



# CITY OF RED OAK, TEXAS

## 2010 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

*“Our Future, Our Heritage”*



**ADOPTED JANUARY 10, 2010**

**Ordinance 11-004**

Prepared in cooperation with City of Red Oak Staff, the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee & the Interstate 35-E Corridor Committee



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Intent of Plan

The City of Red Oak is situated within the southern portion of the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area, in Northern Ellis County. The Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area is the fourth largest metropolitan area in the United States, and is currently the fastest growing metropolitan area in the nation. North Central Texas Council of Governments projections indicate that an additional three to four million people will call the area home by 2030, bringing the total population of the metropolitan area to over 9 million people.

Much of the explosive growth is occurring within fringe communities—communities situated along the edges of the developed/urbanized metropolitan area, of which Red Oak belongs. Red Oak has experienced steady to rapid growth in conjunction with the metropolitan area as a whole. In 1970, the population of Red Oak stood at 767 persons. By 2009, the City had grown to nearly 11,000 residents, according to both NCTCOG estimates and Freese and Nichols field survey estimates. Even more striking has been the growth of the community since 2000—the City’s population more than doubled within the past nine years.

The rapid growth of Red Oak creates the need for the creation of a Comprehensive Plan and Interstate 35-E Corridor Vision. Red Oak remains in the early stages of its maturity as a City; therefore, now is the time for the community to formulate a plan to guide decision-making by City Council and City Staff. The 2010 Comprehensive Plan and Corridor Vision are intended to serve as flexible policy guides for the community and are intended to reflect the types of land uses, mobility options, neighborhood characteristics and general quality of life amenities desired by the community.

### Process

In order to ensure the Plan reflects the views of the community, a Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee and an Interstate 35-E Corridor Committee were created to guide their respective plans. Committee members were chosen based upon a variety of factors including past experience, organizational affiliation, area of the community where they reside or simply the general perspective which they may provide. Bringing together a group of residents with unique experiences, backgrounds and interests helps to facilitate discussion and ensures that a variety of perspectives and opinions were ultimately considered during Plan formation.

The comprehensive planning process occurred over a 12 month period, beginning in December of 2009 and culminating in November of 2010. Committee members gathered monthly to discuss a variety of topics and issues related to the development of the Comprehensive Plan. Initial stages of the process included visioning exercises. Committee members were given an issue identification exercise where

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

they were asked to name a variety of issues which they believed were important or should be addressed during the planning process. Committee members were guided through a SWOT Analysis, where they were asked to identify internal strengths/weaknesses as well as external opportunities/threats. Finally, committee members participated in a Visual Character Survey (VCS) where they were shown a variety of images related to a number of topics within the community. Although subjective in nature, the results of the VCS facilitated discussions on the types of development, aesthetics, public spaces, streets and land uses that are acceptable within Red Oak in accordance with the local market for development.

The visioning exercises conducted with the committee led to the formulation of initial goals and objectives for the community. These goals and objectives were used to formulate the basis of the individual planning chapters. Chapter drafts were presented to the committee members at each corresponding meeting to ensure that the committee's ideas were being conveyed correctly. The process concluded with the presentation of a completed draft to committee members, giving participants a chance to view the Comprehensive Plan document in its entirety and creating an additional opportunity for input and revisions.

## Issues and Recommendations

From the onset, the issues presented by committee members were clear and consistent. During the issue identification exercise, several overriding themes were developed and included outsider perception of Red Oak, diversifying the tax base, Interstate 35-E potential, creating logical City boundaries and maintaining and enhancing Red Oak's quality of life, among others. Many of the issues discussed within the individual chapters stem from these initial issues identified by the committee.

### Transportation

A safe and convenient transportation network not only benefits the mobility of Red Oak's residents, but it also influences Red Oak's ability to attract commerce. Perhaps the largest transportation issue affecting Red Oak is the uncertainty of Loop 9. Loop 9 schematics reflect its eventual construction along the northern border of Red Oak. If constructed, it is essential that frontage roads be constructed in the initial phases. Frontage roads will ensure that the highway is not simply a roadway through the community, but that it is an ultimate benefit to the community by opening up northern areas of the community to economic development.

Additional east-west corridors were also identified as transportation needs. Ovilla Road's expansion was a high priority and is currently receiving high priority by City Staff. The North Ellis County Coalition of Cities has been collaboratively working and lobbying for the expansion of Ovilla Road through northern Ellis County. This corridor traverses several different communities and should ultimately connect Interstate 45 to SH 67.

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In addition to Ovilla Road, the F.M. 2377/Stephenson Road corridor has the potential to serve as an additional east-west corridor along the southern edge of Red Oak. The significance of F.M. 2377/Stephenson Road is its potential to influence development in the southeastern areas of Red Oak's planning area. Discussions were framed upon roadway configurations which optimized development potential within the community. This included examining the feasibility of an overpass at Interstate 35-E and extension of the roadway westward along Stephenson Road.

Additional issues related to transportation were discussed with committee members. Backage roads along Interstate 35-E were felt to be necessary to increase accessibility to properties along the corridor, particularly as development occurs in the future. Greenway corridors were created to accommodate slightly larger sidewalks or bicycle pathways on certain roadways, in accordance with the Core Area Trails Master Plan. Roadway aesthetics were important, particularly along Interstate 35-E, in order to project a positive and recognizable image of Red Oak along the most visible area of the City. Finally, transit oriented development (TOD) was discussed. North Central Texas Council of Governments has identified the Waxahachie line, running from Downtown Dallas to Waxahachie. Funding sources have not been identified and the commuter rail line has no specific implementation timeline. If, however, commuter rail is built through Red Oak, it is believed that two transit stops should be included. Areas directly adjacent to transit stops should include retail, office and medium density residential uses. Commuter rail stops should not be constructed as park-and-rides—commuter parking areas should be shared with adjacent activity.

## Future Land Use

Increasing Red Oak's tax base was one of the original identified issues, particularly because non-residential uses will ultimately allow Red Oak to fund many of the amenities and services desired by residents. The Interstate 35-E Corridor Vision was created to set a framework for development. The importance of Interstate 35-E cannot be understated—it is the economic engine which will drive development across the rest of the community. Strategies related to development, code enforcement, image enhancement, aesthetics and urban design were discussed within the Corridor Vision. In particular, vacant areas at the northern and southern ends of the corridor were believed to have the potential to reshape and redefine the entire corridor.

Vacant land near Ovilla Road and SH 342 was another area identified for potential growth. Some of the visions discussed for this area included a City Complex at Ovilla Road and Methodist Street and a TOD at the northwest corner of Ovilla Road and SH 342. The intersection of two major roadways creates significant development opportunities within this area. Vacant land should be protected and used for the best possible uses—uses which contribute to the City's tax base, retail base and which fit the ultimate vision of the community.

Full-life cycle housing was an additional component discussed under future land use. Creating a diversity of housing choices ensures that residents of all ages may be attracted to and remain within Red Oak.

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Single-family housing is the predominant housing type, and this is likely to continue. However, areas of medium density residential, such as townhomes, garden homes, or small single-family housing lots should be considered. Medium density housing choices are most appropriate for areas surrounding activity centers, such as those along Interstate 35-E. Medium density residential options should also be encouraged within mixed use areas, currently being practiced within the Downtown area.

## Livability

Livability refers to the characteristics and qualities which make Red Oak identifiable, attractive and which contribute to the sense of community. An exercise conducted with committee members indicated that the most important livability issues within the community were:

- Improved traffic, pedestrian flow and safety
- Recreational opportunities
- Entertainment and dining
- Improved retail and shopping
- Community identity and atmosphere
- Emphasis on quality education
- Quality development standards
- Maintain and enhance natural features

In addition to these issues, neighborhood strategies were discussed. The first neighborhood strategy is neighborhood preservation. This begins with creating quality neighborhoods—those which emphasize design and access to parks, services and public facilities—and protecting existing quality neighborhoods. The second neighborhood strategy is neighborhood maintenance. Strategies here would include code compliance, volunteer programs, retrofitting neighborhood infrastructure and housing maintenance programs. The final neighborhood strategy discussed is neighborhood rehabilitation, the most extreme approach. This involves providing financial assistance and incentives for retrofitting structures which are beyond the repair of the property owner. If structurally unsound, particularly in the case of abandoned buildings, it is often in the best interest of the community for the structure to be demolished and removed.

## Infrastructure

The final element of the Comprehensive Plan was an infrastructure assessment. Water and wastewater infrastructure capacities must be able to achieve the long term community goals, for without sufficient infrastructure capacity, full development potential may never be realized. The City must continue examining ways to negotiate with Rockett Special Utility District. Rockett currently provides water for the vast majority of Red Oak's planning area. Rockett must assure the City that its infrastructure



capacities will be able to support the population and economic growth of the City in the future. Additionally, water and wastewater capacities are particularly important along Interstate 35-E—this is the area of the City expected to contain the most intense development. It is important that both Water and Wastewater Master Plans remain current and be cognizant of future development patterns and plans.

## Concluding Process

The conclusion of the planning process involved an examination of the Comprehensive Plan by Red Oak's Planning & Zoning Commission. Any edits or adjustments to the plan were made in accordance with the Commission's comments and suggestions. The Commission then recommended the Plan for adoption by City Council, which Council unanimously adopted on January 10, 2011.

Both the Comprehensive Plan and the Interstate 35-E Corridor Vision should be used to promote Red Oak, especially in regards to economic development—the Plans indicate to interested developers that Red Oak has a vision and has an ultimate desire to protect the long term viability of economic investments within the City.

Implementation of the Plan may take a variety of different approaches. Some changes to the zoning or subdivision ordinances may be considered or deemed necessary by Staff. Other regulatory mechanisms, such as an Interstate 35-E overlay district, may be considered to implement certain design standards and encourage certain land uses. Financing mechanisms, such as a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone, may be considered within appropriate areas, providing a means for investment in infrastructure. Economic incentives, such as those allowed by Chapter 380 of the Texas Local Government Code, may be employed to attract new commerce to Red Oak. The City's Capital Improvement Program may also be used for implementation, considering Plan recommendations as part of project prioritization.

This Comprehensive Plan was the result of collaborative efforts between the Advisory Committee, City Staff and local developers. As changes occur in the future, it is important to update the Comprehensive Plan to fit the changing needs of the City in the future. Updating the Plan to meet the changing needs of the community will ensure that the Plan remains a feasible, practical and flexible guide to be used by current and future decision-makers in Red Oak.



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