



CITY BLUEPRINT MIDPOINT UPDATE

December 18, 2017

INTRODUCTION

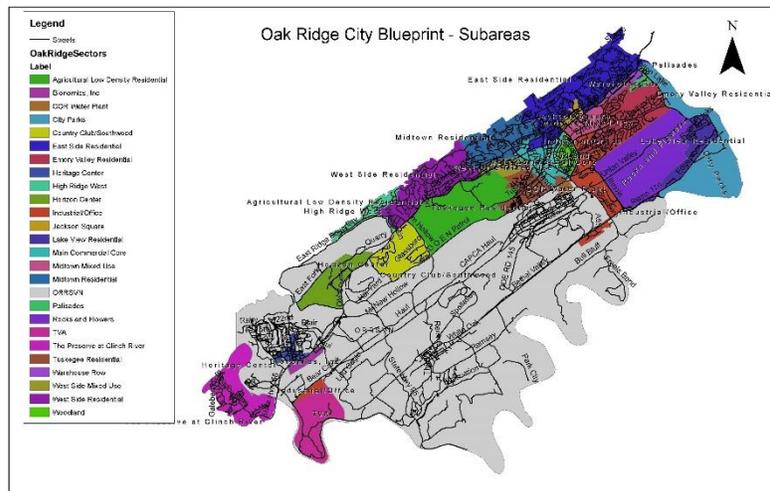
Planning has been central to the development of the City of Oak Ridge from the very beginning. Early in its history as the centerpiece of the Manhattan Project in World War II, a plan for the development of the city was prepared by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. A planning commission was established and staff employed when the city was transferred to civilian control and became a public entity after the war. Since then a variety of long range plans and policy documents have been developed. The adoption of a zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations were important milestones along the way. Public guidance of land development activities has become a routine part of local government activity in Oak Ridge.

1. What is the City Blueprint?

The planning commission decided in 2016 that fresh planning was needed. It would build on past efforts, but be focused in a different way. It would begin with attention to smaller sub-areas of the city. It would involve citizens in identifying problems and finding ways to improve the city. This was the beginning of the Blueprint process. The effort was announced to the public with a kickoff meeting on January 27, 2017. Approximately 500 people attended that event.

2. What has been done?

At the beginning of the process the city was divided into sub-areas, thirteen residential and twelve non-residential. A map showing the sub-area boundaries is included in this report. The Blueprint process for each sub-area has included the preparation of a report by the planning staff and commission; an open house in the sub-area where citizens are invited to review documents, talk to staff and commissioners, and submit written comments;



followed by an email summarizing the results, sent out to those who attend the open house.

3. Revised Schedule

The Blueprint process is now at about its midpoint, in terms of work to be done. Reports have been done and open houses held for nine residential sub-areas. Four sub-areas remain to be done. One open house is planned for three sub-areas soon after the first of the year. The last one will occur soon thereafter. Then work will begin on the non-residential sub-areas. The open house events for some of the non-residential sub-areas may be combined. Some will not need an open house because there is essentially only one property owner. A tentative schedule is included below that includes the accomplished events and those that are planned.

COMPLETED:

Subarea	Open House	Location
Woodland	5/15/17	Woodland Elementary
Country Club, Southwood & High Ridge West	7/27/17	Oak Ridge Country Club
Emory Valley Residential & Lakeview Residential	8/24/17	Jefferson Middle School
East Side Residential & Palisades	9/28/17	Glenwood Elementary
Midtown Residential	10/26/17	Robertsville Middle

THE MIDPOINT:

Summarizing the findings from work done to date, preparation of the Midpoint Report and outreach communications.

UPCOMING:

Subarea	Open House	Location
Tuskegee Residential, West Side Residential & Agricultural Low Density Residential	1/25/18	Scarboro Community Center
The Preserve at Clinch River	2/8/18	Facility on-site
Jackson Square	2/22/18	Oak Ridge Playhouse
Warehouse Row & Industrial/Office	3/8/18	Civic Center
Midtown Mixed Use & Main Commercial Core	3/29/18	Chamber of Commerce
City Parks/Open Space	TBD	TBD
TVA, Horizon Center, Bionomics, Heritage Center, ORRSVN, Rocks & Flowers, COR Water Plant	4/19/18	Civic Center

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

The residential sub-areas vary by size and location, but many of them have common characteristics. The investigations of staff and the feedback from citizens attending open house events has provided two kinds of lists. One is a list of observations that tend to be repeated among several people in a sub-area and among people living in different sub-areas. Different neighborhoods tend to share some of the same positive attributes and some of the same problems. Here are themes we see in the feedback we have received.

Pedestrian Mobility

The people of Oak Ridge like to be able to get around on foot. This comes out in several kinds of remarks. There is an interest in sidewalks, in having them and in their state of repair. The presence of sidewalks is better than one would find in many cities of this age, but there are problems of maintenance and encroachment by fences, utility poles and other barriers. A major sidewalk improvement program would be a substantial financial challenge for the city. There is also a pretty strong interest in the trail system and its potential improvement.

Code Enforcement

Legacy houses and other older homes are a mix of pride and problems. Some have been beautifully maintained, modernized and expanded. But some have not been well maintained and the visible lack of maintenance is a challenge to occupants and their neighbors. Many residents of older neighborhoods are expressing the desire for effective code enforcement. Those comments may not reflect a full understanding of the legal, financial and human challenges involved, but they express a desire to maintain and improve neighborhoods that should be heard. It is also noted that the concern about building maintenance and blight is not limited to residential neighborhoods. People see and respond to commercial and industrial blight, whether it is in their own neighborhood or not.

There is a Lot to Like

Residents of Oak Ridge have pride in their community and they see the things that set it apart. The Greenbelt is an unusual asset and is visible from most streets. There are nice neighborhood parks convenient to most places in the city. In addition, the city occupies a very scenic location. It provides beautiful views from many home sites and through the windshield as one travels throughout the city. The trail system is also viewed as an asset, although that view is somewhat counterbalanced by a desire for better maintenance.

Traffic

A system of arterial, collector and local streets provides generally good service with comparatively few delays. But there are legitimate concerns about specific situations. Most of the complaint-oriented concerns have been about speeding within neighborhoods or near schools, and difficult turning movements along the Oak Ridge Turnpike and Illinois Avenue.

More Jazz Please

This comes in several forms. There is a hunger for the city to be more interesting, more urbane. People want more choices in restaurants, entertainment opportunities, and shopping. It is not a request for more franchise restaurants or retailers. It is a request for the unique and individualized opportunities that come out of the imagination of local individuals. Oak Ridgers want the opportunity to be surprised and delighted by Oak Ridge!

A second kind of list is produced by the suggestions and ideas that come from individuals. They tend to be unique, one-of-a-kind ideas for an improvement. These will be retained as a collection and reviewed as the staff and planning commission move later from gathering information to development of plans and policies.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

All of the Blueprint sub-area studies will be completed in early 2018. The public feedback we get in response to those reports and the input we gather from our midpoint communications will provide a long list of ideas and proposals to consider. Once all the sub-area studies are completed, the planning staff will begin pulling information together into a summary Blueprint plan. It should provide guidance for the coordinated development of the city as a whole as well as its sub-areas. We will share information about that plan as it evolves and continue to ask for your feedback.