

City of Waxahachie 2007 Comprehensive Plan

CHAPTER 7: HOUSING STRATEGIES PLAN



The development of housing has a major impact on the...economic growth and health of regions and communities. Housing is inextricably linked to access to jobs and healthy communities and the social behavior of the families who occupy it. The failure to achieve adequate housing leads to significant societal costs.

The Bipartisan Millennial Housing Commission – [Meeting Our Nation's Housing Challenges](#)



Table of Contents

Introduction.....7.1

Strategies for Current Housing.....7.3

 Figure 7-1: Housing Condition By Neighborhood Area (Cumulative Acreage), 2005 – City of Waxahachie.....7.3

 Neighborhood Preservation 7.3

 Housing Maintenance..... 7.4

 Rehabilitation and/or Redevelopment..... 7.5

 Plate 7-1 Housing Strategies Map.....7.6

Housing Policies7.7

 Current City Programs to Continue..... 7.7

 1. Practice Proactive Code Enforcement..... 7.7

 2. Continue Housing Demolition..... 7.7

 3. Continue to Monitor Neighborhoods to Ensure Safety..... 7.8

 New City Programs..... 7.8

 4. Invest in Seed Projects in Prioritized Areas..... 7.8

 5. Engage in Community Outreach..... 7.9

 6. Consider a Property Maintenance Ordinance 7.10

 Community-Based Programs..... 7.11

 7. Help Establish a One-Day Volunteer Event 7.11

 8. Utilize Neighborhood Associations 7.12

 State & Federal Programs 7.13

 9. Investigate the Use of State and Federal Housing Programs..... 7.13

 Table 7-1: State and Federal Housing Programs.....7.13

 Infill Housing 7.15

 10. Establish Standards for Infill Housing..... 7.15

 11. Provide Incentives for Infill Housing 7.16

 12. Create an Appropriate, Affordable Prototype House 7.17



2007 Comprehensive Plan

New Neighborhood Development.....7.19

 13. Support Developments with Mixed Housing Density & Types7.19

 14. Consider Additional Design Guidelines for New Housing Units.....7.19

 15. Consider Additional Design Guidelines for New Neighborhoods.....7.23

Conclusion7.24





Introduction

The purpose of this *Housing Strategies Plan* is to address the present character and quality of housing in Waxahachie and to identify ways in which to preserve or enhance the local housing stock. Unlike many newer cities in Texas, the City of Waxahachie has a rich and long history. The fact that some of the existing housing in Waxahachie is over 100 years old and is in good condition positively adds to the ambiance of the City. However, some of the City's older residential areas have shown signs of deterioration over the years, which can cause a somewhat negative perception of Waxahachie in those areas. If left unabated, these areas could create a ripple effect, thereby impeding other civic objectives, including economic development and private investment.

Thus, it is in the public interest to maintain the local housing stock, and to improve it wherever necessary. It is also in the public interest to ensure that new housing and neighborhoods are created to the highest level of quality possible, so that new areas maintain their value and have stability and sustainability in future years. It will take cooperative action by the City itself, property owners, volunteers, and the development community to achieve the highest possible housing quality and character within each neighborhood area of Waxahachie. This *Housing Strategies Plan* contains policies and recommendations as to how such cooperation action can most effectively take place.

Securing access to decent, affordable housing is fundamental to the American Dream. All Americans want to live in good-quality homes they can afford without sacrificing other basic needs. All Americans want to live in safe communities with ready access to job opportunities, good schools, and amenities. All parents want their children to grow up with positive role models and peer influences nearby. And the overwhelming majority of Americans want to purchase a home as a way to build wealth.

The importance of helping more Americans satisfy these objectives cannot be overstated. Decent, affordable, and accessible housing fosters self-sufficiency, brings stability to families and new vitality to distressed communities, and supports overall economic growth. Very particularly, it improves life outcomes for children. In the process, it reduces a host of costly social and economic problems that place enormous strains on the nation's education, public health, social service, law enforcement, criminal justice, and welfare systems.

Housing very much matters—to the individual, to the family, to the neighborhood, and to the nation.

Why Housing Matters – Principal Recommendations to Congress: A Framework for Change, from University of North Texas Libraries Online





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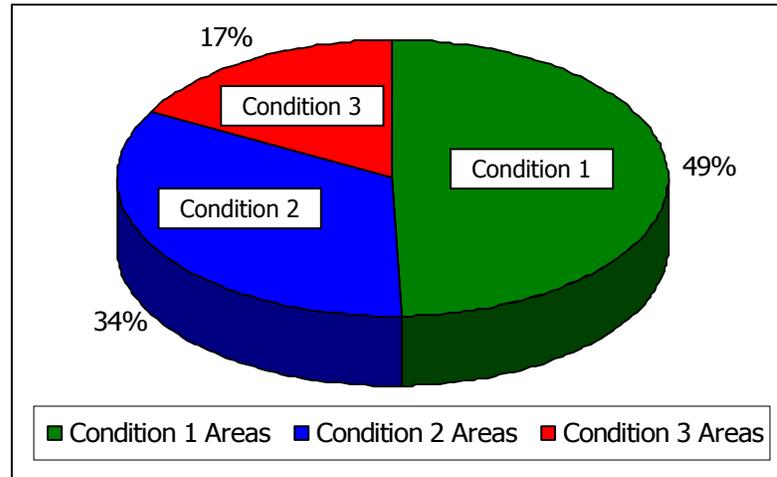




Strategies for Current Housing

To aid in preserving and rehabilitating existing single-family housing units, three action strategies are recommended: *Neighborhood Preservation*, *Housing Maintenance*, and *Rehabilitation and/or Redevelopment*. Plate 7-1 displays the various areas of Waxahachie identified for each type of housing strategy. The areas were identified based on a block-by-block housing assessment of single-family homes conducted in the fall of 2005, results of which are shown in Figure 7-1. These results are discussed in detail in Chapter 1, the *Baseline Analysis*.

Figure 7-1: Housing Condition By Neighborhood Area (Cumulative Acreage), 2005 – City of Waxahachie



Neighborhood Preservation

A preservation strategy is appropriate for those areas identified with predominately sound, quality housing. Approximately 49 percent of the housing areas in Waxahachie have been identified as *Condition 1*, which describes units that are maintained in good physical condition (refer to the *Baseline Analysis* for additional information). In areas identified for the *Neighborhood Preservation Strategy* (shaded in green on Plate 7-1), the City should adopt a policy to sustain and protect existing desirable conditions.

- ❖ This can most successfully be achieved by proactive code enforcement in and around these areas.

- ❖ Also important is ensuring that a complementary relationship with adjacent land uses is provided through careful review of development proposals in proximity to the identified areas.
- ❖ An effective *Neighborhood Preservation Strategy* includes the continued provision and maintenance of adequate utilities and community facilities, such as parks, schools and streets.



This house in the Lake Waxahachie area is representative of a housing area appropriate for Neighborhood Preservation.

Preservation efforts by Waxahachie within these areas should minimize the need for future rehabilitation programs. Appropriate City departments as part of normal planning, community development, and code enforcement practices can implement the *Neighborhood Preservation Strategy*.

Housing Maintenance

The *Housing Maintenance Strategy* is appropriate in areas where the housing units are substantially sound but are in need of minor repairs that homeowners can generally accomplish themselves, such as painting. Those areas with a prevalence of *Condition 2* units are identified with an "HM" on *Plate 7-1*. The intent of the *Housing Maintenance Strategy* is to target areas wherein a relatively small amount of effort could be expended to improve the quality of housing and to reduce the likelihood of further deterioration of the units.



In the fall of 2005, nearly 34 percent of the City's single-family housing areas were categorized as *Condition 2*. As *Plate 7-1* shows, most of the areas recommended for the HM Strategy are in proximity to the older, central area of Waxahachie. The City should encourage homeowner maintenance programs in these areas. City code enforcement officials should continue their efforts, and there should be consistent neighborhood interaction with designated City staff to address neighborhood concerns (discussed in detail later within this chapter within Policy #5). Proactive intervention can result in *Condition 2* areas being improved to *Condition 1*, which would enhance the overall image of Waxahachie and work to preserve and enhance the local housing stock.



This house would be considered Condition 2 due to peeling paint.





Rehabilitation and/or Redevelopment

The *Rehabilitation & Redevelopment Strategy* is appropriate in areas where the housing units are either in need of major repairs, such as a new roof or leaning side, or where housing units are in such a state of disrepair that the area should generally be redeveloped with new housing. (For the purpose of discussions herein, intensive or major repairs are generally those that require a professional to complete.) Areas identified with an "RR" on *Plate 7-1* generally have a large percentage of *Condition 3* blocks of housing. There are two primary purposes behind this strategy: 1) in cases of rehabilitation, to reduce the likelihood of further decline of units in the identified areas; and 2) in cases of redevelopment, to prevent further deterioration of the overall housing areas.

In late 2005, approximately 17 percent of all single-family areas in Waxahachie fell within the *Condition 3* category. If the necessary repairs are not accomplished, these units may deteriorate further, making them virtually uninhabitable. The City should not allow such units to become a serious public safety concern. Also important is the affect that concentrated *Condition 3* areas can have on sound, quality neighborhoods nearby – if the deterioration of housing units within a neighborhood is not addressed, in time the decline will begin to have a negative impact on adjoining areas.



This house (not in Waxahachie) is undergoing a rehabilitation effort.

At the point where housing units need to be cleared, they pose a significant health and safety issue for local citizens; the City, therefore, should continue to be proactive in addressing such structures through demolition. It is recommended that the City continue to identify a set number of dilapidated housing units per year that need to be demolished and allocate funds accordingly within areas designated with an "RR" on *Plate 7-1*. This is further discussed in Policy #2.



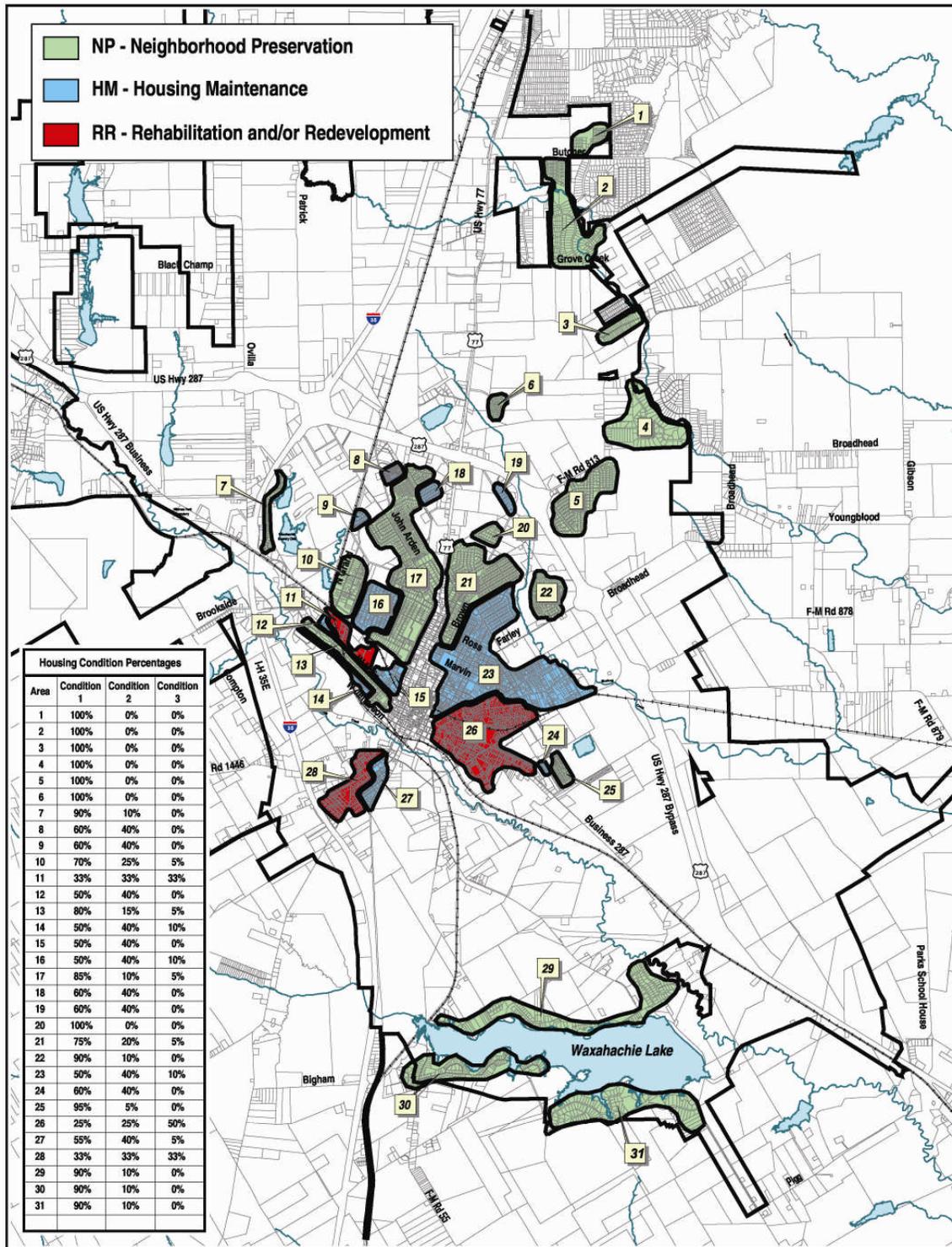




Plate 7-1




Dunkin Seiko & Associates, Inc.
Urban Planning Consultants - Dallas, Texas
Date: October 2007

Housing Strategies





Housing Policies

The *Goals & Objectives* in Chapter 2 and the concepts outlined previously within this chapter provide a basis for these land use policies. The *Implementation Strategies* (Chapter 9) will outline specific ways in which the City can implement these policies, along with other recommended policies from other chapters of the *2007 Comprehensive Plan*. It should be noted that the policies are in no specific order of importance.

Current City Programs to Continue

1. Practice Proactive Code Enforcement

Code enforcement is one way in which the City of Waxahachie can improve local housing unit by unit. Many cities have code enforcement policies that are reactive – that is, violations of general code regulations are not enforced unless and until a complaint is made. Other cities have code enforcement policies that are more proactive – that is, staff is actively looking at areas of the community from a regulatory perspective, and enforcing codes as they see violations on a regular, consistent basis, even without a complaint being made.

Waxahachie should consider adopting a policy of proactive code enforcement. Code enforcement officers should be surveying the City, recognizing and taking care of violations in areas identified as needing a *Home Maintenance or Rehabilitation and/or Redevelopment* strategy on *Plate 7-1*. Public safety issues related to housing, such as sagging roofs and leaning exterior walls, should be of the utmost concern as violations are identified. If necessary, the homeowner can be contacted and informed of any programs that are available to improve the condition of their home. In the implementation of this proactive code enforcement policy, owner-occupied units should be addressed in the same manner as renter-occupied units.

2. Continue Housing Demolition

Regardless of the diligence with which the City undertakes housing maintenance and improvement efforts, some housing units are already past the point of rehabilitation. Areas with a prevalence of such units are identified on *Plate 1-2* of the *Baseline Analysis*, and are recommended for a *Rehabilitation and/or Redevelopment Strategy* on *Plate 7-1* of this chapter. Units that are past the



Information on the City's Current Demolition Program

Number of homes demolished in 2005: 23

Number of homes demolished in 2006: 13

The City has been responsible for approximately 85% of the demolitions, the other 15% are performed by private entities.

The cost for demolition is approximately \$2,500 and \$5,000 per lot, which ends up as a lien against the property, if the City initiates the demolition.

On approximately 25% of the lots, people are rebuilding the homes themselves after demolition (i.e., rebuilding is not being done by a non-profit entity).

point of rehabilitation often present a public safety hazard and need to be torn down, for the safety of area residents and for the well-being of the neighborhood.

The City has had a successful housing demolition program. There is positive effect on area houses and the neighborhood when unsightly and unsafe housing units are demolished; property values are generally increased or stabilized, and the pride and sense of ownership in the neighborhood and nearby homes often increase. For these reasons, it is important for the City to continue its demolition program.

3. Continue to Monitor Neighborhoods to Ensure Safety

Safety is an extremely important factor in whether people feel that their home and neighborhood are quality places to call home. City leaders have recognized that many of the areas with deteriorating housing units have been suffering a residual effect on the related neighborhoods of a decreasing level of safety from petty crime. As a result, the City has worked with civic leaders in these housing areas to identify the safety issues and to increase police patrols to address those issues. The City should continue this public safety patrol program. With an added level of safety, these neighborhoods will be positively affected.

New City Programs

4. Invest in Seed Projects in Prioritized Areas

To improve neighborhood areas once they have begun to deteriorate, an infusion of public funds is often needed. Capital improvements that make an aesthetic



A house in a neighborhood near Downtown Waxahachie.





2007 Comprehensive Plan

difference in a struggling neighborhood can show citizens that their neighborhood is worth investing in for the City, so it should be worth investing in themselves (in terms of improving the outside of their homes, etc.).

- ❖ The City should first prioritize deteriorating neighborhoods based on level of need and location within Waxahachie. For example, the neighborhood areas around Downtown should be a high priority, because Downtown is a draw for visitors and retail sales tax revenue; improving neighborhoods near Downtown could have a positive affect on visitors' perception of Waxahachie as a whole.
- ❖ Certain types of projects, termed seed projects, can make a large visual difference with a minimal amount of capital investment. The funding for these projects can be secured in several ways, such as through the City's general fund, through donations, and through bond programs. Examples of seed projects that the City should consider include:
 - Construction of sidewalks,
 - Neighborhood entry features,
 - Integration of street trees,
 - Purchase of a lot for a neighborhood park, which creates value for nearby lots and the neighborhood itself, as described in detail in the *Neighborhood Livability & Image Enhancement Plan*, Chapter 3,
 - Provision of street lights (possibly in a style that relates to the neighborhood),
 - Provision of special street signs or banners that announce the specific neighborhood area,
 - Resurface streets and/or redesign streets on the basis of CSD concepts (refer to Chapter 4, *Transportation Plan*).



The street trees within this Waxahachie neighborhood give a unique character to the area and houses.

5. Engage in Community Outreach

People generally do not desire to live in substandard housing units; but, there are various reasons they live in these units. Knowledge about the reasons may help the City assess what needs to be done. Waxahachie officials should therefore solicit input on what the specific needs are of the individuals who own and/or live in the areas identified for a *Rehabilitation and/or Redevelopment (RR) Strategy* on *Plate 7-1* of this chapter.

For example, some of these individuals may be elderly and may not be physically able to undertake the repairs needed to improve their homes. In other cases, lack of funds or credit may keep individuals or families from making necessary improvements. Also, people renting property



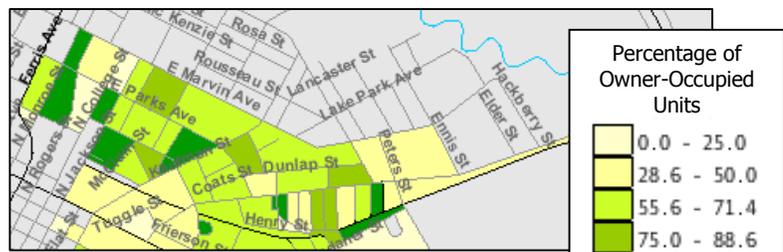
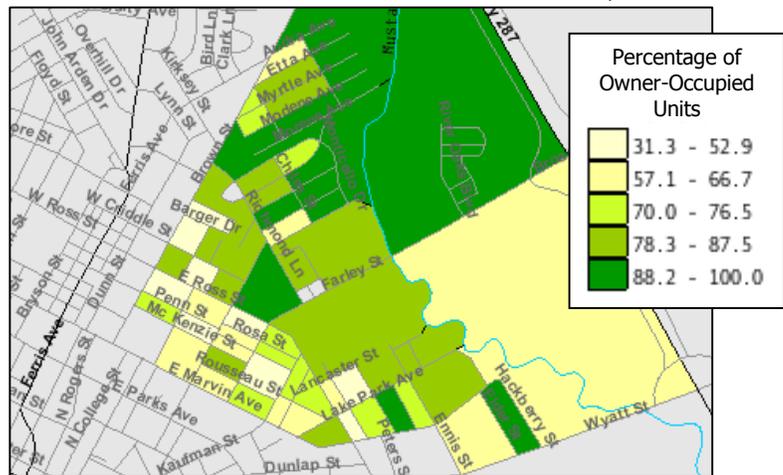
may be having difficulty with the property's owner not undertaking necessary repairs. As one housing authority organization acknowledges, "when resources are limited, there are difficult tradeoffs between making rents affordable to the poorest tenants and ensuring that enough income flows into a property to cover the repairs necessary to sustain the structure's useful life."⁷⁻¹ Knowledge of factors that may be keeping individuals from undertaking proper maintenance will help the City to determine the best steps to take and to allocate funds and services accordingly. Community outreach efforts could be pursued by:

- ❖ Holding community workshops specifically for citizens in these areas of Waxahachie;
- ❖ Performing door-to-door surveys;
- ❖ Working with civic leaders associated with these areas (this has been successful related to the public safety patrols discussed previously) to solicit their efforts to gather such information.

6. Consider a Property Maintenance Ordinance

It is often the case that in deteriorating neighborhoods, the percentage of owner-occupied units is low. This can be seen in an area of Waxahachie that is identified as an area recommended for a *Rehabilitation and/or Redevelopment (RR) Strategy on Plate 7-1* of this chapter; this area is shown in blue to the east of Downtown. The two illustrations below represent the Census information for owner-occupied percentages (by Census tract) for this general area. As can be seen, much of the area has a low percentage of owner-occupied units (represented by the lighter colors in each illustration).

Source: American Factfinder (Census Website), Census 2000 Summary File 1, Thematic Maps – Census Tract 603 and 604 Percent of Occupied Housing Units That Are Owner-Occupied in 2000



Census Block Percentages of Owner-Occupied Housing Units in 2000

⁷⁻¹ Millennial Housing Commission Website: Letter from MHC Co-Chairs Susan Molinari and Richard Ravitch, May 30, 2002; ADDRESS: www.mhc.gov.





In order to address the challenge of ensuring that rental units are properly maintained, some cities have adopted stricter property maintenance ordinances that give a city the ability to inspect rental properties upon a change of occupancy. The inspection could occur when water billing is transferred to a new renter, or could be on the basis of a rental permit (that would be required by the ordinance) issued upon inspection to the person or entity renting the house (or apartment). Fees from such inspections could be earmarked for housing-related efforts, such as one-day volunteer events (discussed below) and seed projects for existing neighborhoods (see Policy #4).

The City should consider such an ordinance to ensure that renter-occupied housing units are well-maintained. The enforcement of such an ordinance may be challenging due to administrative oversight, but it would help ensure that rental units contribute to the quality of the surrounding neighborhood and Waxahachie as a whole.

Community-Based Programs

7. Help Establish a One-Day Volunteer Event

Organized one-day events for improving local housing units can provide an opportunity for citizens to get involved in improving their community, while helping other citizens improve their living situation in a very short period of time. Oftentimes, such events are organized by churches and non-profit organizations, but the City of Waxahachie could sponsor its own such event. The following could be aspects of such a volunteer effort.

- ❖ Organize this effort on an annual basis.
- ❖ Identify targeted areas and concentrate efforts in one or two of these areas each year.

Source: www.tamu.edu *Spotlight: Selfless Service an Aggie Hallmark*



Texas A&M students participate in a one-day student volunteer event called the Big Event.

Source: www.paintyourheartouttampa.com



Citizens of Tampa, Florida, participate in Paint Day 2006 as part of a citywide Paint Your Heart Out Program.



- ❖ Work with local business entities or organization to have supplies and materials donated by public entities or company sponsors, or are bought with donations. One local store, the Home Depot, states that one of their core values is to reach out to communities with philanthropic and volunteer support, bringing together volunteerism, do-it-yourself expertise, product donations and monetary grants to meet critical needs and build affordable communities.⁷⁻²

These types of events may be familiar to City officials and local citizens by various names like *The Big Event*, *Make A Difference Day*, *Paint Your Heart Out*, and *Christmas in April*. These types of volunteer events have been used in many cities and could be used as a template for how to organize and carry out City-sponsored events in Waxahachie.

8. Utilize Neighborhood Associations

- ❖ One way that the City could utilize neighborhood associations toward the betterment of local neighborhoods is to encourage and facilitate their establishment in existing, older neighborhoods.
 - Neighborhood associations are often thought of as being related to new developments (i.e., HOAs). The primary challenge in creating an HOA in existing neighborhoods is getting the support of all of the homeowners, which is necessary because each owner has to agree to be assessed an HOA fee. However, the purpose of HOAs is generally to help maintain and/or improve the neighborhood for which they are created. This is a valid objective for existing, older neighborhoods as well.
 - Establishment of neighborhood associations in older areas of Waxahachie could:
 - Help put positive “pressure” on residents in these areas to maintain and/or upgrade their homes.
 - Provide a liaison to the City, so that a specific contact person could be kept informed of City initiatives, and who would in turn inform the neighborhood. This liaison could also be the person that City officials could contact if there were an issue concentrated in a certain neighborhood, such as a marked increase in crime or a development/redevelopment that might impact the neighborhood.
- ❖ Another way that the City could utilize neighborhood associations is to create a coalition of representatives from these associations. The purpose of this would be to address issues and challenges that are applicable to most neighborhoods in Waxahachie. Through this coalition, the City and neighborhoods could work together more effectively to come up with solutions to housing issues.

⁷⁻² The Home Depot Website, Corporate Giving/Team Depot link. ADDRESS: <http://corporate.homedepot.com>





State & Federal Programs

9. Investigate the Use of State and Federal Housing Programs

There are numerous state and federal programs that are available to cities for improving neighborhood areas. Some of these programs require matching funds, but some do not. The table⁷⁻³ below contains an outline of such programs:

Table 7-1: State and Federal Housing Programs

<i>Program Name</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Funding Information</i>
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	Allocates funds for neighborhood revitalization, economic development and the provision of improved community facilities and services	Participation can be through funds allocated by the State (through the Texas Office of Rural Community Affairs), the County, or the federal HUD Department; the availability of matching funds is considered in the criterion of whether to approve the grant application
Down Payment Assistance Program (DPAP)	Helps very low- and low-income families purchase a home by providing an interest-free loan ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000-depending on the county in which the property is located; assistance is for down payment and eligible closing costs, and the borrower pays the loan when the home is either sold or refinanced, or at the maturity of the original mortgage	No City participation in funding is necessary
HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME)	Provides grants and loans to help local governments, nonprofit agencies, for-profit entities, and public housing agencies provide safe, decent, affordable housing to extremely low-, very low- and low-income families	Funds are through four basic activities: Homebuyer Assistance, Rental Housing Development, Owner-Occupied Housing Assistance, and Tenant-Based Rental Assistance; requires matching funds of at least 25%, which must come from state or local, non-federal sources

⁷⁻³ <http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/overview.htm>; for CDBG information, <http://www.orca.state.tx.us>



2007 Comprehensive Plan

<i>Program Name</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Funding Information</i>
Housing Tax Credit (HTC) Program	Directs private capital towards the creation of affordable rental housing. To qualify for the tax credit, either 20% or more of the project's units must be rent-restricted and occupied by individuals whose income is 50% or less of the median family income; or 40% or more of the units must be rent-restricted and occupied by individuals whose income is 60% or less of the median family income	Developers of low-income rental housing use the tax credit to offset a portion of their federal tax liability in exchange for the production of affordable rental housing
Housing Trust Fund	Awards funds on a competitive basis to nonprofit and for-profit organizations, local governments, public housing authorities, community housing development organizations, and income eligible individuals and families for the acquisition, rehabilitation, and new construction of affordable housing	The program provides funds in the form of zero percent (0%) interest loans for predevelopment expenses including market studies, site plans, architectural and engineering studies, and other pre-construction expenses; no matching funds are required
Texas Bootstrap Loan Program	Provides mortgage loans to very low-income families (60% Area Median Family Income) not to exceed \$30,000 per unit.	Nonprofit organizations can combine these funds with other sources such as those from private lending institutions, local governments, or any other sources
	This program is a self-help construction program, which is designed to provide very low-income families an opportunity to help themselves through "sweat equity." All participants under this program are required to provide at least 60% of the labor necessary to construct or rehabilitate their home	
Texas First-Time Homebuyer Program	Channels below-market interest rate mortgage money through participating Texas lending institutions to eligible families who are purchasing their first home, or to those who have not owned a home in the past 3 years. The program is designed to serve very low- to moderate-income Texas families.	No City participation in funding is necessary

The City should investigate these programs to determine which would be most helpful in addressing local housing challenges. The City may not be able to utilize some block grant programs until it attains a certain population. However, many of these state and federal programs would not require any monetary contribution from Waxahachie, and they would benefit the community through the infusion of funding and related volunteerism that would be part of the implementation of such programs.





Infill Housing

10. Establish Standards for Infill Housing

Infill areas within cities are often very different from outer areas – the character of infill areas is already determined, and homes have existed for long periods of time. For the purposes of this discussion, the term “infill area” as it relates to Waxahachie means any existing neighborhood that was subdivided into residential lots of 9,000 square feet or less prior to 1960, and that is primarily comprised of homes originally constructed with wood siding covering more than fifty percent of the homes’ exteriors.

- ❖ Because infill areas are inherently different than newly developed areas, new and/or rehabilitated homes in infill areas should have different standards applied to them. This can ensure that zoning standards do not indirectly discourage infill housing.
- ❖ The following standards should be applied to infill areas in Waxahachie:
 - Any structure that was originally (and legally) constructed with wood siding should be able to replace such wood siding with cementitious fiber board siding.
 - Cementitious fiber board siding materials (e.g., Hardiplank) should also be permitted on new homes or for improvements to existing homes.
 - Any new home or rehabilitated home should be required to be compatible with other nearby homes along the street, and to compliment and enhance the overall appearance of the neighborhood.



These infill houses (to the right in each picture) are not complementary to existing homes (to the left in each picture).

- The requirement for two off-street, enclosed parking spaces (i.e., a two-car garage) according to the City’s Zoning Ordinance may be too stringent for infill lots. When many of these lots were constructed and the homes were built, the automobile may

not have been widely owned by citizens. In order to keep the integrity of the lot and neighborhood, this standard should be reconsidered, with perhaps just one covered space (not necessarily enclosed) being required.

- The current setback requirements of the traditional zoning districts within the City's ordinance may make building on infill lots an added challenge. Special, less stringent setbacks could be applied to infill areas so that people can comfortably build homes that are appropriate to the current size homes being built today. Setbacks should be compatible with the setbacks of existing homes in the area, and should not differ such that an incompatible aesthetic along the street is created. For example, the illustration above and to the left shows a new house with a much smaller setback, which creates a different view from the road than the original development. The intent of less stringent setback requirements is not to produce "McMansions," but to allow modern-sized houses in a way that is compatible in infill situations.
- Unit types other than single-family should be considered with a Special Use Permit in infill areas.
 - This would encourage a mixture of housing types, as is recommended in Policy #13 of this *Housing Strategies Plan*.
 - This would allow for a housing structure to be approved when it is an improvement to the units it is replacing and/or to the neighborhood as a whole.
 - One of the main criteria for a unit type other than single-family to be approved should be that it is constructed in such a way that is compatible with the other housing units and the neighborhood (refer to the pictures of infill houses on the previous page for incompatible infill examples).

11. Provide Incentives for Infill Housing

- ❖ The City currently has an incentive program whereby up to eighty percent of required permitting and construction fees can be waived for homes rebuilt by low and moderate income families. This program applies to owner-occupied units only. This Comprehensive Plan endorses the continuation of this program.
- ❖ Other incentive programs to encourage infill housing should be explored. The following are examples of such programs, some of which other cities have successfully used.
 - Expand the current City program of waiving development-related fees so that the program can be applicable generally, and not based on income or ownership.





- Examine the feasibility of City participation in the cost of off-site improvements, based on individual project needs. Developers would be required to identify these needs, justify the need for City participation and enter into a development agreement with the City.
- Create an Infill Development Team comprised of specific City staff people to coordinate and expedite infill projects through the development process.

12. Create an Appropriate, Affordable Prototype House

One major challenge for infill housing, especially when a housing unit is demolished and another is constructed, is ensuring affordability. The re-use of infill lots following a demolition has a positive affect on a neighborhood, but the possible displacement of previous residents is not the goal of promoting infill development. Given the need to ensure continued affordability in redeveloped, the City should work to establish a “prototype house” for use on infill lots.

- ❖ Such a house could be designed by local architects, and would be compatible with local older housing. The City could even hold a competition for the best design, which would provide advertisement for the winning architect as well as the prototype house itself. (See an example of this type of competition on the following page.)
- ❖ The cost of the house could be calculated in advance, with different choices for floor plans, building materials, and architectural style.
- ❖ Keeping the cost of such a “prototype” affordable may also make demolition and rebuilding feasible for families with low to moderate incomes.





New Neighborhood Development

13. Support Developments with Mixed Housing Density & Types

As explained in detail in the *Neighborhood Livability & Image Enhancement Plan* (Chapter 3), housing areas with a mix of densities is more sustainable in the long-term than areas with uniform densities. Mixing housing densities provides opportunities for people with varying



These townhomes are designed such that they are compatible with single-family development in the area.

incomes and ages to interact with one another. It also provides people the option of living their lives in one neighborhood, as opposed to people having to find one location to live when they graduate college, another while they raise children, and yet another when they retire.

Previous housing policies in Waxahachie, as in many cities, has not promoted the mixing of housing unit types; rather, it was recommended that differing housing types be separated into different areas of the City. The mixing of single-family lot sizes was previously recommended, however.

As recommended in the *Neighborhood Livability & Image Enhancement Plan* (Chapter 3), this Housing Strategies Plan also recommends a mix of densities. Therefore, new housing developments should be encouraged to have a range of housing types and lot sizes provided. This would prevent the separation of housing types and densities that is typical of the way in which cities are currently developing, and would create more sustainable neighborhood areas in Waxahachie for future generations to enjoy.

14. Consider Additional Design Guidelines for New Housing Units

One of the major challenges the City has faced in recent years is the appearance of homes in newly developed neighborhoods. In many of these neighborhoods, housing units are constructed such that they have similar facades, which is a common occurrence with volume homebuilders. This often results in a monotonous appearance for the neighborhood, and does not meet the standards for quality and uniqueness for which the City strives.

Waxahachie’s Zoning Ordinance does have requirements for the exterior materials that must be used for new housing units. However, the City should consider additional design guidelines



for brick and other exterior materials that would help achieve its objectives of more unique housing choices for its citizens. The following are recommended for inclusion as additional standards within the City's zoning regulations for new housing units.

❖ Roof Pitch

- Require a minimum 7:12 ratio pitch. The City currently has this requirement for the Rural Residential zoning district, but this should be applied to each housing unit constructed.
- Provide varying roof planes and ridgelines to eliminate identical roof ridgelines. The design of each unit should minimize large expanses of the roof to ensure the roof does not dominate the overall view of the building elevation. The use of dormers and gables should be encouraged.



These houses have rear-entry garages, front porches, dormers, varying front facades, and varying building materials. The neighborhood has sidewalks, street trees and unique street lighting (far right side of the illustration).

❖ Garage Location and Design

- A minimum of one-third of the houses in each subdivision should be arranged such that the garage is not the dominant visual architectural feature by incorporating at least one of the following:
 - A garage that is detached from the house and is connected to the house with a breezeway or sidewalk.
 - A garage that is accessed from a driveway at the rear of the lot (i.e., back-entry).
 - A garage that is accessed from a side turn-in driveway at the front facade (i.e., j-drive).
 - A garage with a second story that is enhanced with windows, gables, or a porch.





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- ❖ Front Facades – A minimum number of front facades should be required to be used for developments of a certain size, and there should be a minimum number of lots between similar front facades. For example, for a neighborhood with 50 or more lots, a minimum of six front facades should be used, with no duplication within four lots.
- ❖ Front Setbacks – An allowance to vary front setbacks should be considered. The result of such variation would be a less monotonous view from the road. An example of such a standard is that one-third of the lots would be permitted to have a front yard setback reduced by a maximum of five feet, while another one-third of the lots would be required to have a front yard setback increased by a maximum of five feet, thereby maintaining the average front yard setback that is required overall. It should be noted that an administrative mechanism would have to be created to allow City staff oversight of this type of regulation.
- ❖ Landscaping – Requiring landscaping for each housing unit should be considered. Oftentimes, developers eliminate trees as the development process proceeds because it is more cost effective to not have to build around the trees. However, this creates a barren and monotonous look. Many cities require two large shade trees within the front yard in front of the front building line, and then require a developer to choose from various options for additional landscaping. Options often include more trees, a certain number of shrubs, or complete living groundcover (i.e., sod).
- ❖ Exterior Materials & Related Design – The appropriateness of various types of building materials for housing units has been the subject of debate in Waxahachie, as well as other cities throughout the Metroplex. The City currently has a requirement for a minimum of 75 percent masonry for each unit, and cementitious fiber board (commonly known as hardiplank) does not count toward this 75-percent requirement. However, the *materials* used on a housing unit are generally less important than the *design* of the unit. It is therefore recommended that the City consider additional standards for each housing unit, and different standards for brick and cementitious fiberboard materials. Such standards should be slightly different for units with masonry exterior materials than for units with cementitious fiber board exterior materials. The following are recommended standards.
 - Housing units with masonry materials should have:



Landscaping adds to the aesthetic appeal of this house.



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- Front-entry garages that are setback from the front building line of the unit by at least 10 feet.
- Architectural relief such that the unit has a minimum and maximum wall length. This will eliminate very narrow or wide expanses of wall that result in an unattractive façade.
- If two-story, the unit should have a second story that is a lesser percentage than first story. This will eliminate the masonry “box” look shown in the illustration to the right.



- Housing units with cementitious fiber board should have:
 - Side- or rear-entry garages.
 - Architectural relief such that the unit has a minimum and maximum wall length. This will eliminate very narrow or wide expanses of wall that result in an unattractive façade. (This is the same recommendation as for housing units with masonry materials.)
 - If two-story, the unit should have a second story that is a lesser percentage than first story, as shown in illustration to the right. This will eliminate the “box” look. (This is the same recommendation as for housing units with masonry materials.)
 - A minimum number of interesting architectural elements, such as:
 - ♦ Front porches,
 - ♦ Multiple pane (divided light) windows,
 - ♦ Decorative columns and railings within the front porch area,
 - ♦ Gables with windows,
 - ♦ Dormers,
 - ♦ Bay windows.
 - Walls which face a public street other than an alley, must contain a minimum of thirty percent (30%) of the wall area in windows or doors.





The addition of the above-listed standards into the City's zoning regulations would help achieve better design of new housing units developed within Waxahachie.

15. Consider Additional Design Guidelines for New Neighborhoods

In addition to the housing units themselves being unique and different, it is also important for Waxahachie's neighborhoods to be unique and different. If citizens can find a home in a neighborhood that is extremely similar to their neighborhood in Waxahachie, they are less likely to remain in their neighborhood as their life circumstances change. However, if their neighborhood has certain amenities that makes it hard to find another that is similar, they are more likely to remain their through their full life-cycle. The concept of designing neighborhoods for people's full life-cycle is also discussed in the *Neighborhood Livability & Image Enhancement Plan* (Chapter 3). The following specific requirements should be considered for inclusion in the City's regulations to benefit the future design of neighborhoods.

- ❖ Pedestrian Connectivity – Providing for pedestrian connections from neighborhood-to-neighborhood and from neighborhoods to adjacent retail would allow people living in Waxahachie an alternative to the automobile for short trips. Oftentimes, screening walls and other types of buffer treatments can hinder pedestrian connectivity. Even though these site elements add a more pleasant aesthetic along roadways, these site elements can serve as barriers by cutting off pedestrian access. In the future, pedestrian connections should be integrated into neighborhoods to provide access to adjacent neighborhoods, as well as neighborhood retail areas; screening elements established should be provided with respect to this recommendation.
- ❖ Focal Feature or Amenity – Great neighborhoods are often associated with a special feature or amenity that sets the neighborhood apart from others in the community. Examples include such things as a park, gazebo, golf course, fountain, unique entryway, and trail system. To achieve more unique and sustainable neighborhoods, the City should require one or more focal features or amenities as part of the development process as new developments are approved.



This amenity provides the neighborhood with a unique feature.



An effective way to accomplish this would be for the City to provide a list of amenities that would be acceptable and allow the developer to choose one or two to provide from this list.

- ❖ Street Trees – One of the visual elements that give older neighborhoods a unique charm is the presence of trees lining the streets. This aesthetic can be achieved in new developments as well, albeit over time, with the addition of standards for street trees within Waxahachie’s Subdivision Ordinance or Zoning Ordinance (as appropriate).
 - Street trees should be required along all streets within single-family and two-family developments,
 - Street trees should be planted at regular intervals and with a minimum caliper at the time of planting.
 - The location of underground utilities and sidewalks should be coordinated with the location of street trees.
 - Trees should generally be located between sidewalks and curbs to create shade and a feeling of safety for pedestrians.

Conclusion

This *Housing Strategies Plan* represents an important series of recommendations and policies for maintaining and improving housing and neighborhoods in Waxahachie. The City has a wonderful blend of historic and new neighborhoods that are not found in many Texas cities. The policies herein include endorsement of certain current City housing programs, concepts for new housing programs and rehabilitation efforts, and concepts for improving upon standards for new housing units and neighborhoods. If followed, these recommendations and policies should help the City maintain its current housing stock and improve its future housing neighborhood areas to ensure that quality and sustainability are key characteristics of future residential development in Waxahachie.

