

STRATEGIC PLAN

Introduction



As the Town of Oak Ridge celebrates the 20th anniversary of its incorporation, Town officials have taken the opportunity to look back and celebrate town successes as well as ponder the challenges of the past. Notable successes in the Town's first 20 years include construction of Town Hall and a thriving and popular Town Park, adoption of plans and policies that encourage preservation of the Town's scenic and historic resources, and establishing active and informed citizen boards such as the Historic Preservation Commission and Planning and Zoning Board.

Looking forward, the Town Council recognizes that this point in its history is an ideal time to think strategically about the issues that will define Oak Ridge over the next 5-10 years. As Oak Ridge grows, so do the needs of its citizens. How to best provide for the recreation needs of Oak Ridge residents, how to strike the right balance between measured growth and the preservation of the Town's valued historic and open space resources, and considerations of the types of infrastructure that will be needed in the future are just a few of the issues Oak Ridge will face.

To address these topics, the Town Council embarked on a strategic planning process that began in May 2018 and continued throughout the summer. Through facilitated discussion, the Council developed a Vision Statement, agreed on focus areas to address, and then analyzed strengths, areas of needed improvement, and opportunities to achieve their collective vision.

This document contains strategic goals and policies that were released for public feedback and input in September 2018. Following the public input period, including an Open House held on November 8 from 5-7 pm at Town Hall, Council analyzed the feedback received and determined no significant revisions to the strategic goals and priorities were needed. After adoption, Council approved an Implementation Schedule that prioritized initiatives, set timelines, and identified parties responsible for implementation.

ADOPTED BY OAK RIDGE TOWN COUNCIL DECEMBER 6, 2018. REVISED JANUARY 21, 2021.

2021 UPDATE: On January 21, 2021 Town Council reviewed progress on implementation of the Strategic Plan, reassessed priorities, and approved minor updates to the Plan and Implementation Schedule.



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

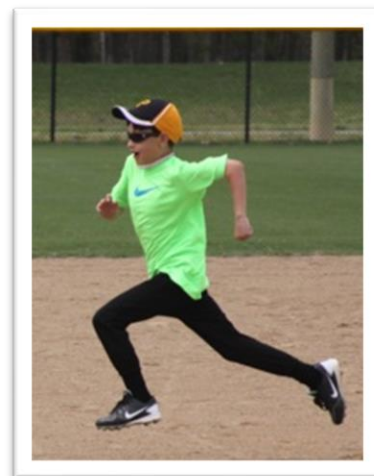


Town's active and passive recreation needs, including facilities for active organized youth and adult sports, and passive parkland for areas for walking, exercising, play, community gathering, and open space. Smaller neighborhood parks, wooded/natural areas, and open space, as well as walking paths and 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.

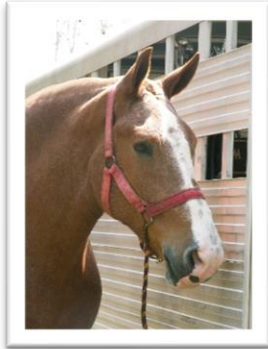
POLICY 1.1.2: Potential uses of the Chester Redmon House will be explored after interior demolition and evaluation of structural issues and potential rehabilitation costs.



GOAL 1.2: The Whitaker property will be retained primarily as open space to be enjoyed by Oak Ridge residents for its scenic beauty. Active uses such as practice fields and tennis courts may also be appropriate.

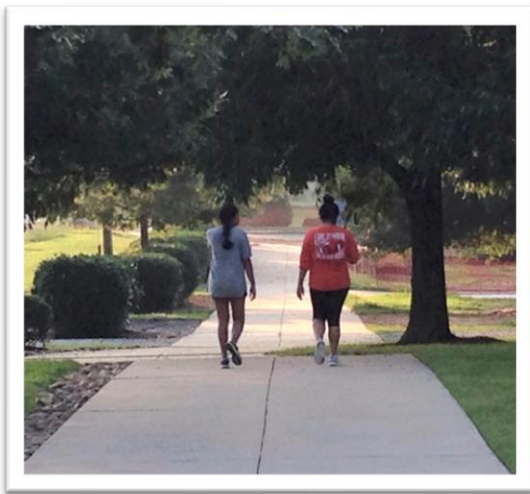
POLICY 1.2.1: Preserve the scenic view along Oak Ridge Road as much as feasible.

POLICY 1.2.2: Provide a 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.



POLICY 1.2.3: Investigate the need for practice fields and/or tennis courts on the portion of the Whitaker property closest to Scoggins Road and on the rear of the Town Hall property.

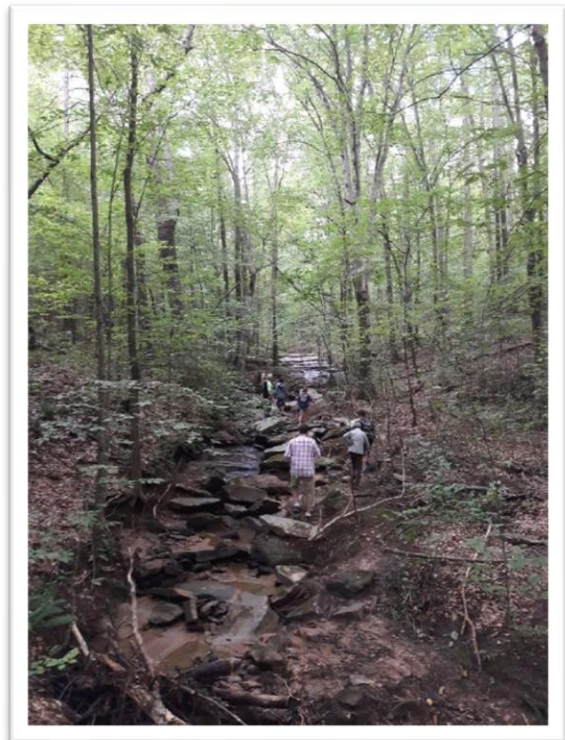
POLICY 1.2.4: Investigate the feasibility of incorporating equestrian uses into park designs.



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: Public open space should be dedicated along floodplains and trail corridors during subdivision development.

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 and Whitaker property.



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: Establish a working group to investigate the use of conservation/preservation easements for open space and historic sites.

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.

POLICY 2.2.2: Review and possibly update zoning requirements to ensure implementation of 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: Improve the appearance and safety of NC 68.

POLICY 2.3.1: 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.

POLICY 2.3.2: Advocate for reduced speed limits on NC 68.

POLICY 2.3.3: Continue to encourage street connectivity to promote alternate access to residential and commercial properties on NC 68.



GOAL 2.4: Oak Ridge will pursue a policy of responsible future growth.

POLICY 2.4.1: Establish a strategic voluntary annexation policy.

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 exploration of a 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: Review and consider the findings of the Northwest Guilford Water Feasibility Study, and conduct further analysis if necessary, to determine the efficacy of a Town-wide or regional water system.

POLICY 3.1.2: 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: Continue to implement the recommendations of the Oak Ridge Pedestrian Plan.

POLICY 3.2.2: Refine and improve the Thoroughfare/Collector Street Plan 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).

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

POLICY 3.3.1: Investigate the feasibility of burying utility lines in the Town Core.

POLICY 3.3.2: Assess future Town website needs, and plan for website improvements to increase capacity and functionality.



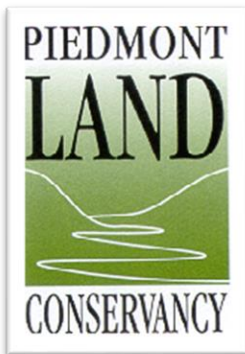
IV. PRESERVATION. The Preservation Focus Area will cover a variety of topics including the preservation of farmland, historically open spaces, scenic vistas and the Town’s built heritage.

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

POLICY 4.1.1: Establish a working group to investigate the use of conservation/preservation easements for open space and historic sites.

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, other historic and open space preservation groups, and property owners including historic site owners to encourage and facilitate conservation and preservation easements for open space and historic preservation.



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.

