

## **Section 6: Residential Development**

### **6.0 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **6.1 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

GOAL 6: Develop high quality residential neighborhoods that promote public health, safety and welfare, and meet the various housing market needs of the community.

Objective 6.1: Promote the development of quiet, safe, and clearly defined neighborhoods.

Objective 6.2: Update building codes and zoning standards with respect to current residential construction technologies and architectural designs. These standards should preserve the economic value and amenity of existing neighbor's property.

Objective 6.3: Encourage the construction of energy efficient residences and use of native plants and low-water-use landscaping.

Objective 6.4: Encourage residential development within areas that have adequate public facilities and City services, including roads and streets, police and fire protection, sewage disposal, water supply and pressure, telephone and electricity.

Objective 6.5: Investigate providing City utilities to predetermined underdeveloped areas within Rockdale as a development stimulus.

Objective 6.6: Protect single-family residential areas from traffic congestion and through-traffic, including traffic generated by nonresidential and high density residential land uses.

Objective 6.7: A mixture of land uses and densities should be encouraged wherever possible, which would be beneficial for the neighborhood.

Objective 6.8: Update standards and master planning criteria for new subdivisions and other major residential developments, as needed.

Objective 6.9: Accept lot consolidation in residential areas.

Objective 6.10: Ensure that new development and the related development review processes achieve, maintain, and improve the quality of life.

Objective 6.11: Alleviate the occurrence of substandard and/or deteriorated development within the City and its extraterritorial jurisdiction through the use of regular, consistent development review and code enforcement practices.

Objective 6.12: Manage development in the floodplain and in areas that the City determines are subject to flooding, with the exception of development that can utilize the floodplains and not substantially alter it (e.g., park and recreation uses).

Objective 6.13: Encourage the development and implementation of conservation programs providing incentives to developers for environmentally friendly construction standards and practices.

## **6.2 OVERVIEW**

Residential development is valuable to the community because it brings new neighbors to add to the social framework, share in the cost of providing services and serve the local community. New development must be constructed in a high quality, well planned and controlled fashion. The quality of construction, architecture, dwelling square footage, and the residential land use that is incorporated into single family and multifamily residential development will dictate future property values, City growth, and quality of life. Properly planned residential development ensures that population density across the City is consistent with community standards. It imposes fairness to adjacent landowners by protecting property values and provides a pleasant living environment.

Residential development is the economic engine that attracts new businesses, commercial development and provides a stable tax base for the City. The majority of the City's tax revenues are generated by residential development providing the City with steady income. Residential development is the driver that provides sustainable, steady economic growth.

### **6.2.1 Existing Conditions**

There are approximately 2,589 housing units based on the 2010 census. There were no new housing permits issued in years 2009 and 2010. Residential housing development has seen very little development in the last ten (10) years. There are a few residential lots available for the development in the

west part of the City. The City needs to develop programs and processes that encourage more grouping of residential development into a given geographic area where utilities exist. Grouping residences will over time help the city with regard to road maintenance, utility distribution and lower cost of new residential construction.

### **6.2.2 Single Family Home Construction**

The City of Rockdale population grew from 5439 in year 2000 to 5595 in year 2010. There was very little single family home construction during this period.

The City should focus on maintaining an appropriate mix of housing units ranging from low cost/affordable to the more expensive homes. To accommodate affordable housing, the City zoning ordinance allows for a minimum home size of 1,000 Square Feet, Manufactured Home districts and multifamily homes.

### **6.2.3 Multifamily Residential**

Little significant multifamily residential construction has taken place in Rockdale in recent years. One multifamily development has occurred in the past few years. There is the potential for a new development in the next few years. The last census reported 806 households renting in Rockdale. The availability of affordable housing is an important quality of life consideration in the community. The City should continue to ensure that at least the current availability of land dedicated to multifamily use is maintained until future affordable housing is developed.

### **6.2.4 Floodplains**

Managing new residential construction in the floodplain or areas of the City that are subject to flooding should be carefully evaluated based on FEMA regulations. The City does not encourage residential construction in a flood zone. It is desirable for land in the floodplain or flood prone areas to be utilized as parks, open space or other compatible uses.

### **6.2.5 Planning and Zoning**

The City has obligations to its citizens to ensure the proper balance between quality of life, residential growth, tax rates and economic competitiveness. It is critical that Rockdale through its Planning and Zoning and Economic Development processes decide what growth is desired and take the necessary steps to move Rockdale into the future while preserving its quality of life.

### **6.2.6 Enforcement and Compliance**

To protect the beauty of the area and maintain property values within the City, existing building codes and zoning ordinances must be strictly enforced to prevent the occurrence of substandard development and/or deteriorating development. Property owners with deteriorating structures or poor land use habits should be required to bring their property up to a minimum standard. For new residential development, it is important that project reviews are conducted on a regular basis to ensure code conformance and protect our quality of life.

### **6.2.7 Mobile Homes and Manufactured Homes**

Manufactured Homes are controlled in the City's Zoning Ordinance. Land area has been set aside through zoning to accommodate this important element of affordable housing. The citizens represent many diverse levels of economic ability, and all deserve the chance to live within their means in our sustainable community. Where non-site built homes are chosen, concerns often arise with neighbors based on perceptions that the quality, value or tax burden of these homes are inconsistent with the community. But, as the manufactured housing industry points out, these homes allow greater participation in homeownership by persons who would otherwise be renters and increased homeownership rates add economic vitality to the local community.

### **6.2.8 Conservation**

With the growing emphasis locally and nationally on the conservation of water, electricity and fuel consumption, the City needs to consider implementing programs, where feasible, that help conserve our natural resources. Currently there are two widely utilized programs that are endorsed by the Department of Energy (DOE) that address the reduction of residential energy consumption: Energy Star and Residential Energy Network (RESNET) or other green builder programs. The City needs to be a good steward of our environment by evaluating and implementing nationally recognized environmental programs that preserve our natural resources.

## **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Encourage lot consolidation as a method to enable the construction of larger homes and create more open space.

2. Take steps in developing utility infrastructure in areas that lack water and sewer services as a development incentive.
3. Electrical utility provider should be encouraged to participate in Department of Energy approved energy reduction programs with the City, builders and citizens of Rockdale.
4. Review and implement nationally recognized programs that conserve water while maintaining the natural beauty of the area.