

Section 3: Quality of Life

3.0 QUALITY OF LIFE

3.1 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 3: Enhance the quality of life provided in Rockdale by expanding and preserving the recreational, cultural, educational, economic, historic, natural and aesthetic resources of the community.

Objective 3.1: Preserve, protect and enhance the values of commercial and residential neighborhoods through establishment, implementation, and enforcement of effective ordinances and codes.

Objective 3.2: Promote cultural activities, historic preservation and the arts locally.

Objective 3.3: Promote a continuing program of civic revitalization, maintenance of homes and businesses, and other measures that will contribute to an aesthetically desirable environment.

Objective 3.4: Preserve the beauty of the rural setting by establishing and enforcing ordinances and guidelines that protect and enhance aesthetic values.

Objective 3.5: Protect the environmental quality of Rockdale's urban environment by acquiring and protecting flood prone areas, maintaining and increasing healthy urban forests, and protecting wildlife and natural resources.

Objective 3.6: Ensure the availability and conservation of water, our most precious resource, within Rockdale.

Objective 3.7: Control impact of development on the environment through appropriate regulation of landscaping, plant removal and lot excavation.

Objective 3.8: Promote family centered medical facilities that provide patient care that is developmentally age appropriate, compassionate and effective for the treatment of health problems and the promotion of health.

Objective 3.9: Promote and advocate public education that is strong and well funded that provides primary and secondary education that encourages lifelong learning and provides a gateway to the future.

3.2 OVERVIEW

Every change or action we take in the Rockdale community affects the quality of life. The overall quality of life and our way of life is synonymous with the preservation of the environmental quality and integrity of the community. There are three levels (material, health and sustainability) that combine to equal the total quality of life. The material level includes such demographical categories as culture, economics and infrastructure. Health and integrity of biological and ecological factors comprise the health level. Finally, ensuring provisions for the stakeholders to participate and to contribute to this ongoing and current planning process is the sustainability level. Without this, we no longer have our beautiful community. Our health, safety and welfare depend on setting and executing goals for the protection of our surroundings. Quality of life objectives will enable Rockdale to safeguard our environment, biological and natural resources, cultural community, and enhance our ability to achieve a balance between commercial enterprises, ecology and aesthetics.

Quality of life is a major consideration in planning for the City's future. As growth occurs, issues concerning undeveloped lots, air quality, clean air and water, litter, noise and light pollution become more obvious. It follows that this plan must consider discussion of broader issues including interdependence, limits of carrying capacity, ecological soundness, and cultural needs into a plan that provides for all.

Central Texas is not alone in experiencing a conflict between the forces of economic growth and the preservation of cultural, environmental, historic and natural resources. Rockdale can benefit from research and policy development undertaken in other comparable jurisdictions. A growing number of cities are adopting smart growth policies and sustainable development criteria. The City should review the programs developed by these other communities to manage traffic, lighting, noise, air and water pollution, soil disturbance, chemical leaching and vegetation disruption to determine which if any might be applicable for Rockdale.

Ordinance changes can also be a factor in protecting our quality of life. The City should utilize Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to develop a system of maps depicting unoccupied and /or inaccessible lots, sensitive zones and

protected green spaces. Rockdale should take the opportunity to increase open space by knowing more about current and projected land use. Other applications may include general water, air and land zones, as well as specific historical and wildlife sites.

The City should continue to ensure an appropriate amount of open space in its approval of new residential developments. Managing open space should involve encouraging growth of clusters of mixed use development. These could include intensely developed clusters, lightly developed neighborhoods, and protected open space and likely will require land acquisition and/or rezoning.

Many factors affect the citizens' sense of well-being which can be measurable in the economic and social characteristics of the community. But quality of life extends beyond measures such as population, income, employment, taxes, education, etc. Quality of life includes such amenities as clean air, smooth traffic flow, and freedom from crime that must also be measured. The City should consider developing measures of quality of life to be used in future planning.

The City should carefully examine the impact of growth. Possibly, future configurations of the community could be projected using computer modeling and GIS technology.

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Consider development of an ecological map (topography, vegetation, ravines and unoccupied areas) reflecting existing development of Rockdale.
2. Develop and implement new criteria and standards to protect ecological features and habitats, as maybe required.
3. The preservation of the local community setting should be managed through zoning and ordinances established by the City Council.
4. Encourage support of native plant protection, tree preservation and water conservation and water harvesting.
5. Recognize and support the cultural significance of historic sites and relics as mapped and identified by recognized historical authorities.
6. Develop a comprehensive drainage plan.