual appearance of a community and increase its character. Recreational facilities and activities are positive and attractive features that often serve to sustain neighborhoods, enhance community perception, and heighten the sense of pride and identity associated with the community.

The public school system is highly regarded and a great asset for the City. Expanding partnerships, programs, and activities with the school system can help the City connect with residents, businesses, and visitors.

The Oak Ridge Playhouse is an example of a gathering place in the community. It has been in operation since 1943, providing a place for residents to gather for community events, while also highlighting the City's rich history.

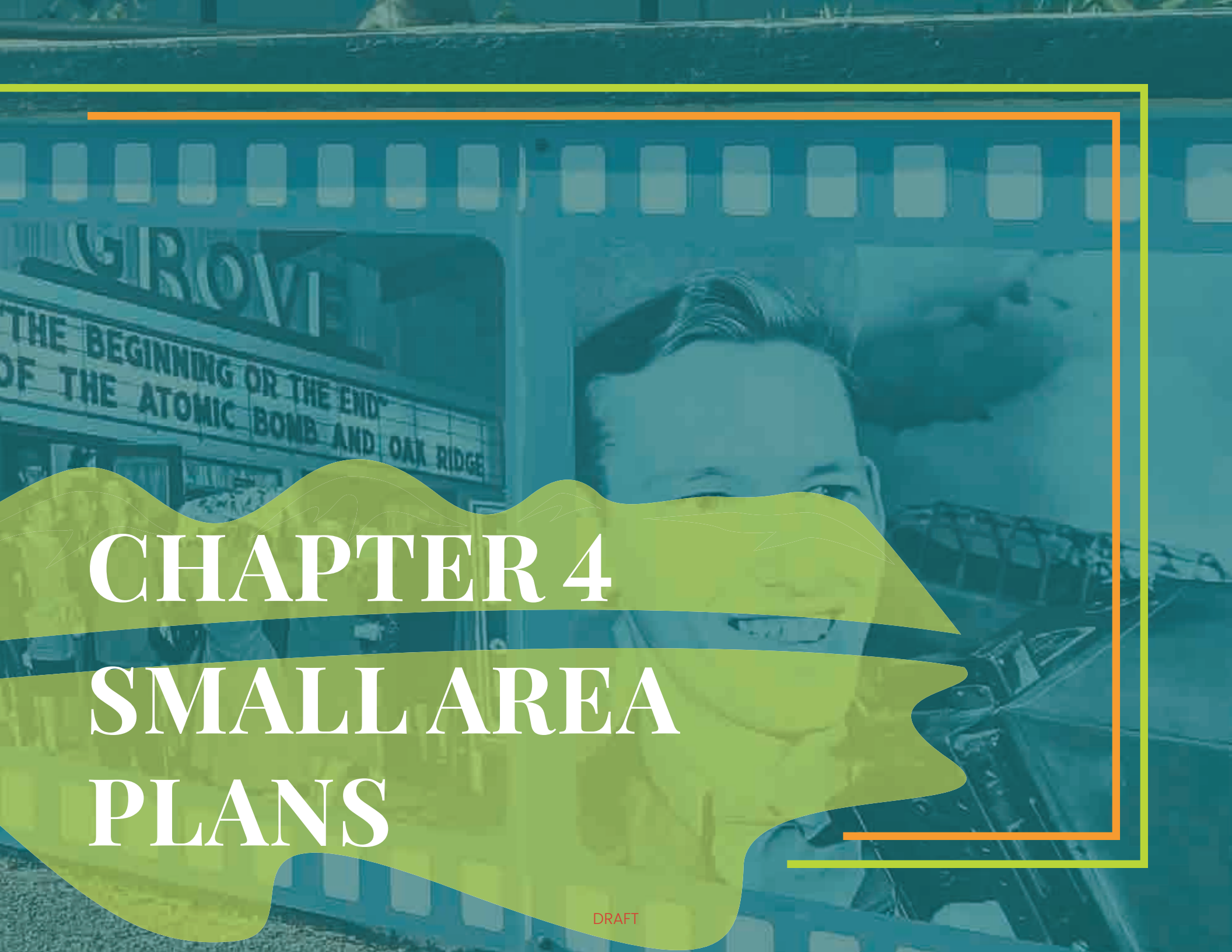
Oak Ridge has numerous places that can be leveraged to support community building and interactions between residents. Working purposefully to create opportunities for events and reasons for people to come together is a low-cost way for the City to support engagement and community connections.







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CHAPTER 4

SMALL AREA PLANS

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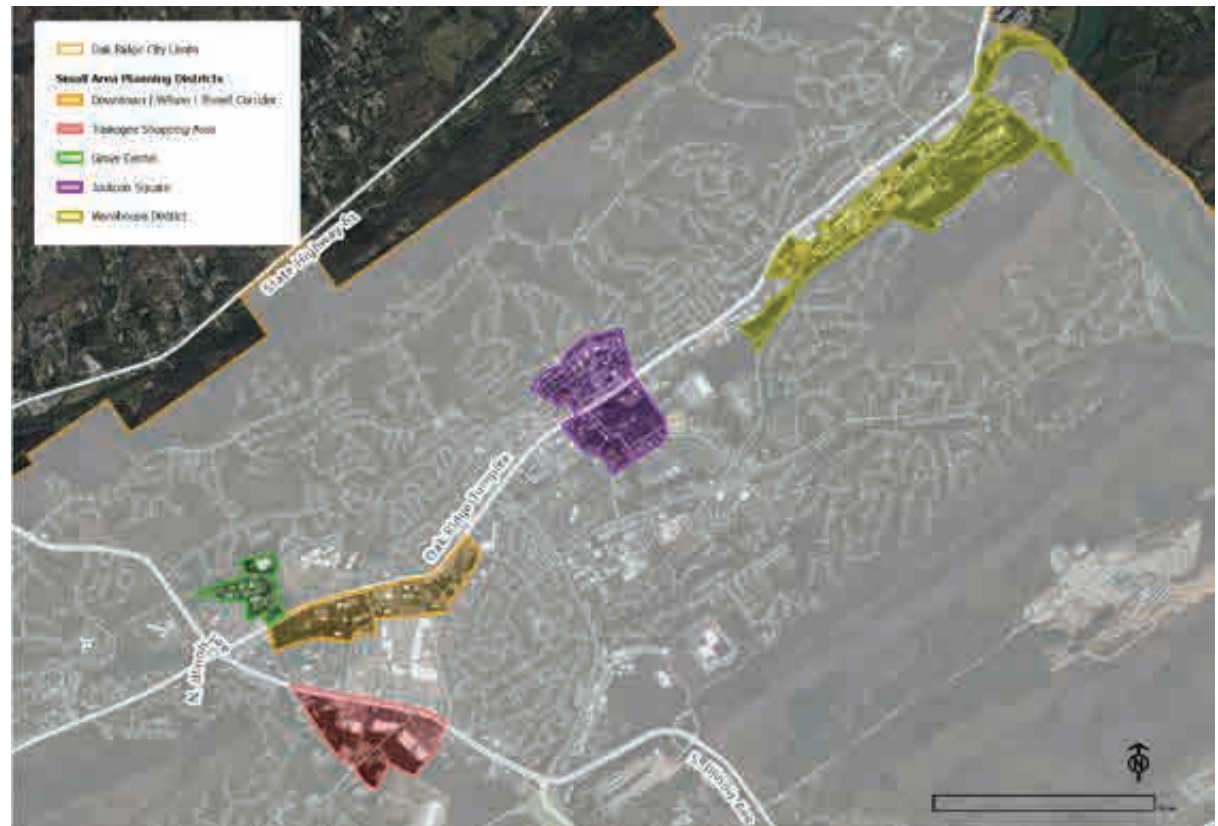
Introduction

As Oak Ridge plans for the future, several areas within the community present unique opportunities to enhance economic vitality, improve connectivity, and create vibrant destinations that reflect the City's identity. These key locations play a vital role in supporting daily life, attracting investment, and fostering a strong sense of place. By focusing on targeted improvements in these locations, the City can address existing challenges while unlocking its full potential. The following Small Area Plans (SAP) provide high-level assessments of the current conditions and potential opportunities in five key focus areas across the City. Each plan outlines a vision for the area's future, highlights existing assets and challenges, and proposes strategies for revitalization and growth.

The purpose of these conceptual plans is to provide context for the City to guide development in the future, inform policy decisions and align future development with the community's vision. Because these are conceptual plans bounded by the City's planning horizon, implementation will require coordination with property owners and developers to guide redevelopment and ensure feasibility. Together, the plans provide a framework for coordinated action that supports community goals for livability, mobility, and sustainability.

This chapter focuses on the following five areas:

- Downtown | Wilson | Bissell Corridor
- Grove Center
- S. Illinois at Tuskegee Shopping Center
- Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road Corridor
- Jackson Square and Federal Headquarters



Map 7. SAP Planning Areas Overview

Small Area Plan Opportunities and Constraints Framework

The opportunities and constraints framework offers a consistent approach for evaluating each district. The following elements highlight where physical improvements, redevelopment efforts, or policy changes are recommended to enhance each district's role within the community and help realize the established vision.

Trail Connections

This refers to how trails link parks, neighborhoods, and commercial districts. These were evaluated based upon where existing systems could be extended or new connections are needed to improve access.

Multimodal Routes

This takes into consideration transportation options beyond driving, including sidewalks and bicycle lanes. Street networks are examined to identify where multimodal improvements would create stronger connections and enhance commercial investments.

Pedestrianized Routes

This identifies streets where pedestrian comfort and safety should be prioritized. Recommendations emphasize wider sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping to create more walkable corridors.

Pedestrianized Conflicts

This highlights unsafe or incomplete crossings that limit walkability. Key locations are mapped where gaps in the sidewalk network or intersection design disrupt pedestrian access.

Intersection Improvements

This reviews intersections that present barriers to safety and access. Potential upgrades include crosswalk striping, improved signalization, and pedestrian push buttons.

Parks

The parks element takes into account opportunities for open spaces as both recreational amenities and stormwater infrastructure. Enhancements include expanded facilities, connectivity to greenways, and integration of flood mitigation measures.

Minor Redevelopment

Minor redevelopment indicates the need for smaller-scale changes such as façade improvements, landscaping, or infill development on underutilized parcels. These areas can be enhanced without significant land assembly or new infrastructure.

Major Redevelopment

Major redevelopment focuses on large vacant or underutilized properties that require coordinated reinvestment. These sites offer long-term opportunities for new mixed-use centers, higher-density housing, community centers or employment anchors.



Downtown | Wilson | Bissell Corridor District

Location

The 101-acre Downtown/Wilson/Bissell (DWB) Corridor is centrally located in the City along Oak Ridge Turnpike (SH 95), a major regional thoroughfare, and includes A.K. Bissell Park, the public library, municipal buildings, vacant lots and commercial properties.

Existing Conditions

Disconnected Civic Assets

Key public institutions like the library, municipal buildings, and A.K. Bissell Park are located within walking distance but lack strong pedestrian or visual connections to each other.

Excessive Surface Parking

Much of the corridor consists of large parking lots and commercial developments with significant setbacks, which create a large amount of underutilized space, detract from an enjoyable pedestrian environment, and reduce opportunities for more active spaces and uses.

Limited Pedestrian Infrastructure

Sidewalks are inconsistent, crossings are infrequent, and pedestrian comfort is low, making walking between destinations difficult and uninviting.

Low-Density, Single-Use Development

Most buildings serve a single commercial or institutional purpose, and there is little vertical or horizontal mixing of uses that would support a more vibrant street life.

Lack of Green Space Integration

While A.K. Bissell Park is a major asset, surrounding areas offer little in the way of trees, planted buffers, or usable public spaces outside of the park itself or active links to the park.

Opportunities for Activation

Despite having a number of important civic and cultural institutions, the corridor lacks gathering spaces, visual interest, or programmed events that would attract regular foot traffic.



Surface Parking at Existing Shopping Center



A.K. Bissell Park



Existing Commercial Development – Hotel



Map 8. Downtown | Wilson | Bissell Corridor District Existing Conditions Map

Downtown | Wilson | Bissell | Corridor District Opportunities and Constraints

Downtown Development

This area is in a central location and is primed to support the development of a new downtown to serve the entire City. Existing buildings and properties should be evaluated to determine what the highest and best use may be and if redevelopment or reuse options may exist. Starting development on empty properties can create enough activity to support redevelopment of existing sites.

Trail Connections

A significant trail system exists within A.K. Bissell Park, but it is currently disconnected from adjacent residential and commercial areas. This system should be more prominently designated and extended into the surrounding areas, including a robust connection north across the Oak Ridge Turnpike.

Multimodal Routes

In addition to trails, multimodal routes are proposed along Wilson Street and Tulane Avenue. Bicycle accommodations should be considered within the existing right-of-way to provide connections between the potential downtown commercial center, adjacent single-family neighborhoods, and higher-density multifamily development along Tulane Avenue and Rutgers Avenue. Wilson Street currently includes a two-way left-turn lane. The lane configuration should be evaluated to determine if the center-turn lane is needed or if a road diet could occur to create more space for multimodal uses.

Pedestrianized Routes

Two pedestrian-priority routes are proposed in the study area. One is recommended along Badger Avenue, extending south toward South Illinois Avenue. While much of Badger Avenue includes a 5- to 6-foot sidewalk on one side, it lacks pedestrian lighting and street trees. Similar enhancements are recommended along Vienna Road. Adding street trees and other site elements will help create a more comfortable and usable space for pedestrians, as well as support a downtown feel.

Pedestrian Conflicts

There is a significant sidewalk gap at the intersection of Wilson Street and E. Main Street in addition to a missing pavement marking on one of the crosswalk legs. There is an opportunity to repair this sidewalk network in conjunction with multimodal improvements.

Intersection Improvements

Several intersections along Oak Ridge Turnpike present significant barriers to pedestrian access between adjacent neighborhoods and the DWB Corridor District. Many intersections lack pedestrian amenities and feature wide pavement crossings that deter pedestrian activity and reduce safety. The intersection at S. Tulane Avenue and Wilson Street warrants a more robust pedestrian crossing treatment.

Minor Redevelopment

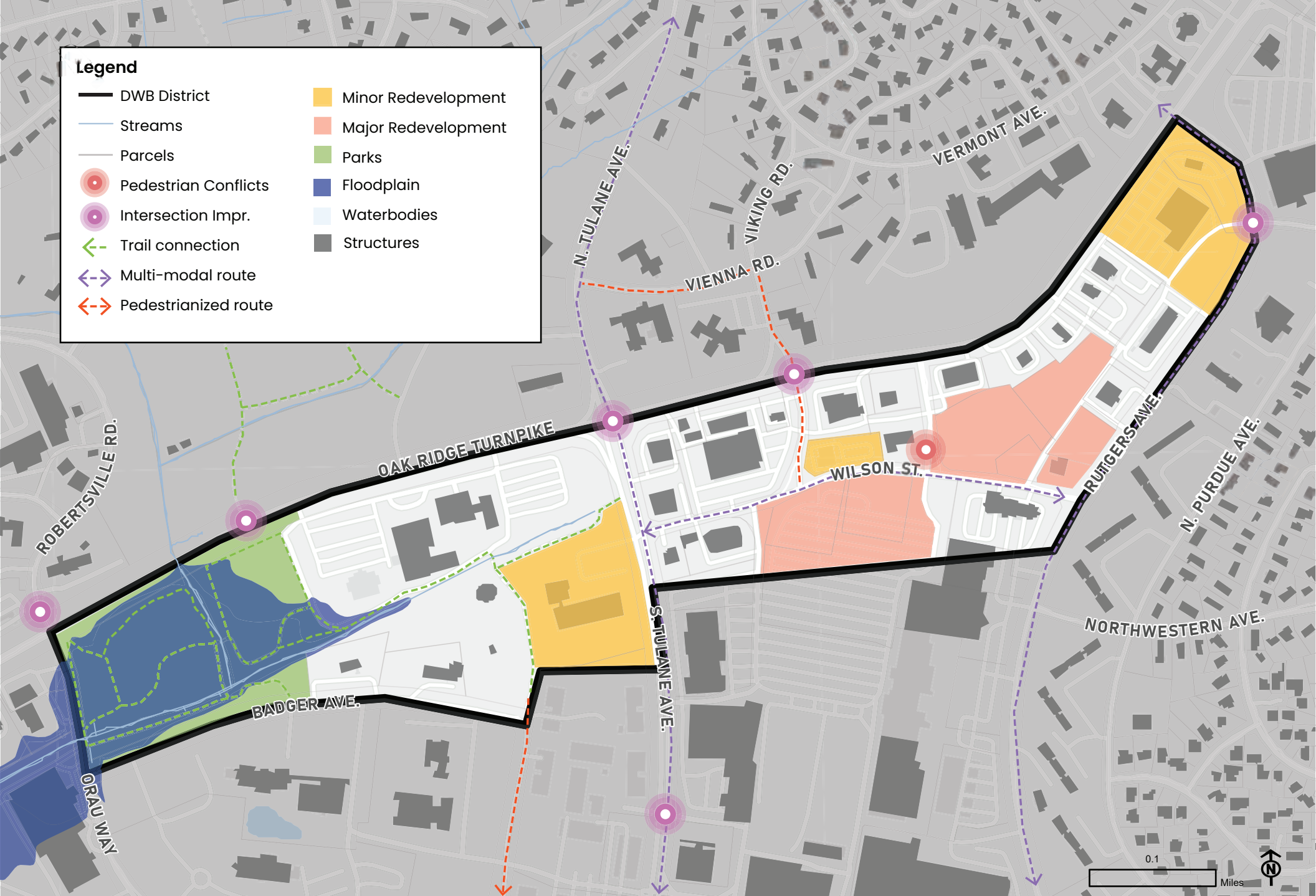
Numerous properties exist that may be underutilized or in need of minor improvements, such as landscaping and sidewalks. These properties can be enhanced through infill development, improvements, and activation to support a vibrant city center.

Major Redevelopment

There are several properties centrally located along Wilson Street that are underutilized or vacant that create opportunities for infill commercial, high-density residential, or mixed-use development to create a vibrant space. Incorporating urban open spaces will help create vibrancy. These areas can support new, higher intensity development to begin concentrating activity and interest to create a new downtown.

Parks

A.K. Bissell Park is a large, community-wide park that can be enhanced to include significant stream restoration and additional features for the community to enjoy. Additional stormwater infrastructure is needed to help alleviate the flooding associated with the 100- and 500-year floodplain that exists in the park. Creating better connections between the civic uses that exist around the park, such as the Art Center, Senior Center, Library, and others will help create more activity and interest.



Map 9. Downtown Wilson Bissell District Opportunities Map

Downtown | Wilson | Bissell Corridor District Strategies

Vision

The Downtown/Wilson/Bissell Corridor District will be reshaped into a walkable, high-intensity area that supports local businesses, civic life, and redevelopment. Underused land and excess pavement will be replaced with public space, green infrastructure, new buildings, and improved pedestrian connections between key sites like the high school, library, A.K. Bissell Park, and the American Museum of Science and Energy. Over time, this corridor will grow into a vibrant downtown district of Oak Ridge, serving as the City's social and economic heart.

Strategies

The following strategies are approaches the City can use to help achieve the vision described in this Plan for this specific small area.

Market Feasibility Study

- Conduct a targeted market and fiscal analysis to determine viable commercial, residential, and mixed-use opportunities. This should include demand forecasts, potential anchor tenants, and a highest-and-best-use analysis for existing underutilized parcels.

Zoning and Policy Adjustments

- The existing Downtown Zoning District (D-1) is a zoning district that supports many of the quality-of-life and economic goals of this district. However, it currently applies to only a small portion of the downtown area along Wilson Street. Expanding the D-1 district to include adjacent properties now zoned General Business (B-2) and Unified General Business (UB-2) may help create a critical mass of connected, walkable, and aesthetically appealing development.

Transportation Improvements

- Consider roadway reconfigurations along Wilson Street and S. Tulane Avenue to improve pedestrian and multi-modal accessibility. Potential strategies could include repurposing the existing two-way left-turn lane on Wilson Street for protected/unprotected bicycle facilities.
- Complete street retrofits should be considered along both corridors. This may include curb extensions, reduced through lanes, multimodal facilities and improved pedestrian refuges.
- Collaborate with the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) on the overall roadway design and intersection safety improvements along Oak Ridge Turnpike to include retroreflective backplates on signal heads, and pedestrian push buttons.
- Complete the sidewalk and multimodal network within the district to include 6- to 8- foot wide multi-use paths, wherever possible, with street trees, site furnishings, and lighting.

Trail and Greenspace Enhancement

- Extend and rebrand the trail network around A.K. Bissell Park with wayfinding signage to make routes more visible.
- Construct a northern trail connection across Oak Ridge Turnpike that connects to the Grove Center District and Oak Ridge High School.
- Add park amenities to A.K. Bissell Park, such as play features, additional benches, covered areas, shade trees, and gardens.



Example of Amenitized Neighborhood Park



Example of Bike Lane



Example of Pedestrian Crossing with Retroreflective Backplate



Example of Pedestrian Refuge

Grove Center District

Location

The 37-acre Grove Center is located north of Oak Ridge Turnpike along Robertsville Road and is anchored by the Historic Grove Theater, the Westcott Center, and neighborhood retail and dining. Built during the Manhattan Project era, it was one of Oak Ridge's first planned shopping districts and quickly became a gathering place for residents. The district is also tied to Oak Ridge's musical heritage, as the Oak Ridge Boys trace their early roots to performances here, giving Grove Center a lasting cultural connection in addition to its historic role as a community hub.

Existing Conditions

Aging and Vacant Buildings

Several buildings within the Grove Shopping Center are vacant, underutilized, or in poor condition, creating visual blight and limiting opportunities for active commercial or community use.

Opportunities for Streetscape Activation

The Grove Center is located close to a number of civic and residential areas; however, the sidewalks for circulation within and around the development are lacking amenities that reduce accessibility.

Land Uses Misaligned with Community Needs

The Grove Center's current mix of retail, institutional, and vacant space does not fully align with community needs or expectations. Limited local-serving businesses, lack of diverse housing, and underutilized civic assets leave the area underperforming as a true neighborhood commercial and cultural hub.



Existing Grove Center Shopping Center



Oak Ridge History Museum



Existing Grove Center Shopping Center Parking Lot



Map 10. Grove Center District Existing Conditions Map

Grove Center District Opportunities and Constraints

Multimodal Routes

The nearby Oak Ridge Turnpike is noted as one potential multimodal route, with bike facilities ideally buffered from through lanes. Coordination with the Tennessee Department of Transportation will be necessary for implementing projects within rights-of-way that are part of the state transportation system.

Pedestrianized Routes

Raleigh Road and Robertsville Road are both candidates for pedestrian improvements due to incomplete sidewalk networks, infrequent lighting, lack of street trees, and lack of marked crossings connecting residential areas to the shopping center and surrounding commercial properties. Also, providing connections between Robertsville Middle School, Oak Ridge High School, the pool, and the Grove Center can support new commercial businesses.

Pedestrian Conflicts

There are two significant pedestrian conflict points within this district, one of which is located at the intersection of Robertsville Road and Randolph Road. There is currently a small crosswalk that needs updated signage and striping. Within the shopping center, the pedestrian environment is uninviting to pedestrian users due to the lack of sidewalks, missing trees and landscaping, and lack of overall pedestrian amenities. Missing sections of crosswalks and the wide travel lanes without pedestrian refuges make Oak Ridge Turnpike a significant barrier to pedestrians from the southern edge of the area. Enhancing the pedestrian environment through plantings, sidewalk connections, crosswalks, and other elements will help support a safer and more comfortable pedestrian environment.

Minor Redevelopment

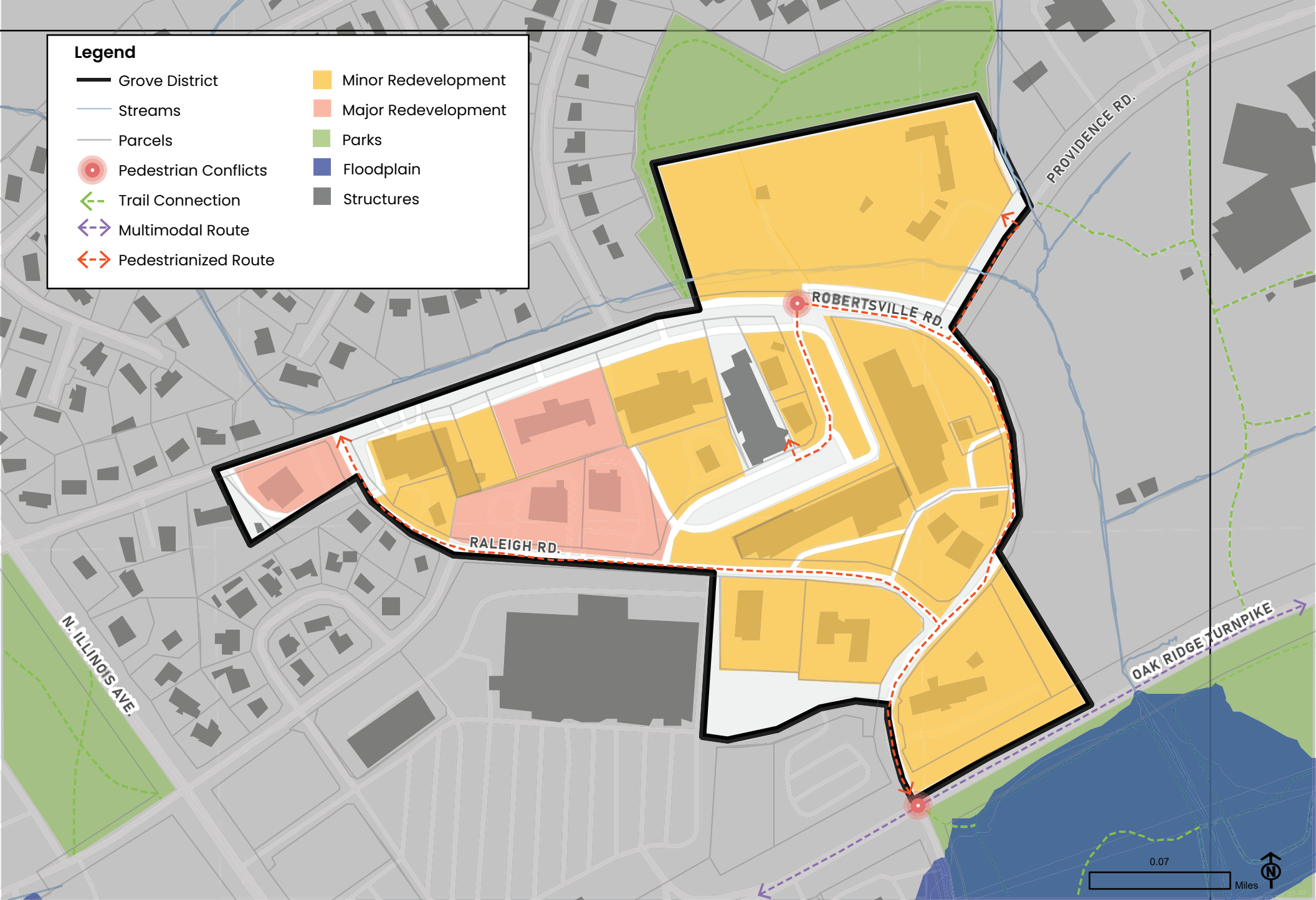
The Oak Ridge History Museum and Historic Grove Theatre are important landmarks that could be enhanced through façade improvements and streetscape enhancements to boost their visibility and appeal. The Grove Shopping Center also presents an opportunity for revitalization through coordinated building maintenance, new landscaping, and tree planting to create a more cohesive and inviting environment. The Oak Ridge Outdoor Pool can benefit from upgrades and overall maintenance, as well as parking lot upgrades to better support recreation and community gathering.

Major Redevelopment

There are several underutilized properties surrounding the Grove Shopping Center. Several properties appear to be well-suited to support multifamily development to address housing needs and create more activity in the area. Adding multifamily development in this area will help support investment in the Grove Center's commercial spaces and provide easy access to schools and recreational amenities for residents.

Parks

There are several opportunities for parks and recreation near the Grove Center District. Adding facilities and trails to the vacant parcel west of N. Illinois Avenue and the wooded area surrounding the Oak Ridge Outdoor Pool will support additional recreation. Creating connections across the Oak Ridge Turnpike to A.K. Bissell Park will greatly enhance park access for pedestrians.



Map 11. Grove Center District Opportunities Map

Grove Center District Strategies

Vision

The Grove Center District will be transformed into a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood center that supports local businesses, housing, and community activity, while retaining its historic charm. Investments in sidewalks, roadway improvements, landscaping, and streetscape enhancements will create a safer and more welcoming environment for residents and visitors alike. Creating a stronger connection to the Oak Ridge Outdoor Pool will help support commercial and residential activities. Underused lots and aging buildings will be reimagined with local commercial and multifamily development, while targeted façade improvements and infill projects will help unify the district's visual identity.

Strategies

The following strategies are approaches the City can use to help achieve the vision described in this Plan for this specific small area.

Zoning and Policy Adjustments

- The Grove Center's UB-2 zoning allows a wide mix of commercial, cultural, and institutional uses, but its current standards such as large setbacks, a maximum height of 35 feet, and restrictions on multifamily housing limit the district's ability to evolve and meet the community's needs. While City ordinances allow for retail, restaurants, theaters, museums, mixed-use developments, and food truck parks – aligning relatively well with the vision for the Grove – there is still a strong emphasis on auto-oriented development. Beyond adjusting the building envelope, reduced or shared parking requirements may be an effective strategy for attracting more desirable development within the district.

Park Improvements

- The vacant parcel west of North Illinois Avenue is a strong opportunity to add new park and recreation space that directly supports the district. This site could become a neighborhood park with multipurpose trails, play areas, and open green space that serves both nearby residents and visitors to the area. The parcel is large enough to support a mix of uses, from small athletic courts or a community garden to shaded lawns and seating areas that support informal gatherings. Trails from this site should extend east to tie into the Grove property to create connections throughout the district.

Beautification and Façade Program

- Utilize loans, grants, and other programs to support beautification of older building façades. This will help highlight the historic importance of and reinvigorate activity in the district. Example improvements may include the building façade, landscaping, tree plantings, and parking lot



improvements. The vacant properties can be developed into uses that support new activity in the district.

Improving Pedestrian Access

- Create a stronger and more connected pedestrian network between the district, surrounding neighborhoods, Oak Ridge High School, Outdoor Pool, and other local places of interest. Sidewalk gaps along Robertsville Road and Raleigh Road should be completed to create continuous routes that tie directly into the district. Upgrades should include pedestrian amenities, street trees, and lighting to create a more comfortable environment.
- Marked crosswalks should be added at key intersections and appropriate mid-block locations (such as at the Outdoor Pool) to provide safe pedestrian crossings to the interconnected sidewalk system.

Multimodal Transportation

- A shared-use path should be installed along the Oak Ridge Turnpike to provide users opportunities to travel along the district edge without needing a vehicle. Having sidewalks connect to the shared-use path that leads into and throughout the district helps support the interconnected pedestrian and bicycle network. TDOT Multimodal Access Grant and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) offer funding options for these types of projects.



Marked Crosswalk Improvement



Example Retail Center ADA Ramp

S. Illinois at Tuskegee Shopping District

Location

The S. Illinois and Tuskegee Shopping District is located along the southern side of the road where Tuskegee Drive and Tulsa Road intersect S. Illinois Avenue. Major retailers are located in the area around this district and include stores such as Walmart, T.J. Maxx, other retailers, restaurants, hotels, and service businesses. The district itself consists of large parking lots with older retail strip center buildings and out parcels, several of which are vacant. With its scale and visibility along State Route 62, the district functions as a regional shopping and hospitality hub serving both Oak Ridge residents and visitors.

Existing Conditions

Floodplain and Drainage Exposure

East Poplar Creek and the combined 100-year and 500-year floodplains run along the southern and western edges of the district. Portions of the district are within and immediately adjacent to mapped flood hazard areas. The large amount of impervious surface directs stormwater to the creek without slowing or treating the runoff.

Parking and Circulation

There is excess parking relative to the demand on a typical day for this district, leading to large, empty parking areas. Multiple wide curb cuts on Tuskegee Drive and internal drive aisles prioritize vehicle movement over people. There are few shaded parking rows, limited landscape islands, and little infiltration.

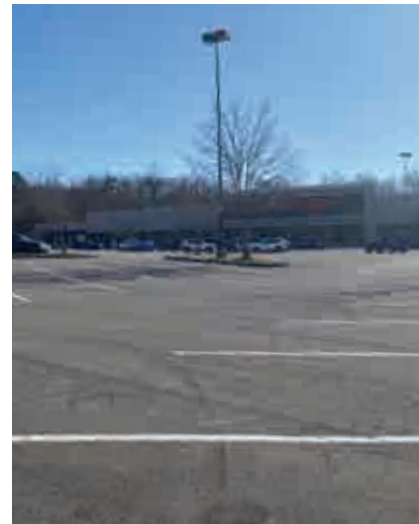
Pedestrian and Bicycle Environment

Sidewalks exist in segments but are inconsistent and narrow in places. Marked crosswalks within the site are limited, and internal pedestrian routes from the sidewalk to storefronts are incomplete.

The intersection of Tulsa Road and Tuskegee Drive has a sidewalk gap and lacks a clearly marked crossing. At Tulsa Road where East Fork Poplar Creek intersects, a high visibility crossing is needed to connect to future trail and greenway routes. The intersections of Tuskegee Drive and E. Tulsa Road with S. Illinois Avenue present wide pavement crossings, minimal pedestrian features, and poorly visible crosswalks.

Underutilized Strip Mall Development

The Tuskegee Shopping Center includes a significant amount of big box and strip retail. Large single story buildings sit far back from the street behind wide parking lots. This layout is typical of older strip shopping centers, designed to attract regional shoppers; however, it does not support a vibrant, walkable destination that will be a valued asset to the community. Many of the buildings show signs of age and several buildings sit obviously vacant.



Tuskegee Shopping Center Retail



Existing Drainage Infrastructure



Map 12. S. Illinois at Tuskegee Shopping District Existing Conditions Map

S. Illinois at Tuskegee Shopping District Opportunities and Constraints

Greenway and Trail Connections

A new greenway is proposed to follow East Fork Poplar Creek that runs behind the existing shopping center. This greenway can connect to other trails to preserve the floodplain, while allowing residents access to forested areas.

Multimodal Routes

Tuskegee Drive is a strong candidate for multimodal improvements due to its prime location for wide existing right-of-way, which can accommodate new pedestrian and bicycle facilities without major property acquisition. The roadway connects directly to several multifamily residential developments, as well as nearby single-family neighborhoods, making it a critical link for non-vehicular access. Due to the high volume of traffic using S. Illinois Avenue, creating an alternative multimodal route that does not follow the road will support a more comfortable user experience.

Pedestrianized Routes

E. Tulsa Road is an important pedestrian corridor but currently lacks adequate lighting, street trees, and buffers in several areas. The existing sidewalks are exposed to traffic and uncomfortable for users. Enhancing this corridor with lighting, landscape buffers, and street tree improvements should be a priority to support walkability and safety.

Pedestrian Conflicts

The intersection of Tulsa Road and Tuskegee Drive lacks sufficient pedestrian signage and features several unmarked or faded crosswalks. At the point where the proposed trail along East Fork Poplar Creek intersects Tulsa Road, a clearly marked crosswalk will be essential to creating safer pedestrian access. Additionally, the intersections of Tuskegee Drive and E. Tulsa Road with S. Illinois Avenue present significant barriers to pedestrian movement, including minimal pedestrian infrastructure, wide pavement crossings, poorly visible crosswalks, and a lack of retroreflective signal backplates.

Minor Redevelopment

A single minor redevelopment area was proposed along the southern gateway of Tuskegee Drive. This property could be enhanced with landscaping and visual buffers for the outdoor storage.

Major Redevelopment

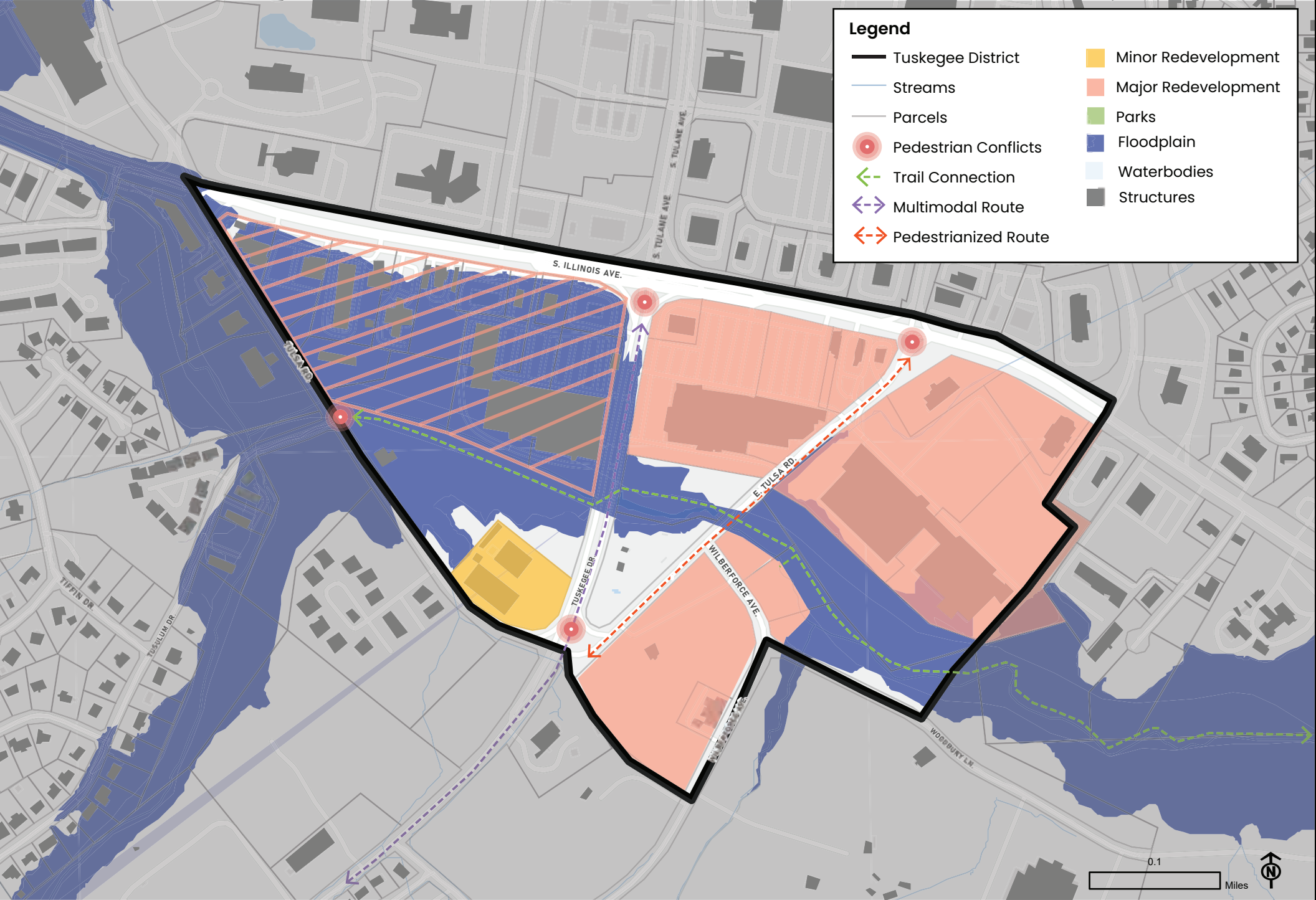
Several properties present opportunities for redevelopment for both commercial and residential activities. Moving buildings closer to S. Illinois Avenue not only will improve the functionality and visual appeal of the district, it will also help protect the buildings from future flooding events along East Fork Poplar Creek. The portions of the shopping center that are within the floodplain should be redeveloped in a manner that respects the future flooding potential. Property to the south of the creek presents a great opportunity for multifamily residential development.

Parks

The addition of a greenway along East Fork Poplar Creek opens up opportunities for some linear park features to help reconnect the community with nature and support activity in the district.

Floodplain

The combined 100- and 500-year floodplains, along with the regulatory floodway created by East Fork Poplar Creek, present a significant constraint in the study area. As a result, careful planning, design, and construction techniques should be used to limit damage from future flooding events. The use of innovative stormwater mitigation strategies can help reduce runoff volume and improve water quality.



Map 13. Tuskegee District Opportunities Map

S. Illinois at Tuskegee Shopping Area Strategies

Vision

The district will evolve into a connected, walkable, and vibrant commercial area in Oak Ridge. Vacant and underused properties will be reimagined with a mix of local and regional businesses and new housing that complements the area's commercial anchors. Streetscape enhancements, including tree planting, pedestrian infrastructure, public art, and green space, will create a more inviting and attractive environment. A new greenway along the East Fork Poplar Creek will connect new high-density development to local businesses. Targeted improvements like flood mitigation, access management, and improved lighting will make the area safer and more accessible for all users.

Strategies

The following strategies are approaches the City can use to help achieve the vision described in this Plan for this specific small area.

Redevelopment Opportunities

- The district includes several underutilized sites where B-2 zoning already permits a wide range of retail, restaurants, hotels, theaters, and service businesses. While this breadth of uses provides flexibility, it has also led to fragmented, low-intensity development with large parking areas. Redevelopment should reposition parcels with buildings closer to the street, reduced parking footprints, and mixes of residential and commercial uses.
- Although the B-2 district permits mixed use development, projects must maintain a non-residential ground floor component that is accessible from the street. This requirement should be evaluated and potentially relaxed or paired with incentives for housing above shops, office space, or community facilities. Implementation should focus on identifying priority parcels, assembling sites, and offering tools such as tax abatements or infrastructure cost sharing to make redevelopment feasible, while requiring designs that are pedestrian friendly.

- In addition, new development should address stormwater management through on-site detention, rain gardens, permeable paving, and other best practices that reduce runoff and mitigate flood hazards. These measures should be integrated into site design so that stormwater systems function both as infrastructure and as visible public amenities.

Zoning and Policy Adjustments

- Tuskegee Drive has the right-of-way to support sidewalks/multipurpose side paths and safer crossings, but implementation depends on pairing these design upgrades with zoning standards that shape how new development meets the street. The current zoning district already allows a wide range of uses including retail, restaurants, offices, and services that can generate the activity needed to support multimodal investment. The challenge is that current development patterns often default to deep setbacks and large areas of surface parking along the frontage, which undermine walkability and make the corridor feel auto-oriented.
- More than building orientation alone, one zoning issue in this district is parking ratios and placement. Minimum parking requirements encourage oversupply, and front loaded lots create wide driveways and long walking distances. Adjusting parking ratios to better match actual demand, allowing shared parking between uses, and requiring parking to be located at the side or rear of lots would free up frontage for buildings and improve the pedestrian environment, which would also help to protect buildings from flood events.

Pedestrian Environment

- Tulsa Road is one of the district's most important corridors for connecting nearby multifamily development to the shopping areas, but its lack of lighting, landscaping, and pedestrian facilities makes it uncomfortable and feel unsafe. Improving pedestrian conditions here will include adding shade trees, buffers, and pedestrian lighting, as well as supporting businesses to manage frontage areas in ways that support walkability.



Example of Parking Lot Bioswale



Pedestrian Environment within the District



Suburban Mall Retrofit Site Plan (Photo courtesy of Congress for the New Urbanism)

Major and minor retrofits can significantly enhance an area by improving its functionality, safety, and overall appeal. Major retrofits, such as upgrading infrastructure or modernizing buildings can transform outdated spaces into efficient environments that better serve community needs. Minor retrofits, such as adding sustainable systems like bioswales, can aid in potential flood mitigation and reduce overall environmental impacts from existing and new developments. Major and minor retrofits can increase property values, attract new investment, and create more attractive and utilized space for residents and visitors.

Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road District

Location

The 235-acre Warehouse District is located south of the Oak Ridge Turnpike, stretching east to west near Elza Gate Park and Melton Lake. The district contains a concentration of aging industrial sites, distribution facilities, and storage buildings, with major access points along Brisbane Road, Warehouse Road, and Belgrade Road. Positioned adjacent to the Office of Scientific and Technical Information and Department of Energy (DOE) receiving facilities, the area reflects Oak Ridge's historic role in research and industry. A former rail corridor also runs through the district, linking it to nearby greenways and reinforcing its connection to the City's industrial landscape.

Existing Conditions

Aging Industrial and Retail Properties

The district includes older industrial sites and some strip retail buildings that are no longer fully utilized. Many properties show signs of disinvestment, with limited upkeep and some vacancy. This aging building stock presents both challenges for re-use and opportunities for reinvestment as the commercial real estate market evolves. Restaurants, bars, and some small scale artisanal manufacturing uses are starting to take hold in the district.

Pedestrian Infrastructure Gaps

Sidewalks, street lighting, and other pedestrian amenities are generally not present throughout the district. Key commercial corridors such as Brisbane Road, Warehouse Road, and Belgrade Road lack pedestrian and multimodal facilities entirely, making it difficult to walk or bike into and around the district.

Parks and Trail Connectivity

The district is well positioned near Elza Gate Park and the existing Melton Lake Greenway. A former railway runs east-west through the entire length of the district, intersecting the greenway at Warehouse Road and Melton Lake Drive. This right-of-way is well suited for a rails-to-trails conversion that would extend the greenway system, create new east-west connections within the district, and strengthen access to Melton Lake.



Warehouses



Former Rail Line



Vacant Property in the District



Map 14. Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road District Existing Conditions Map

Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road District Opportunities and Constraints

Pedestrianized Routes

A dedicated pedestrian connection is proposed along Brisbane Road and Brussels Road to improve access between the Oak Ridge Turnpike, redevelopment sites, and future greenway links. Currently Brisbane Road has no sidewalks, pavement markings, or lighting to accommodate pedestrian use. Similar pedestrian improvements are recommended along Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road, since both streets lack sidewalks, street furniture, street trees, or other multimodal facilities.

Pedestrian Conflicts

Several intersections within the district, especially those crossing the Oak Ridge Turnpike and along Belgrade Road, lack adequate pedestrian infrastructure. Improvements such as clearly marked crosswalks, signal upgrades, and pedestrian scale lighting are needed to enhance safety and support walkability to nearby neighborhoods and trails.

Minor Redevelopment

Several properties contain aging warehouses and buildings that are well suited for incremental improvements and minor land use changes. Adding affordable artist spaces, room for small-scale commercial and restaurant spaces, and residential uses will help revitalize the area. Reducing uses that create significant noise and impacts to adjacent properties, while supporting light industrial activities will allow this area to become a more vibrant part of the community. Residents also noted concerns about nighttime safety and the district's unwelcoming appearance. Targeted upgrades such as better lighting, property maintenance, and façade improvements would enhance the district's character, sense of security, and overall activity.

Major Redevelopment

The western portion of the district includes large, underutilized industrial properties well suited for transformation into a mixed-use employment and activity hub. These sites offer space for light industrial, industrial flex spaces, or mixed residential/commercial development. Community input highlighted the need for more retail options and improved site design, reinforcing the opportunity to reimagine these properties to better serve both economic and quality-of-life goals.

Trail Connections and Floodplains

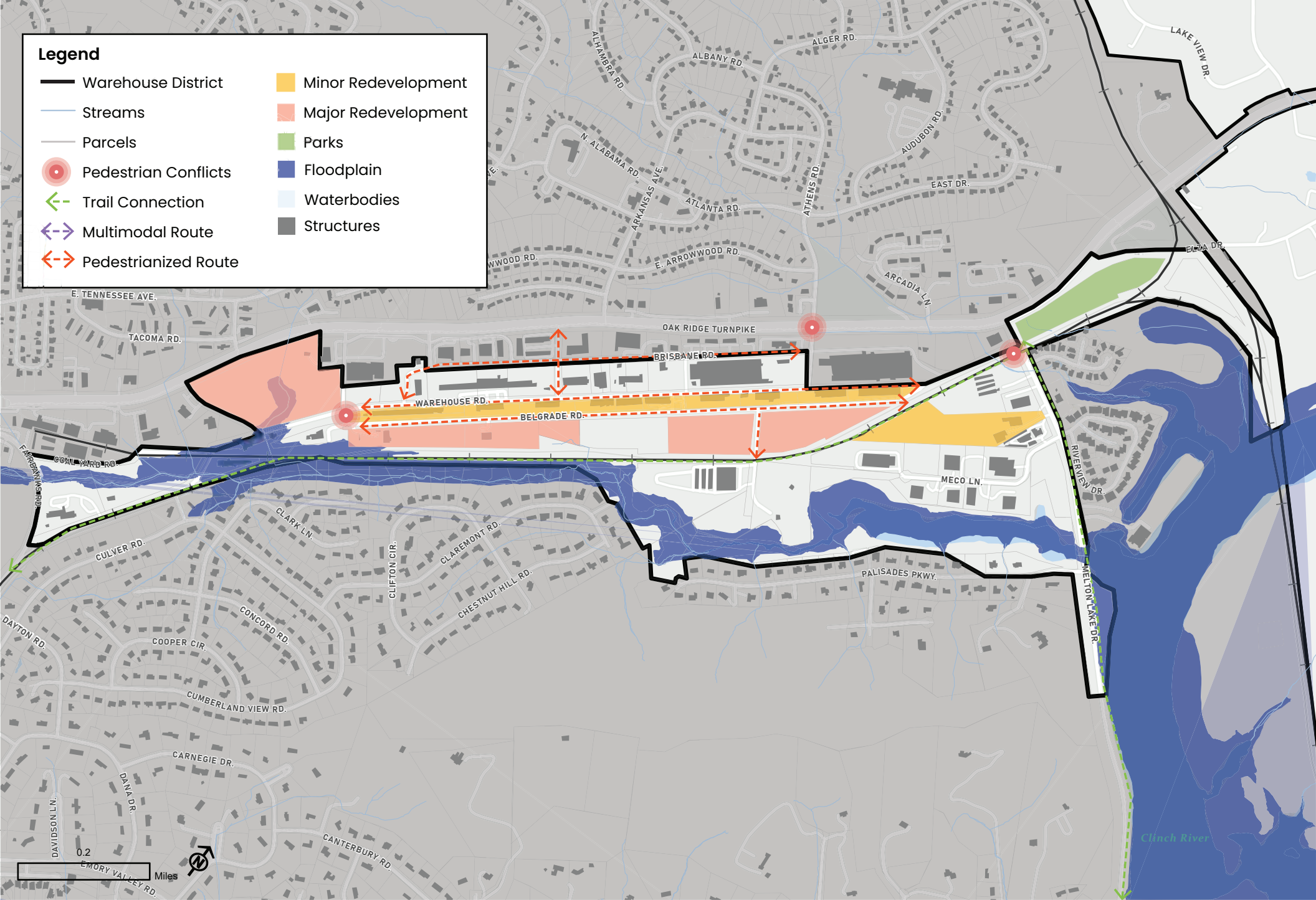
The southern portion of the district includes land along East Poplar Creek, a creek that falls within the 100- and 500- year floodplains and the regulatory floodway. While these constraints limit opportunities for intensive development, they present a strong opportunity for public open space, ecological restoration, and trail development. This area follows a former rail corridor, making it well suited for a future rail-to-trail conversion that would provide both recreation and regional connectivity with the existing Melton Lake Greenway.

Parks

Expanding the amenities provided at Elza Gate Park to act as a greenway trail head will support additional recreational opportunities.

Melton Lake Park Connection

This district can support the uses at Melton Lake Park (such as rowing events) through shared parking, shuttle services, retail, and other tourism-based business opportunities.



Map 15. Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road District Opportunities Map

Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road District Strategies

Vision

The Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road Corridor will transition from a low-intensity light industrial corridor into a mixed-use district that supports new employment, housing, and public space, while still retaining space for light industrial uses. More affordable commercial spaces will support local artists and encourage a concentration of artists to expand the City's growing economic base. Large, underutilized parcels will be redeveloped to include flexible commercial and/or residential uses, while excess parking areas will be repurposed for infill development or green space. A rail-to-trail connection and expanded floodplain parkland will provide recreation and improve resiliency, while roadway conversions along Warehouse and Belgrade Roads will create safer multimodal access throughout the district.

Strategies

The following strategies are approaches the City can use to help achieve the vision described in this Plan for this specific small area.

Rail-to-Trails Conversion

- The former rail line along the southern edge of the district should be repurposed as a continuous multi-use trail that connects east to west and ties into the Melton Lake Greenway system. Implementation of this trail system can be supported by both federal and state partners. The Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program provides a dedicated source of funding for active transportation and trail projects, while the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), funded through federal gas taxes and administered by TDOT, supports the construction, restoration, and maintenance of nonmotorized trails, making it especially well suited for repurposing the rail corridor.

Pedestrian Environment

- Pedestrian routes should be upgraded along Brisbane Road and Brussels Road to provide sidewalks, pavement markings, and lighting that connect neighborhoods with redevelopment sites and greenways. Similar improvements are recommended along Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road to create a pedestrian environment that supports retail, artisanal, and restaurant uses. Grant programs such as Safe Streets for All (SS4A) or TDOT pedestrian safety funds can be pursued to support these investments. Funding for a more in-depth transportation safety study can also be pursued either prior to or as part of the implementation effort.

Redevelopment Strategies

- The existing IND-1 zoning district provides a foundation for facilitating industrial development, which should continue to serve as anchors for this district. Uses such as light manufacturing, assembly, warehousing, research facilities, and professional services remain appropriate for the area and should continue to serve as anchors for economic activity. Minor redevelopment can focus on upgrading existing buildings to better accommodate future uses, including adaptive reuse for research labs, craft production, small-scale food processing, fitness facilities, and office or service spaces that are already permitted in the district. Zoning modifications are needed to support additional redevelopment and diversification of the district's uses to include residential and restaurants, as well as other uses to create a vibrant area.
- The City should consider pursuing targeted incentives that support site readiness and incremental reinvestment in the Warehouse District, potentially using Knoxville's Chamber strategy as a model. In Knoxville, the Chamber has partnered with the City, County, and TVA to fund industrial site preparation programs, which focus on clearing sites, modernizing utilities, and preparing older buildings to be competitive for new tenants. For Oak Ridge, a similar approach could include matching grants for façade upgrades, assistance with site clean-up and environmental due diligence, and support for modernizing utilities such as power, water, sewer, stormwater, and broadband.



Rails-to-Trails Example



Pedestrian Streetscape



Outdoor Food Truck Park



Warehouse District Revitalization

Jackson Square and Federal Building District

Location

The 131-acre Jackson Square and Federal Building District is centrally located along the Oak Ridge Turnpike and contains a mix of civic, commercial, and institutional land uses. The district brings together Jackson Square's small shops and services, federal office complexes, medical offices, and nearby recreational spaces such as Pinewood Park and the Jackson Square tennis courts.

Existing Conditions

Historic Core and Civic Role

Jackson Square originated as Oak Ridge's civic and cultural center during the Manhattan Project and still contains a mix of government offices, institutional uses, and retail uses. The northern portion of the square includes clusters of restaurants, shops, and service businesses that bring steady activity, while other areas house vacant storefronts, low-intensity uses, and aging façades. In sum, this creates uneven conditions across the district, with strong anchors in some locations and visible disinvestment in others.

Pedestrian and Streetscape Conditions

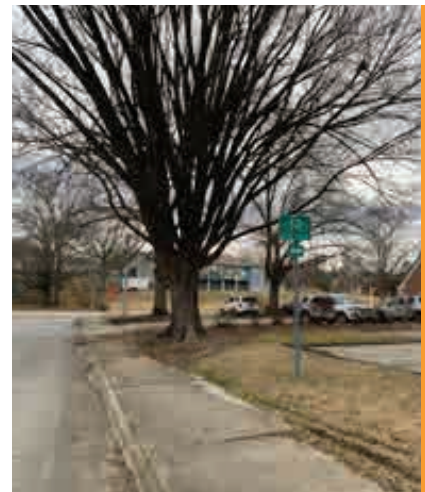
While sidewalks are present, they are often narrow, uneven, or lack amenities such as street trees, lighting, and seating. Crosswalks are limited and traffic speeds along major frontages discourage pedestrian comfort. The overall streetscape does not yet support the type of civic and cultural hub envisioned for this district.

Government and Institutional Presence

A notable share of the district's footprint is occupied by federal and government offices. These provide stable employment anchors but contribute little to retail frontage or evening activity. Most office sites are auto-oriented, with large parking lots that take up significant swathes of area and interrupt pedestrian connections between commercial clusters.



Local Retail in Jackson Square



Pedestrian Sidewalk



Federal Building



Map 16. Jackson Square and Federal Building District Existing Conditions Map

Jackson Square and Federal Building Opportunities and Constraints

Multimodal Routes

A multimodal connection is proposed from the open area northwest of the DOE building toward Briarcliff Avenue, establishing a direct route between the district and Roane State Community College. Oak Ridge Turnpike is also identified for multimodal improvements, allowing better nonmotorized access across and along the corridor. These improvements respond directly to feedback about unsafe crossings and gaps in bike and pedestrian infrastructure.

Pedestrianized Routes

A defined pedestrian route is proposed from the Jackson Square fountain to the tennis courts, enhancing walkability and supporting access to public spaces. Additional improvements along Central Avenue and Tyler Road are recommended to address safety concerns, particularly when crossing the turnpike.

Pedestrian Conflicts

The intersection of Tyler Road and the Oak Ridge Turnpike was flagged by the public as unsafe for pedestrians due to traffic speed and limited visibility. Sidewalk gaps and inconsistent crossings near Central Avenue and Tulane Avenue also present pedestrian barriers.

Minor Redevelopment

Several properties along Oak Ridge Turnpike, as well as smaller commercial strips near the Jackson Square fountain, have aging façades and underutilized parking lots. These locations are ideal for minor redevelopment through updated storefronts, new landscaping, and improved walkability.

Major Redevelopment

Key properties within the district, including the former Department of Energy building and adjacent parcels, are now under or pending City ownership and present a transformative redevelopment opportunity. These sites could support a mix of housing, commercial, or civic uses and anchor the southern end of the district. Other priority redevelopment sites include vacant land next to the Flats at Jackson Square and the area surrounding Miss Betty's Magic Wok, which are well positioned for infill and can help activate underutilized blocks near the heart of Jackson Square. Major redevelopment can also support the inclusion of housing in the district for Roane State Community College professors, staff, and students.

Trail Connections

Trail connections are proposed near Pinewood Park and the southern boundary of the study area to integrate Jackson Square into the broader greenway system.

Floodplain

A small portion of the eastern edge of the district includes mapped floodplain, which presents minor constraints for development. These areas are better suited for trail, park, or open space uses that support the district's green infrastructure goals.

Parks

Pinewood Park is a key asset on the western edge of the district, and an adjacent parcel just north of it has been identified as a potential site for expansion or new public open space. Other properties in the district may also be good candidates for additional green space, such as the property south of the tennis courts. These improvements could help create a more cohesive network of green spaces throughout the district.



Map 17. Jackson Square and Federal Building District Opportunities Map

Jackson Square and Federal Building District Strategies

Vision

The Jackson Square and Federal Building District will be a vibrant, walkable civic and cultural center that honors its historic identity while supporting new activity, housing, and public life. Strategic redevelopment of key sites, improved façades, and enhanced streetscapes will create a more welcoming and visually cohesive district. Safe pedestrian and bike connections will link Jackson Square to nearby neighborhoods, Roane State Community College, and regional trails, while concentrated public spaces will support events, markets, and gathering. Vacant and underutilized properties will be redeveloped into a mixture of uses that support government functions, housing, and commercial activities. Reduced pavement and reorganized parking will support the district in serving as a central destination for residents and visitors alike.



View of Existing District

Strategies

The following strategies are approaches the City can use to help achieve the vision described in this Plan for this specific small area.

Improving Intersection Safety

- Address safety concerns at Tyler Road and Oak Ridge Turnpike by completing crosswalk legs, adding sidewalks to both sides of Tyler Road, and adding pedestrian signals. Signal timing should be evaluated to improve crossing intervals, and pedestrian-scale lighting should be added to enhance nighttime safety. In conjunction with a broader study of this corridor, additional traffic calming aspects should be studied, including turning radii and overall pavement width, and street trees.

Multimodal Routes

- Consider developing a safe, pedestrian-friendly, multimodal connection from the DOE building area northwest of Briarcliff Avenue to Roane State Community College. The Oak Ridge Turnpike should be studied for a “complete street” retrofit, including enhanced crossings, multi-use sidepath, and bus stop improvements. Short-term actions could include restriping lanes and installing high-visibility crosswalks, while long-term actions may involve capital investment in constructing the sidepaths and adding trees. Coordination with TDOT will be critical, as the Oak Ridge Turnpike is a state-maintained roadway.

Parks and Trails

- Build new trail segments that link Jackson Square to Pinewood Park and the broader greenway system at the southern edge of the district. The City can apply for federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funding administered through TDOT and pursue partnerships with TVA, local non-profits, and regional greenway organizations. A phased approach should start with lower-cost connections (striping, signage) before building larger trail infrastructure.



Crosswalk Examples



DRAFT

The background of the slide is a photograph of a bridge structure over a road. The image is partially obscured by a large, wavy green overlay that contains the chapter title. A thin orange line runs horizontally across the top of the slide, and a yellow line runs vertically down the right side, forming an L-shape.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION

DRAFT

Introduction

The implementation plan serves as the blueprint for turning the vision and goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan into reality. It provides a clear set of practical tools, strategies, and actionable steps designed to convert community ideas into measurable outcomes within the planning horizon. By detailing achievable actions, the implementation plan ensures progress remains focused, manageable, and aligned with the long-term vision.

This implementation plan also clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in the process. It identifies potential partnerships—both in the public and private sectors—as well as funding opportunities that can be leveraged to bring additional expertise, resources, and innovative solutions.

It is important to remember that successful implementation does not rest solely on the City's shoulders. It requires active collaboration and ongoing coordination with community members, local organizations, businesses, and private partners. This collective approach harnesses community knowledge, builds broad-based support, and fosters shared ownership of the plan's success. Ultimately, the implementation plan is essential to transform strategic planning into tangible improvements, creating a roadmap for meaningful progress that benefits the entire community.



Proactive and Reactive Strategies

Plan implementation is often achieved through one of two methods: proactive and reactive implementation strategies. While both are effective in putting the recommendations of this Plan into action, using a balance of both approaches will better set the City up for success in achieving these goals. Proactive strategies, such as updating zoning regulations, guide development in alignment with the Plan's vision. Reactive strategies, such as development review processes, allow for adjustments to address emerging issues. Examples of proactive and reactive strategies are provided below.

Proactive Strategies

Proactive strategies are those that the City leads in seeking implementation of the Plan's recommendations and actions. City-initiated efforts are effective because they may occur immediately but may prove costly regarding staff time and City resources. Examples include:

- Updating policies, such as Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs), thoroughfare plans, and development codes to achieve the recommendations identified within this Plan.
- Initiating zoning changes within target areas to encourage development that is compatible with the land use designations within this Plan.
- Acquiring property from private individuals and entities in strategic locations to direct property development.

Reactive Strategies

Reactive strategies involve opportunities brought to the City on a case-by-case basis, rather than those the City seeks out independently. These strategies rely on elected and appointed officials to act with the recommendations of this Plan in mind, placing further emphasis on the continuing updates and communication of the Plan suggested in this chapter. Examples include:

- Reviewing development applications for compliance with the adopted development standards and the intent of this Plan.
- Updating the recommendations and actions of this Plan based on public feedback and initiatives.
- Considering economic development projects and incentive options that expand the City's tax base and employment opportunities.



Implementation Education

An essential part of implementation is education about the role and significance of the Comprehensive Plan. Public education about the Comprehensive Plan builds consensus on the initiatives in the Plan and gains buy-in from the community. When the community supports the Plan for the future development of Oak Ridge, the Plan receives the consensus it needs to successfully implement these initiatives.

Regular education and training should be offered to City Council, Planning Commission, City staff, and other individuals with a direct role in the implementation of the Plan. Training is intended to update or educate participants so that those involved with the Plan are always informed about the current status of the Comprehensive Plan. Training initiatives should include:

- A review of the goals and guiding principals that guide the Plan's recommendations
- An overview of segments of the Plan that most directly relate to their responsibilities and purposes
- Discussion of the roles and responsibilities of each individual entity and its function regarding Plan implementation
- Implementation tasking and priority setting that allows each group to establish their own short- and long-term agendas
- A review of current Plan initiatives and status updates on the progress of recommended implementation strategies



Maintaining & Updating the Plan

This Plan is intended to serve as a guide for policy decisions and to reflect the community's vision for the future. As such, the Plan is not a rigid document but a living tool that should be revisited and revised, if necessary, depending on the City's changing economic, physical, and social composition. The Plan should be reviewed for accuracy as the City grows to maintain alignment with the vision and guiding principles.

Annual Progress Reporting

Following adoption, the City should assign a responsible body, such as the Municipal Planning Commission, to provide an annual progress report on the status of the Comprehensive Plan to City leadership. This annual review will help verify if the Plan's relevance of content and the appropriateness of the Plan's recommendations and actions are still applicable. With assistance from City staff and involved departments, the responsible body could present an annual report on the City's implementation from the year prior to the City Council. This report should be coordinated with the annual budget and can be used as an opportunity to celebrate the City's achievements and reflect on opportunities in the coming year.

Annual Updates

Following the annual progress reporting, the implementation action plan should be reviewed and updated as part of an annual plan amendment. This annual amendment will allow the City to update the implementation plan and identify near-term actions for the coming year. Annual Plan amendments also provide opportunities for relatively minor Plan updates and revisions as needed.

Five-Year Audit Diagnostic

In addition to the annual reviews, the City should conduct a thorough audit of the Plan's outcomes and content every five years following the Plan's original adoption. Such reviews should be a joint effort between all involved departments and officials and should include an analysis of the Plan's successes and shortcomings as it relates to implementing the community's vision for the City. During this process, staff should work to identify any necessary revisions, either minor or comprehensive, to organize potential revisions to the document. Topics of interest should include any shifts in demographic composition, economic factors, and societal factors that may impact the trajectory of the City.

10-Year Update

The Plan sets the stage for subsequent implementation actions in the 10-year planning horizon. Environmental conditions, population composition and City trends and concerns change over time. To help the Plan continue to provide the best and most appropriate direction possible, it should be taken through a full update process every 10 years.

Small Area Plans

The Small Area Plans identified in Chapter 5 should continue to be updated and expanded over time. The Plan should be updated with new small areas as they are identified and analyzed by City staff and the community.

Roles | Responsibilities | Partnerships | Financing Tools

No single individual or entity is responsible for the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. There are multiple aspects of the Plan that require participation by various parties, such as the adoption of regulations, administration of the development code, and partnering with different public and private organizations. Each individual or group involved with the Comprehensive Plan has a vital role to play in its implementation based on their authority or expense.

Roles and Responsibilities

City Council

The key responsibilities of the City Council are to establish priorities, set time frames for when actions should be initiated and completed, and determine the financial resources to be made available for implementation efforts.

Municipal Planning Commission

The Municipal Planning Commission is charged with making recommendations to the City Council regarding zoning and the Comprehensive Plan. In this role, the Municipal Planning Commission acts as the connection between City staff and City Council. It is important for the Municipal Planning Commission to make sound recommendation in the best interest of the City. In addition, subcommittees may be created to help with implementation items, studies, and moving various initiatives forward.

City Staff

City staff is involved in the most direct application of the Comprehensive Plan. Staff is responsible for administering the Plan through the zoning ordinance, subdivision codes, and other regulations directly influenced by the Comprehensive Plan. Staff also oversee capital projects and other activities that have a direct relationship to the goals, strategies, and implementation items.

Partnerships

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan is not solely dependent on the City's resources. Entities like private developers, boards and commissions, federal agencies, and local non-profit organizations are great partners to implement specific recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. These entities can provide resources and support for elements of the Plan to assist the City in completing particular tasks. Partnerships can take the form of public-private partnerships (P3), grant funding, establishment of programs, and other various methods. The following list of partners is not exhaustive, but provides examples of entities that can be beneficial to the success of this plan:

- Anderson and Roane Counties
- Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT)
- Oak Ridge Housing Authority
- Oak Ridge Land Bank Corporation
- Recreation and Parks Advisory Board
- Traffic Safety Advisory Board
- Arts, Culture, and History Alliance Advisory Board
- Anderson County Tourism Council
- Anderson County Economic Development Association
- Homeowner Associations
- Area property and business owners and the development community
- Department of Energy (DOE)
- Public School System and Roane State Community College

Financing Tools

The following financing tools are commonly used to support implementation projects and should be utilized to support the recommended implementation actions. Local governments frequently depend on these sources to secure the funding needed for successful project completion. In addition to the tools listed, leveraging private investment through public-private partnerships or similar models offers another way to finance projects.

General Funds	Set aside funds within the general fund specifically to use for short-term and lower cost projects.
Bonds	Bonds are debt securities issued by the City to fund projects. In this case, funds could be used to fund capital projects. Money is lent to the bond issuer in exchange for a promise of regular interest payments and the return of the original investment.
Low Interest Loans/ Subordination	The City may issue low interest loans for the purpose of encouraging investment. Loans are typically granted to small businesses that may have a harder time qualifying for affordable financing.
Tax Increment Financing District (TIF)	A TIF is a special district where any increase in tax revenues caused by new development and higher property values is paid into a special fund to finance improvements. The purpose of a TIF is to finance new public improvements in the area in which the funds originated.
Special Districts (SD)	An SD is a district in which owners pay a supplemental assessment with their taxes to fund specific uses and functions, such as service provision, capital projects, or other specified activities.
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides CDBG funds for economic development, housing rehabilitation, public facilities, and other physical development projects.
Federal Transit Administration Grants	The Federal Transit Administration provides grants to local public transit systems to promote public transportation. Multiple grants are available annually for a variety of improvements.
East Tennessee Economic Council (ETEC)	ETEC works to foster economic growth in the region by building strategic partnerships and bringing together diverse sectors to advance federal missions locally. Collaborative efforts between ETEC and the City offer new opportunities to boost Oak Ridge's economy and sustain local businesses well into the future.
Fund Tennessee	Part of the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI), this program features InvestTN (equity), LendTN (debt), and AssistTN (technical assistance) to provide financial support and guidance.
TNInvestco	Delivers funding opportunities for businesses headquartered and employing the majority of their workforce in Tennessee.
TVA Performance Grant Program	Available for businesses expanding or developing within the Tennessee Valley Authority region.
Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBEAP)	Delivers free, confidential help with environmental regulations and compliance.
State Enterprise Zones	Enterprise Zones are designated geographic areas where governments offer tax incentives, regulatory relief, and other benefits to encourage business investment, job creation, and economic development.

Elements of Implementation Plan

One of the most important elements of a comprehensive plan is having actionable recommendations that clearly outline the initial steps that a city must take to begin implementing the plan. The following implementation table provides individual actions that will help achieve the vision established by the community. For each action, an associated time frame for implementation and related Plan goals are identified to assist with planning and completing the action.

1. Action Items

The action items include recommended strategies that are deemed both feasible and a priority to the community. They are developed based on assessments and community input across various topics outlined in this Plan. These action items represent practical strategies that the City can implement to achieve the vision set forth in this Plan. While not all Plan recommendations are included as an action item, they are still important considerations for the community.

2. Corresponding Plan Goals

The Plan includes three goals, which serve as the foundation for the strategies within the document. The table in the following pages highlights the alignment between these goals and the recommended implementation strategies, offering a clear framework for translating the Plan's vision into action. Each recommended action item will correspond to a Plan goal or goals. The goals included in the Plan and implementation table are:

- Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability
- Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
- Improve Connectivity & Mobility

3. Implementation Time Frame

This Plan provides a phased approach to implementation to help the City identify achievable actions in the near future and distinguish them from long-term actions that might need extensive studies and preparation. The recommended actions are categorized into the following time frames.



Short-Term (1-3 years)

Short-term actions are those that are typically “low-hanging fruit” or easier to achieve because they do not require a large amount of capital or significant preparation.



Mid-Term (4-6 years)

Mid-term actions are those that may require more preparation and capital than the short-term 3-year horizon.



Long-Term (7+ years)

Long-term actions are those that typically need a large amount of capital, require significant preparation and coordination for completion, or other steps must take place before implementation. In some cases, there may be opportunities to make some initial progress in the short- or mid-term.

Implementation Tables

City-wide Recommendations

The following Action Items include key strategies related to city-wide improvements. These Action Items are those that are the most feasible and supported by public input and community needs. Other strategies identified throughout the Comprehensive Plan should be implemented as opportunities become available.

#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Goals Addressed By Project
1	Revise the Zoning Ordinance & Subdivision Regulations Update and align the City's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations with best practices, community goals, and future development needs. Revisions should create an overall framework that supports responsible growth, protects community character, preserves the natural environment, and enhances the quality-of-life for residents.		Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability Improve Connectivity & Mobility
2	Develop Additional Small Area Plans for DOE Transitional Properties, West End, and other areas of growth and change. Create strategic, actionable small area plans that maximize the use and sustainability of Self-Sufficiency Parcels and DOE Transitional Properties, aligning with long-term economic, environmental, and community goals.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability
3	Create a Water and Wastewater Master Plan Develop a plan that assesses and evaluates the City's current water and wastewater system to determine improvements needed to maintain system functionality and support future residential and industrial growth.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
4	Improve Economic Diversification Develop an approach to market the City for tourism and non-industrial/ research businesses to help diversify the economic base, while attracting businesses and economic activity that supports existing industries.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability
5	Update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Work with the Parks and Recreation Department to review and update the existing Parks and Recreation Master Plan to reflect current conditions, community needs, and future growth patterns.		Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place

#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Goals Addressed By Project
5	Create a Public Arts Plan Develop a plan for incorporating public art throughout the City on public and private property, evaluate a public art walk or similar connection with the Arts Center, and help make art a prominent community feature.		Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
6	Strengthen Code Enforcement Increase code enforcement efforts and capabilities through adding staff, increasing available enforcement tools, and evaluating current strategies to resolve recurring code violations that have negative community impacts.		Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
7	Complete the Bissell Park Master Plan Work with the Recreation and Parks Department to complete the Bissell Park Master Plan. Public engagement and community feedback should be incorporated into the writing and completion of the Plan.		Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
8	Land Bank Property on Wilson St. Collaborate with the Oak Ridge Land Bank to identify properties to land bank to increase the housing conditions and supply along Wilson Street and support downtown development.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability, Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
9	Identify Locations for the West-End School Partner with the public school system to identify potential locations for a school in the western portion of the City.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability
10	Complete the City Wayfinding Signage Design, Location Assessment, and Installation Develop a cohesive design system that reflects the City's branding. Efforts should be made to create an overall clear, attractive, and functional wayfinding system that improves navigation, enhances the City's identity, and contributes to a better visitor and resident experience.		Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place

#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Goals Addressed By Project
11	Update the Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan Work with the Recreation and Parks Department to review and update the existing Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan to reflect current conditions, community needs, and future growth patterns. The Plan should improve safety, accessibility, and connectivity throughout the City for pedestrians and cyclists.		Improve Connectivity & Mobility
12	Develop a Food Accessibility Plan Develop a plan that evaluates access to healthy foods across the entire City.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
13	Complete the Rails-to-Trails Project Enhance walkability and recreation by completing the City's Rail Trail through collaboration with the Recreation and Parks Department.		Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place Improve Connectivity & Mobility
14	Identify Alternatives for Airport Site Location Work with the Metropolitan Airport Authority (MAA) and other key partners to identify possible locations for the proposed general aviation airport.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability
15	Develop a Community Development Program Create and operate a program that provides assistance for property improvements, beautification efforts, affordable housing, and other initiatives to support the existing housing stock and existing residents.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
16	Develop a Sustainability Plan Create a plan that includes a property tool kit to encourage sustainable efforts throughout the City on public and private property, including approaches for innovative stormwater management, increasing tree canopy, preserving forested land, creating pollinator gardens, and other initiatives.		Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place

Small Area Plan Implementation

The following Action Items include key strategies for the Small Area Plans contained in Chapter 5 of this Plan. These Action Items are those that are the most feasible and supported by public input and community needs. For a comprehensive list of the Small Area Plan specifics, please refer to Chapter 5.

#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Goals Addressed By Project
Grove Center			
1	Minor Redevelopment Encouraging façade improvements and streetscape enhancements to boost visibility and appeal of the Grove Center, with particular attention paid to the Oak Ridge History Museum and Historic Grove Theatre, will help encourage revitalization of the area. Revitalization efforts should include coordinated building maintenance, new landscaping, and tree planting to create a more cohesive and inviting environment. The City should create a program and adopt regulations to encourage investment and revitalization efforts.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
2	Improving Pedestrian Access - Improve the pedestrian network to connect nearby neighborhoods and civic sites like Oak Ridge High School and the Outdoor Pool. Fill sidewalk gaps on Robertsville and Raleigh Roads to provide continuous access throughout the area. - Marked crosswalks should be added at key intersections and mid-block locations to link critical areas. Upgrades should include ADA ramps, pedestrian scale lighting, and tree buffers to improve comfort and safety.		Improve Connectivity & Mobility
3	Park Improvements The vacant parcel at the intersection of Ivanhoe Ln and Robertsville Rd offers an opportunity for a neighborhood park with trails, play areas, and green space. It can serve residents and visitors while connecting eastward to the Grove and A.K. Bissell Park via a pedestrian crossing across the Oak Ridge Turnpike.		Improve Connectivity & Mobility Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place

#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Goals Addressed By Project
Downtown Wilson Bissell Corridor			
1	Market Feasibility Study Conduct a targeted market and fiscal analysis to determine viable commercial, residential, and mixed-use opportunities. This should include demand forecasts, potential anchor tenants, and a highest-and-best-use analysis for existing underutilized parcels to support downtown development.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
2	Transportation Improvements Improve pedestrian and multimodal accessibility along Wilson Street and S. Tulane Avenue using complete street retrofits that may include curb extensions, reduced travel lane widths, multimodal facilities, and improved pedestrian refuges. Incorporate wide sidewalks (6-8 feet) with street trees and enhanced landscaping.		Improve Connectivity & Mobility
3	Trail and Greenspace Enhancements - Construct a northern trail connection across Oak Ridge Turnpike that connects to the Grove Center District and Oak Ridge High School. - Extend and rebrand the trail network around A.K. Bissell Park, with wayfinding signage to make routes more visible. - Add park amenities to A.K. Bissell Park such as play features, additional benches, or covered shelters.		Improve Connectivity & Mobility Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
4	Zoning & Policy Adjustments The existing Downtown Zoning District (D-1) is a strong ordinance that supports many of the quality-of-life and economic goals of the DWB district. However, it currently applies to only a small portion of the downtown area along Wilson Street. Expanding the D-1 district to include adjacent properties now zoned General Business (B-2) and Unified General Business (UB-2) may help create a critical mass of connected, walkable, and aesthetically appealing development.		Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place Improve Connectivity & Mobility Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability

#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Goals Addressed By Project
S. Illinois at Tuskegee Shopping Area			
1	Zoning & Policy Adjustments Tuskegee Drive should be improved to include sidewalks, bike lanes, and safer pedestrian crossings. The City should work on updating the streetscape in conjunction with adjacent property improvements. These improvements will necessitate the City updating design standards and development regulations, as well as working with property owners to shape how new development meets the street. Reducing deep front setbacks and requiring large parking lots to be placed behind buildings will support walkability and create a better sense of place.		Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place Improve Connectivity & Mobility Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability
2	Major Redevelopment Several properties present opportunities for redevelopment for both commercial and residential activities. Redeveloping the shopping center to move buildings closer to the street not only will improve the functionality and visual appeal of the area, it will also protect from future flooding events along the creek. Opportunities for multifamily residential development and the integration of a greenway help support redevelopment. The City should work with the property owner to find a creative solution to achieve this redevelopment through policy and ordinance changes, development agreement, public-private partnerships, special district creation, and other approaches.		Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place Improve Connectivity & Mobility Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability
3	Pedestrian Environment Improving pedestrian conditions along Tulsa Road should include adding shade trees, buffers, and pedestrian lighting, but also encouraging businesses to manage frontage areas in ways that support walkability. The City should seek ways to work with property owners along the corridor for a concerted improvement effort that creates a comfortable and safe environment for pedestrians.		 Improve Connectivity & Mobility Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place

#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Goals Addressed By Project
Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road			
1	Rail-to-Trails Conversion Move forward with converting the former rail line along the southern edge of the Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road District as a continuous multi-use trail that connects east to west and ties into the Melton Lake greenway system. The City should pursue any additional funding needed to complete the project.		Improve Connectivity & Mobility Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
2	Pedestrian Environment Pedestrian routes should be upgraded along Brisbane Road and Brussels Road to provide sidewalks, pavement markings, and lighting that connect neighborhoods with redevelopment sites and the Rail-to-Trails project. Improvements are recommended along Warehouse Rd and Belgrade Rd to create a pedestrian environment that supports retail, artisanal, and restaurant uses. The City should leverage grant funding such as Safe Streets for All or TDOT pedestrian safety funds to support these investments.		Improve Connectivity & Mobility
3	Industrial Redevelopment Strategies The City should consider pursuing targeted incentives that support site readiness and incremental reinvestment in the Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road District, potentially using Knoxville's Chamber strategy as a model. Approaches could include matching grants for façade upgrades, assistance with site clean-up and environmental due diligence, and support for modernizing utilities such as power, water, and broadband.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
4	Policy & Zoning Adjustments Warehouse Road and Belgrade Road should be evaluated for potential policy and zoning changes that can contribute to positive change. Potential changes could include the adoption of a mixed-use district to attract a more diverse range of uses.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place

#	Action Item	Implementation Time Frame	Goals Addressed By Project
Jackson Square and Federal Building			
1	Minor Redevelopment Encourage the minor redevelopment of properties with aging façades, underutilized parking lots, those lacking landscaping, and limited pedestrian infrastructure. The City should update policies and ordinances, leverage various programs, and work with property owners to make these property improvements.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place Improve Connectivity & Mobility
2	Major Redevelopment Key properties within the district, including the Federal Building and adjacent parcels, present a transformative redevelopment opportunity. These sites could support a mix of housing, commercial, or civic uses and anchor the southern end of the district. Other priority redevelopment sites include vacant land next to the Flats at Jackson Square and the area surrounding Miss Betty's Magic Wok, which are well positioned for infill and can help activate underutilized blocks near the heart of Jackson Square. The City should pursue acquisition of these properties and work with those that remain in private ownership on redevelopment plans to support a vibrant area.		Grow Our Population & Economic Sustainability Enhance Our Image & Quality of Place
3	Multimodal Routes Consider developing a safe, pedestrian-friendly, multimodal connection from Jackson Square to Roane State Community College through the federal property. Oak Ridge Turnpike should also be studied for a "complete street" retrofit, including enhanced crossings, bike lanes, and bus stop improvements. Short-term actions could include restriping lanes and installing high-visibility crosswalks, while long-term actions may involve capital investment in separated bikeways. The City should coordinate with property owners to obtain easements for a multimodal trail and with TDOT to make improvements along the Turnpike.		Improve Connectivity & Mobility



