

neighborhood
action plan
Oakridge



Strategy
for
Vital
NEIGHBORHOODS

garland neighborhoods are where it's @!

City of Garland
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June 2007

Greetings!

On behalf of the entire City of Garland organization, I wish to convey our support for all of Garland's neighborhoods and the neighbors who are working so hard to keep them vital places to live, work, shop, learn and invest. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the efforts to create the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area Action Plan. We should all be proud of our neighborhoods and look forward to a vibrant future for them through the combined efforts of neighbors, municipal government, and partners throughout the community.

The City of Garland recognizes partnerships are key to maintaining and creating healthy neighborhoods. The continued prosperity of Garland relies upon the vitality of its neighborhoods. By working with residents, business and property owners, real estate professionals, school officials, non-profits, and the faith-community in a coordinated manner to address neighborhood and City-wide issues, we will set a new standard for neighborhoods throughout Garland and build capacity for citizens to effectively manage their neighborhoods.

It will take the combined effort of neighbors, the community, and the City of Garland to carry out the actions contained in this Action Plan. The City of Garland organization is a committed leader and partner in these efforts and seeks to join with others in taking advantage of the tremendous momentum growing throughout the city to move Garland and its neighborhoods forward together.

With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William E. Dollar".

William E. Dollar
City Manager





Introduction

The purpose of the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area Action Plan is to put forward a set of strategies to enhance the vitality of the neighborhoods within the Neighborhood Program Area. The strategies suggested in the Action Plan are in response to the priorities identified by the neighbors participating in the planning process. It is not assumed the strategies in the Action Plan will by themselves completely solve the issues; moreover, the priorities addressed in the Action Plan are not exhaustive. Numerous activities and issues outside of this document also influence the future of these neighborhoods.

The key to the successful realization of the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area Action Plan is purposeful and coordinated enactment of the strategies set forth in it. Working together with the same goals in mind, all of the partners

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involved must be committed to the vitality of the area and the enrichment of the lives of those living, working, and investing there. New and stronger partnerships between neighbors, the City of Garland, and resources throughout the community will help neighbors reach their goals for their neighborhoods.

This Action Plan is among the first to be completed as a part of the *Strategy for Vital Neighborhoods*. Initiated by the City Council and City Manager in 2006, the Strategy for Vital Neighborhoods seeks to create a framework for neighbors, the City of Garland, and all partners to work together to maintain and enhance the vitality of all of Garland's neighborhoods.

At the core of the *Strategy* is the City of Garland Neighborhood Philosophy:

Recognizing a strength of Garland is the character of its neighborhoods, we will work in partnership with neighborhood stakeholders and community resources to build a stronger community and keep Garland an excellent place to live, work, play, and invest.

This Neighborhood Philosophy identifies neighborhoods as a defining element of the City of Garland and highlights the relationship between neighborhood quality and the overall quality of the city. The Neighborhood Philosophy also embraces the concept of partnerships between neighbors, the City of Garland organization, and the community to build





stronger neighborhoods. Finally, it speaks to the options individuals, families, and businesses have when choosing where to reside, work, and locate. All of those decisions are influenced by the perception of whether or not it makes economic sense. By taking action to create a bright future for the neighborhoods of Garland, the decisions to live, work, and invest here continue to be sound.

The *Strategy for Vital Neighborhoods* also has three primary envisioned outcomes. Specifically, they are:

1. Stabilized and improved neighborhoods
2. Increase sense of community
3. Increased neighborhood management capacity

Garland's neighborhoods are all different. There are older neighborhoods and newer neighborhoods. Some are well-maintained, while others are showing signs of age and neglect. Many are organized, with either a mandatory homeowners association or voluntary neighborhood groups. Most importantly, all have the potential to be neighborhoods of choice, places where families and businesses choose to live and invest. The *Strategy* seeks to offer tools to restore and revitalize older neighborhoods and to maintain newer neighborhoods.

The *Strategy for Vital Neighborhoods* is a program for all of Garland's neighborhoods. Numerous programs and activities all neighborhoods can

utilize to make themselves stronger. The Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area was selected as one of four pilot areas to focus additional time and resources to address specific issues. Each neighborhood was chosen for several reasons. Among the reasons for making the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area one of the pilots are:

- The area has several well-organized neighborhood-based organizations consisting of both voluntary associations and mandatory home owner associations
- The neighborhood organizations have a generally high level of neighborhood management capacity
- The neighborhood organizations have a good relationship with the City of Garland
- The organizations may be groomed to serve as mentors to other neighborhood associations
- The Oakridge neighborhoods are easily identified in Garland and in the wider community



Looking North on Big Oaks Dr.





Because of these characteristics, the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area was selected for this pilot phase. The processes, programs, and policies developed through this effort may serve as templates in other neighborhoods.

The Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area Action Plan is the result of the work of many people investing their time and efforts. Included in the Action Plan is:

- A timeline outlining the process for developing the Action Plan
- A Neighborhood Story telling the past, present, and future of the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area
- The priority issues identified by the neighbors and strategic actions to address them
- A presentation of neighborhood management and specific actions for the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area
- And a description of how this Action Plan will be accomplished and moved forward to realize a well-managed and vital Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area.



Corner of Oakcrest Dr. & Beaver Run



North of the Oakridge Country Club



**Current Street light with
Telecommunication Device**





Timeline

The Vital Neighborhoods process involved several steps intended to involve both neighborhood residents and a wide range of city staff and departments.

- July 2006:** Selected as one of four pilot Neighborhood Program Areas
- October 2006:** City of Garland's *Strategy for Vital Neighborhoods* presented at Neighborhood Summit
- November 2006:** Kickoff Meeting at Oakridge Country Club initiating the planning process in the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area
- December 2006:** Neighborhood Priorities identified
- January 2007:** Issue Resolution Groups (IRGs) begin developing solutions to Neighborhood Priorities
- April 2007:** IRGs present proposed actions to Oakridge Neighborhood Program Team
- May 2007:** Proposed actions for Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area approved by Neighborhood Resource Team
- June 2007:** Presentation of proposed actions to Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area at Holford Recreation Center
- July 2007:** Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area Action Plan presented to City Council
- ONGOING:** Action Plan Implementation
Neighborhood Management Capacity Building
Neighborhood Improvement





The Neighborhood Story

This Neighborhood Story is intended as a snapshot of the area’s past and present and a preview of what the neighborhood might be in the future. The story of the Oakridge neighborhoods is in some ways a familiar story—with a number of actors and actresses playing their roles, a series of ups and downs, and looking forward to a happy ending. The neighborhood story was assembled by gathering information through talking with residents during the planning process..

The Oakridge area is among the best known neighborhoods in Garland. Enclosed within an attractive brick screening wall, it is bounded on the north by Belt Line Road, on the east by Shiloh Road, on the south by Buckingham

Road, and on the west by Jupiter Road. At the center of the neighborhood is the Oakridge Country Club. One may think the Oakridge Country Club and the neighborhoods surrounding it were developed together; however, this is not so. The Oakridge Country Club was laid out a few decades before the first homes in the Oakridge area were built. It was known as the Duck Creek Golf Course, after the creek meandering through the layout and cutting through the neighborhood from northwest to southeast .

Today, the country club draws its membership from nearby communities. It is not a prerequisite for membership to live in Oakridge; nor is it a requirement for Oakridge residents to belong to the country club, yet many of the homeowners are members. The





Oakridge Country Club provides a scenic setting for the neighborhood as well as meeting space for neighborhood associations and community groups. They are a good neighbor within the Oakridge area.

In the later years of the 1970s, the Oakridge neighborhoods were first planned. A master plan for the area was approved by the Garland City Council in 1979. The first section of the neighborhood to be built was in the northwestern quadrant along Ridge Oak Drive coming off of Jupiter Road. The other eleven sections of the Oakridge Neighborhood followed, with all of them being platted during the 1980s. Within the Oakridge Neighborhood are homes of various sizes and styles—from golf course estates to duplexes. Residents and visitors remark on the distinctive, well-designed homes in Oakridge.

Though perhaps not apparent to some, the Oakridge area also contains several other neighborhoods. The Briar Oaks and Oakcrest Neighborhoods are located in the southwest portion of the area. These homes were built in the early part of the 1980s and are connected to the Oakridge Neighborhood; however, they were developed with independent mandatory home owner associations (HOAs) as opposed to the Oakridge Neighborhood being represented by a voluntary neighborhood association, the Oakridge Neighborhood Association.

Another neighborhood is Oakridge on the Creek. Located off of Buckingham Road in the southeastern section of the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area, this neighborhood is the newest of the

neighborhoods, being laid out in 2004. Like the other parts of the Oakridge area, the homes have character and blend well with their surroundings. As the planning process was wrapping up, another neighborhood was being platted in the southeast corner of the area. It is preliminarily being called Oakhaven on the Creek and will have homes located on two culs-de-sac off of Shiloh Road.

Filling out the residential portion of the neighborhood is a large apartment complex dominating the northeast section of the Oakridge area. Originally built as three separate complexes in the early 1980s, it is now owned and managed as a single complex. Having more than 900 units, it is the largest collection of apartments in Garland. Acquired by a new ownership group in 2006, the apartment complex is undergoing a renovation.

Neighborhoods are more than houses. There are also churches in the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area. Two are located along Belt Line Road and another pair is sited on Jupiter Road.

Oakridge Statistics Housing Data	
Total housing units	2,227
Rental housing units	948
Single family housing units	1,279
Owner-occupied	97%
Renter-occupied	3%
Average assessed value	\$163,957
Average age of housing	21 years
Average size of housing	2,010 sq. ft.

* Sources: U.S. Census 2000
Dallas County Appraisal District





Notably, there are no schools located within the Oakridge neighborhoods. Parks are also absent; however, the Oakridge Country Club does provide open space and Holford Park and Recreation Center are just across Shiloh Road.

As typical with suburban development, the main intersections are developed with retail and commercial uses. Though located just beyond the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area, Oakridge Plaza is thought of as one of the neighborhoods' shopping areas. Over the years, it has been home to a number of shops and restaurants. The anchor tenant left the center in the early part of this decade; however, the space is currently being renovated for an Asian-themed collection of stores and restaurants.

A second retail area is located at Buckingham and Jupiter Roads. The main draw is a home improvement center. Additional commercial uses are strung along the north side of Belt Line Road and at the intersection with Shiloh Road.

Large vacant tracts of land are located outside the edges of the Oakridge area. In the coming years they may be developed with other retail opportunities for the residents of the Oakridge and



Big Oaks Dr., near Oakridge Country Club

other nearby neighborhoods or homes for more neighbors.

The residents of the Oakridge neighborhoods are known to be friendly and proud of the place they call home. They are active in their neighborhood organizations, helpful, and want to keep their neighborhood a "nice place to live". The people of the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area are diverse in their backgrounds, ages, and cultures. This diversity is certainly an asset.

Moving into the future the Oakridge neighborhoods are planning to maintain and restore its unique qualities, engage and involve more neighbors in the neighborhood organizations, attract and maintain quality retail and restaurants to the area, and to keep it a neighborhood of choice in Garland.

Oakridge Statistics		
Age Distribution		
Total Population	4,956	100%
Under 18	998	20%
18 to 61	3,449	70%
62 and over	509	10%

* Source: 2000 Census





Neighborhood Priorities

During the process of working with the Oakridge neighbors, several key priorities were identified:

- Reducing the number of parked cars on the street
- Attracting and keeping quality retail and restaurants in the Oakridge area
- Replacing street lights with a design similar to the original
- Updating the landscaping at neighborhood entrances and around screening walls
- Developing and implementing neighborhood marketing strategies

Reducing the Number of Parked Cars on the Street

Neighbors in the program area have expressed a frustration about the number of cars parked on the street. Parking is allowed on the street, but has become a growing concern over time.

There are several factors contributing to this issue. The first is the increase in the number of drivers residing within a household often results in more cars than existing on-site parking. The consequence is generally some cars are parked on the street.

Another change is an increase in garages being used for general storage instead of parking for vehicles. This puts more strain on the available parking in the driveway and also may result in more cars being parked on the street.

In some areas of the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area, the cars parked on the street are not parked legally. One instance of this is found in some culs-de-sac. Cars are often parked perpendicularly to the curb, not parallel as they should be. This results in a somewhat untidy look for the area. In general, the residents want this issue addressed because it detracts from their neighborhoods.

Attracting and keeping quality retail and restaurants in the Oakridge area

Although there are many national and local retail and restaurant chains in the vicinity of the Oakridge neighborhoods, there are also some recent closings in the area resulting in vacant buildings. The decisions to shutter or relocate these businesses are generally not a reflection on the neighborhood's viability as a place to invest, but are due to factors and influences well-beyond the bounds of the neighborhood. However, the loss of businesses and the growth of the retail and dining opportunities in other areas of

Oakridge Statistics Population Data	
	Total
White	3,367
Black/African American	352
American Indian /Alaska Native	41
Asian	910
Native Hawaiian / other Pacific Islander	0
Some Other Race	204
Two or more races	82
Total	4,956
% Hispanic descent	8.7%

* Source: U.S. Census 2000





Along Oak Point Dr.

Garland have made quality economic development an issue for neighbors in Oakridge.

Replacing street lights with a design similar to the original

When the homes in the Oakridge Neighborhood were first built, the developer chose to install a more decorative pole and light, or luminaire, than those found in other neighborhoods. These lights became an amenity and source of pride for the homeowners because they made the Oakridge Neighborhood unique among Garland neighborhoods. When the Briar Oaks, Oakcrest, and Oakridge on the Creek neighborhoods were constructed, the City standard streetlights were installed at the developer's request.

Over the years, as streetlights needed to be repaired or replaced, Oakridge did not have the funds to maintain the decorative streetlights, and agreed Garland Power & Light would replace damaged streetlights with the City standard pole or luminaire as needed. This has resulted in a hodgepodge of streetlights. Neighbors have expressed their desire to have a uniform streetlight design, similar to the original lights, installed in order to upgrade the appearance and increase neighborhood pride.

Updating the landscaping at neighborhood entrances and around screening walls

Two of the defining characteristics of the Oakridge neighborhoods are the landscape entries and the screening walls. Both have been attractively maintained through the years. The entrances are generally a combination of brickwork and flowering plants. The screening walls all have a similar appearance. Neighbors feel there is an opportunity to upgrade the landscaping at the entryways and in strategic locations around the perimeter screening walls to give a new level of beauty and appeal to the neighborhoods within them.

Developing and implementing neighborhood marketing strategies

The neighborhoods of the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area are among the most well known and well regarded neighborhoods in Garland. Neighbors want to maintain this position in the community. In order to do so, they would like to be able to better present the neighborhood to potential residents and businesses as an attractive, friendly, golf course community with nearby shopping and dining, as well as convenient to locations throughout the Metroplex.





Coming Up With The Solutions

The solutions to the priority issues proposed in the following pages were developed by neighbors and City of Garland staff. To develop the proposed actions, City staff and neighborhood residents examined their own roles in solving the priority issues and then generated a series of actions that they could undertake to affect positive change on the topics. The City and neighbor actions were then combined to create a series of complementary actions to address the key issues of the neighborhood. Creative actions generated by both neighbors and staff are included in the plan. Together these actions make up the content of the plan and exhibit the partnership between the City of Garland and the neighborhood residents.

The concern with on-street parking was shared with other neighborhoods. The solutions here were generated by an Issue Resolution Group. The purpose of this work team was to look at potential actions from a cross-departmental perspective. Members of the Issue Resolution Groups discussed what is currently being done by their departments to address the issue. Next, they brainstormed possible actions, incorporating existing policies and programs, as well as developing some new ones. These ideas were then refined to those determined to be most likely to have a positive effect.

Finally, the Neighborhood Resource Team, a panel of management-level City staffers assembled to guide the implementation of the *Strategy for Vital Neighborhoods*, was presented the possible actions for their approval. After the approved actions were determined, an implementation schedule was developed.

The final two priority issues regarding maintaining and attracting quality retail and restaurants and marketing the Oakridge neighborhoods have been designated as City-wide priorities. City staff will work with the Garland Economic Development Partnership and the Garland Chamber of Commerce to develop strategies to make the nearby commercial areas more attractive to local and national retailers and restaurants.

The City is also developing a branding campaign to market Garland. Along with this effort, the Office of Neighborhood Vitality and Public Information Office are working on neighborhood marketing initiatives for neighbors and neighborhood organizations to implement. The results of the economic development and marketing efforts will be seen in the coming months.

It will take the combined efforts of neighbors, City of Garland staff, and partnerships with community resources to accomplish the work of realizing these actions. The specific actions, project leads, partners in the activities, and a schedule for implementation are included in the next section of the Action Plan.





Solutions For Oakridge

The solutions produced through the work of the neighbors and City staff have been grouped by the priorities identified by the people of the neighborhood. Each priority has one or more objectives identifying specific activities to be pursued to accomplish the priority. The actions listed call for activity by neighbors and/or City staff to accomplish the objectives.

Priority Reducing the number of parked cars on the street

Objective: Reduce Number of Illegally Parked Cars

Action 1: *Make neighbors aware of codes and laws regarding parking and encourage reporting of violations.*

Start: Ongoing

End: Ongoing

Lead: Police, Code Compliance

Partners: Neighborhood Vitality, Public Information Officer, Neighbors

Informing neighbors about existing codes is an initial effort. This item may be included in the proposed Good Neighbor Guide. Opportunities must also be created for neighbors to talk to other neighbors about proper parking.

Action 2: *Investigate legislative and judicial obstacles to parking enforcement.*

Start: June 2007

End: November 2007

Lead: Transportation

Partners: Code Compliance, Police, Transportation, Courts

Research will be done to see what is working in Texas communities regarding neighborhood parking issues. Changes may be proposed to existing policies and procedures.





Objective: Decreasing Amount of on Street Parking.

Action 1: *Increase the amount of off-street improved surfaces for parking*

Start: January 2008

End: Ongoing

Lead: Neighbors

Partners: Building Inspection

Inform neighbors on opportunities to add off-street parking and permit process.

Action 3: *Install additional lighting by neighbors and through the Guard Light Program*

Start: January 2008

End: Ongoing

Lead: Neighbors

Partners: GP&L, Police

Some neighbors do not use the parking in the rear of their property because it is poorly lit. Additional lighting may be added by neighbors on their properties or in conjunction with the Guard Light program offered by GP&L. The Guard Light Program installs additional lighting for alleys and properties in exchange for a homeowner's agreement to pay the nominal fee for operating the light.

Action 4: *Assemble a list of options to restrict parking in residential neighborhoods*

Start: June 2007

End: November 2007

Lead: Transportation

Partners: Planning, Police, Code Compliance

The purpose is to create a menu of options for the Neighborhood Management Pilot Program mentioned on the next page. The City will also investigate ways to lower the cost to neighbors to provide additional off-street parking.





Action 5: Create a Neighborhood Parking Management pilot program.

Start: June 07
End: November 07
Lead: Transportation
Partners: Planning, Police, Code Compliance, Neighbors

The pilot program will address neighborhood parking management needs.

Priority **Improving landscaping in neighborhood**

Objective: Take steps to achieve improved entryways

Action 1: Develop master landscape plan

Start: January 2008
End: Ongoing
Lead: Neighborhood Associations
Partners: Parks and Recreation

Working with a landscape architect to develop some concepts for the entryways and along screening walls will work to share a vision with neighbors and to build support for improving the visual impact of those areas. The landscape master plan should also include some preliminary cost estimates to aid in fundraising.

Action 2: Provide assistance to landscape architect for site issues and ordinance compliance (City)

Start: January 2008
End: Ongoing
Lead: Neighborhood Associations
Partners: Parks and Recreation, Planning, Engineering

Staff from the City of Garland will assist a consultant in ensuring the landscape master plan takes into consideration the unique situation posed by property ownership and right of way issues in the Oakridge area. Also, the landscape master plan should be in conformance with applicable policies and ordinances.





Action 3: Identify Funding Sources

Start: January 2008
End: Ongoing
Lead: Neighborhood Associations
Partners: Neighborhood Vitality

Financial resources to implement the landscape master plan must be developed. Neighborhood association, private, and public sources should be investigated.

Action 4: Raise Matching funds if required

Start: January 2008
End: Unknown
Lead: Neighborhood Associations
Partners: Neighborhood Vitality

The City of Garland Neighborhood Vitality Grant Program as currently structured requires a funding match from participating neighborhood organizations.

Action 5: Coordinate implementation of landscape plan

Start: January 2008
End: January 2008
Lead: Neighborhood Associations
Partners: Neighborhood Vitality

As funding becomes available for implementing the landscape master plan, a schedule should be developed and followed.

Priority **Replacing streetlights with a design similar to the original**

Objective: Have uniform, attractive streetlights in the neighborhood

Action 1: Identify preferred pole and luminaire

Start: January 2008
End: January 2008
Lead: Neighborhood Associations
Partners: GP & L

GP&L has identified several styles of poles and luminaires for neighborhood streetlights. Neighbors must select from these options the preferred style of pole and light to be installed.





Action 2: Identify participating areas

Start: January 2008
End: Ongoing
Lead: Neighborhood Associations
Partners:

The Oakridge subdivisions when constructed were the only portion of the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area with streetlights different from the City standard streetlight. All of the neighborhoods within the area must determine if they will participate in the effort to change the streetlights in the Oakridge area to a different streetlight from the City standard.

Action 3: Identify funding sources

Start: January 2008
End: Ongoing
Lead: Neighborhood Associations
Partners: Neighborhood Vitality

Financial resources to install the preferred street lights must be developed. Neighborhood association, private, and public sources should be investigated.

Action 4: Raise match funds, if required

Start: January 2008
End: Ongoing
Lead: Neighborhood Associations
Partners: Neighborhood Vitality

The City of Garland Neighborhood Vitality Grant Program as currently structured requires a funding match from participating neighborhood organizations.

Action 5: Determine replacement schedule

Start: January 2008
End: Ongoing
Lead: Neighborhood Associations
Partners: GP & L

The schedule for replacing the neighborhood streetlights will depend on the availability of funding to replace the lights, obtaining the preferred poles and luminaires from the vendor, and the workload of the installation contractors.





Action 6: Coordinate installation of preferred poles and luminaires with the City's GP&L and Telecommunications Departments.

Start: January 2008
End: Ongoing
Lead: GP & L
Partners: Telecommunications

The replacement of neighborhood streetlights would be coordinated through GP&L with participation from the City of Garland Telecommunications department to prevent disruption to the City's wireless communication network.

Priority **Develop a Citywide Neighborhood Marketing Strategy**

Objective: Market City of Garland Neighborhoods and the Strategy for Vital Neighborhoods to residents and property owners in the City and to the larger region.

Start: October 2007
End:
Lead: Public Information Officer
Partners: Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Partnership

Action Steps are currently being developed by the City of Garland Neighborhood Vitality Program and the Public Information Office to develop a marketing program highlighting city of Garland neighborhoods and the Strategy for Vital Neighborhoods program to improve neighborhoods throughout the City. Proposals currently being reviewed include activities addressing all forms of media and sharing the positives of living in Garland neighborhoods.





Priority **Improve Citywide Economic Development for Neighborhood Serving Businesses**

Objective: Attract quality neighborhood serving retail

Start: June 2007

End: October 2008

Lead: Planning/Economic Development Partnership

Partners: Chamber of Commerce

Action Steps are currently being developed by the City of Garland Planning Department in partnership with the Garland Chamber of Commerce. Proposals currently being reviewed include activities to improve participation of Program Area businesses in the Strategy for Vital Neighborhoods, improving Chamber services to small businesses, and identifying funds, plans, policies, or programs to attract quality neighborhood serving retail to Garland.

Priority **Identify Citywide Methods and Resources for Improving Residential Property Maintenance**

Objective: Identify a plan to provide resources for property owners seeking to improve residential property

Start: October 2007

End: March 2008

Lead: Neighborhood Planning

Partners:

Action Steps are currently being developed by the City of Garland Planning Department to develop a Residential Property Improvement Plan based on research of grants, tax incentives, and/or fee waivers currently used by cities with similar needs of updating housing stock, approving appearance, and low-income homeowner repairs.





Neighborhood Management

Neighborhood management focuses on the willingness and ability of neighbors to successfully manage the day-to-day issues in the neighborhood; increasing neighborhood activities; and increasing the sense of community in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood management works by building upon existing assets to connect, excite, and inform citizens. This can be a catalyst and a spark for community change; however, it may require a mind shift for many people. Instead of focusing on what is wrong, it may be more appropriate to start with what is working, and more productive to operate from believing everyone has a gift or talent to share, as well as a responsibility to the community.

Neighbors are the key. A single person or a group of people acting together has the power to have a dramatic impact upon a neighborhood.

Change isn't always monumental; usually, it's lots of small things. In neighborhoods, change comes from someone doing something different. And then it grows...from person to family, from one house to one block, from residents to businesses, and throughout the community.

Social capital also plays a role. Social capital is the connections or networks among individuals and groups generating trustworthiness and shared responsibility making it easier to coordinate and

cooperate for the benefit of all neighbors. Social capital can be thought of as grease for the wheels allowing communities to advance smoothly. The source of and opportunities to utilize social capital are endless!

Neighborhood management is critical to the success of the *Strategy for Vital Neighborhoods*. Neighborhoods and neighbors each have differing ability when it comes to managing their neighborhoods. The Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area has a relatively high level of neighborhood management; however, the City of Garland must provide opportunities for neighbors to hone their management skills. These activities include:

Promoting and supporting neighborhood organizations

Neighborhood organizations are helpful in promoting coordinated activities for neighborhood health, communicating information, educating neighbors, and building stronger social bonds. The Oakridge Neighborhood Program Area has several strong neighborhood organizations. It is critical for these groups to be supported and encouraged as they continue to grow in numbers and skill.

The Office of Neighborhood Vitality offers on-going assistance to neighbors. Such assistance could include strategies for increasing membership in the voluntary Oakridge Neighborhood Association, training for the HOA boards of the Briar Oaks, Oakcrest, and Oakridge on the Creek neighborhoods, encouraging all of the organizations to share their expertise





with other neighbors by serving as a mentor organization, and ways to cooperatively address neighborhood issues affecting the entire area.

Offering training and development through Garland Neighborhood Management Academy

The Garland Neighborhood Management Academy (GNMA) was inaugurated in spring 2007. The purpose of GNMA is to provide community leaders with the tools to actively engage in the municipal government process, to manage neighborhood growth and change, and enhance the vitality of neighborhoods throughout Garland. By offering classes to improve the skills of individuals and the capacity of organizations, neighborhoods become better able to manage the day-to-day issues of their neighborhoods. The Oakridge neighbors will have the opportunity to attend GNMA classes to improve their personal toolbox for increasing the health of their neighborhoods.

Developing and distributing the *Good Neighbor Guide*

Sometimes people in a neighborhood do not do what is expected of them because they do not know what is expected of them. Such is the case with some of the issues in the Oakridge neighborhoods. The *Good Neighbor Guide* is an attempt to inform neighbors of some of the things it takes to be a good neighbor. Starting with existing publications, the City of Garland will develop and distribute the *Good Neighbor Guide* to let everyone

know the standards expected of residents of Garland's neighborhoods. The *Good Neighbor Guide* be given to all of Garland's residents when it is developed, will be given to GP&L customers when they open an account, and will be available to neighborhood organizations to include in welcome packets for new neighbors.

Developing a long-term property management structure and plan for the Oakridge Neighborhood

The Oakridge Neighborhood was created with amenities requiring on-going maintenance and investment. This was a relatively new concept when the neighborhood was developed. If the neighborhood were to be built today, a mandatory home owner association would be required to be formed to own and maintain the landscaping, public open spaces, and screening wall. This contrasts with the reality of the landscaping being either in public rights-of-way or on property owned by individual homeowners and the responsibility maintaining the screening wall falling to the homeowner abutting it.

The result of this scheme is neighborhood landscaping being maintained through the work and financial contribution of only a portion of the property owners and a screening wall with some sections over the years being replaced with non-matching materials.

The City of Garland through the Engineering, Parks, and Planning Departments will work with the Oakridge





Neighborhood Association to investigate possible new arrangements to better coordinate the on-going maintenance of landscaping and screening walls and other neighborhood amenities.

Marketing the Successes

People are drawn to winners. Over the years, the Oakridge neighborhoods have had numerous good things to share about their neighborhood. As the implementation of the Action Plan unfolds, additional successes will result. Neighbors must find ways to communicate the many positive outcomes to the larger community.

The *Strategy for Vital Neighborhoods* is built upon partnerships. The partnerships may at times require one partner to carry a heavier burden, but together we can achieve our goals. The purpose of increasing neighborhood management capacity is to allow for neighbors to be an equal partner in sustaining healthy neighborhoods.

When neighborhoods succeed, Garland succeeds!





Summary

The creation of the Oakridge Neighborhood Program Action Plan is one of the first steps in the on-going vitality of these neighborhoods. The actions and strategies contained in it are important, but once they are completed the work is not done. New priorities will need to be addressed, new opportunities and additional partners will present themselves.

The City of Garland's Neighborhood Philosophy captures how important neighborhood vitality is to the overall vitality of Garland. It identifies the development and maintenance of strategic partnerships to achieve stable and improved neighborhoods. These partnerships are important because of the strengths each partner brings into the relationship—be it resources, time, expertise, skills, knowledge, positive attitude, or another talent contributing to a good outcome for neighbors and neighborhoods. Moreover, the benefits of these partnerships are also shared—through increased goodwill, a stronger sense of pride in the community, and a greater return on the investment of capital. In short, working together works.

The Oakridge Neighborhood Program Action Plan is only a guide. It is not a recipe or formula to be followed with a guarantee for success; however, like a recipe or formula, the outcome is dependent upon the qualities of the ingredients or inputs. With commitment and an on-going good faith effort by neighbors, the City of Garland organization, and community resources,

the Oakridge neighborhoods can maintain the positive aspects of the area and meet the challenges facing them by continuing to be well-managed neighborhoods with a strong sense of community and identity.

