

OAKLAND

OAKLAND NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



An Element of the City of Topeka Comprehensive Plan
March 11, 2014



OAKLAND

Topeka, Kansas



Neighborhood Plan

An Element of the
Topeka Comprehensive Plan
A Cooperative Effort By:
The Oakland Neighborhood Improvement Association
&
Topeka Planning Department



ADOPTED:
Topeka Planning Commission, January 27, 2014
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Contents

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE	1
PURPOSE.....	1
II. NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE.....	4
LOCATION AND CHARACTER.....	4
EXISTING CONDITIONS.....	7
SOCIOECONOMIC TRENDS	11
PROFILE SUMMARY	12
III. VISION AND GOALS	14
VISION STATEMENT.....	14
GOALS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES.....	15
IV. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN.....	17
LAND USE PLAN CATEGORIES	17
V. REVITALIZATION THEMES	22
THEMES.....	22
TARGET AREA STRATEGIES	22
NEIGHBORHOOD-WIDE STRATEGIES	29
HOUSING	29
CHARACTER AND IMAGE.....	34
COMMUNITY BUILDING AND INITIATIVES	37
PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS	40
CIRCULATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	42
COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS	44
VI. IMPLEMENTATION	50
KEY ACTION PRIORITIES.....	50
REZONING	55
APPENDIX A: MAPS.....	60
APPENDIX B: TABLES.....	69
APPENDIX C: MEETING SURVEY.....	73
APPENDIX D: HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE SURVEYS	76
APPENDIX E: ADDRESS MAPS	79

Map 1: Current Land Use.....	60
Map 2: Current Zoning	61
Map 3: Housing Conditions.....	62
Map 4: Tenure.....	63
Map 5: Code Violations	64
Map 6: Major Crimes.....	65
Map 7: Infrastructure	66
Map 8: Development Activity.....	67
Map 9: Circulation.....	68
Map 10: Future Land Use	21
Map 11: Target Area Evaluation	25
Map 12: Target Area Concept Map	26
Map 13: Proposed Zoning Map	56
Map 14: Primary Target Area.....	57
Map 15: Secondary Target Area	58
Map 16: Tertiary Target Area	59
Table 1: Land Use	69
Table 2: Housing Density.....	69
Table 3: Housing Conditions	70
Table 4: Owner Occupancy	70
Table 5: Median Appraised Property Values	70
Table 6: State Street Elementary and Chase Middle Schools	71
Table 7: Population and Race.....	71
Table 8: Age	72
Table 9: Households.....	72

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Background

In July of 2000, the Topeka City Council and Shawnee County Board of Commissioners adopted the Neighborhood Element of the *Topeka Metropolitan Comprehensive Plan 2025*. This ranks the overall health of block groups based on five factors: Poverty, Public Safety, Residential Property Values, Single Family Housing Tenure, and Boarded Houses. Based on the combination of these factors, block groups are triaged as Healthy, Out Patient, At Risk, or Intensive Care. In 2003, Oakland's ratings had improved with the central and southwestern portion of the neighborhood being ranked as outpatient and the remainder was healthy. Unfortunately, Oakland's ratings have slipped so that in 2011, the entire neighborhood was rated as at-risk.

Many neighborhoods decline over time. However, the ultimate goal of the Oakland Neighborhood Plan Update is to identify strategies that can help bring Oakland back to its previously healthy status.

Accomplishments since the 2004 Plan

- Rezoned the neighborhood from M1 to R2
- Rezoned a portion of Seward Ave to Mixed Use
- Began Seward Ave Streetscape improvements
- The BNSF office building at Atchison and Branner has been converted to low-income senior housing apartments
- Empowerment Grants for projects including: sidewalk improvements; park improvements in Little Oakland and Santa Fe Parks; Improvements to the Oakland Community Center marquee
- Neighborhood murals
- Chase and State Street schools remodeled and connected
- Trail connections from the community center to Santa Fe and Oakland Billard Parks, and to the Shunga Trail

PURPOSE

In 2012, the Oakland Neighborhood Improvement Association (NIA) applied to the City of Topeka for Stages of Resources Targeting (SORT) funding. In early 2013, the Topeka City Council approved the Oakland Neighborhood to be one of two designated neighborhoods to receive planning assistance in 2013 and implementation funding in the following two years.

The purpose of the Oakland Plan Update is to provide long-range guidance and feasible alternatives to the City, its agencies, residents, and private/public interests for the future revitalization of Oakland. The Plan should be fluid, not static. It establishes a 10-15 year vision with appropriate strategies and implementation measures for land use, housing, urban design, parks, commercial districts, infrastructure, and circulation. This Plan provides the policy basis from which to identify appropriate zoning and capital improvements, and programs to implement these.

Recommendations for infrastructure, housing, and parks all involve major City expenditures that are constrained by the amount of tax revenues the City collects. Other neighborhood plans also compete for such allocations. Reliance on non-City funding sources will also determine the pace of implementation. Thus, another purpose of this plan is to provide guidance for *priorities* in order to determine the most prudent expenditures with limited resources.

Relation to Other Plans

The Plan is a comprehensive community-based approach to neighborhood planning that constitutes an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan and is regularly monitored, reviewed, and updated as needed. It is intended to balance neighborhood needs with city-wide objectives and be consistent with goals of existing and future elements of the Comprehensive Plan including Downtown, Transportation, Economic Development, and Trails Elements.

PROCESS

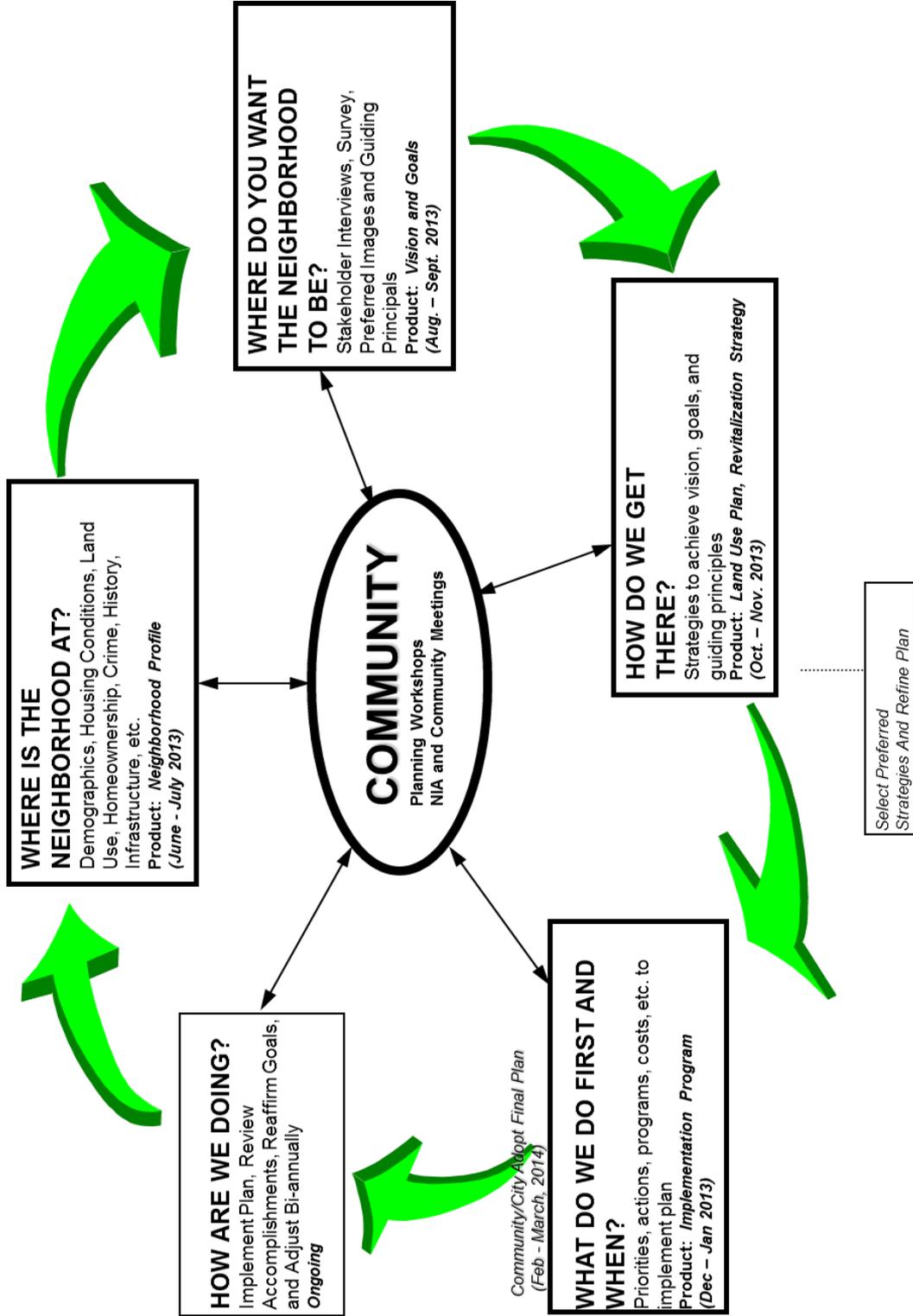
This document has primarily been prepared in collaboration with the Oakland NIA. Beginning in the spring of 2013 planning staff conducted a property-by-property land use and housing survey of the neighborhood and collected pertinent demographic data. This “state-of-the-neighborhood” information was shared and presented during the kickoff meeting on July 25. The steering committee, comprised of neighborhood volunteers, met four times over the summer and looked in-depth at issues such as goals and guiding principles, land use and zoning, circulation and parks, corridors, and selected SORT Target Areas. A compass meeting was then held on December 11, 2013 to make sure the plan and the steering committee’s recommendations were on the right course.

A summary of the final plan was presented to the community at a confirmation/wrap-up meeting held on January 15, 2014 at the Sacred Heart Church Hall. A work session was held with the Planning Commission on December 16, 2013 and a public hearing was held before the Commission on January 27, 2014.

All property owners in the Oakland planning area were specifically notified of public meetings twice during the planning process. Attendees of the first public meeting were notified a third time, for the Compass Meeting. A total of 7 meetings in the neighborhood were held with citizens and Planning staff to develop the Plan.

Oakland Plan Process

S T A R T



II. NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

LOCATION AND CHARACTER

Location

The Oakland Neighborhood is located in northeast Topeka, across the Kansas River from North Topeka and immediately to the west of Billard Airport. For purposes of this Plan, the neighborhood is bounded by the Kansas River and the Shunga Trail on the north, the BNSF shops on the west, the BNSF railroad tracks on the south, and Strait Avenue on the east. The neighborhood encompasses approximately 1,465 acres.

History Oakland's Earliest Settlers

Since 1854, several families have lived in the Oakland area. Most notably the Charles Sardou and the Gilbert Billard families, who were both born in France and settled on tracts of land in present-day Oakland. From their origins in France, each family made their way to New York, where they heard about the opening up of the Kansas Territory. The two families met up in Kansas City, Kansas, and traveled together to the area of what is Oakland today, and made their land claims on adjoining properties. The Billard family settled on the 160 acres north of present-day Sardou Avenue and the Sardou family settled on a 160-acre plot south of Sardou Avenue. Both of the family's original homes have nearly been altered completely by the original settlers' siblings. However, the homes are still located today at the locations of the original home sites. The Billard house is located at the base of the Sardou Bridge, inside of the cloverleaf. The Sardou home is located on the northeast corner of Grattan and Laurent.

The similarities between the two families continued as both Gilbert Billard and Charles Sardou had children, who became prominent Topekans. Gilbert Billard had two sons, Francois, who died in a Civil War Battle in New Mexico and Jules Benoit, who was known as "JB". JB Billard founded the Shawnee State Bank and the Western Woolen Mills. But more important to Topeka history is that in 1910, JB was elected mayor of Topeka. In addition to JB's importance to Topeka, his son became even more prominent in Topeka. Louis Charles Phillip (Phil) Billard, the son of JB and grandson of Gilbert Billard, was an adventurous person, who began racing automobiles, but eventually found his way to airplanes. In 1912, A.K. Longren, who made the first airplane flight over Topeka a year earlier, built a plane for Phil Billard. Phil made the first flight between Topeka and Kansas City, and became an aviation pioneer. Phil died over France during World War I, when his airplane exploded. The Phillip Billard Airport in Oakland is named after him.

Much like Gilbert Billard, Charles Sardou and his family became more prominent in Topeka because of his children. Charles Sardou's son, Freeman, who was born during the journey from Europe to New York, became a Topeka businessman. However, unlike the Billard family, who were not steadfast at working the land and staying in Topeka, the Sardou family remained on the land which Charles Sardou claimed. Freeman farmed the land and in 1909 founded a canning plant on the Sardou property near the base of the Sardou Bridge.

Some notable events of the Sardou family include:

- In 1870, Freeman Sardou was part of the 1st graduating class of Topeka High School.
- In 1903, during the Kansas River flood, Freeman Sardou and his sons used their boats to rescue North Topekans stranded on their roofs.

- In 1961, at the dedication of the Sardou Bridge, George Robert Sardou, a great-great grandson of Charles Sardou, cut the symbolic ribbon to open.
- Until recently, the Sardou house remained in possession of relatives.

Oakland becomes a Community

It was not until J.B. Bartholomew and John Norton bought farms in the area did people begin moving to Oakland. Bartholomew, a real estate promoter, and Norton turned the mostly farmland into a booming “utopian” resort-type town in the country for the residents of Topeka to escape from the plight of the late nineteenth century city.

In 1886, the new town bounded by Chester, Strait, North, and Center Avenues was named Oakland Center, for the groves of Oak trees along the Kansas River. With the help of J.B. Bartholomew, John Norton, and Topeka’s Rapid Transit Authority the new town was created as an escape from the City life in Topeka. To enhance their investment and hasten the development of Oakland, Bartholomew and Norton encouraged the creation of a new rail line from Quinton Heights to Oakland Center. The popularity of Oakland Center was two-fold, it was located far enough outside of Topeka and the city’s urban ills and adjacent to the newly created resort-type park, Oakland Grove Park. This park was where Topekans would visit to get out of town, to enjoy the gardens and outdoor festival atmosphere. Oakland Grove Park was located in an area that today is on the northeast corner of the neighborhood, bordered by Arter, North, Strait, and Springfield (a street which no longer exists today but was between North and Center Avenues). The centerpiece of the Park was the Tabernacle, which was an auditorium for meetings and entertainment. Oakland Center shortened its name to Oakland in 1889.

“Oakland Grove Park was a campground, a hotel, a zoo, and an entertainment center, all wrapped in one” (p.32).*

All through the late 1800s, Oakland was an independent suburb of Topeka. In 1903, Oakland was organized as a city. F.A. Brigham was Oakland’s first mayor and Oakland was a completely functioning small town on the outskirts of Topeka.

“A Topeka Capitol article from May 2, 1915 reported that Oakland was thriving, with a population of 1800, 4 churches, 8 grocery stores, a blacksmith, a general repair shop, a drugstore and a confectionery store. The Rapid Transit Line ran through Oakland at 20 minute intervals during midday, and at 15 minute intervals in the early morning and evening” (p.37).*

Noel Copeland became the city’s last mayor, when in 1925, Oakland voted 505-206 to be annexed by Topeka. At the time the population of Oakland was 2500. On October 25, 1926 the City of Topeka passed by unanimous vote the ordinance to annex Oakland.

The German-Russian Community in Oakland

The German-Russians began arriving in Kansas in the 1870s. Many of these immigrants moved on to central Kansas, but a large number did stay in Topeka to work for Santa Fe. At first, the immigrants moved to North Topeka along the banks of the Kansas River, particularly the Little Russia area. However, in 1902, Santa Fe moved its shops to its present-day location on the southwestern corner of Oakland. With this



move by Santa Fe and the subsequent Kansas River Flood in 1903, many German-Russians relocated to the growing German-Russian area on the east side of the Santa Fe shops in present-

day Oakland. Santa Fe helped with this move, by building working class homes for these workers. These shops continued to bring laborers to Oakland and drastically expanded the town to the south around the Santa Fe shops. Oakland turned into more of a working class city, which was quite different from what the resort-type status it previously held before.



In the early 1900's, there was a movement to establish a Catholic parish in East Topeka for the German-speaking people. In January 1917, Oakland received consent to create its own German Catholic church—Sacred Heart—and construction began in 1920. The Sacred Heart Church and School were dedicated in 1921. It endured through the trials of the Great Depression and the Flood of 1951.

Germanfest began in June of 1974 and has been held continuously every year since on the first Saturday and Sunday in June. Originally called “Juni-fest,” after a few different name variations, it became the Germanfest of today. Originally it was only held on Sunday, but 10-15 years ago, activities were added on Saturday. Now, on Saturday, an outdoor German Mass is held at 4pm, followed by authentic German food, games and carnival activities for the children, dancing and music. Sunday's events continue with food and festivities and culminate with an oral auction. Additionally, this year will be the 4th Annual Brat-Trot, held the Saturday before Germanfest. All of the funds raised from Germanfest events go towards the Holy Family School.

The Mexican-American Community in Oakland

The Mexican Revolution, the 1903 Kansas River Flood, World War I, and the Santa Fe Railroad were the main factors that brought the earliest Mexican immigrants to the Oakland neighborhood to live and work. The Mexicans *“attempting to flee the unstable living conditions and poverty in Mexico, many of the poor farmers took advantage of new developments and industry in the U.S. and latched onto promises made by labor recruiters, who met them at the border. As Mexico had been struggling with revolution, the United States had been sending its men to war in Europe, leaving a shortage of workers for its developing industry. At the same time, a stoppage of European immigration during wartime had left industry leaders worrying about finding enough laborers to keep their businesses afloat”*. (p.68)* Recruiters meeting these potential laborers at the border offered travel expenses to the cities where labor assistance was needed. The Santa Fe railroad company, which was headquartered in Topeka, was one of the major companies recruiting for laborers.

In 1908, the first wave of Mexican immigrants arrived in Topeka and up until 1939 mostly lived in area known as La Yarda or Little Mexico, located near SE 6th Avenue and Shunga Creek. In 1914, Pedro Lopez and Father Ocampo assisted with the organizing of the new Mexican Catholic Parish in Oakland; they rented a small building on the corner of Crane and Branner, which would serve as the parish church for 8 years. In 1923, a new parish church and school was built. In 1924, the Branner Viaduct was built directly in front of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and School and “damage money”* was awarded to the parish, which allowed for the building of Guadalupe Hall. This activity center would provide future fundraisers, with which to keep the parish afloat.

In 1939, the City of Topeka issued an order to evacuate La Yarda due to the unsanitary conditions. The residents, who were mainly of Mexican descent, had to find other places to live. Many moved to Oakland on the east side of the Santa Fe shops. In 1947, the construction on the Our Lady of Guadalupe church began. In 1953, the existing parish school was completed.

Fiesta Mexicana – 80 plus years of this mid-summer festival

In 1932, Father Quartero formed the Fiesta Mexicana, to help raise money for the Our Lady of Guadalupe School. Over 70 years have passed since the first Fiesta. The tradition, which started with only one night of festival activities on the parish school grounds, has now grown into a week-long carnival throughout the streets surrounding the school. It is one of the largest annual celebrations in all of Topeka. The Fiesta is still a major fundraiser for Our Lady of Guadalupe School.



Oakland Today

Oakland has over 6,100 residents today. Over 85 years have gone by since Oakland became a part of Topeka, but it still has retained its own small town feel.

“The businesses that exist in present-day Oakland continue to be small and often family-operated. The glitter of franchise has, for the most part, remained outside the neighborhood” (p.41).*

**(Quotes from “The Little City that Was”, The Story of Oakland as a City and a Neighborhood, by Kris Schultz, co 2002)*

EXISTING CONDITIONS

*** All tables and maps are found in Appendix A and B**

Health

The Neighborhood Element of the Comprehensive Plan establishes a neighborhood health rating system for all the neighborhoods in Topeka to prioritize planning assistance and resource allocation. This uses five categories—Poverty Level, Public Safety, Residential Property Values, Single Family Homeownership, and Boarded Houses—to assign a health rating to each Census Tract Block Group. The Oakland planning area falls in three block groups. In 2011, all three were rated as “at-risk.”

Land Use

There have been no major shifts in land use since the 2004 Plan—rather, the 2013 Plan Update includes the land north of Oakland to the Kansas River, adding the Open Space and Agriculture land use categories (Map 1).

The fabric of Oakland's neighborhood is bordered Open Space, Agriculture, Railroad Facilities, and Utilities. Commercial uses cross the community along NE Seward Ave and NE Sardou Ave. The remaining area is dominated by single-family residential uses. 90% of the parcels and 43% of the land area is devoted to single-family residential use. In fact, single-family residential comprises 98% of all residential land uses in Oakland. The second highest land use by total acreage is tied between Open Space and Agriculture at 14% each, followed by Railroad Facilities at 8% (Table 1).

Zoning

The current zoning map reflects nearly all of the rezoning changes recommended in the 2004 Plan (Map 2). This more accurately reflected the pattern in the community, as most residential uses already had a single dwelling unit on each property. Much of the community was rezoned as single-family residential, with commercial uses located along Seward and Sardou Aves. Six blocks along Seward were rezoned as Mixed Use (X1) to allow for commercial and residential to blend together in a traditional neighborhood setting. Carrying over from the 2004 Plan, there are a few commercial uses located away from the main corridors—a restaurant, a bank, and the old mill. Additionally, the parcels located at the corner of Wabash and Thomas are zoned commercial but used for multi-family housing.

Housing Density

Oakland has increased its number of housing units by 120 units since the 2004 Plan was written; most of these new units are in multi-family senior apartments. The net housing density increased slightly to 5.0 units/acre with the increased number of multi-family units (Table 2). Multi-family units increased from 2% of all units, to nearly 6% today. However, the overall density remains low due to the predominance of single-family detached housing found in this traditional neighborhood setting.

Housing Conditions

Overall, the housing conditions in Oakland have remained good, although they have slipped some from the time of the 2004 Plan (Table 3). Now, 63% of the houses are sound or have only minor problems. Deteriorating houses, though, have increased dramatically—from 32 properties in 2004 to 384 properties in 2013. Blocks that were showing intermediate deteriorating in 2004 are nearly all deteriorating today.

Interior blocks away from major thoroughfares, in addition to dead-end streets tend to show the most distressed conditions (Map 3). Blocks where houses face community facilities, such as the Oakland Community Center and Chase and State Street Schools, tend to show only minor deterioration. It seems to be that the more homeowners on a block, the better the housing conditions are.

Tenure

In 2004, only one block in Oakland had less than 50% homeownership. That number has increased to 27 blocks with less than 50% of the homes being owner-occupied (Map 4). This shows a sharp drop in the stability in the Oakland Community and should be a cause for concern. One good thing is that these blocks are rather spread out throughout Oakland instead of being concentrated in one particular area. The area north of Sardou has a higher percentage of homeownership than south of Sardou, with the southern area having many more renter-dominated blocks. Oakland's homeownership rate has dropped to below 60%, a trend that needs to be halted and reversed for the neighborhood to return to its previous stable conditions (Table 4).

Values and Age

Oakland was annexed into the city of Topeka at the end of 1925 and many of the structures still present in Oakland today were built before that time. Of all the structures, 42% of all structures were constructed prior to annexation.

According to the Shawnee County Appraiser, the mean (average) property value for single family residential homes is \$56,880 (Table 5). The value of single-family properties ranges from \$6,000 to \$206,100, highlighting the variety of housing styles and prices found within Oakland's boundaries. As the community developed, different styles and sizes of homes were constructed next to each other. This gives a varied feel to each street in Oakland and creates the blended fabric that defines this community.

Environment/Public Safety

Topeka Code Compliance provided data on nuisance and housing codes violations in the Oakland neighborhood during 2012 (Map 5). These cases include issues such as inoperable vehicles, accumulations of junk and debris on a property, or structural concerns. Overall, Oakland does not have many blocks with high code violation issues. The central blocks in the north half of Oakland and the west side of the southern half of Oakland tend to have higher numbers of violations.

Public safety was measured by the number of Part 1 crimes per block. These include crimes such as murder, aggravated assault, rape, theft, burglary, and robbery. In 2004, there were blocks that had up to 16 crimes per block. However, there was a large shift in these types of indicator crimes throughout Oakland. During 2012, the highest occurrence of these major crimes was just 6 crimes per block. The higher crimes tend to be in the central areas of both the northern and southern halves of Oakland.

Infrastructure

The original town site of Oakland was laid out in 1886; much of the area retains the historic feeling from its early history and can use this as an advantage. However, historic infrastructure rarely attracts nostalgic feelings and this, too, is still present in some areas of Oakland. Blocks near the main thoroughfares and central areas of the community have been renovated with repaving, sidewalks, curb and gutter, and storm drain improvements. Blocks on the outskirts of Oakland, and the Garden Park Subdivision, have not been so fortunate. Streets in these areas lack sidewalks, curbs, or gutters.



Map 7 illustrates the infrastructure of Oakland, showing both the completeness and the condition. The central blocks around Freemont and Seward, State Street School, and Thomas and Oakland show the best infrastructure in the planning area; the northeast, northwest, and southeast “corners” show the need for major repairs or replacement.

Building Activity

There has not been much building activity in Oakland since the previous plan was completed. In fact, between 2009 and 2013, there were no building permits issued and 16 demolition permits issued (Map 8). As noted in the Housing Values section, there are 103 vacant parcels in Oakland, many of which are suited for single-family residential development. By improving the community through the SORT process, it is hoped that there will be an increased demand for new housing in Oakland.

Circulation

As shown in Map 9, Oakland has two major corridors, Seward and Sardou Aves, of which both are east-west roads. There is no major north-south road. River Road skirts the western edge of the community and Strait St borders the community on the eastern edge but neither of these have the profile or use of Seward or Sardou.

There are two proposed bike routes that cross the community and one bus route that serves the community along its major corridors—Seward and Sardou Aves. There is an established trail along Oakland-Billard Park that connects to the Santa Fe Park and a trail along the northern portion of the community is planned, eventually linking to the Shunga Trail. However, implementation of this is farther down the road.

Public Facilities

Oakland has eight public facilities and areas: Oakland Community Center; Oakland-Billard Park; Santa Fe Park; Little Oakland Park; Mousetrap Skate Park; Motorcycle Park; the open space at Doran St.; and Fire Station #6. All the parks provide green space for passive recreation; ball fields and courts are available at Oakland-Billard, Santa Fe, Little Oakland, and the Oakland Community Center.

Oakland Community Center

The Oakland Community Center was built in 1977 and was opened to the public in 1978. Oakland primarily serves the northeast Topeka and northeastern Shawnee County. The most recent attendance figures show that 115,000 people participated in some type of program, class, or special event in 2012 with revenue for programs, camps, rentals and special events exceeding \$110,000. The park area sits on 51.26 acres. In January of 2012 the community merged with Shawnee County and is now a division of Shawnee County Parks and Recreation.



In the last ten years the community center’s improvements include a new heating and cooling system, parking lot overlay, installation of a wood gymnasium floor (2012), updating of male and female shower facilities, development of public computer lab in cooperation with Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library, new handicapped accessible playground, development of 12 bed community garden, fitness facility, security system installed at the skate park and pool , additional green space created in the park,

new roof and guttering, installation of new entry doors, and placement of electronic outdoor sign near in front of the center.

Currently the Oakland Community Center offers a licensed preschool program, computer lab and WiFi, up to date fitness center, before and after school program, state licensed summer sports camp, 1.3 miles of Shunga Trail, open air shelter, computer lab, and partnerships with the following: Topeka Police Athletic League, Santa Fe Soccer Club, Stormont Vail, Golden Gloves Boxing, Arlene Marshall, Washburn University, Topeka Police Department, Dick's Sporting Goods, Panera Bread, Frito Lay, Topeka Common Ground, K-State Extension office, OCW Wrestling, The Mexican Fiesta, USD 501 Schools.



Schools

Oakland is served by State Street Elementary School and Chase Middle School. This shared campus is bounded by State St, Chester Ave, Division St, and Sumner St.

State Street Elementary School

This elementary school served 442 students with data in Table 6 showing the indicators of this student population. State Street has the 13th highest rate of economically disadvantaged students of all of the schools in USD 501. The state of Kansas averages 48.8% of students that are economically disadvantaged; 86.2% of the State Street students fall in this category. Reading and math scores also fall below the averages for the state and USD 501.

Chase Middle School

This middle school serves 447 students with data in Table 6 showing the indicators of this student group. Chase has the 6th highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the 501 school district at 90.8%. It, too, has reading and math scores below the state and district averages.

Holy Family Catholic School

In 2006, the Sacred Heart Catholic School and Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic School were merged to form Holy Family Catholic School. This is a kindergarten through 8th grade school, with preschool services offered at the Our Lady of Guadalupe campus.

Lundgren Education Center (formerly Lundgren Elementary)

Lundgren Elementary School closed at the end of the 2010-2011 school year when schools were consolidated to improve efficiency. Early childhood services were moved into this location, which now provides half-day preschool four days per week for 3 and 4 year old children with developmental delays.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRENDS

***Refer to Appendix A for Socio-Economic Tables (Table 7-Table 9)**

The Oakland planning area is located in Census Tract 9, Block Groups 1, 2, and 3 and Tract 10, Block Groups 1, 2, 3, and 4. The socioeconomic data was extrapolated from the 1990, 2000

and 2010 United States Censuses, with tables located in Appendix B. The neighborhood lost 468 people between 1990 and 2010, losing 5% of its total population between 1990-2000 and another 3 percent loss from 2000-2010 (Table 7). In regards to the shifting race and ethnic demographics, the winds of change blow straight through Oakland.

Table 8 shows that the population of nearly all age groups in Oakland declined from 1990-2000 (20-24 year olds and 45-54 year olds showed a significant increase in this time frame). From 2000-2010, the only age groups to show a substantial increase were 5-9 and 55-64 year olds. The increase in school-aged children could have implications in the neighborhood schools, State St. and Chase. On the opposite side, the increase in adults nearing retirement age could indicate a need for improved public transportation and a greater demand for senior housing.

Economically, the average household income (AHI) in Oakland has increased to \$36,962 but still lags slightly behind Topeka's AHI of \$40,342 (Table 9). The AHI for Oakland has stayed at relatively the same rate (91-92%) as compared to Topeka's during the last 20 years. On a positive note, the Great Recession and the Housing Crisis of 2007 did not impact Oakland any more than it did the rest of the city. Economically, this community is maintaining its same status as it did in 1990.

PROFILE SUMMARY

The Oakland Neighborhood is a proud neighborhood rooted in single family development. The neighborhood was developed over time for many different reasons, which might explain why the style and size of the homes in the neighborhood vary so greatly. Similar to the randomness of the housing styles in this neighborhood, the health indicators follow no set patterns either. Nonetheless, from the conclusions that can be made about Oakland below are some of the impediments for reinvestment:

Needs/Constraints

- Decline in homeownership from 75% to 59%.
- Wastewater Treatment Plant odor issues.
- Park space that is not centralized or accessible to the entire neighborhood.
- Loss of middle aged population (residents age 25-34 and 35-44 decreased from 1990-2010).
- Senior population leaving the neighborhood (residents age 65+ decreased 30% from 1990-2010).
- Overall population of the neighborhood decreased 8% from 1990-2010.
- Physical condition of Sardou and Seward Avenue commercial corridors.

On the other hand, there are many strengths and opportunities that can be seized upon to overcome these constraints:

Strengths/Opportunities

- Festivals
- Affordable and sound housing stock.
- Two commercial corridors with small, locally owned businesses.
- Access to public transportation.
- The Shunga Trail connection to the neighborhood.

- Three neighborhood parks.
- Population of 55-64 year olds increased by 65% from 2000-2010.
- The neighborhood contains a number of important institutions – Chase Middle, State Street Elementary, and a number of churches – that provide community anchors and quality of life amenities for the neighborhood.
- The neighborhood is close to a major employer, BNSF.
- 95% of the housing units in Oakland are single family.

III. VISION AND GOALS

VISION STATEMENT

Marie grew up in Oakland, as did her parents and grandparents. Most of her family members worked at the Santa Fe shops or taught at the one of the neighborhood schools. Her family is deeply entrenched into the neighborhood fabric that is Oakland.

As the time went by, she decided to leave and go off to college. Once graduating from college, Marie began working, in time married and started a family. 15 years after leaving Oakland, her young son is about to begin school and like so many other parents, she began to think about where she wanted her son to be raised and what kind of schools she wanted him to attend.

She never thought she would return to Oakland, but everything she was looking for – good neighborhood schools, friendly neighbors, and close to family – was right here in the neighborhood where she has all those wonderful childhood memories.

Marie decided to drive around the neighborhood and check it out. While she remembers the neighborhood for the most part being nice, she does recall that there were some rough edges starting to show throughout the neighborhood.

Upon entering the neighborhood the big “Welcome to Oakland” sign and beautiful landscaping greeted her. She turned down Seward Avenue to be delightfully surprised by the new family restaurant that opened up. Marie also noticed other improvements along Seward, the new trees, the light fixtures, but what surprised her even more, was how vibrant with activity the street has become. Many of the existing buildings have been rehabilitated and a new drugstore and hardware store opened up along Seward. She was also happy to see that the neighborhood grocers were continuing to thrive.

As Marie turned off of Seward Avenue to take a look at some homes, she was delighted by the sight of the wonderful tree canopy, a canopy that has covered nearly all of the residential streets in Oakland for generations. While driving she witnesses a couple of people helping out an elderly neighbor with some of his routine housing maintenance, realizing that neighbors still help out neighbors in Oakland.

Another wonderful sight for Marie is the schoolyard full of children playing even though school is out for the day, just as it was when she was a kid.

As Marie heads over to her parents’ house for dinner, she is more convinced than ever, that Oakland is the place in which she wants to raise her family.

GOALS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

LAND USE

Goal

Maintain the viable single-family residential character of the neighborhood; encourage healthy redevelopment of commercial corridors; develop strong park/trail system.

Guiding Principles

- Single-family land use, as the predominate and intended land use of the neighborhood, should remain viable and be protected from encroachment of incompatible land uses.
- Balance the needs of the institutional users with the needs of the neighborhood to maintain a viable residential community.
- Seward Avenue and Sardou Avenue corridors should maintain their mixed-use nature including neighborhood-level commercial.
- Allow for neighborhood-level commercial activities within the interior of Oakland (i.e. family restaurant).
- Integrate additional open space/park uses within the interior of the neighborhood.

HOUSING

Goal

Maintain current level of high homeownership within the neighborhood and prevent decline of housing conditions.

Guiding Principles

- Encourage homeowners to participate in the housing rehabilitation activities.
- Create volunteer “neighbor to neighbor” programs that can help the elderly, disabled, or other neighbors-in-need address smaller housing and property maintenance issues that prolong the life of the existing housing stock and prevent the “broken window” cycle.
- Any infill housing development should be in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.
- Develop strategies to ensure a high level of property owner compliance with minimum housing/nuisance standards.
- Address vacant lots and dilapidated housing stock by encouraging infill development with affordable housing units.
- Support the development of multi-unit affordable low- and moderate-income senior housing to allow Oakland residents to age in place.

PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES

Goal

Provide ongoing improvement of infrastructure and public facilities that will maintain Oakland’s capacity for viability.

Guiding Principles

- Continue to improve the odor control systems of the wastewater treatment plant.
- Encourage trail connections to the existing regional trail system.

- Eliminate “ditch” drainage systems in areas still lacking modern street drainage.
- Create pedestrian friendly streetscapes (streets and sidewalks) that connect to the neighborhood’s amenities and assets.
- Improve family-friendliness of parks within Oakland.

SAFETY

Goal

Create a safe, clean, and livable environment for all those in Oakland to live, learn, work, and play.

Guiding Principles

- Promote a strong, working relationship with police and educational efforts so residents are fully aware of “what to look for” in detecting and preventing crime.
- Improve the environmental design (CPTED) of the neighborhood to prevent crime.
- Discourage high traffic speeds within the neighborhood through contemporary traffic calming devices and other techniques.
- Organize volunteer resources to take a more organized and proactive role in safety protection.

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Goal

Promote a positive image that will preserve homeownership investment and stimulate neighborhood-level commercial development.

Guiding Principles

- Work together with community anchors and employers to help make them positive assets for the neighborhood.
- Organize as a neighborhood to provide a louder voice for positive change.
- Welcome and support a diversity of peoples.
- Work to prevent nuisance and housing code violations from occurring while prioritizing enforcement efforts on more persistent and severe violations.
- Create an identity that gives visitors a better sense of the neighborhood (i.e. create gateways at neighborhood entrances).
- Enhance Oakland’s image corridor along Seward Avenue.
- Continue to promote and support Oakland as the community of festivals (i.e. Fiesta and Germanfest) and create a new neighborhood-wide celebration.
- Coordinate with other agencies, such as the Riverfront Authority and Shawnee Co. Parks and Recreation on the development and promotion of the riverfront area.
- Promote and expand the projects of the NIA: i.e., reach out to new residents, coordinate programs with residents and businesses and promote the NIA through brochures and outreach.

IV. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Oakland Land Use Plan (Map #10) graphically illustrates a conceptual guide for future development and re-development that embodies the vision and goals presented in Section III. The map is conceptual and should not be used to determine precise zoning boundaries. The following land uses, zoning districts, and densities are the “maximum recommended” and assume less intensive land uses, zoning districts, or densities are appropriate.

LAND USE PLAN CATEGORIES

Residential – Very Low Density: This category reserves the lower density non-urbanized area of Oakland that primarily fronts “local” low volume streets where larger lot single-family and agricultural-type uses exist to the north.

The northern area originally developed less compact due to infrastructure constraints and exhibits rural-like characteristics (deep road-side ditches, narrow roads, very low density). Parts of the area lie below the wastewater treatment plant, which means wastewater must be pumped uphill at a significant cost. Another hindrance to higher density development in parts of this area is proximity to the airport. Air flight path restrictions limit development close to the airport. Therefore, it is not anticipated the area will develop into urban densities over the 10-year horizon of this Plan. New development in this area should be compatible with the existing single-family character, which could include such uses as churches, small scale day cares, and institutional uses.

Primary Uses: single-family dwellings
Zoning Districts: R-1, R-2 (Single Family)
Density: 1-4 units/acre (net)

Residential – Low Density (Urban): This category reserves urbanized areas of Oakland that primarily front “local” low volume streets where the highest concentrations of single-family uses exist without a significant mixing of non-residential uses. These areas originally developed as compact single-family areas with urbanized road/utility infrastructure. New development in this area should be compatible with the existing single family character, which could include such uses as churches, small-scale daycares and institutional uses.

Primary Uses: single-family dwellings
Zoning Districts: R-1, R-2 (Single Family)
Density: 5-7 units/acre (net)

Residential – Medium Density (Urban):

This category applies only to the existing multi-family zoning located on Seward near Chester. This category reflects the current zoning—not the current use—as it is currently used for single family residences. A change in actual land use to medium density may be permitted in the future.

Primary Uses: single- and multi-family dwellings
Zoning Districts: M-1, M-2
Density: 8-15 units/acre (net)

Mixed Use – Multi-Family Residential: This category applies to the Wabash and Thomas node. This area formerly functioned as Oakland’s commercial downtown prior to being annexed by Topeka. The area consists of commercial and institutional buildings whose primary use now is multi-family residential with a couple commercial uses. This category is intended to promote the continued use of the buildings as a mix of low-to-medium density residential and low-intensity neighborhood commercial. A ground-level retail use with residential units above is the preferred model in the two-story buildings. Commercial uses here are to be of lesser intensity than those on the neighborhood’s commercial corridors.

Primary Uses: Single to four-unit dwellings; neighborhood commercial; institutional
Zoning Districts: X-1 Mixed Use
Density/Intensity: 8-22 dwelling units/acre (net)

Mixed Use – Neighborhood: This category promotes the integration of neighborhood commercial uses with residential uses on blocks that front Seward Avenue. Neighborhood-scaled office, institutional, and commercial retail/service uses could be designed to accommodate residential uses within the same structure or on adjacent property. Residential standards should accommodate “zero-lot line” designs.

Since these blocks front a major image street, parking lots should be effectively screened from street frontages or placed at the side or rear of properties. Quality of design should be emphasized by orienting buildings close to the street, making sites pedestrian friendly, softening views where possible, restricting large pole signage, ensuring visual integrity, minimizing points of access, and buffering physical impacts from adjacent residential blocks. Adaptive re-use of residential buildings is encouraged. The purpose of this classification is to provide for healthy mixed-use development and re-development along an aesthetically pleasing neighborhood corridor.

Primary Uses: Single to four-unit dwellings; neighborhood commercial
Zoning Districts: X-1 (Mixed Use); C-2 (Commercial)
Density/Intensity: 8-22 dwelling units/acre (net)

Commercial – Neighborhood: This designation allows for small-scale “mom and pop” businesses along the major corridors and that would serve local needs of the neighborhood residents. Many of the properties under this category contain existing commercial buildings and would be restricted from further expansion without meeting setback and parking requirements. In addition, expansion of existing commercial uses should be compatible with the adjoining residential neighborhood, with the most intense part of the use located away from the residential homes, and parking lots screened from residential homes. New commercial uses should front the corridor street and not the residential street, and meet the design criteria for corridor development. Existing residential uses in these areas are appropriate. The commercial uses in this category are intended to be an asset to neighborhood residents that can serve pedestrian convenience. They are not intended to attract a large number of non-local visitors.

Primary Uses: small-scale neighborhood commercial stores
Zoning Districts: C-2 (Commercial)
Density/Intensity: Low

Institutional: This designation recognizes existing schools and churches. Major expansion of existing institutional sites should be reflected on the map. Anticipated expansions are within low-density residential areas and should not pose any negative impacts on surrounding blocks.

Primary Uses: Schools, churches, etc.
Zoning Districts: primarily R-2 (Single-Family)
Intensity: Medium (limited occurrences)

Parks and Open Space: This designation represents both the passive open space areas without structural or recreational elements and the active park areas with structural or recreational elements. Current parks in Oakland include Oakland Billard Park, Oakland Park, Motorcycle Park, and Santa Fe Park. Future park space/open space should include the Shunga Trail and County-owned property at Michigan and Laurent. Under this category, open space could be public or privately-owned as long as it is accessible to the community for some form of recreation or cultural activities. Neighborhood-building activities such as community gardens can be an innovative, productive use for this land if it is not used as park-space. This category recognizes that the development of these sites is reserved for public recreational space and should not be developed for non-park uses.

Primary Use: Parks and Open Space
Zoning District: OS (Open Space)
Intensity: Low

Industrial: This designation recognizes the industrial use areas of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad located primarily along the southwestern and southern boundaries of the neighborhood. This category also applies to those areas south of Seward Avenue in the southeastern portion of the neighborhood. This includes existing and future industrial expansion areas. Some attention to site buffering will be needed for the existing industrial areas since they front residential areas and Seward Avenue, a major image corridor for the neighborhood.

Primary Uses: Light Industrial
Zoning Districts: I-1 (Light Industrial); I-2 (Heavy Industrial)
Density/Intensity: Heavy

Utility: This designation recognizes the City's Oakland Wastewater Treatment Plant and those sites in the neighborhood related to it. The Oakland Wastewater Treatment plant serves a great portion of the City, as well as areas south of the City. The plant is currently undergoing a major upgrade/expansion. Improved odor-control, energy efficiency, and an upgraded bio-solids handling facility are all included in the future plans. If expansion is necessary, it shall expand no farther than Chester Street and extensive efforts should be made to screen the plant from the adjoining residential neighborhood.

Primary Uses: Utility
Zoning Districts: R-1 and R-2 (Single Family)
Density/Intensity: Heavy

Multi-Family – High Density: There are two high density multi-family complexes in Oakland now: Santa Fe Motive Power and La Colonia. The Santa Fe Motive Power building is located at Atchison and Branner Streets, just south of Our Lady of Guadalupe School. It was built in 1915

for Burlington Northern Santa Fe to serve as its office building until 2002. It remained unoccupied until 2011 when the Pioneer Group, Inc. purchased it and renovated it and created 58 low-to-moderate income senior apartments. La Colonia is a high-density retirement community located at Golden and Seward Streets. It has 40 units for low- to middle-income adults aged 62 and over. Additional affordable senior housing complexes should be considered to encourage lifelong residents to remain in Oakland as they mature. Sites best suited for future high density residential development includes those areas closest to activity zones such as major thoroughfares with public transportation, mixed use areas, and retail areas. Future applications for high-density multi-family shall be approved on a case-by-case basis.

Primary Uses: Multi-Family
Zoning Districts: M-1; M-2; M-3
Density/Intensity: High

Office: This category permits office and associated uses in specified areas of Oakland. These uses should be considered along major thoroughfares where appropriate infrastructure exists for traffic that is generated. However, there is one office located on an interior street that should be encouraged to stay and continue providing its services to the Oakland community. The Envista Credit Union and supporting parking lot are located at State and Lake Streets have been at their present location since 1970 and are an integral part of the neighborhood.

Primary Uses: Office
Zoning Districts: O&I1
Density/Intensity: Low

Detailed Land Use Recommendations

- **Interior ‘Mom and Pop’ Commercial Use (1)**

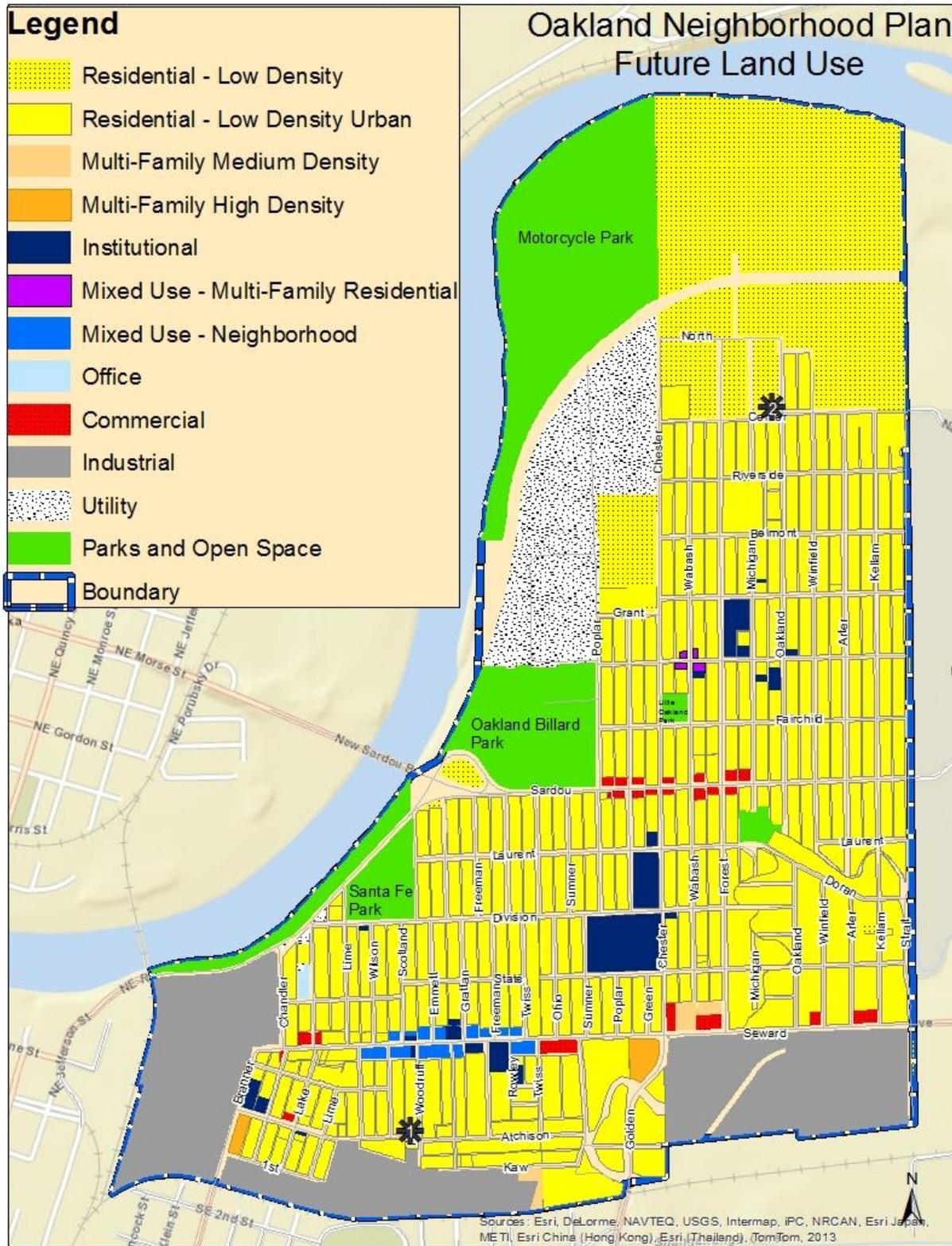
The La Siesta Restaurant, located at Woodruff and Atchison, is unique to the Oakland Neighborhood in that it is a small-scale commercial business located within the interior of the residential neighborhood. La Siesta is now Topeka’s oldest Mexican restaurant having been in business at this location since 1955. While the Future Land Use Plan for the Oakland Neighborhood does not recognize commercial land uses outside the commercial corridors, this description recognizes that this ‘mom and pop’ business has been coexisting for many years with its residential neighbors. This Plan supports a ‘mom and pop’ commercial use at this location.

- **Former airplane factory (2)**

This is another of Oakland’s unique land uses. This industrial building has been used as a mill and as an airplane factory, back in the early days of modern flight. Today it sits on the north end of the neighborhood, sandwiched between the levee and a residential neighborhood in a residential zoned area. This facility is currently the Olde Mille Auction Center, specializing in estate, consignment, and moving auctions. While this use is less intense than previous heavy industrial uses at this location, having a commercial use in this location poses a potential conflict with the surrounding residential character. Reuse ideas include conversion to loft residential and artist live/work space.



Map 10: Future Land Use



V. REVITALIZATION THEMES

THEMES

- ✓ **“Oakland is MY neighborhood”** – When residents identify with the neighborhood in which they live they are more likely to have a stronger sense of community. Steps should be taken that will increase residents’ awareness of their belonging to the neighborhood. This could include having NIA “block captains” to act as a point of contact and information, as well as helping new residents become a part of the community.
- ✓ **“Corridors, Corridors, Corridors”** – Oakland’s commercial corridors are key to the long-term stability of the neighborhood. Viable commercial corridors will help keep Oakland’s retail dollars in the neighborhood. Oakland’s commercial corridors are also Oakland’s image corridors. High-quality commercial corridors will present a good image to those passing through the neighborhood and help retain and attract homeowners.
- ✓ **“Organize”** – The NIA must champion the implementation of this Plan, take the lead on what happens in the neighborhood, re-energize its volunteer system, and provide clear direction/input to decision-makers on how to realize neighborhood goals. New, creative methods will be needed for reaching out to the community and for reestablishing the NIA as a grass-roots leadership organization for Oakland.
- ✓ **“Think Outside the City’s Box”** – The NIA, businesses and stakeholders in the neighborhood should not rely solely on the City for the neighborhood’s successful renaissance. There simply are not enough resources available from the City. The NIA must find ways to raise its own money and develop its own programs independent of City support. This should include collaboration with the business community in Oakland as well as the residents.
- ✓ **“Institutional Partners”** – Oakland contains important institutions that add stability to the neighborhood. Partnering with those institutions on various projects will create strength and energy in revitalization and should be a priority for the neighborhood. Churches, schools, and businesses should all be involved with the NIA in stabilizing and revitalizing Oakland.
- ✓ **“Crime Prevention for the Long Haul”** – Oakland is becoming more and more prone to criminal activity as fewer people feel a sense of ownership toward the neighborhood. One of the most important aspects of preventing crime is the creation “social connectivity”. Social connectivity is the capability of residents to know their neighbors through chance encounters on the streets, sidewalks, and public facilities. Achieving this objective alone will help empower residents to take back their neighborhood now and into the future.

TARGET AREA STRATEGIES

Target Concept and Principles

Neighborhoods make up the fabric of a city, but blocks make up the fabric of a neighborhood. When the fabric is strong, the city or the neighborhood is strong. If the fabric becomes frayed,

wears down and tears, the city or neighborhood becomes weak and susceptible to accelerated decay. The most successful strategies in neighborhood revitalization involve the repairing and re-weaving of this fabric. To do this, a neighborhood revitalization strategy must protect key assets or anchors, isolate weaknesses, and re-position them as strengths. The Target Area Concept Map depicts these current features in Oakland as defined below:

Anchor – These are rigid points of support that give a neighborhood its identity. They are long-term community investments that draw people to them as destinations thereby lending stability to the area and making them desirable for residential investment (e.g., schools, churches, parks, shopping, etc.).

Strength/Potential – These areas are the relatively strongest blocks of a neighborhood that exhibit staying power and/or recent investment. These are also underachieving areas that have the potential to become strengths or anchors given an appropriate stimulus.

Weakness – In general, weaknesses are areas that have the highest concentrations of negative conditions such as low homeownership, vacant/boarded houses, poverty, substandard infrastructure, and high crime. The more concentrated these are, the greater social problems occur and the more entrenched they become. Diluting their concentration gives surrounding areas a greater chance to revitalize on their own.

Spatial relationships play a dynamic role in the overall concept. Spread too thin, anchors or areas of strength will fail to influence beyond their natural reach leaving poorly performing areas little hope of turning around on their own. Conversely, much like a shopping mall where the stores between two anchors will benefit from greater pedestrian traffic, weaker blocks isolated between two closely placed areas of strength will be prone to more investment because they are “attaching” themselves to something more stable and desirable. In a similar fashion, a neighborhood can only be re-woven back together if the new threads (i.e., investment) are attached to something worth attaching itself to for the long-term. If you try to attach new threads to a frayed piece of fabric, you will ultimately and more quickly fail in its purpose to mend.

If the new investment is “public dollars”, the most effective and fair use of such an investment in a neighborhood is to **maximize the impact and transformation of the neighborhood**. Spreading out dollars throughout a neighborhood dilutes its effectiveness and impact. Combining the same amount of dollars for infrastructure and housing investments into a targeted 3-5 block area will give that area a much better chance to transform itself and become another strength upon which to build. The more areas of strength or fewer areas of weakness for a neighborhood, the better it will be. The keys to this concept are that the targeted area will have an even greater chance to succeed if it can:

- attach itself to an anchor and/or area of strength (protect assets)
- address a significant need or weakness (transform)
- provide a benefit to the greatest number of people possible (can include image)
- leverage private investment to the greatest extent possible (sustainable)

All of those factors should go into selecting the priorities for which “target area” is first, second, third, etc. And if done correctly, the targeted public investment will lead to its highest and best purpose – to re-establish market forces and stabilize property values. Simply put, this means that if you put money into your house you will get that money out at the time of sale. The matrix

below rates each proposed target area with the general targeting principles. Ratings are High (3), Medium (2), and Low (1).

	Chase/State St Schools	Sardou/Wabash	Sardou/Oakland	Seward/Lime	Garden Park Subdivision
Attach to Strengths and Protect Assets	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low
Significant Need/Weakness	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	High
# of People Benefit	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Leverage and Sustainable	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Total	10	12	8	8	8

Proposed Target Areas

During the planning process, the residents and participants realized that all of the Oakland planning area needed help. From infrastructure upgrades to housing improvements, every street had some need that could be met with the SORT funds. However, as they all realized, there was only a finite amount of funding allocated to their neighborhood. It was necessary to step back and look objectively at the entire neighborhood to see which blocks were most in need and had the most potential. Six rating factors were used to evaluate each block to see which area was most in need:

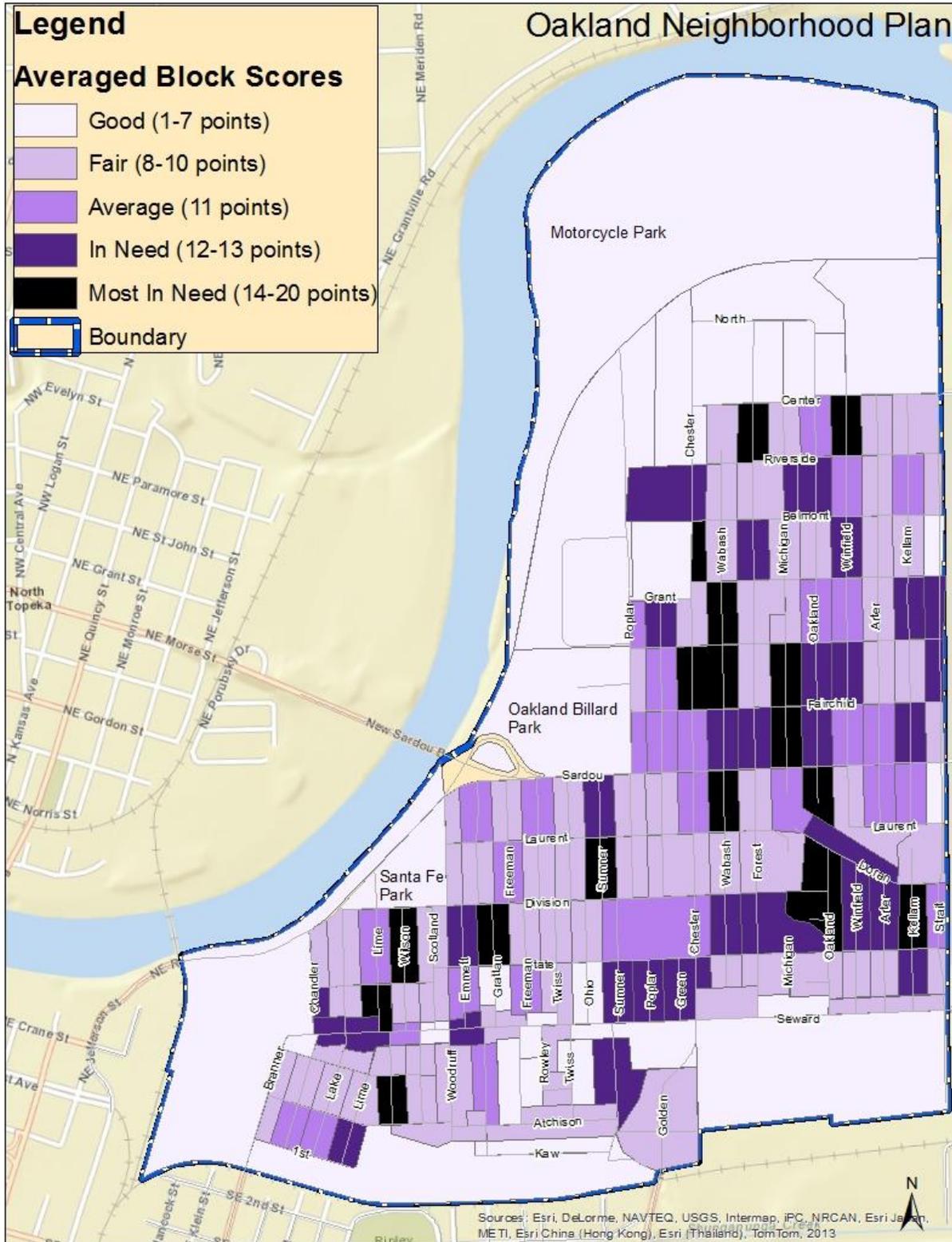
- Housing Conditions
- Home Ownership (Tenure)
- Code Violations
- Major Part 1 Crimes
- Infrastructure

These rating factors were each mapped at the beginning of the planning process with the results averaged per block, and the maps were overlaid to see which blocks consistently scored low (Map 11). This allowed a pattern to emerge for areas that were in need but, based on their proximity to Anchor Areas and Strength/Potential Areas, had the highest potential for responding to public investment (Map 12).

Based on the Target Area Map, the Steering Committee voted that the highest priority target area should be the Chase/State Street School Area. This area experiences high pedestrian and vehicular traffic going to and from the schools, yet many of the streets between the schools and Seward Ave lack sidewalks. This, combined with its proximity and high visibility, make it a prime area to show improvements in the Oakland Community. Building conditions in these blocks range from minor to intermediate deterioration. This could easily respond to the housing programs associated with SORT and create a new Anchor Area from this entire neighborhood.

The secondary target area should be the Sardou/Wabash Area. This area scored the highest in the needs assessment; however, it did not have the high visibility and hazards to school children as was seen in the Chase/State Street School Area. Several factors make this an ideal candidate

Map 11: Target Area Evaluation



for receiving SORT funding: there is relatively high homeownership; it is proximal to a main neighborhood park, community center, and school; it contains its own park; projects here would probably not be funded through other means. Although this area lacks the proximity and drive-by traffic associated with the Chase/State Street School Area, Sardou will provide good visibility to enhancements and improvements to this area.

The idea behind targeting is to focus a critical mass of improvements in a concentrated number of blocks so that it stimulates additional investment by adjacent property owners, increases property values, and leaves behind a visible transformation of the area. If the improvements are not visible enough, then the stabilization of that area is marginalized and investments to the area will not be leveraged. Each Target Area may require a different set of strategies for improvement. Ultimately, public funding is limited for improvement and some of the strategies outlined for these areas will not be made in a sufficiently timed manner for the improvements necessary.

Detailed descriptions below describe the proposed Target Areas based on their recommended order of priority. The most significant needs within each Target Area should be adequately addressed before moving on to the next area.

1. Chase/State Street School Target Area

Location

This area is located adjacent to the Chase/State Street School complex. It consists of the blocks facing the schools on Sumner St and Chester Ave, and the blocks of Sumner, Poplar, Green and Chester between the schools and Seward. Most of the houses in this area showed Minor Deterioration but the blocks between the schools and Seward had low homeownership. Improvements here will be apparent both to the residents, neighboring streets, and visitors to the area. A main thought behind applying the SORT funding to a neighborhood is to stimulate private dollars being invested. By locating the primary target area here, it will have a high impact on the surrounding neighborhood through perception and visibility.

Infrastructure

Most of the alleys in this target area are graded gravel and are filled with potholes. All alleys here should be concreted to improve circulation, drainage, and image. However, prior to alley reconstruction, the sewer lines in the alleys should be evaluated to determine needed repairs or maintenance. Sidewalks should be installed so that each street has a sidewalk on one side of it. If any sections of curbing need repair, they should be reconstructed to match the existing curbing on that street.

Housing

Housing improvement strategies should include a combination of:

- Interior and exterior rehabilitation of many existing owner-occupied homes;
- Exterior rehab of some renter-occupied homes;
- Conversion of some renter-occupied homes into owner-occupied homes;
- Demolition of selected vacant, sub-standard homes in combination with the major rehabilitation of adjacent owner-occupied homes or with infill development of owner-occupied homes.

Sidewalks

- NE Sumner St (500 block)
- NE Poplar St (400 block)

- NE Green St (400 block)
- NE Chester Ave (500 block)

2. Sardou/Wabash Target Area

Location

This location lies mainly along NE Wabash Ave from NE Laurent to NE Grant. Some blocks of Chester are also included in this target area. The building conditions are divided between Minor Deterioration and Deteriorating conditions. The good blocks are being pulled down by the bad, creating a situation where intervention can lead to reversing this trend. This area has moderately high homeownership so private investment could easily be stimulated with public funding. While this block is not highly traveled in itself, its intersection and visibility from Sardou lends the energy and visibility needed for SORT projects to create the most benefit.

Infrastructure

The alleys in this target area are graded gravel and are filled with potholes. All alleys here should be concreted to improve circulation, drainage, and image. However, prior to alley reconstruction, the sewer lines in the alleys should be evaluated to determine needed repairs or maintenance. Sidewalks should be installed so that each street has a sidewalk on one side of it and ADA accessible ramps should be added if they are not already present. If any sections of curbing need repair, they should be reconstructed to match the existing curbing on that street.

Housing

Housing improvement strategies should include a combination of:

- Interior and exterior rehabilitation of many existing owner-occupied homes;
- Exterior rehab of some renter-occupied homes;
- Conversion of some renter-occupied homes into owner-occupied homes;
- Demolition of selected vacant, sub-standard homes in combination with the major rehabilitation of adjacent owner-occupied homes or with infill development of owner-occupied homes.

Sidewalks

- NE Wabash Ave (700-1000 blocks)
- NE Chester Ave (900-1000 blocks)
- NE Grant St (2400-2500 blocks)

3. Seward/Lime/Division St Target Area

Location

This Target Area is bordered by NE Seward, NE Chandler, NE River Road, and NE Division St. Building conditions here show a range of need, with some blocks showing Minor Deterioration, some showing Intermediate Deterioration, and some with Deteriorating conditions. This area has moderately high homeownership that will hopefully lead to increased private investment when SORT and other public funds are used for improvements in this area. Its location along Seward and Chandler will allow for passersby to see the improvements occurring in this area.

Infrastructure

The alleys in this target area are graded gravel and are filled with potholes. All alleys here should be concreted to improve circulation, drainage, and image. However, prior to alley reconstruction, the sewer lines in the alleys should be evaluated to determine needed repairs or

maintenance. Sidewalks should be installed so that each street has a sidewalk on one side of it. If any sections of curbing need repair, they should be reconstructed to match the existing curbing on that street.

Housing

Housing improvement strategies should include a combination of:

- Interior and exterior rehabilitation of many existing owner-occupied homes;
- Exterior rehab of some renter-occupied homes;
- Conversion of some renter-occupied homes into owner-occupied homes;
- Demolition of selected vacant, sub-standard homes in combination with the major rehabilitation of adjacent owner-occupied homes or with infill development of owner-occupied homes.

Sidewalks

- NE Chandler St (400-500 blocks)
- NE Lake St (400-500 blocks)
- NE Lime St (400-500 blocks)
- NE Wilson (500 block)

NEIGHBORHOOD-WIDE STRATEGIES

Several livability strategies can be utilized that add significant value to the “demand-side” of the neighborhood. The quality of housing stock is but one facet of Oakland’s reinvestment strategy. Non-housing strategies related to neighborhood character, infrastructure, parks and open space, appearance, and safety are critical in creating an overall environment of livability emphasizing a traditional neighborhood quality of life. Additional livability strategies are in this section and the following sections.

HOUSING

The overarching goal for housing in Oakland is to *maintain current level of high homeownership within the neighborhood and prevent decline of housing conditions*. The homeownership rate in Oakland is 59.8%, which is better than Topeka (55.2%) but lower than the national average (63.9%). What are some of the reasons this average is so high and what are some reasons why it has dropped from 74% 10 years ago?

The neighborhood has an existing housing stock of various sizes and designs that is still in good shape. Oakland owes much of its stability to the fact it is a neighborhood that historically has drawn in families and kept generation after generation in the neighborhood. A classic grid system of streets makes for ease of getting around and most of the streets are lined with large mature trees that provide natural canopies over the streets and provide shade to the homes below.

It may be that Oakland felt so secure in its neighborhood character and feel that it missed opportunities in promoting itself to new residents and to keeping existing residents. It lost population in key home-buying age groups (20-44 years of age) as well as to seniors. As a mature neighborhood, instead of having its modest homes purchased by seniors looking to retire and downsize, it saw its housing stock become rentals. This shift away from homeownership to

rental units should have been a warning sign that the community needed to launch a PR campaign touting the benefits of living in Oakland. However, it has not slipped so far that it cannot reclaim its former glory.

This is a rather simplistic explanation of why Oakland remains a stable neighborhood, although it faces more threats than it did 10 years ago. It illustrates a key point that will, if addressed now, continue to keep Oakland a viable neighborhood. That key point is: *the existing housing stock must be maintained to sound conditions*. This will make the housing attractive to homebuyers looking at Oakland from outside the neighborhood. Protecting the existing housing stock will also make the neighborhood more attractive to those homeowners within the neighborhood looking to 'trade up' by buying a larger home.

Housing Improvements

The primary approach for Oakland to maintain the quality of its housing should be through rehabilitation. Vacant lots are too few to warrant any great emphasis on new construction of in-fill housing. Several approaches to affordable housing rehabilitation are available for property owners to stimulate renovation of the existing housing supply.

Rehabilitation

- Non-Profits – **Cornerstone** operates a lease purchase program for households who demonstrate an interest and ability in becoming future homeowners. Low/moderate-income families are placed in rehabilitated single-family units and gain necessary credit-worthiness in a couple of years to eventually become homeowners. Cornerstone funds rehabilitation of the property and manages it until they are ready. **Topeka City Homes** currently renovates and manages single-family rental units. These programs should be targeted on the key improvement blocks using a scattered-site approach.
- City Sponsored Programs – The City of Topeka in cooperation with Housing and Credit Counseling, Inc. (HCCI) and participating lenders offer the **TOTO II** (Topeka Opportunity to Own) program for new homebuyers. The TOTO II program now offers up to \$65,000 for acquisition and \$30,000 for rehab if it is located in an "Opportunity Area." In the last five years, 13 TOTO homes have been selected in Oakland, making it one of the most popular NIA neighborhoods for TOTO homes to be located in. There have also been two Neighborhood Stabilization Program (**NSP**) homes that have gone into Oakland during this same period. Other rehab incentives offered to income eligible homeowners by the City's Housing and Neighborhood Development Department include forgivable loans for **major rehab, emergency repair, and accessibility modifications**.
- Institution Partners – The neighborhood has the benefit of having a number of large institutions located throughout. These institutions include State Street Elementary Schools, Chase Middle School, Our Lady Guadalupe Church, Sacred Heart Church, and Holy Family School. Strategies to partner with these institutions for the benefit of improving the housing stock in the neighborhood include:
 - ✓ Churches in the neighborhood discuss the importance of home maintenance at weekly church services. This type of peer pressure could prove effective at convincing people to keep up their properties.
 - ✓ The schools in the neighborhood have a number of children that could be involved with minor maintenance projects and clean-ups. Many of these students have community

service hours they need to fulfill and there may be a number of class projects that could get the students involved in the neighborhood.

- Neighbor to Neighbor – The “broken windows” theory explains that little things such as a broken window or an unkempt porch at one property can leech out to other properties as people begin to feel that no one cares about what’s going on. The problem will continue to grow block-by-block, street-by-street, until it “tips” and the whole neighborhood is suffering from an epidemic of decline. This “tipping point” can be avoided if attention is paid to the details.

Volunteer “neighbor to neighbor” programs can address smaller housing maintenance issues – painting, porches, gutters, etc. – that prolong life of existing housing stock and prevent the “broken window” cycle. These simpler yet critical home improvement needs can be easily met by a dedicated group of volunteers. It is recommended that the NIA seek sponsorship to help organize volunteer rehab “parties” each year that will assist 2-3 elderly homeowners. They also could utilize existing volunteer rehab programs like **Christmas in April** to accomplish the same purpose.

- Tree Trimming – Overgrowth of trees and lawn vegetation lends to an unkempt appearance that detracts from the value of the housing and blocks lighting at night. If nothing else, trimming back trees and vegetation would make considerable difference in appeal and safety. Until a larger contingent of owner-occupied properties exist, it will be necessary to undertake major neighborhood “trim-ups” on a yearly basis.
- Neighborhood Coordination – The NIA members have a good opportunity to take an active role in assisting homeowners and other members of the community maintain their houses. This would require a dedicated commitment of people to organize volunteers and people in need of help but it would be a great grass-roots approach to revitalizing the housing in Oakland.

Landlord Cooperation

Tension can exist with homeowners who are often left to complain about the run-down condition of rental properties they live next to. In order to help implement the guiding principle of *ensuring property owner compliance with minimum housing/nuisance standards*, a couple strategies are outlined below that could help prevent blighted rental property conditions before they undermine homeowner values and bring down the neighborhood:

- Rental Registration Program – A rental registration program should be adopted that regulates the rental properties throughout the city. Other communities have adopted programs such as this and have seen the benefits. A “first step” could include solely monitoring rental properties located in single-family residential neighborhoods. This could involve requiring a landlord to have insurance on the property, whether or not “absentee” landlords need to have a local property manager, and how many years a property should go between City inspections.

CPTED Guidelines

Safe Streets and the Police Department can help the neighborhood determine which property configurations discourage criminal activity. These methods, known as CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) follow four basic principles: access control, surveillance, territorial reinforcement, and maintenance.

Access control:

- This involves designing streets, sidewalks, building entrances, and neighborhood gateways to clearly indicate transitions from the public environment to semi-private and private areas.

Surveillance:

- A design principle that maximizes the visibility of people, parking areas, vehicles, and site activities. Strategies involve the strategic placement of windows, doors, walkways, parking lots, and vehicular routes.

Territorial reinforcement:

- Sidewalks, landscaping, and porches help distinguish between public and private areas. This helps users display signs of “ownership” that send “hands off” messages to would-be offenders.

Maintenance:

- This addresses management and maintenance of space. Proper upkeep (mowing grass, trimming trees and landscaping, picking up trash, repairing broken windows and light fixtures, and painting over graffiti)
- Helps signal that a location or facility is well cared for and therefore would be inhospitable to a criminal
- It also signals that an owner, manager, or neighbor is watching out for the property and could spot illegal behavior.

New Construction

Infill Housing

While there are not a lot of vacant lots in the neighborhood, there will be instances of new infill housing construction. For the most part, Oakland is a traditional neighborhood in the sense that the houses are lined up uniformly along the blocks and are constructed with front porches. Occasionally over the years, new housing was constructed that did not conform to the rest of the houses on the block. The picture on the left illustrates the incorrect way to place new housing on an existing block in Oakland. Note how far it is setback from the street and its lack of a porch. The picture on the right shows how the homes on that street have front porches, are set closer to the street and are lined up with each other, and create a uniform street front.



Massing and Form

Massing generally refers to how a given amount of space is reflected in a building's design. For example, the space could be a rectangular box with no porch and a flat roof, OR two smaller boxes of uneven height and a full length covered front porch with front-gable roof. The form would determine how the building is positioned on the lot. This is typically dictated by lot design and setbacks from property lines. In order to retain the area's character, several guidelines should be followed in Oakland related to massing and form:

- An infill house should match the average setback on its block to create a unified street frontage and mimic the consistency currently found in Oakland.
- Garages should be built similar to the block character and take into consideration CPTED principles (see page 32)
- Houses should include an elevation of floor above ground, a functional front porch, and a front door access from the street.

Accessory Dwellings

The Oakland Neighborhood, like many of the older neighborhoods in Central Topeka, has a number of properties in which an accessory dwelling is located on the property along with the home. These accessory dwellings, also known as *garlows*, originated in the early 20th Century. Some were used as living quarters for a family waiting for the main house to be built. Many others were used as apartment units for family members or used to provide additional income by renting them out. Accessory dwelling units can be located on the second floor of garages. They can also be stand-alone structures located in the rear of the property.

Although an accepted practice in years past, accessory dwellings are not allowed under today's zoning laws in Topeka. Just as accessory dwelling units provided a benefit to homeowners in years past, they should be allowed to do the same today. It is the recommendation of this Plan that a zoning code revision be considered by the City to include a provision for accessory dwelling units.

CHARACTER AND IMAGE

Market the Neighborhood – “Welcome to Oakland”

The keys to successfully marketing a neighborhood’s assets lie with getting the word out about these assets or potential assets so the neighborhood may show them off.

- **Neighborhood Brochure** – Oakland has a remarkable history, a history that has not only shaped the neighborhood, but also Topeka. The neighborhood has historic homes and buildings that are hidden opportunities. The Oakland NIA should continue to update its brochure to promote the many reasons why people should discover one of those hidden opportunities within the neighborhood. The brochure can be used to communicate with realtors that may not understand the value of the homes in the neighborhood. It can also communicate to prospective homebuyers the benefits of living in an established neighborhood if it is widely publicized and available.



- **Homeowner and Landowner Recognition & Appreciation** – The Topeka Beautification Association already recognizes residents, who beautifully landscape their yards, by placing a note on their door commending them on their landscaping. The NIA should set up a program to recognize residents who beautifully landscape their yard, even by simply placing a note on their door commending them for their work. This could go one step further, even, by recognizing those people and their yards by placing photos on a Community Board, possibly in the Oakland Community Center or in some other central gathering spot for the neighborhood.

- **History of Oakland Walking Tour** – Hosting a history of Oakland tour would be a good way for the NIA to draw people to visit from outside the neighborhood. A specific walking tour showing off the distinctive character of Oakland will show that the neighborhood is active. Oakland is the hidden neighborhood of Topeka. Those who have never lived here do not really know much about the neighborhood and those who grew up in Oakland tend to stay and in turn keep the neighborhood their secret. Generations of families are found all living in Oakland. This could be tied in to the various neighborhood festivals to capitalize on the high number of visitors drawn in for these occasions. Tours could be offered during the early evening and leave from the main festival area and show the highlights of Oakland. This could serve as both a fundraiser for the NIA as well as promoting the neighborhood and fostering a sense of community.

- **Block Captains** – The NIA should organize “Block Captains” to serve as a point of contact for NIA information and community activities. Each Captain could be in charge of a few blocks and help involve and engage the residents in community activities. Neighbors could come by to talk about problems, volunteer to help other neighbors, or learn about what the NIA is working on. This would be more informal than the NIA meetings but would provide another option for people to be involved in the Oakland community. The Block Captains would be active, community oriented citizens who want to reach out to other neighbors and help revitalize the Oakland community.

- **Welcome Packet** – A good way to welcome new residents to Oakland is by developing a welcome packet. The packet could include a detailed listing of phone numbers and locations of the neighborhood schools, churches, businesses, community centers, parks, and any other neighborhood services. These packets will serve as a dual purpose, both for providing important information to the new resident as well as providing advertising regarding the services of the local institutions and businesses. This could be in conjunction with the NIA Brochure and handed out by the local Block Captain. This would serve multiple functions: encourage a sense of community, educate new residents on neighborhood services, promote involvement with the NIA, and help redevelop the “small town feel” of Oakland.

Neighborhood Festivals

Festivals in Oakland are as old as the neighborhood itself. The early residents of Oakland were enticed to visit Oakland Grove Park by the festival atmosphere at the Park. In turn the festival at the Park helped increase awareness and interest in living in Oakland. Thousands of Topeka residents would travel to this park to enjoy the outdoors and the entertainment. Even though Oakland Grove Park and the accompanying festival activities no longer exist today, the festival tradition in the neighborhood continues to thrive.

The Mexican-American community in Oakland carried on this festival tradition and created the Fiesta Mexicana. Today, this weeklong street festival is one of the largest festivals in all of Topeka. The German-Russian community also created a festival, Germanfest, an outdoor festival located on the Sacred Heart Church and School grounds. Just like at Oakland Grove Park in the 1800s, today, thousands of people still flock to Oakland for these outdoor festivals.

In order to promote and support Oakland as the community of festivals, a new neighborhood-wide celebration should be organized. This event could possibly happen in the fall since Germanfest is celebrated every June and Fiesta Mexicana takes place in mid-July. The Neighborhood Improvement Association, local businesses, groups, and churches can organize this event. One option would be to utilize the “National Night Out Against Crime,” held the first Tuesday in August. This could be a dual-function community festival—community building as well as partnering to stand up against crime.

Beautification/Image

Unlike other neighborhoods in Topeka, Oakland does not have many pass through streets. The neighborhood is hidden behind the BNSF railroad yards and the Kansas River. Several options to be considered for enhancing the image of the neighborhood include:

- **Gateways** – Employ a gateway signage approach instead of a centralized approach. Use a “gateway” to place signage on one or two corners angled towards the intersection or entrance street. The gateway signs should be located at all six access points into Oakland. The locations include entrances into the neighborhood at Branner and Seward, the River Road and Division, Golden, Seward and Strait, the Sardou Bridge and Oakland-Billard Park, and the Sardou and Strait Street entrances (see Future Land Use Map for gateway locations). In addition to a sign being placed at the gateways, public art can also be displayed at the gateway entrances to enhance the visual appearance of the entrances.

- **Gateway Sign Design Guidelines** – The gateway signs in Oakland should improve the neighborhood’s aesthetics, achieve uniformity, and create a unique character. Since all entrances into Oakland are vehicle based, the signs should be large enough to be easily seen while driving into the neighborhood. Other design elements for the gateway signs include:

Type: Monument Sign

Location: Located at all 6 entrances

Setback: Located behind the sidewalk and outside of the sight distance triangle minimum

Materials: Made of natural stone, cast concrete, or other appropriate masonry material.

Lighting: Any illumination shall be shielded to direct light toward the sign face only

Sign Dimension: Shall be limited by the City of Topeka sign code.

General minimum guidelines for the sign dimensions include a width of 9 feet, and a height of 4 feet.

- **Neighborhood Banners and Flags** – In addition to the gateway signs, banners and flags should be placed along the street poles and on the residences front porches. The benefits of banners and flags are two-fold; it shows that the residents are proud of Oakland and happy to call it home and it shows that a community spirit exists in Oakland. The NIA should come up with a unifying logo for Oakland that can be placed on banners and flags. Like with the neighborhood signage, there are a number of different methods of coming up with the look of the banners and flags. These banners and flags can be placed on light poles on the major streets. Residents of Oakland could also display these banners and flags from their homes. Also, at the main entrance into Oakland, such as along Seward Avenue, east of Branner, a festive across-the-street banner may be hung between the light posts over the roadway advertising Oakland’s next festival and when it is. The banner is simply placed on a standard modern light pole, but adds much to the overall character of the neighborhood.
- **Sign Contest** – A contest between the neighborhood schools, a program at the community centers, collaboration among the businesses, and so forth are all methods to involve the community with designing the banners and flags. The NIA can set up a public meeting for the neighborhood residents to vote on their favorite designs. Not only could this design be used in the Entrance Signs, but it could be used in the Neighborhood Banners, Flags, and NIA materials as a symbol of the Oakland Community.
- **Street Tree Replacement** – Oakland is a mature neighborhood that was developed at a time when trees were planted along streets as a matter of course. These trees have matured over time and are now a tremendous asset for the neighborhood. Trees have a number of benefits including saving energy, improving air quality, and creating wildlife diversity. However, these trees need to be managed so that they do not become a detracting feature of the community. When the trees become too big or there are too many trees on a property, problems can arise with infrastructure such as driveways and sidewalks. The Oakland Community needs to actively work with the City’s Forestry

Department to ensure that the mature trees of Oakland maintain their status as an asset to the community.

Occasionally, a street will lose a mature tree. It's important to replace this tree to help preserve the character of the street. It is also important to introduce new tree species to the neighborhood. Many of the streets are lined by Silver Maples, with very little tree diversity. A variety of trees along the street will help preserve the street canopy and prevent the susceptibility of all the trees catching a disease and having to be removed, like what happened when the City was hit by Dutch Elm Disease. The City is in the process of creating a master street tree and reforestation plan that will be applied to the entire city; Oakland should ensure that its street canopy is maintained according to this master plan.

COMMUNITY BUILDING AND INITIATIVES

"Together we find the way"

African Proverb

Community building is a key part of a neighborhood revitalization strategy because of its focus is on making the neighborhood a stronger advocate for itself. Empowering the residents and institutions of a neighborhood with the notion they can foster change that impacts the neighborhood in a positive manner is one of the goals of community building.

Some of the principles of community building are:

- ◆ Build on community strengths
- ◆ Support families and children
- ◆ Foster broad community participation
- ◆ Forge partnerships through collaboration
- ◆ Value cultural strengths

Capacity

Successful organizations have the wherewithal to succeed. A neighborhood's ability to complete a competitive grant application, run successful meetings that are open to all citizens of the neighborhood, and complete projects in a timely manner demonstrates to decision makers and funding organizations that the neighborhood is serious about getting things done. Ideally, the neighborhood should function like a business. Below are strategies to increase organizational capacity.

- **Non-profit status:** The neighborhood has secured non-profit status. Since organizing as a 501 (c) (3), many doors have been opened to additional funding sources. 501 (c) (3) groups are eligible to receive public and private grants. Individual donors to 501 (c) (3) groups can claim a federal income tax reduction of up to 50%.
- **Education and Training:** NIA leaders should consider attending seminars and conferences that deal with community building, neighborhood revitalization, and other neighborhood issues. For example, United Way, NUSA, and Neighborworks all provide training opportunities. It is recommended that the NIA and the City explore ways to encourage neighborhood leaders to attend these conferences.

- **Oakland Community Center:** This facility provides training, community educational classes, and meeting rooms. Attendance figures for 2012 showed that 115,000 people visited the Center for activities held there. This is an opportunity to reach out to the residents of Oakland to keep them informed and involved in the other activities in their neighborhood.

Organizing

The most important resources of any neighborhood are the people who live there. Organizing is the renewable resource that can power a neighborhood's revitalization. An organized neighborhood can be a strong advocate for itself. A neighborhood that can show it is willing to stand up for itself is a neighborhood that can be a force for change. Bringing more people into the NIA is a key step toward successful revitalization. Listed below are a number of strategies for building organization within the neighborhood.

- **Strength in numbers:** When opportunities present themselves for the neighborhood to appear before decision makers, the neighborhood must be able to demonstrate a unified voice with a large number of people. The impact of this demonstration is very difficult for decision makers to ignore.
- **Social Activities:** Fun activities that bring neighbors together are an important element of a strong neighborhood. Oakland should revive block parties as a means to get neighbors together. These could be hosted or coordinated by the neighborhood Block Captains as a way for the residents to get to know each other and become active in their block and community.
- **Christmas in April:** The NIA should petition the Christmas in April organization to focus on a part of Oakland each year to do an all-out housing rehabilitation blitz. This volunteer effort will demonstrate pride in the neighborhood and will encourage others to take ownership in their neighborhood.
- **Collaborate to form partnerships:** Building community requires work by all sectors – local residents, community-based organizations, businesses, schools, religious institutions, and health and social service agencies – in an atmosphere of trust, cooperation and respect. This could include the NIA becoming involved in the schools PTA's so as to create a broader partnership with the schools. It will take time and committed work to make this collaboration more than rhetoric.

Public Safety

A major goal of this Plan is to: *create a safe, clean, and livable environment for all those in Oakland to live, learn, work, and play.* A crime problem is a multifaceted problem. There is no magic solution that is going to erase a crime problem. However, there are things that people can do to reverse the negative cycle and begin to reclaim their neighborhood.

- **Neighborhood Patrols:** The neighborhood should contact Safe Streets to help them set up a neighborhood patrol program. Stroll Patrols put people out walking the neighborhood. Neighborhood activity by residents discourages criminal activity.

- **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED):** Safe Streets and the Police Department can help the neighborhood determine which property layouts in the neighborhood encourage crime. There are ways to design property and neighborhood layouts to help prevent criminal activity. For instance, the “5 & 2 rule” states that trees should be trimmed to at least 5 feet high and bushes should be trimmed to be no higher than 2 feet. Support adoption of Unified Development Code requiring CPTED principles be enforced for new development.
- **Crime Free Multi-Housing Program:** The Topeka Police Department, Safe Streets, and the City’s code compliance program have teamed up to provide landlords with a free education in keeping their tenants safe and preventing crimes against their properties. The program uses a three-step process to help landlords and property managers make their properties secure, prevent and identify drug operators, screen tenants and learn about liability laws. The three steps landlords must take to earn certification as a Crime Free Multi-Housing property are to complete the eight-hour class, have a property inspection by code compliance services and police, and conduct a “Safety Social” for residents of the rental property at least once a year.
- **Clean-Ups** – The NIA should continue its neighborhood/ alley clean-up program and start an annual “trim-up” campaign (see pg.29). These clean-ups by the NIA are vital to avoiding environmental code problems as well as deterring crime by showing that residents care about the appearance of their neighborhood. Another program could be an “ugliest” yard clean up or neighborhood landscape contests.
- **Community Policing** – This vital program must be continued by the Topeka Police to maintain the gains made in recent years on ridding the neighborhood of serious drug activities. The individual contacts made by police officers and relationships made with the community are essential to the cooperation needed to ensure residents’ safety. This program can be extended by actively reaching out and engaging members of the community in promoting safe habits—for example, people should walk on the sidewalks and bicyclists should ride on the streets.
- **Youth and Education** – Youth are critical for the ongoing revitalization of the neighborhood. As these children grow up and are faced with choices about where to live, they are going to be more inclined to stay in the neighborhood if they had good experiences growing up in a place that provided a positive environment. If Oakland is “kid friendly”, it will have the two-fold benefit of attracting /retaining families in the short-term and becoming assets to the community in the long-term.

Some actions include:

Clean-Ups – Encourage youth to help with neighborhood clean-ups, particularly of the nature area like within Oakland Billard Park, the Kansas River, and the Shunga Trail. These activities are vital to connecting youth with their neighborhood and assisting with environmental education.

Volunteer Activities – There are many young adult groups that ask their members to perform community service. Honor societies, KEY Club, boy and girl scouts, and 4-H all stress to their

members the importance of being involved in their community. These groups could be contacted to help elderly Oakland residents or to work on specific community projects.

Family Events – By increasing the awareness of various family-friendly community events, more people would be aware of different ways they can be involved in their community. Picnics block parties, community center events, church events, children’s sport events, and neighborhood festivals all provide opportunities for people to get out, socialize, and feel connected with their fellow neighbors.

PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS

The quality of life in Oakland is directly influenced by the quality of the neighborhood’s environment, its scenic beauty, and the variety of its cultural and recreational opportunities available to area residents. Collectively, these resources not only contribute to the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of the neighborhood, but also greatly influence the perception of this neighborhood throughout the entire city.

The neighborhood currently has approximately 55 acres of parks. Including Motorcycle Park (approximately 100 acres), the neighborhood has nearly 155 acres of parkland. Looking at numbers alone, it becomes quite obvious that Oakland is very well served in terms of parks and open space.



Given their locations on western edge of the neighborhood, the existing parks in Oakland aren’t readily accessible to all elements of the population. Pedestrian access to the parks could be better as there is no internal trail/pathway system linking the bulk of the residential neighborhood with the parks. The finished segment of the Shunga Trail in Oakland does connect Santa Fe Park with Oakland Billard Park. As the Shunga Trail is completed along the Kansas River Levee, it will connect Motorcycle Park with Oakland Billard and will provide those residents in the northern part of the neighborhood with a pedestrian means of access to Oakland Billard and Santa Fe Parks. On the whole, however, pedestrian access to the parks could be better. The Oakland Park “system” should consist of parks, trails, and other pathway connections throughout the neighborhood to truly create a system of open space.

Any park improvements proposed by residents of the neighborhood should be coordinated with the City’s Parks and Recreation Department.

- **Oakland Billard Park** – This Park is significant in connecting the neighborhood’s system of parks and trails with the region’s system. The park already is connected to Santa Fe Park via the Oakland segment of the Shunga Trail. Once the Shunga is finished citywide, Oakland Billard Park will be major node along the region’s trail system. At approximately 41 acres, Oakland Billard Park contains a fairly large amount of passive open space along with its recreational facilities that include the Mouse Trap Skate Park (a regional recreational facility), a swimming pool, and ball fields. The Oakland Community Center is also located in Oakland Billard Park. The active recreation space, such as the ball fields, should have the highest use possible. This may mean changing the ball fields to support a different sport if the needs of the Oakland residents change or another sport has a higher demand. Additionally, there are drainage issues at this park that need to be addressed, as the ground is all relatively flat and collects standing rainwater.
- **Santa Fe Park** – Approximately 12 acres, this park is connected to Oakland Billard Park via the Shunga Trail. The park contains passive open space, playground equipment, and a couple ball fields. Future improvements should include looping the Shunga Trail around the park and adding benches nearby along the Kansas River levee to enhance the pedestrian environment for both the Park and the Shunga Trail users.
- **Oakland Park** – “Little Oakland” Park is approximately 2 acres. Planned improvements to the park include lighting improvements and making the tennis court useable for tennis and basketball.
- **Motorcycle Park** – The largest park in the Oakland system at 100 acres is also the park with the least amount of benefit to most of the neighborhood. Motorcycle Park is a specialty use park for motorized recreational vehicles only. In September 2012, the Shawnee County Trail Riders Club formed to facilitate a better relationship between users of this park and the surrounding community. As of November 2013, they had 169 members and their website stresses working with the City, Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Department, and the community to be a good neighbor. Hopefully, this group will continue to improve the perception of this park and its users so that it becomes an asset to the community.

The location of the park could pose problems as the Shunga Trail is extended in Oakland along the Kansas River levee in the near future. Steps will need to be taken to segregate the users of Motorcycle Park from the pedestrian users of the Shunga Trail. In the future, consideration should be given to making this park available for other outdoor recreation users and moving the motorized vehicles elsewhere.

- **Shunga Trail** – The Shunga Trail currently links Oakland Billard Park with Santa Fe Park. The trail also forms a loop around Oakland Billard Park. The Shunga Trail is part of the regional trail system in Topeka and Shawnee County. The section in Oakland, however, is a stand-alone part of the system waiting to be linked up with the rest of the Shunga Trail. Finishing the Shunga Trail and extending it into Oakland is a priority for the City of Topeka. The trail currently starts at approximately 27th and Fairlawn Road in west Topeka and winds its way



east to Golden Avenue in East Topeka. In addition, the City's Water Pollution Control Department has begun to surface the trail along the Kansas River levee beginning east of the Oakland Wastewater Treatment Plant. The total length of the completed trail will be approximately 14 miles. 7.63 miles have been completed at this time.

- **Public Schools** – Although not public parks, the grounds at the public schools in the neighborhood oftentimes function as 'de facto' park space for the neighborhood. For instance, the grounds around Chase Middle School and State Street Elementary has passive open space, playground equipment, tennis courts and basketball courts, all of which can be used by the young and old of the neighborhood. Improvements at the Chase Middle School Track, for example, can benefit the entire Oakland community by providing a safe, functional walking track that the entire neighborhood can utilize. The Track can be paved with asphalt and improved sidewalks and decorative fencing can be added to create a true asset to the Oakland neighborhood.

Adopt-a-Park

Adopt-a-park programs are good ways neighborhoods, school groups, churches, businesses, etc. can assist local governments with the ongoing maintenance of park facilities. The local government gets the benefit of volunteer labor and the sponsoring group gets the benefit of "ownership" of a community resource. Also, the Shawnee County Trail Riders Club would be the perfect adopt-a-park partner for the Motorcycle Park. The neighborhood should work with the Parks and Recreation Department and other neighborhood groups to form adopt-a-park programs with the Oakland parks.

Community Gardens

Community Gardens provide a huge opportunity to a neighborhood. Not only can vacant land be put to a use, but residents will have access to locally-grown healthy food. These gardens can build community spirit—something that is needed in Oakland—as well as provide an outdoor activity for residents. They can also be planted in areas that may be ill-suited for development, such as near the airport. The City of Topeka is currently looking into permitting Community Gardens—Oakland should push to have the first such garden in Topeka and model this concept for the rest of the city.

CIRCULATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Traffic Calming

The traffic and pedestrian circulation within Oakland is defined primarily by a grid pattern street system that serves the needs of residential neighborhood quite well. There are problems, however, with the many uncontrolled intersections in the neighborhood. Uninterrupted travel along the long streets in the neighborhood has a tendency to encourage some to travel at higher speeds than is appropriate for this residential neighborhood. This poses risks to motorists and pedestrians alike. Priority intersections need to be identified before decisions on techniques are made. Cost will be an issue so it will be important for the neighborhood to be creative when identifying funding sources. Definitions of traffic calming vary, but they all share the goal of reducing vehicle speeds, improving safety, and enhancing quality of life. There are a variety of techniques used to calm traffic. They include the traditional forms of intersection control such as stop signs and stop lights. They also can be as simple as encouraging residents along a street to park their vehicles on the street. This has the effect of narrowing the street which will encourage vehicles to slow down. Other techniques include:

Speed humps/cushions – These are effective at cutting down speed and getting drivers to think about their roadway and speed.

Raised intersections/changes in road texture – These can use grooved asphalt, colored paving stones, brick, (or for the ultimate effectiveness, cobblestones). It serves to get drivers' attention and is good for pedestrians crossing at the intersection.

Traffic circles – These slow motorists down and alter their path around a potentially landscaped island. These serve both to reduce speed and also to control access at an intersection. Examples in Topeka can be found in the Potwin Neighborhood.

Streets/Sidewalks

As discussed earlier, the traffic circulation system within Oakland is defined primarily by a grid pattern street system. In addition, most of the neighborhood has standard urban infrastructure. There are some isolated portions of the neighborhood with few or no sidewalks and open drainage systems; however, infrastructure on the whole is good in Oakland.

There are, however some areas that need to be addressed. Resources are limited; therefore priority areas need to be set to target infrastructure improvements where it is most needed.

Sidewalk Priorities

Nearly the entire neighborhood has sidewalks. One of the issues with those sidewalks is that many are broken and uneven because of the presence of large mature trees. Those trees have gotten bigger over the years and their roots are coming to the surface and disrupting the sidewalks. This poses problems for the elderly and for ADA accessibility for people who may have difficulties navigating uneven surfaces. It also poses liability issues to property owners. City law dictates that property owners are responsible for the sidewalks adjacent to their property. Therefore, property owners are responsible for fixing broken sidewalks. The NIA should find ways to help those property owners that are unable to afford to fix problem sidewalks. Sidewalk priorities should include areas that are important pedestrian linkages, which include connecting schools, parks, commercial areas (Seward and Sardou), bus routes, and other important destinations and anchors around the neighborhood.

Detailed Recommendations

Garden Park Connections

Pedestrian connections need to be improved in many areas throughout Oakland, but one major section of the community—the Garden Park Subdivision—is more isolated and disconnected than the rest. The only connections this area has to the rest of Oakland are Seward Avenue or Strait Street. This plan recommends creating pedestrian connections across the creek at Division St. to create an east-west connection and north from Doran to Michigan Ave.

River Road Sidewalks

Sidewalks along major perimeter streets should also be a top priority, especially streets with high amounts of foot traffic. River Road serves as an east-west access point across the railroad yard and a north-south connection between Seward Ave and the Sardou Bridge. A trail runs to the west of River Road connecting Santa Fe Park with Oakland Billard Park. However, this path does not extend south past Santa Fe Park, nor does it assist pedestrians connecting from River Road to Sardou Ave. This road needs sidewalks on the east side from Sardou to Santa Fe Park, and the existing sidewalk on the west side extended to NE Crane St.

Street Priorities

Many of Oakland's roads are in good condition with curbs and gutters. The lower-density roads to the north of the community, and those found in the Garden Park Subdivision, however, lack the curb and gutter infrastructure. However, to achieve the goal of "providing ongoing improvement of infrastructure and public facilities that will maintain Oakland's capacity for viability", eliminating "ditch" drainage systems in areas still lacking modern street drainage should be a priority. It is the recommendation of this plan that those areas lacking modern street infrastructure be identified and plans crafted to bring those areas up to standards. Until then, property owners with ditch drainage systems should work to maintain the ditches on their property or contact the City if the ditch is not working properly.



Wastewater Treatment Plant

The Oakland Wastewater Treatment Plant is located on the western edge of the neighborhood. This facility not only serves the Oakland neighborhood, but also a major portion of the City and areas south of the City. Since 2004, the facility has installed a secondary treatment system to remove nitrogen and phosphorous in the effluent discharge. This improves the quality of the water being released to the Kansas River and reduces the eutrophication effects. The facility is currently undergoing major expansions and upgrades, including improved odor control, improved biosolid handling and reuse, and energy efficiency.

One concern of the neighborhood is minimizing the odors produced by the treatment plant. As the City upgrades the existing facility, it is initiating a number of odor control measures to mitigate the odor problem. These measures include techniques at the plant itself, as well as treatments to waste at a few pump stations near the plant. Future odor control measures will address the biosolid drying piles at the north end of the plant.

The treatment plant treats a large amount of waste from the City, making it safe for discharge into the Kansas River. There are a number of additional benefits of the treatment plant. The biosolids created by the facility is given to farmers to use on agricultural crops. The plant is looking to promote this recycling method and develop a larger market for biosolid land application. A portion of the methane gas produced by the plant is reused to heat the anaerobic digesters used to treat the wastewater. However, 80% of this biogas is currently being flared off instead of used because the plant cannot use all of it. There have been ideas about reusing this biogas to fuel a fleet of vehicles powered in part by the biogas. Also, the plant has been looking into using the reclaimed water to water the ball fields at Oakland Billard Park, although this has not been funded yet.

COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Commercial corridors are the heart and soul of a community. They provide an opportunity for visitors to experience the neighborhood and serve as a gathering and social space for the residents. Neighborhood commercial areas provide a place to buy goods as well as to interact with friends and neighbors and thus create an important "Main Street" feeling within a community. This Main Street feel is deeply embedded in Oakland's history. As it developed as its own town,



having local commercial areas were an essential part of the residents' daily lives. Seward Avenue and Sardou Avenue played a strong role in creating the Oakland community and providing a destination for the social interaction of residents. Over the years, some of this destination has been lost. However, there are many strong forces at work shaping these Avenues back into the prior glory. The elements still remain that made these streets vibrant and full of life—they just need to be reclaimed.

Seward Avenue has commercial interspersed with residential housing throughout its corridor. The mixed use zoning here permits a range of commercial, allowing for people to live, work, and shop in the same area. Historic commercial properties, whose facades have been altered over the years, are patiently waiting for their redevelopment potential to be realized. Windows that have been painted or boarded over can be reopened so that the pedestrian shoppers can see the goods for sale inside. The buildings sit close to the street and sidewalk and are ideally located for enticing passers-by to stop and look around. Scheduled infrastructure improvements detail a streetscape treatment which could include street lighting, pedestrian improvements, landscaping, signage, and roadway treatments. The vacancy rate on Seward Avenue is around 31%, providing many opportunities for reuse of historic commercial structures in the revitalization efforts.



Sardou Avenue does not have quite the commercial build-out as Seward does, nor has it received the attention and infrastructure seen on its sister street. However, looking at the layout of the commercial areas on Sardou, it is brimming with potential. The properties fronting the street have shallow setbacks, creating a sense that the buildings are framing the street and pedestrians. Mature trees arch over the road, adding to the pedestrian feel of the streetscape. The street does not feel as travelled as Seward, making it feel as though it is an undiscovered treasure.



Looking at the property layout, infrastructure, and landscaping, Sardou has as much potential as Seward for rediscovering this Main Street, if not more. The vacancy rate on Sardou Avenue is around 23%. There is not as much commercial property here as compared to Seward but this, too, will allow for the reimagination of Sardou Avenue.

Access

A successful Main Street needs to be accessible to many people. While some treasures may lie off a beaten path, a vibrant, active commercial area needs to have strong ties to the outside community. Seward Avenue and Sardou Avenue are both gateways into the Oakland community, providing direct access for residents and visitors to the commercial areas of Oakland. With Sardou Bridge completed this year, this avenue is being rediscovered and is perfectly poised for revitalization. But...how?

The following strategies can be applied both to Seward and Sardou Avenues to transform them into Main Streets.

Streetscape: Creating an inviting street makes people want to be a part of it. Historic lighting, benches and street furniture, planters, and signage all work together to create a great, interesting street. It draws people to want to walk along the street and experience it, rather than just driving by to find a parking space. Restaurants and businesses can interact with pedestrians on a street like this. People can look in store windows to see displays and shoppers inside the store can watch the activity on the street.



Transportation: For people to rediscover an area, there needs to be thought given to transportation. It needs to be convenient for visitors and residents to come to the commercial area. This can be done through attractively landscaped, lit, parking lots and easy access to public transportation. Seward and Sardou Avenues both have stores that attract visitors and, with the increased commercial uses prompted by revitalization of these Main Streets, will need to consider additional parking. This could be in the form of surface parking lots or side street parking. Parking lots should be located behind the stores rather than using street-frontage space as they would detract from the pedestrian-oriented Main Street.

Action and Energy

There needs to be action and energy—a catalyst—to entice people onto on redeveloped Main Street. Oakland needs to create activities and events to draw people into the commercial area. The idea is not to re-create any other commercial area that is found in Topeka (like an Oakland-version of NOTO) but rather to create an area of interest that is distinctly Oakland. Oakland's heritage and history play a vital role in shaping this. Just as the emerging murals recognize the historic elements of the neighborhood, the revitalized Seward and Sardou Avenues can do the same.

Fiesta and Germanfest are established traditions that all of Topeka associate with Oakland. These events draw thousands of people from outside the neighborhood to visit when they are occurring. The businesses on Sardou and Seward could hold promotional events in coordination with the festivals and draw the visitors into the neighborhood to explore the Main Streets.



Oakland does have a fair amount of commercial space that is underutilized. This could be repurposed until the commercial market takes off. A large building, or a series of smaller buildings, could rent spaces out to individual entrepreneurs to sell their wares out of. This could help develop and grow small businesses while putting to use commercial space that is currently vacant. It would provide revenue for the property owner as well as increase the draw and intrigue of Oakland's Main Streets. This would help build up the human energy needed to revitalize Seward and Sardou Avenues. As more people come, shop, and visit Oakland, this momentum will build off itself and create energy. It just needs the catalyst.

Attention

Main Streets are successful because people know about them and what is going on there. They create excitement and get attention because of the action and energy found there. Seward and Sardou Avenues need to be marketed as destinations, where people want to go to see what is going on. There are a lot of improvements underway to improve Seward that people may or may not know about. People know of Oakland as the community for Germanfest and Fiesta—make Seward and Sardou known as well!

- Organize the businesses to work together to promote the Avenues
- Market at the festivals
- Promote online, through social media, and throughout the neighborhood
- Create excitement and interest—contests, parades, and festivals all draw people and attention
- Promote Seward and Sardou Avenues and get Topeka’s attention!



Other Main Street Revitalization Strategies

The physical condition of Oakland’s commercial corridors strongly impacts the perception of the vitality and desirability of the adjacent residential neighborhood. Seward and Sardou Avenues are the main points of entry into the neighborhood. Currently, Seward and Sardou Avenues are not reaching their full potential as prominent front doors for Oakland; the overall image of these commercial corridors is not as pleasant or reflective of the neighborhood behind them. Realizing the goals of this Plan depends in large part to the perceived health of Seward and Sardou Avenues as the neighborhood’s most important image corridors.

The importance of the corridors lies not only with the overall health of the residential neighborhood, but also with the health of the existing commercial businesses. Changes in market dynamics has meant that local neighborhood retailers have had to compete harder for the local dollar against larger chain retailers in regional locations who can afford to sell at lower prices. The physical condition of the corridors does not make that competition an easier. Healthy corridors are an important element in the local retailer’s fight for those neighborhood dollars. In addition, those businesses seeking to locate in a healthy neighborhood will be influenced by the condition of the commercial corridors in Oakland.

The intent of a revitalization strategy for the commercial corridors should be to help create an image that says, “This is the place to be.” The general goals of this revitalization strategy for the Seward and Sardou commercial corridors are as follows:

- Enhance the pedestrian environment

- Beautify the area
- Encourage local ‘mom and pop’ businesses to locate in the neighborhood
- Rehabilitate those businesses that are still viable
- Raise design standards for Seward and Sardou frontage
- Encourage residential consistent with its mixed-use character.

Commercial façade improvement program

A new program should to be created to help property owners interested in fixing up their commercial property but cannot because they lack the technical know-how or perhaps are a few thousand dollars short of making a good impact. The program could include a dollar for dollar match of requiring exterior renovations of commercial buildings to be consistent with adopted design guidelines. Patterned after the City’s previous Downtown commercial storefront façade program, free design assistance could be combined with rehab match grants up to \$5,000 to encourage an owner to go the extra step towards sensitive neighborhood design. Not only would this program benefit existing businesses, but also could improve vacant properties, making them more marketable to new business.

Image Corridors

As discussed earlier in this section, the Sardou and Seward Avenue corridors are the neighborhood’s most important image corridors. The perception of the entire neighborhood is largely derived from the visual appearance of these two major streets in Oakland. Each carries a significant amount of traffic and as such, immediate aesthetic improvements to these corridors could have a fairly dramatic impact. Both public and private investment can affect the visual image of the corridors. Public investment in the streetscape could include roadway repair, new sidewalks, lighting, street furniture, and landscaping. As discussed earlier, simple façade improvements by property owners to existing properties will go a long ways towards enhancing the visual vitality of the commercial corridors.

Business Improvement District (BID)

A BID is an organization of property owners in a commercial district who tax themselves to raise money for neighborhood improvement. Core functions usually include keeping sidewalks and curbs clean, removing graffiti, and patrolling the streets. A BID could also be responsible for signage along the corridors. Once a BID is formed, the assessment is mandatory, collected by the city like any other tax. Unlike any other taxes, however, the city returns the assessment to the BID management for use in the district. Commercial property owners along the corridors should consider this option as a way to fund improvements.

Urban Design Recommendations

Parking

A parking lot should never be the focus from the street. Parking should be moved to the rear of buildings or be extensively screened from the street.

Building Orientation

New buildings fronting Seward should maintain zero setbacks to position the building as close to the sidewalk as possible. New buildings along Seward and Sardou should be oriented towards those streets. Front doors should not face the secondary residential streets.

Pedestrian Lighting

New decorative pedestrian lighting will help define the corridors as special and safe places to be. Using period lighting from the neighborhood's time as a city could add a bit of charm to the corridors.

Streetscape

Public investment in a pedestrian oriented streetscape will complement revitalization efforts. Repaired/new sidewalks, brick crosswalks, street furniture, decorative lighting, and neighborhood banners/signs should be included in the overall development strategy.

Landscaping

Landscaped setbacks and parking areas helps contribute to the pedestrian-friendliness of the corridor and its visual quality.

Signage and wayfinding

Signs for offering navigational assistance include road signs, kiosks, maps and other tools.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION

“Be not afraid of growing slowly; be afraid only of standing still.”

-Chinese Proverb

After completing the planning process, action and implementation are essential. After identifying goals and target areas, the next logical step is taking action to achieve those goals. The implementation section of a plan identifies specific steps to be taken and by whom, and places a timeline on completing these steps. This allows for progress of the community’s vision to be tracked and evaluated. This section should be used by all stakeholders to guide their decision-making in implementing the priorities of the Plan.

KEY ACTION PRIORITIES

The meetings with the Steering Committee brought up ideas for implementing specific strategies and actions in this Plan. The community was surveyed at the final meeting to determine their priorities for action. The actions below are organized based on the rankings received at that meeting and are not necessarily inclusive of all potential actions, but a checklist of some of the more significant actions that should be taken.

1. Do These First

- Seward Avenue Streetscape Improvements
- Improve the NE Wabash and NE Thomas Intersection
- Revitalize Sardou Avenue
- Collaborate with USD 501 for improvements to Chase Middle School Track

2. Do These Next

- Install pedestrian lighting along walking trails
- Eliminate ditch drainage systems in Oakland
- Add sidewalks along River Road to improve pedestrian connections

3. Do These After the Above Has Been Completed or Stalled Out

- Encourage senior housing complexes in Oakland to allow residents to age in place
- Add benches along the levee trail near Santa Fe Park
- Improve Little Oakland Park
- Community gardens
- Dog Park
- Pedestrian connections to Garden Park

The tables below show the cost and timing of infrastructure improvements for the proposed target areas and other infrastructure recommendations of the plan. By combining several major actions within a concentrated area of a neighborhood, a greater cumulative impact can be realized than if they were dispersed throughout the larger planning area. In this manner, it is intended that multiple target areas can be worked on in various stages of completion. Once the first area is “finished”, the majority of the public investment can then be shifted to the second area, then the third, etc.

Important Note: The priorities and costs estimates for infrastructure and housing rehabilitation projects in the neighborhood are provided for *informational purposes only* and should not be relied upon for future costs or as actual bids for future projects. Increases in material costs, overhead and labor can change greatly in a short period of time. Funding is subject to availability as provided by federal grants and the governing body, and allocations change annually. The housing costs in the following tables represent subsidies from City Consolidated Plan funding (CDBG/HOME) and are intended to leverage private dollars. Costs for infrastructure and parks reflect City of Topeka capital costs from sources typically found within the City’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP), unless otherwise indicated. Cost assumptions are detailed at the bottom of this section.

Chase and State St School Target Area (Primary)

Sidewalks	Source	1-3 Years	3-5 Years	5+ Years
NE Sumner St (500 block)	GO Bonds	\$6,464		
NE Poplar St (400 block)	GO Bonds	\$19,200		
NE Green St (400 block)	GO Bonds	\$19,200		
NE Chester Ave (500 block)	GO Bonds	\$7,392		
(Sidewalk Total)		(\$52,256)		
Alleys				
Ohio/Sumner Alley	GO Bonds	\$80,000		
Sumner/Poplar Alley	GO Bonds	\$80,000		
Poplar/Green Alley	GO Bonds	\$80,000		
Chester/Wabash Alley (1.5 blocks)	GO Bonds	\$120,000		
(Alley Total)		(\$360,000)		
Infrastructure Contingency		\$164,902		
Other Projects				
Chase Track Improvements (Track, Sidewalks, Fencing)	GO Bonds, CDBG, USD 501	\$432,000		
(Other Projects Total)		(\$432,000)		
ALL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS TOTAL		\$1,009,158		
Housing Rehabilitation				
Primary and Secondary Area	CDBG, HOME	\$509,000		
(Housing Total)		(\$509,000)		
INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING PROJECTS TOTAL		\$1,518,158		

Sardou/Wabash Target Area (Secondary)

Sidewalks	Source	1-3 Years	3-5 Years	5+ Years
NE Wabash Ave (700-800 blocks)	GO Bonds	\$15,616		
NE Wabash Ave (900-1000 blocks)	GO Bonds	\$28,576		
NE Chester Ave (900-1000 blocks)	GO Bonds	\$18,112		
(Sidewalk Total)		(\$62,304)		
Alleys				
Green/Chester Alley	GO Bonds		\$80,000	
Chester/Wabash Alley	GO Bonds		\$80,000	
Wabash/Forest Alley (4 blocks)	GO Bonds		\$320,000	
(Alley Total)			(\$480,000)	
Total Street Reconstruction				
NE Grant St (2400-2500 blocks)			\$321,100	
(Street Reconstruction Total)			(\$321,100)	
Curbs				
NE Wabash Ave (800-900 blocks)	GO Bonds	\$8,768		
(Curb Total)		(\$8,768)		
Infrastructure Contingency		\$28,429	\$320,440	
Other Projects				
ADA Ramps (2)	GO Bonds	\$2,000		
Little Oakland Park Improvements	GO Bonds, CDBG	\$67,700		
Acquisition and Demolition of Blighted Multi-family Housing	GO Bonds	\$160,000	\$817,500	
(Other Projects Total)		(\$229,700)	(\$817,500)	
ALL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS TOTAL		\$329,201	\$1,939,040	
Housing Rehabilitation				
Primary and Secondary Area	CDBG, HOME	\$509,000		
(Housing Total)		(\$509,000)		
INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING PROJECTS TOTAL		\$838,201	\$1,939,040	

Seward/Lime/Division Streets (Tertiary)

Sidewalks	Source	1-3 Years	3-5 Years	5+ Years
NE Chandler St (500 block)	GO Bonds			\$4,416
NE Lake St	GO Bonds			\$5,728
NE State St (1200 block)	GO Bonds			\$3,904
<i>(Sidewalk Total)</i>				(\$14,048)
Alleys				
Chandler/Lake Alley (2 blocks)	GO Bonds			\$160,000
Lake/Lime Alley (2 blocks)	GO Bonds			\$160,000
Lime/Wilson Alley (2 blocks)	GO Bonds			\$160,000
Wilson/Scotland Alley	GO Bonds			\$80,000
<i>(Alley Total)</i>				(\$560,000)
Curbs				
NE Lake St (500 block)	GO Bonds			\$4,800
<i>(Curb Total)</i>				(\$4,800)
Infrastructure Contingency				\$477,669
Other Projects				
ADA Ramps (3)	GO Bonds			\$3,000
<i>(Other Projects Total)</i>				(\$3,000)
ALL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS TOTAL				\$1,059,517

Neighborhood Wide Projects

	Source	1-3 Years	3-5 Years	5+ Years
Pedestrian connection along Division St to Garden Park	GO Bonds			\$22,200
Pedestrian connection along Michigan Ave to Garden Park	GO Bonds			\$81,600
River Road sidewalks	GO Bonds			\$1,063,500
<i>(Projects Total)</i>				<i>(\$1,167,300)</i>
Infrastructure Contingency				\$466,920
ALL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS TOTAL				\$1,634,220

Assumptions:

Total street reconstruction (curb/gutter): \$380/linear foot

Alleys (concrete): \$80,000

Curbs and gutters: \$32/linear foot

Sidewalks: \$32/linear foot

ADA sidewalk ramps: \$1000

Average Acquisition = \$35,000/residential unit

Average Demolition = \$7,500/ unit

40% for design, engineering, and contingency

REZONING

There are a few areas within Oakland where the current zoning is inconsistent with the Future Land Use Plan. A rezoning should be initiated by the Planning Commission to reflect as such (See Map 13 for the Proposed Zoning Map).

1. Change the East side of the 100 block of Lime St. to R-2. Currently zoned for light industrial but is fully developed with single family homes.
2. Change the parcel of land between River Road and the River from R-1 to Open Space. It is currently zoned for residential but is used as an open space and view to the Kansas River.
3. Rezone commercially-zoned properties located around the Wabash and Thomas intersection to X-1 mixed use.

Map 14: Primary Target Area



Map 15: Secondary Target Area

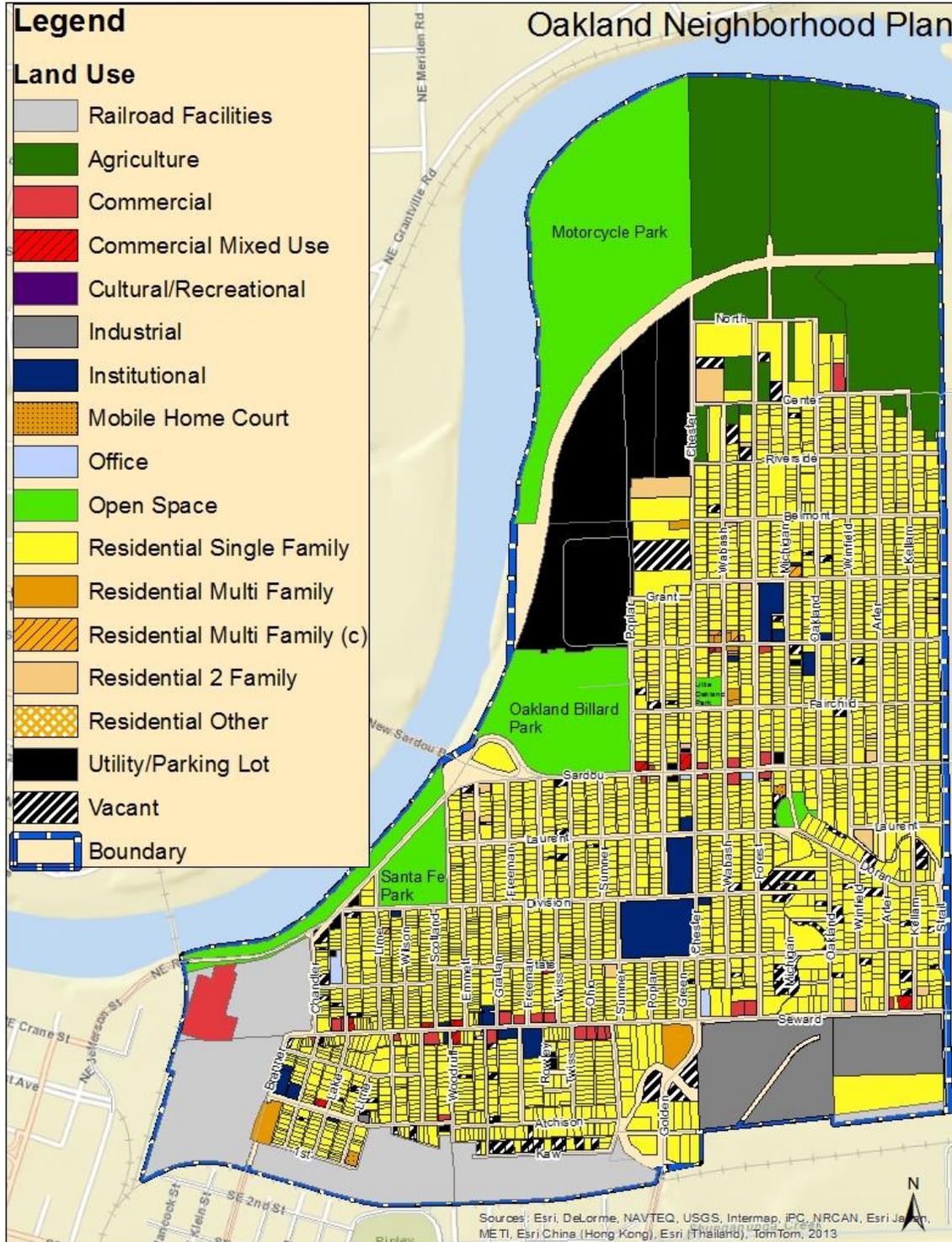


Map 16: Tertiary Target Area

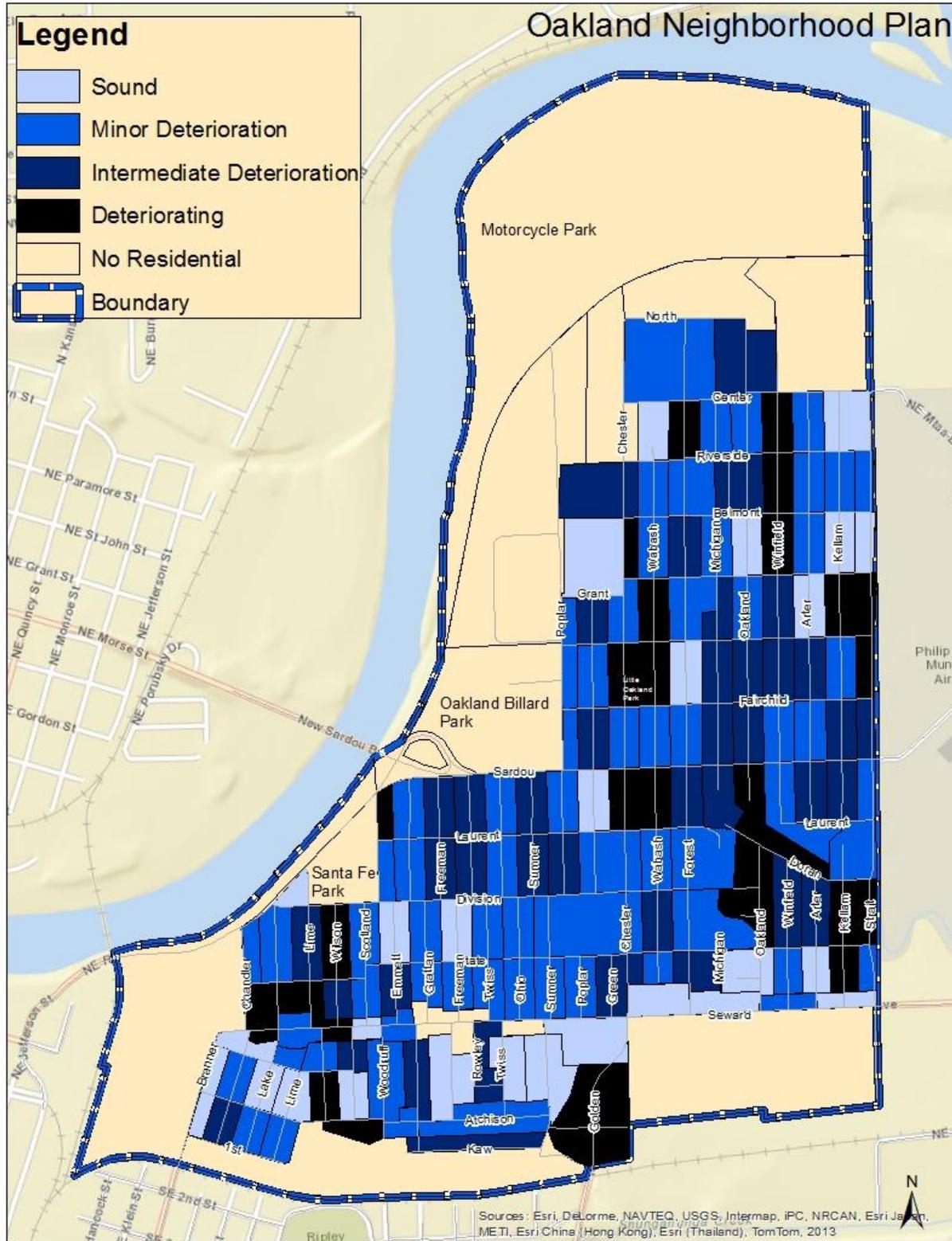


APPENDIX A: MAPS

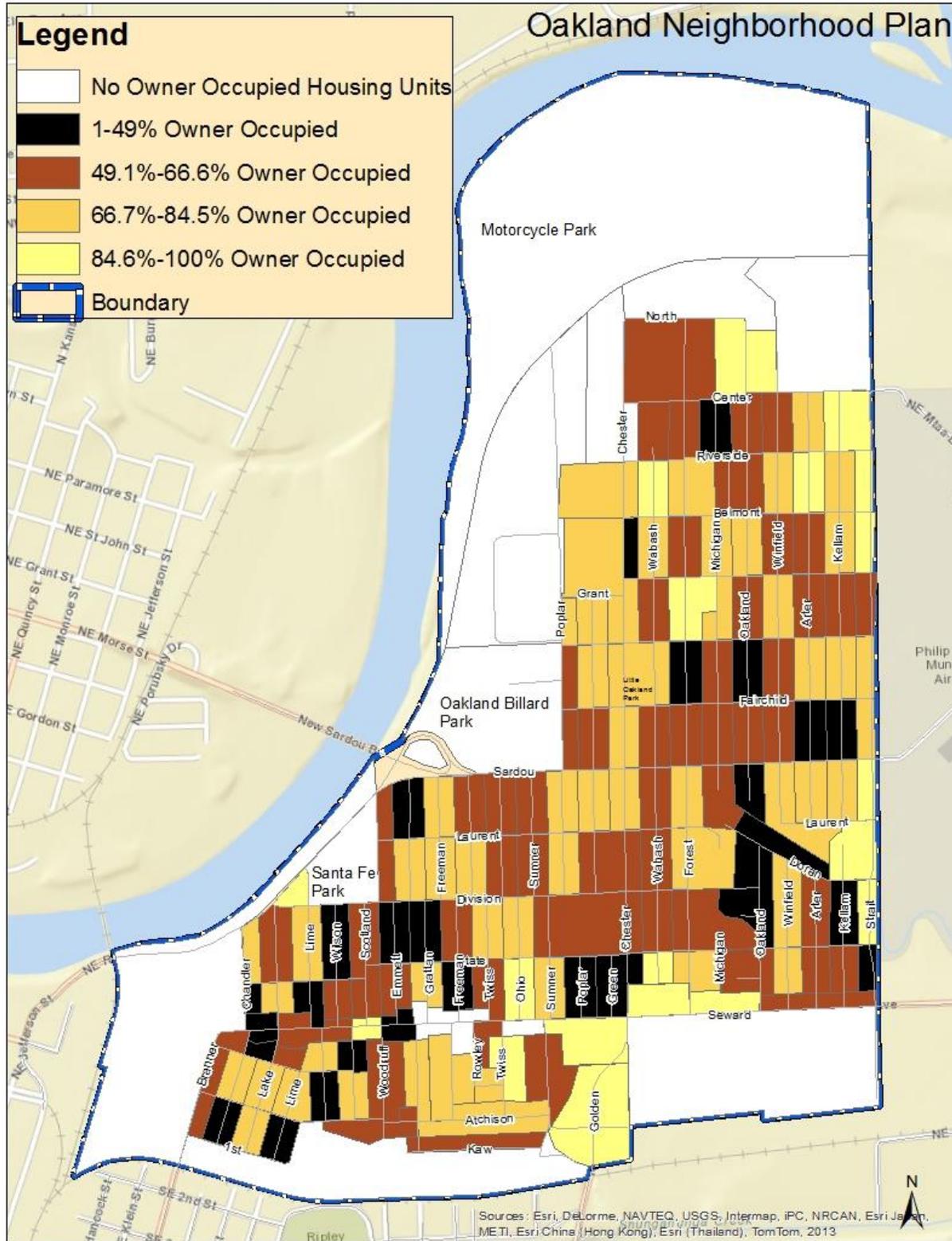
Map 1: Current Land Use



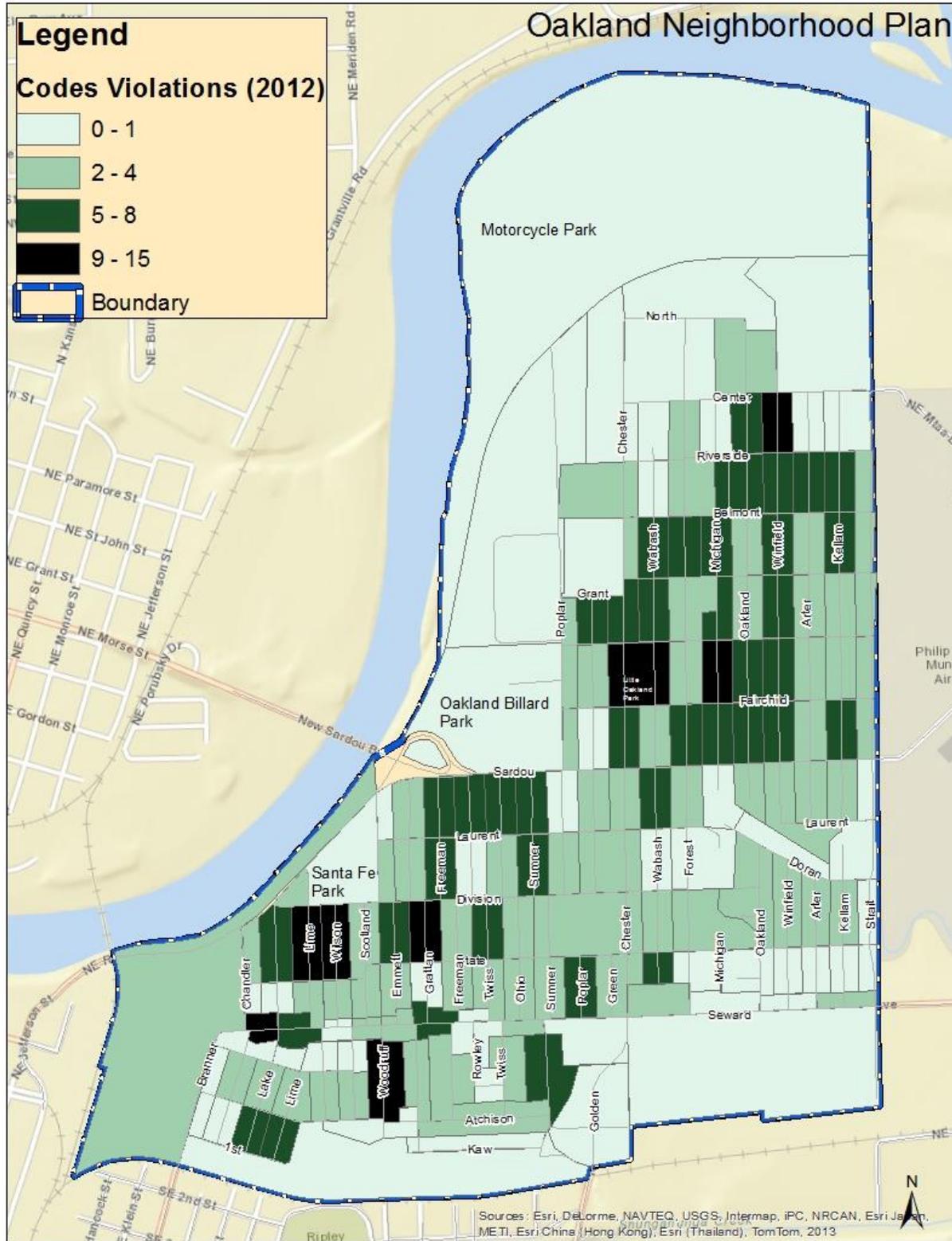
Map 3: Housing Conditions



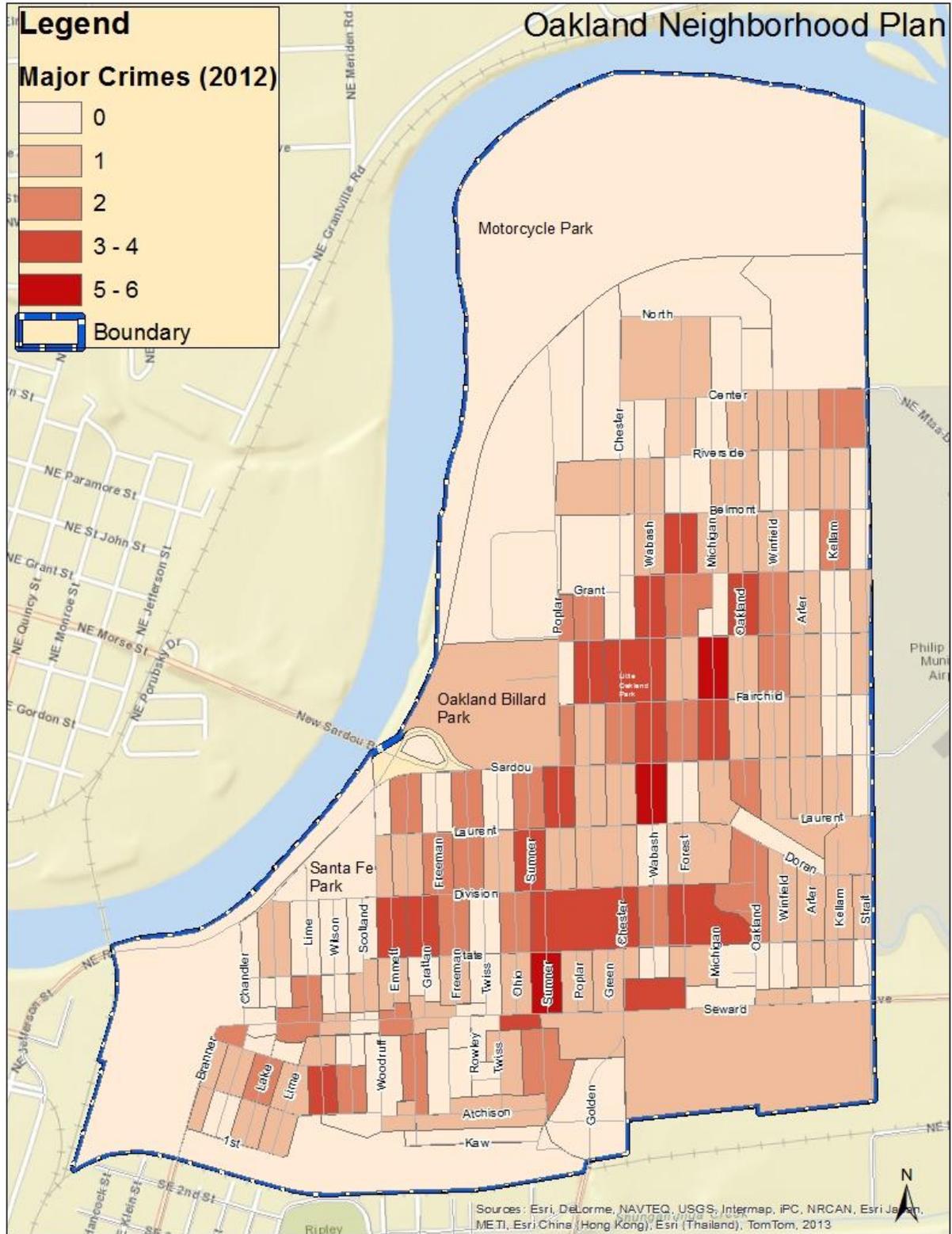
Map 4: Tenure



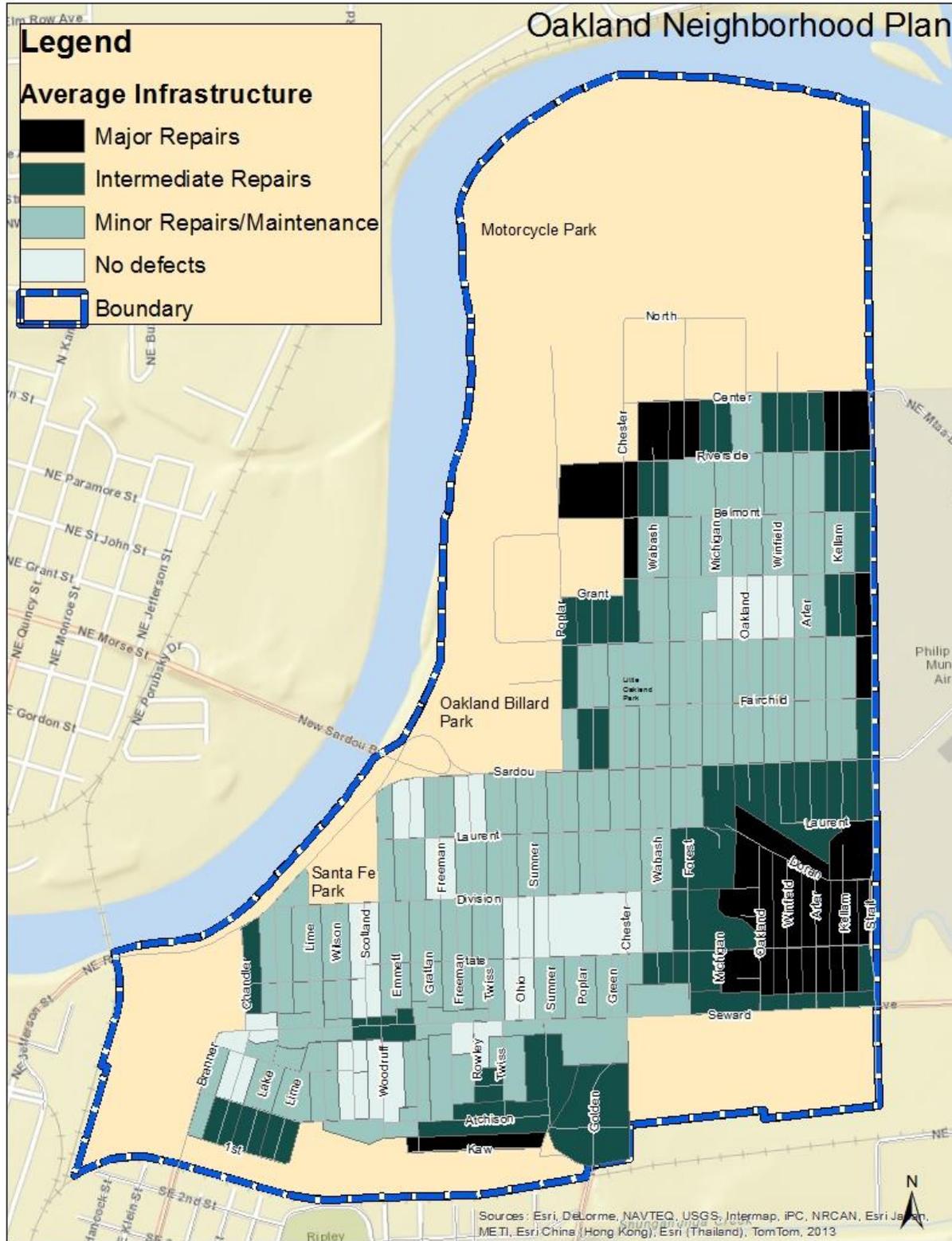
Map 5: Code Violations



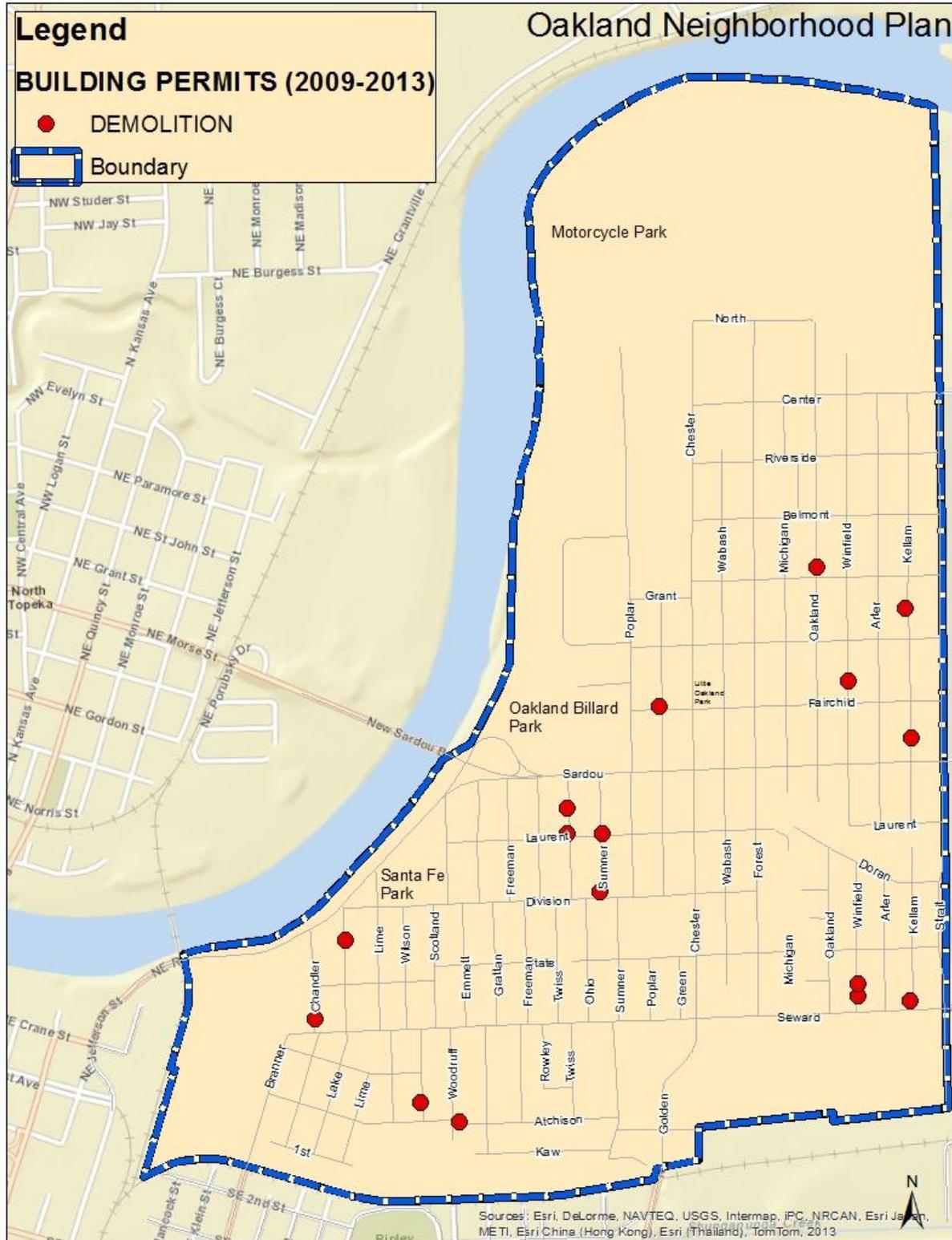
Map 6: Major Crimes



Map 7: Infrastructure



Map 8: Development Activity



APPENDIX B: TABLES

Table 1: Land Use

Land Use	Parcels	% Total	Acres	% Total
Commercial	33	1%	16.1	1%
Commercial Mixed Use	10	0%	2.6	0%
Industrial	3	0%	51.5	4%
Institutional	21	1%	24.4	2%
Mobile Home Court	2	0%	0.8	0%
Office	4	0%	2.0	0%
Open Space	6	0%	167.6	14%
Residential (c)	4	0%	0.9	0%
Residential Multi-Family	10	0%	6.7	1%
Residential Single Family	2434	90%	510.2	43%
Residential 2 Family	27	1%	11.2	1%
Utility	16	1%	86.4	7%
Vacant	103	4%	32.4	3%
Agriculture	12	0%	173.6	15%
Railroad	7	0%	99.4	8%
	2692		1185.7	
		Subtotal	1185.7	
		ROW	279.3	
		Total Area	1465	

Table 2: Housing Density

	# Units	% Total	Total Acres	Units/Acre
Commercial Mixed Use	11	0.4%	2.6	4.2
Mobile Home Court	4	0.1%	0.8	5.2
Residential (c)	8	0.3%	0.9	8.8
Residential Multi-Family	156	5.8%	6.7	23.3
Residential Single Family	2438	91.3%	510.2	4.8
Residential 2 Family	54	2.0%	11.2	4.8
Net Density	2671	100.0%	532.3	5.0
Net Density All			1185.7	2.3
Gross Density (w/ROW)			1465.0	1.8

Table 3: Housing Conditions

Housing Conditions

Sound	1587
Intermediate Deficiencies	514
Deteriorating	384

Table 4: Owner Occupancy

Housing Ownership of Single Family Residences

Owner-Occupied Units	1598	59.8%
Renter-Occupied Units	1011	37.9%
Vacant Units	62	2.3%

Table 5: Median Appraised Property Values

Average Appraised Property Values

Commercial Mixed Use	\$119,868
Mobile Home Court	\$6,500
Residential (c)	\$48,150
Residential Multi-Family	\$549,023
Residential Single Family	\$56,877
Residential 2 Family	\$66,429

	Median	Mean	Min	Max
Commercial Mixed Use	\$57,475	\$119,868	\$31,080	\$576,840
Mobile Home Court	\$6,500	\$6,500	\$6,060	\$6,940
Residential (c)	\$54,900	\$48,150	\$22,500	\$60,300
Residential Multi-Family	\$62,500	\$549,023	\$20,500	\$2,626,670
Residential Single-Family	\$56,700	\$56,900	\$6,000	\$206,100
Residential 2-Family	\$63,550	\$66,429	\$10,380	\$160,980
Vacant	\$2,450	\$3,505	\$0	\$19,390

Table 6: State Street Elementary and Chase Middle Schools

Category	State of Kansas			District 501			State St School		
	State 2003	State 2012	Change	District 2003	District 2012	Change	State St 2003	State St 2012	Change
Economically Disadvantaged Students	37.5%	48.8%	11.3%	58.8%	76.5%	17.7%	73.4%	86.2%	12.8%
Attendance	94.8%	95.2%	0.4%	92.3%	95.1%	2.8%	95.7%	95.0%	-0.7%
ELL Students	5.1%	10.3%	5.2%	2.7%	8.2%	5.5%	0.0%	20.1%	20.1%
Reading-- % @ Prof and Above	65.7%	87.7%	22.0%	65.7%	70.1%	4.4%	66.6%	62.6%	-4.0%
Math-- % @ Prof and Above	53.9%	86.1%	32.2%	53.9%	70.6%	16.7%	64.1%	70.6%	6.5%

Category	State of Kansas			District 501			Chase Middle School		
	State 2003	State 2012	Change	District 2003	District 2012	Change	Chase 2003	Chase 2012	Change
Economically Disadvantaged Students	37.5%	48.8%	11.3%	58.8%	76.5%	17.7%	85.2%	90.8%	5.6%
Attendance	94.8%	94.9%	0.1%	92.3%	93.6%	1.3%	91.3%	93.7%	2.4%
ELL Students	5.1%	10.3%	5.2%	2.7%	8.2%	5.5%	5.1%	0.0%	-5.1%
Reading-- % @ Prof and Above	70.5%	87.1%	16.6%	65.7%	64.0%	-1.7%	66.1%	62.1%	-4.0%
Math-- % @ Prof and Above	65.3%	83.3%	18.0%	53.9%	63.5%	9.6%	37.2%	60.0%	22.8%

Table 7: Population and Race

	2010	2000	% Change 2000-2010	1990	% Change 1990-2000
Population	5669	5863	-3%	6154	-5%
Male	2843	2847	0%	3002	-5%
Female	2826	3016	-6%	3153	-4%
White	4549	4710	-3%	5365	-12%
Black	118	77	54%	68	13%
Other	1002	1076	-7%	722	49%
Hispanic	1620	1452	12%	1234	18%
Not Hispanic	4048	4412	-8%	4921	-10%

Table 8: Age

Age	2010	2000	% Change 2000-2010	1990	% Change 1990-2000
>5	397	415	-4%	445	-7%
5 to 9	650	481	35%	453	6%
10 to 14	313	409	-24%	438	-7%
15 to 19	375	360	4%	363	-1%
20 to 24	261	381	-32%	297	28%
25 to 34	806	768	5%	1066	-28%
35 to 44	634	911	-30%	876	4%
45 to 54	699	753	-7%	545	38%
55 to 64	756	459	65%	566	-19%
65 and older	778	907	-14%	1105	-18%

Table 9: Households

	2010	2000	% Change 2000-2010	1990	% Change 1990-2000
Households	2414.6	2409.51	0.00	2498.48	-0.04
Topeka Avg. Household Median Income	\$40,342	\$35,928	12.29%	\$26,774	34.19%
Oakland Avg. HH Median Income	\$36,962	\$32,570	13%	\$24,520	33%
Oakland's %MHI	92%	91%		92%	
Housing Units	2699.72	2606.15	4%	2632.59	-1%

APPENDIX C: MEETING SURVEY

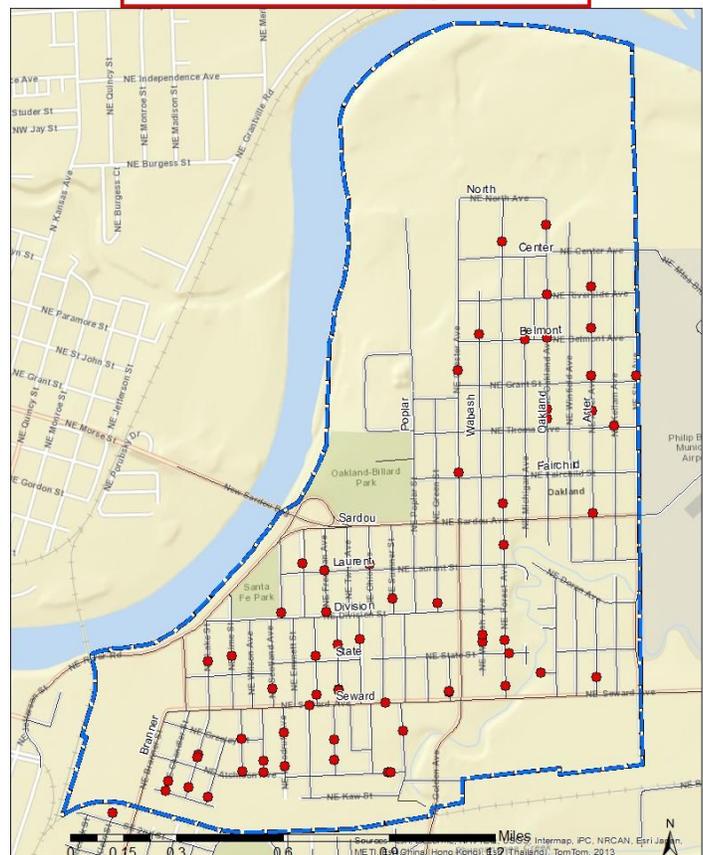
At the Oakland Kickoff Meeting, participants were asked to complete two surveys regarding the 2004 Oakland Neighborhood Plan—one grading the Plan’s Vision Statement and one prioritizing the Plan’s Goals. We received 68 Vision Statement surveys and 70 Goal surveys and have compiled the results on the following pages.

The results on the Vision Statement vote (page 2) clearly show themes valued in Oakland. Three of the four the highest scoring categories describe the social part of the community—raising families, children playing, and helping each other out. The other high scoring category references the beautiful oak trees lining the streets of Oakland. Lower-scoring categories show that voters see problems with infrastructure and economic development in Oakland along with “rough edges starting to show.”

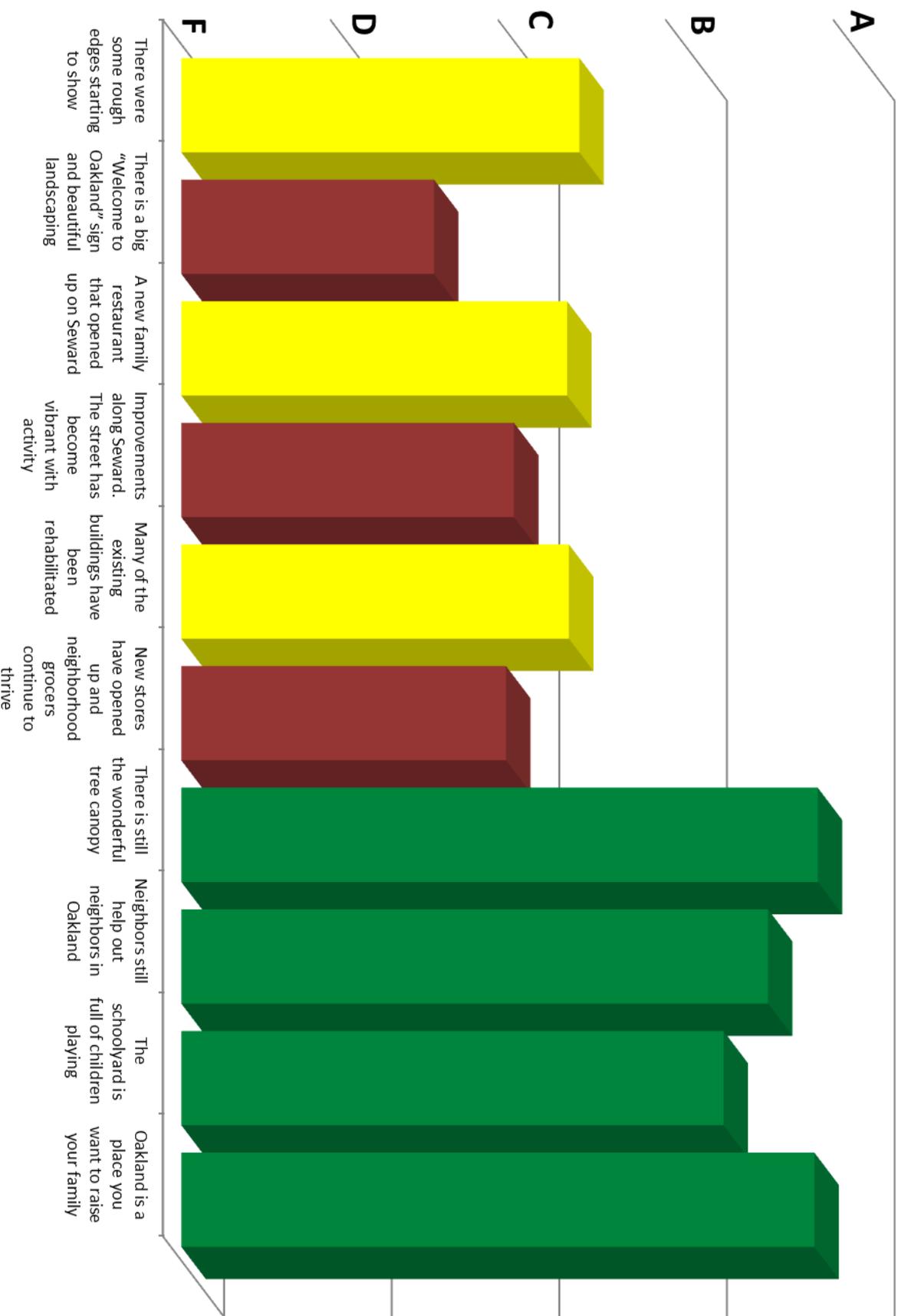
The votes for the 2004 Plan Goals show a variety of reactions to importance of each stated goal (page 3). The only consistent trend was the low priority of recreational goals. Three of the five high-priority goals address public safety, either directly or indirectly. All of the other goals involved economic development, social connections, housing, or infrastructure and scored as medium-priorities.

We had a very good turnout at the July 25 Kickoff Meeting, with residents attending from all over the Oakland area, and property owners from throughout Topeka, surrounding communities, and one couple from Missouri! This map shows the general location of those attending the Kickoff Meeting from within the planning area.

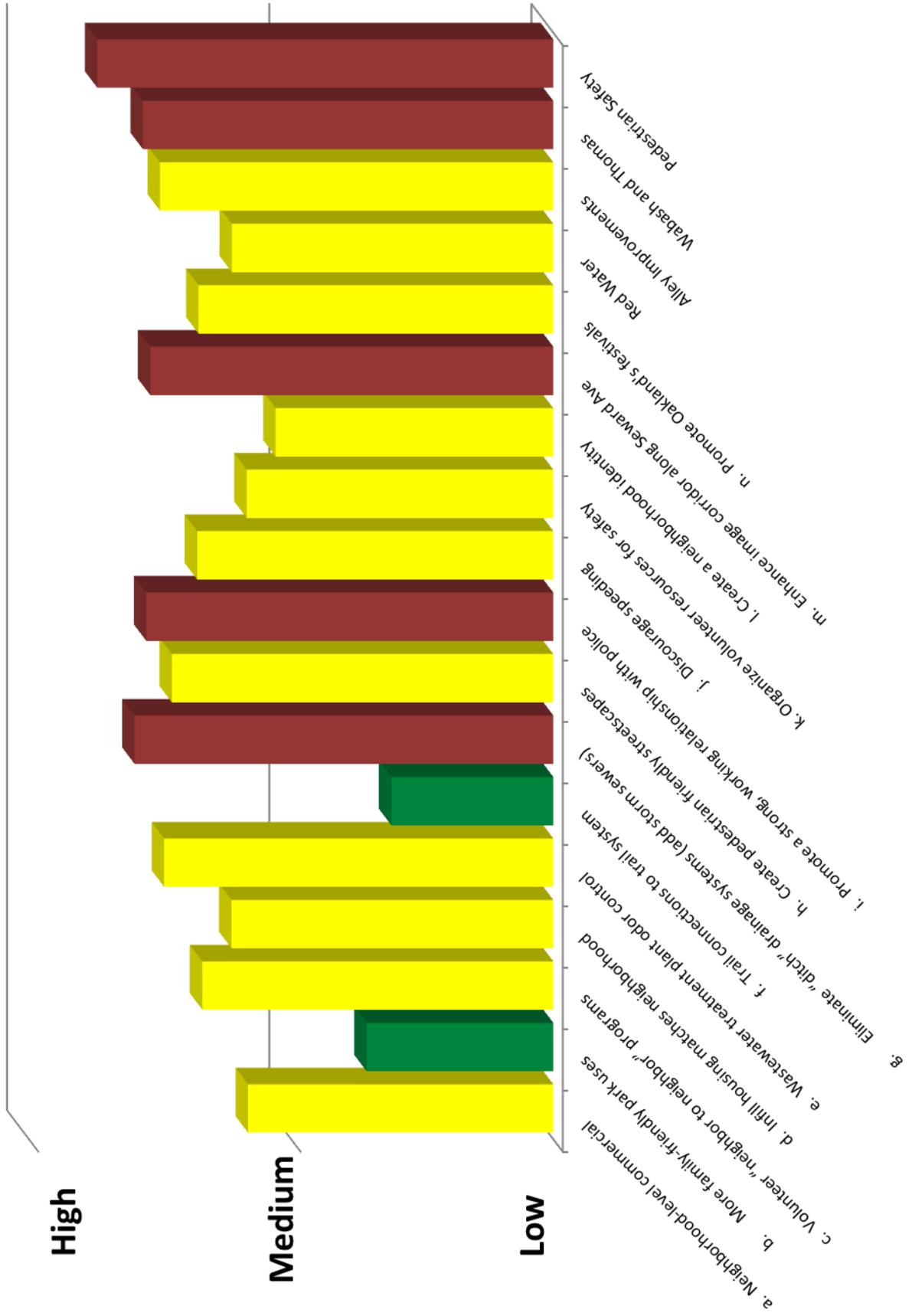
Oakland Kickoff Meeting Attendees



Vision Statement Average Score



Guiding Principles Average Score



APPENDIX D: HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE SURVEYS

Criteria Used to Evaluate Housing Structural Defects

Minor Defects – deficiencies corrected during the course of regular maintenance.

- Missing shrubbery or bare spots on lawn, trash and garbage accumulation
- Deteriorated or lacking window screens.
- Weathered paint, minor painting needed.
- Wear on or light damage to steps, window and door sills, frames and porches.
- Weathering of mortar and small amounts of loose, missing material between bricks.
- Cracked window panes, loose putty.
- Handrails deteriorated or missing.
- Missing splash blocks at foot of down spouts.
- Lacking porch lights.

Intermediate Defects – deficiencies serious enough to require more extensive repair than required by regular maintenance.

- Gutters or drain spouts rotten or parts missing.
- Sagging, cracked, rotted or missing roofing, overhang or lattice work.
- Foundation or bearing walls cracked or sagging or with loose, missing material.
- Erosion of landscape due to improper drainage, abandoned vehicle, cracked or uneven sidewalks.
- Deteriorated fencing with loose or missing material.
- Rotted, cracked or sagging porches, columns, door frames and stairways.
- Cracked or missing material from chimney.
- Broken or missing window panes and/or rotted window sills.
- Peeling or cracked paint, complete paint job needed.
- Damaged or missing air vents in foundation.

Major Defects – condition of structural components which can be corrected only by major repairs.

- Holes, open cracks, rotted or missing material in foundations, walls, roofing, porches, columns, etc.
- Sagging or leaning of any portion of house indicating insufficient load bearing capacity: foundation, walls, porches, chimneys.
- Defective conditions caused by storms, fires, floods or land settlements.
- Inadequate or poor quality material used in permanent construction.
- Inadequate conversion for use involved.
- Major deteriorated or dilapidated out building or garage.
- Evidence of a lack of, or inadequate indoor plumbing such as no roof vents.

Category

Definition

Buildings/Properties

***Minor Deficiencies
(Sound)***

No major defects and no more than 1 intermediate defect and less than 4 minor defects. (3 points)

Intermediate Deficiencies

No major defects with 2 or more intermediate defects; no major defects with 1 intermediate defect and 4 or more minor defects. (2 points)

Major Deficiencies

1 to 4 (5+ is dilapidated) major defects in combination with intermediate or minor defects. (1 point)

Blocks

Sound

Average 3.0 – 2.5 points per block

Minor Deterioration

Average 2.49 – 2.0 points per block

Intermediate Deterioration

Average 1.99 – 1.5 points per block

Significant Deterioration

Average less than 1.5 points per block

Infrastructure Rating System

Criteria used for Evaluation:

Sidewalks:

- 3= No defects in sidewalk
- 2= Minor defects- partially overgrown with weeds and grass or broken, cracked (< 25% disrepair/substandard)
- 1= Intermediate defects- Completely missing segments within that block area, broken and cracked segments, completely overgrown with weeds and grass (> 25% disrepair)
- 0= Major defects- No sidewalks

Curbs and Gutters

- 3= No defects in curbs and gutters
- 2= Minor defects- Covered up by weeds (< 25 % disrepair/substandard); not draining (standing debris)
- 1= Intermediate defects- Broken, cracked, missing segments of curbing (> 25 % disrepair)
- 0= Major defects- None existent; drainage ditches

Streets:

- 3= No defects- concrete or asphalt, even, draining
- 2= Minor defects- uneven concrete/asphalt and/or significant pot holes, cracks, broken pavement (<25% disrepair/substandard)
- 1= Intermediate defects- uneven concrete/asphalt and/or significant pot holes, cracks, broken pavement (> 25% disrepair/substandard)
- 0= Major- gravel or dirt; road incomplete or dead-ends; street one-lane and does not allow cars to pass; or any combination of these.

Alleys:

- 3= No defects- gravel or concrete/asphalt, even, draining
- 2= Minor defects- gravel and uneven concrete; alleys not platted (i.e. less cost to improve)
- 1= Intermediate- dirt and even; draining
- 0= Major- Dirt and uneven; or not draining; platted alleys, but never built

Block Averages

- No defects- 2.25 - 3
- Minor repairs/maintenance issues- 1.5 – 2.25
- Intermediate repairs- 0.75 – 1.5
- Major repairs/total construction or replacement- < 0.75

APPENDIX E: ADDRESS MAPS

