



Chapter 11: COMMUNITY LIFE

Life in Oak Hill is bolstered by the preceding chapters. A walkable neighborhood gives residents more opportunities to meet and interact casually. A Town Center will give Oak Hill a more coherent presence, a central place to go that can be shared by everyone. Stewardship of the environment connects residents to the natural features that make Oak Hill unique.

This chapter, however, focuses narrowly on the things that sustain communities directly: the continuity of history, public safety, and community interaction. These areas may not be directly related to Land Use and Zoning, but nevertheless are crucial in enhancing a place's quality of life.

Lastly, Linda Flint, a kind Oak Hill resident of 20 years, contributes some of her insights about life in Oak Hill.



Figure 11-1: Kids playing at Windmill Run Park



GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

11.A. Preserve valued historic sites.

11.A.1

Instill a sense of pride among Oak Hill community members by preserving and celebrating the historic value of landmarks.

11.A.1a—Preserve the Oak Hill Pizza Garden, formerly known as the Patton Store.

11.A.1b—Preserve and maintain the Convict Hill Quarry Park on Convict Hill Road.

11.A.1c—Preserve the old Oak Hill Elementary school.

11.A.1d—New development and redevelopment projects should make a sincere attempt to preserve the older oak trees along William Cannon Drive.

11.B. Ensure the safety of persons and property.

11.B.1

Address crime in the Oak Hill area by creating a comprehensive crime management and safety program for the Oak Hill planning area.

11.B.1a—Increase coordination between Oak Hill stakeholders and Travis County.

11.B.1b—Increase coordination between Austin Police Department and the Oak Hill community members to create an informational session about the law enforcement services in the Oak Hill area.

11.B.1c—Stakeholders feel that a police substation is needed in the Oak Hill planning area to address criminal activity.

11.B.2

Coordinate and enhance educational safety programs for the Oak Hill community.

11.B.2a—Conduct bike safety programs for the adult and youth population of the area.

11.B.2b—Encourage forest fire prevention and awareness programs in the area.



11.C. All Oak Hill residents should have readily accessible, quality community and public services.

11.C.1

Encourage locating community and public services in one area of Oak Hill to ease accessibility by area residents.

11.C.1a—Build a cultural and historical community center that would include a civic center, senior activity center, and a center for performance and visual arts.

11.C.1b—Cluster services in areas that can accommodate the amount of traffic that would be generated by the cultural center.

11.C.2

Expand the library services in the Oak Hill area to accommodate areas that are farthest from existing libraries.

11.C.2a—Community members would like Oak Hill libraries to be in close proximity to recreational facilities such as a pool.

11.C.2b—Encourage Oak Hill residents to volunteer at Oak Hill libraries.

11.C.3

Ensure school capacity is adequately addressed.

11.C.3a—Locate elementary schools closer to single-family neighborhoods so children can walk to schools.

11.C.3b—Locate an additional high school in the planning area.

11.C.3c—Encourage coordination between Austin Independent School District (AISD) and community groups to learn more about long-range plans for AISD.

11.D. Promote camaraderie, community spirit, and communication among neighborhoods.

11.D.1

Encourage coordination with Oak Hill residents and neighborhoods on issues of mutual interest and concern.

11.D.1a—Encourage all qualified, unregistered neighborhood associations to become recognized members of Oak Hill Association of Neighborhoods (OHAN).



11.D.1b—Encourage businesses to join Oak Hill Business and Professional Association (OHBPA).

11.D.1c—Oak Hill residents, stakeholders and Neighborhood Planning Contact Team should continue to educate themselves on the new zoning categories Neighborhood Commercial and Neighborhood Mixed Use as well as the overall effect on development and land use of this large neighborhood plan and Future Land Use Map (FLUM) in order to make informed decisions.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Oak Hill has a long history written into its built environment. Stakeholders recognize this history and desire to preserve it through the significant landmarks in the neighborhood.

11.A. Preserve valued historic sites.

11.A.1

Instill a sense of pride among Oak Hill community members by preserving and celebrating the historic value of landmarks.

11.A.1a—Preserve the Oak Hill Pizza Garden, formerly known as the Patton Store.

11.A.1b—Preserve and maintain the Convict Hill Quarry Park on Convict Hill Road.

11.A.1c—Preserve the old Oak Hill Elementary school.

11.A.1d—New development and redevelopment projects should make a sincere attempt to preserve the older oak trees along William Cannon Drive.



**Figure 11-2:
Austin Pizza Garden**

How to get a Historic Landmark designation

In Austin, a historic zoning overlay is applied to property determined eligible for historic landmark status. The City Historic Landmark Commission reviews applications for historic designation and makes recommendations to City Council. If the property meets the criteria, the process usually takes three months from application submittal to landmark designation.

To qualify for historic landmark status, a property must significant in two or more (but preferably five or more) of the local historic categories (see Appendix H). Applicants submit historical documentation demonstrating how the property meets the following criteria:

- Be at least 50 years old, unless it possesses exceptional importance as defined by National Register Bulletin 22, National Park Service (1996);
- Retain sufficient integrity of materials and design to convey its historic appearance; and
- Be individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places, designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Archeological Landmark, or National Historic Landmark OR be significant in at least two of the categories described in Appendix H.



PUBLIC SAFETY

11.B. Ensure the safety of persons and property.

Safety is always a big concern for neighborhood stakeholders. Oak Hill is a relatively safe area with a strong sense of ownership that makes for a tacit understanding that neighbors care for each other and pay attention to their surroundings.

11.B.1

Address crime in the Oak Hill area by creating a comprehensive crime management and safety program for the Oak Hill planning area.

11.B.1a—Increase coordination between Oak Hill stakeholders and Travis County.

11.B.1b—Increase coordination between Austin Police Department and the Oak Hill community members to create an informational session about the law enforcement services in the Oak Hill area.

11.B.1c—Stakeholders feel that a police substation is needed in the Oak Hill planning area to address criminal activity.

Implementation Note: According to APD staff, there are no future plans to build a police station in Oak Hill. The Contact Team and Neighborhood Associations can contact APD for updates on this matter.

Phone numbers for crime and code enforcement reports

- Austin Police Department, Northeast Area Command: 974-5500
- Austin Police Headquarters Main Switchboard: 974-5000
- Austin Police Community Liaison Office: 974-4700
- Code Violations: Dial 311 for 24 hour response, all week
- Code Violations: (Mon–Fr, 7 am–6 pm) 494-9400
- Code Violations: Email a complaint: http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/sws/sws_info.cfm



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11.B.2

Coordinate and enhance educational safety programs for the Oak Hill community.

11.B.2a—Conduct bike safety programs for the adult and youth population of the area.

11.B.2b—Encourage forest fire prevention and awareness programs in the area.

Implementation Notes:

- The Oak Hill Neighborhood Plan Contact Team, neighborhood associations, and community members should coordinate with the Austin Police Department to address their safety concerns in the area. Community groups are also encouraged to coordinate with the Austin Fire Department to address fire prevention and awareness education in the area.
- To learn more about the services offered by the Travis County Emergency Services District #3 "Oak Hill Fire Department," a volunteer-based organization founded in 1968, visit the Oak Hill Association of Neighborhoods website (www.ohan.org) or read the June 2007 Oak Hill Fire Department community report (http://www.ohan.org/docs/TCESD3_Community_Report.pdf).

Contact numbers for fire safety

- Fire Safety Information: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/fire/prevmonth.htm>
- Safety Presentations: To schedule a presentation in your school or neighborhood, contact the AFD Public Education Office calling (512) 974-0290.
- Questions about fire code issues permits, hydrants, inspections, or fire protection systems: Dial AFD's Prevention Office at (512) 974-0160.
- For general information, go to <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/fire/default.htm> or dial (512) 974-0130.

Oak Hill Fire Department Contact numbers:

- Station 1: (512) 288-5576, fax (512) 288-5903, 9211 Circle Drive, Austin, TX 78736.
- Station 2: (512) 288-5534, fax (512) 288-5844, 411 Barton Creek Blvd, Austin, TX 78735.



PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES

11.C. All Oak Hill residents should have readily accessible, quality community and public services.

Stakeholders felt that efforts should be made by developers to coordinate community and public services so that they will be integrated into the Town Center. One suggested integrating Austin Community College into it as well. People felt that these services should be addressed within a master transportation plan for Oak Hill as well.

11.C.1

Encourage locating community and public services in one area of Oak Hill to ease accessibility by area residents.

11.C.1a—Build a cultural and historical community center that would include a civic center, senior activity center, and a center for performance and visual arts.

11.C.1b—Cluster services in areas that can accommodate the amount of traffic that would be generated by the cultural center.



The Facilities Master Plan for the Austin Public Library calls for a future bond election to fund the construction of four Resource Libraries: one in each quadrant of the City and each standing at approximately 40,000 square feet.

Often referred to as “mini-central libraries,” these larger, better-equipped facilities are intended to bring the whole array of library reference services and collection resources normally found only in

the downtown, central library closer to those communities more on the periphery of the City limits.

The service area for each branch library in the Austin Public Library System is about a two-mile radius extending from each site. The service area for each of the new Resource Libraries will be larger.



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11.C.2

Expand the library services in the Oak Hill area to accommodate areas that are farthest from existing libraries.

11.C.2a—Community members would like Oak Hill libraries to be in close proximity to recreational facilities such as a pool.

11.C.2b—Encourage Oak Hill residents to volunteer at Oak Hill libraries.

SCHOOLS

Currently, the planning area includes the following public schools:

- *Elementary Schools:* Clayton, Mills, Oak Hill, Patton, Sunset Valley
- *Middle Schools:* Covington, O. Henry, Small
- *High Schools:* Austin, Bowie, Crockett



11.C.3

Ensure school capacity is adequately addressed.

11.C.3a—Locate elementary schools closer to single-family neighborhoods so children can walk to schools.

11.C.3b—Locate an additional high school in the planning area.

11.C.3c—Encourage coordination between Austin Independent School District (AISD) and community groups to learn more about long-range plans for AISD.

Implementation Note: The new Southwest Middle School will be built east of the intersection of Slaughter Lane and FM 1826. It will be designed in accordance with the 2004 AISD Educational Specifications for middle schools and will include parking, playing fields, and tennis courts. AISD also owns land in the Travis Country subdivision that could be used for a future elementary school.

For more information on schools in Oak Hill, go to OHAN's website (www.ohan.org) or see the AISD website (<http://www.austin.isd.tenet.edu/>).



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

11.D. Promote camaraderie, community spirit, and communication among neighborhoods.

11.D.1

Encourage coordination with Oak Hill residents and neighborhoods on issues of mutual interest and concern.

11.D.1a: Encourage all qualified, unregistered neighborhood associations to become recognized members of OHAN.

11.D.1b—Encourage businesses to join Oak Hill Business and Professional Association (OHBPA).

11.D.1c—Oak Hill residents, stakeholders and Neighborhood Planning Contact Team will continue to educate themselves on the new zoning categories Neighborhood Commercial and Neighborhood Mixed Use as well as the overall effect on development and land use of this large neighborhood plan and Future Land Use Map (FLUM) in order to make informed decisions.

OAK HILL ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Oak Hill Association of Neighborhoods (OHAN) is a strong Oak Hill-based community organization. Volunteers from Oak Hill and the surrounding area meet monthly to review and comment on proposed changes to the Oak Hill community. The group discusses community services, transportation, planning, zoning, fund-raisers, and other community events. This plan recommends neighborhood associations and stakeholders take advantage of this great resource.

OHAN meets on the second Wednesday of the month at the Austin Community College Pinnacle building on the first floor, room 108, from 7:00 until 9:00 pm. Meetings are open to everyone.

Write to OHAN at P.O. Box 90906, Austin, TX 78709-0906, or visit their website at www.ohan.org.





OAK HILL GAZETTE

Excerpt from the Oak Hill Gazette website:



"The Oak Hill Gazette is a lively weekly newspaper serving southwest Austin since 1995. The Gazette is published every Friday with a circulation of 5,000. It is home-delivered to over 3,000 households and is also sold at vending stands in stores, restaurants and supermarkets.

"Oak Hill Gazette is a family oriented paper that focuses on issues that are important to this fast-growing area of Austin which includes zip-codes 78735, 78736, 78737, 78739, 78748 and 78749. People look to the Gazette for exclusive coverage of local events."

LIFE IN OAK HILL

Excerpts from an essay by a Oak Hill resident Linda Flint

Oak Hill is an outdoor lover's community with hill country town friendliness and atmosphere. Joggers, walkers, and bikers (often with dogs or kids) greet and share some humor as they pass. Young and old, they traverse the hills and dales under blazing sun, starry skies, and sudden surprise showers. Evenings and weekends finds crowds at the soccer and baseball fields with enthusiastic players and cheering crowds.

Wildlife still abounds along the fringes of even the oldest developed areas. Sightings of roadrunners, deer, raccoons, armadillos, possums, jackrabbits and cottontail rabbits, coyotes, rattlesnakes and skunks are exciting for young and old. (Well, maybe not the rattlesnakes and skunks.) Oak Hill is blessed with large areas of trees and greenery that attracts songbirds.



Time after time residents say the reason they moved to Oak Hill was to get away from dense urban neighborhoods and traffic and get to Oak Hill for quiet and relaxation. The moderate darkness of the neighborhoods encourages stargazing and catching shooting stars.

Oak Hill is a 24-hr community with some grocery stores, restaurants, and pharmacies open at all times. This accommodates some residents that work night shifts or other times outside the typical 8-5 work-time. There are many churches growing in the Oak Hill area. There is a popular non-denominational Sunrise Service on Easter Sunday on the hill in the Cook Walden Oak Hill Cemetery.

When traffic is backed up, you don't have to wait long for someone to wave you into the line just ahead of him or her. Although we have avoided urban smog, many of our homes (ranging from expensive with a view, to moderately priced homes, to condos, apartments, and mobile homes) have fireplaces. The smoke sometimes combines with light ground fog resulting in a dense aromatic soup. This can make for a very slow and cautious drive home.

The area used to be on the flight path for landing Bergstrom Air Force jets and helicopters. Nowadays, that same flight path is used for commercial flights landing at Bergstrom Airport. Also, small planes and EMS and news helicopters use the 290W/71 interchange to identify where to change heading toward Lakeway, Waco, and other points west and north.



Local businesses (such as Jims, GattiTown, and many others) support Oak Hill Schools. The businesses also display thank you pictures sent from the students.

So what is missing in Oak Hill?

In Oak Hill the phrase "I'm going into town to get...." (which means I'm heading into urban Austin or Sunset Valley to get something not available in Oak Hill) is still heard in our community as if we were miles from Austin. And as Oak Hill and surrounding areas are continuing to grow, the lines at the grocery stores, gasoline stations, restaurants, auto repair shops, and dry cleaners, etc. have lengthened. We will soon need more.

Physicians and medical services have come and gone and returned on a limited basis, especially in Western Oak Hill. We could expand medical around Seton Southwest to include more family practices.

When TxDOT bought up the land along 290W, Oak Hill lost a landmark, the old Convict Hill Steakhouse, which was most recently a Serrano's Mexican Food restaurant. A number of other restaurants and fast food locations also disappeared. Western Oak Hill needs replacements. And perhaps a nice vegetarian restaurant would be a first for Oak Hill. At one time there were 5 Mexican food establishments around the 290W/71 Y. Oak Hill loves Mexican food. Does anyone know what happened to the lovely logs used in the landmark restaurant? Could it be rebuilt in a new location?

Oak Hill used to have the Motorola 5K Run every spring. Would some else sponsor? Do we need a golf course?

We have few places for indoor recreation: GattiTown and the library. An Old Town Square with hill country style buildings and a park area next to the creek and hike and bike trails could be built. It could have an indoor multi-purpose theater (think Paramount Theater or One World Theater) for movies, theatrical productions, meetings, educational presentations, etc. The Old Town Square could also contain an expanded Wi-Fi and library, a history center, a science and nature center (hands on science like those found in California and would need support from UT to build and maintain exhibits like they provide at Wild Basin) and a Chamber of Commerce for Oak Hill and maps of the Hike and Bike Trails. The Park in the middle of the square could be decorated for weddings, holidays, Christmas lights and more. It could be used for a monthly arts and crafts/farmers market, Antique Cars Club monthly meeting, Oak Hill Worlds Fair, summer movies under the stars, and more.

Ah. Life in Oak Hill. With big town benefits (Austin) and small hill country town amenities. Life is good!

—June 2007



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This plan reflects more than two years of collaboration between City of Austin staff and stakeholders from the Oak Hill Combined Neighborhood Planning Area.

On March 21, 2003, City Council approved an ordinance that required all neighborhood plans to form a contact team. In the ordinance, a “Neighborhood Plan Contact Team” is defined as “the individuals designated by the persons involved in the development of a neighborhood plan to implement the plan.” According to the ordinance, the neighborhood plan contact team must contain a diverse group of members, including at least one property owner, non-property owner resident, business owner, and neighborhood association member for each neighborhood in the plan. The Oak Hill Plan Contact Team, in coordination with staff, will be the primary organization responsible for implementing the recommendations in this plan.

In addition to implementing the recommendations in the plan, contact teams are also responsible for making recommendations regarding any future amendments to the plan. They take a role in Vertical Mixed Use overlay discussions when property owners apply for VMU designation.

The City’s recently created implementation planner will facilitate coordination between contact teams, city departments, and other applicable agencies working to implement the neighborhood plan recommendations. Therefore, it is essential that Oak Hill stakeholders maintain an active Contact Team, to ensure that the vision of the Plan is achieved.



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