

TYLER 1st

Building our future, together



8. Housing, Neighborhoods & Community Identity DRAFT

The intent of this document is to detail amendments from the 2014 and 2020 updates while continuing to memorialize the original text. Items updated through the 5-year update process will be accompanied with a Tyler 1st logo within the original Tyler 21 document. The text from the original document begins after the Tyler 21 logo appears in the text.



GOALS	POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS
HOUSING	
Provide sufficient housing for households at all income levels and all stages of the life cycle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate and provide incentives for development of a variety of housing types to serve diverse household types. Expand programs that support creation of ownership and rental housing affordable to low and moderate income households within the city, working with both for-profit and nonprofit developers. Expand first-time homebuyer and credit counseling programs.
Sustain and maintain established neighborhoods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage compatible infill residential development in established neighborhoods. Enhance code enforcement. Rehabilitate existing housing stock. <u>Protect investments and property values within neighborhoods.</u>
BUSINESS, RETAIL AND MIXED-USE AREAS	
Concentrate commercial development in compact, mixed-use districts interspersed with lower-density uses and open space along corridors rather than commercial strips.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate and provide incentives for concentration of development in mixed-use districts. Encourage addition of other uses to existing business parks and shopping centers. Establish zoning overlay districts to require improved design standards as properties redevelop.
Improve function and design of commercial areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish zoning, design and access guidelines for mixed-use and commercial areas, including tree and landscape standards.
Use public investments to promote compact mixed-use districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use public buildings as anchors for mixed-use centers. Use infrastructure investments to support mixed-use centers.



GOALS	POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS
COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND APPEARANCE	
<p>Enhance Tyler’s public realm with trees, attractive streetscapes, <u>adequate lighting</u> and public gathering places.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish design standards for streetscapes. • Establish a city commitment to tree-planting. • Establish a program for public art.
<p>Promote building, street and residential subdivision design that is focused on people rather than vehicles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage voluntary use of guidelines for human-scaled and pedestrian-friendly development while accommodating vehicles. • Ensure sensitive transitions from nonresidential to residential areas. • Ensure that signs are compatible with the desired surrounding context and kept in good repair. • Preserve and enhance the walkable character of older neighborhoods.
<p>Promote creation of new neighborhoods rather than isolated subdivisions and/or apartment complexes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage subdivision design that includes defined centers and edges. • Allow new subdivisions to be connected to surrounding areas. • Require maintenance endowments for private streets and open space.
<p>Promote appropriate location and design of housing and commercial development in the ETJ.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support land use frameworks to shape and guide development in the ETJ. • Continue City review of all plats in the ETJ for consistency with the Master Street Plan and the Comprehensive Plan as adopted.



HOUSING FACTS

TOTAL AND TYPE OF HOUSING UNITS (2019):

- Total of 42,457 housing units in City
- 60% are single-family houses
- 30% are in 2-9 unit buildings
- 19% are in buildings with 10 or more units
- 1% are mobile homes
- About half of all dwellings have more than 2 bedrooms and half have 2 or fewer bedrooms

AGE OF HOUSING STOCK (2019):

- Built before 1950: 14%
- Built before 1990: 49%
- Built since 2000: 10%

OWNERSHIP AND RENTING (2019):

- 52.7% owner-occupied
- 48% renter-occupied

LENGTH OF TIME IN CURRENT RESIDENCE (2011):

- 75% of residents lived in the same house in 2000.
- 14% of residents have lived in the same house since 1989.
- 3% of residents have lived in same house since 1969.

HOUSING VALUE (2018):

- Median value: \$195,000
- Less than \$50,000: 3.5%
- \$50,000 to \$199,999: 48.3%
- More than \$200,000: 48.1%

HOME SALES AND AVERAGE PRICE:

- 1,199 total sales in 2018 (2% decrease from 2017)
- Average price: \$1231,734 (4% increase from 2017)

Source: *American Community Survey 2017/8/9, Census 2010, Tyler Neighborhood Services; Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Most of Tyler's housing is composed of single-family houses.
- The homeownership rate for Tyler is lower than the statewide rate of 63%.
- The downward trend in the average price for an existing single-family home has ended, and prices are beginning to trend higher than pre-recession levels.
- New houses are, on average, much larger and more expensive than existing homes.
- Nearly half of Tyler's households do not receive enough income to afford the median-priced single-family home.
- The majority of new development in Tyler is taking place in the southern part of the city.



GOALS	POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS
HOUSING	
<p>Provide sufficient housing for households at all income levels and all stages of the life cycle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate and provide incentives for development of a variety of housing types to serve diverse household types. • Expand programs that support creation of ownership and rental housing affordable to low and moderate income households within the city, working with both for-profit and nonprofit developers. • Expand first-time homebuyer and credit counseling programs.
<p>Sustain and maintain established neighborhoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage compatible infill residential development in established neighborhoods. • Enhance code enforcement. • Rehabilitate existing housing stock.
BUSINESS, RETAIL AND MIXED-USE AREAS	
<p>Concentrate commercial development in compact, mixed-use districts interspersed with lower-density uses and open space along corridors rather than commercial strips.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate and provide incentives for concentration of development in mixed-use districts. • Encourage addition of other uses to existing business parks and shopping centers. • Establish zoning overlay districts to require improved design standards as properties redevelop.
<p>Improve function and design of commercial areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish zoning, design and access guidelines for mixed-use and commercial areas, including tree and landscape standards.
<p>Use public investments to promote compact mixed-use districts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use public buildings as anchors for mixed-use centers. • Use infrastructure investments to support mixed-use centers.
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GOALS	POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS
Promote creation of new neighborhoods rather than isolated subdivisions and/or apartment complexes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage subdivision design that includes defined centers and edges. • Allow new subdivisions to be connected to surrounding areas. • Require maintenance endowments for private streets and open space.
Promote appropriate location and design of housing and commercial development in the ETJ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support land use frameworks to shape and guide development in the ETJ. • Continue City review of all plats in the ETJ for consistency with the Master Street Plan and the Comprehensive Plan as adopted.

HOUSING FACTS

- HOUSING UNITS (2000): 35,337
 - 69% are single-family houses.
 - 14% are in 2-9 unit buildings.
 - 16% are in buildings with 10 or more units.
 - 1% are mobile homes.
 - About half of all dwellings have more than 2 bedrooms and half have 2 or fewer bedrooms.
- AGE OF HOUSING STOCK (2000):
 - Built before 1950: 15%
 - Built before 1980: 70%
- OWNERSHIP AND RENTING (2000):
 - 56% owner-occupied; a third of homeowners are senior citizens.
 - 44% renter-occupied; 14% of renters are senior citizens.
- LENGTH OF TIME IN CURRENT RESIDENCE (2000):
 - 48% of residents lived in the same house in 1995.
 - 20% of owners and 37% of renters in Tyler moved between 1995 and March 2000.
 - Over half of those who moved stayed in Smith County (including Tyler).
- HOUSING PRICES:
 - Of houses sold in 2004, 38% were priced below \$100,000 and 11% above \$250,000.
- NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:
 - 1990-2000: 3,310 building permits in Tyler; 76% of these were for single-family houses.
 - The 2005 average size of a new single-family house in Tyler was approximately 3,000 square feet.
 - The estimated average sales price of a new single-family house in Tyler is \$225,000.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Most of Tyler's housing is composed of single-family houses.
- The homeownership rate for Tyler is lower than the statewide rate of 60%.
- Prices for existing single-family houses in Tyler have increased substantially since 2000.
- New houses are, on average, much larger and more expensive than existing homes.
- Nearly half of Tyler's households do not receive enough income to afford the median-priced single-family home.
- The majority of new development in Tyler is taking place in the southern part of the city.

Source: Census 2000 and Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University data

FINDINGS

- There is little diversity of housing types in new housing: most new houses built within the city limits are single-family homes.
- The median new house built within the city limits is nearly 3,000 sf in size and costs \$192,000, making it 54% more expensive than the median-priced home (new or existing) within the entire metropolitan area (\$124,600).
- Subdivisions in newer parts of the city and in the ETJ tend to be poorly connected to surrounding areas.
- Residential areas in newer parts of the city and in the county tend to lack defined centers and edges and therefore lack neighborhood identity.
- “Leapfrog” development—small subdivisions surrounded by rural land—is common in the ETJ.
- Generic, “Anywhere, USA” development types predominate in Tyler’s commercial districts and extend in low densities along arterial corridors.
- Transitions between residential and commercial areas are not well managed in many areas.
- With few exceptions, the public realm lacks design identity. In too many parts of the city, Tyler lacks a sense of place.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Encourage development of greater diversity in housing types in new residential development within the city.
- Enhance efforts to make homeownership available to low and moderate income families.
- Make subdivisions and groups of subdivisions—both new and existing—into neighborhoods and create neighborhood and district centers.
- Improve the function, design, and attractiveness of commercial and mixed-use areas.
- Discourage development types that are isolated from neighboring areas.
- Improve the character of Tyler’s public realm.

A. Current Conditions

This chapter of the Tyler 1st Comprehensive Plan focuses on several key quality of life issues for Tylerites: the growth and character of existing and future housing, neighborhoods, and commercial areas. There are two overarching themes. One is related to the location of new housing growth and production. In this planning process, the City has committed itself to balanced growth, meaning an effort to direct some of the new growth coming to Tyler away from the southern parts of the city and the county. The inclusion of special area plans for downtown and the North End is part of this effort, but it is also an important question to consider in terms of housing growth. Expanding opportunity for affordable homeownership is a key issue. Also critical is the question of city, district and neighborhood identity, or sense of place. Tyler's development in recent years has tended towards generic models that can be found throughout Texas and the country as a whole. In the Community Visioning Retreat, the survey, interviews and other events, Tylerites expressed dissatisfaction with the results of this approach.

COMMUNITY ISSUES:

How and Where We Live

Neighborhoods and sense of place are important elements of the Tyler 1st Vision and Principles:

- In the Vision: “safe, interconnected neighborhoods”; “a sense of place and community in every part of the city”
- In the Principles:
 - > “Provide appealing, safe, affordable and stable places to live for people with a wide range of incomes.
 - > Provide a variety of housing types for families, singles, older persons and other kinds of households.
 - > Enhance and create neighborhoods containing walkable centers with a mix of housing and shopping to serve residents.”

HOUSING

Does Tyler have enough housing diversity for its population now and in the future? It is expected that Tyler's exceptional annual population growth rate of 4.4% in the 2000-2005 period will moderate in the future, returning to a more modest 1.1% annual rate. Even with this slower growth rate, the city will add over 21,500 people by 2015. If we assume that this additional population will reflect the same household composition found in 2000, we can estimate that 30% of those people will live alone and the remaining 70% will live in families or with unrelated people. Estimating three persons per household for the latter group results in 5,017 households. This means that there will be a need for 6,450 housing units for single persons and 5,017 for larger households over the course of ten years, or an average of 1,147 a year.

The challenge to produce sufficient housing in the future has several elements:

- How can Tyler produce a sufficient variety of product types to satisfy a diverse market?

- How can Tyler produce a sufficient diversity in price and tenure to accommodate households at different income levels and meet the City's goals for balanced growth?
- Where should housing production occur and how can the City encourage development in preferred locations?

Housing Diversity

Housing Types, Household Composition and Tenure

Single family homes predominate in the City of Tyler and will continue to do so. Of the 35,553 city housing units counted in the 2000 census, nearly 70% were single-family homes. Small multifamily buildings with two to four units made up nearly 8% of all the housing units, another 10% of housing units were in medium-sized apartment buildings with 5 to 19 units, and 11% were in buildings with more than 20 units. Only 450 mobile homes (1.3% of all units) were counted in Tyler. The City's Consolidated Plan estimates that by 2005, an additional 1,842 units had been built, bringing the total to 37,395, of which 71% were single-family houses. Nearly 70% of Tyler's housing was built before 1980, including 5% built before 1940.

Since the end of World War II, the U.S. housing construction industry has focused on providing single-family homes for families with children, responding first to postwar housing demand and then to the huge baby boomer generation. Baby boomers are now becoming empty-nesters, the smaller "baby bust" generation now makes up the early adult cohort, and households in general have become much more diverse. Nationwide, married couples with children made up 31% of the national population in 1980 and only 24% in 2000.

Tyler's household composition reflects the national trends. In 2000, only 20.5% of City of Tyler households were made up of a married couple with children. Another 14.5% of all households were female-headed households with children. The figures for Smith County as a whole were comparable to national figures, with 24% of all households composed of married couples with children. In the City of Tyler, 30% of households were made up of a single person living alone (25% in Smith County as a whole). Approximately one-third of all households include children under 18 and slightly more than one-quarter of all households include persons 65 years or older. These data suggest that there may be more demand for a variety of housing types in Tyler than is currently available or being produced.

Renters accounted for 44% of City of Tyler households in



Single-family houses



Townhouses



Mobile homes



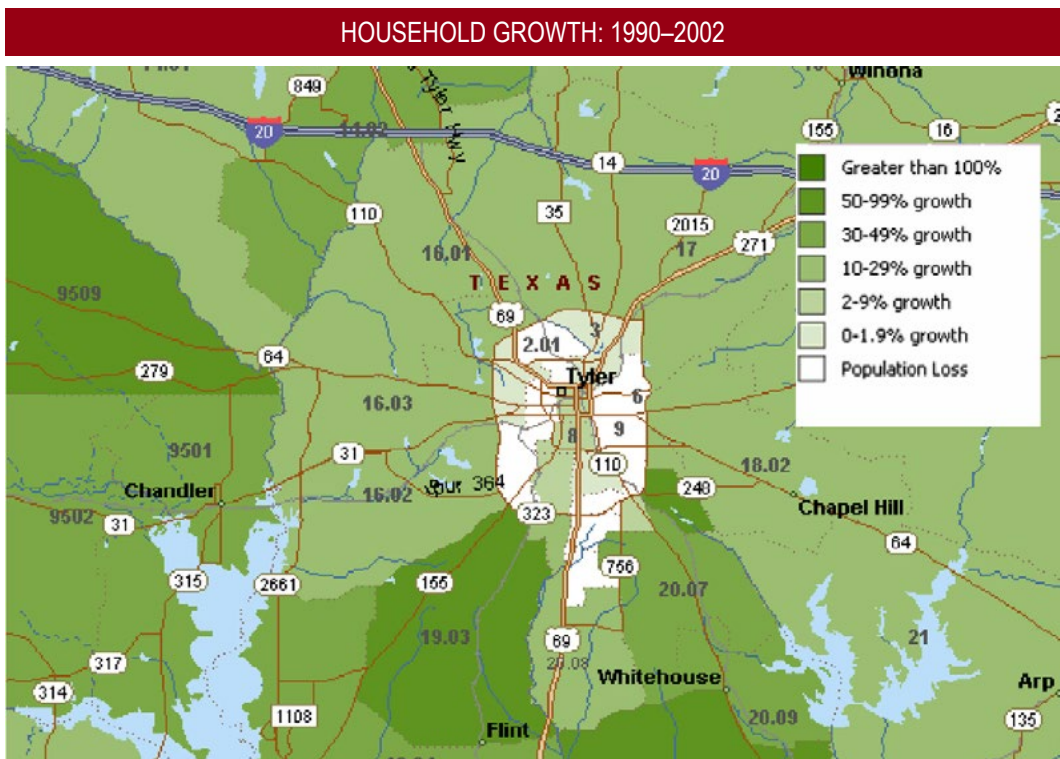
Apartments

2000 and while 56% were owners. County data (which include Tyler) suggest many fewer rental units outside of the city. Almost 70% of the households in the entire county own their homes. There are approximately 60 apartment complexes in Tyler today, the majority located in South Tyler, clustered near the South Loop and South Broadway. The Tyler Apartment Association, which tracks rental rates and occupancy data for 8,046 apartments, reported a 94% occupancy rate in June 2006. The average rent for a one-bedroom apartment was \$526 a month, for a two-bedroom apartment was \$685, and for a three-bedroom apartment was \$770. Niche apartment markets outside the complexes include downtown apartments on the square, which are highly sought after despite downtown's limitations.

Household Growth Trends and Housing Markets

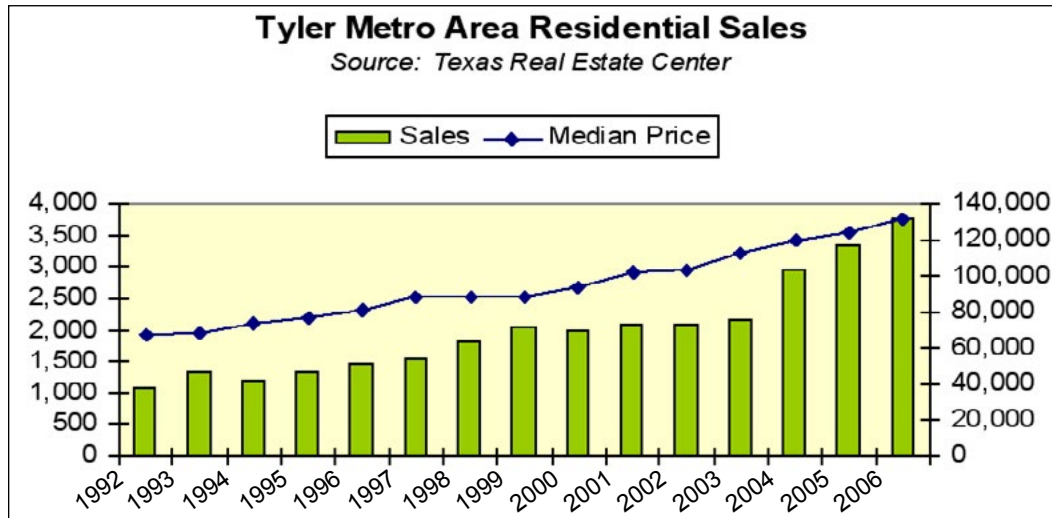
The city is the focus of Smith County and the majority of county residents who live outside of the City of Tyler work and shop in the city. The county is part of the overall housing market for people who consider themselves Tylerites.

Household growth over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s was particularly strong outside of Loop 323 and the city limits, especially to the south. Certain parts of the city lost households in those years.

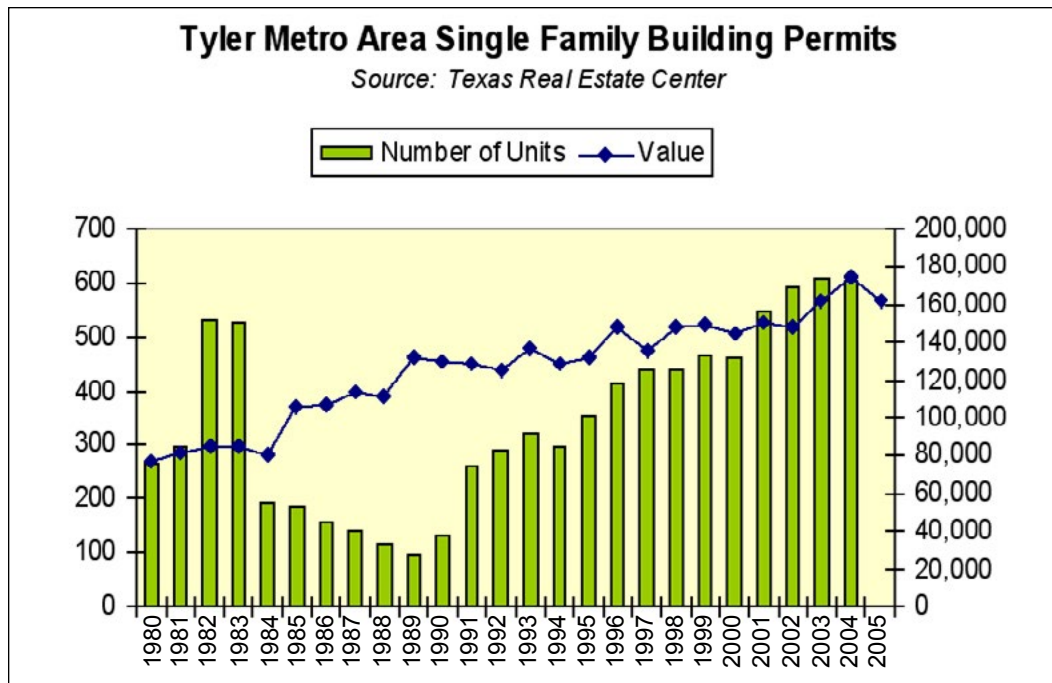


Source: Microsoft MapPoint; ZHA, Inc.

Housing Sales and Housing Production

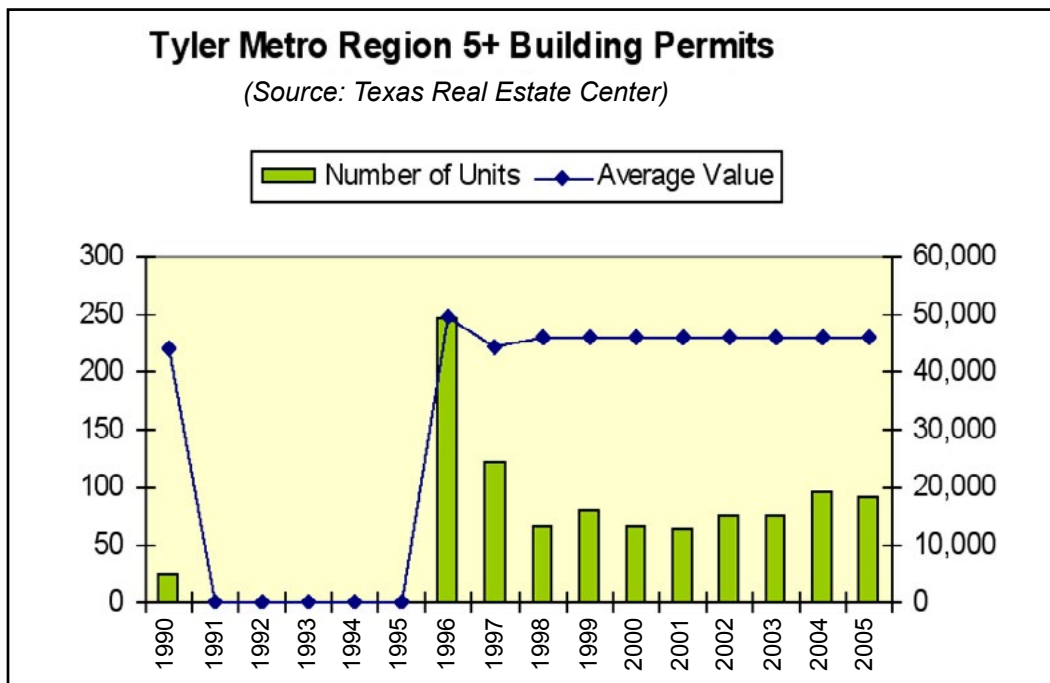
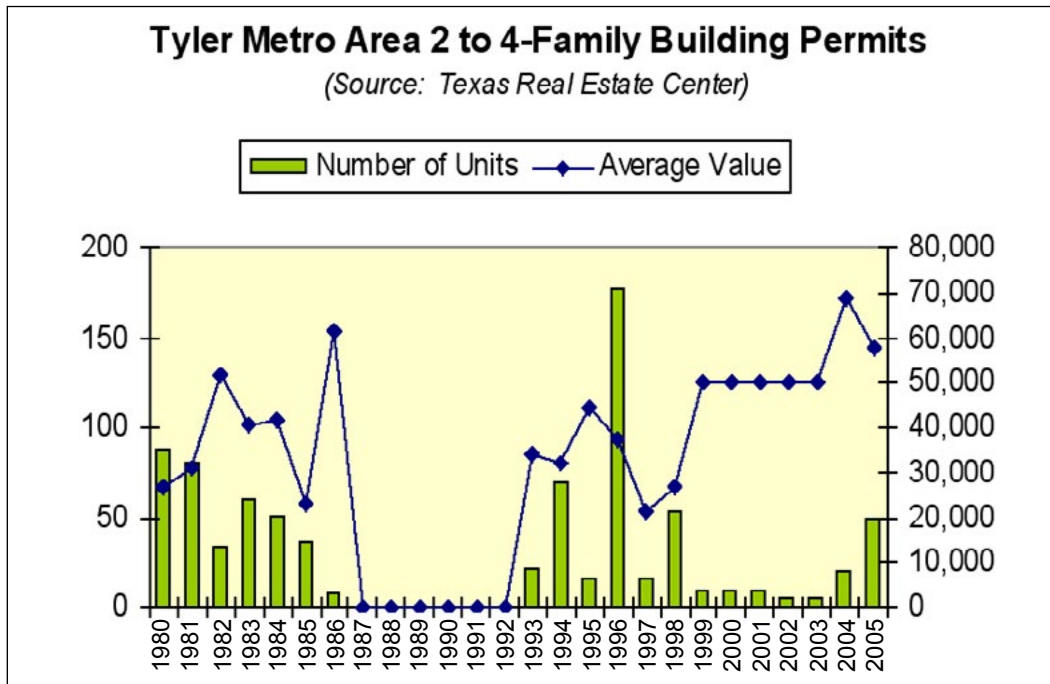


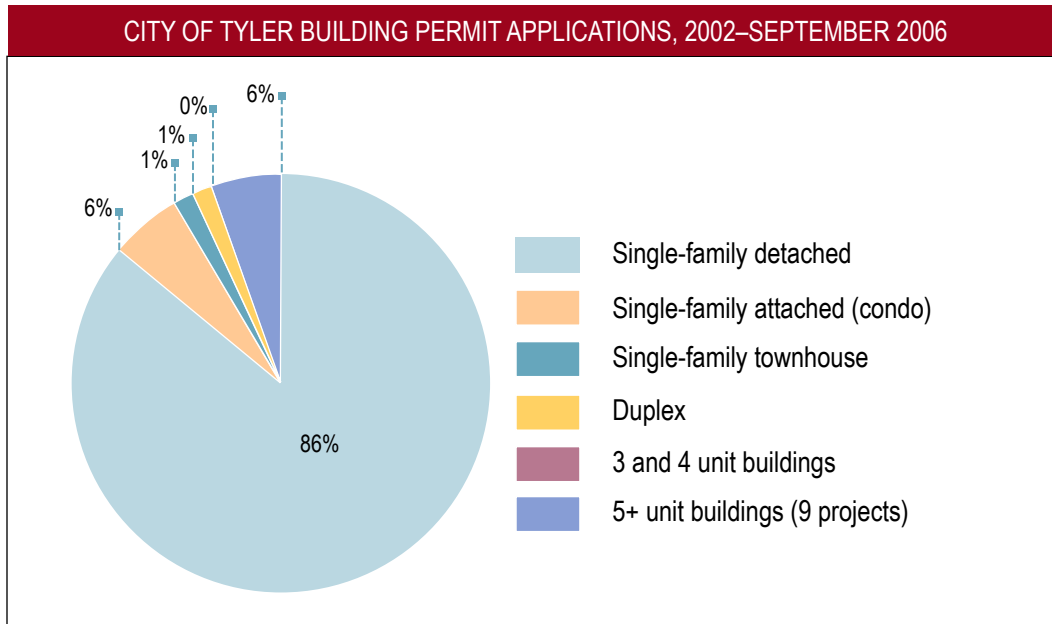
Housing sales data is collected for the Tyler Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes all of Smith County, and is not compiled for the City of Tyler alone. The sales data from the Texas Real Estate Center at Texas A & M University show that from a sales volume of approximately 1,000 housing units in the early 1990s, the market grew to over 3,500 units sold in the first three quarters of 2006.



Building permit data for the Tyler MSA over the last 15 years show that construction in the Tyler MSA market has focused on single-family homes, with limited development of duplexes, small apartment buildings and larger multifamily developments.

Recent data from the City’s list of residential building permit applications show that builders active within the city are focusing on single-family housing and that housing tends to be more expensive than the new housing in the MSA as a whole. From 2002 to September 2006, 93% of the residential building permit applications in the city were for single-family homes (86% single-family detached).





Source: City of Tyler

Most new developments and subdivisions in Tyler tend to be relatively small. They often include a few amenities such as a swimming pool and clubhouse or walking trails, but the majority do not provide for neighborhood retail centers or civic sites.

Housing Diversity and Tyler 1st Goals

Tyler has relatively little housing diversity, especially in newer housing. The city’s housing stock and builders still tend to be focused on production of single-family homes. Few condominiums, townhouses, and duplexes are produced. There are few alternative housing products aimed at the empty-nester baby boom market. The options are limited in rental apartments, with the majority of apartments in isolated complexes unconnected from the neighborhood amenities which are increasingly attractive to both the young professional market and the empty nester market. A continuing lack of diversity in housing types will make it difficult for Tyler to achieve the Tyler 1st goals.

Housing Costs and Affordable Housing

The overall housing market in the Tyler MSA is affordable compared to the nation and the state of Texas, according to generally-accepted standards. The Texas Real Estate Center calculates a Housing Affordability Index that is the ratio between the median family income and the income required to buy the median home based on current mortgage practices and interest rates. In 2005, the median cost of a single family home in the Tyler MSA was \$124,600, requiring a household income of \$28,809 to qualify for a mortgage. The median household income was estimated to be \$50,950, meaning that the median home was quite affordable to households making the median income. Affordability calculations for first-time homebuyers also indicate that the Tyler MSA has housing that is quite affordable, compared both to the state and the nation. Because mortgage interest rates have increased in the last year, the affordability index may not be as favorable at present.

2005 HOUSING AFFORDABILITY INDEX					
MLS	2005 Median-Priced Home	Required Income to Qualify	Median Family Income	HAI*	HAI for First-time Homebuyers**
Tyler	\$124,600	\$28,809	\$50,950	1.77	1.26
Texas total	\$136,500	\$31,561	\$53,000	1.68	1.14
U.S. total	\$206,600	\$47,132	\$58,000	1.23	0.68

* The HAI is the ratio of the median family income to the income required to buy the median-priced house using standard mortgage financing at the current interest rate. Standard financing is a fixed-rate, 30-year loan covering 80 percent of the cost of the home. A HAI of 1.00 indicates that the median family income is exactly equal to the required income to qualify for the standard loan to purchase the median-priced house.

** First-time home buyer is assumed to purchase a home equal to the first quartile home price using a 90% home loan at an interest rate 0.5 percent greater than the standard current state.

New housing is more expensive on average than existing housing and new housing within the city is more expensive than in the MSA as a whole. The city residential building permit data for 2002 to September 2006 demonstrate this clearly. The average value was \$241,000, which is much higher than the range of \$150,000 to \$180,000 average value for single-family home permits in the MSA as a whole during the same period. The median value of the city residential building permit applications was \$192,000. In addition, the new housing in the City of Tyler follows a national trend in size. The average size of these single family homes is 3,321 square feet and the median size is 2,931 square feet.



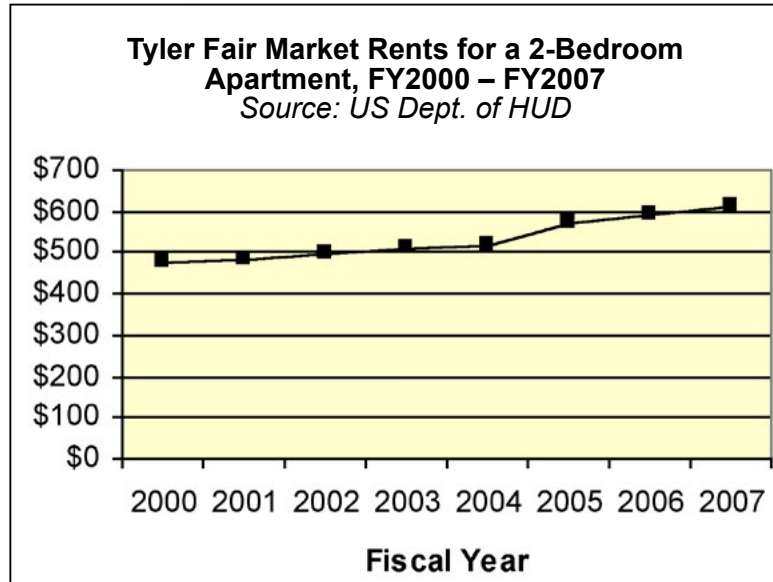
New housing in Tyler is larger and more expensive than existing housing.

Permanently Affordable Housing in Tyler

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development identifies households paying more than 30% of their monthly income for housing costs as being “cost-burdened.” These are the households that need more affordable housing. In Tyler, the 2000 census found that 44% of renters and more than 20% of owners spent more than 30% of their household income on housing. In 2000, of the 8,668 rental households in Tyler earning less than 50% of the area’s median income, 86% paid more than half of their incomes for housing. A quarter of the 3,009 rental households earning between 50% and 80% of the area median income paid more than 30% of their income for housing.

Tyler has a total of 1,665 units of subsidized housing in which the subsidy is tied to the physical unit. This number includes apartment complexes built with Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, which are federal tax incentives provided to developers who meet certain requirements and are approved by state housing agencies, and apartment complexes funded by other types of federal subsidy. While 1,470 of these units are for any type of income-

eligible household, 133 units are reserved for elderly tenants. An additional 908 units are subsidized through Section 8 tenant-based vouchers, which permit eligible households to pay no more than 30% of their income in housing costs, with the federal government paying the remainder, up to a specified amount called the Fair Market



Rent, to a private landlord. These are called “tenant-based” vouchers because they move with the tenant rather than being attached to the specific unit.

Overall, therefore, approximately 7% of Tyler’s housing units are subsidized. Nearly two-thirds of these subsidized units are reserved for households making no more than 50% of the Tyler area median income, which for FY 2006 was \$26,350 for a family of four. An estimated 14,230 Tyler households in 2005 had incomes that were 50% or below the area median income. Less than ten percent of these households receive any housing subsidy. The City’s housing division reports that approximately 2,000 names are on the waiting list for Section 8 vouchers and it takes three to five years to get a unit.

Affordable Homeownership

Increasing the homeownership rate for low- and moderate-income households is a top goal of the City’s housing program. However, affordable housing ownership programs are somewhat limited in Tyler. Since 2003 the City has had a small program to build houses for select Section 8 voucher holders and has built three houses. The goal is to build five houses a year. The total land and building costs are approximately \$80,000 and subsidized mortgages are offered. Section 8 voucher holders who meet certain criteria can use their housing assistance towards buying a home.

The city Habitat for Humanity has built 66 homes since 1989. While the current average is eight homes a year, the organization wants to raise that number to ten homes a year. Habitat often builds on donated land and receives some government funding for site preparation, infrastructure and construction, and homebuyer counseling. The Habitat executive director reports that as many as 200 people attend their annual credit screening events and that bad credit is a greater barrier to homeownership for many households than low income. Most of the Habitat families are single parents working in the hospital and medical sector with household incomes between 30% and 70% of area median income.

State first-time homebuyer program funds are available through a few mortgage companies in Tyler. According to the FDIC Community Reinvestment Act Performance Evaluation issued in 2006, Southside Bank, which is the biggest real estate lender in the Tyler area, assisted 13 first-time homebuyers in 2003 using several different programs. It made five loans in a first-time homebuyer program with the most flexible underwriting criteria. In addition, the bank participated in the state bank program for affordable housing, making three loans, and it also obtained funds from the Federal Home Loan Bank to match down payment or closing costs for first-time homebuyers, assisting five buyers. The bank has investigated the possibility of creating a community development corporation (CDC) and was involved with five other banks at one point in a CDC that no longer exists.

Housing Rehabilitation

Housing abandonment by absentee owners coupled with low-income property owners' difficulty in funding repairs undermine the stability of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. Boarded-up buildings bring down the value of adjacent housing and a street with many empty lots communicates disinvestment.



Boarded-up buildings can destabilize neighborhoods and discourage new investment.

In 2000, 8% of housing units were vacant. Although nearly two-thirds of these were either for rent or for sale, there were 766 “other vacant” units.

Most of these were in dilapidated condition. Demolition of vacant units in extremely poor condition is an ongoing activity of city government. Housing abandonment and vacant lots are common in several neighborhoods in North, East and West Tyler. In the CDBG target areas chosen each year, the City provides funding for homeowner rehabilitation as well as for demolition and reconstruction of owner-occupied units. There are also some funds available for emergency rehabilitation for disabled or handicapped owners.

Affordable Housing and Tyler 1st Goals

Affordable housing policies and strategies matter, not only because it is important to provide safe and secure housing to households of all income levels but because stable neighborhoods are important to the success of the city as a whole. Most of Tyler's permanently affordable housing is provided in apartment complexes in which all the units are subsidized, and this tends to create areas where there is a concentration of populations living in poverty. Though the value of subsidized homeownership and rehabilitation programs has been well-recognized in the city, programs and funding are very limited. In recent decades, newer approaches elsewhere to affordable housing production have emphasized the value of mixed-income and scattered site affordable housing, including infill projects. The benefits of these approaches include deconcentration of poverty, similar design for subsidized and market rate units, and elimination of neighborhood or market stigma attached to subsidized housing.

Chapter 8 :: HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOODS & COMMUNITY IDENTITY

New construction of affordable, non-subsidized, market rate housing is also relatively rare within the city. Although there are a few builders in this sector of the market, most of the moderately-priced new housing in the Tyler MSA is built in the ETJ or other parts of the county. As a result, there are numerous lots for infill and small subdivisions within the city limits that go unused while land in the country is subdivided for “leapfrog” development and expanding sprawl. The northern and western parts of the city suffer from disinvestment and depopulation, the city loses taxpayers, existing infrastructure is underutilized, older homes become dilapidated and some are demolished. As is the case in many cities, Tyler benefited in the last five to ten years from investments by Mexican immigrants in east and northeast Tyler. Although some of this investment is likely to continue, these migrant- and market-based improvements will not be sufficient to promote growth in the many underutilized parts of Tyler.



Some affordable housing is being constructed on vacant lots within the city, such as this new home in the North End.



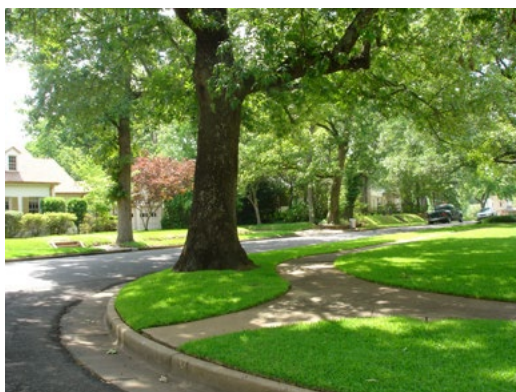
Tyler is seeing some market-rate infill and housing rehabilitation inside Loop 323, including North Tyler, West Tyler, and downtown area units.

NEIGHBORHOODS AND IDENTITY

When asked about places within Tyler that communicate what is special about the city as a physical place, most Tylerites talk about two things: trees and the historic districts. Sometimes people will mention the Rose Garden or a few other special destinations within Loop 323, but no one ever mentions places outside of Loop 323. Trees represent the green landscape of East Texas that is especially appreciated in a state that is predominantly dry and this landscape is linked to the horticultural heritage that still makes Tyler the “Rose City.” Otherwise, Tylerites find it hard to identify places that make Tyler special. Development along most of the major city streets and roads is undistinguished and generic. There has been little investment in improving public environments—the public realm—particularly at the edges of districts or neighborhoods. Similarly, there has been little effort to capitalize on the elements of the city that could serve as the raw materials for a more attractive public realm, such as the city’s drainage canals.

Neighborhood Form

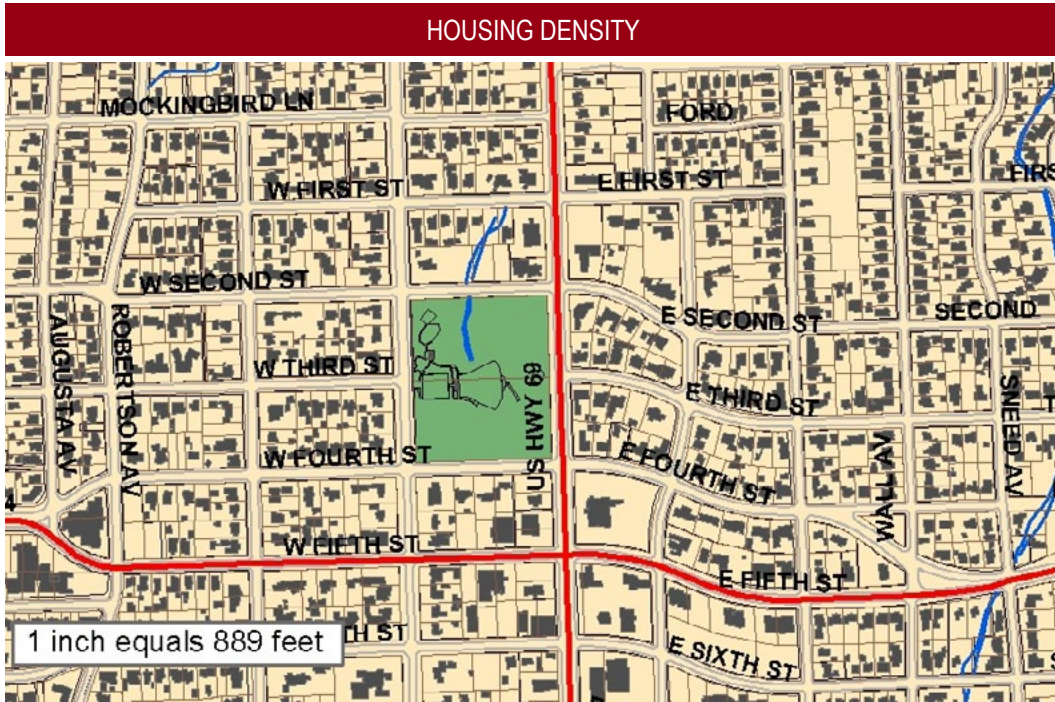
In many parts of Tyler within Loop 323 there are recognizable neighborhoods with acknowledged names, often, though not always, centered on parks, schools or small neighborhood retail areas. Older neighborhoods are set within a grid-like system of streets that allows travel and access by a variety of routes. They tend to be pedestrian-friendly: many (but not all) older streets have continuous sidewalks and street trees. The blocks are small and in the oldest neighborhoods there is considerable housing variety with big and small houses nearby and, in some cases, a mixture of single-family homes, duplexes, and small multifamily buildings. In some areas there are “walk-to” commercial districts or corner stores. Finally, parks and other gathering places, schools or other civic uses, or churches often function as neighborhood centers.



Many of Tyler’s older neighborhoods have sidewalks and mature street trees.

As the city has expanded to the south, the concept of neighborhood becomes less salient and places tend to be identified more by names of subdivisions, apartment complexes or roads. These subdivisions are less likely to have identifiable centers or anchors and they are more likely to be gated or isolated from surrounding areas with one or two ways in and out to an arterial road. Blocks are larger and, until establishment of a recent requirement by the City, sidewalks were often absent. Street trees are rare and in general there are few amenities for pedestrians on the streets, though some of the newest subdivisions have responded to demand by putting in walking trails. Housing tends to be homogeneous in type and design.

Overall, the City of Tyler has a low gross residential density of approximately one dwelling unit per acre. However, residential densities on the block, district or subdivision level in most of the city and even in the ETJ are not especially low, though usually below the densities required for a robust public transportation system. In the historic districts, gross residential

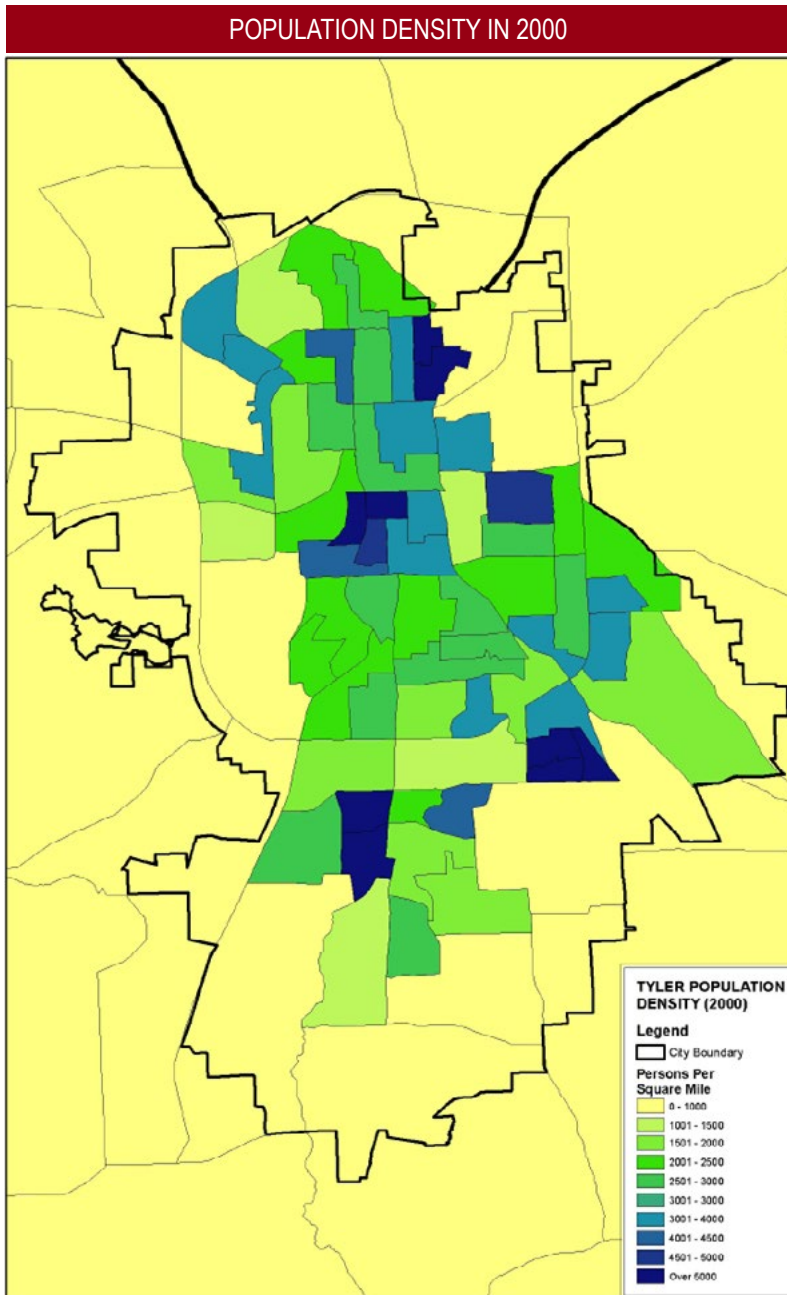


Bergfeld Park/Azalea District



Cumberland Road Area

Source: City of Tyler GIS data



Source: Census 2000 data

densities of three or four units per acre are common, and of course, the apartment complexes have much higher densities within their districts. The Cumberland Road area has some of the lowest densities in Tyler, with very large houses on lots of two or more acres, but in most new developments, large houses are being built on smaller lots.

The Population Density in 2000 map shows persons per square mile by census tract in 2000, rather than residential density, but it conveys the point that residential densities in Tyler do not follow any uniform continuum from high density in the center to low density on the periphery. The highest density census tracts are locations with groups of apartment complexes, including several locations in South Tyler outside of Loop 323. Most of the census tracts in 2000 had densities well below 4,000 persons per square mile, which is generally viewed as the base foundation for public transit.

The City of Tyler’s residential areas can be divided into three general categories:

- Stable areas—substantially built out, well-maintained, owner-occupied and with little new construction activity
- Emerging growth areas—rehabilitation, new construction, the potential for expanding institutions and the potential for new development models to emerge
- Areas of special interest—areas challenged by disinvestment or other concerns.

The city's Emerging Growth Areas are all on the periphery, and, of course, there is “leapfrog” growth to the southeast, south and southwest into the county and nearby cities. This discontinuous growth, rather than very low densities, is the marker of sprawl in the Tyler region.

Business and Mixed-Use Areas

Tyler has long been zoned for commercial development along all of its major arterial roads with the expectation that businesses would gradually fill in all of the lots. The result is low-density development fronted by parking lots along miles of multi-lane roads. Some corridors are mature suburban-style retail strips, such as Broadway Avenue south of Loop 323, while others, like Gentry Parkway and West Loop 323 have many low-value, underutilized, or vacant sites. With the opening of Broadway Square Mall, the intersection of South Broadway Avenue and Loop 323 became the “100 percent corner” for retail in Tyler, and new retail development has competed to occupy South Broadway Avenue sites as housing development has moved to the south. At the same time, there is discontinuous development on many other commercial strips in the city, with low-value development interspersed with vacant lots.

The Urban Land Institute's description of suburban strip development fits Tyler very well:

“Typically, they are one-dimensional forms of development that lack a distinct sense of place or community and that increasingly are plagued by problems to do with fragmentation, congestion, inconvenience, inefficiency, deterioration, and visual blight While a single automobile-oriented shopping center is easily accessible, dozens lined along the same suburban arterial are not. Consumers continue to shop there, of course, but in the coming years, increasing choices will undoubtedly force major changes in the strip environment if they are to retain their competitive position and economic vitality.”¹

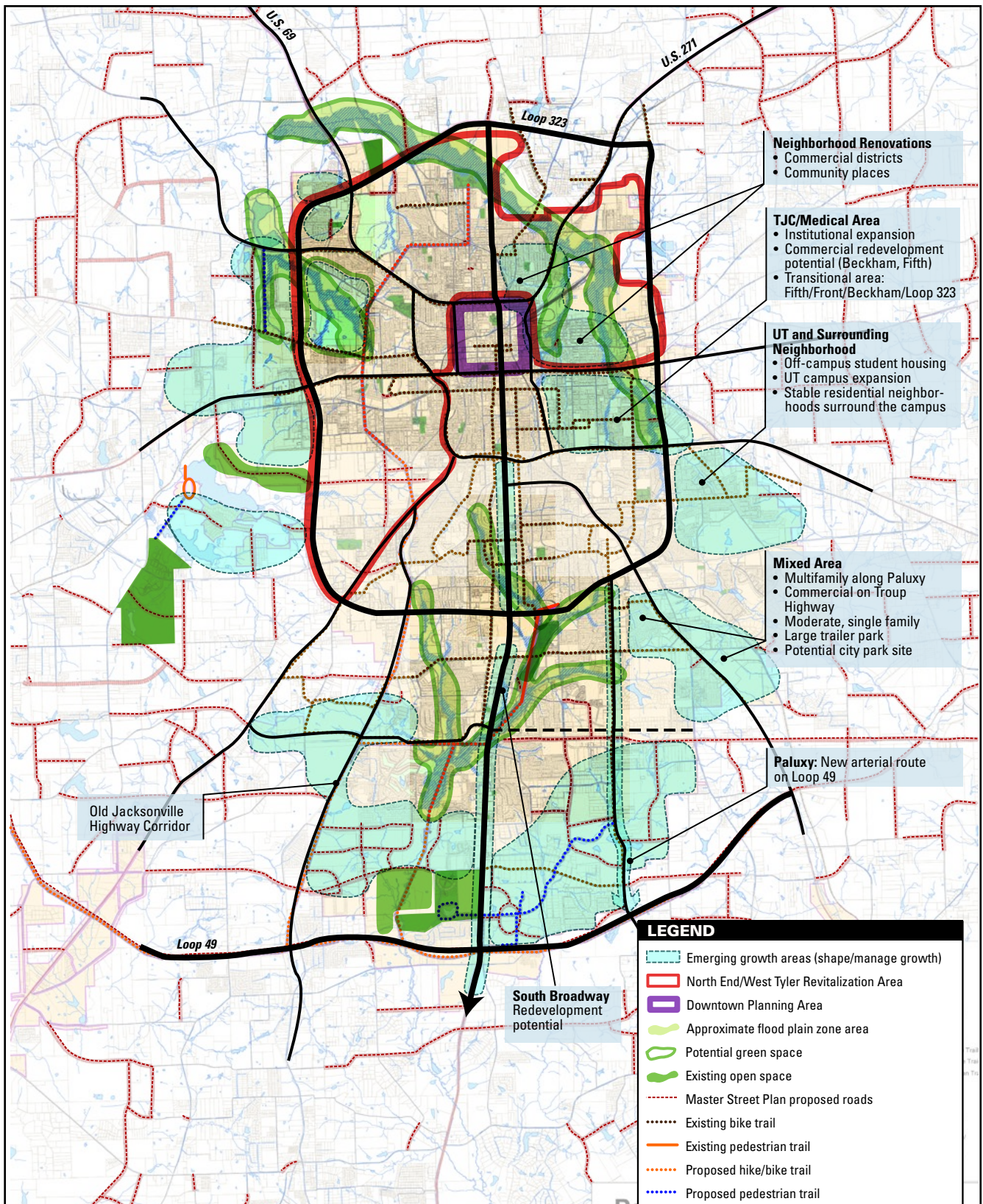


South Broadway Avenue is lined with strip retail centers that include large signs and vast parking lots between the street and stores.

Strip commercial development in Tyler usually does not serve as a neighborhood center for residential areas because the arterials function as edges and barriers between neighborhoods rather than as seams that weave together neighborhoods. Neighborhoods often back onto the retail lots that line the corridor and residents need to get into their cars and often take a rather circuitous route to enter traffic on the arterials in order to access the commercial area. The arterials are designed to discourage pedestrian crossing or pedestrian use. Most neighborhoods do not have their own small retail centers and the retail development

1 Ten Principles for Reinventing America's Suburban Strips (Washington, DC: ULI, 2001), iv-v.

Emerging Growth Areas and Areas of Special Interest



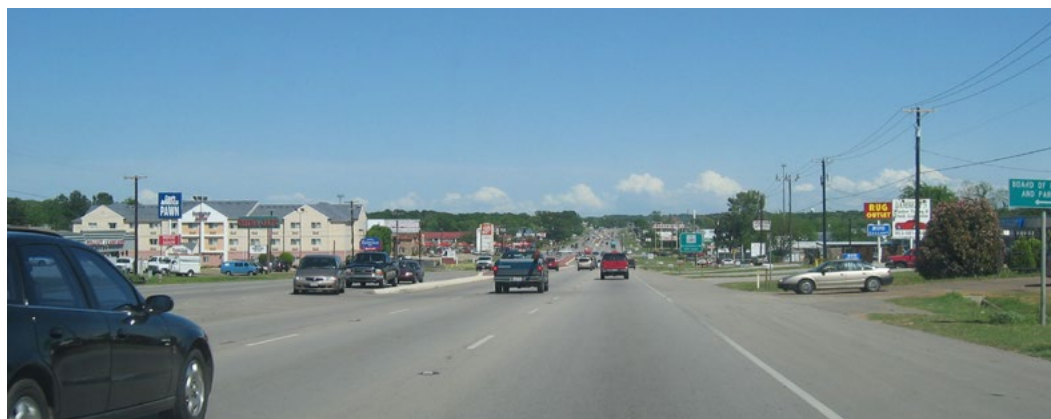
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on Loop 323, Broadway Avenue, and Beckham Avenue/Troup Highway is highly auto-dependent and hostile to pedestrians.

Sense of Place

The character of Tyler's arterial roads and commercial areas is one of the main reasons that much of Tyler lacks a "sense of place." What does that mean? A "place" is a space that has meaning for people. Environments that are "placeless" are not connected to their specific location; they "could be anywhere." The generic national chain architecture of many of Tyler's shopping areas and the ubiquitous metal buildings used by many local businesses help create an "Anywhere, USA" environment that belies Tyler's reputation as a beautiful city. Signs are often inappropriately large for their context.

Moreover, Tyler has not invested lately in its public realm. Streets are the most important part of the public realm because they cover the most area. While many of the streets of the historic districts and older neighborhoods in North Tyler are lined with big trees, on the arterial streets and roads there is a bit of lawn, shrubbery and occasionally a few trees planted in newer commercial developments.



Tyler's major arterials generally lack street trees and landscaping that could help create a sense of place.

B. Recommendations–Housing

GOAL:

- 1. Provide sufficient housing for households at all income levels and all stages of the life cycle.**

ACTIONS:

1a. Expand first-time homebuyer and credit counseling programs.

Tyler observers agree that the biggest obstacle to homeownership for working families in Tyler is lack of credit-worthiness rather than lack of affordable ownership housing. A small number of programs currently prepare first-time homebuyers for City and Habitat for Humanity programs. A simple approach to expanding these services is for the City or another government or nonprofit entity to seek funding from foundations, banks (as Community Reinvestment Act activities) or other donors and then issue a request for proposals (RFP) to identify a nonprofit service provider for credit counseling. The target population would be working families and not the lowest-income households. The proposed system might include the following:

- A marketing program;
- Quarterly and annual reports by the provider;
- Measurement of outcomes to include outreach numbers, participant numbers and tracking of participants who become homeowners; and
- Small payments to be made by the clients, as a token of seriousness and also to contribute to program funding.

1b. Provide developer/builder incentives for producing housing affordable to households making 80% or below the area median income in areas where housing development is desired other than South Tyler.

There are a number of ways that the City and others can seek to facilitate production of more housing for households with modest incomes:

- Assist in land assembly through acquisition of tax title lots, forgiveness of taxes when lots will be used for affordable market-rate housing, and/or donation of lots for creation of infill housing.
- Work with banks to organize a revolving loan pool at concessionary interest rates for builders of affordable infill and investor owners who rehab homes and agree to charge only moderate rents for income-eligible owners.
- Work with banks to organize a loan pool for soft second loans for income-eligible first-time homebuyers.
- Facilitate developer access to government funding for affordable housing production and provide tax incentives where housing production is desired. Many builders are reluctant to use federal funds because of paperwork and requirements to meet union-level wage rates. The City can provide assistance to streamline the process.
- Create public-private partnerships in which the City contributes infrastructure and/or permits higher densities in return for desired development types and locations.

- Utilize the Affordable Housing Task Force recommendations for the waiving of development fees relating to affordable housing in the North End Revitalization area (building permits, taps, platting, zoning, etc.). Affordable Housing would be defined as Single Family, Attached and Detached- R-1, R-2, R-1D or a building of 4 or less multi-family. The house or unit will be limited to 1500 square feet of heated and cooled space. Removing requirement of curb and gutter improvements or escrow for new affordable housing in the North End (ownership or rental and same requirement of 1500 square foot heated and cooled).
- Waive development fees related to single-family detached and attached infill housing in the North End Revitalization Planning Area.

1c. Create a marketing program for all first-time homebuyer programs available in the city.

The City's Department of Neighborhood Services Housing Division should serve as a central information center on the affordable housing programs available in the city. Information should be consolidated in a brochure, to be distributed widely to organizations and individuals around the city, and it should also be posted on the City's web site. A project of this type could be completed in a summer by an intern. It would have to be updated regularly, which would provide an additional opportunity for collaboration between the Housing Division, banks, and other providers of programs to first-time homebuyers. In addition to the brochure and webpage, there should be personal outreach through presentations to community groups, such as church congregations, or first-time homebuyer fairs.

1d. Make public investments in infrastructure and amenities where housing development is desired.

Improvements to infrastructure, streetscape and the public realm by city government can attract new private investment. These improvements should be coordinated to have maximum impact on areas where development is desired. The City already follows this principle in the annual choice of a target area for expenditure of Community Development Block Grant funds in low and moderate income neighborhoods. However, the same strategic approach should be taken to other capital investment decisions.

1e. Promote partnerships between social service agencies and providers of subsidized housing.

Making educational and social services easily available to residents of subsidized housing enhances their success. Developers and social services providers should be encouraged to work together.

GOAL:

2. Sustain and maintain established neighborhoods.

ACTIONS:

2a. Create a database of existing homeowners' associations and neighborhood associations and encourage the creation of new neighborhood associations.

The City currently does not have complete information on neighborhood associations,

homeowners' associations (HOAs), and large condominium associations. Homeowners' associations have responsibility for maintenance of common features of many subdivisions as well as acting like neighborhood associations to create a sense of community and advocate for their neighborhoods. The City needs to understand how HOAs and condominium associations affect maintenance of common spaces, private streets and public or semi-public spaces and when, if ever, their responsibilities may lapse. This will become even more important if the City annexes land in the ETJ. New subdivisions are almost all being created with HOAs.

Neighborhood and homeowners' associations play an important role in communicating with city government to improve and protect neighborhoods. Neighborhood association leaders help create community and enhance the capacity of residents to solve common problems. A strong partnership between the City and these groups will enhance neighborhood quality of life. The City could assist developers and HOAs by creating guidance documents for HOA charters.

2b. Ensure that maintenance endowments are included in Homeowner Association draft documents and that they are required prior to plat approval.

Maintenance of private or community space, as well as any other common features, that are created in subdivisions should be secured by an endowment. This can occur by requiring arrangements for these endowments in draft Homeowner Association documents to be approved before plat approval.

The City has in the past accepted undevelopable land from developers without any accompanying maintenance endowment. Developers can create playgrounds or other open space amenities on some undevelopable tracts. The City should not accept private streets or common open space without implementing a system for evaluating the costs and benefits and funding methods.

2c. Encourage compatible infill residential development in existing neighborhoods and the creation of neighborhood conservation districts.

Neighborhood conservation districts, which are discussed in detail in the Historic Preservation chapter, are resident-generated overlays that promote retention of the distinctive character of a neighborhood through board review of



Neighborhood conservation districts can protect the character of many of the city's older neighborhoods.



The City can help homeowners with housing rehab through low-interest loans.

proposed changes to the exterior of properties.

2d. Enhance code enforcement.

Most city governments inevitably depend on residents to inform them about conditions that may require enforcement actions. Neighborhood associations can be helpful in gathering information on enforcement needs. Making it easy to report potential offenses is also important. A telephone answering machine can record reports, as can forms on the City's web site. Staff needs to be identified to collect the information and enforcement officers assigned.

2e. Rehabilitate existing housing stock.

Promote housing rehab through organization of revolving loan pools for low and moderate income owner-occupants and for investor-owners who will rent to low- and moderate-income households.

2f. Protect investments and property values within neighborhoods.

The City of Tyler can act to protect and improve property values within established neighborhoods by enforcing regulations related to fencing and screening, parking on improved surfaces, vegetation control and other rules that are intended to encourage responsible upkeep of property. Other considerations for maintaining and improving property values may be to adopt additional codes and regulations such as the International Property Maintenance Code.

C. Recommendations—Business, Retail and Mixed-Use Areas

GOAL:

- 3. Concentrate commercial development in compact, mixed-use districts interspersed with lower-density uses and open space along corridors rather than commercial strips.**

ACTIONS:

- 3a. Amend commercial strip zoning along arterial roads to promote compact, mixed-use districts.**



Birkdale Village in Huntersville, NC is a mixed-use development with most of the housing units above village-style retail. (Source: ULI Case Studies)

Regulations to promote mixed-use development at major intersections should be established, while the rest of the arterial corridors can be preserved for less intense uses and, where appropriate, green edges to encourage a parkway-like character. Zoning overlays can be applied both to areas where there is currently little development and to existing business parks and shopping centers. In mixed-use areas, commercial and office uses should be located at the street edge while residential uses should be located towards the interior and back of the mixed-use center. Permitted heights should transition down towards lower-density residential areas and be buffered with landscaped setbacks.

Appropriate areas for compact, mixed-use centers include major Loop 323 intersections. Commercial strips where overlays could be suitable include South Broadway Avenue, Beckham Avenue, and West Loop 323.

- 3b. Offer more zoning options for higher densities and diverse housing products around mixed-use commercial centers to provide more housing types and prepare for future transit centers.**

While most of the housing in Tyler will continue to be single-family homes, opportunities for a variety of housing types can be appropriately created in mixed-use locations. Rental apartments, condominiums, lofts and townhouses that are designed to be part of mixed-use centers, where there are stores, restaurants and entertainment, will offer housing attractive to young singles, couples and empty-nesters. Appropriate locations for this mixed-use zoning include downtown and major intersections.

The zoning should include design guidelines for mixed-use projects. Although mixed-use projects are beginning to appear in Tyler, they tend to be designed with the uses adjacent to one another rather than truly integrated: for example, a conventional suburban shopping center layout with adjacent townhouse and single-family housing development connected by trails as well as roads. The next step towards mixed-use development is to

create environments that are more like urban villages in which housing and commercial development are more thoroughly integrated in main-street-style centers and higher densities are concentrated at these centers. As the neighborhood transitions away from the centers, somewhat lower densities should prevail, down to a minimum of six to seven units per acre at the outer limits of the half-mile “walk-to” radius around neighborhood centers and potential transit centers.



Obsolete or abandoned retail sites (sometimes called “grayfields”) have been successfully developed in a number of communities, such as Charlottesville (VA), Raleigh (NC), and Orlando (FL), as mixed-use centers with retail, housing and office uses.

Winter Park Village in Orlando, FL, was built on the site of a failed mall. It includes retail, office and 52 loft apartments. The interior streets link to the outside street grid. (Source: ULI Case Studies)

GOAL:

4. Improve the function and design of commercial areas.

ACTIONS:

4a. Establish zoning overlay districts to require improved design standards as properties redevelop on arterial roads.

Zoning overlay districts should include design standards that promote better access management and appearance, for example:

- One driveway serving multiple developments, with internal circulation and cross access.
- Buildings built at or close to the sidewalk, depending on the character of the street.
- Parking located to the side or rear of the building with landscaped parking lots, including defined pedestrian routes.
- Trees at a minimum of 30’ on center and sidewalks at the street edge.



Adjacent shopping centers often do not have cross access (top), which forces drivers to return to the main road to reach the next driveway. Openings between shopping centers facilitate internal circulation and reduce traffic congestion on main highways (below).

A zoning overlay with design standards at Loop 323 and South Broadway Avenue could promote mixed-use redevelopment and improve the appearance, function and future potential as a transit center of this major intersection.



GOAL:

5. Use public investments to promote compact mixed-use districts.

ACTIONS:

5a. Locate public buildings to anchor mixed-use districts and invest in the public realm to encourage development and redevelopment by property owners.

Public investment should be targeted to areas where the City wants to see mixed-use development and redevelopment, rather than isolated, low-density sites. Mixed-use districts benefit from anchor uses that bring patrons and encourage co-location of other businesses and residents. Public buildings can function as anchors. Similarly, public investment in transportation, infrastructure, and streetscape improvements should be focused at preferred locations in order to create a positive framework for redevelopment and development according to new guidelines.



Public buildings can help anchor new mixed-use districts, such as a municipal government building and a post office in Southlake, TX.

D. Recommendations—Community Identity and Sense of Place

GOAL:

6. Enhance Tyler’s public realm with trees, attractive streetscapes, adequate lighting and public gathering places.

ACTIONS:

6a. Establish an urban forestry program.

Because Tyler’s landscape and trees are so important to everyone in the city, Tyler’s public spaces should once again become known for their trees. The City can establish this commitment through becoming a member of the Tree City USA Program, which requires an arborist on city staff, a \$2 per capita annual budget commitment, and a tree planting program. The City should consider creating its own tree nursery, either on City land, for example, in a large park such as Lindsey Park, or through a contract with a private horticulturist in the Tyler area. These trees could then be used to plant new trees along streets or in public places and to replace trees that die or are damaged. Trees should be planted along streets, in parking lots, in plazas and parks.



Mature trees enhance Tyler’s public realm and provide a distinctive city

An inventory of street trees and trees in public plazas and parking lots should be undertaken. Because there is much public enthusiasm for trees, many cities and organizations have found that inventories can be achieved by using volunteers. In addition to investment in tree-planting, many cities have programs for residents to request trees to be planted by the city for a set fee; to have trees planted at their own expense but following city regulations; or to have commemorative trees planted to honor a person or event.

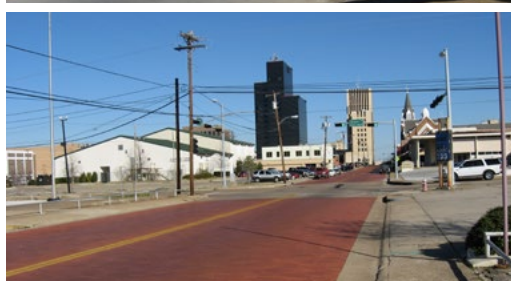
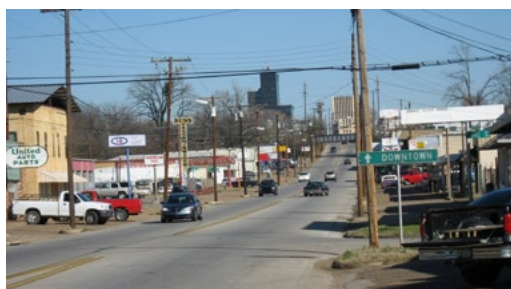
Priority locations for the tree inventory and for tree planting include downtown and South Broadway



The City initiated a tree-planting program in January 2007 by planting four new trees at Ramey Elementary School. (Photo: Tyler Morning Telegraph)

Avenue between Fifth Street and Loop 323. Other key locations include entrance corridors, such as U.S. 69 at Loop 323 and Highway 64W at Loop 323. Street tree planting should adhere to the following principles:

- Trees should be at least 3-inch dbh.
- Street tree species should be chosen for their shade canopy as well as their ability to withstand stressful urban conditions. Tyler's warm summer climate makes shade essential for good pedestrian conditions. Shrub-like trees, such as crape myrtle, can be attractive additions to the landscape for their flowers and form, but they do not provide sufficient shade for pedestrians.
- The maximum distance between trees should be 40 feet. Denser plantings at 15 to 20 feet are preferred.
- Where existing sidewalks are narrow and cannot be widened, or where utility placement is problematic, tree wells or curb extensions with trees can be placed every 40-60 feet in the parking lane with little impact on the number of parking spaces.
- If possible, continuous tree pits should be used, in order to provide more space for tree roots.



Erwin Street, a major east-west arterial, passes through different environments as it runs through Tyler: at Loop 323 (top), near Glenwood Boulevard (middle), and downtown (below). Streetscape design standards should be sensitive to how the street character changes in different settings.

6b. Establish a context-sensitive design standard for streetscapes as part of the area and district plans and, working with TxDOT, on improvements for urban arterials that are state roads.

The Master Street Plan provides typical cross-section standards for Tyler streets according to functional classification. The City should also have basic standards for streetscapes that are sensitive to different contexts. For example, an arterial like Erwin Road passes through different environments on its course through the city. Standards appropriate for the Erwin Road-Loop 323 intersection are not appropriate for Erwin Road as it runs through the heart of downtown Tyler. The process of establishing these standards can begin in the area and district plans and in the zoning and subdivision regulation amendments as part of Tyler 1st.

6c. Establish a program for public art.

Public art adds interest, excitement and unique character to public places. Increasingly, artists are going beyond traditional but somewhat static sculpture art and creating interactive pieces that attract visitors and build a sense of identity for public places.

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A number of communities, including Austin and San Antonio, have established a “One Percent for Art Program” which designates one percent of the budget of every public infrastructure improvement project to an associated public art project. State law prevents Tyler from using the Half Cent Sales Tax program to fund public art; however, the City can partner with community groups to establish a public art program. Inclusion of artists in design teams for public spaces or public art competitions for signature public spaces are also increasingly common. Temporary public art activities create excitement and bring people into public spaces.



A sculpture on private property visible from the street enhances a Tyler office neighborhood.



Temporary public art can animate cities and reinforce community identity. Lexington, NC, the “Barbeque Capital of the World,” sponsors a fiberglass pig-painting contest that leads up to its annual Barbeque Festival (left). Downtown Fort Worth has cattle topiaries (right) that refer to the city’s stockyard history.

GOAL:

7. Promote building, street and residential subdivision design that is focused on people rather than vehicles.

ACTIONS:

7a. Encourage voluntary use of guidelines for human-scaled and pedestrian-friendly development while accommodating vehicles.

Voluntary design performance guidelines incorporated in the City’s zoning ordinance as preferred goals will show developers what is expected and gradually improve the character of development over time. Important elements of these guidelines include the following:



In Charleston Park, a subdivision near UT–Tyler, garages and parking areas are located along rear alleys.

- Developments should provide for connection to adjacent parcels of land. Current subdivision regulations require this, but in many cases connections have not been made to enhance circulation.
- Parking areas and garages should not be the most prominent elements of street frontage. Alleys behind houses are the preferred location for parking. Otherwise, garage doors should be at the side of the building or set back farther from the street than the main house façade.
- Buildings should be oriented to the street edge.
- On-street parking should be allowed on one side of narrow residential streets and two sides of wider streets. On-street parking functions as a buffer between pedestrians and moving cars.
- A line of street trees should be planted in a tree lawn between the sidewalk and the street.
- Blocks should be smaller than the 1,000 foot standard in current regulations. Walkable areas have block sizes no more than 600 feet long. More intersections create more opportunities for pedestrians to take direct routes, provide a greater sense of freedom because there are multiple paths to the same destination, and disperse traffic, allowing for narrower streets and more pleasant walking conditions.



A line of street trees in a new neighborhood in Addison, TX creates a green environment for pedestrians.

7b. Encourage voluntary use of simple design guidelines for nonresidential development downtown and on major arterials.

As one of the Tyler 1st Steering Committee members commented, metal buildings are becoming the “native building type” in Tyler for nonresidential uses. The simplicity and low cost of metal buildings clearly account for this choice. In some situations, metal buildings are an appropriate



The windows, door, roof overhang and lettering in a simple contrast trim color help this metal building make a better impression.



A simple paint scheme can make a metal building more attractive, like this one in Tyler.



A metal building with a masonry facade in Frisco, TX

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choice and their appearance can be improved with very simple choices of trim or paint. However, in some parts of the city, such as downtown, metal buildings should be prohibited. In other locations they could be acceptable but with a masonry façade, contrasting trim, or paint.

Simple design guidelines that can be easily applied administratively without expert design knowledge can be established through a zoning approach that provides voluntary guidance on the basic design and orientation of building envelopes. Among the types of guidelines to be included would be the following:

- Buildings should be oriented to the street or road.
- Buildings downtown and at designated mixed-use centers should have at least two stories.
- Parking should be located to the side or rear of the building.
- Buildings facing the roadway must include windows and entryways on the ground-floor level façade facing the road.

7c. Ensure sensitive transitions from nonresidential to residential areas.

The existing zoning ordinance contains two zoning districts that are explicitly intended to function as transitional zones from residential to nonresidential districts: Adaptive Reuse (AR), which allows single-family houses, professional offices, retail, personal services, churches and public facilities in single-family districts; and Restricted Professional and Office District (RPO), which is designed for offices on the fringes of commercial districts that will not detract from the residential character of adjacent neighborhoods.

Because Tyler's zoning is implemented as a system of exclusive districts, the way that this zoning has been applied is to create small zoning districts of one or a handful of lots isolated within a larger residential district. The transitional character is assumed to be the



Nonresidential buildings should be oriented to the street (top) and have parking placed to the rear (bottom).



New signage regulations can reduce visual clutter over time.

use itself with the setback and other requirements associated with the zoning district. This approach does not provide effective transitions between primarily residential zoning districts and districts where other uses predominate. Requirements should be added to nonresidential zoning districts that will buffer the impacts of parking areas, loading and service areas, height and shadows, lighting, and similar elements on adjacent residential areas.

7d. *Revise the sign ordinance to ensure that signs are compatible with the desired surrounding context and kept in good repair.*

Many signs in Tyler are oversized, inappropriate for their context, and poorly designed. Visual clutter is common in commercial corridors. Signage regulations are focused on placement and dimensional requirements and give no guidance on design. New signage regulations should be sensitive to context and reflect desired character in different kinds of commercial, mixed-use and residential areas. In addition, regulations should provide that signs no longer in use must be removed when a business leaves a location.



Sidewalks and better street lighting could make West Front Street near Windsor Grove Nature Park safer for pedestrians.

7e. *Preserve and enhance the walkable character of older neighborhoods.*

Many older neighborhoods in Tyler have sidewalks, street trees, and small blocks, all of which contribute to good pedestrian conditions. However, a number of areas remain where continuous sidewalks, trees, lighting, and other safe pedestrian conditions are lacking. Priority locations for upgrades should be locations where improvements can enhance the safety of routes to important neighborhood destinations.

GOAL:

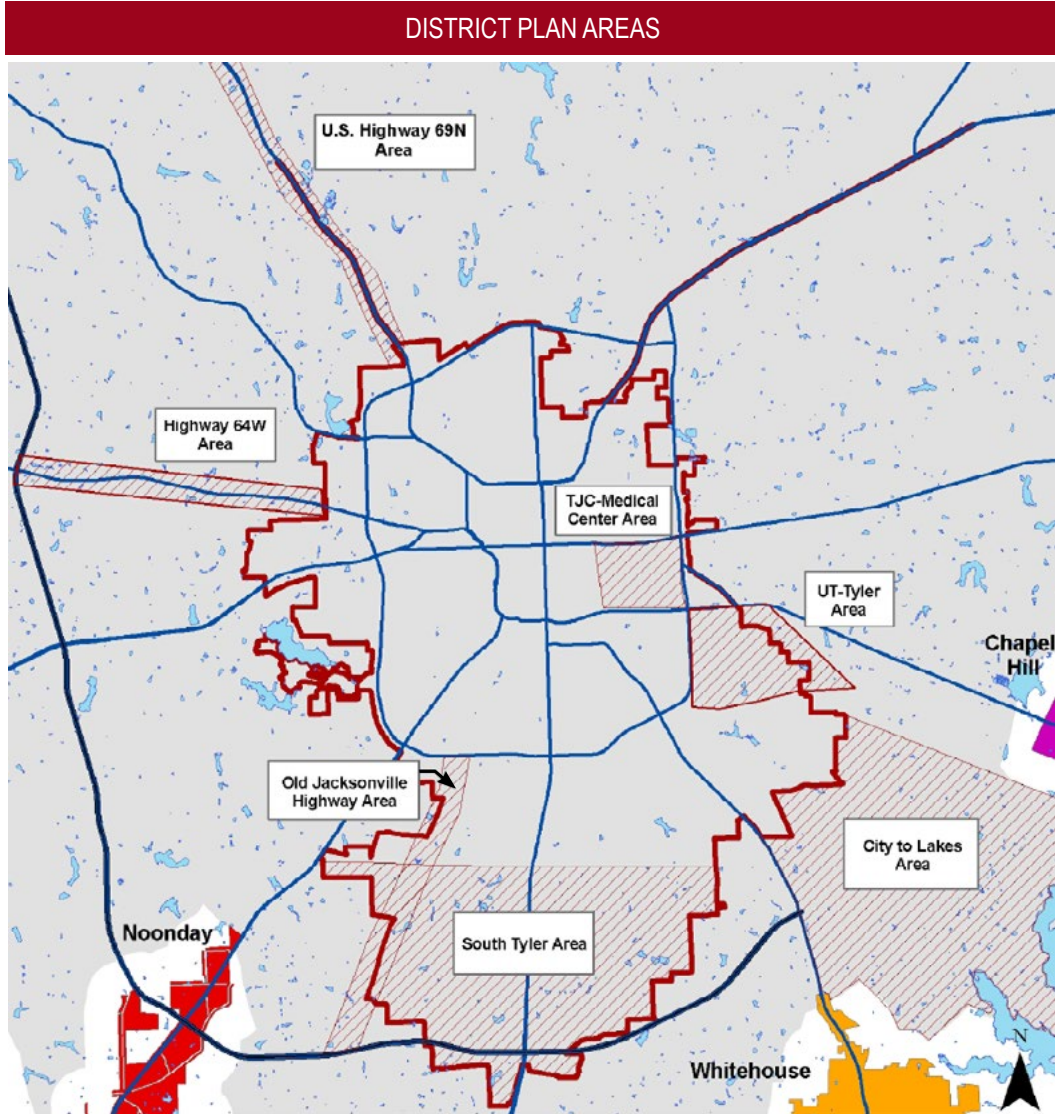
8. *Promote creation of new neighborhoods rather than isolated subdivisions and/or apartment complexes.*

ACTIONS:

8a. *Divide the city and the ETJ into districts and create district plans to guide development.*

New development in the Tyler area takes several forms: redevelopment of sites with existing structures; infill development on vacant, relatively small sites surrounded by existing development; relatively small subdivisions of fewer than 100 units on vacant land on the periphery of the city or on farmland. Most subdivisions in the Tyler area—both within the city and in the ETJ—are relatively small. Development in the ETJ is often “leapfrog” development on parcels of former agricultural land, so called because the subdivision is not created adjacent to existing development but is farther out and surrounded by rural, unbuilt land.

Tyler developers do not work with thousands of acres of land to create new communities that contain civic and commercial uses as well as residential neighborhoods. Thus, the



zoning requirements in Tyler’s zoning districts for master-planned residential development are insufficient in themselves to shape a collection of isolated subdivisions into connected neighborhoods with centers and edges.

The City needs to provide a framework for development as a context for private development. The land use plan and associated rezoning, the proposed owner-initiated neighborhood conservation district opportunities, and the ETJ study that are part of this Tyler 1st process, as well as the downtown and North End special area plans, will go some of the way to create this framework. However, there are several other key areas that can benefit from a more detailed approach:

- TX 64W to the airport
- Old Jacksonville Highway

- Area between the city and the Lakes
- South Tyler south of Grande Boulevard
- Medical District/TJC District
- UT-Tyler District
- U.S. Highway 69N to I-20

8b. Allow apartment complexes to be connected to surrounding areas.

Tyler’s R-4 multifamily zoning district, which permits up to 24 dwelling units per acre, is intended for location on “major thoroughfares” and specifically requires that there be no access to “standard residential streets.” Although there are few R-4 zoned areas in Tyler, this kind of approach has resulted in the disconnected, pod-style development that can be seen in the northern section of Paluxy Drive. Appropriate transitional elements and design of circulation and access can protect neighboring single-family areas from adverse impacts while providing connectivity.



Apartment complexes should be integrated into neighborhoods instead of being isolated residential pods.

8c. Allow new subdivision designs to be effectively connected to surrounding areas and encourage them to provide public spaces such as neighborhood squares and district parks.

Subdivision development in the city is increasingly accomplished through use of the PUR—Planned Unit Residential zoning districts. These are master-planned areas with private streets and sometimes with common areas. They tend to be self-contained with only one or two routes in or out.



Subdivision design should provide connections to new adjacent residential development.

In the ETJ, subdivisions are carved out of farmland parcels with one or two exit points to arterial roads. Often they are designed for the maximum yield of lots, without any common open space. Because they are relatively small, they do not include provision for civic uses such as parks or schools.

Current subdivision regulations require that the design either connect to adjacent streets or provide for future road connections to adjacent development. Care should be taken to ensure that isolated subdivisions provide for these connections in a realistic way and when new adjacent subdivisions are planned, that these connections are made.

GOAL:

9. Promote appropriate location and design of housing and commercial development in the ETJ.

ACTIONS:

9a. Encourage district plans identifying preferred development areas for the ETJ to coordinate with the Comprehensive Plan, infrastructure and transportation plans, and open space preservation strategies.

Even though the City does not have legal jurisdiction over development decisions in the ETJ, district plans that identify where the City intends to make investments and explain the rationale behind those decisions can influence development decisions. Many developers will prefer to try to follow the City framework rather than pursue development where the City does not want it.

9b. Encourage the use of voluntary subdivision development guidelines to enhance neighborhood form and connections and provide expedited approvals for subdivisions that meet preferred development standards and are located in the preferred development areas.

Subdivision development guidelines should encourage adherence to district plans and provision of current or future connectivity, as discussed earlier.

Providing for enhanced development standards and civic and common open space as development occurs in the ETJ is a challenge, especially with many small subdivisions. Zones 2 and 4 of the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction appear to require adherence to the same subdivision development standards as urban subdivisions, with potential exceptions for drainage standards. This includes language that requires “general” conformance with an adopted Comprehensive Plan and an adopted Master Street Plan. Design standard changes to the general subdivision regulations would therefore affect these two zones of the ETJ.

Smith County development standards apply to Zone 3 of the ETJ, which is the area along U.S. 69N and U.S. 271N. If possible, this situation should be revisited and Zone 3 brought under the umbrella of the City’s development standards.

The district plans proposed here, along with the Parks, Recreation and Lakes Plan and the Tyler 1st ETJ study and land use plan will help to provide a framework for where common open space and civic spaces should be located in relation to a regional network of roads, development centers and open space. Further efforts to promote creation of neighborhood form even when several small subdivisions are built in phases should be explored and evaluated, for example:

- Requirements for public neighborhood open space within a quarter mile of all residences for subdivisions over a certain threshold of total site acreage;
- Developer contributions to an escrow fund for future neighborhood open space creation, as new subdivisions are built and a critical mass is attained;
- Provision for village retail centers at intersections designated through the Master Street Plan.