STRATEGIC PLAN

Introduction

In 2018, the Oak Ridge Town Council adopted a Strategic Plan, setting goals and priorities for investments in the Town's future. The plan focused on four key areas: parks and recreation, infrastructure, growth and development, and preservation. In each of these focus areas, strategies were developed for prioritizing investments and setting policy objectives. In early 2021 and again in Fall 2022, the Town Council met to review its progress, assess emerging trends and issues, and identify priorities to guide future efforts. This Strategic Plan reflects these updated priorities while building on past successes.

Over the past four years, the Town Council advanced its strategic vision in all four focus areas through a multitude of initiatives. It completed a Master Plan for Heritage Farm Park and secured grant funding for a significant portion of its construction. It succeeded in establishing a municipal water system, based initially on community wells for new developments, and is poised to begin engineering work to secure a reliable future water source from Forsyth County. Council also adopted a Village Core Design Guidebook to help guide development decisions in the Town's commercial core. In addition, the Town facilitated and funded the construction of nearly six miles of new hiking trails on the Mountains-to-Sea route, established a new committee to prioritize preservation of historic resources and open spaces, and funded a new grant initiative to fund preservation easements. An informative and user-friendly new website was also unveiled.

Looking forward, parks and recreation projects and trail connections will continue to be priorities. Town Council also plans to take a fresh and more comprehensive approach to the Town's Future Land Use Plan, which will include a special focus on the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) and consideration of the strong growth just beyond the Town's boundaries. The Town will also continue efforts to increase the village feel of its commercial core by completing a market analysis and economic development plan that is responsive to the community's needs. Strengthening Oak Ridge's community identify

through branding and strategies to encourage an informed and engaged citizenry were also identified as future priorities.

VISION STATEMENT

Oak Ridge is a safe and livable community that takes great pride in its natural beauty and small-town village charm. The Town's rich history and rural roots inspire an independent, family-oriented community engaged in planning for the future while preserving its unique character, historic resources, and open spaces.

Focus Areas

- **Recreation**
- **Growth and Development**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Preservation**

I. RECREATION. **The Recreation Focus Area includes strategies to address the Town's active and passive recreation needs, including facilities for active organized youth and adult sports, and passive parkland for areas for walking, exercising, play, community gathering, and open space. Smaller neighborhood parks, wooded/natural areas, and open space, as well as walking paths and trails, are also addressed.**

GOAL 1.1: The Oak Ridge Town Park will continue to be a vital community resource and gathering place. Future development at the Town Park must carefully consider the needs of multiple user groups and interests to ensure an appropriate balance of active recreation and passive open space.

POLICY 1.1.1: Small increases in active sports facilities may be accommodated at the Oak Ridge Town Park. No more than 20% of Park acreage should be devoted to active recreation.

POLICY 1.1.2: Continue to evaluate the feasibility of renovating and expanding the Redmon House into the Farmhouse Community Center.

GOAL 1.2: Heritage Farm Park will be retained primarily as open space to be enjoyed by Oak Ridge residents for its scenic beauty. Active uses will be included per approved PARTF site plan; additional active uses such as tennis, pickleball, and basketball courts may also be considered along Scoggins Road.

POLICY 1.2.1: Preserve the scenic view along Oak Ridge Road as much as feasible through compliance with PARTF grant and consideration of possible conservation easement once park construction is complete.

POLICY 1.2.2: Complete network of walking trails throughout the property and connecting with existing and proposed sidewalks and trails along Oak Ridge Road, Linville Road, and the Town Park, per approved PARTF site plan.

POLICY 1.2.3: Continue to investigate the need for tennis courts as well as the possibility of including pickleball courts on the portion of Heritage Farm Park closest to Scoggins Road.

POLICY 1.2.4: Evaluate the long-term viability of farming the open and undeveloped portion of Heritage Farm Park. Evaluate other uses including natural areas, native wildflowers, community gardens, and agricultural tourism.

GOAL 1.3: The Town will foster neighborhood recreational uses and connectivity through the private development process and by providing trail and sidewalk connectivity from neighborhoods to parks and open space.

POLICY 1.3.1: Continue to dedicate public open space along floodplains and trail corridors during subdivision development as required by ordinance.

POLICY 1.3.2: Working with the MST Committee, the Town will support development of the MST through Oak Ridge, as well as additional trails to connect neighborhoods with the Town Park, Heritage Farm Park, and Bandera Farms Park.

GOAL 1.4: Continue to consider strategies to support the development of Bandera Farms Park.

POLICY 1.4.1: Evaluate the Town's long-term commitment to the development and maintenance of Bandera Farms Park.

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II. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT. The Growth and Development Focus Area will provide guidance for future residential and commercial growth.

GOAL 2.1: The Town of Oak Ridge will use creative methods to preserve farmland, open space, and historic resources.

POLICY 2.1.1: Continue to support the Conservation Easement Committee and the Conserving Oak Ridge through Easements (CORE) grant program.

POLICY 2.1.2: Investigate open space preservation opportunities by (1) defining and prioritizing high-value open space, and (2) promoting policies that encourage preservation.

GOAL 2.2: The Town will promote policies to create an active and healthy "village feel" in the Town Core that prioritizes a unique, walkable, and inviting environment with smaller buildings in close proximity to each other and the street, and incorporates a mix of commercial, residential, and institutional uses, as well as pockets of green space that help create community-oriented gathering places.

POLICY 2.2.1: Staff will conduct a thorough review of all allowable uses in commercial districts and recommend changes to encourage village uses. (Completed 2021).

POLICY 2.2.2: Review and update zoning requirements as needed to ensure implementation of the village feel and to encourage more diverse design. Amendments may include revisions to existing zoning districts and overlay zones (i.e., Scenic Corridor).

GOAL 2.3: Consistent with the recently completed Village Core Design Guidelines, Oak Ridge will pursue economic development strategies to further develop the Town's commercial core to better serve the needs of residents and visitors.

POLICY 2.5.1: Perform a market analysis to identify what goods and services are or will be needed for Oak Ridge residents now and in the future.

Policy 2.5.2: Develop an Economic Development Plan for the commercial core that incorporates community input and will guide future development over the next 10-15 years.

POLICY 2.5.2: Develop a branding program that communicates Oak Ridge's unique community identity and addresses a wide range of signage, from town banners to maps and wayfinding, supported by a phased implementation plan and cost estimates.

GOAL 2.4: Improve the appearance and safety of NC 68.

POLICY 2.4.1: Work with NCDOT to ensure that functional improvements to the NC 68/ NC 150 intersection and NC 68 and NC 150 corridors incorporate

pedestrian safety measures including sidewalks, crosswalks, and landscaping. (Construction to begin Fall 2023.)

POLICY 2.4.2: Advocate for reduced speed limits on NC 68. (Speed limit lowered to 35mph in 2021.)

POLICY 2.4.3: Continue to encourage street connectivity to promote alternate access to residential and commercial properties on NC 68.

GOAL 2.4: Continue to plan proactively to serve the Town's infrastructure needs and accommodate future growth consistent with the Town's character and vision. .

POLICY 2.4.1: Continue to refine the Town's strategic voluntary annexation policy.

POLICY 2.4.2: Update the Future Land Use Plan, including the extra-territorial jurisdiction, with special emphasis on the impacts of continued growth in Greensboro, Kernersville, and southern Rockingham County.

POLICY 2.4.3: Incorporate the Town's water infrastructure plans, trail planning, and open space preservation planning into the Future Land Use Plan process.

III. INFRASTRUCTURE. **The Infrastructure Focus Area will examine the Town's future infrastructure needs, including transportation and utilities. Local street connectivity, sidewalks/crosswalks, traffic and other transportation improvements, as well as development of the Town's approved public water system, will be addressed.**

GOAL 3.1: The Town of Oak Ridge will investigate current and future water and wastewater needs.

POLICY 3.1.1: Continue to evaluate the feasibility of constructing a water main to provide water from Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Utilities to a proposed storage tank on Town Hall property. (Water for Fire Protection Study Completed 2022.)

POLICY 3.1.2: Evaluate other opportunities to expand the Town of Oak Ridge Water System.

POLICY 3.1.3: Recognizing that the land requirements of individual septic fields may be a challenge in implementing the desired "village feel," the Town will investigate creative ways to provide water and wastewater treatment in the Town Core.

GOAL 3.2: Oak Ridge will continue to value neighborhood connectivity and pedestrian safety in the continued development of its transportation infrastructure.

POLICY 3.2.1: Update, re-evaluate, and prioritize the recommendations of the Oak Ridge Pedestrian Plan.

POLICY 3.2.2: Refine and improve the Thoroughfare/Collector Street Plan, in conjunction with updates to the Land Use and Pedestrian Plans, to ensure feasible road connections for future development.

POLICY 3.2.3: Work with NCDOT to ensure that functional improvements to the NC 68/ NC 150 intersection and NC 68 and NC 150 corridors incorporate pedestrian safety measures including sidewalks, crosswalks, landscaping, and reduced speed limits (see Growth and Development policy).

POLICY 3.2.4: Evaluate speed reductions and traffic calming methods throughout Oak Ridge, particularly in high-risk areas and the Town Core.

GOAL 3.3: The Town will pursue additional infrastructure improvements that will improve aesthetics and enhance communication with citizens.

POLICY 3.3.1: Continue to strengthen the Town's website and social media communications to provide helpful online information to Oak Ridge residents. (Updated website launched summer 2022.)

POLICY 3.3.2: Encourage an informed and engaged citizenry by expanding community building efforts to include Town Council office hours, local government educational offerings, and strategies to engage residents, schools, community groups, and students in town events and operations.

IV. PRESERVATION. **The Preservation Focus Area will cover a variety of topics including the preservation of farmland, historically open spaces, scenic vistas and the Town's built heritage.**

GOAL 4.1: The Town of Oak Ridge will use creative methods to preserve farmland, open space, and historic resources.

POLICY 4.1.1: Continue to support the Conservation Easement Committee and the Conservation Oak Ridge through Easements (CORE) grant program.

POLICY 4.1.2: The Town will consider additional strategic land acquisition opportunities that further historic and open space preservation priorities.

POLICY 4.1.3: Work with the Piedmont Land Conservancy (PLC), Preservation North Carolina (PNC), other appropriate organizations, and with owners of open space and historic sites to encourage and facilitate conservation and preservation easements. (PLC and PNC are active partners in the CORE Grant Initiative.)

POLICY 4.1.4: Continue to investigate the use of grants and other incentives to facilitate easements and support preservation of key sites.

POLICY 4.1.5: Continue to build relationships with historic site owners and key preservation groups at the regional, state, and national levels to ensure broad support for the historic District and the town's preservation goals.

POLICY 4.1.6: Re-assess and strengthen the Historic Heritage Grant program.

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