

From Fall 2009 Newsletter

Oak Bluff Estates Community Update

Round Rock City General Plan 2020

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On July 15th, I attended the final wrap-up meeting of the General Plan 2020 workshop hosted by the City of Round Rock. The previous three meetings featured presentations by city planners and department heads followed by in-depth Q&A. At this final meeting, attended by many Round Rock HOA officers and interested residents, we were asked to assess, via survey, the importance of us of the key proposals advanced in the prior meetings. These were subdivided by categories and we each rated each one on a 1 to 3 scale of importance. The city totaled up the inputs and averaged them out. The final results, which will be used by the city planners in creating their general plan for the upcoming decade ending in 2020, follow:

By mean (average), the 3 highest-rated items were (all 2.5):

- Provide incentives for developers to incorporate water conservation measures into new development
- Build a diversified and efficient transportation system
- Develop public transit options for point to point routes and to serve the college campuses

The items receiving the highest numbers of "3" ratings were:

- Build a diversified and efficient transportation system (25 of 36)
- Provide incentives for developers to incorporate water conservation measures into new development (23 of 36)
- Preserve the City's history/sense of place for future generations (23 of 36)
- Implement a regional approach to transportation planning (23 of 36)

By subject area the results indicate:

Future Land Use & Subdivision Design

- Strong support for more open space and recreational facilities and better subdivision design generally
- Strong support for more variety in housing types for different life stages and incomes
- Strong support for locating neighborhood commercial at major intersections between neighborhoods, but not within them.
- Strong opinion that neighborhood commercial should be scaled to local needs – several mentioned the grocery on Sam Bass. Significant concern about over-commercialization of areas near neighborhoods
- Strong support for more assertive standards "don't let developers define our community for us"
- Significant support for denser and more diverse housing, and for mixed-use areas, but ONLY if well planned
- Significant concern that apartments and duplexes are too concentrated.
- Significant agreement that commercial development should be directed to nodes rather than strips.
- Ambivalence/disagreement on whether subdivisions should follow a traditional neighborhood pattern or a suburban one with cul-de-sacs.

Support for Older Neighborhoods

- Very strong opinion that the city should assist neighborhoods in improving amenities, and also strong opinion that maintenance of city properties should be improved (sidewalks, lighting, trails, parks)

- Very strong support for organizing neighborhoods, volunteers etc. for neighborhood cleanups, and strong opinion that the city should actively organize or facilitate these efforts.
- Very strong support for adopting/enforcing maintenance standards for rental properties/landlords
- Strong support for having the city and volunteer groups help property owners meet code/maintenance standards
- Moderate support for stronger code enforcement standards and enforcement

Historic Preservation

- Very strong support for preserving the City's history (buildings and documents) and sense of place for future generations.
- Very strong agreement that the City needs to clarify its preservation goals
- Very strong support for giving more attention to the character of a district: creating standards for new construction to harmonize with older buildings in the area; also strong aversion to creating a false history (theme park)
- Very strong support for flexible standards that allow modern, better-performing materials if they preserve the building's look and character – although standards must be strict enough to be meaningful.
- Strong support for various preservation activities, including improving public awareness of preservation, offering City grants, and establishing a non-profit preservation organization
- Moderate support for more designations and stronger standards
- Strong support for increasing the City's support for preservation (its existing preservation programs)
- Support for improving preservation through incentives and improvements in preservation management – streamlining review or waiving permit fees, and creating pattern books so that buildings are evaluated by their building type
- Very strong rejection of reducing the City's preservation efforts or standards, or that it's too late for preservation/too much has been lost

Residential design (single-family)

- Strong support for requiring more trees and less obtrusive utility placement
- Strong support for encouraging design variety and better construction and materials
- Strong-moderate support for both appropriate house/lot proportions and variety on these proportions.
- Moderate support for variety of house types, price points.
- Moderate support for better design standards and less obtrusive garages.

Environment

- Very strong support for water conservation measures, especially for new development.
- Strong support for improving the recycling program and adding curbside service

Parks & Open Space

- Very strong support for conservation of natural areas
- Very strong support for the development of a connected hike & bike trail system
- Strong support for improving maintenance of older parks – significantly stronger than support for new parks

Connectivity and the Transportation Network

- Very strong support for a more comprehensive and diversified transportation system (incl. transit) that is integrated with neighboring communities' systems.
- Very strong support for better street connectivity - more entrances to subdivisions, better connections between neighborhoods and small-scale commercial, etc.
- Agreement that you should notice the city and not just pass through as fast as possible
- Strong support for other transportation issues: synchronized signals, better street maintenance, fewer school zones, generally improving congestion etc.

Street/Corridor Design

- Very strong support for more sidewalks/bike lanes, and generally improving pedestrian safety, access and connectivity.
- Very strong support for improving street appearance (and walking experience) with trees, landscaping, medians, lighting, underground utilities, etc.
- Very strong support for better signage for both public facilities and places/events of interest. In discussion several had mentioned that they like the builder sign kiosks. [unclear whether this was more an issue of more signs or more attractive signs, but mentioned that they appreciated that all streets had name signs]
- Mixed opinions on speed bumps
- Rejection of roundabouts at major intersections.

Transit

- Very strong support for bus and rail connections, including bus service within the city. Strongest support for transit serving the university area.

Public Services

- Strong support for strengthening neighborhoods' sense of community
- Strong support for ensuring that social services accommodate population increases.

Programs & Attractions

- Strong support for attracting more businesses downtown, more family oriented entertainment, and a more diversified economic base.
- Strong support for developing a stronger identity for Round Rock