

FIRST COURTHOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Developed by First Courthouse
Neighborhood Residents with
City of Norman Revitalization

May 31, 2011



First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan

Table of Contents

	page
1. Acknowledgements	5
2. Map 1—First Courthouse Neighborhood Location	7
3. Executive Summary	9
4. Map 2—Land Use	
5. Map 3—Zoning	
6. What is Neighborhood Planning?	13
7. History of CDBG Program in Norman 1974-2010	15
8. Neighborhood Planning: How Did We Get Here?	17
9. Neighborhood Assets, Liabilities & Opportunities	18
10. Neighborhood Issues	20
11. Map 4—Underground Drainage	
12. Map—Locations of Curb and Gutter	
13. Map 6—Housing Conditions	
14. Map 7—Alleys	
15. Neighborhood Context	26
16. Frances Cate Park	33
17. Safe Routes to School Program	34
18. Porter Avenue Corridor Plan	35
19. First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan Concept	37
20. Plan Concept Goals and Recommendations	38
21. Implementation Strategy	46
22. Map 8—Plan Recommendations	
23. Conclusions	47

Acknowledgements

The City of Norman Revitalization Staff would like to thank residents of First Courthouse Neighborhood and the following people for their assistance in developing this neighborhood plan and bringing it forward for adoption.

Norman City Council

Mayor Cindy Rosenthal

Ward 1 Al Atkins

Ward 2 Tom Kovach

Ward 3 Hal Ezell

Ward 4 Carol Dillingham

Ward 5 Rachel Butler

Ward 6 Jim Griffith

Ward 7 Doug Cubberly

Ward 8 Dan Quinn

Norman Planning Commission

Jim Gasaway, Chairman

Zev Trachtenberg, Vice-Chairman

Cynthia Gordon

Diana Hartley

Tom Knotts

Chris Lewis

Curtis McCarty

Roberta Pailes

Andy Sherrer

City of Norman

Steven D. Lewis, City Manager

Susan F. Connors, AICP, Director of Planning and Community Development

Revitalization and GIS Staff

Linda R. Price, AICP, Revitalization Manager

Lisa Krieg, Grants Planner

Jolana McCart, Admin Tech IV

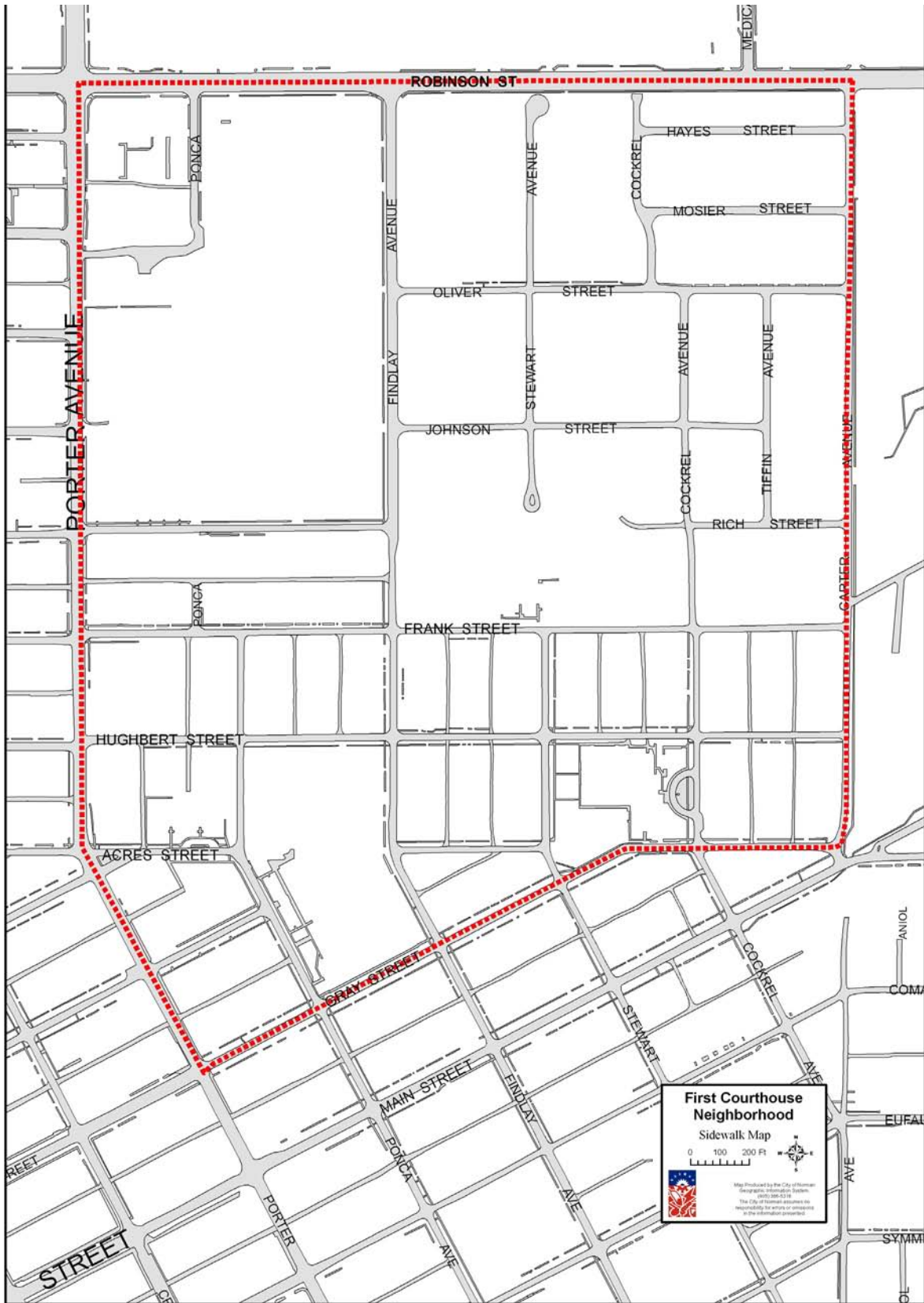
Susan Owen Atkinson, AICP, Neighborhood Planner

Rick Hoffstatter, GIS Analyst I, GIS Division, City of Norman

Larry Knapp, GIS Analyst II

Michelle Matthews, GIS Utilities Analyst

Map of First Courthouse Neighborhood



Executive Summary

The First Courthouse Plan for Neighborhood Preservation is an update and expansion of the 1990 *First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan*. Over the past three decades, neighborhood stakeholders have met annually to discuss issues and neighborhood goals. Over the years, residents have elected to spend Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds on a variety of infrastructure projects from sidewalks to sewers. Neighborhood meetings during which the contents of this plan were initially developed were held in 2007 and 2008, with infrastructure surveys done in 2009.

Neighborhood Boundaries. The neighborhood is bounded by Robinson on the north, Porter Avenue on the west, Gray Street on the south, and Carter Avenue and the eastern edge of Cate Park on the east. (See Map 1)

History of the Name. Just after Norman's founding in 1889, the first Cleveland County Courthouse was built in what would become the neighborhood. The exact location is a matter of some dispute, but most sources agree the courthouse was once located at 250 N. Cockrel, now the site of Jefferson Elementary School. When the neighborhood was designated as a CDBG area and formed a neighborhood association in 1974, residents wanted their name to reflect that history.

Land Use. Like every neighborhood, First Courthouse is characterized by its land use and built form, as well as its physical, social and economic conditions. Land use in the neighborhood is defined by three major patterns: single-family residential, commercial, and institutional. Land use conflicts stemming from Porter Avenue business expansion and hospital encroachment into residential blocks have dominated neighborhood concerns for many years. (See Map 2)

Encroachment. Unchecked expansion of commercial uses is generally a destabilizing force in neighborhoods. Its ripple effect negatively affects property values causing property owners to lose confidence in their investments. This trend has been chronic along Porter Avenue and along the residential edge immediately east and south of Norman Regional hospital for decades. The Norman City Council adopted the *Porter Avenue Corridor Plan* and the Porter Corridor Zoning Overlay District (PCZOD) in 2010. The overlay district creates a strong tool that sets a limit line for commercial expansion into the neighborhood and requires a physical buffer between commercial and adjacent residential uses. This protection should help restore property owners' confidence and boost their incentive to reinvest in houses near commercial edges. The City will begin implementing streetscape improvements along Porter Avenue outlined in the plan as funding becomes available.



For more than 100 years the steeple at St. Joseph's Catholic Church has been a neighborhood beacon and a landmark.

Executive Summary, continued



Longfellow Middle School can be a community gathering place as well as a school.



The close proximity of Fire Station N° 1 means that First Courthouse residents enjoy some of the best emergency response times in the city.

Neighborhood Issues

Sense of Place. First Courthouse Neighborhood possesses an inherently strong *sense of place* with prominent features that shape its form and identity and make it a desirable place to live. This sense of place in First Courthouse is defined by features such as the dominant single-family pattern of residential land use, by streets lined by mature trees, by the presence of sidewalks, and by the neighborhood's close proximity to Downtown and the Porter Avenue Corridor.

Infrastructure. First Courthouse Neighborhood is well-served by both physical and civic infrastructure. Physical infrastructure refers to the large-scale network of public services or systems such as water lines, storm and sanitary sewer systems, roads, alleys and sidewalks. Civic infrastructure refers to parks, schools, museums, recreational trails and other public buildings and institutions.

Long-term Residents. First Courthouse Neighborhood has many long-term residents who are deeply connected to their community. However, parts of the neighborhood are experiencing conversions of owner-occupied housing to rental housing, particularly along the commercial edges. This trend is often a catalyst for decreasing levels of personal investment in property; declining real estate values, and decreased levels of property maintenance.

Proximity to Community Destinations. First Courthouse Neighborhood is close to Norman Regional Hospital and the Porter Avenue commercial corridor, both of which are within the neighborhood's boundary. The neighborhood is also close to doctors' offices, churches, schools, and Downtown Norman. Residents can easily walk or bike to reach many basic services and daily needs, including popular restaurants. However this convenience comes at a price: increased traffic, noise, encroachment from expanding businesses, and demolition of houses for parking lots.

Environmental Deterioration. First Courthouse has experienced a steady decline of property maintenance over the past thirty years. This trend can be an indicator of declining emotional as well as economic investment in a neighborhood and subtly conveys an inaccurate message that no one cares about this place.

Lists of neighborhood-generated Assets, Liabilities and Opportunities were grouped into broad issue categories for this plan. Each category includes assets to be protected, liabilities to be corrected, and potential opportunities to be developed. First Courthouse Neighborhood issue categories are described on the following page:

Executive Summary, continued

- Physical and Civic Infrastructure
- Neighborhood Investment, Quality of Life and Appearance
- Traffic, Parking and Circulation

Cyclical Nature. Because CDBG neighborhoods play an active role in prioritizing neighborhood projects, projects that move forward reflect resident participation, group dynamics, and the aging of infrastructure. Over three decades, neighborhood residents have moved through cycles of active to minimum participation. The neighborhood has also cycled through high demand for improvements to physical infrastructure to prioritize more visible, above-the-ground improvements.

Neighborhood Plan Concept

The First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan Concept, can best be summarized as “Strengthen What We Have.” The plan identifies six long-term goals and objectives that, if implemented, will be very effective in the long-term revitalization of one of Norman’s oldest neighborhoods:

GOAL 1: Strengthen Neighborhood Edges

Mark clear boundaries that separate Porter Avenue commercial land uses from adjacent residential areas in First Courthouse. A mutually respected edge is critical for peaceful coexistence between commercial and residential land uses.

GOAL 2: Protect History, Character and Sense of Place

Protect the neighborhood’s physical environment that includes blocks of houses and other buildings, the pattern of sidewalks, streets and trees, and proximity to neighborhood goods and services.

GOAL 3: Strengthen Zoning Protections

Support zoning changes that reflect 2025 Plan Land Use Plan recommendations, preserve the single-family residential character of First Courthouse Neighborhood, and promote peaceful co-existence of land uses.

GOAL 4: Improve Traffic and Circulation at Key Locations

Calm traffic and improve safety along key streets and at busy intersections. Improve pedestrian access throughout the neighborhood but particularly across Porter Avenue.

GOAL 5: Upgrade Neighborhood Infrastructure

Make meaningful infrastructure improvements that enhance the neighborhood’s quality of life.

GOAL 6: Enhance Appearance and Quality of Life

Encourage participation in programs that beautify the neighborhood, enhance individual property values, and build a sense of connection between neighbors.

Executive Summary, continued

Next Steps and Implementation

Sustainable enhancement of neighborhood quality of life requires a coordinated strategy rather than just a collection of projects. Effective, sustainable strategies for neighborhood revitalization can only be created by the people who live there asking themselves questions such as “how do we want our neighborhood to look in ten years?” And “what steps can we take ourselves to make it happen?”

City staff plays an important supporting role in this process but the momentum for and personal investment in revitalization must come from residents themselves. City staff’s task for the next ten years is to help all of Norman’s CDBG areas identify and implement revitalization strategies that combine neighborhood placemaking, social organization projects, and community beautification in ways that foster a strong sense of identity and ownership in the hearts and minds of neighborhood residents.

A Short-Term Implementation Plan for the First Courthouse Neighborhood is included in the last section of this plan document (**See Map 8**) Listed below are the nine most important projects the neighborhood should strive to accomplish over the next five years. Cost estimates and potential funding sources are included in the full Implementation Plan.

1. Install gateway markers and/or neighborhood signage at points of entry into the neighborhood:
 - Oliver east of Findlay
 - Johnson east of Findlay
 - Carter south of Robinson
 - Hughbert east of Porter
 - Frank east of Porter
 - Findlay north of Gray
 - Gray/Carter intersection
2. Continue revitalizing Cate Park.
3. Organize a Friends-of-Cate Park group to support park maintenance, beautification and importance as a neighborhood focal point.
4. Hold a Neighborhood Association Relaunch event, including election of neighborhood officers and gathering email addresses for database.
5. Develop electronic First Courthouse Neighborhood Newsletter.
6. Develop neighborhood identification graphics package to include neighborhood logo, signage, and letterhead.
7. Install missing sidewalk segments and accessibility ramps.
8. Eliminate alley trash collection wherever feasible. City staff should work with individual neighbors to find alternative pick up sites where needed.

What is Neighborhood Planning?

A neighborhood is a geographic location with a resident population and distinguishing physical features. It is a place where people live, work and play. Neighborhoods are the building blocks of cities.

Neighborhood planning is a process by which community residents identify assets and agree on priorities for neighborhood improvement and to devise strategies to achieve their goals. During these conversations, neighbors ask themselves “what is working well in our neighborhood that we want to protect?” and “what is not up to our standards and how can we improve it?” They ask themselves “what is it about this place that draws us here and what will keep us here in the future?”

The *Norman 2025 Land Use and Transportation Plan*, adopted in 2004, recommended the establishment of a neighborhood planning program with a dedicated staff person. The program would be designed to “engage neighborhoods in the Core Area in a participatory planning process to directly address such issues as land use compatibility, parking, circulation, and neighborhood improvements.” The *2025 Plan Implementation Techniques and Technical Memorandum* recommends that “The Planning Commission and City Council would adopt each of the neighborhood plans as an element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan.”

Neighborhood planning begins with a documentation of physical and environmental conditions in the area. Planners then meet with neighbors to identify social conditions and neighborhood assets. By articulating goals to protect the physical and social environment, planners help neighbors chart a course of action to protect existing assets and to implement desired change. Ideally, neighborhood plans should be updated every five-to-ten years.

The most important goal in neighborhood planning is to develop a strong sense of community connectedness. This means residents know and trust each other, and choose to work together to create real improvements in the neighborhood. By working together to identify community assets and to develop a plan for protecting them, neighbors have more of a sense of direct control over their future.



Neighborhood meetings are often held in schools, churches, libraries or other public settings.

Lastly, in order to be effective and successful, neighborhood planning can only occur in the context of the broader community’s values and aspirations. While plan goals may be specific to a neighborhood, individual plan goals must reflect those that are supported and strived for by the community as a whole.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan

What is Neighborhood Planning?

The plan concept laid out in the First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan is consistent with the goals and objectives of all of Norman's current major planning initiatives, including: *Norman 2025 Land Use and Transportation Plan*; the *Porter Avenue Corridor Plan*; *The 2010 CDBG Five-Year Consolidated Plan*; *Norman Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, and the Safe Routes to School Initiative.

History of the Community Development Block Grant Program in Norman 1974-2010

Beginning in 1974 with a \$206,000 grant, Norman has developed a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program that has targeted infrastructure deficiencies and improved quality of life for homeowners and the community as a whole. During the CDBG program's 37-year history, the City of Norman has installed over ten miles of water lines, five miles of sewer lines, and nearly 30 miles of sidewalks throughout CDBG neighborhoods. The program has also made significant drainage and street improvements throughout the targeted area.

In addition to infrastructure improvements since 1974, CDBG funds have made possible over 900 emergency repairs, house rehabilitations, and accessibility modifications at a value of nearly \$5.7 million for income-eligible homeowners in neighborhoods throughout the city.

The CDBG program has also underwritten acquisition of neighborhood parks and the installation of period lighting in the city's oldest neighborhoods. The CDBG program has also been a catalyst for a number of special projects including the purchase of the Sooner Theatre, the construction of the Little Axe Community Center and Fire Station, and a major addition to the Norman Senior Citizens Center. These projects have created lasting benefits that are felt community-wide. In all, over \$9.4 million in CDBG funds have been spent on infrastructure and other projects throughout the Norman community.

An invaluable but intangible benefit of the CDBG program is that participant neighborhoods have more direct access to the City's planning process for infrastructure as well as non-infrastructure projects. Because CDBG neighborhoods' needs are revisited annually as required by the program, these areas are constantly on the City's radar screen. In many cases, CDBG funds are used as a tool to leverage other capital projects, thereby allowing the City to rectify larger problems and spread the benefit to a wider community. The complete rebuilding of Jones Avenue in 1995 is a prime example of this kind of leverage.

In 2010, the City of Norman received \$929,444 in CDBG funding, down from a high of \$1,053,000 in 2003. Forecasts for 2011 funding levels project even deeper cuts in funding from Washington. Current economic conditions are forcing all areas of government to do more with less. However, this belt-tightening can also be seen as an opportunity.

History of CDBG, continued

In the coming years our task at the City of Norman is to help Norman's CDBG areas become attractive, high-functioning neighborhoods at not only a physical but also at a social level. What is needed now is a strategy that combines CDBG projects such as community identification, placemaking, and more effective social organization with projects that foster a sense of ownership in the neighborhoods. In cities across the United States, it has been demonstrated that creating a strong sense of ownership among inhabitants is the most effective tool in successful neighborhood revitalization.



St Joseph's Catholic Church is a land use anchor along Porter Avenue that serves as a neighborhood gateway.

Neighborhood Planning: How Did We Get Here?

Since 1974, First Courthouse residents have met twice a year to discuss neighborhood issues and prioritize CDBG projects. Over nearly four decades, CDBG projects have addressed infrastructure deficiencies such as inadequate water and sewer lines, deteriorated streets, inadequate lighting and poor drainage. Many of these projects were identified in the area's first long-range plan, the 1990 *First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan*. Though brief in scope, the 1990 *Plan* has been referenced often and used to guide neighborhood projects for the past 20 years.

Update of 1990 Plan

The 1990 *Plan* focused on resolving on-going conflicts between commercial and residential land uses along Porter Avenue and the hospital edge. An escalation of land-use conflicts prompted the Norman City Council's 2008 decision to study the Porter Avenue Corridor at an intensive level, with the hope of developing solutions to land-use conflicts and also identifying opportunities for improved traffic circulation, economic development and aesthetics along the corridor. Beginning in October 2007, residents participating in the annual fall meeting identified neighborhood Assets, Liabilities and Opportunities as a starting point for an update of the 1990 *Plan*.

Where Do Things Stand Now?

Though four years have passed since First Courthouse's original brainstorming sessions, the neighborhood's core assets and liabilities remain largely unchanged. Opportunities, however, continue to evolve in the changing economic, political and funding climate. The primary reason for the delayed completion of the neighborhood plan was the City's decision to embark on the *Porter Avenue Corridor Plan*. The gradual implementation of the *Porter Avenue Corridor Plan* as funding becomes available is likely to have a positive effect on the First Courthouse Neighborhood.

Another changing dynamic that may ultimately have a positive impact on First Courthouse Neighborhood is Norman Regional Hospital's (NRH) decision to build a new hospital campus west of I-35. The NRH Healthplex opened in late 2009. This major shift has drawn doctors and clinics away from Porter Avenue to new offices near the Healthplex though the migratory trend has reached a plateau as the real estate market catches up with demand for new medical office space. At present, NRH remains committed to maintaining the Porter Campus as a general service, acute care hospital facility. The long-term effects of NRH's shift to two campuses are still developing but may present significant opportunities for the neighborhood in the future as redevelopment of aging office space is being considered.



Porter Avenue has a number of Art Deco style buildings that give the corridor a distinctive character.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan



Longfellow Middle School is a neighborhood asset and a landmark.

Neighborhood Assets, Liabilities & Opportunities

As one of the city’s oldest neighborhoods, First Courthouse has great bones. In addition to its strong sense of place, the CDBG program has positively impacted neighborhood infrastructure over the past 37 years. The following is a verbatim list of neighborhood-generated Assets, Liabilities and Opportunities developed during the Fall 2007 CDBG meeting. A few of the issues the neighborhood recognized as opportunities in 2007, i.e. Proactive Code Enforcement, improvements at Cate Park, have been achieved in the past four years. Other opportunities are underway; a few still require work.

Assets

- Housing is affordable
- Neighborhood is quiet in some locations
- Close to Francis Cate Park
- Good lighting in some places
- Presence of two schools
- Walking distance to shopping
- Walking distance to medical district
- Neighborhood on Findlay and Griffin bus lines
- Adjacent to Cleveland County Fairgrounds
- Area has a good neighborhood feeling
- Diverse types of housing
- Lots of trees
- Original looking—doesn’t look like everywhere else
- Predominantly zoned R-1 with pockets of multi-family

Liabilities

- Bar ditches provide inadequate drainage
- A number of houses are in poor condition
- Lack of maintenance on rental properties
- Drainage problems on Rich and Cockrel
- Lack of sidewalks throughout neighborhood
- Poor lighting in some places: 800-block E. Hayes, Carter Avenue
- Higher crime rate around Jefferson Elementary
- Cate Park is too dark; attracts loiterers
- Cate Park is not fully developed and in poor condition
- Commercial encroachment into residential areas
- Speeding and cut-through traffic along east/west streets and Carter



From a neighborhood perspective, Norman Region Hospital is both an asset and a liability.

Assets, Liabilities, and Opportunities



As a public space, Frances Cate Park is an asset and has great bones but needs overall revitalization.

- Poor condition of streets and sidewalks
- Too many barking dogs
- No way to effectively address problem tenants
- Lack of response from Animal Control

Opportunities

- Build a good network of sidewalks
- Create streets that accommodate all modes of travel
- Become a Proactive Code Enforcement area
- Pave Rich Street (a private road)
- Add curbs and guttering to all streets
- Create a safe, well-lighted, well-maintained neighborhood
- Improve conditions at Cate Park



Portions of 1960s-era neighborhood development were built with sidewalks; some areas were not.



Modest sized, single-family houses are the dominant land use pattern in First Courthouse neighborhood.

Physical Infrastructure



Sidewalk segments along Hughbert Street across from Jefferson School have virtually disappeared under creeping sod.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Issues

Lists of neighborhood-generated Assets, Liabilities and Opportunities were grouped into broad issue categories. Each category is summarized below, describing assets to be stewarded, liabilities to be corrected, and opportunities that could be developed into meaningful neighborhood improvement. Since the original 2007 brainstorming sessions, some of these opportunities have become reality. These issue categories form the basis for the First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan Concept which is fully developed later in this document.

First Courthouse Neighborhood issue categories include:

- Physical and Civic Infrastructure
- Neighborhood Investment, Quality of Life & Appearance
- Traffic, Parking & Circulation

Physical infrastructure refers to large-scale network of public services and systems such as water lines, storm and sanitary sewer systems, roads, alleys and sidewalks in the neighborhood. Civic infrastructure refers to parks, schools, recreational trails or other public buildings or institutions. Churches, though private, are often included in the category of civic infrastructure. Examples of physical infrastructure in the First Courthouse Neighborhood include the following:

Drainage Structures—First Courthouse Neighborhood is very flat with clayey soils that drain poorly. The area has five types of stormwater drainage systems (see **Map 4**) in place from full curb and gutter with underground drainage to a passive drainage system of swales or bar ditches. Opportunities to install underground drainage infrastructure are limited throughout the area so installing curb and gutter is infeasible in some locations. In addition, the cost of installing underground drainage is prohibitively expensive: around \$150,000 per block. Lastly drainage swales, which do serve a vital drainage function have been filled in over the years, removing the possibility of passive drainage unless the swales are reintroduced. A large underground drainage structure was installed along Findlay Avenue using CDBG funds in the 1980s. The system was designed with excess capacity in order to be able to drain stormwater from east-west streets intersecting Findlay when the demand arose and funding allowed. To date, Frank, Oliver and Johnson Streets east of Findlay have been connected to this system. (See **Maps 4 and 5**)

Sidewalks— Throughout much of the southern half of the neighborhood there are sidewalks; however some segments are missing or deteriorated and many corners do not yet have accessibility ramps. In some cases, sidewalks exist but have been overgrown by grass. In the

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan

Summary of Neighborhood Issues, continued

Civic Infrastructure



Frances Cate Park is a 14-acre neighborhood asset and a good example of civic infrastructure.



Jefferson Elementary School, 250 N Cockrel, includes an entire block bounded by Gray, Cockrel, Hughbert and Stewart Streets.

sidewalks due to the relatively shallow placement of houses on lots, short driveways and the lack of on-street parking. The goals of parking cars in driveways and installing sidewalks are often in direct conflict.

Water Lines and Sanitary Sewer. The entire sanitary sewer system in the neighborhood has been replaced. All areas are served by 8-12-inch lines .

If physical infrastructure makes it possible to inhabit a place, civic infrastructure is what makes it enjoyable to live there. Examples of civic infrastructure in First Courthouse Neighborhood include:

Frances Cate Park—Located along Carter Avenue adjacent to the Griffin Hospital campus, Frances Cate Park provides neighborhood open space though it is underutilized in its current condition. However Cate Park has “good bones,” a central location, and presents an opportunity to become a community destination and anchor in the First Courthouse Neighborhood. The 14-acre park includes open space, playing fields, a basketball court, baseball backstops, a playground, a picnic shelter, and off-street parking. It also includes a free-flowing segment of Bishop Creek. Much of the park’s recreational space is passive. There is playground equipment but it is dated and the area offers little shade. The park is accessible to pedestrians and bikes by a sidewalk along the east side of Carter Avenue between Robinson and Gray Street. With strategic public investment, Cate Park has the potential to become a very popular neighborhood and community destination.

Recent improvements at Cate Park include the installation of 17 pedestrian-scale lights along the walking path, the enlargement of the basketball court from half to full-court, and the installation of new fencing along the northern and eastern edges of the park. Drinking fountains and pet waste stations will be installed in FY 2012.

Construction of a new baseball backstop and accessibility improvements to one of the park’s pedestrian bridges is being carried out as an Eagle Scout community service project.

Jefferson Elementary School. Located at 250 N Cockrel, Jefferson opened its doors in 1916 and has been a neighborhood anchor ever since. The school serves children from Pre-School to 5th Grade. Student enrollment in 2011 is just over 400. The sprawling red brick complex has had several additions since its original construction but retains a basic Institutional Gothic style of architecture. The school also includes a large playground that can be utilized on occasions as neighborhood play space after school hours. If the school administration is amenable, Jefferson may be a suitable location to hold regular meetings of the neighborhood association.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan

Summary of Neighborhood Issues, continued



Norman Regional Hospital Porter Campus remains a 248-bed, general service acute care hospital anchored on Porter Avenue.



The Southern OK Chinese Baptist Church at 625 E Frank has imposing Mid-Century modern design.



Grace Presbyterian is a small congregation located at 310 N Findlay Avenue has Art Deco-style and likely dates to the 1940s.

Longfellow Middle School—Located at 215 N. Ponca, the historic brick school opened its doors in 1925, originally as a primary school and later as a high school. Today the school serves children in grades 6-8 with a student body of just over 600 students. During the 2011-2012 school year, the campus will undergo a major renovation that will include an enhanced main entrance to the building, construction of a front courtyard along the Ponca Avenue edge and a complete rehabilitation of the school auditorium. With the auditorium renovation, Longfellow will become well-suited for a variety of large-scale community gatherings and performances.

Norman Regional Hospital Porter Campus. As discussed elsewhere in this document, Norman's original hospital on Porter Avenue has undergone substantial changes prompted by the opening of the Regional Healthplex in west Norman. The 28-acre Porter Campus remains a general service, acute care hospital, offering 248 beds and including departments of General Surgery, ER, ICU and Progressive Care. Moving other departments to the west campus has allowed a \$2.6 million renovation of the hospital's 1950s-era North Tower to occur. The North Tower facility reopened in April 2011. The renovation has brought all facilities in this large section of the hospital into compliance with current HVAC, life-safety and accessibility standards and has raised the quality of patient care rooms to a level on par with the Regional Healthplex campus. As of this writing, the hospital has no plans to expand existing land holdings beyond the current campus footprint.

Churches —Moderately sized church campuses can add desirable visual texture and activity to established neighborhoods. However this can be a delicate balance between competing land uses as churches are often driven by needs for expanded parking and building facilities. Just like expanding commercial land uses, churches usually seek to expand in the path of least resistance: into neighborhoods. For the most part, churches in First Courthouse Neighborhood have peacefully co-existed with residential land uses. Active congregations in the neighborhood include:

- St. Joseph's Catholic Church, 211 N. Porter
- Southern Oklahoma Chinese Baptist Church, 625 E Frank
- Grace Presbyterian OPE, 310 N. Findlay

A healthy neighborhood with a high quality of life requires emotional as well as financial investment from its inhabitants. Indicators of neighborhood health are both tangible and intangible. Tangible indicators of investment are reflected in the overall neighborhood condition such

Summary of Neighborhood Issues, continued

Neighborhood Investment, Quality of Life & Appearances

as houses and yards kept neat and in good repair, well-tended trees, people out in their yards, and the presence of well-utilized public spaces. Intangible indicators of neighborhood health include property values and sales price trends, how frequently houses come on the market and how quickly they sell, and what percentage of the houses are owner or renter-occupied.

Long-term Residents. First Courthouse has many long-term residents who are deeply connected to the neighborhood. This is good for neighborhood health and well-being. However, parts of the neighborhood are experiencing conversions of owner-occupied housing to rental housing, particularly along commercial and institutional edges. This trend can indicate decreasing levels of personal investment; falling market values, and often leads to decreased levels of property maintenance.

Housing Conditions and Property Maintenance. The majority of housing in the neighborhood is average-to-above average condition, with pockets of below-average structures at the north and south edges. Trends toward poor property maintenance often indicate declining emotional and financial investment in the neighborhood. Properties in disrepair send a subtle message to all that nobody cares about the neighborhood. Neighbors in First Courthouse often complain about poorly maintained rental property yet feel helpless to enact any kind of lasting change to this negative trend. The neighborhood was designated for Proactive Code Enforcement in 2008. (See Map 6)

Proximity to Community Destinations. First Courthouse Neighborhood includes Norman Regional Hospital and the Porter Avenue commercial corridor, and is close to doctors' offices, churches, schools and Downtown Norman. Residents can easily walk or bike to reach many basic services and daily needs, including popular restaurants. However this convenience comes at a price: increased traffic, noise, encroachment from expanding businesses, and demolition of houses for parking lots.

Effects of Commercial and Institutional Encroachment. Without intervention, commercial and institutional edges can creep into adjacent residential areas with a generally negative impact on physical and social conditions of residential blocks. Unchecked expansion of non-residential uses (or the threat thereof) is a destabilizing force in neighborhoods that adversely affects property values and causes property owners to lose confidence in the security of their investments. Struggles between expanding



Prior to the PCZOD, houses adjacent to a commercial uses were only required to be buffered by a wood stockade fence and a 5-foot landscape strip.

Summary of Neighborhood Issues, continued



Norman Regional Hospital built a masonry wall north of Frank Street buffering a large parking lot and signaling the end of hospital expansion into the neighborhood.

Traffic, Parking and Circulation



The bus stop shelter at Findlay and Oliver has a bench and solar-powered lighting.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan

commercial uses and neighbors seeking to “protect their turf” have resulted in a kind of chronic gridlock.

In the 1990s and early 2000s Norman Regional Hospital grew substantially, expanding southward into the neighborhood. The hospital’s momentum also spurred the construction and expansion of private medical offices as well. In the early 2000s, a large medical office building was erected on the east side of Findlay Avenue, which had long been the boundary line between Porter institutional and residential uses to the east. At the south end of the campus, the hospital built a six-foot masonry buffer wall along the alley north of Frank Street as a way to signal a limit line for hospital expansion.

With the City’s 2010 adoption of the *Porter Avenue Corridor Plan* and the Porter Corridor Zoning Overlay District (PCZOD), First Courthouse Neighborhood now has a powerful tool creating a limit line for commercial expansion and which requires a buffer wall and landscaping between expanding businesses and adjacent residential uses. This protection should help restore residential property owners’ confidence and boost the incentive to reinvest in houses near commercial edges since the community has reached a shared understanding that commercial encroachment will have a stopping point.

For the most part, First Courthouse’s circulatory system is an effective grid, though there are some locations where circulation conflicts persist. Office and commercial parking lot expansions have encroached into residential blocks as far east as Findlay in the northern areas of the neighborhood.

Parking Lots. Until the adoption of the *Porter Avenue Corridor Plan*, residentially zoned blocks adjacent to Porter Avenue had little recourse when adjacent office or commercial uses sought to expand their parking lots.

Bus Stops. The neighborhood includes two stops on the Alameda East/N 21 CART bus route. There is a bus stop with no shelter at the SE corner of Findlay and Gray and a bus stop shelter at the NE corner of Findlay and Oliver. For more information about CART bus routes, go to <http://cart.ou.edu/routes.html>

Gravel Driveways. Many properties in the neighborhood retain gravel driveways. These can work well if they are well-maintained; many are not. An option to remedy this situation is to develop a driveway improvement program to construct permanent edges and update

Summary of Neighborhood Issues, continued



The triangle formed by Daws, Porter and Acres is a no-man's land visually and functionally but could present an opportunity.

Opportunities

gravel driveways or to replace gravel driveways with concrete. To create more visual impact it would be appropriate to focus on entire block faces, including both owner and renter-occupied properties. Either approach will stop gravel creep and will give a defined edge to parking areas. Property owners should also consider the existing Driveway Replacement Program offered through the City's Public Works Department. This program covers 100% of the cost of installing a new drive approach and right-of-way pavement if the property owner agrees to improve the rest of the driveway.

Acres Street Intersection. The Acres Street/Porter Avenue intersection has several moving parts that make it complex. Porter Avenue is a busy arterial road carrying 18,000 cars per day by 2008 counts. Acres Street is one of Norman's few streets with an at-grade railroad crossing (three blocks west of Porter), and has become a busy east-west through-street. Acres crosses Porter Avenue at "the elbow," i.e. a bend in the road, so drivers' sight lines are shorter at this intersection, allowing them less response time to see pedestrians, cyclists or the turning movements of other vehicles.

Acres Street is also a major pedestrian route for Longfellow Middle School located one block east of Porter on Ponca. On the north side of the Acres-Porter intersection there is a pedestrian-activated, in-ground, lighted crosswalk. However drivers complain that the lighted crosswalk is not visible and they often do not stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk. Pedestrians complain that the system is confusing because they cannot see whether lights are flashing except at night.

The Acres-Porter junction is further complicated by a short segment of Daws Street that terminates east of Porter, making this a five-way intersection. The triangle formed by Daws, Porter and Acres is functionally and visually a no-man's land. If the Daws segment were vacated, it could be absorbed by the commercial land use to the south for building expansion or additional parking. Or with design treatments, the triangle could become an attractive feature for the Porter Corridor. Decisions about the future of this intersection should be delayed until the City of Norman is able to undertake a comprehensive traffic analysis of the entire Porter Avenue Corridor.

Like most mature American neighborhoods, First Courthouse has many assets to be protected as well as liabilities to be addressed. But with its central Norman location, variety of early 20th Century housing, proximity to goods & services, public, recreational and entertainment facilities, First Courthouse has substantial opportunities on its horizon of which many neighborhoods could only dream. Later in this plan document, we outline strategic goals and objectives to help First Courthouse residents and stakeholders begin to take advantage of this potential for revitalization.



Early 20th Century bungalows are a common architectural style found in First Courthouse Neighborhood. Brick construction is less common.

Neighborhood Context

Sense of Place. As in many mature neighborhoods in American cities, First Courthouse possesses an inherently strong *sense of place* with many physical features that define its form and identity and make the neighborhood a desirable place to live. These features include:

Historic Building Character. First Courthouse Neighborhood retains many examples of early 20th Century architecture, including architectural styles such as Folk, National-style and Craftsman/Bungalow.

Street Pattern. In general, First Courthouse has a grid pattern of streets, lined with sidewalks in the southern sections of the neighborhood. Many blocks in this neighborhood have between seven and ten houses on the largest face of a block.

Trees. Many First Courthouse streets are lined with mature trees. The leafy green canopy provides a comforting sense of enclosure as well as environmental benefits such as cooler temperatures, increased oxygen levels, decreased levels of carbon dioxide, and a sense of well-being.

Physical Environment and Scale. First Courthouse has a human scale. This is defined by a well-established traditional rhythm of houses, tree-lined sidewalks, streets, and alleyways. With its many different styles and sizes of houses, many residents observe that the neighborhood “just feels livable.”

Porter Corridor and Main Street. First Courthouse residents are within easy walking and biking distance of goods, services, and institutions that support their daily activities along the Porter Avenue Corridor and Main Street/Downtown.

Civic Infrastructure. First Courthouse includes an elementary school and a middle school, three churches, a 28-acre public hospital campus and a park. The neighborhood also includes CART bus routes and bus stops along Findlay Avenue.

Public Space. Sidewalks are considered to be public space as are parks. Frances Cate Park with its open space, playground, basketball courts and soccer fields provides community gathering and play space for First Courthouse neighborhood and for the community as a whole.

What is Sense of Place?

The term “sense of place” describes a personal response to the built and natural environment that individuals experience in daily life. It refers to feelings, emotions and attachments that people have for a particular location.

In the First Courthouse Neighborhood, sense of place is defined by the setting of mature trees lining the streets, the street pattern itself, the placement of houses along the blocks, the presence of several churches. These elements work together with the close-knit rhythm of houses to create a sense of place that is unique to this neighborhood.

First Courthouse doesn’t *look* or *feel* quite like any other neighborhood in Norman. This sense of place is a valuable asset and should be nurtured and stewarded through sensitive planning for future generations.

Neighborhood Context, continued



The stone Folk-style structure at Gray and Ponca was reportedly built with salvaged stone blocks from the original Cleveland County Courthouse.

Boundaries and Geography. First Courthouse is the largest of Norman's five CDBG neighborhoods in geographic area and one of the oldest. The neighborhood includes approximately 175 acres spread over 35 blocks. The area is bounded on the north by Robinson; on the south by the north side of Gray Street; on the west by Porter Avenue and on the east by the east edge of Cate Park and Carter Avenue. The bulk of the neighborhood's residential structures were built between 1900 and 1975.

Neighborhood Character. The neighborhood's dominant land use is single-family residential, with scattered garage apartments, duplexes, and higher density apartments. It is edged by the Porter Avenue commercial corridors on the west.

Porter Corridor. Porter Avenue, a commercial and institutional corridor through central Norman, forms the western edge of the neighborhood. The Porter Avenue Corridor was the subject of a recent planning study and presents many opportunities for the neighborhood. The *Porter Avenue Corridor Plan* is discussed in more detail later in this document.

Original Plats. The neighborhood includes eight plats and one unplatted area: Carpenter, Doctor's Park #1 and #2, Elliott, Griffin Heights, Hardie Field, High School, and Tiffin. An area north of Frank between Findlay and Cockrel was never platted.

Architecture. The neighborhood retains a few examples of Folk-style and National-style dating to the 1910s, as well as many examples of Craftsman/Bungalow style from the 1920-1930s. The northern half of the neighborhood includes Minimal Traditional, Ranch, Neo-Colonial styles, and interpretations of Folk-style structures constructed after World War II.

Landmarks. The heart of First Courthouse neighborhood includes a number of landmark structures, notable for their age, function, design or location. All of these landmarks contribute significantly to the neighborhood's character and sense of place:

- Jefferson Elementary School, 215 N. Cockrel
- Longfellow Middle School, 215 N. Ponca
- St. Joseph's Catholic Church, 211 N. Porter
- Southern Oklahoma Chinese Baptist Church, 625 E Frank
- Grace Presbyterian Church OPE, 310 N. Findlay
- Main Street & Carter Avenue Roundabout



First Courthouse is a comfortable residential neighborhood defined by single-family houses, trees, sidewalks and houses with front porches.

Neighborhood Context, continued



This house at the northeast corner of Hughbert and Cockrel is a fine example of high National Style architecture.

Historic District Status. No section of First Courthouse Neighborhood is designated as a local historic district. Based on 1989 surveys of the neighborhood's historic architecture, it was determined that the oldest sections of the neighborhood have lost much of their original architectural integrity. A handful of individual structures built between 1895-1940 located south of Hughbert Street do retain historic integrity. These individual structures are good examples of late 19th/early 20th Century architecture. No structures in First Courthouse Neighborhood are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Census Data and Land Use. US Census data and Cleveland County Tax Assessor's records indicate that First Courthouse Neighborhood is 58% owner-occupied and 42% renter-occupied. Though 2010 Census data is not yet available at this level of detail, 2000 Census data shows a total of 590 housing units in the neighborhood. Of the 590 units, 92% are single-family units and 6% multi-family structures (2-4 unit). In terms of household income, the neighborhood is described as 63% low-to-moderate income with a total population of nearly 700 inhabitants.

Neighborhood land use is characterized by three major types:

- *Single-Family Houses*
- *Civic Infrastructure*
- *Adjacent Commercial Corridors:* First Courthouse Neighborhood includes the east side of the Porter Avenue Commercial Corridor which incorporates the Medical District, both on the east side of Porter Avenue.

Zoning. The neighborhood was zoned R-1 Single-Family in 1954, This zoning has remained in place ever since. This designation has allowed the maintenance of the neighborhood's predominantly single-family land use character. (See Map 3)



This restored I-House style farmhouse has anchored the northeast corner of Main and Ponca for 110 years.

Overall Neighborhood Condition. First Courthouse residents are frustrated with poor property maintenance and the feeling that they have no effective means to address problem tenants. Early 20th Century neighborhoods are often rich on architectural charm and provide an affordable niche for many homeowners. The downside of early 20th Century neighborhoods is that the houses are considered small by modern real estate standards. So without external pressures such as zoning overlay districts and/or strong levels of neighborhood peer pressure to reinforce real estate values and levels of personal investment, the American trend for ever-bigger houses has diminished the neighborhood's desirability. This trend has been accelerated in blocks east of Porter Avenue and along the hospital edge by demand for business parking and institutional expansion. Rental-occupancy rates along these edges are higher and property conditions are often noticeably poorer.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan

Neighborhood Context, continued



In some cases sidewalks are tree-lined. In this block of Hughbert, the wide right-of-way also accommodates utility poles.

These patterns of neighborhood land use change along these commercial edges began decades ago and will continue unabated without some intervention. While the Downtown commercial corridor has steadily improved over the past decade, physical and aesthetic conditions along Porter Avenue are poor, with economic conditions and market rates that are poor-to-fair.

Trees. Many people comment that tree-lined streets are one of the neighborhood's best features. Trees cool the environment, infuse oxygen into the air and provide a sense of leafy enclosure. The neighborhood's tree canopy is aging and many trees have been lost in recent storms. Rights-of-way along the streets need to be replanted to ensure a tree canopy remains in place for many years.

Sidewalks. The sidewalk network is in basically good condition but needs spot repairs, missing segments installed, and accessibility ramps installed in some locations. Sidewalks are present in the original southern subdivisions of First Courthouse but much of the northern half of the neighborhood was built without sidewalks. Houses in this area have shallow front setbacks, making it difficult to retrofit sidewalks without sacrificing parking on private property. If blocks also have a bar ditch and culvert drainage system this further constrains sidewalk construction on those blocks, making it nearly impossible to achieve.

Conversions to Rental Housing. The trend of converting owner-occupied housing to rental housing has been particularly acute along commercial edges in First Courthouse. Several blocks adjacent to Porter Avenue have become nearly 100% rental. With the adoption of the *Porter Avenue Corridor Plan* and the *Zoning Overlay District*, this trend could see a reversal in the future.



Mid- 20th Century houses in First Courthouse are modest in size and considered relatively affordable by local real estate standards.

Affordable Housing. First Courthouse and surrounding Porter Corridor neighborhoods include some of Norman's remaining affordable housing. Relatively small early 20th Century houses make attractive starter homes for young families, graduate students, senior citizens or anyone looking to downsize. This population diversity is an asset that residents value highly. Revitalization along Porter Avenue may push adjacent residential property values upward, but it is important to the neighborhood that affordability be preserved in any way possible. The average size house in First Courthouse is around 1,000 square feet, which is modest size by local real estate standards. In general, houses are moderately-priced compared to elsewhere in Norman.

Neighborhood Context, continued



Prior to adoption of the Porter Corridor Zoning Overlay, only a board fence and a 5-foot landscape buffer was required to separate commercial from adjacent residential land uses.

Land Use Conflicts. Conflicts between residential and expanding commercial land uses have existed for decades at the southern and western edges of First Courthouse Neighborhood. Much of this was ignited along Porter and Frank Street by Norman Regional Hospital's expansion in the 1980-1990s. Back in 1984, Norman's *Central Core Plan* recommended a neighborhood revitalization project establishing a clear line between commercial/institutional and residential uses. Over the past five years, conflicts along Porter Avenue have become more frequent as successful commercial operations have sought to expand into adjacent neighborhoods. Along with land use conflicts, traffic congestion continues to build along Porter Avenue, making current circulation patterns along the corridor unsustainable in the long term.

Neighborhood Edges. Along commercial edges of Porter Avenue and the edges of Norman Regional Hospital, transitions between land uses can be abrupt. *The Porter Avenue Corridor Plan* creates a commercial limit line and seeks to create graceful transitions between land uses with required buffer walls and landscaping between commercial and residential uses. Institutional land uses also need buffers between themselves and residential neighbors.

Land uses delineated in the *1990 Neighborhood Plan* and in three *Five-Year Consolidated CDBG Plans*, (2000, 2005, and 2010 respectively), were recommended by the First Courthouse Neighborhood, approved by the Norman City Council and by US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Cultural and Economic Diversity. This neighborhood's physical diversity of land uses and building types means it is a visually interesting environment with lots of "texture." This varied environment spawns a high degree of cultural and economic diversity among inhabitants. First Courthouse neighbors value their diversity and the sense of neighborhood vitality that comes from people being out in their yards, children walking to school, and neighbors interacting with each other on the street.

Physical Infrastructure

Stormwater Drainage. Poor drainage is a persistent problem in First Courthouse Neighborhood for three reasons: 1) the area is very flat, 2) it has poor soil percolation, i.e. clayey soils that do not allow water to filter into the ground, and 3) there are a limited number of underground drainage systems available. (See Map 4) However, as more impervious surface is created by an ever-larger urbanized area upstream, the problem of stormwater runoff continues to grow and must be dealt with more effectively.

Neighborhood Context, continued

There is not a consistent network of curb and guttering in First Courthouse Neighborhood. (See Maps 5) Though Findlay Avenue does have curb and guttering and underground drainage along its entire length, the rest of the neighborhood has only scattered segments of curbing. There are five types of drainage systems found throughout the neighborhood (See Map 4):

- Concrete curb-and-gutter, with drainage inlets and underground drainage
- Concrete curb-and-gutter
- Drainage inlets with underground drainage
- Bar ditches with culverts
- Bar ditches that have been filled in over the years, leaving a passive system of detention/evaporation

First Courthouse Neighborhood has had a long-standing goal of eliminating bar ditches and installing curb and gutter along all neighborhood streets. This is not physically possible to achieve in all locations. Integrated drainage structures—prohibitively expensive in terms of engineering and construction costs—are not prevalent in the neighborhood so in many cases there is no place to drain water to. Stewart Street is a good example of this. Its combination of silted-in or removed bar ditches, pull-off parking, much overlaid roadway, and no major drainage structures nearby mean that a solution to occasional standing water is not a simple one.



Some of First Courthouse's alleys are paved; many are gravel. Some are in -serviceable condition, some are not.

While underground drainage is the fastest way to remove stormwater, it is by far the most expensive and the least environmentally sustainable method to drain stormwater from city streets. The City Public Works Department's knowledge and understanding of stormwater management best practices is evolving. This means that City engineers are investigating stormwater removal methods that are both effective and environmentally sensitive. The City seeks to help citizens understand how techniques such as regular maintenance of bar ditches will allow that type of drainage system to operate to its highest efficiency. City engineers are also exploring new techniques of sustainable stormwater management such as rain gardens, a water retention technique that beautifies while also performing a vital function.

Alleys. First Courthouse neighborhood has a system of alleyways primarily south of Hughbert Street. Some are paved; many are gravel, and some are in serviceable condition. Some have become impassible over the years. (See Map 7)

Neighborhood Context, continued



This asphalt alley east of Porter Avenue has been often patched. Board fence separates the alley from adjacent back yards.

Alley Trash Collection. For many years, the City has provided alley trash collection. Over the past decade, Norman's Sanitation Division has used the new style of side-collection automated trucks, which allow one driver to handle an entire route. But this also means that trash trucks must make four passes to collect trash from a single block (two sides of the streets, two sides of the alley). This is a highly inefficient method of collection. Alley collection is also hard on the trucks. For large trash trucks, many of the city's alleys are nearly impassable due to vegetation, projecting gas meters, low-hanging utility wires, deep ruts and the location of alley buildings. Finally, repairing alleyways to the City standard of 6" thick concrete costs a minimum of \$70,000 a block. Asphalt paving is sometimes cheaper but does not hold up well under heavy truck use. A loaded trash truck can weigh up to 44,000 pounds. These heavy trucks damage alleyways that were never intended to carry such loads. These constraining factors in the city's alleys add to the cost of garbage collection for all Norman's citizens.

Sanitary Sewer. Over the past 37 years through the CDBG program, First Courthouse neighborhood has been completely retrofitted with new 8-12-inch sanitary sewer lines. As the CDBG program replaced sewer mains over the past 37 years, sewer connections to individual houses were also replaced throughout the neighborhood.

Water. The entire neighborhood is serviced by 6-12-inch water lines, many of which were installed by the CDBG program over the past 37 years. As the CDBG program replaced water mains, water connections to individual houses were also replaced throughout the neighborhood. A few undersized lines (under 4 inches) remain at Crawford & Acres, Crawford & Himes, and along the 330-block of East Frank. These undersized lines should be replaced as funding allows.

Lighting. Roadway lighting throughout the neighborhood meets the City standard of one roadway light at the end of each block in most locations; however residents often observe that the City standard is too dark for their comfort. In some places, this is because the tree canopy is beneath the 30-foot roadway light, so it blocks the light from reaching the street or sidewalk.



Historic lamp posts give the neighborhood warm character.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan



Though functional, this pedestrian bridge in Frances Cate Park is just barely accessible and is not an attractive feature of the park.

Four Reasons to Revitalize Frances Cate Park

1. Park enhancement is a highly visible and effective tool in neighborhood placemaking.
2. Park revitalization will create very attractive and usable public open space for the neighborhood and the larger community.
3. Investment in the public realm conveys a strong commitment to revitalization of a Porter Corridor area neighborhood .
4. This project could give the City the opportunity to solve long-standing stream quality issues along Bishop Creek.



The Cate Park Playground equipment is dated and the area lacks shade.

Revitalization of Frances Cate Park

Shrinking CDBG budgets at the federal level have prompted a re-thinking of the approach to future projects in Norman’s five CDBG neighborhoods. First Courthouse residents have expressed interest in focusing resources on the revitalization of Frances Cate Park, a 14-acre community park on the eastern edge of the neighborhood.

Revitalization Opportunity

Cate Park includes a number of built and natural elements that could be enhanced to provide better functionality, accessibility and aesthetics. These elements could be better connected by landscaping, pathways and park “furniture” that would create a more inviting atmosphere. A revitalization plan for Frances Cate Park could include a number of projects:

- Improved landscaping particularly along park edges
- Extended walking paths that connect park program elements
- Tree planting throughout the park, especially around gathering places, the playground and along the creek
- Playground equipment, furniture and possible expansion
- New decorative pedestrian bridges
- Continued enhancement of the basketball court area
- Attractive furniture throughout the park such as benches, lighting, trash receptacles, bike racks, drinking fountains

An Opportunity: Bishop Creek Stream Restoration

The segment of Bishop Creek flowing southerly through Cate Park presents a multi-layered opportunity for stormwater management, water quality improvement, and enhanced recreational value. Though the overall stream condition is fair as measured by water quality and temperature, stream bank condition, and aquatic life, the creek is definitely a park program element unto itself. Human being are instinctively attracted to water features, whether naturally-occurring or manmade.

When funding becomes available, the restoration of Bishop Creek as it flows through Cate Park would be valuable in terms of mitigating downstream flooding, particularly at Main Street. The City’s Stormwater Master Plan identified this Main Street segment of the Bishop Creek watershed as one that would require mitigation. Other benefits would include improved water quality flowing from the neighborhood and enhancement of the park’s aesthetic and recreational environment.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan

SRTS Improvements for Jefferson Elementary & Longfellow Middle School

Infrastructure Projects

- Install new school zone pavement markings at various location around schools.
- Use traffic calming methods on Gray Street between Main St roundabout and Porter Avenue.
- Install overhead mast-arm school zone flashers on Porter Avenue north and south of Acres Street.
- Install in-pavement crosswalk warning lights on Main Street at Cockrel.
- Repair existing sidewalks and install new sidewalks and accessibility ramps along major routes to school.
- Install new bike racks at Longfellow.

Non-Infrastructure Projects

- Hold bicycle repair clinics for elementary and middle school students.
- Hold bicycle safety rodeos and bike helmet giveaways with Norman Police Department and Healthy Communities Coalition.
- Initiate a Walking School Bus program.
- Hold annual Safety Patrol training sessions with Norman Police Department.
- Continue to promote the idea of walking and biking to school for children who live within a 1/2 mile of school.



Norman Police Bike Team members hold a SRTS Bicycle Rodeo at Jefferson Elementary School in March, 2010.

Safe Routes to School Program

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is funded by the Federal Highway Administration. The program funds a variety of projects that examine and address social and environmental barriers around schools which prevent children from walking or cycling to school. In 2008, the City of Norman was awarded a \$200,000 grant through the Oklahoma Department of Transportation to implement one of the state's first Safe Routes to School grants. The grant was awarded to Jefferson Elementary and Longfellow Middle Schools because of their close proximity and their high concentration of students living within one mile of school. The grant is being administered by the City of Norman. Non-infrastructure improvements will be installed by September, 2011 according to the terms of the grant.

According to the Center for Safe Routes to School, in 1969, 42 percent of children 5 to 18 years of age walked or bicycled to school. By 2001, that number had dropped to 16 percent. This decline in active transportation is correlated with skyrocketing rates of childhood obesity, high levels of air pollution and traffic congestion around schools, and the increasingly unfriendly design of schools with respect to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

The program brings together students and parents, teachers, administrators, public safety, public health, and city officials to support the notion that active transportation is good for the entire community. Active transportation to school—specifically walking and biking—is good for students' mental and physical health, good for community, and good for the environment. The SRTS program underwrites projects and activities that work to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety, school accessibility, and traffic and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. SRTS programs help make bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing transportation choices thus encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age.

Porter Avenue Corridor Plan

Why Undertake the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan?

In its current form, Porter Avenue's impact on First Courthouse neighborhood is largely negative, though residents appreciate the convenience of being close to commercial and institutional destinations. Commercial uses along Porter need room to grow and the only place they can expand is into the adjacent neighborhoods. This has occurred steadily over recent decades, causing the removal of houses for parking and igniting a trend of disinvestment in the adjacent residential blocks. East of Porter Avenue, many blocks that were once owner-occupied have become almost entirely rental occupied. Porter's environmental aesthetics are poor which detracts from the quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods. Right now, Porter Avenue is largely an opportunity unrealized. Many nearby residents and business owners would like to change this.

What is the Purpose of the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan?

The purpose of the *Porter Avenue Corridor Plan-Staff Update* is to guide future improvement of the Porter Avenue Corridor, while focusing on the existing community and the rich history of the area. The plan explores opportunities for the creation of a pedestrian environment along Porter Avenue, the establishment of an enhanced streetscape that attracts new commercial activity and leverages investment in commercial property, and the preservation of adjacent residential neighborhoods.

What Do We Hope to Achieve in the Porter Corridor?

The *Porter Avenue Corridor Plan-Staff Update* describes five broad categories of long-term improvement along the corridor:

Mobility and Public Safety

Establish Porter Avenue as a safe, accommodating connection with Downtown Norman, other established commercial districts, and adjacent neighborhoods. Manage traffic along Porter in a way that maintains the corridor as a safe transportation network for all users, allowing access for pedestrians, buses, and bicycles as well as cars.

Aesthetics

Create a destination environment reminiscent of Porter's transportation "roots" that is complemented by attractive green



The Porter Avenue Corridor Plan was created to establish a revitalization vision for this important 1.2-mile corridor through central Norman.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan

Porter Corridor Plan, continued

space, a spectacular streetscape, and high visual interest which creates an attractive environment for private investment on adjacent land throughout the corridor.

Neighborhoods

Blend existing neighborhood fabric with opportunities for new residential development that will establish Porter neighborhoods as walkable and well-maintained with connectivity and easy access to amenities and essential goods and services.

Economic Development

Make Porter Avenue a significant revenue-generating corridor for Norman, encouraging development efforts that create a balance of uses. Create development that blends seamlessly with adjacent neighborhoods, parks, trails, and institutions.

Land Use

Balance Porter Avenue's active commercial and mixed use areas with the needs and character of the surrounding established neighborhoods to maximize economic growth and protect the interests of all Porter Avenue stakeholders.

What's Next for the Porter Corridor?

As a part of the *Porter Avenue Corridor Plan – Staff Update*, Norman City Council also adopted the Porter Corridor Zoning Overlay District (PCZOD) that establishes a limit line for commercial land uses along Porter Avenue. Businesses which expand to this line must build an opaque masonry wall and ten-foot deep landscape buffer at the property line that will separate residential properties from commercial activities. Masonry walls are effective in creating a physical and psychological edge that clearly conveys the point where one land use stops and another starts. This mutually respected edge is critical for peaceful coexistence between commercial and residential land uses.

The Porter Avenue Corridor Plan establishes a long-range vision for creating both physical and economic change along this central Norman corridor. Implementing these revitalization goals for Porter Avenue will require time and investment from both the public and private sectors. Without the investment to improve Porter's streetscape environment and to create a permanent protective buffer between commercial and adjacent residential land uses, the Porter Avenue that exists today is likely the best it will ever be.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan Concept: Strengthen What We Have

Working with resident-generated goals, data from a physical survey of the neighborhood, and other current City plans, the City of Norman planning team has developed this Neighborhood Plan Concept as a framework to implement specific improvements in the First Courthouse Neighborhood.

The Plan Concept, perhaps best summarized as “Strengthen What We Have,” identifies six long-term goals for the First Courthouse Neighborhood. On the following pages, each goal is articulated and accompanied by specific objectives. If implemented, these measures will be very helpful in preserving and protecting First Courthouse’s many assets and will also effectively reverse negative trends in the neighborhood.

GOAL 1: Strengthen Neighborhood Edges

Mark clear boundaries that separate Porter Avenue commercial land uses from adjacent residential areas in First Courthouse. A mutually respected edge is critical for peaceful coexistence between commercial and residential land uses.

GOAL 2: Protect History, Character and Sense of Place

Protect the neighborhood’s physical environment that includes blocks of houses and other buildings, the pattern of sidewalks, streets and trees, and proximity to neighborhood goods and services.

GOAL 3: Strengthen Zoning Protections

Support zoning changes that reflect 2025 Plan Land Use Plan recommendations, preserve the single-family residential character of First Courthouse Neighborhood, and promote the peaceful co-existence of adjacent land uses.

GOAL 4: Improve Traffic and Circulation at Key Locations

Calm traffic and improve safety along key streets and at busy intersections. Improve pedestrian access throughout the neighborhood but particularly across Porter Avenue.

GOAL 5: Upgrade Neighborhood Infrastructure

Make meaningful infrastructure improvements that enhance the neighborhood’s quality of life.

GOAL 6: Enhance Appearance and Quality of Life

Encourage participation in programs that beautify the neighborhood, enhance individual property values, and build a sense of connection between neighbors.



Simple brick columns with minimal landscaping can create a very effective neighborhood entryway.

GOAL 1: Strengthen Neighborhood Edges

Mark clear boundaries that separate Porter Avenue commercial land uses from adjacent residential areas in First Courthouse. A mutually respected edge is critical for peaceful coexistence between commercial and residential land uses. These goals are closely correlated with the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan goal to protect neighborhoods.

1. Develop neighborhood gateways that formalize entry into First Courthouse at the following locations:

- Oliver east of Findlay
- Johnson east of Findlay
- Carter south of Robinson
- Hughbert east of Porter
- Frank east of Porter
- Findlay north of Gray
- Gray/Carter intersection

2. Strengthen neighborhood identity through meaningful placemaking activities.

- Develop a high quality neighborhood identification graphic package that includes a logo and signage.
- Plant appropriate species of trees in rights-of-way to create or sustain the urban tree canopy.
- Expand historic lighting in the neighborhood.
- Revitalize Frances Cate Park to become a meaningful open space
- Develop interpretive signage for Frances Cate Park, First Courthouse Neighborhood, and other historic landmarks in the neighborhood.

3. Monitor proposals that expand commercial zoning along Porter Avenue to ensure that developers fulfill obligations for residential buffering per the Porter Corridor Zoning Overlay District (PCZOD).



Neighborhood gateways are both symbolic and functional points of entry.

What is Placemaking?

According to authors and urban planners Al Zelinka and Susan Jackson Harden in a book entitled *Placemaking on a Budget*, “placemaking refers to the process of adding value and meaning to the public realm through community-based revitalization projects rooted in local values, history, culture and natural environment.”

Urbanist Phillip Langdon writes “placemaking has become a necessary activity as a response to the 20th Century’s creation of an impermanent, standardized built environment at odds with community pride and loyalty. Yet the stubborn fact remains: human beings need places that matter to us, places in our cities, towns and neighborhoods that we can point to and inhabit with pride.”

Examples of Placemaking

Successful placemaking takes many different forms from the installation of public art to activities on private property that help create a distinctive neighborhood identity.

- Public art in parks or other gathering places in the public realm
- Attractive lighting designs
- Creation of neighborhood gateways
- Decorative sidewalk treatments
- Tree planting in public ROW
- Decorative bus stops or shelters
- Corridor landscaping
- Neighborhood identification signage on posts or light poles
- Interpretive historical signage for parks, schools, buildings, or natural features
- Park revitalization projects, e.g., stream bank restoration, seating areas, tree planting, lighting, decorative fencing, and interpretive signage, engaging play equipment.

GOAL 2: Protect Character and Sense of Place

Protect the neighborhood’s physical environment that includes blocks of houses, sidewalk patterns, tree-lined streets, and the proximity of neighborhood goods, services and institutions.

- 1. Undertake neighborhood placemaking activities (see sidebar) that strengthen the neighborhood’s edges, strengthen identity, and create public spaces that attract people.**
- 2. Revitalize Frances Cate Park to make it an attractive, inviting “living room” for the entire neighborhood.**
- 3. Work through the City’s Neighborwoods Program to distribute and plant appropriate tree species in rights-of-way to sustain or create the urban tree canopy.**
 - Create a neighborhood tree-tenders support program to help nurture newly-planted trees and teach property owners how to take care of them.
 - Develop a Friends of Frances Cate Park program to invest neighbors in the park’s condition and to maintain the health of new plantings in the park.
- 4. Work with the City of Norman to create home improvement grants for property owners to be used for painting and exterior repair.**
 - Use improvement programs to preserve and enhance neighborhood character and historic building design
- 5. Use attractive sidewalk treatments to link the neighborhood with the Porter Avenue Corridor and Downtown and the neighborhood with Frances Cate Park.**

What is the Porter Corridor Zoning Overlay District (PCZOD)?

During the Porter Avenue Corridor planning process, the Zoning Overlay District was identified as a regulatory tool that could be effective in achieving a desired balance between commercial and residential land uses in the corridor.

City Council adopted the Porter Corridor Zoning Overlay District (PCZOD) thereby establishing a commercial limit line. The PCZOD requires businesses that expand to this line build an opaque masonry wall and 10-foot landscaped buffer at the property line that will provide a separation between residential and commercial activities.

What Are the Development Standards Required by the PCZOD?

- Establishes a limit line for commercial land uses at a maximum of 250 feet back from Porter Avenue.
- Requires that commercial land uses expanding to the limit line must have 10-foot wide landscape buffer and 4-foot high masonry wall, increasing to 6 feet adjacent to neighbor's backyard.
- Requires parking lots to have downcast lighting on poles no higher than 20 feet.



The PCZOD will buffer transitions between commercial and residential land uses to better protect houses from negative impacts of commercial activity.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan

GOAL 3: Strengthen Zoning Protections

Support zoning changes that reflect Norman 2025 Land Use Plan recommendations and which preserve the residential character of First Courthouse Neighborhood by promoting the peaceful co-existence of adjacent land uses.

- 1. Support applications for commercial or institutional rezoning only when the application is consistent with the Porter Corridor Zoning Overlay District (PCZOD) and the commercial limit line of the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan.**
- 2. Outside the PCZOD, support applications for rezoning only when the application brings the subject zoning into consistency with the existing land use.**



To safely cross busy streets, pedestrians must rely on drivers stopping at crosswalks.

GOAL 4. Improve Traffic and Circulation at Key Locations

Reduce speeds and improve safety along busy road segments and intersections. Improve pedestrian access throughout the neighborhood but particularly along and across Porter Avenue.

1. Address speeding and cut-through traffic problems along Findlay Avenue, Gray Street, and other known speeding areas.

- Increase police monitoring of known speeding areas.
- Request the City Traffic Engineer undertake a study of areas with persistent speeding problems to determine if traffic calming measures are required and what those calming options are.

2. Make pedestrian improvements at the Acres and Porter intersection a community priority.

- Work with Norman Public School officials to get a crossing guard stationed at this busy intersection.
- Improve sidewalk connections along Acres Street linking Longfellow Middle School, Porter Avenue, Updegraff Park, Legacy Trail and Andrews Park.
- Request the City of Norman to fund a detailed traffic analysis of the Porter Avenue Corridor to determine the best options for future traffic flow along Porter Avenue, including the best options for safe crossing at the intersection of Acres & Porter.

3. Use CDBG funding and the Safe Routes to School program to improve walkability in the neighborhood.

- Use School Sidewalk funds from Public Works Department and sidewalks identified in the Safe Routes to School Program to address deficiencies near Jefferson Elementary and along routes to Longfellow Middle School.

4. Improve sidewalks along and across Porter Avenue.

- Use the *Porter Corridor Public Streetscape Design* to begin improving sidewalks that serve the neighborhood on the west side of Porter.
- Consider using CDBG funds to leverage private sector improvements to commercial facades along Porter Avenue.
- Make landscaping improvements along Porter Avenue that connect with gateways into the neighborhood.

What is Walkability?

A walkable neighborhood is a place where people live within walking distance to most places they want to visit, whether it is school, work, grocery stores, parks, churches, banks, retail shops, or drug stores, and where people choose to walk to access these goods and services instead of drive their cars.

A walkable neighborhood has sidewalks or clear pedestrian zones linking major destinations in and around the area. A walkable community is made up of a collection of walkable neighborhoods.

Improving Walkability In First Courthouse Neighborhood

- Wherever feasible, install sidewalks where there are missing segments throughout the neighborhood.
- Using *Porter Corridor Public Streetscape Design*, install new or replace existing sidewalks along Porter Avenue.
- Using *Porter Corridor Public Streetscape Design*, install landscaping improvements along Porter Avenue that make sidewalk environment more attractive to walkers.
- Install accessibility ramps throughout the neighborhood wherever they are missing or inadequate.



Bishop Creek's condition of flowing through Cate Park is poor and an eyesore. Stream restoration would improve park aesthetics and help mitigate downstream flooding.

GOAL 5. Upgrade Physical and Civic Infrastructure

Make meaningful infrastructure improvements to enhance neighborhood quality of life.

1. Improve drainage throughout the neighborhood by installing curbs and gutters where appropriate or by other means where curbs and gutters are not feasible.

- Use data from this survey to verify the type and location of existing drainage structures in the neighborhood and to identify specific locations where improved drainage is needed. Determine if existing drainage system is adequate.
- In areas where there are no drainage structures in place, identify other techniques that could improve the drainage situation.

2. Revitalize Frances Cate Park to become an inviting and meaningful open space for the neighborhood, with opportunities for both active and passive recreation.

3. Improve sidewalk connections throughout First Courthouse linking the neighborhood with Jefferson Elementary School, Longfellow Middle School, the Porter Avenue Corridor and Downtown Norman.

4. Establish a plan to install pedestrian-scale lighting along key sidewalks in the neighborhood.

5. Eliminate alley trash collection as a means to reduce sanitation truck damage to alleys which will also improve sanitation department operating efficiency.

6. Initiate sidewalk and landscaping improvements along the east side of Porter Avenue which conform to the *Porter Avenue Corridor Design for Public Streetscape*.

7. Install neighborhood gateway monuments and/or signage at major points of entry to the neighborhood:

- Oliver east of Findlay
- Johnson east of Findlay
- Carter south of Robinson
- Hughbert east of Porter
- Frank east of Porter
- Findlay north of Gray
- Gray/Carter intersection

8. Develop Driveway Replacement program that targets entire blocks, maintaining and containing gravel and/or replacing gravel driveways and drive approaches with concrete.



Sidewalks linking neighborhood destinations are vital to getting people around the neighborhood without having to use a car.



Gateways not only mark neighborhood boundaries, they also help enhance a neighborhood's sense of place.



Well-maintained houses and yards convey to all that people care about the health and safety of the neighborhood.

GOAL 6. Enhance Neighborhood Appearance and Quality of Life

Foster participation in programs that beautify the neighborhood, enhance individual property values, and build a sense of connection between neighbors. Effective implementation of this goal will require a public-private partnership with some tasks undertaken by the City, some undertaken by the City and the neighborhood together, and some initiated by neighborhood residents themselves.

1. Work to reactivate First Courthouse’s Neighborhood Association as an important symbol of social investment and revitalization.

City-Led Tasks

- Establish neighborhood leadership training programs (e.g. Neighborhood Alliance’s Neighborhood Leaders for Today) that sustain the organization and successfully implement ongoing revitalization activities.

Neighborhood - City Partnerships

- Hold a Neighborhood Association Relaunch event to reactivate existing neighborhood association with a facilitated discussion about neighbor expectations of the group’s purpose and goals.
- Educate property owners about neighborhood expectations for property maintenance and to work with Code Enforcement to address problem areas.
- Make meaningful recommendations for future CDBG projects in the neighborhood.
- Participate in future discussions about redevelopment as part of Porter Corridor revitalization, especially as an advocate for preservation of neighborhood affordability and design character.
- Establish an electronic neighborhood newsletter that comes out at least twice a year.
- Create an email database to facilitate more effective communication among neighbors.

Neighborhood-Led Tasks

- Use the association to monitor issues that affect the neighborhood, to be an effective communication tool, to educate residents about property maintenance expectations, and to provide a mechanism that builds connection between neighbors.



First Courthouse Neighborhood’s compact form and human scale, with the presence of sidewalks, means it is highly walkable.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan

GOAL 6, continued

Neighborhood-Led Tasks, continued

- Organize regular neighborhood social gatherings that allow neighbors to get acquainted and share information (e.g. potluck suppers, ice cream socials, neighborhood picnics, etc.)
- Use Neighborhood Association and email to distribute information about various City of Norman programs that can benefit property owners.
- Work together to develop and maintain a neighborhood webpage.
- Initiate a needs assessment of neighborhood residents who may require various kinds of assistance to maintain and improve their property.

2. Maintain First Courthouse's historic tree canopy by planting new trees and replacing diseased or dying trees.

Neighborhood-City Partnerships

- Work as a Neighborhood Association with the City's Neighborwoods Program to distribute and plant appropriate tree species in rights-of-way.
- Hold a Tree Planting Day as part of the Neighborwoods Program, the City's urban reforestation program for planting street trees in rights-of-way.
- Working through the Neighborhood Association, create a neighborhood tree-tenders support program to help nurture newly-planted trees and to teach property owners how to take care of them.

3. Develop a Friends of Frances Cate Park program to invest neighbors in the park's condition and to maintain the health of new plantings in the park.

Neighborhood-City Partnership

- Hold an information-gathering meeting with other "Friends Of Park" groups in the City followed by an organizational meeting to outline mission, strategies and next steps.
- Plan an annual neighborhood event (e.g. ice cream social) to be held at Cate Park, Jefferson Elementary or Longfellow Middle School.



Neighborhood leadership training sessions are an effective way to bolster participation and overall effectiveness of neighborhood associations.

GOAL 6, continued

4. Work with the administration of Jefferson Elementary School and neighborhood churches to build stronger relationships that help support the neighborhood.

Neighborhood-City Partnership

- Consider making Jefferson Elementary the regular meeting place for the Neighborhood Association.
- Encourage residents to use the school playground and fields as neighborhood open space and play space.
- Work with the school and other resources to develop continuing education opportunities (hobbies, academics, etc.) that can be held at school facilities.

Neighborhood-Led Task

- Approach the churches about working with the Neighborhood Association to undertake home improvement projects for elderly or handicapped neighborhood residents.



Neighborhood identification signs are effective placemaking tools and help reinforce a sense of place.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan

First Courthouse Neighborhood Short-Term Implementation Strategy

DRAFT

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>COST EST</u>	<u>POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES</u>
1. Install gateway monuments and/or signage at entry points into the neighborhood: Oliver east of Findlay; Johnson east of Findlay; Carter south of Robinson; Hughbert east of Porter; Frank east of Porter; Findlay north of Gray; Gray/Carter intersection	\$10,000-\$30,000	CDBG (budgeted)
2. Proceed with Cate Park Revitalization, beginning with lighting, landscape and fencing projects	\$150,000-\$200,000	CDBG
3. Help convene and facilitate Friends-of-Cate Park organizational meeting	\$200	Staff and volunteer time
4. Hold Neighborhood Association Relaunch event, including election of neighborhood officers and gathering email addresses for database	\$200	Staff and volunteer time
5. Facilitate development of electronic First Courthouse Neighborhood Newsletter	No cost	Staff and volunteer time
6. Develop neighborhood identification graphics to include neighborhood logo, signage, and letterhead	\$2,500 +/-	CDBG
7. Work with City Staff to develop home improvement grant program for property maintenance of owner occupied, low/mod income housing; fund program	\$10,000 +/-	CDBG
8. Install missing sidewalk segments and accessibility ramps where missing	\$40,000	CDBG
9. Eliminate alley trash collection wherever feasible, working with neighbors to find alternatives	No cost	
10. Install a block of Porter Avenue Streetscape	\$170,000	Capital Fund Neighborhood Improvement, CDBG,
11. Install Safe Routes to School Sidewalk and traffic calming improvements	\$195,000	Safe Routes to School grant from ODOT (budgeted)
12. Implement Driveway Gravel Maintenance/Paving Project on a block-by-block basis	\$10,000-\$20,000	CDBG

Conclusions: Where Do We Go From Here?

Over the past 37 years, City staff working with CDBG neighborhood residents have implemented numerous infrastructure improvements in five neighborhoods. Much of the critical infrastructure such as replacement of water and sewer lines, and reconstruction of collector streets has been addressed. Though expensive to undertake, these projects are essential to basic health and sanitation. But in some ways, these infrastructure projects could be considered low-hanging fruit. The more difficult task in forging a sustainable climate of neighborhood revitalization is a successful “hearts and minds” campaign. This is the process of creating an enduring sense of personal investment for individual property owners in the long-term economic health and social well-being of their neighborhood.

Solve One Problem; Create Another. Solving urban infrastructure problems in Norman’s CDBG neighborhoods is rarely as simple as it looks on the surface. In older neighborhoods, problems are inextricably woven—solve one, create another. For example, residents often complain of localized drainage deficiencies in First Courthouse. Yet the problem is not installing curb and gutter; it is overcoming the lack of sewers in the area to accept stormwater. Sidewalks are another thorny issue. Sidewalks were not part of standard infrastructure in many mid-20th Century subdivisions. Moreover, the shallow setback of houses in these subdivisions often means that installing sidewalks inadvertently eliminates parking for many residents who would block sidewalks—a violation of City Code—by parking in their own driveways.

Neighborhoods Needs Shifting. After three decades in the CDBG business, the needs of Norman’s Core Area neighborhoods and the tasks required to fulfill those needs have shifted. These days, CDBG neighborhoods need to be well-organized, well-connected, and charged with meaningful projects on residents’ plates to keep all stakeholders engaged, invested and making progress. Now more than ever, CDBG funding must catalyze neighborhood revitalization efforts to coordinate residents’ efforts and to support a system of sustainable, resident-led projects.

A Coordinated Strategy Needed. Sustainable enhancement of the quality of life in First Courthouse Neighborhood requires a coordinated strategy rather than a collection of projects. Effective

Conclusions: Where Do We Go From Here?

strategies must be created by residents of the neighborhood regularly asking themselves questions such as “how do we want our neighborhood to look in ten years?” and “what steps can we take ourselves to help make it happen?” City staff’s task for the next decade is to help all of Norman’s CDBG areas combine activities to their best strategic advantage. Projects such as placemaking, effective social organization, and the beautification of parks and rights-of-way will foster a stronger sense of neighborhood ownership and a climate of revitalization.

Plan Implementation. A Short-Term Implementation Strategy on the following page details specific projects recommended in the First Courthouse Neighborhood Plan. It also identifies possible funding sources, and establishes the players who will be required to act in order to bring these projects to fruition. Projects recommended in the implementation plan have been developed from neighborhood-generated lists of opportunities. They represent neighborhood priorities at a social, civic and infrastructure levels.

First Courthouse Neighborhood Demographic Summary

This data is derived from 2000 Census Block Group data. 2010 Block Group data is not yet available.

Neighborhood Population	790
Total Number of Housing Units	370
Average Household Size	2.1 persons per unit
Percentage of Population Defined as Low/Mod Income	63.16%
Land Use Distribution	86% single family residential 14% 2-4 family residential
Percentage of Owner-Occupied Units to Renter-Occupied Units	58% owner-occupied 42% renter-occupied
2011 Average Daily Enrollment at Jefferson Elementary School	400 students

First Courthouse Neighborhood

Map 1: Location Map

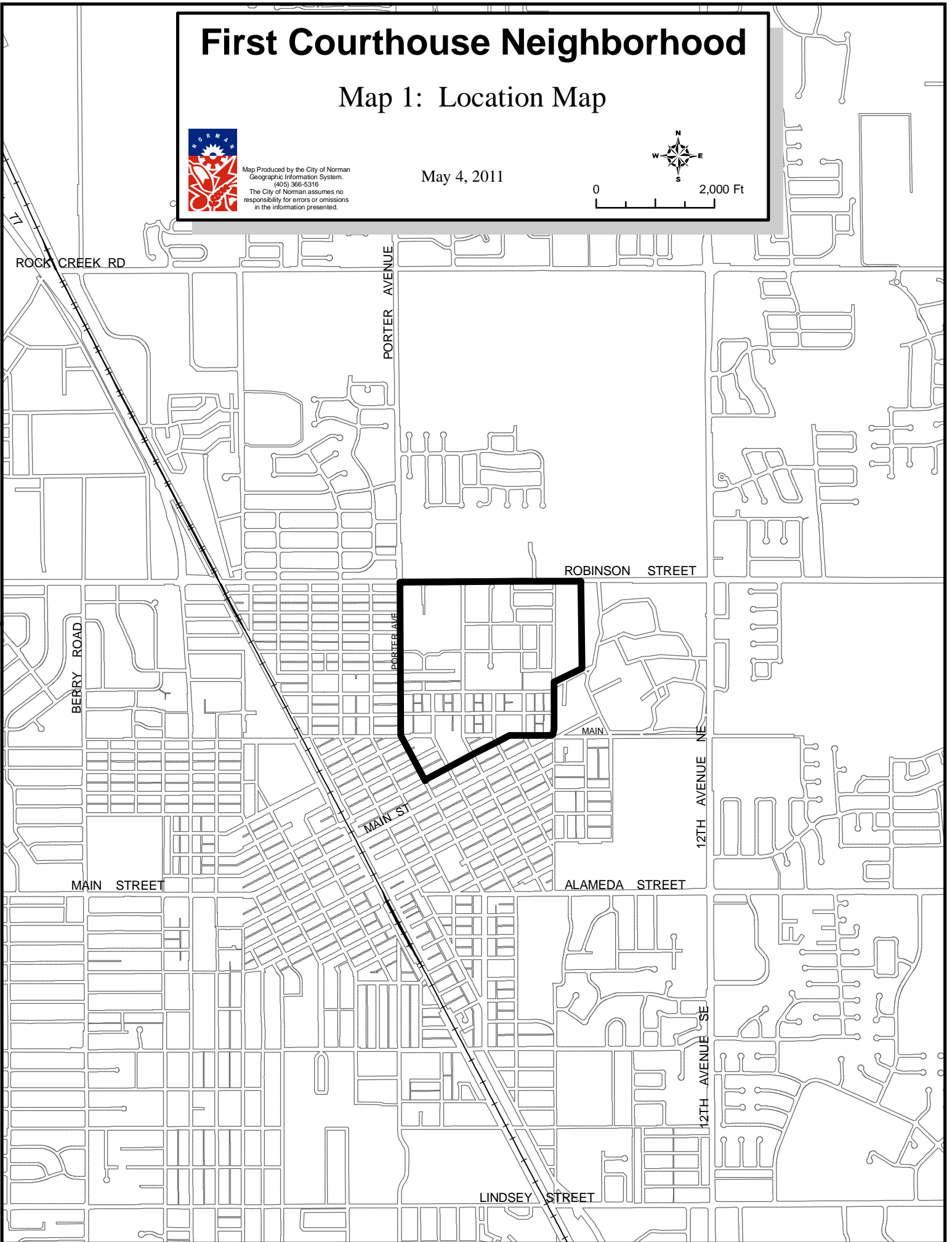


Map Produced by the City of Norman
Geographic Information System.
(405) 366-5316
The City of Norman assumes no
responsibility for errors or omissions
in the information presented.

May 4, 2011



0 2,000 Ft



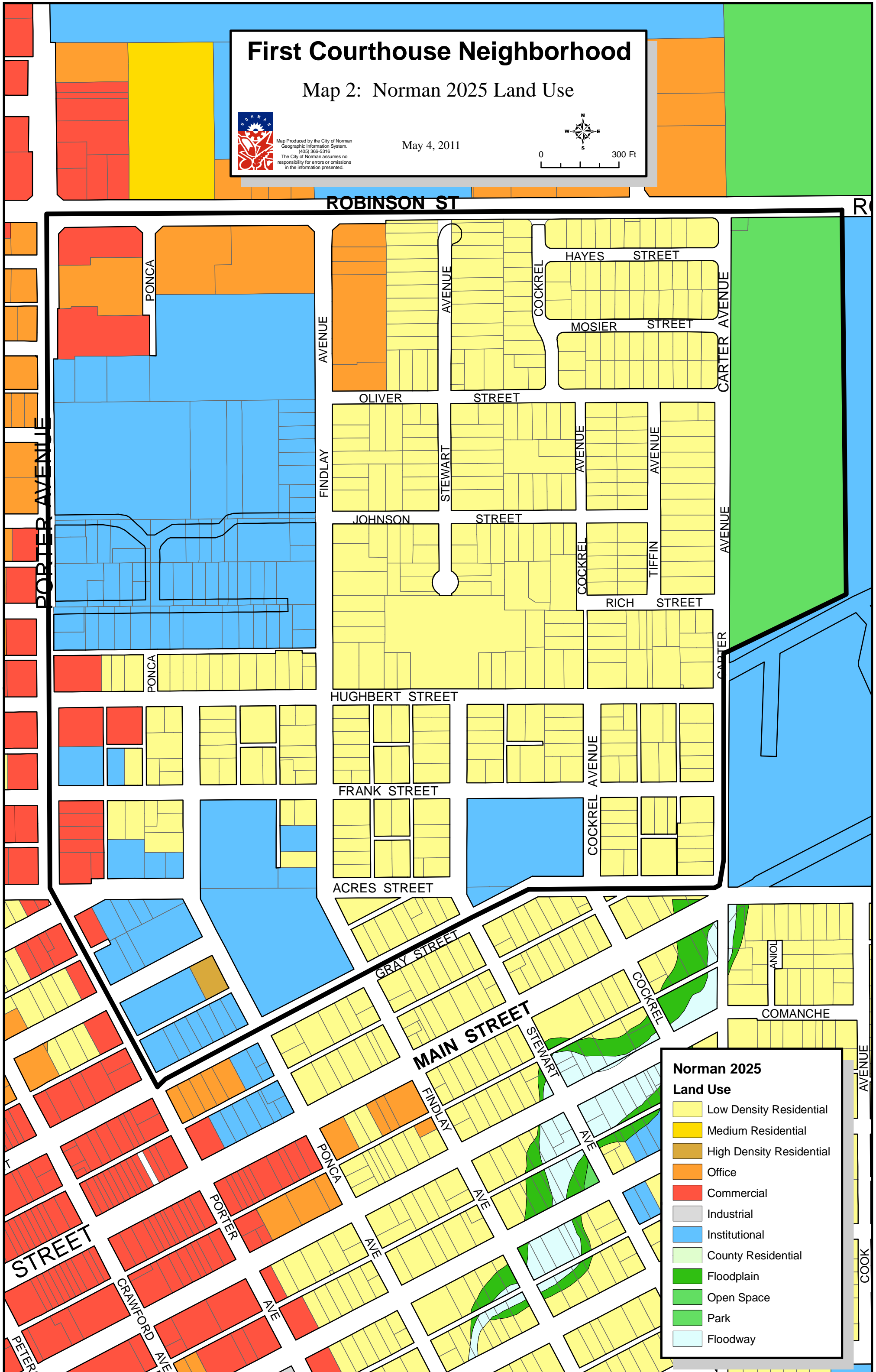
First Courthouse Neighborhood

Map 2: Norman 2025 Land Use



Map Produced by the City of Norman
Geographic Information System
(405) 366-5316
The City of Norman assumes no
responsibility for errors or omissions
in the information presented.

May 4, 2011



Norman 2025
Land Use

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Residential
- High Density Residential
- Office
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- County Residential
- Floodplain
- Open Space
- Park
- Floodway

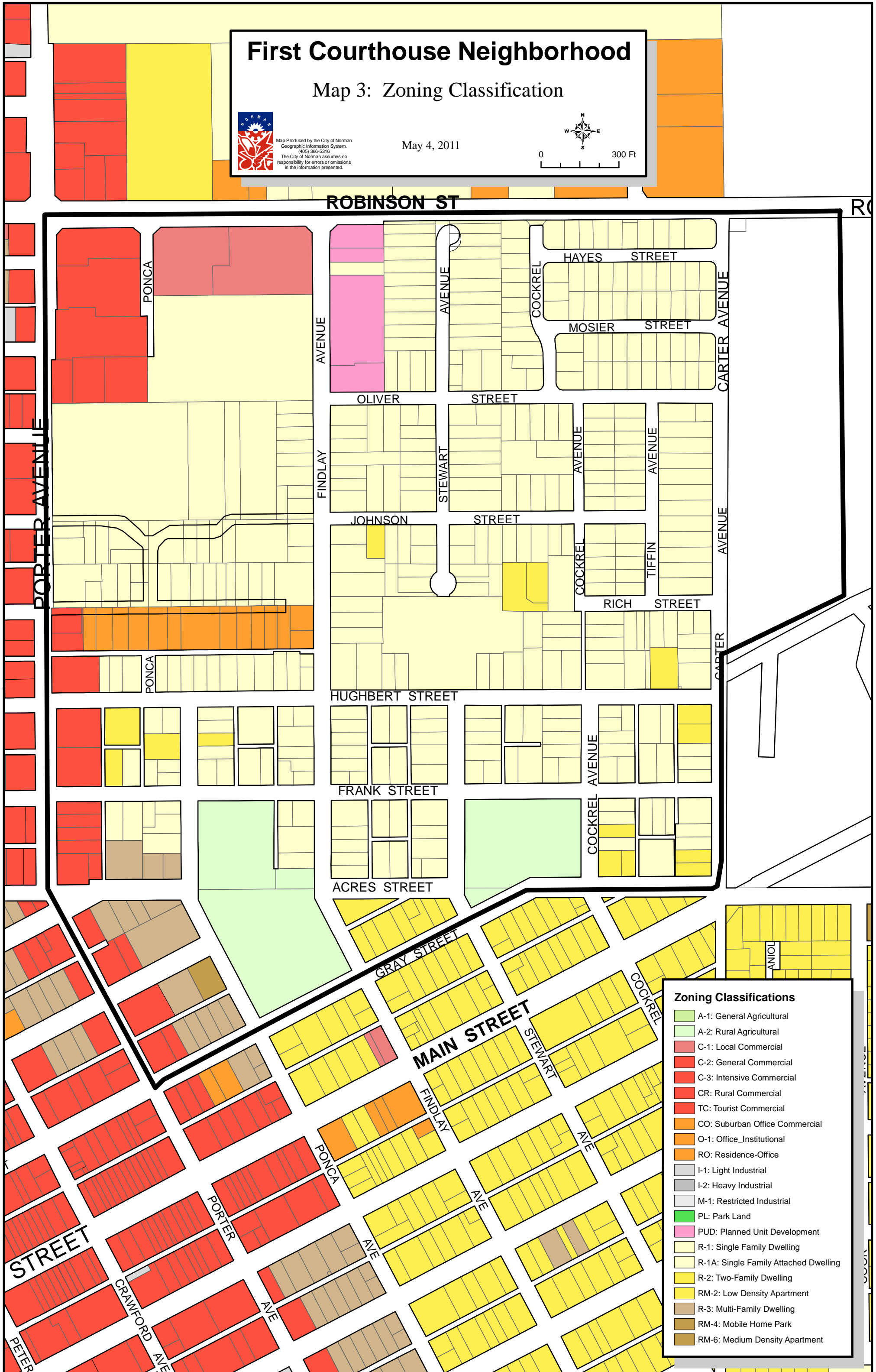
First Courthouse Neighborhood

Map 3: Zoning Classification



Map Produced by the City of Norman
Geographic Information System
(405) 366-5316
The City of Norman assumes no
responsibility for errors or omissions
in the information presented.

May 4, 2011



Zoning Classifications	
	A-1: General Agricultural
	A-2: Rural Agricultural
	C-1: Local Commercial
	C-2: General Commercial
	C-3: Intensive Commercial
	CR: Rural Commercial
	TC: Tourist Commercial
	CO: Suburban Office Commercial
	O-1: Office_Institutional
	RO: Residence-Office
	I-1: Light Industrial
	I-2: Heavy Industrial
	M-1: Restricted Industrial
	PL: Park Land
	PUD: Planned Unit Development
	R-1: Single Family Dwelling
	R-1A: Single Family Attached Dwelling
	R-2: Two-Family Dwelling
	RM-2: Low Density Apartment
	R-3: Multi-Family Dwelling
	RM-4: Mobile Home Park
	RM-6: Medium Density Apartment

First Courthouse Neighborhood

Map 4: Underground Drainage

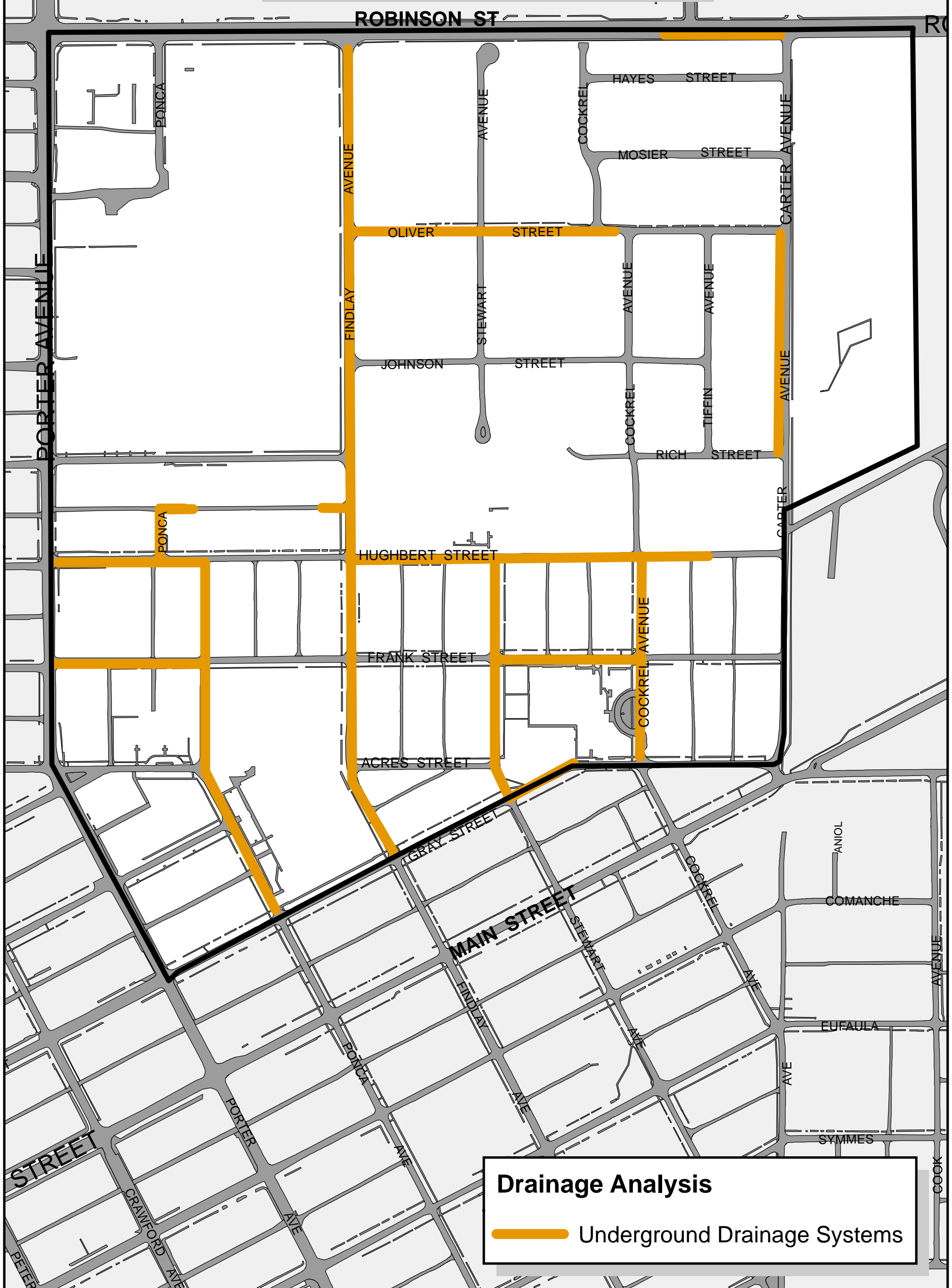


Map Produced by the City of Norman
Geographic Information System.
(405) 366-5316
The City of Norman assumes no
responsibility for errors or omissions
in the information presented.

May 4, 2011



0 300 Ft



Drainage Analysis

 Underground Drainage Systems

First Courthouse Neighborhood

Map 5: Curb and Gutter Locations

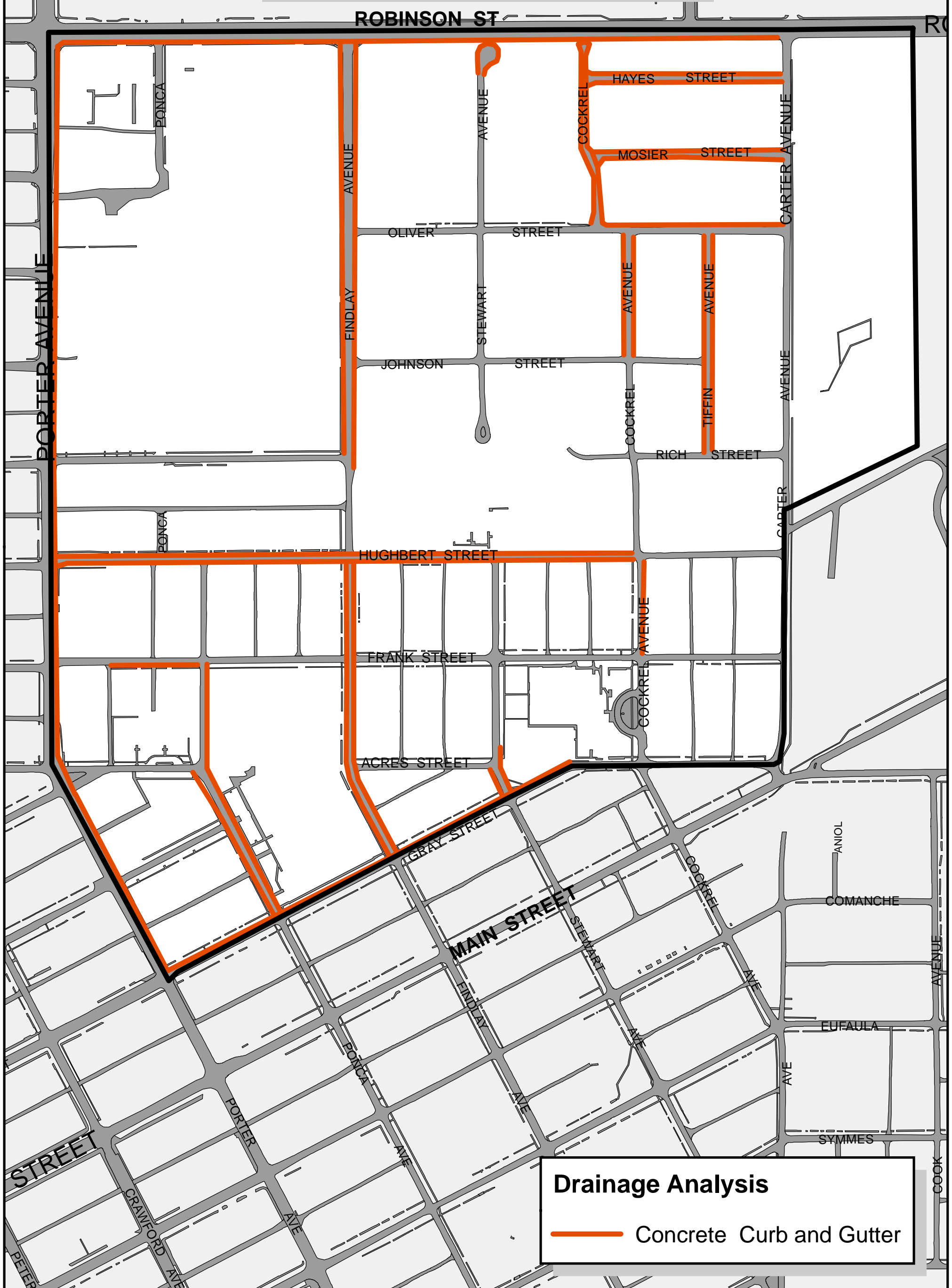


Map Produced by the City of Norman
Geographic Information System
(405) 366-5316
The City of Norman assumes no
responsibility for errors or omissions
in the information presented.

May 4, 2011



0 300 Ft



Drainage Analysis

— Concrete Curb and Gutter

First Courthouse Neighborhood

Map 6: Housing Condition



Map Produced by the City of Norman
Geographic Information System.
(405) 366-5316
The City of Norman assumes no
responsibility for errors or omissions
in the information presented.

May 4, 2011



0 300 Ft



Housing Condition Analysis



Above Average Condition - Recently Painted, Maintained Above Minimum Standards



Average Condition - No Visible Exterior Code Violations



Below Average Condition - Exterior Maintenance Substandard, Peeling Paint, Structural Defects

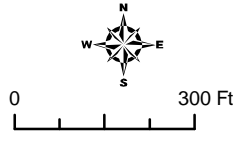
First Courthouse Neighborhood

Map 7: Alley Locations



Map Produced by the City of Norman
Geographic Information System
(405) 366-5316
The City of Norman assumes no
responsibility for errors or omissions
in the information presented.

May 4, 2011



First Courthouse Neighborhood

Map 8: Implementation

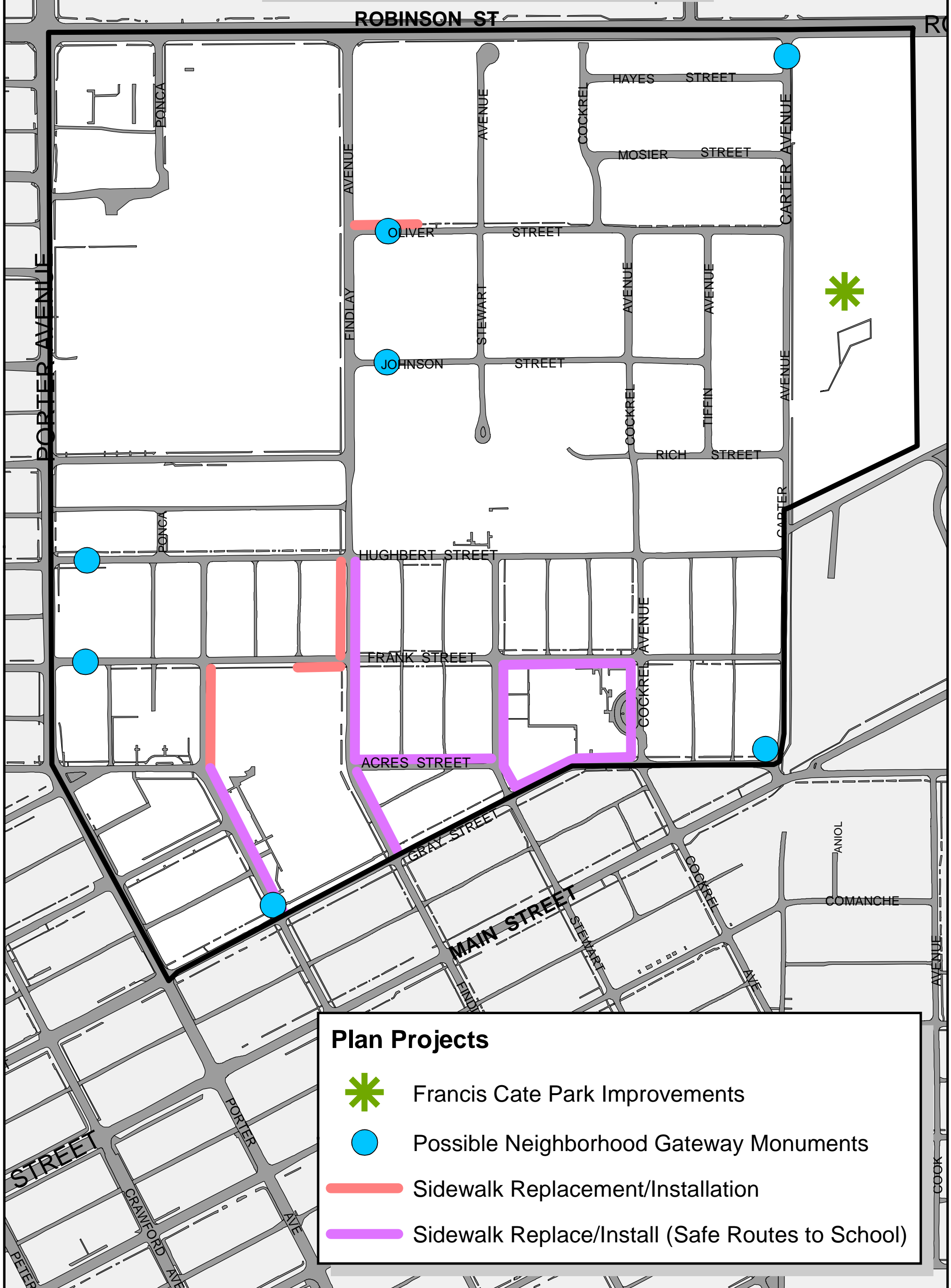


Map Produced by the City of Norman
Geographic Information System
(405) 366-5316
The City of Norman assumes no
responsibility for errors or omissions
in the information presented.

May 4, 2011



0 300 Ft



Plan Projects

-  Francis Cate Park Improvements
-  Possible Neighborhood Gateway Monuments
-  Sidewalk Replacement/Installation
-  Sidewalk Replace/Install (Safe Routes to School)